Defensive Counterterrorism: Effectiveness of Screening on Preventing Terror Attacks in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nairobi, Kenya

Samwel Auya¹, Caroline Sikulu Ndombi²

¹Egerton University, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Peace, Security, and Social Studies, PO Box 536-20115, Egerton, Kenya
²Mount Kenya University, School of Social Sciences, Department of Social and Development Studies, P.O.Box 1869-30200, Kitale, Kenya

ABSTRACT: Unpredictable and horrific terror attacks has seen adoption of screening of people entering key governments’ infrastructure and social places in many parts of the world. Kenyan government of ordered learning institutions in the country to apply the defensive counterterrorism measure to curb a repeat of loss of lives in learning as witnessed in Garrisa University College terror attack. Although the technology has been implemented, little is known regarding the effectiveness of screening on preventing terror attacks in learning institutions in the country. This paper the outcome of an empirical descriptive study conducted in institutions of higher learning in Nairobi Central Business by the author. The sample of fifty public and private institutions of higher learning was drawn from a total of seventy six institutions of higher learning in the city using purposive sampling technique. From each fifty institutions two security guards were also selected purposively into a study sample. This paper critically examines effectiveness of screening on preventing terror attacks in institutions of higher learning in the area of study. This paper concludes that screening as defensive counterterrorism measure is fairly efficient in preventing terror attacks in most learning institutions of higher investigated since some security guards at entry points lack adequate training on counterterrorism and necessary tools for carrying out screening. This paper recommends government to formulate a policy to see security guards manning entry to learning institutions obtain adequate counterterrorism training that can be done by Anti-Terrorism Police Unit. In addition, learning institutions and private security firms make necessary arrangements to avail metal detectors and other essential gadgets to boost security in institutions of higher learning in the capital city.

KEYWORDS: counterterrorism, terrorism, screening, nairobi

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
1. INTRODUCTION

According to Enders and Sandler [4] terrorism is the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or sub national groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate noncombatant victims. Jenkins [5] defines terrorism as a systematic use or threatened use of violence in order to intimidate a population or government and thereby effect political, religious, or ideological change. Terrorist groups in the world engage in horrid attacks to create widespread anxiety in order to achieve a political motive. Terrorists utilize outrageously violent acts, such as beheadings, downing of commercial airlines, bombings in public markets, and armed attacks in public places, to intimidate an audience [9].

For the past two decades, terror attack has skyrocketed not only in developing but also in developed countries. The major notable attacks include the September 11, 2001 U.S experienced terror attack at north and south tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, the 7 July 2005 London bombings in Britain, 8 August 2000 bombing of subway in Moscow Russia, and the June, 26 2015, simultaneous attacks in five countries from Thursday into Friday morning, in Tunisia, France, Kuwait, Syria, and Iraq. In Africa, terror attacks have also been witnessed in Nigeria, Algeria, Mali, Uganda, Kenya, Somali and Tanzania.

In Kenya, since 1998 U.S Embassy attack Kenya has experienced a number of terror attack. In 2002, terrorists attacked a hotel on Kenya’s coast while simultaneously shooting a missile at an Israeli commercial aircraft, missing it narrowly. In September 2013 terrorists attacked Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi killing 67 people both locals and foreigners. In 2014 there was Nairobi bus bombings, Gikomba bombings, Mpeketoni attacks and Lamu attacks. On 2 April 2015, terrorists stormed the Garissa University College in Garissa killing 147 people and injuring over 79. All these attacks in Kenya have been perpetrated by Al-Qaeda and its affiliate group, Al-Shabaab [2].

The motives of terrorism in the world range from economic discrimination, religious persecution, nationalist/separatist motives, religious fundamentalism, political ideologies, to marginalization [9]. Persistence terror attacks in Kenya can be attributed to porous national borders with many unstable neighbors such as Uganda, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia making it easy for weapons smuggling and would be terrorists’ entry into the country [10]. In addition, Kenya’s geographic and strategic location that has made the country a regional hub of international air, road, maritime, and communications traffic from Europe, Asia, and the

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
rest of Africa contribute to the country’s susceptibility to terror attacks [8]. These links make it easy for would be foreign and local terrorists to travel to, from, and within the country, to communicate easily, and to launch terrorist attacks against Kenya [10, 3]. Youth radicalization has also been linked to high prevalence of terror attacks in Kenya. Islamic fundamentalism has invaded Kenya from the east through Somalia and along the Kenyan coast leading to easy recruits of young people for terrorist activities. Similarly, poverty and widespread unemployment have made Kenyan youths vulnerable to indoctrination and recruitment for terrorist activities. Terrorists also bring money into Kenya and are able to entice many from the unemployed and poverty-stricken to support their cause, wittingly or unwittingly, and to provide new [1].

Acts of terrorism have had momentous economic, political, and social connotations in many countries around the globe. In Kenya, tourism which contributes to 25 percent of the GDP has been adversely affected due to travel advisories by western states especially United States, Germany, and Great Britain. In addition, terror attacks has negatively affected Kenya’s tea sector since the second and third largest importers of the commodity, Pakistan and Afghanistan, respectively, have been affected by terrorism [1]. Terrorism has led to loss of foreign direct investment, loss of life, damage infrastructure due to bombing, output losses, security costs, reduced economic growth, trade losses, and higher insurance premiums [6].

The horrific consequences of terrorism have made international community, and individual nations to institute counterterrorism measures to minimize terror attacks. Such terrorist campaigns are more prevalent in liberal democracies, where the government’s legitimacy hinges on its ability to protect the lives and property of its citizens [4]. According to Sander [4] counterterrorism entails strategies by governments, international organizations, military alliances, private corporations, and private citizens to deter the threat and consequences of terrorism. Counterterrorism strategies can be categorized into defensive and proactive. Defensive countermeasures aim at protecting potential targets by making attacks more costly for terrorists or reducing their likelihood of success. In most cases defensive measures are instituted after some successful or innovative terrorist attacks. The most notable defensive counterterrorism measures include metal detectors and bomb-detecting devices initiated in U.S to screen people entering public places and their luggages [7]. Defensive measures may also include target hardening, such as defensive perimeters around government buildings or guards at key points of a country’s infrastructure. On the other hand, proactive measures

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
entail a government’s direct confrontation on the terrorist group or its supporters. Proactive measures may destroy terrorists’ resources, curb their finances, eliminate their safe havens, or kill and capture their members. Although Kenya has employed proactive counterterrorism measures including 2011 military invasion of Somalia, defensive measures especially screening and guarding at key point a country’s institutions and public places [2].

The Garissa University College terror that became the genesis of screening institutions of learning occurred on 2 April 2015. The militant group of Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, stormed with guns killing 147 people and injured more than 79 people. The siege ended the same day, when all four of the attackers were killed. Five men were later arrested in connection with the attack, and a bounty was placed for the arrest of a suspected organizer. Unpredictable and horrific attacks compelled Kenyan government to initiate screening as defensive counterterrorism measures in learning institutions to circumvent a repeat of Garissa College attack incidence. The measures have been implemented in learning institutions in most parts of the country because such facilities have been soft target terrorists in the recent past. In Nairobi and other towns in Kenya, learning institutions have contracted private security firms to offer security services including screening of people entering the institutions.

Since initiation of defensive counterterrorism in Kenya especially screening at the entry points to learning institutions, there is no available information about the effectiveness of screening on preventing criminal attacks in learning facilities. Therefore this paper sought to establish the effectiveness of screening on preventing terror attacks in the institutions of higher learning within Nairobi CBD. Specifically, the paper focused on the security guards’ training on counterterrorism and security issues, knowledge on terrorist assortments, awareness of response procedure in terrorism incidence, and challenges facing security guards in screening points.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a study conducted between September and October 2015 in higher institutions of learning in Nairobi CBD, Kenya. The city has more than seventy six institutions of higher learning both private and public. Data collected was both quantitative and qualitative and the research adopted a descriptive design. The design was used because it is suitable for obtaining insights of a phenomenon like the effectiveness of
screening at the entry points on preventing terror attacks in institutions of higher learning. Questionnaire, interviews and observation were the methods for data collection utilized in this study. The criterion for selecting the area for study was based on the data available which rank the capital city of Nairobi as an area that has experienced most terror attacks in the recent past and that the city has highest number of academic institutions in the country which can be a soft target for attacks. The sample of fifty public and private institutions of higher learning was drawn from a total of seventy six institutions of higher learning in the city using purposive sampling technique. From each fifty institution two security guards were selected purposively into a study sample. This paper critically examines the effectiveness of screening on preventing terror attack in institutions of higher learning within Nairobi CDB with regard to security guards’ training on counterterrorism and security issues, knowledge on terrorist assortments, awareness of response procedure in terrorism incidence, and challenges facing security guards in screening points. The paper concludes by giving recommendations to the government, institutions of higher learning, security firms and other relevant stakeholders in the security sector for policy making to promote and strengthen security in learning institutions in Kenya.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Training of Security Guards on Counterterrorism and Security Issues

In human resource field, organizations enhance productivity through provision of skills relevant in performing a specific task. Through training a worker can understand what to do and how to do it. In effort to beef up security, training is a prerequisite to provide security agents knowledge on security operations including how to conduct screening of people entering key infrastructure, interviewing suspects or criminals, and how to apply security tactics to avert criminal activities. Since knowledge and skills correlates with performance of security agents, this paper sought to determine security’s level of knowledge and skills on security matters and counterterrorism. The paper established that 62% of guards attended basic security management training spearheaded by either ex police officer or military officer while 38% were never trained. The findings implies that majority of security guards in learning institutions in the Nairobi CBD possess some knowledge regarding security

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
management and operations that can deter criminal attacks in the institutions. In contrast, security guards who never received security training argued that their employers (companies) were only interested to address shortage of security guards without due regard to training and thus assigned them duties after requesting for the work and after presenting national identification cards. Failure to subject security guards to training was also attributed to high cost of training that some companies are unable to afford. Lack of security management knowledge and skill among the security guards pose security threats to the learning institutions. However for the security guards who were trained before deployed they didn’t undergo counterterrorism training and practical lessons to get glimpse of various weapons utilized by criminals especially terrorists. This complicates counterterrorism efforts in the country.

3.2 AWARENESS OF TERRORIST ASSORTMENT

From the variety of terror attacks around the globe, it has become clear that terrorists employ specific weapons in their attacks. In most situations grenades, explosives, and guns are used and this has forced security agencies in both developed and developing countries to concentrate on such weapons during screening of people entering airports, buildings, and other social places to ensure that those getting in don’t possess the weapons. In Kenya it is a norm for the security agents to establish the same for people entering learning institutions which have become a recent soft target for terror attacks. This study sought to establish the level of awareness and knowledge of the weapons by security guards at entry points to higher institutions of learning in the area of study.

Findings established that 72% of security guards have knowledge on the terrorists assortments especially grenades and they are able to identify them while 28% of respondents asserted that they have no mental picture of the assortments. For the guns, hundred percent of respondents said they know them because they see police and other security agents carry them. This data depicts that it possible for criminals to enter with the deadly weapons especially explosives and grenades since it is impossible for some security guards to realize a phenomenon that can pose security threats to individuals in the learning institutions.

3.3 Response Procedure in Terrorism Incidence

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
In this period of escalated terror attacks in the world, response strategy especially alerting the security machinery is fundamental to avert attacks. This study sought to determine the response strategy of security guards in an event of terror threats. Respondents were asked how they will respond. Fifty five percent (55%) of security guards at screening points argued that they will call the police through 999 or mobile phones of police commanders in the city, twenty two percent (22%) said they will report to institutions’ security officers who can then contact the police, while 23% asserted that they have no idea on what to do. This data suggests that most seventy seven percent (77%) of security guards in the institutions of study are informed on the step to take in an event of terror threats. Timely rely of communication to the police and other government security agents is imperative because they can move swiftly to avert an attack. However, the security guards without response strategy were those who didn’t undergo security management training hence they can subject students and people in the learning institutions to suffering in an event of attack.

3.4 Challenges facing security Guards in Screening Points

This paper also sought to establish the challenges that security guards face at screening points in higher institutions of learning in Nairobi CBD. Respondents gave responses shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1 Challenges facing security Guards in Screening Points](image-url)
As depicted in Figure 1, 58% of respondents argued that uncooperative entrants to the institutions is a challenge facing them, 16% said defective screening gadgets, 12% said lack of screening gadgets, and 10% maintained that additional tasks is the problem they face while beefing up security at entry points to institutions of higher learning in Nairobi CBD. This data revealed that most security guards (58%) experience unruly entrants who don’t want to undergo screening process. Respondents argued that some visitors and students even abuse guards whenever requested to be screened. This hostility see some of them enter without screening, an act that puts the institutions’ staff and students at risk of attacks. Hostility of entrants to learning institutions was attributed to lack of awareness among Kenyans on the importance of adhering to security measures and counterterrorism strategies in public institutions and social places.

In addition, this paper established that 16% of security guards have defective screening gadgets which hinder effective security management and operations at entry points. Some respondents in this category maintained that the metal detectors and other screening gadgets had failed for the past two months without repair or replacement by concerned authorities leading to entry without thorough screening implying that destructive and dangerous weapons can easily get into the institutions. Similarly, 12% of respondents said that they completely lack screening gadgets at the entry points and this was attributed to unwillingness for the management of the academic institutions and contracted security firms to purchase the gadgets.

Furthermore, this paper established that security guards in some academic institutions are allocated other duties apart from screening people entering the institutions and performing other security operations. The respondents maintained that they doubled as messengers who run errands for the institutions of higher learning. This was witnessed by the author of this paper who went to collect data in some institutions to find out that there were no security guards at the institutions’ entry points. However, some of them emerged after twenty minutes and said that they had been sent by institutions administration. This paper established that administration in the learning institutions want the value of their money hence they utilize the guards maximum but endangering staff and learners’ life.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION
Terror attacks have compelled governments all over the World to institute counterterrorism strategies. Countries like U.S, Kenya, and Britain etc have employed both proactive and defensive counterterrorism strategies to safeguard their people and infrastructure from the deadly terrorists’ attack. Kenya, for example, has made indefatigable effort to counter terrorism including sending its army to Somalia deal with Al shabaab, Al Qaeda affiliate, that had conducted many attacks and kidnapping in the country. In addition, the government had initiated a policy where people entering key government and private infrastructure are to be screened. The government further called for all academic institutions in the country to undertake thorough screening at entry points following the Garrissa attack that claimed 147 lives to avert similar incidence in future. Although the governments directed learning institutions to do so, still the defensive counterterrorism measure is not efficient in preventing terror attacks in some few learning institutions of higher in Nairobi CDB. The security guards contracted to undertake screening in the learning institutions lack adequate training on counterterrorism in that some of them can’t recognize a grenade and explosives mostly used in attacks by the terrorists. Some institutions of higher learning have defective metal detectors while others lack them. In addition, security guards are sometimes allocated other duties by institutions administration leading to entry of people without screening. People and students entering the institutions also have not attached utmost significance to screening as a counterterrorism security measure due to lack of awareness leading to abuse and harassment of security guards when performing their duties.

It is therefore imperative for the government and learning institutions to create public awareness on screening as a defensive counterterrorism strategy and formulate a policy to see security guards manning entry to learning institutions obtain adequate counterterrorism training that can be done by Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU). Furthermore learning institutions and private security firms make necessary arrangements to avail metal detectors and other essential gadgets to boost security in institutions of higher learning in the capital city.

REFERENCES


---

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.