



Algiers, 2 June 2014

TERRORISM INCIDENT REPORT: ATTACK ON DJIBOUTI RESTAURANT

On Saturday, 24 May 2014, the *La Chaumiere* restaurant in Djibouti city, a popular venue for Western military personnel and tourists, was attacked with grenades by two suicide bombers. The two terrorists, a man and a veiled woman, were killed in the attack as well as one other person in addition to 15 civilians injured. Of the injured, three were German, three Spanish, and six soldiers of the Dutch military detachment. The remaining were of French and other undisclosed nationalities.

The Djibouti Ministry of Interior said in a statement that the two terrorists were of Somali origin and Alshabab has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Djibouti is very strategic. It is venue to the only US military base in Africa as well as to a French military base. The port of Djibouti is used by the EU CAP anti-piracy naval force. Djibouti is increasingly becoming an attractive port to a number of landlocked countries in East and Central Africa. Djibouti is a troop-contributing country for the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Djibouti hosts several thousand of western military personnel and their families. Furthermore, Djibouti is also used as a base for US drone operations in Yemen and parts of Africa as far as counter-terrorism operations are concerned.

The attack at *La Chaumiere* restaurant was the first of its kind in Djibouti.

Given the prevailing situation in Somalia since 2011 where the AMISOM and Somali defense Forces have steadily gained ground and made significant progress in countering terrorist operations, *Al Shabaab* is now concentrating more on asymmetric warfare characterized by the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Vehicle-borne Explosive Devices (VBIED), Remotely-controlled Explosive Devices (RCIED), Explosive Formed Projectiles (EFP), suicide bombings, grenade attacks, ambushes and targeted assassinations. The change in tactics was developed hand-in-hand with the change in leadership in *Al Shabaab* during 2013 when *Ahmed Godane* assumed leadership of the group. *Godane* restructured the group operationally to prepare *Al Shabaab* for protracted insurgency activities in urban areas, thereby ensuring the survival of the group for longer and putting them on the path of a more radical, hard-line, violent, anti-Western and anti-AMISOM approach. In several statements since 2013, *Al Shabaab* has said that it will take the war beyond Somalia, particularly to Troop-contributing countries of Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Burundi. In fact, Kenya has seen an increase in attacks by *Al Shabaab* since 2013 with the Westgate Mall attack being the bloodiest. Ethiopia has foiled attacks by *Al Shabaab* in the capital city, Addis Ababa both in 2013 and 2014, and Uganda has had similar experiences of foiled attacks. Somalia has experienced a dramatic increase in IED

attacks and threat of attacks. Suicide bombings and grenade attacks have been taking place in Mogadishu, Puntland region, Barawe, Jubbaland and Kismaayo during 2014. All or most of the aforementioned attacks can be attributed to the actions of the *Amniyat* attack cells of *Al Shabaab* which have been infiltrated into several countries of the region such as Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and possibly Djibouti. The *Amniyat* attack cells consist of well-trained, experienced, hard-line violent jihadist members of *Al Shabaab*. These cells were developed by *Al Shabaab* as a reaction to the successful counter-terrorism operations by AMISOM and the Somali Defense Force which practically defeated *Al Shabaab* on the conventional battlefield and forced them to resort to asymmetric urban guerilla warfare where the *Amniyat* groups are much more adaptable and effective.

With *Al Shabaab* firmly implementing the strategy of taking the conflict beyond Somalia, more attacks in the Troop-contributing countries can be expected. Furthermore, it can be reasonably surmised that *Al Shabaab* can use local grievances, economic disparity, perception of marginalization among the populations, growing jihadist radicalization, porous borders, weak border management and control, the presence of large amounts of small-arms and light weapons in the region, to expand its operations into the countries bordering Somalia and beyond.

Djibouti is particularly vulnerable to attacks by *Amniyat* cells, since the capital hosts thousands of foreign military personnel which are an attractive target, not merely to *Al Shabaab*, but also to other *Al Qaeda*-affiliated terrorist groups such as *AQIM* and *Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula*.

Consequently, security measures in the Troop-contributing countries should be tightened and closer collaboration between intelligence agencies in the region strengthened. Moreover, border-control and joint border patrols and management operations among countries in the region need to be augmented in order to stop the free movement of terrorist groups. Additionally, socio-economic development programmes, de-radicalization programmes, increased democratization and greater political and social inclusion are important as an eloquent counter narrative against terrorist ideology.

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