

INTERNATIONAL

Africa could become increasing target of terrorism

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NAIROBI, Kenya (IPS) —

Africa's weak security is increasingly rendering the continent a much easier target for international terrorism, African analysts say.

"The intensity of terrorism is shifting from Europe and America toward Africa where there are still many weak points," Okoye Oboji at the University of Nairobi says, commenting on the Aug. 7 bomb attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Oboji, a lecturer at the university's department of government, says recent cases in Algeria, Egypt, and the recent twin bombings in the East African capitals are indications of a new trend of international terrorism making its way into Africa from Europe and America.

"Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were weak points where terrorists knew they could cause the greatest damage," he says. "They (terrorists) are trying to look for other places apart from Europe and America, which recently have tended to be forewarned and prepared."

The two bombs, estimated to weigh six tons each, exploded simultaneously near U.S. embassies in the two countries, killing at least 210 and injuring 5,000 people.

There is little information about the reasons behind the

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attacks, although fingers are pointed toward Islamic fundamentalists.

One suspect of Arab origin has been arrested in Kenya, while in Tanzania, authorities have reportedly detained 12 people in connection with the attack. Their identities have not been revealed.

In Kenya, anti-Arab and anti-Islamic sentiments are beginning to emerge.

In buses, bars and the marketplace in Nairobi, discussions are centered on the attack, with some people calling for stiff action against Arabs and Muslims.

Muslims account for about 10 percent of Kenya's approximately 30 million people, while in the United Republic of Tanzania, Muslims are 35 percent of the population of more than 29 million.

"These cowards should be tracked and dealt with severely," says one Nairobi resident.

"If the U.S. was the target, it was stupid of them, because Kenya was the loser at the end of the day," added another man.

Norman Nyazema of the University of Zimbabwe says Africa should not become the new playground for terrorism against the United States.

"I can't understand the wanton destruction of human life. We are so poor here in Africa. We are battling with HIV/AIDS and the next thing we don't want is some people coming to fight their wars on our continent. They should take their wars somewhere else," Nyazema said.

The United States and Israel have indicated that the bombings could be linked to a wealthy Saudi Arabian businessman, Osama bin Laden, who has threatened a holy war against the United States.

Zimbabwean political analyst Thomas Deve also thinks Islamic fundamentalists are behind the bombings.

"Naturally these guys (Muslim fundamentalists) are behind it," he said. "Kenya and Tanzania were considered soft targets. The problem lies at the doorstep of the countries concerned."

"Tanzania and Kenya have a strong presence of Muslims, so the involvement of locals cannot be ruled out. The attack would not have been possible without local assistance."

Chimed in an observer who declined to be named: "Muslims are quite strong in Kenya and Tanzania.

There is a possibility that the attacks could have been engineered from the other end (the United States).

This could be a way of pitting Muslims against Christians."

Deve thinks the attacks may not necessarily lead to a worsening of Muslim-Arab/Christian relations in Africa.

"It's hegemony politics inspired by Islamic values. What is happening is Muslims using force to drive out Americans, just like the Americans do to the Arabs."

"These two countries were targeted for not doing enough to be anti-American like some of the Muslim countries are, so I don't think Christians will see it as a clash of religions. The two do business together."

"The message has been sent to the U.S. that they need to be careful when dealing with other countries."

"The fact that those responsible could target and cause such damage shows that we are headed for tougher times," he said.

Oboji of Kenya says while countries like the United States may take a hardline to bring the culprits to justice, there are diplomatic issues at stake in tracking down those who were behind the bombings.

"Handling Arabs is a risky business. They are unpredictable. It needs tact and diplomacy," he says, cautioning that no one is sure those behind the attacks were Muslim Arabs.

WORLD BRIEFS

CUBA SET TO STRENGTHEN ITS LINK WITH CARIBBEAN NATIONS

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada (IPS) — Cuban leader Fidel Castro will have another high-profile chance to thumb his nose at the United States when he sits with Caribbean leaders in the Dominican Republic later this month. This comes on the heels of his recently concluded three-nation Caribbean tour which took him to Jamaica, Barbados and Grenada. The leaders have invited Castro to the meeting for several reasons, chief among them to step up the pace on getting Cuba into the lucrative European Union market. Under the successful Lome Agreement, most Caribbean states, as one element of the African, Caribbean and Pacific grouping, have enjoyed selective preferential trade access to European markets. Officials say the visit is also designed to show the once ostracized pariah that he is a full family member once again. Dominican organizers have invited Castro and others to mark the 500th anniversary of Santo Domingo, the first city in the western hemisphere. But part of the significance of his visit lies in what appears to be the Cuban leader's belief that the end is near as far as hemispheric isolation is concerned. To show his gratitude to the region, Castro has announced a generous aid package to the community despite the island's dire economic circumstances. Students from the Caribbean region will benefit from 1,000 new scholarships — up from 120 a year ago — in such fields as medicine, language training, marine biology and many others.

BOTH SIDES RECRUITING, ARMING THEMSELVES FOR WAR IN ANGOLA

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) — The Angolan government and the rebel UNITA movement are on a recruiting drive to boost their troop strengths and, with an increase in armed incursions, the nation appears headed for a new round of warfare, say U.N. officials. According to the official, who spoke to IPS on condition of anonymity, the Angolan Armed Forces have begun a nightly round-up of youths in the capital, Luanda, to gather recruits for combat in zones held by the forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in central and eastern Angola. "Even local U.N. staff are saying they have to pay off the FAA or send away family members so they won't be recruited to fight," the official said. The U.N. Observer Mission in Angola, a peacekeeping force comprising more than 700 soldiers, has gathered evidence that UNITA has tried to reoccupy some 70 localities which it was to have turned over to government authority under the terms of a 1994 peace accord. In recent months, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi has failed to hand over four rebel strongholds — including his base in Bailundo — despite several rounds of U.N.-brokered talks. Meanwhile, the United Nations is stepping up efforts to boost humanitarian aid for Angola.

Cottage

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improved, without help from laws, remediation policies or advocates. They use this reasoning to demand that affirmative action be eliminated because, they claim, it never was needed in the first place. Their book is an example of the parasitic quality of the Black Folk Cottage industry.

Two largely unknown White school teachers, through the manipulation of information and in collaboration with a rich publishing house, mainstream media and high-profile daily press, have been showcasing their opinions in prime time television and on the front pages of papers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* above the fold.

On invitation from the White House (to the chagrin of several Race Advisory Board members, I am told), they were special guests at President Clinton's Akron, Ohio, town meeting on race.

The White House released excerpts of their comments,

made during a private discussion with the president. This transcript accompanied the front-page photo opportunities arranged for the White House Press Corps.

Too bad that the same promotional advantages and press coverage are almost never available to genuine African-American leaders who meet on substantive Black issues in the White House with the president.

There are too many others, in addition to the Thernstroms, whose flaky notions should and would be gathering appropriate dust on remote university and research office shelves were it not for a rich, rewarding Black Folks Cottage Industry.

The point is not only that these frivolous intellectual interlopers obsess about Black people through their questionable explorations and writing.

It is also transparent that what they write is designed to prove to receptive audiences that the authors have found our demands for equality and

justice to be unjustified and undeserved.

This pandering sensationalism is like tabloid journalism. It guarantees prominence to middle-brow minds, who otherwise would languish in well deserved obscurity.

A legitimate question, then, is why the conspiracy? What's in it for them? What is the prize the conspirators hope to win

by discrediting African-Americans' reality?

The answer is obvious and painfully familiar. The prize would be a return to White male preferences, a return to White male quotas and a most-favored-place for Whites which, for 400 years beginning with slavery, characterized America's social, economic, political and domestic balance of power.

Tragedy

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for the American victims, "By all accounts the father and son were an immensely popular duo whose headlong embrace of Kenyan life had been lovingly returned by the people they met and befriended."

The larger point is that the tragedy also underscored that it was not just Americans of African descent who saw the beauty in Black Africa.

A friend told the *Times* that Molly Huckaby Hardy, 51, another career Foreign Service employee who was white and who also died in the Nairobi bombing, "just loved being there, I think. She found East Africa a beautiful place."

It is this — the stories of the capacity of human beings to see and embrace the beauty of their surroundings, be they in Oklahoma or Black Africa — which transforms the horror of this tragedy into a declaration of hope.

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