

**NEW YORK CITY  
POLICE DEPARTMENT**



**ANALYSIS OF  
AL-SHABAAB'S ATTACK  
AT THE WESTGATE MALL  
IN NAIROBI, KENYA**

***Information current as of November 1, 2013***

***Important Note on Sources:***

*This report and the conclusions it contains are based on information gathered by the NYPD and unclassified open source information. This report is subject to further revision based upon new information.*

***For more information***

*Please contact Lt. Kevin Yorke at [kyorke@nynjhidta.org](mailto:kyorke@nynjhidta.org)*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... page 4**

**THE LOCATION: WESTGATE MALL..... page 5**

**THE TERRORISTS: AL-SHABAAB.....page 12**

**TIMELINE OF EVENTS ..... page 14**

**ANALYSIS OF ATTACK..... page 27**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Overview:

- On Saturday, September 21, 2013 at approximately 12:30 hours (local East African Time) four terrorists associated with the Somali based terrorist organization Al-Shabaab launched an armed assault using rifles and hand grenades at the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. The attack resulted in the deaths of 67 people and it took almost four days before authorities declared the scene safe. This terrorist attack was the largest loss of life in Kenya due to terrorism since the 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi in which 212 people were killed.
- This high profile armed assault successfully raised Al-Shababb's worldwide profile as a terrorist organization. It also clearly illustrates that armed assaults by terrorists on "soft" targets such as a shopping mall are a simple, effective and easy to copy tactic.
- The victims of this attack included males and females, ranging in age from 78 to eight years old and coming from 13 different countries. The majority of these casualties probably occurred within the first hour of the attack. It also appears that the terrorists made some conscious effort to just target non-Muslims during the attack.
- A large number of victims were individuals who either attempted to seek shelter or were trapped while in the mall. This presented the attackers with opportunities to engage in wholesale killing when they discovered groups of victims attempting to hide in confined spaces like storerooms. It also presented first responders with challenges in evacuating and properly identifying the victims.
- During the beginning of the attack, a large number of plainclothes law enforcement and civilian armed personnel were present at the scene and actively assisted in evacuating victims. Their presence may have created identification issues for uniformed Kenyan Police first responders.
- Poor coordination and lack of effective communication between police and military commanders resulted in the military troops firing on members of the police tactical team, killing one officer and wounding the team commander.
- The last confirmed sighting of the terrorists on the mall's CCTV system takes place on Sunday, September 22, 2013 at 00:54 hours, 12 hours after the start of the attack. It is unknown if the terrorists were killed or escaped the mall. A major contributing factor to this uncertainty was the failure to maintain a secure perimeter around the mall.
- On Monday afternoon, September 23, 2013, the Kenyan Defense Forces while conducting tactical operations started a fire and collapsed a large part of the mall.
- On Tuesday, September 24, 2013 at 18:00 hours, the Westgate Mall was declared secure and the incident ended almost 78 hours from the start of this attack.

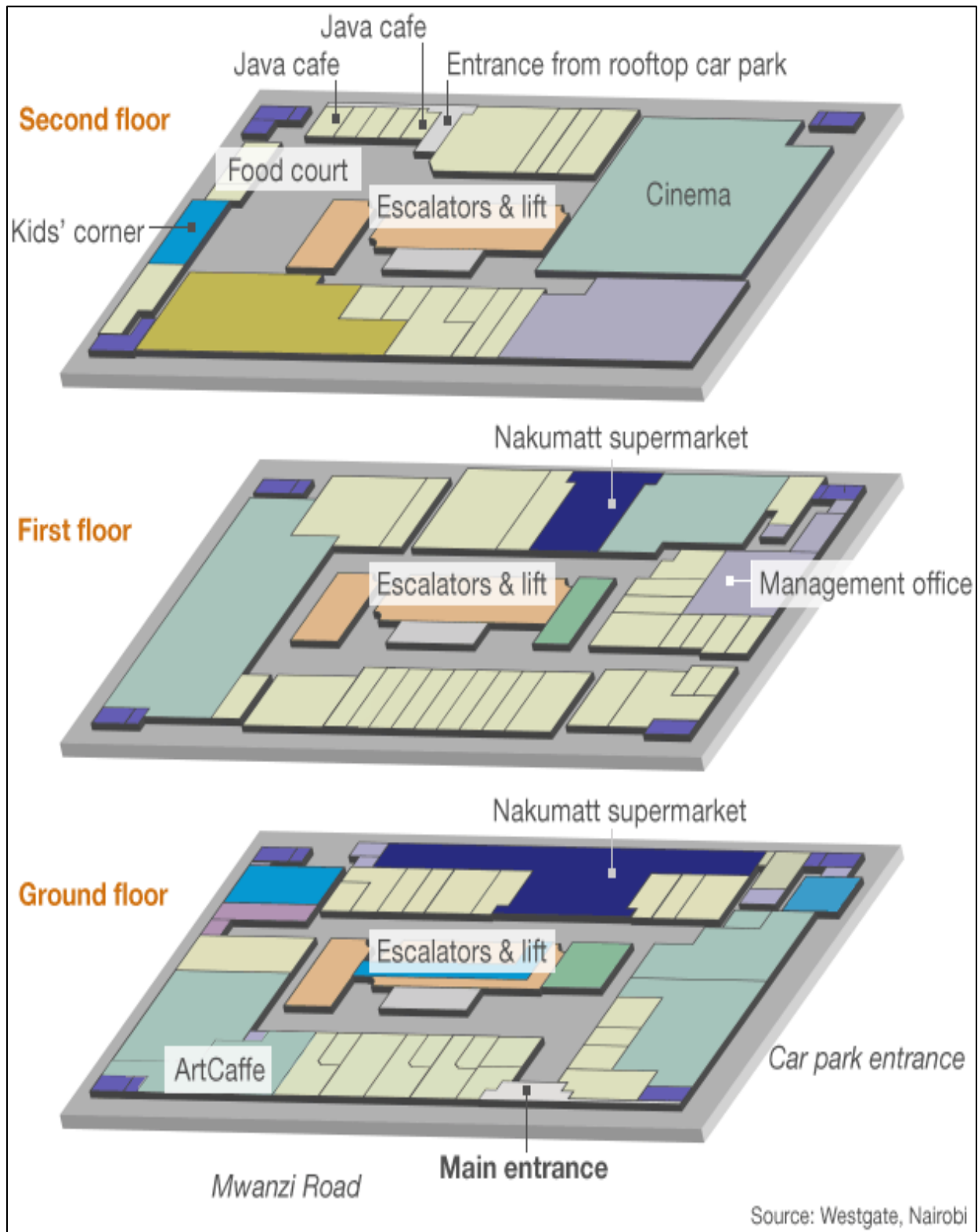
## THE LOCATION: THE WESTGATE MALL



**Overview** - The Westgate Mall opened in 2007 and is a well-known center of western expatriate life in Nairobi. It has five (5) levels with 350,000 square feet of available retail space. There are 80 shops, with the largest tenants being the Nakumatt Super Market (a large Department Store that sells a variety of goods) and a Planet Media Cinemas (Movie Theaters). Other large tenants include clothing and home goods stores, two banks and the “Millionaires Casino” located on the second floor (18 gaming tables and 95 slot machines). Smaller rental units include outlets for international brands such as Adidas, Converse, FedEx, and Samsung Mobile. Westgate Mall is currently owned by a company called Sony Holding Ltd (no relation to the Sony Corporation), a commercial real estate business owned by Israeli national Alex Trachtenberg.

**Construction** - The five story mall is a concrete and steel structure designed with an open atrium in its center, a basement parking garage and a parking garage in the rear built on the roof of the Nakumatt Super Market. The top two floors are currently not open as retail space and house the projection rooms for the theater and space for a planned medical clinic. The main entrance to the mall faces the street and consists of several open cafes on an elevated patio overlooking the road.

**A note on the Floor Plan** – In Kenya the floor of a building at street level is called the **ground floor**. The floor above it is called the **first floor**.





View of the atrium inside the Westgate Mall



Aerial view of Westgate Mall taken during the terrorist attack

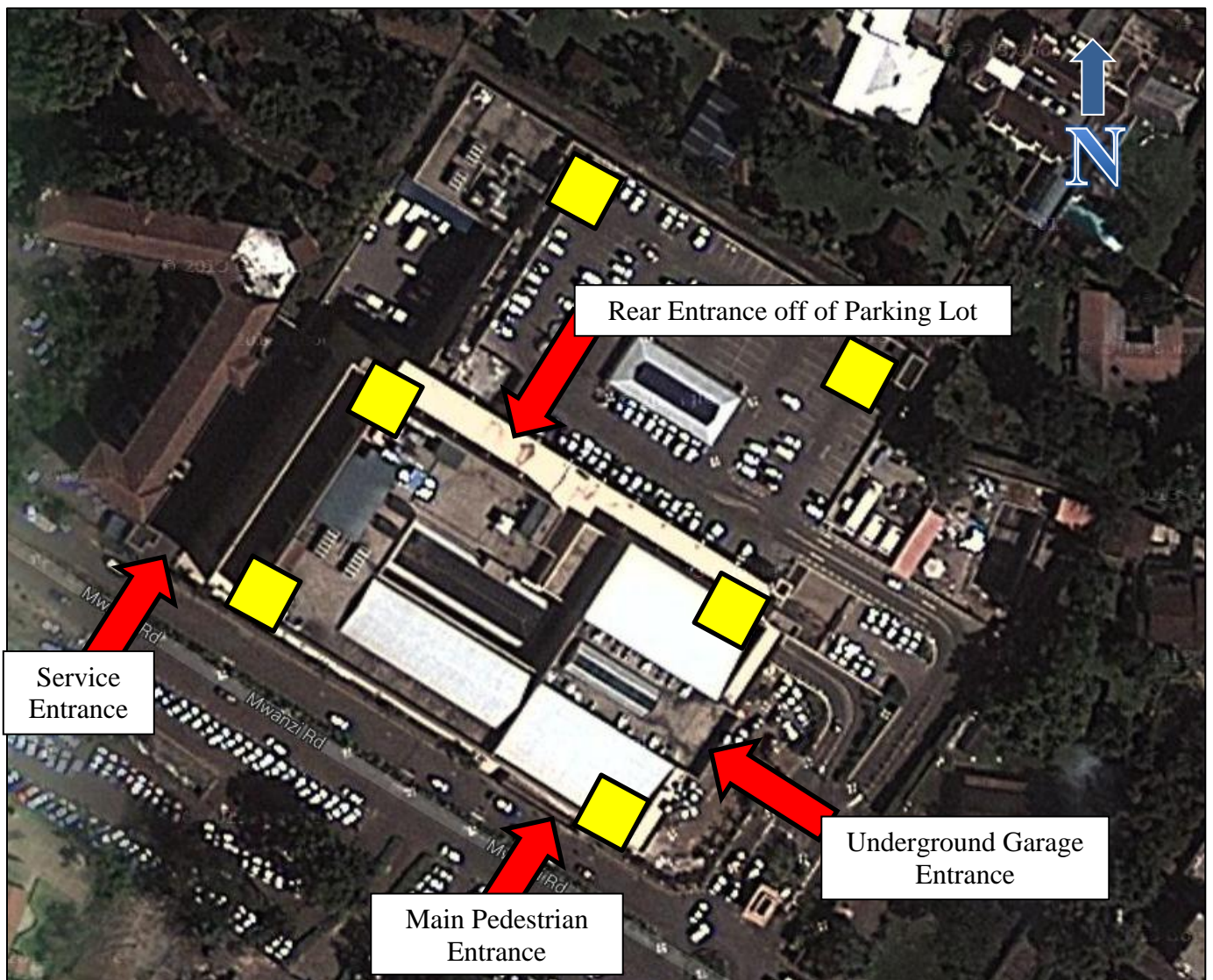


### Mall Entrances and Exits

The Westgate Mall has three public entrances and one service entrance. The main pedestrian entrance is located on the south side of the building. On the east side of the building there is a vehicle entrance to an underground public parking garage. There is also a vehicle ramp on the east side of the building that leads to the elevated parking garage. There is a rear public entrance into the mall from the parking garage. Service and commercial deliveries are made thru a garage located on the southwestern corner of the building.

### Fire / Emergency Stairwells Exits

In addition to the public entrances to the mall and public staircases and elevators, there are six (6) interior stairwells for service and emergency use. There are stairwells located at each corner of the mall and there are two (2) stairwells located midway inside on the east and west perimeter walls of the mall.



**Roof-top Garage**

There is a rooftop garage (shaded yellow) located on top of the second floor of the Nukumatt Supermarket. In the center of the Garage is a skylight that sits above the escalators between the ground and first floors inside the Nakumatt Supermarket.



## **Mall Security**

### **Guard Force**

- The mall is staffed by unarmed contract security personnel.
- Security posts are located at;
  - The main Ground level Pedestrian entrance
  - The booth at the entrance to the parking garage
  - The rear pedestrian entrance located off of the rooftop parking lot.
  - The loading dock.
  - An unknown number of interior and roving posts
- Mall security officers stationed at the pedestrian entrances carry “hand wands” for detecting metal objects. Interviews with people who have frequented the mall state that searches were often done in a very perfunctory manner.
- It is also reported that the mall’s management company was in the process of changing contract security services when the attack occurred.

### **CCTV**

- There is a comprehensive Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) security system installed at the Westgate Mall.
- The CCTV control room is located on the first floor of the mall in the mall’s management office.
- The feed from the mall’s CCTV System can also be monitored from a facility approximately five miles away in the Hurlingham section of Nairobi.
- A number of individual businesses inside the mall have their own proprietary CCTV systems.

## THE TERRORISTS: AL-SHABAAB



### Overview

- Al-Shabaab, or "The Youth," an al-Qaeda-linked Somalia based terrorist organization, claimed credit for conducting this attack. The stated goal of Al-Shabaab, also known as Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideend, is the creation of a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia. Al-Shabaab and some of its affiliates controlled Mogadishu and major portions of the Somali countryside but a sustained African Union military campaign (to which Kenya contributes troops) in recent years has weakened the group's hold on Somalia considerably. But despite its weakened state in Somalia, Al-Shabaab has publically threatened to retaliate against Kenya.

### Terrorist Attacks by Al-Shabab

- Al-Shabaab's terrorist activities have mainly focused on targets within Somalia, but it has also proven an ability to carry out deadly strikes in the region, including coordinated suicide bombings in Uganda's capital in 2010.
- In the past five years, Al-Shabaab has carried out nearly 550 terrorist attacks, killing more than 1,600 and wounding more than 2,100. The number of attacks attributed to Al-Shabaab has increased rapidly from less than 10 in 2007 to more than 200 in 2012. The most common types of attack carried out by Al-Shabaab are; Bombings38%, Armed Assaults34%, Kidnappings16%, Assassinations 5% and all other attacks 7%.

## **Recruitment of Americans and other Foreigners**

- Al-Shabaab has been successfully recruiting radicalized members of the Somali-American diaspora as well as other radicalized US persons. It has also recruited individuals from Britain, Australia, Sweden and Canada. It has trained them to fight against Ethiopian forces, African Union troops and the internationally-supported Transitional Federal Government in Somalia. The fear is that these trained individuals could also be used to conduct attacks on U.S. soil or against U.S. interests overseas.
- Some specific New York area residents who have been arrested for attempting to join Al-Shabaab include: Betim Kaziu, Mohamed Mahmood Alessa and Carlos Eduardo Almonte.

## **Al-Shabaab's Use of Social Media**

- Al-Shabaab is unique in that it makes extensive use of social media to recruit and communicate its message.
- During this attack, Al-Shabaab created and used as many as six Twitter accounts, each time opening a new account very shortly after the active account was shut down for violating Twitter's Terms of Service.

## **Claim for the Westgate attacks:**

- In a series of Twitter messages released on September 21, 2013, Al-Shabaab claimed credit for the Westgate attack stating the attacks were in response to the Kenyan government's actions in Somalia.
- The excerpt below is taken from Al-Shabaab's Twitter handle, @HSM\_Press. This handle is based on the acronym for Al-Shabaab's Arabic name; Harakat Shabaab Mujahideen (HSM).

*"HSM has on numerous occasions warned the #Kenyan government that failure to remove its forces from Somalia would have severe consequences... The Kenyan government, however, turned a deaf ear to our repeated warnings and continued to massacre innocent Muslims in Somalia ... by Land, air and sea, #Kenyan forces invaded our Muslim country, killing hundreds of Muslims in the process and displacing thousands more... the attack at #WestgateMall is just a very tiny fraction of what Muslims in Somalia experience at the hands of Kenyan invaders... The Mujahideen entered #Westgate Mall today at around noon and are still inside the mall..."*

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

**Saturday – September 21, 2013**

**Approximately 12:30 hours**

- The four male terrorists driving a silver Mitsubishi Lancer four door sedan pull up outside the mall's main pedestrian entrance.
- As the four terrorists exit their vehicle, they throw three hand grenades: one onto the outdoor dining patio of the Art Cafe just to the left of the main entrance, and two at the security booth located outside of the parking garage.



Victim by the main entrance to the Westgate Mall.

- After firing shots at innocent bystanders outside the mall's main pedestrian entrance, the first two terrorists, operating as a "buddy pair", enter in to the mall.
- CCTV footage shows Terrorist # 2 briefly entering into the Urban and Gourmet Burgers shop located just to the left of the main pedestrian entrance to shoot innocent victims.
- After Terrorist # 2 shoots the victims in the Urban and Gourmet Burger shop both terrorists appear to put fresh magazines in their AK-47s. Once reloaded, the two terrorists make a left hand turn from the main entrance and proceed walking slowly towards the Art Cafe.





**12:32 hours** – CCTV Camera footage shows the two other terrorists making their way up the ramp to the rooftop parking garage in the rear of the mall. Once on the rooftop garage they open fire on the adults and children participating in a cooking competition being held there, before entering the mall through the rear exit.



Victims at the Cooking Contest on the Rooftop parking lot



## Initial Response

- **Mall Security**
  - Reports state that the security guard on duty at the main entrance initially believed that an armed robbery was taking place.
  - In accordance with the facility's established security practices and standing orders, the Security Guard attempted to close the roll down metal security gates before the attackers entered the building. A terrorist reportedly shot this guard in the head.
- **Uniformed Kenya Police Service Personnel**
  - The initial report the police are responding to is for shots being fired and a robbery in progress at the mall.
  - The typical Uniformed Kenyan Police Officer is not as well equipped as their western counterparts, typically only carrying a long gun, most commonly an AK-47 style rifle with a folding stock, loaded with a single 30 round magazine. They do not carry handguns, wear body armor, gun belts or have portable radios to communicate.



- **Plainclothes Law Enforcement First Responders**

- There were multiple plainclothes law enforcement first responders conducting tactical and rescue operations during the first day of the attack.
- Very few of any of the plainclothes law enforcement first responders displayed any visible law enforcement identification such as a badge, arm band, ID card or a raid jacket, making identification as “friend or foe” extremely difficult for other armed first responders.



- **Private Armed Citizens and Security Personnel First Responders**

- It is reported that a number of armed private citizens and security company personnel played a significant role in the early stages of the attack. Reportedly these personnel formed “ad hoc” tactical teams with plainclothes police personnel and assisted in evacuating people and attempting to engage the terrorists early on during the attack.



**12:45 hours** – In the first few minutes of the attack, Terrorist # 1, who had entered the main pedestrian entrance with Terrorist # 2, apparently exchanges gunfire with an unidentified first responder and receives a wound to his left leg.

**13:00 hours** – Responding police officers outside the mall are attempting to establish a perimeter, deal with the hundreds of people fleeing the location and assess what is going on inside the mall.

**13:30 hours** – All four terrorists join up inside the Nakumatt Super Market store. While inside the store they locate and shoot numerous people who are attempting to hide.



At the entrance to the Nakumatt Super Market, Terrorist # 4 shoots a victim who is on the floor attempting to hide.

**13:50 hours** – Kenyan Police Service’s Inspector General (Commissioner) arrives at scene.

**14:15 hours** – The Kenyan Police Service’s General Service Unit – Reconnaissance “Recee” Company (GSU-RC) has assembled at the scene. The GSU-RC is a highly trained paramilitary unit and functions as the Kenya Police Service’s elite Tactical Team.

**15:00 hours** – The GSU-RC Tactical Team composed of ten officers enters the mall and begins to conduct clearing and rescue operations. CCTV footage shows that at some point during the tactical operations tear gas grenades are thrown in front of the Nakumatt Super Market forcing one of the terrorists away from the entrance.



Pictures of the GSU-RC Tactical Team conducting rescue operations at the mall

**16:00 hours** – Kenyan government officials decide to transfer the handling of this incident from the police to the military. A squad of Kenya Defense Forces KDF soldiers enters the mall and shortly afterwards, in a case of mistaken identity, the troops fired on the GSU-RC Tactical Team. They kill one police officer and wounding the tactical team commander. In the ensuing confusion both the police and military personnel pull out of the mall to tend to the casualties and re-group.



KDF troops as they enter the mall.

**19:00 hours** – CCTV shows that all four terrorists are in a store room located in the rear of the first floor of the Nakumatt Super Market.

During the several hours the terrorists spend in the store room they appear extremely relaxed. They treat the wound that Terrorist # 1 had sustained to his left lower leg. They also eat and pray. At one point, three of the terrorist put down their weapons and only one terrorist has a weapon in his hands.

At an unknown time, Terrorist #1 is observed on the CCTV footage leaving the storage room in the direction of the exit to the Nakumatt’s loading dock. Authorities believe that he was possibly checking for a means of escape. Terrorist # 1 does not re-appear for the remainder of any of the CCTV footage.



CCTV picture of the four terrorists inside the Nukumatt’s first floor store room

**Sunday – September 22, 2013**

**00:54 hours** – One of the three remaining terrorists tilt the CCTV camera so it no longer covers the inside of the storeroom. This is the last CCTV footage of the terrorists and it is believed that they attempted to escape by an unknown route sometime after tilting the CCTV camera.

### **Sunday – September 22, 2013**

**10:00 hours** – The Kenyan Interior Secretary Ole Lenku holds a press conference announcing that 10 to 15 terrorists attacked the Mall and that the terrorists are holding hostages.

**20:00 hours** – Kenya Defense Forces broadcast a Twitter Message that 4 soldiers have been injured and are being evacuated to the hospital.

### **Monday – September 23, 2013**

**06:45 hours** – A large explosion is heard inside the mall

**11:00 hours** – The electrical power and CCTV feed from the mall is cut.

**12:45 hours** – Gunshots and explosions are heard coming from the mall throughout the day. Dark clouds of smoke appear at the rear of the mall.

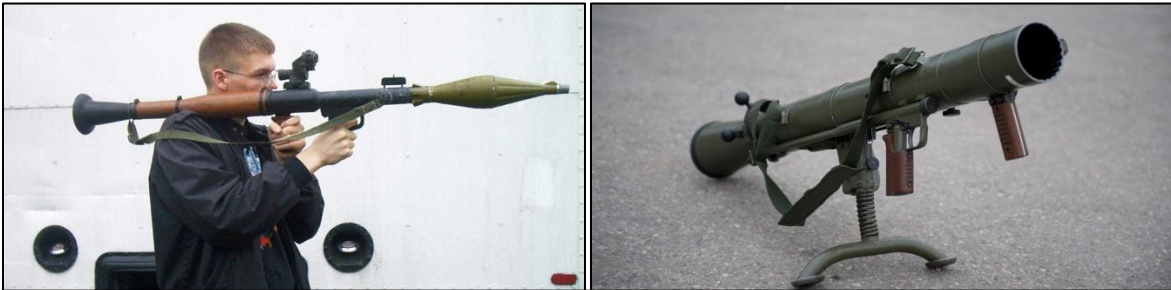
**13:25 hours** – Four more large explosions occur at the mall.

**19:00 hours** – Kenya officials say that the smoke is from the terrorists setting mattresses on fire.



Smoke coming from the rear of the Westgate Mall

- It is reported that at some point during the day the Kenya Defense Forces decided to fire a high explosive anti-tank rocket (possibly a RPG-7 or an 84mm Recoilless Rifle) as part of their operation to neutralize the terrorists in the Nakumatt Super Market.



RPG-7 (left) and a 84mm Recoilless Rifle (right)

- The end result of this operation was a large fire and the partial collapse of the rear rooftop parking lot and two floors within the Nakumatt Super Market into the basement parking garage.



Overhead view of the collapse of the Nakumatt's rooftop parking lot





View of the inside of the Nakumatt Super Market after the fire and roof collapse.

### **Tuesday - September 24, 2013**

**15:10 hours** – The Kenya Defense Forces broadcast a Twitter Message that three of the 11 wounded soldiers who were previously removed to the hospital have died.

**1830 hours** – The President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta holds a press conference and declares the Westgate Mall secure.

**Saturday, October 5, 2013**

**Kenya Officials release the tentative names of the terrorists**

- One week after the attack, Major Emmanuel Chirchir, a spokesman for the Kenya Defense Forces, stated that four terrorist had been killed during the Westgate Attack and provided the following information about them;
  1. **Abu Baara al-Sudani** - from Sudan, was the leader of the group inside the mall and had been trained by al Qaeda.
  2. **Omar Nabhan**, a Kenyan of Arab origin, was born in Mombasa and travelled to Somalia with his uncle at the age of 16.
  3. **Khattab al-Kene** is said to be Somali from the capital Mogadishu, and is linked to al Shabaab Islamist militants.
  4. **Umayr Al-Mogadish** - no further information is available. One open source media outlet stated that he has American citizenship but this has not been confirmed.

**Friday, October 18, 2013**

**Norwegian Suspect Named**

- Kenya Officials identify Hassan Abdi Dhuhulow a 23-year-old Norwegian citizen of Somali origin as one of the terrorist.
- Dhuhulow and his family are thought to have moved to Norway as refugees in 1999 and Dhuhulow is alleged to have returned to Somalia in 2009.

**Sunday, October 20, 2013**

**The possible body of one of the terrorists is recovered**

- Kenya government officials announce that they have recovered human remains of one of the terrorists from the rubble of the collapse and are sending samples for DNA testing. The Kenyan media later reports that the remains have been identified as animal beef from the Nakumatt's butcher shop.
- As of this report, there have been no bodies of the terrorists have not been recovered or there have been no bodies are identification has been announced.

## ANALYSIS OF THE ATTACK

### **The Terrorist Tactic of Coordinated Armed Assault or “raid”**

- Historically, the tactic of terrorists conducting a coordinated armed assault or “raid” of a target has been successfully employed many times in the past. Some examples include the attacks at multiple “soft” targets (hotels, restaurants, a train station and a residence) in Mumbai, India that occurred in 2008 and more recently the attack at the U.S. Embassy in Benghazi, Libya in 2012.
- These attacks are characterized by multiple heavily armed attackers operating in a coordinated fashion to inflict the maximum amount of casualties. There is typically evidence of extensive prior planning to include the selection and training of the attackers, prior target reconnaissance, acquisition of weapons and explosives, transporting the attackers and their weapons to the scene, planned media releases and active communication and coordination with the terrorist groups leadership while the attack is ongoing.

### **Prior terrorist plots targeting malls in the U.S.**

- In November 2003, Somali immigrant Nuradin Abdi, a close associate of convicted al-Qaeda operatives Christopher Paul and Iyman Faris was arrested for initiating a plot to attack a Columbus Ohio Shopping Mall.
  - Iyman Faris, pleaded guilty to terrorism charges stemming from allegations that he targeted the Brooklyn Bridge for destruction at the behest of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and is serving 20 years in prison.
  - Christopher Paul pleaded guilty to plotting to bomb European tourist resorts frequented by Americans, as well as overseas U.S. military bases and is serving 20 years in prison.
- Abdi pleaded guilty and after completing his prison sentence was deported back to Somalia in November 2012.



(Photos L to R - Nuradin Abdi, Christopher Paul, Iyman Faris)

### **Overall Mission Profile**

- It appears the mission of this attack was to conduct a high profile attack by inflicting as many casualties as possible in a short period of time and then possibly escaping during the ensuing confusion.
- This assessment is based on the weapons, amount of ammunition the terrorists were carrying, their actions at the scene and the lack of martyrdom videos and official announcements by Al-Shabaab.

### **Hostage taking was not a priority**

- From all accounts of witnesses and viewing the CCTV video footage it does not appear that the terrorists were interested in taking hostages at all. They only appeared interested in killing a broad spectrum of people.

### **Targeting of Non-Muslims**

- There was a conscious but erratic attempt at discriminating between non-Muslims and Muslims and sparing select victims. A number of survivors state that at points during the attack the terrorist made an intentional effort to avoid Muslim casualties.
- The terrorist asked some of the victims if they were Muslims. If they answered yes, they received a followed up question: "*What was the name of the Prophet Muhammad's Mother?*" If people failed to give the correct answer (his mother's name was Aminah) they were summarily shot.
- The victims of this attack ranged in age from 78 to eight years old and came from a total of 13 different countries. Their religions are not known.

### **Not expecting a long engagement**

- The amount of ammunition and type of equipment the terrorist were carrying indicate that they did not expect to be engaged for a protracted period of time.

### **Awareness of CCTV coverage**

- Examination of CCTV videotape footage the terrorists were aware of the CCTV cameras located throughout the mall and made deliberate attempts to avoid being viewed on CCTV.

**Firearms Used: AK-47 Style Assault Rifles**

- It appears the attackers are using a folding stock version of an AK-47 type Assault Rifle with a 30 round magazine. The magazine in the weapon has another 30 round magazine taped to it for quick re-loading.
- It is estimated that each terrorist was carrying a combat load of 240 rounds held in eight 30 round magazines



AK-47 type Assault Rifle with a metal folding stock



AK-47 magazines taped together

### **Firearms Tactics**

- The AK-47 type weapons the terrorist carried were used on semi-automatic, single shot mode and not on full automatic. This setting allows for the conservation of ammunition.
- The terrorist very rarely appeared to properly shoulder their weapon and use their sights to aim, but instead they fired almost casually from a high ready position.

### **Load Bearing Gear**

- The terrorist appear to be wearing load bearing gear consisting of pockets for extra magazines and hand grenades. They also appear to have been using canvass bags with shoulder straps possibly to carry their hand grenades.



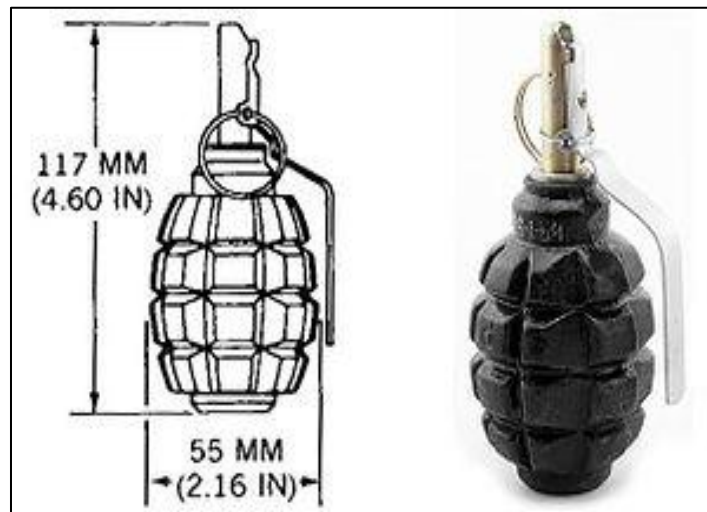
Load bearing gear similar to the type used by the terrorists

## Hand Grenades

- There was an open source picture of an unexploded hand grenade (appears to be a version of Russian F-1 or variant) lying on the mall's rear rooftop parking lot. Based upon the photo it appears that the pin was pulled and this grenade failed to detonate.
- The F-1 Hand Grenade is an anti-personnel device and contains 60 grams of Trinitrotoluene explosive.



Photo of Hand Grenade at the scene



F-1 Hand Grenade

## Communications / cell phones

- All four terrorists carried cell phones and used them to coordinate their activities during the attack. Witnesses state that the terrorists on the rooftop parking lot received a call from the terrorists inside the mall instructing them to come inside.
- It is also reported the terrorists used their cell phones to make calls to other unidentified persons associated with the attack. It is alleged that the terrorists also called an Al-Shabaab media outlet in Somalia to give an interview and a location in Norway.



Terrorist # 4 speaking on the phone while inside the Nukumatt Super Market



## Vehicle Used

- Authorities observed an unclaimed Silver Mitsubishi Lancer with the Kenyan License Plate KAS 575X parked in front of the Westgate Mall.
- It is reported that two pins for hand grenades, 20 empty boxes of ammunition and four SIM Cards for cellular telephones were found during a search of this vehicle



A Silver Mitsubishi Lancer similar to the one used by the Terrorists.



Evidence Technicians processing the terrorist's vehicle.

## Two suspects are identified as purchasing the vehicle used in the attack

- The four SIM Cards recovered in the Silver Mitsubishi Lancer were found to be activated on September 18, 2013 in the Eastleigh section of Nairobi. A search of the activity on those cards led to the identification of the following two suspects who purchased the Silver Lancer used to transport the terrorists to the attack site.
  - **Abd Kadir Haret Muhamed**, also known as Muhamed Hussien. He is described as light-skinned, around 5-feet-8-inches tall and believed to be Kenyan of Somali origin, from Mandera, a town near the Kenya-Somali border. Muhamed is married to a Kenyan woman, Shurekha Hussien, who was recently arrested by police at the airport as she was trying to leave the country after the attack.
  - **Adan Dheq**, also known as Hussien Abdi Ali as well as Abdulahi Dugon Subow. He is 5-feet-5-inches tall, and speaks "broken" Swahili, according to investigators.
- Police released a CCTV still image taken from the Queensway branch of Barclays Bank in Nairobi where the men withdrew money used to purchase the vehicle.



CCTV footage of the two suspects who purchased the Mitsubishi Lancer used in the attack