



Posted by Musa

Why we doubt the Al-Shabab connection in the Kampala bombings

On Dec. 2, 1983, a helicopter carrying the Ugandan army chief of staff, Maj. Gen. David Oyite-Ojok, came down in a ball of fire over central Uganda where he had gone to review counter-insurgency operations against the NRA guerillas led by the former defense minister Yoweri Museveni.

The first suspicion among Ugandan public was that the helicopter had been shot down by the NRA. Four days later, on Dec. 6, 1983, the NRA rebels in a statement claimed responsibility for the downing of the helicopter.

Many years later, enough facts have emerged to indicate that it was not the NRA that shot down the helicopter; nor, for that matter, was it shot down.

This piece of history is important in light of this evening's claim by Somalia's Al-Shabab militia that they were responsible for the four bomb blasts in Kampala on the night of the football World Cup final, Sunday July 11, 2010.

Sometimes, guerrilla and other insurgent groups make claims about incidents, attacks, assassinations, and sabotage that they had nothing to do with but which serves their propaganda ends.

All through Monday, Al-Shabab had expressed their satisfaction with the attacks in Uganda, but did not claim any part in them. The view continued to spread around the world and on the Internet that this was Al-Shabab.

Then suddenly at a press conference in Mogadishu on Monday afternoon, they claimed responsibility. The lack of detail and conviction in their claim of responsibility suggested that Al-Shabab had belatedly decided to take a position on the blasts, but without having given it much thought.

The statement vaguely mentioned having done the deed because of Uganda's involvement in Somalia. To pull off an operation of this scale so far away from home in Mogadishu, Al-Shabab would have had to plan carefully.

They would have had a statement at the ready, to be read out once the terror attacks in Kampala succeeded. That statement would have been detailed, mentioning dates, Ugandan peacekeepers' attacks on Somali civilians in Mogadishu, for example.

Ugandans to the rescue



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The lack of detail in the statement claiming responsibility points to the possibility that, like most people around the world, Al-Shabab was reacting to fast-moving events and not knowing what might come next.

Another example can be shown. The Kyadondo Rugby Club at Lugogo in Kampala is located only about 150 meters away from the huge diesel generators that supply electricity to most of Kampala.

This power station is lightly guarded and not much attention is given it by the public.

It seems hard to believe that a group with the logistics and planning to carry out such attacks in Kampala and therefore would have had the time to study the surrounding areas of the sites selected for the bombing, would have chosen to bomb ordinary citizens watching a football match and ignored a much more important target, the diesel electricity power station.

To blow up a dozen or two Ugandans would shock the country and make world news. But for Al-Shabab's war purposes, to destroy the station that supplies electricity to Kampala and bring the city to a standstill for at least two weeks, would be a far more concrete blow to Uganda.

Something does not add up in this story that links Al-Shabab to the Kampala bombings of July 11.

For this reason, the *Uganda Record* maintains its view that the bomb attacks were not, in this instance, the work of Al-Shabab even though it serves the groups propaganda and political ends.