

SMS Africa – Kenya – September 2015_1

1) Garden City IED

On September 08, 2015, a message was posted to one of my *whatsapp* groups at 7:32 pm warning of an attempted attack on Garden City Mall. The message consisted of a screen caption of a tweet by *Citizen TV Kenya*:

One person arrested with an IED device at Garden City Mall along Thika Superhighway, device successfully detonated by anti-terror police (citizentvkenya, 2015)

When I checked *Twitter* the details of the attempted attack were already circulating along with photographs of the device(s) and a press release by the management of the newly opened *Garden City Mall*. Apparently, a man was noted to be acting suspiciously was searched and detained by mall guards (suemc_phee, 2015, Ma3Route, 2015). He was found to be carrying items which were allegedly identified as explosives by anti-terror police sniffer dogs (suemc_phee, 2015, @Ma3Route, 2015). The bomb detonation unit proceeded to safely disarm the bomb (@suemc_phee, 2015, @Ma3Route, 2015).

Congratulations flowed for all parties involved:

Props to the guards who caught the bombers at @GardenCity Mall! #Nairobi #Kenya #terror (@IanECox, 2015)

Congratulations for the excellent work by @PoliceKE for foiling bombing attack @GardenCityNbi Garden City Mall is a strategic investment (@ConsumersKenya, 2015)

However, the information began to get confusing. After reports that the police had detonated the device, the Inspector General (IG) of Police scoffed at the danger posed by the contraption:

The device at the Garden City Mall was not an ied. It was an amateurish collection of phone wires strapped together to look like an ied (JBoinnett, 2015)

Conspiracy theories began to percolate:

Why is it that when someone is about to go to Hague or Hague is in the papers, there is always a terrorist threat in Kenya? (Mariahsudi, 2015)

Ory Okolloh and Boniface Mwangi, avowed speakers of truth to power, smelt a rat:

Wait...one of the Garrden [sic] City terror scare suspects was a civil servant at Foreign Affairs? Ai? (OryOkolloh, 2015)

Where are the three terror suspects arrested by #Kenya police at Garden City Mall @NPSOfficial_KE? Or was it a hoax? (bonifacemwangi, 2015)

A week later, nothing new has emerged.

Ma3Route as an Information Source

One of the best sources for crime related information is *ma3Route*, an app and twitter handle that alerts followers to traffic patterns and snarl-ups. They have dedicated people to manage the account and write original tweets and they also retweet traffic updates and questions sent in by users. Thus, they are a repository of observations made by commuting Nairobians, which inadvertently means that they end up being a source of crime and security related news:

4 thugs raided Eastleigh's sunrise mall on early dawn. 1 has been ejected¹ & 3 others escaped (Ma3route, 2015)

If you are heading to Kikuyu beware. Demonstrating youths have blocked the highway with stones via @H_Ojay254 (Ma3route, 2015)

Subru Motors on James Gichuru before Shell seems to have been vandalised overnight. Any ideas on what happened? via @Dj_Amar_B (Ma3Route, 2015)

Operation Linda Boni

After an attempted raid on a KDF barracks in Lamu by Al Shabaab fighters, we have been aware through video footage secured from raiders that they may have been living in Boni forest. A week ago Cabinet Secretary of the Interior, Nkaissery announced a multi-agency operation to raid Boni forest and rid it of any terrorist element:

#OperationLindaBoni is aimed at restoring the integrity of our country and it's [sic] borders from intruders and enemies of Kenya (InteriorKE, 2015)

The tenor of the response to the announcement was mixed. As is often the case, Kenyans though united in response to external attacks engage in heated internal debate. Often, the responses follow predictable lines of division. @kamonjomaina makes note of the divisions, but by doing so, suggests an allegiance with the Jubilee government.

¹ Based on the photographs and other tweets, ejected = killed.

#OperationLindaBoni will be opposed by a political divide we all, know (kamonjomaina, 2015)

No one questioned the premise behind the operation, only its execution:

The US never told the World when they were going for Osama, #KDF should stop this crap. A total PR gimmick (Ndagod, 2015)

Where on earth someone stands on top of the mountain and shout to his enemies about the attack? #OperationLindaBoni (DennisNgoya, 2015)

This is stupidity #OperationLindaBoni Why publicize a security operation? It's like warning Alshabaab to relocate before you get there (AdhochDennises, 2015)

There are non-partisans sentiments:

Even in opposition we must support initiatives such as #OperationLindaBoni. Security is above politics! (Onynagoojr, 2015)

And sentiments lending support to those on the frontline of the operation:

Our wholesome respect to men and women who will be involved in #OperationLindaBoni. The dignity of this country can't be derailed by terror. (Joe_Kioko, 2015)

So far the outcome of the operation is the displacement of people and wildlife:

3,000 flee Boni Forest as military in major swoop <http://goo.gl/xwBuUx> #BeInTheKnow (StandardKenya, 2015)

Elephants & Giraffes seen in #Somalia's Lower Jubba area for the 1st time in decades. Residents say animals moved from #Kenya's Boni forest. (Hamza_Africa, 2015)

I will keep you posted on Operation Linda Boni.

References

- bonifacemwangi, (2015), Where are the three terror suspects arrested by #Kenya police at Garden City Mall @NPSOfficial_KE? Or was it a hoax?, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, <https://twitter.com/bonifacemwangi/status/642258262931427328> [Accessed 16 September]
- citizentvkenya, (2015), One person arrested with an IED device at Garden City Mall along Thika Superhighway, device successfully detonated by anti-terror police, (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/citizentvkenya/status/641272931230855168>, [Accessed 08 September, 2015]
- ConsumersKenya (2015), Congratulations for the excellent work by @PoliceKE for foiling bombing attack @GardenCityNbi Garden City Mall is a strategic investment, (Online) *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/ConsumersKenya/status/641275277902016512> [Accessed 08 September, 2015]
- DennisNgoya, (2015), Where on earth someone stands on top of the mountain and shout to his enemies about the attack? #OperationLindaBoni, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/DennisNgoya/status/642300373844099072> [Accessed 16 September, 2015]
- Hamza_Africa, (2015), Elephants & Giraffes seen in #Somalia's Lower Jubba area for the 1st time in decades. Residents say animals moved from #Kenya's Boni forest, (Online), *Twitter*, 16 September, Available from https://twitter.com/Hamza_Africa/status/644074977168224256 [Accessed 17 September, 2015]
- IanECox, (2015), Props to the guards who caught the bombers at @GardenCity Mall! #Nairobi #Kenya #terror, (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/IanECox/status/641289598870548480> [Accessed 08 September, 2015]
- InteriorKe, (2015), #OperationLindaBoni is aimed at restoring the integrity of our country and it's [sic] borders from intruders and enemies of Kenya, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, Available from https://twitter.com/na_kadhalika/status/642250399039291396 [Accessed 16 September]
- kamonjomania, (2015), #OperationLindaBoni will be opposed by a political divide we all know (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/kamonjomaina/status/642257545785122816> [Accessed 17 September, 2015]
- Joe_Kioko, (2015), Our wholesome respect to men and women who will be involved in #OperationLindaBoni. The dignity of this country can't be derailed by terror (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, Available from https://twitter.com/Joe_Kioko/status/642260913073057792, [Accessed 16 September, 2015]
- Ma3Route, (2015), Statement on today's incident at #GardenMallCity, Thika Road. [pic.twitter.com/PJ4W0vygmi](https://twitter.com/PJ4W0vygmi) via @asmali77, (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/Ma3Route/status/641286563884765185>, [Accessed 08, September, 2015]
- Ma3Route, (2015), If you are headed to Kikuyu beware. Demonstrating youths have blocked the highway with stones via @H_Ojay254 (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/Ma3Route/status/643725065402478593>, [Accessed 15 September, 2015]
- Ma3Route, (2015), Subru Motors on James Gichuru, before Shell, seems to have been vandalised overnight. Any ideas on what happened? via @Dj_Amar_B, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, <https://twitter.com/Ma3Route/status/642214947296907264>, [Accessed 15 September, 2015]
- Ma3route, (2015), 4 thugs raided Eastleigh's sunrise mall on early dawn. 1 has been ejected & 3 others escaped [pic.twitter.com/TEWG7ZSzOV](https://twitter.com/TEWG7ZSzOV) via @Abass_KE, (Online), *Twitter*, 15 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/Ma3Route/status/643731188918517760>, [Accessed 15, September, 2015]

- JBoinnett, (2015), The device at the Garden City Mall was not an ied. It was an amateurish collection of phone wires strapped together to look like an ied, (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/JBoinnet/status/641323242880397314?lang=en>, [Accessed 09 September, 2015]
- Mariahsudi (2015), Why is it that when someone is about to go to Hague or Hague is in the papers, there is always a terrorist threat in Kenya?, (Online), *Twitter*, 09 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/mariahsudi/status/641506536574058496?lang=en>, [Accessed 09 September, 2015]
- NdaGod, (2015), The US never told the World when they were going for Osama, #KDF should stop this crap. A total PR gimmick. #OperationLindaBoni, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/ndaGod/status/642269755378921472>, [Accessed 17, September 2015]
- Onynagoojr, (2015), Even in opposition we must support initiatives such as #OperationLindaBoni. Security is above politics!, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/onyangoojr/status/642261419266842624>, [Accessed 17, September, 2015]
- AdhochDennises, (2015), This is stupidity ~> #OperationLindaBoni Why publicize a security operation? It's like warning Alshabaab to relocate before you get there, (Online), *Twitter*, 11 September <https://twitter.com/AdhochDennises/status/642308181402779649>, [Accessed 17 September, 2015]
- StandardKenya, (2015), 3,000 flee Boni Forest as military in major swoop <http://goo.gl/xwBuUx> #BeInTheKnow, (Online), *Twitter*, September 17, Available from <https://twitter.com/StandardKenya/status/644428099107446785>, [Accessed 17 September, 2015]
- Suemc_phee, (2015), 1 person arrested at garden city trying to gain access with suspect items. Bomb expert called in to verify the object, (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from https://twitter.com/suemc_phee/status/641265541341126656, [Accessed 08 September, 2015]
- Synadjyina, (2015), @ntvkenya check reports of explosives in garden city mall, (Online), *Twitter*, 08 September, Available from <https://twitter.com/synadjyina/status/641287877939343360>, [Accessed on 08 September, 2015]