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Terrorist Explosions in East Africa and Embassy Security: Successful Antiterrorism as Successful Terrorism

Editor

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Title: Terrorist Explosions in East Africa and Embassy Security: Successful Antiterrorism as Successful Terrorism

Abstract. This article posits that security upgrades at embassies to effect successful antiterrorism may necessarily contribute to achieving the political goals of terrorists.

One predictable reaction on the part of some United States (U.S.) legislators and executive branch officials to the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam explosions is the call for security upgrades of embassies. This reaction is occurring even though the U.S. Congress intentionally has not allocated money necessary for embassy security to meet standards set in 1985 and even though U.S. State officials have not strongly fought for the money. Both sources--seemingly to blame--may be on to something. Meeting security standards plays into the hands of anti-US terrorists. (1) The money spent for embassy security upgrades cannot be spent on other needs and initiatives of the US and its allies. (2) Security upgrades usually entail less accessibility, visibility, salience, and cooperative opportunities for the US presence in other countries. (3) Security upgrades usually link the terrorist threat in a country to the US presence. The US appears to be at fault, not the terrorists. Therefore, successful antiterrorism in the sense of deterring and preventing terrorist attacks in specific locations still has significant positive consequences for terrorists.