

Islamist Threats to the North American Economy and to Jews

On February 21, 2015, one of the lesser known groups of those competing for the Oscar for the greatest global threat of Islamic terrorism made an appearance in the modern form of a video broadcast. The organization calling itself al-Shabaab (The Youth), the Somali affiliate of al-Qaeda, issued a highly professional 77-minute propaganda video calling for attacks on major Western shopping centers in Europe and North America.

The masked speaker in the video, against a background of violent images, claimed responsibility for the September 21, 2013 attack on the Westgate shopping mall consisting of 80 shops in Nairobi, Kenya, where a number of masked gunmen killed 67 people and wounded 175 others. The mall was owned by Israelis, and that at least 4 restaurants in the mall were owned and operated by Israelis.

Speaking with a British accent, he warned that the Westgate event was “just the beginning.” He called on Muslim groups to attack other shopping malls as well as individual shops. He mentioned specific potential targets, and images were shown of some of them: the Mall of America in Bloomington, a suburb of Minneapolis, in Minnesota; the West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; two Westfield shops in central London; and other shops on Oxford Street in London.

The two malls mentioned are among the largest in the world. The West Edmonton Mall, built in 1981, is 5.3 million square feet; the Mall of America, built in 1992, is 4.87 million square feet. The latter, regarded as the world’s busiest mall, attracts 40 million visitors a year and employs 12,000 at its 500 stores, amusement parks, wedding chapel, and 50 restaurants. The Edmonton Mall includes a water park, ice rink, and miniature golf course.

The threats of attack are now being taken seriously by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, especially the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI. The malls have taken extra security precautions, including the use of bomb-sniffing dogs, a dispatch center receiving feeds from hundreds of cameras, and a social media monitoring area.

These precautions are essential. During the last five years, al-Shabaab has carried out 600 terrorist attacks, killing more than 1,600 people. Its slaughter continues. On January 22, 2015, an attack was made on a hotel in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, during which a suicide bomber blew himself up. Less than a month later, on February 20, 2015, al-Shabaab attacked another hotel in the capital, killing 25 and wounding 40. Involved in the attack was a vehicle carrying explosives that was driven into the gate of the hotel.

The group, labeled by the US in 2008 a terrorist organization, has attracted individuals from Europe and from the U.S. and Canada by its extensive use of social media for recruiting purposes. It is linked not only with al-Qaeda, but also with Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram in Nigeria. With its Wahhabi roots, its objective is clear: the creation of a fundamentalist state in Somalia. It is aiming at inspiring followers to strive for this objective.

It is frightening to believe that a relatively small number of Islamic fighters by their threats can strike terror into the hearts of would-be shoppers and could bring major shopping to a standstill, an occurrence that could cause a disruption in the US economy. Fear is understandable for at least one of the malls in the coincidence that the city of Minneapolis has the U.S.'s largest Somali population. More than 20 U.S. Somalis have left to join Shabaab, and another 15 have left to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

The key factor, neglected in all the mainstream media reporting on the Shabaab threats, is that the mall in Kenya

that was attacked, and those in Alberta and Minnesota that are being threatened, were built by and are owned by Jews, the Triple Five Group. The name of the Group refers to the late founder, Jacob Ghermezian, who came in the 1940s to the U.S. from Iran, where he had started a business at age 17 in 1919, and his four sons, who grew up in Canada. It began by importing and selling Persian carpets. They bought real estate and then expanded interests in the shopping malls, banking, mining, and oil. The founder claimed he had hosted the Tehran Conference in November-December 1943 at which Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin discussed coordination of Allied military strategy against Nazi Germany and Japan.

The question therefore has to be asked if the activity of Shabaab is another manifestation of terrorist threat against Jews. If so, the question becomes more compelling in view of the threat to the ambitious project of Triple Five in developing the American Dream Meadowlands Mall, alongside the New Jersey Turnpike, in East Rutherford. The Group took over the project in 2010 after progress had been stalled under previous developers. They plan an ambitious mall. Present plans contemplate more than 400 retail shops and restaurants, a skating rink, an indoor amusement park, 20 movie theaters, and a 500-room hotel. With an estimated 9,000 construction jobs and 35,000 permanent jobs, this new mall will contribute to the recovery of northern New Jersey.

If this is so, the governor of the State of New Jersey, as well as all law enforcement agencies, must take action to protect the Meadowlands Project. The sad reality is that al-Shabaab, like other Islamist terrorist groups, is trying to stir up hatred against Jews as a tactic for an attack on Western civilization. By preventing Shabaab from carrying out its threatened attacks, law enforcement will not only save countless lives, but also help foil the promotion of anti-Semitism.

First published in the