COUNTERING TERRORISM - IT STARTS WITH YOU

By BD Njuguna
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Run, Hide, Fight!, is what Major Noah Bett of National Counter Terrorism Center aptly summed up on what one should do in the event of a terror attack. Major Bett was taking participants through a session on countering terrorism during a Senate Sensitization workshop held on April, 25, 2019 at the Central Catering Unit.

The National Counter Terrorism Center is a multi-agency policy making organ for the coordination of counter terrorism efforts. It focus on rallying public support and engagement; deploying effective counter radicalization efforts; providing training and expertise; building a strong preventive pillar for Kenya’s counter terrorism strategy; and being a national focal point for bilateral and multilateral collaboration in counter terrorism.

Major Bett noted that the major threats to national security included espionage, subversion and sabotage. Noting that terrorism has greatly mutated, he singled out the following as some of the factors that contribute to terrorism in the country; unemployment, famine and drought, refugees, cybercrime, land disputes and drug trafficking, among others.

The participants were reminded that terrorists leverage on creating fear, obtaining money, influence government policy, destroy lives and property. Kenya, he noted was a terror target due to her relation with western countries and current involvement in the peace mission in Somalia.

He revealed that extreme radicalization by terror groups was targeting children and especially in universities, prisons, places of worship and through social media. In this regard, parents were urged to pay a keen interest in whom their children were associating with, reading and more so on what they were watching on Television and social networks.

That there was need to be alert of suspicious persons and items abandoned in public places. “Once you notice any abandoned luggage, adopt the three C’s i.e.

i) confirm,
ii) clear from the area and
iii) communicate to others and relevant authorities.
In the event of an attack, the first thing should be to run away from the attackers in a zig-zag manner if it is a gun attack. This is meant to distract the attacker from aiming straight. The second thing is to hide behind solid walls, tables or washrooms. The lights should be switched off and doors barricaded to obstruct the attackers as much as possible. The mobile phones should be muted but remain in contact with the authorities, families and friends. One should remain calm knowing well that help shall come. The last resort is fighting the attacker with any available weapon at hand; chairs, computers, fire extinguishers, even shoes!

The University of Nairobi has had its share of terror panics the last one being the 14 Riverside terror attack where some of the students were injured. There is need for all of us to remain vigilant and report and suspicious persons as, “security starts with you.”

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Mbithi thanked the National Counter Terrorism Centre for organizing the sensitization and urged all staff and students to cooperate with security personnel to enhance safety.