

[EXTRACT]

Angola attack raises awareness of World Cup terror threat

- Players and fans could be vulnerable, say security experts
- South Africa 2010 will be safe, says Danny Jordaan

Supporters at the World Cup in South Africa face "a deadly serious threat" from terrorists encouraged by the global impact of last week's atrocity in Angola, security analysts have warned.

The lethal ambush on the Togo squad showed the ease with which militants could gain publicity with a copycat attack on a bigger stage, said Anneli Botha, a researcher at South Africa's Institute for Security Studies which does work on behalf of the United Nations.

World Cup organisers reiterated yesterday that political strife in Angola should not be conflated with South Africa and promised that no chances will be taken with players' safety when the tournament kicks off in June. But there was little doubt that the shocking incident had cast a shadow over Africa's first World Cup, even if only by reinforcing the fears of pessimists. South Africa, like Angola, has invested millions in stadiums and infrastructure in the hope that staging a major international event will help bury a troubled past. But experts believe the [Africa Cup of Nations](#) incident shows how easily insurgents can grab world headlines with attacks on soft targets.

"Far from needing weapons of mass destruction, terrorists have put a tiny place like Cabinda on the map using simple strategy and a few guns," Botha said. "When star football teams from places like Brazil and England turn up, it could be a gift to aggressors like this."

Fans could also be vulnerable, she added. "It's a deadly serious threat for supporters at the World Cup too, because it does not require the attacker to get through security barriers. Anywhere where there are fewer gun control searches, for instance by the big TV screens at fanparks, is wide open for trouble."

Botha, who monitors terror threats across southern Africa, said she feared the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), which claimed responsibility for the ambush, could use the World Cup to boost its profile. "FLEC have now proven to themselves how much attention they can get through this sort of activity. The World Cup offers an even bigger stage, and it will not take much effort to penetrate. What better opportunity for a troublemaker to do damage?"

South Africa has had myriad major problems since the end of apartheid in 1994, but terrorism is not one of them. The most unequal society in the world has one of its highest rates of "ordinary" crime, including an average of 50 murders per day. Such a climate could provide opportunities for terrorists from inside or outside the country, experts say. Fake passports, illegal firearms and explosives are all in wide circulation in South Africa.

Neil Thompson, the operations director of red24, a UK-based global security company, said: "If you look at everything the terrorists want, in South Africa they've got porous borders and easy access to weapons and explosives. The security services have never been tested by an international terrorist group. Assuming the terrorists will wait until just before the World Cup to come over the border is naive. If there are terrorist cells here, I would expect them to be in a township already, mixing with the population."

An "undisclosed" security threat last September led to the temporary closures of the US embassy in Pretoria and consulates across the country. But linking the situation in Angola to South Africa is at best foolish, and at worst an ignorant post-colonial caricature, according to defenders of the 2010 project.

South Africa is the wealthiest country on the continent and a tourist hotspot boasting Western-style airports, golf courses, luxury hotels, multiplexes and shopping malls. Johannesburg is about 1,800 miles from Cabinda with Botswana and most of Angola inbetween. Organisers are keen to point out that South Africa has hosted more than 150 international events without major incident. Last year's Confederations Cup saw only 39 arrests in or near a stadium.

Danny Jordaan, the chief executive of the South Africa 2010 organising committee, insisted that the Angola attack should have no bearing. "I don't think the world has ever asked one country to take responsibility for what happens in another country," he said. Fortunately the majority of the world is not influenced by a warped understanding of the African continent. If there is a war in Kosovo and a World Cup in Germany, no one asks if the World Cup can go on in Germany, everyone understands the war in Kosovo is a war in Kosovo.

"The world must be balanced and must not apply different standards when it comes to the African continent. Our World Cup is secure and we are confident because we have employed a lot of resources to safeguard the event in our country."

South Africa will put down a huge security blanket for the World Cup. Some 55,000 new police officers have been recruited and trained in the past five years. During the tournament, 41,000 will be deployed – with 700 at each match – in an operation costing £50m. Six helicopters, 10 mobile command vehicles, 10 water cannons and 100 high-performance cars will also be available for use.

The country's security services have worked with Interpol to create databases of dangerous individuals including those involved in hooliganism, gun smuggling and terrorism. None will be allowed into the country. Various terrorist-simulation exercises – including chemical, biological and radioactive attacks – have been conducted and expertise shared with participating countries.

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Source: Guardian.co.uk website (11 January 2010)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/2010/jan/11/togo-shooting-world-cup-implications>