

# Television Fragment from bombed U.S. Embassy Nairobi, 1998

*Transfer from the U.S. Embassy Nairobi, Kenya*



*Even a piece of rubble can tell an important story about diplomacy. This fragment, found in the ruins of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi after the bombing in 1998, reminds us that the ever-present threat of terrorism requires utmost vigilance in diplomatic lives and settings, even in seemingly "low-threat" environments.*



On August 7, 1998, al Qaeda attacked the U.S. by detonating near-simultaneous car bombs at U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in Africa. Both buildings were destroyed and some 250 people died in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, including 12 Americans and a total of 41 Foreign Service Nationals working at the two embassies. Thousands of Kenyans and Tanzanians were injured in buildings near the embassies, many severely. The U.S. District Court in Manhattan later convicted two of Osama bin Laden's operatives, sentencing them to life in prison and millions of dollars in restitution.

The U.S. demonstrated resilience by replacing the bombed-out embassies with new, more secure buildings. A memorial garden was created in Nairobi, where the bereaved sought solace with co-workers, friends and family.



Why did we save a piece of a television from the battered embassy in Nairobi? What can this television fragment show about U.S. diplomacy? The TV set is an ubiquitous item in the offices of U.S. diplomats and embassy staff members. It offers real time news and information, an essential tool for communication and for understanding the local environment in which they work.

If you look at it closely at the object you can see a bar code sticker on your right, used for maintaining inventory. Bar code scanning enables a rapid and accurate accounting of the equipment diplomats everywhere need to conduct their business.

The tragic and mundane collide in this object, showing that no matter how much we plan, acts of terror are only one bomb explosion away. It is a stark reminder that American diplomats, and the Foreign Service Nationals who are essential to the work of diplomacy, often are exposed to great risk while carrying out their missions.



U.S. Ambassador to Kenya  
Prudence Bushnell, 1998  
AP Photo/ John McConnico



Department of State staff  
with TV at their work station



Map of Tanzania



Kind of bar code used to  
inventory government property