**Islamist gunmen kill 17 in Somalia beach cafe attack**

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By Reuters

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At least 17 people were killed when Islamist gunmen struck a popular beachside restaurant in the Somali capital of Mogadishu late on Thursday, Somali police said.

Al Shabaab, a militant group aligned with al-Qaida, said its members set off two car bombs at the Beach View Cafe on Mogadishu's popular Lido beach, engaging in a gun battle for hours with government troops trying to flush them out.

"The operation ended at 3 a.m. last night and at least 17 civilians were killed," police officer Osman Nur told Reuters on Friday.

Police said al Shabaab fighters set off the first car bomb at dusk. A huge second blast, which witnesses said echoed around the city center, struck about an hour later as government soldiers laid siege to the restaurant.