# Militants claim responsibility for Egyptian temple massacre

LUXOR, Egypt (AP) — Militants blamed Luxur, to reassure tourists, and replaced his infor most of the violence in Egypt's five-year Islamic rebellion claimed responsibility Tuesday for the revolt's deadliest attack: the massacre of 62 people at an ancient temple crowded with tourists.

The al-Gamaa al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Group, said in a faxed statement that Monday's attack was a failed attempt to take hostages to trade for the freedom of their spiritual leader, a blind Egyptian cleric jailed in the United States for plotting to bomb New York landmarks.

The sandstone terraces of the Temple of Hatshepsut were bloodstained Tuesday, but dozens of tourists warily returned. Many others were fleeing the country, however, and agencies were scrapping tours — spelling trouble for Egypt's important tourism industry.

President Hosni Mubarak visited the temple on the Nile River's West Bank, across from

terior minister, blaming him for lax security.

Thirty-one of the dead were Swiss, police said. The others included eight Japanese, five Germans, four Britons — including a child a Bulgarian, a Colombian and a French citizen. Seven of the dead were still unidentified.

There were 24 people wounded. Police shot the six attackers as they tried to escape. Authorities said one was a member of al-Gamaa, the group that claimed responsibility for the attack

Al-Gamaa has been a main target of police battling a violent campaign aimed at overthrowing Mubarak's secular government and turning Egypt into a strict Islamic state.

The government has arrested and jailed thousands of suspected radicals, put hundreds on trial and executed 63 people in the past five years. But al-Gamaa and similar radical groups are difficult to fight because of

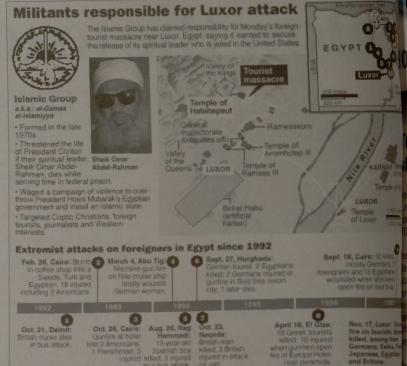
their small, loosely connected cells.

Last year, al-Gamaa took responsibility for killing 16 Greek tourists at a hotel near the pyramids, on the edge of Cairo. The group also claimed an assassination attempt on Mubarak while he was visiting Ethiopia in June 1995; he was unharmed.

In its statement Tuesday, the group said the gunmen's "brave" hostage attempt went awry because police opened fire too quickly, forcing militants to return fire. It accused police of showing negligence toward the safety of tourists.

"The government forces dealt lightly with the lives of the tourists and the citizens, leading to the falling of this great number of

Witnesses, however, said the six gunmen opened fire as soon as they entered the temple grounds, spraying wildly with automatic weapons and killing 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians.



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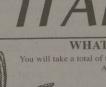
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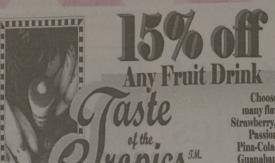


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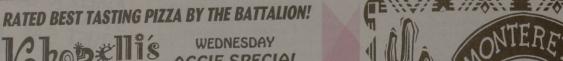
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