

Mumbai attack: British men 'among the terrorists'

British men were among the terrorists who killed 140 in the attacks in Mumbai, Indian authorities have claimed.

By Jon Swaine

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Two British-born Pakistanis were among eight gunmen seized by Indian commandos who stormed buildings to free hostages, Vilasrao Deshmukh, the chief minister of Mumbai, reportedly said.

The Foreign Office earlier said it was investigating reports on NDTV, a local television news channel, that the terrorists - who swarmed luxury hotels and other tourist sites in the city - included "British citizens of Pakistani origin".

The development came as Gordon Brown called for international co-ordination to combat terrorism in the wake of the attacks. He said: "We have got to look at how international action against terrorism can be improved."

On the claim that Britons could have been among the perpetrators, he said: "I would not want to be drawn into early conclusions about this.

"Obviously when you have terrorists operating in one country, they may be getting support from another country or coming from another country, and it is very important that we strengthen the co-operation between India and Britain in dealing with these instances of terrorist attacks."

Describing events as "atrocious", the Prime Minister told Sky News: "It is clear that we have got to help the Indian government deal with this terrorist incident and we have sent people from the Metropolitan Police to help."

Mr Brown, who is to talk to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh later on Friday, said he did not believe there were any further Britons among hostages.

One Briton, Andreas Liveras, the founder of a luxury yacht business who was in his 70s, has been confirmed among the dead, while at least seven are known to have been injured.

Mr Brown said: "Of course, we are mourning the death of a British citizen who has died and as the high commissioner visits hospitals in the Mumbai area, we are hoping to discover more in

terms of the number of people injured."

The Prime Minister's comments came as Indian commando troops cleared the last terrorists from buildings across Mumbai.

At the Oberoi Hotel, at least 25 captives - including two Britons and another clutching a baby - were rushed out and loaded into waiting cars, buses and ambulances.

Mark Abell, a British lawyer, who on Thursday spoke to The Daily Telegraph while barricaded into his hotel room, was among those released. He said: "I'm going home, I'm going to see my wife."

He added: "These people here have been fantastic, the Indian authorities, the hotel staff. I think they are a great advertisement for their country."

Another man, who said he was British but would not give his name, said: "I didn't see anything. I just heard loud blasts. I was in my room. I didn't get out until an hour ago."

Nicole Griffen, another Briton, said she had been rescued by Indian special forces from the Taj Mahal.

She told BBC Radio 5 Live: "They entered and looked through our passports and scouted around to see if there was (anyone) harbouring terrorists or attackers.

"And then we were promptly told where to go by the central stairway and again we were asked to wait with other guests while they checked other floors and checked other rooms and we all congregated into one space where they could protect us centrally."

Heavy gunfire was heard early on Friday as commandos were dropped by helicopter on to the roof of a Jewish centre where at least 10 hostages were believed to be held.

A group calling itself Deccan Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

However, Mr Singh blamed "external forces" for the violence - a phrase sometimes used to refer to Pakistani militants, whom Indian authorities often blame for attacks.

The country's foreign minister was more explicit.

"According to preliminary information, some elements in Pakistan are responsible," Pranab Mukherjee said.

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