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Taj cleared of terror threat; toll mounts to 127

The luxury Taj Mahal hotel was cleared of terror threat late on Thursday night after an unspecified number of them holed up in the iconic landmark were killed in a commando raid while a final assault on the besieged Trident Oberoi was underway, a day after the audacious terror strike in Mumbai in which the death toll rose to 127.

All but one of the terrorists holed up in Taj hotel were killed in encounter with National Security Guards (NSG) and Army, Military sources said. One terrorist was neutralised by crack commandos and is in an injured condition, according to NSG Director General JK Dutt said.

Late in the night, there was a major fire in the Trident (Oberoi) hotel where about 200 people have been trapped and terrorists exploded grenades that set the roof ablaze amid exchange of gunfire. Two terrorists are holed up in the 8th floor of the Oberoi hotel while in the Trident section the combing operation has been completed. There were reports that about 30 to 35 hotel guests were safely evacuated.

Dutt said it is a matter of time before the combing operation is over in hotel.

The other scene of action was at Nariman House, a Jewish residential complex, where some Israelis have been held hostage by some three-four terrorists. Combing operation in the building is in progress, Dutta said.

The hand of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba is suspected in the worst terror attacks in the country but the outfit denied any involvement.

Among the dead were six foreigners, 14 police personnel, a home guard jawan and 104 members of the public including several staff of the two hotels. Of the 327 injured, police personnel accounted for 26 and foreigners seven.

Scores of hostages in Taj were evacuated to safety through the day. Seven hostages were rescued from Nariman House shortly before midnight, 24 hours after the prestigious complex was targeted by terrorists.

There were heavy casualties among the staff in both the hotels with Taj alone accounting for 17 of them. G-o-C Maharashtra RH Hooda said they had done a detailed search of the 395-room hotel but declined to give numbers of terrorists holed up or those trapped.

Intelligence sources said 12 terrorists in two batches had been frequenting the two hotels for the last one month and were well aware of the topography.

Among the dead were nine foreigners and 14 police personnel including ATS chief Hemant Karkare and four other senior officers.

Security agencies have sought to blame LeT, one of whose activists was captured alive in Trident. He is said to be Abu Ismail hailing from Faridkot in Pakistan. The terrorists numbering about 20-25 are believed to have landed on Mumbai shores after a mother vessel dropped them in three inflatable boats. Seven of them have been gunned down.

The Indian navy claimed that they have spotted the mother vessel and giving it a hot chase.

Podcasts: [On terror attacks](#) | [Soumitra Ghosh](#) | [Spokesperson of Taj Hotel](#)

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