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**theguardian**

# My friend said to me 'don't be a hero, don't say you're British'

- Witnesses say foreigners were targeted by attackers
- Gunmen sprayed bullets in station and hotels

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Thomas Bruce in Mumbai and **Ben Quinn**  
The Guardian, Wednesday 26 November 2008 20.18 GMT

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Survivors of the coordinated terror attacks in India's financial capital Mumbai told yesterday how they fled as gunmen opened fire at sites where local people and tourists were gathered.

A British MEP saw a man open fire in the lobby of the Taj Mahal hotel, where he and other European politicians were staying ahead of an EU-India summit. "All I saw was one man on foot carrying a machine-gun type of weapon - which I then saw him firing from and I saw people hitting the floor, people right next to me," said Sajjad Karim, MEP for the north-west of England. "I was in the lobby of the hotel when gunmen came in and people started running. There were about 25 or 30 of us," said the Tory MEP, speaking by mobile phone from a barricaded basement room. "Some of us split one way and some another. A gunman just stood there spraying bullets around, right next to me.

"I managed to turn away and I ran into the hotel kitchen and then we were shunted into a restaurant in the basement of the hotel. We are now in the dark in this room and we've barricaded all the doors. It's really bad."

Guests at the hotel, including Britons, were moved from one place to another amid confusion as at least one explosion rocked the building after the initial gun attacks. The 105-year-old, 600-room waterfront hotel, described as one of Mumbai's architectural marvels, was to have been the base for the England cricket team next month after a previous stay two weeks ago.

The string of attacks is thought to have started at around 10pm local time. At the Oberoi Trident hotel, a British man working in Mumbai described how the gunmen burst into the hotel's Kandahar restaurant, where they rounded up diners.

Alex Chamberlen, who works for the Indian Premier League website, said: "A guy burst in with a machine gun. He was in western dress wearing jeans and he asked for British and American tourists.

"They told everybody to stop and put their hands up and asked if there were any British or Americans. My friend said to me, 'don't be a hero, don't say you are British'. I am sure that is what this is all about," he told Sky News.

He said that he and another man managed to escaped through a fire exit and stumbled through the smoke that filled the hotel.

They made their way to the lobby and emerged outside to find fire engines and 20 armed policemen "looking as scared as we were".

Another British businessman, Colin Tungate, was in a lift which reached the hotel lobby amid the gunfire. "We took the lift to the lobby and heard bangs as the door opened. A Japanese man in the lift, was shot and wounded at that precise moment. I frantically pressed the 'close door' button but had to move the shot man's foot for the doors to close," he said. Tungate and his colleagues were told by staff to head for another part of the hotel where they waited for an hour before being escorted from the hotel.

Another guest fleeing from the Oberoi hotel was Mangho Kripalni, 84, who moved from India to New York as a young man and was taking his two daughters and granddaughter to India for the first time.

"It was sheer panic. I was in my room, lying down, when I heard loud explosions. I thought it was fireworks, but soon realised something was wrong and that there was gunshots too. I got on my bathrobe and went outside the room," he told the Guardian. "I just came here to show my family India but now I don't know why I did that." His daughters were still inside the hotel, he said.

Meanwhile a separate attack was launched at the Cafe Leopold, a popular tourist restaurant nearby. Sourav Mishra, a Reuters reporter, was at the cafe when gunmen opened fire. "I was with my friends. Something hit me. I ran away and fell on the road. Then somebody picked me up. I have injuries below my shoulder," he said later from a hospital bed he was sharing with three other people.

Elsewhere, police battled gunmen at the Chhatrapati Shivaji railway station, where grenades were thrown and at least 10 people were said to have been killed.

Police also said that at least three people were killed in a bomb explosion in a taxi on Mazegaon dockyard road, while firing was reported at the Cama hospital in south Mumbai.

As the fighting raged, hotel guests who had barricaded themselves inside rooms

attempted to contact those on the outside.

Another Tory MEP, Said Kamal, told the Guardian that he had left the Taj hotel earlier to go out for dinner and had received a call from a colleague warning him not to return.

"It seems like these attacks were deliberately targeting locations where foreigners were staying," said Kamal, who added that a Hungarian working with the MEPs was among the injured. "I've been receiving texts from a German MEP who told me that she is hiding in one of the hotel kitchens. She just said 'it's dangerous and I'm in hiding'."

Indian television later showed pictures of the lobbies of both the Taj and the Oberoi Trident hotels on fire, and of people being evacuated from the Oberoi with their hands on their heads. Some of the injured were evacuated from the Taj on luggage carts. Early this morning, as the army moved in to take control, gunmen were continuing to hold out in the two hotels and the Cama hospital, and were said to be holding hostages.

- This article was amended on Wednesday 30 July 2009. In the article above we quoted a man we said was called Alex Chamberlain. That should have been Chamberlen. This has been changed.



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