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More India Terror Attack Reporting

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HIGHLIGHT: More reporting on the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India.

FREDRICKA WHITFIELD, CNN ANCHOR: Attacks in India, terrorist operation in Mumbai, now nearly 23 hours old, and new explosions were just heard at a five-star hotel. Well, a fire has broken out at another hotel, and people remain trapped there. Our reporters are at both sites. It is Thursday, November 27th, Thanksgiving Day here in the U.S. I'm Fredricka Whitfield in for Heidi Collins. And you're in the CNN NEWSROOM.

The death toll is rising in Mumbai. The Indian city formerly known as Bombay. The latest numbers, 125 people are dead, at least 327 wounded. The U.S. State Department confirms at least three Americans are among the injured. A previously unknown Islamic militant group has claimed responsibility for these series of attacks.

India's prime minister is calling the strikes well planned and very orchestrated. At least 10 separate sites were targeted and hostages have been taken at several of those locations. Authorities tell CNN that the siege is over at the Taj Hotel. However, conflicting reports of that. Because our reporters are saying they just felt and witnessed an explosion taking place there. More than an hour later since the initial law enforcement authorities saying that it was all over. Still no evidence of that, whether the terrorists have been taken down, apprehended or what is taking place there. Still utter chaos essentially. You're looking at some of the latest images that have come in of what presumably are hostages that were released. Many British, Americans, western clientele at these hotels where the terrorists have essentially seized. We're hoping for more explanation about what these folks may have experienced.

Sara Sidner is outside the Taj Hotel, a 105-year-old opulent hotel, a place where kings, presidents, business CEOs and the like, and many western tourists have been for many, many years. Sara Sidner now joining us there outside of that hotel. Sara?

SARA SIDNER: So Fredrika, we're standing right now, I'm sort of standing close to where I was

telling you there's still smoke coming out and we can't see any flames. Now I'm looking into that window, and there are flames. It was quite orange. There are lots of bursts of orange going on. A fire definitely still going. Yet there is no fire truck now spraying water on that area. It looks like it's starting to burn back inside the hotel as opposed to out where there are people. We are still standing here wondering what is happening inside because they still have several ambulance that are all now parked you know just outside the Taj Hotel and several police vehicles that are still here, and we cannot see very far. They've now pushed us back a little bit. And we talked about, what, 15, 20 minutes ago and there was an explosion here at the Taj. It was the seventh in the past three hours. I've been here for all of them. They all sound very similar. Very loud noise and then quiet, the birds fly off and everything is quiet for a few minutes. Then people start talking again and wondering what is going on. What we haven't heard is gunfire. Earlier in the day we were hearing lots of successions of gunfire after these blasts will go off. Now we're not hearing the gunfire. We're just simply hearing that one big boom and then silence.

A lot of people still standing around watching, trying to figure out what's going on. And you know everyone is hoping that this will end in a peaceful way, that anyone who might be inside get out safely. Tonight we just don't know what is happening still inside the Taj.

WHITFIELD: And still no sight of any reinforcements from the army or city police since last we spoke roughly 30 minutes ago?

SIDNER: No. They have not come out. Journalists have been standing out here for you know for 20 hours trying to get something from someone. And we are all sort of pushed back. People obviously have sources, but then that starts the rumor mill. There have been a lot of rumors flying, a lot of misinformation coming through the media. And so it's kind of a confusing thing, not unusual. I have to tell you the past explosions, for example that happened in Delhi and Islamabad, in Jaipur, in past explosions we've had the problem of one person, one commander saying one thing and maybe you know someone else saying something else. And so you get these conflicting numbers of how many have been killed and how many injured and conflicting information - (inaudible) taken care of or not. So it is not that unusual for that to be the case in these kind of scenes. Obviously this has never happened on this scale before in Mumbai. That's what authorities are saying. And certainly the idea of targeting foreigners is a new tactic being used by whichever group or organization that might be behind this. The idea of looking specifically for those with American and British passports is a new thing basically here on Indian soil. Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: And Sara, just to recap on that point, earlier when all this transpired, you did a great job explaining how these armed folks just kind of came into the Taj Hotel, for example. People were poolside. They just opened up fire and then the hotel tried to be as proactive as possible by telling residents of the hotel to stay in their rooms and they gave them a list of instructions, what to do to be safe. Can you run us through that again?

SIDNER: That's right. Exactly. Yes. Basically what happened, a lot of the people that got out, you can hear witnesses say things like you know the hotel and the staff have been absolutely - they were very calm. They say look, this is what you do. So people did this to get out, quite a few got out. But the ones that did not were told to go in their rooms, shut everything off, all of the lights, close the blinds, stay there until further notice. Do not open your door for anyone. Do not open your door if someone simply knocks on your door. You won't know - it may be someone who is trying to harm you. I can tell you the Taj has (inaudible) it's a 105-year-old building, a majestic building. What's interesting is the newer part, the tower part of the Taj, there are people in their rooms there. You can see lights on. You can see people walking by their windows. It appears that that is completely secure. It is the old Taj, the old majestic building that everyone knows and loves that is the -- everything is out, all the lights are out. Nothing sort of glowing from the inside out except for that fire. The lights are coming from the outside looking

down into the Taj and into the lobby. Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: Before I let you go, real quick, when you mentioned how these armed gun men just came into this hotel, this is a hotel that didn't necessarily have security like we've seen in some places, particularly in its neighboring country of Pakistan where you've got magnetometers at the front door. This hotel didn't have that so it's fairly easy access, right?

SIDNER: Well my colleague before was talking about this 10 days ago they did have these sort of barricades up due to in part what happened in Pakistan at the Marriott. So they had very, very major security, very much beefed up security. And they took it down. There is a lot of speculation going on as to waiting for that moment when the security was relaxed. Security certainly was relaxed.

WHITFIELD: Just took it down within a matter of days or weeks or?

SIDNER: 10 days.

WHITFIELD: 10 days.

SIDNER: I think it was about 10 days, yes, that they took away the barricades and this sort of thing where you could drive up to the Taj and open the door and get out and be let in. It's a beautiful hotel.

WHITFIELD: Possibly making this soft target that much softer. Sara Sidner there outside the Taj Mahal hotel. We'll come back to you momentarily. Meantime, strong reaction coming from around the world, mainly the White House, President Bush having his conversation with the Indian prime minister. Our Brianna Keilar is at the White House. Bring us up to date, Brianna.

BRIANNA KEILAR, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Well, Fred, we've learned that President Bush was able to get on the phone this morning with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. According to White House Press Secretary Dana Perino, he expressed condolences to the victims of terror attacks in Mumbai, India and in solidarity with the people of India. And she went on to say the president offered support and assistance to the government of India as it works to restore order, provide safety to its people and comfort to the victims and their families and investigate these despicable acts. I should mention, President Bush is not at the White House today. He's actually at Camp David, spending the Thanksgiving holiday with friends and family today. But of course, he's keeping an eye on the situation and according to the White House, he's getting regular updates.

The White House also said that last night the National Security Council - these are the president's top national security advisors - they convened with officials from the State Department and the Defense Department as well as counterterrorism and intelligence officials to talk about the situation in India, Fred. WHITFIELD: And so, Brianna, you know earlier we spoke with Paula Newton out of London, she mentioned that representatives of Scotland Yard would be on their way if not already on the way there to India. Do we know anything from our national security wing or from President Bush whether there are any representatives from our investigative anti-terror units that are on the way?

KEILAR: No, we don't know at this point. What we know generally is that the U.S. has offered its support. In what form is that going to come? We don't necessarily know, especially in light of my colleague, State Department colleague Zain Verjee reporting that westerners and Americans are among the injured over there in Mumbai, India. We don't know if this is going to change the situation in terms of an investigation. Obviously a very fluid situation. But the offer is there on the table as we understand it, India has not taken up that offer. But it's apparently not unusual considering how quickly things are developing, Fred.

WHITFIELD: All right. Brianna Keilar, at the White House. Thanks so much. Appreciate it.

All right. Well, the president-elect is also denouncing these attacks in India. His chief national security spokeswoman issued this statement saying, "President-elect Obama strongly condemns today's terrorist attacks in Mumbai and his thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and the people of India. These coordinated attacks on innocent civilians demonstrate the grave and urgent threat of terrorism. The United States must continue to strengthen our partnership with India and nations around the world to root out and destroy terrorist networks. We stand with the people of India whose democracy will prove far more resilient than the hateful ideology that led to these attacks."

That coming from the office of the president-elect. And of course, you heard the sitting president and his comments coming from the White House as well.

So who might be behind these **Mumbai attacks**, and how well have Indian authorities been to respond? Our international security correspondent Paula Newton will be answering those questions coming up.

WHITFIELD: All right. More than 20 hours now after 10 separate locations in Mumbai were targeted. There were explosions. There was hostage taking and even fires. Now the situation remains tenuous. Ten targeted locations including hospital, a train station and two hotels. You're looking at images right now on your screen to the - well actually both sides there, the Oberoi Hotel which right now an active fire is under way. We understand that 30 people are trapped. We also have some of the latest images now taking place outside of the Taj Mahal Hotel there on the right of your screen. There we understand from our own reporting on the ground there, Sara Sidner as well as our sister network CNN IBN reporting that an explosion was heard and felt less than 30 minutes ago, and there continue to be eruptions of gunfire taking place. We understand that hostages include Americans, perhaps even Britons, and we also understand that law enforcement is quite taxed. It doesn't appear as though, according to reporting on the ground, they have enough reinforcement to tackle what is a massive, colossal event there for Mumbai, India also known as Bombay.

Lots of questions being asked around the world, who is responsible for this and how was a sophisticated attack able to be carried out? Our CNN international security correspondent Paula Newton joins us live now from London. You gave us some incredible information last hour talking about the height of the sophistication of this and that possibly it could have been carried out, unconfirmed reports by terrorists who used boats in which to begin this attack.

PAULA NEWTON, CNN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT: Yes. I mean, I caution again that this is what the Indian government is briefing governments including the U.S. and Britain around the world about. According to the Indian government, they believe that what happened here is that this attack was launched from the water. I remind everyone that the Taj that we're looking at is right along the water. Literally if you're looking over the window, you're looking over the causeway there. And that three speed boats originating from the MV Alpha which is a cargo ship that apparently originated in Karachi. Again India claims that this is the way this happened, three speed boats latent with weaponry, ammunition, the kinds of things that you see happening right now at the hotel. The things that were the cause, allegedly some of those explosions early on, especially we heard some of those militants were lobbing grenades off the roof. They say this all originated off the water.

Right now the Indian Navy has boarded that ship and they say they continue to question the crew. Add to that that an update that authorities had almost two hours ago - that the situation on the ground, the way the Indian authorities imparted it to them, was that in both situations at both hotels, they did not see the situation resolving itself at the end of this day. The reason.

They still believe there are at least three to four terrorists holding hostages in both hotels and that they still have significant ammunition and weaponry to carry out those attacks. I heard Sara say it before and she's absolutely right, the British authorities don't know what to make of the information. She's getting conflicting information from commanders on the ground. It gives you some sense of what the commanders there are dealing with on the ground. They can't sort this out. But they thought that perhaps a lot of the explosions and the gunfire that we're hearing recently, kind of tends to the point that the briefing we had two hours ago is still pretty much accurate. And that this continues to be a very tense situation at both hotels, and that there is still a lot of gunfire, explosions, a lot of things that are unexplained right now, including how many more hostages are left.

Now if I go back to the fact that the British authorities would have been briefed on this about two hours ago now, almost two hours ago. They're still saying that in total there would be upwards of 50 hostages still between those two hotels and that possibly, they have unconfirmed reports from the commanders on the ground that there could be American and British bank employees among the hostages. You have to take all this with a grain of salt. We certainly have not heard from any American or British bank saying they have any employees missing. We have not had any eyewitness testimony to that effect. We're just waiting to try and put some flesh on the bones of this story. I can tell you, this is what British authorities were told from local commanders on the ground there. Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: And tenuous on so many levels, complicated investigation under way. Difficult to sort out all these pieces because, as you underscore there Paula, the conflicting information. But you know when you think ahead of the relationship now between India, Pakistan and Great Britain, all those under the microscope and possibly the U.S., too, because of the makeup of these potential hostages. Paula Newton, thanks so much. We'll check back with you there from London.

Meantime we had a chance to talk earlier to a young lady who is in Mumbai. She heard the explosions and she was in her apartment not far away. She actually is a graduate student at Columbia University in New York, but often spends time visiting family there in Bombay or Mumbai. Smitri Mundhra is with us again. So Smitri were you able to hear the latest explosions taking place from the Taj Hotel? Because I understand from your interview earlier that your apartment or the building that you're in is not far away from the Taj Mahal Hotel, right?

VOICE OF SMITRI MUNDHRA, GRADUATE STUDENT: That's correct, Fredricka. I didn't hear the latest explosion. There's been a little bit of pickup in the commotion outside. So there's been some noise on the street, and it's sort of difficult to distinguish the noises, sometimes where they're originating from. I'm closer to the Oberoi Hotel than I am to the Taj Mahal Hotel. So I didn't identify anything particularly as an explosion in the last hour or so.

WHITFIELD: I got you. So are you able to see the fire that is still under way at the Oberoi Hotel?

MUNDHRA: Yes, I can see - well, now it's dark so I can't see much. But before I could see some smoke billowing up above the roof tops. I'm up on the sixth floor over here. So if I got up on the roof, I could probably see everything. I don't think I'm going to risk that.

WHITFIELD: So how concerned are you about your own personal safety, your family's safety, simply because of the proximity of where you are to these two hotels, there have been explosions heard and felt as well as gunfire that apparently has also been heard just been the last few minutes there at the Taj Hotel?

MUNDHRA: There's definitely concern. I mean we're taking whatever precautions we were advised to by the police via the local news, you know just - we've stayed indoors all day. We haven't left our apartment in 24 hours and keeping away from windows, keeping doors locked

and not venturing out, of course, after dark. So we're doing everything that we can. We're trying not to panic or you know participate in any kind of hysteria, just following the instructions that we were given and you know keeping an eye on the news to see what's going on. For me what I'm most sort of worried about are these unsubstantiated but you know feasible rumors that there might be rigging the hotels for some kind of an explosion in all the time that they've had in there. And so we're very close to the Oberoi Hotel. To me, when I heard that rumor, that was the first thing that really sort of concerned me.

WHITFIELD: Yes. And these are locations - these hotels obviously frequented by a lot of high-brow people, celebrities, presidents, CEOs, et cetera. But I also know the Taj Hotel is one that you said that you and your friends or family would like to go you know to get a bite to eat or drink, et cetera. These two are locations in your view, right, that never in your wildest imagination would be targeted for something like this?

MUNDHRA: No, not at all. It's you know it's really sort of surreal to see all of this happening. Not only are these two the oldest and most historic hotels in Bombay, but you know they're places that my friends and I go to all the time. I jog by the Oberoi every morning on my morning jog, have breakfast there at least once a week. I have drinks or dinner out of the Oberoi or the Taj at least twice a week when I'm in Bombay. And I've never felt unsafe. And it's scary to see what's going on over there now.

WHITFIELD: Very scary. Smitri Mundhra, thanks so much, a Columbia University student out of New York, however, visiting family there in Mumbai and just happened to be witness to the explosions, the fires taking place there, not far away from where she's staying right now on a sixth floor. Thanks so much, and continue to be safe.

We'll have much more on this tragedy unfolding in Mumbai.

WHITFIELD: Fire still burning, utter chaos still in Mumbai. Two hotels among the ten sites targeted by suspected terrorists who have unleashed explosions and gunfire. We understand 125 people have been killed and more than 300 - 327 people injured just in the past 20 hours there in Mumbai. We also understand now that three or four terrorists may still be holding hostages, and we understand from our reporting there on the ground that there could be up to 50 people who are being held against their will, some of whom may be Americans and some of whom may be British as well.

The two hotels - you're looking at the Oberoi hotel, which is a five- star hotel there in Mumbai, often frequented by a number of business people and western tourists. Fire still under way at that building. Meantime, a few blocks away to the east would be the Taj Mahal Hotel, majestic, 105-year-old hotel also frequented by a number of presidents and CEOs and top world officials. That hotel, we understand, there are eyewitness accounts of gunfire still taking place there, an explosion took place, the seventh explosion of the day took place less than an hour ago.

And then we understand that we're just now getting new images of Prime Minister Singh who is visiting one of the locations that was targeted by these terrorists. There are were ten locations in all, and that included the two hotels that I mentioned as well as at least two hospitals. When we have that picture, we'll be able to bring that to you. Apparently he went to one of the hospitals that was targeted. There are a number of people that are injured there and also being treated. And that Prime Minister Singh has been to that hospital to visit. He's also received correspondence from President Bush as well, President Bush saying the united states continues to offer support to India.

U.S. state department correspondent Zain Verjee is in New York. And she's been working her sources. Very tenuous situation diplomatically and, of course, very difficult to get a grasp of what has taken place there in Mumbai, and to determine really, because of conflicting reports,

Zain, whether indeed authorities feel like they have a handle of things at all.

ZAIN VERJEE, CNN STATE DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENT: Really difficult, this critical stage, when the situation is developing so quickly and there's still so many question marks to really get a grip and a handle on the situation. And importantly for the State Department and officials on the ground to make sure that the Americans there are OK. What we're learning from the State Department is that at least three U.S. citizens have been injured. We don't know the circumstances of the injuries or whether they're very serious, whether they're minor. There are a lot of question marks there, too. We don't know whether any Americans have been taken hostage or any have been killed. There is a possibility that that could be the case. But we just really don't know at this point, simply because of the kind of situation that we are dealing with.

Importantly, too, the State Department is saying to any Americans there listening on the ground to local news media. They're advising them to listen closely and take their advice, to be very careful about going out, to stay in if necessary. And if they do need to go out, vary their routes a little bit. Be a lot more vigilant. If they see any suspicious packages, see any one suspicious, to raise questions about that.

The State Department is saying that they're ready to help, if the Indian government needs it. The consular services are staying open this Thanksgiving Day, if anyone needs emergency passports and needs to travel, because they've been lost in all this chaos.

They're also advising all Americans around the world not to travel to Mumbai for the next 48 or 72 hours - Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: All right. Zain Verjee, thanks so much, from New York. Appreciate it. Our U.S. State Department correspondent.

Our Jim Clancy is also working his sources from our international desk here at CNN, trying to get more information on what's taking place.

And Jim, we've been underscoring it's difficult, because there's so much conflicting information coming from not just the Indian army, but law enforcement on the ground. And a lot of the commanders are apparently telling U.S. as well as British authorities different things.

JIM CLANCY, CNN CENTER: Well, you know, and it's going to be confusing in a case like this. I think that it's good. The reports we're hearing are saying that they slowed down these sieges out of concern for the lives of the hostages. That's good news. It's got to be good news.

Let the Indian police do their job. I don't think we should be worried about how fast they're funneling information to us.

But I can tell you, I've talked with people in Mumbai. Just moments ago, I talked to a stenographer, Dina Meta (ph), and she was telling me the mood of people in the city. She said, it's all quiet. Everybody's quiet.

But there's a seething anger, an anger at the attackers, because they have attacked the cultural heritage of the city of Mumbai. They have attacked the Oberoi Hotel from the - built in 1901. It was a cultural icon for the people. It represented the image of their city.

They're not happy about that. But they're quietly staying at home. They're waiting and they're watching.

If you go on Twitter, and go to the topic Mumbai, you'll find people talking about donating blood at the hospitals. You'll find people that are publishing and volunteering. "We'll help type up the list" - those people that are known to be dead, those people that are known to be wounded,

what hospitals that they're in.

People are pulling together in Mumbai right now, and that's a very significant thing that we see unfolding here. At our own international desk, I mean, people have obviously been going around the clock here, as we try to cover this story.

And one of the things that Dina (ph) told me is, most Indians in the city of Mumbai, many of them just still locked down, doing nothing but watching television, minute by minute, trying to understand what is going on.

Sadly, this isn't over yet, Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: Yes. Partly, that has to be fear, too, because, you know, it's unclear exactly who these terrorists are targeting. Yes, we know that at those two hotels where a number of Westerners stay, that those Westerners have been targeted.

I'm sure a lot of people who live there feel like they want to stay indoors, because they're not sure if they're going to be victimized either.

CLANCY: Well, and they don't want to add to the problems. The sense that I got in my phone conversation was it really is an anger, and people don't know what to do.

They're frustrated with the politicians. They believe that they come to Mumbai for their own purposes, for their own popularity, that there's nothing that they can do, that whatever needed to be done should have been done before these attacks - not now.

WHITFIELD: Very unsettling. Thanks so much, Jim Clancy at our international desk, continuing to watch, and the sources that are calling in, he's calling his sources, and a lot of the feeds that are coming in from around the world, particularly in that region.

We're getting great help from our sister station CNN-IBN as well - IBN, as well.

Meantime, out of Washington, we're hearing from our Kelli Arena, who is checking on her sources. Still unclear, Kelli, whether Americans are among the dead. However, from the U.S. State Department, they are revealing that three American citizens may be injured.

KELLI ARENA, CNN CORRESPONDENT, WASHINGTON: That's right. Which opens up the question of U.S. involvement. And here's how that works. If American citizens are injured or killed by a terrorist group, the FBI can open a case, based on the extraterritorial laws regarding terrorism.

Now, opening a case does not mean that the FBI can operate in India, unless it's asked or invited by the country. And both the United States and Britain have offered help. The U.S. offer of FBI or other assistance went through the State Department, but we have not heard back yet.

And it's not surprising, Fred, because, you know, the Indian government is still in a very fluid situation.

Through the American consulate in Mumbai, teams are reaching out to hospitals to try to identify injured American citizens. As far as fatalities, you know, we don't have any confirmed Americans. But that could change.

In some cases, immediate identification is going to be very, very difficult. And personal items are not being kept with the bodies in the morgue. Hospital staffs are not recording nationality when they were admitting injured patients.

As you know, State Department, you know, says three Americans were injured. Officials tell me there are a lot of people that are calling friends or family from cell phones, giving their locations

and status, and passing on information.

But this is a very fluid situation. And so far, you know, we do not have FBI on the ground. This remains an Indian domestic situation.

WHITFIELD: All right. Kelli Arena in Washington, appreciate that.

Let's go back to Mumbai. Our Sara Sidner is there. She's been outside the Taj Mahal Hotel, a witness to the seven explosions that have taken place there throughout the day.

Sara, what can you tell us?

SARA SIDNER, CNN CORRESPONDENT, TAJ MAHAL HOTEL, MUMBAI (VIA PHONE): OK. So, there have been several more, basically what sounds like shots. There may have been a grenade. Someone who is saying, well, maybe there was a sound of a grenade going off, as well. So, there has been several - there have been several shots that have gone off, noises that sounded like, you know, firing inside the Taj. This is definitely not a done deal, a scene that has ended. It is still quite the live scene. There is still plenty going on inside of the Taj Hotel.

The crowds, you know, they're sort of like fish in the water. Every time something happens, you see them running away, and then they swoop back.

And so, right now, we're - all is quiet. But we're all standing and watching, because after every half-an-hour or so, you're hearing something going on inside the Taj Hotel - Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: And so, Sara, while we've been getting conflicting information about just how many people may be held hostage, how many terrorists there may be, et cetera, there at the Taj Hotel, what are you hearing about the possible number of people that are being held against their will there?

SIDNER: It's real frustrating, Fredricka, because they're still not giving us any information about possible hostages, one (ph). Possible number of people just in the hotel that are, you know, hold up in their rooms, that are not taken as hostages, but that are certainly inside and waiting to get out.

And lastly, even the number of hostage-takers or terrorists inside - a few hours ago they said, yes, they believed there were five in there. But since then, there has been so much activity. There have been ambulances, as I told you last hour, coming through and leaving. And we just had a couple more go up to the hotel lobby, and put their sirens on and leave.

But yet, no police authority. There is no one coming to the media, or no one that we can sort of get to, to tell us exactly what's going on, nor have they been very open with any information.

WHITFIELD: And presumably, there are lots of different entrances and exits, because this building, as you described earlier, takes up a good two city blocks.

SIDNER: Exactly. It's a huge, huge building. It is magnificent. It is beautiful. But it is also quite a daunting task to try to go through and try to figure out how to deal with people inside, if you have hundreds of rooms inside the hotel.

And I can tell you, it's still dark in there, with the exception - now I'm seeing one room that has a light on. Now, that may be a vacant room, because it's gotten quite dark here tonight, and sort of see any light that's coming out.

I see one room with what appears to be a lamp on, inside the old part of the Taj. But that is the only light that you're sort of seeing from the street where we are, looking at the front of the Taj

Hotel.

WHITFIELD: And it's almost about midnight where you are now? SIDNER: The time is about nine - seven past nine, p.m.

WHITFIELD: OK.

SIDNER: So, yes. So, we're about 10.5 hours ahead of you guys.

WHITFIELD: OK. All right. Well, making it that much more complicated, too, with nightfall there. And fires still taking place in both the hotels, the Taj Mahal Hotel there and the Oberoi, not far from where you are.

Thanks so much, Sara Sidner. I appreciate that.

So, again, 125 people have been killed in these terror attacks taking place, targeting 10 different locations there within Mumbai, also known as Bombay. Those 10 locations including the two hotels that I mentioned, the Oberoi, as well as - I see on the far right the Taj Mahal Hotel. And as far north there, there is a hospital that was targeted, at least two hospitals targeted, as well as a train station.

Still unclear exactly how many hostages there may be. But some reports indicate as many as 50 hostages. And there could be maybe three or four terrorists that are holding some of these hostages. But again, it's unclear how many may be either at both of those hotels, or whether it's split up, et cetera. Details are very much conflicted coming from law enforcement there on the ground.

We're going to continue to follow the situation there from Mumbai, and keep you abreast when we come right back.

WHITFIELD: Images of Mumbai under siege. A number of local people staying indoors. It's a warning of explosions taking place throughout the day, and possibly more to be heard and felt there in the city.

The U.S. State Department is saying that now, three U.S. citizens are among the 327 wounded in the attacks. One hundred twenty-five people are dead.

And a fire is still burning inside the Taj Mahal Hotel right now, one of the key targets of the terror attacks, and one of the two prime hotels that were targeted. Flames can also be seen at the Oberoi Hotel just west of the Taj Mahal. Earlier, we saw 10 people coming out of that hotel.

Here are some of the latest images of fire still taking place at the Oberoi Hotel. Still active scenes, and gunshots are still being heard at the Taj Mahal Hotel, as well. Still unclear how many people may be held hostage, but some reports indicate could be as many as 50 people being held against their will.

So, we're hearing reaction from the White House, from the president-elect in this country, from Great Britain. We're also watching the situation carefully from the Pentagon, as well. Our Barbara Starr is there. And they are really looking at how this attack was executed, how this was carried out. It was sophisticated, but does it have the hallmarks of anything that they've really seen before.

BARBARA STARR, CNN PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT, WASHINGTON: Well, I have to tell you, Fred, since last night, we have been talking to senior officials across Washington in the national security community. And what they have been telling us, and they continue to tell us today, is this is perhaps one of the most well-coordinated attacks they have ever seen.

A senior U.S. official telling me this morning that, what they are focusing on is, in fact, the sophistication of the execution of this attack - the fact that it was so well coordinated, timed, multiple targets, with some level of precision.

So, what they're going to do, clearly, working with Indian intelligence services, working with the British intelligence services, try and piece together who might have been capable of doing this, work their way backwards, essentially. What would it have taken to pull this off? Who would have had the weapons, the money, the training, the organization, the ability to recruit, to bring all of this together inside Mumbai without the Indian authorities realizing this was about to unfold?

And they tell me, when they look at this, the big question is Deccan Mujahedeen, the group that has claimed publicly to be responsible for this. A senior U.S. official saying, at this point at least, they don't buy it.

WHITFIELD: Really.

STARR: They don't think that Deccan Mujahedeen would have had the ability for that type of sophisticated attack, that they must have had help in some fashion.

To be clear, nothing is confirmed. We're talking about intelligence analysis, what people are analyzing today as they see these events unfold.

And that takes them to this other group that we've been talking about, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a group in India, in South Asia - in the South Asian region - very radical, very much against the Indian government's rule in Kashmir.

Very well known to the U.S. military, because what I have to tell you, it was a couple of months ago that U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan started talking about this group, the LET, rearing its head in the Afghan-Pakistan border region - a group they said they had not seen operating there before, that they were much more traditionally against this Kashmir question.

So, they are looking at the LET now, saying, is this something new? You know, it doesn't match a traditional al Qaeda attack, either. We tragically know, al Qaeda focuses on straight-up suicide attacks - suicide car bombs, suicide vests. U.S. officials saying that's not what they see here, of course. They think this was much more aimed at this Western hostage-taking.

So, the bottom line, Fred, is, when they see all of this, that's the level of concern today. Is this something new? It's something that they clearly do not understand at this hour - Fredricka.

WHITFIELD: All the more alarming in this situation.

Barbara Starr, thanks so much, from Washington. I appreciate it.

All right. This financial capital still under siege. We'll look at the importance of the city of Mumbai.

WHITFIELD: It is after 9 p.m. there in Mumbai, India. Just trying to get the latest information for you about these attacks that have targeted now 10 locations in Mumbai. Over 20 hours ago it all began, when these terrorists apparently took over at least two hospitals, a train station and the two hotels.

You see the map there, the red markers indicating these locations where these terrorists opened fire in some cases, and even caused explosions. We understand that up to 50 people may be held against their will, maybe hostages, some of whom may be Americans, may be Britons.

We understand from the U.S. State Department that three Americans are among the 327 people who have been injured. In all, 125 people have been killed in this siege in Mumbai.

And on the line with us now, CNN-IBN's Rohit Chandavarkar, with us now outside the Oberoi Hotel. That is a five-star hotel. You're looking at images right now, where we understand a fire to be taking place on one of the floors there at this five-star hotel.

Rohit, what can you tell me?

ROHIT CHANDAVARKAR, CNN-IBN CORRESPONDENT: Well, the situation here has not really very much improved. I must tell you that it is still grim. The gun battle is still going on inside the Oberoi Hotel, and also at the other hotel in south Mumbai, which is the Taj Mahal Hotel.

Right now, the national security guard commandos have entered these, both these hotels, and they are sanitizing, one by one, each floor, and making sure that there no terrorists on that floor.

Once they make sure that there are no terrorists, they are letting the guests in the hotel come out. So, in one lot after the other, we have some guests coming out since afternoon today.

But the siege continues. And the gun battle, and the throwing of grenade bombs, et cetera, still continues in the - at the Oberoi Hotel, as well as the Taj Hotel.

So, the situation not really under control so far. WHITFIELD: So, Rohit, when you talk about the law enforcement sanitizing these hotels, might they be the ones responsible, whether it be the army or the Mumbai police, responsible for the explosions or gunfire? Do we know whether that's an exchange with the terrorists? How do we understand what we're hearing?

CHANDAVARKAR: What is happening is - there are two things that are happening. One is that there has been - there is a constant exchange of fire that is happening between the terrorists and the police forces. And secondly, the terrorists, we believe, are throwing small hand bombs, grenade bombs, outside the hotel, as well as on the police party, or the commando party.

So, it's two - it's both things. There are things happening that is leading towards chaos. And the situation really - there's a lot of commotion outside these two hotels. In fact, police are finding it difficult to keep the situation under control right now.

WHITFIELD: OK. And Rohit, while you're there outside of the Oberoi Hotel, we're also looking at images shot earlier. We believe this to be a terrorist or hostage-taker in the window here that's being circled there in red. You probably cannot see the screen that we're looking at, but just to give you an idea of what we have up on our screen.

There were some accounts that said maybe three or four terrorists, who were still holding the up to 50 hostages between those two hotels. Are authorities giving you any indication there at the Oberoi, just how many terrorists or hostage-takers there are suspected to be?

CHANDAVARKAR: Well, the head of the local government, the state government, has told us that their number could be in the range of 20. But they are spread in two or three different groups. And we believe that each hotel would have about five, six to seven terrorists gathering at that hotel and undertaking this activity.

The total number of terrorists who have entered Mumbai City through sea, we are told, is in the range of 20. And they have distributed themselves in two or three different groups, and they are doing these activities in various areas.

WHITFIELD: Now, it's nightfall there. It's after 9 o'clock there in Mumbai. And both hotels, witnesses say they have seen fire coming from the windows, from some of those rooms there.

There at the Oberoi, we don't have the live picture of the building up right now, but we are showing a live picture of law enforcement outside Oberoi Hotel.

Is the fire still burning?

CHANDAVARKAR: Well, the fire is now burning at Oberoi Hotel. Through the day today, fire, there was fire on the - fire at the Taj Mahal Hotel, the (UNINTELLIGIBLE) hotels. But the fire brigade came and brought it under control by afternoon, or late afternoon. And now, towards the evening, we are seeing that there is fire at the second hotel, the Oberoi Hotel, which is on the fourth or fifth floor right now. And that fire seems to be a major fire. It's not really under control of the fire brigade.

But we are told that the commando action is right now happening. And once it is under control and they go beyond the fourth or fifth floor, sanitizing one floor by one floor, they will bring in the fire brigade to douse this fire.

WHITFIELD: And so, Rohit, can you kind of give me your assessment of the emergency responders, or the police or army there? Is it the case that the majority of them happen to be inside the hotel, and that's why there is not as much evidence of law enforcement on the exterior? Or are you seeing that there is just a lack of law enforcement being able to respond to this?

CHANDAVARKAR: Well, what I can tell you for sure is that the response time was very, very long. It took them a lot of time to bring in forces from Delhi, and gather forces from around Mumbai, to come to the hotel and try and put up some kind of resistance to the terrorists.

The response time was in the range of 12 hours, which was very, very long.

But apart from that, I think they knew that the equipment that the law enforcement agencies have is the state-of-the-art, at last. There's no compromise on that (ph) front (ph).

We are also told that the training that these commandos have got is of international standard. And the operation that they will do is of some kind of an international standard.

But the response time was really very, very bad.

WHITFIELD: Our sister network, CNN-IBN. Rohit Chandavarkar, thanks so much for that account.

We're going to continue to follow the developments here throughout the afternoon. Tony Harris is coming up next, a continuous update of what's taking place there in Mumbai.

At least two hotels are still on fire. And we understand that hostages are still being held against their will. Law enforcement in there trying to sanitize, according to CNN-IBN there, trying to sanitize the hotels, so that some of the hostages can be released.

I'm Fredricka Whitfield. I'll see you again tomorrow. Tony Harris up next.

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