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CNN

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## Terror Attack in Mumbai, 101 Dead and 314 Wounded; More Gunshots at Taj Hotel

**BYLINE:** Carol Costello, Joe Johns, Mallika Kapur, Phil O'Sullivan, Ed Henry, Zain Verjee, Sara Sidner, Paula Newton

**GUESTS:** Peter Bergen

**SECTION:** NEWS; International

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**HIGHLIGHT:** Mumbai is a city gripped by fear this morning following the coordinated and deadly terror attacks that left more than 100 people dead and more than 300 wounded. The situation is still unfolding.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CAROL COSTELLO, CNN ANCHOR (voice-over): Breaking news. Terror overseas. A city under siege.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There was a terrorist attack happening just outside of our door.

COSTELLO: Islamic gunmen storming hotels, attacking a hospital for women and children, singling out Americans, killing more than 100 people in India's financial capital.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: They're trying to send a message. They got the world's attention.

COSTELLO: Right now, a standoff and the horror stories from people who got out.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Most definitely the worst experience of my entire life.

COSTELLO: On this AMERICAN MORNING.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COSTELLO: And I'm Carol Costello in for Kiran Chetry. Happy Thanksgiving Day to you. But there is terror in other parts of the world in Mumbai, India.

JOE JOHNS, CNN CO-ANCHOR: We are continuing to follow the breaking news and the massacre in the heart of Mumbai, India. Terror gripping that rich island city for more than 18 hours now.

Hostage situations are still playing out at the five star Oberoi Hotel where yesterday teams of heavily armed gunmen stormed that building and nine other locations including the historic Taj Mahal hotel. Right now, there are new reports of gunfire. So far, more than 100 people killed. More than 300 wounded.

The brazen attack catching India's and much of the world intelligence community completely off guard. Officials say there were really no signs of terrorist chatter, just the sound of gunfire as it rang through luxury hotels, the train station, restaurants and city streets.

Right now, breaking developments just into CNN reports of gun shots and explosions at the Taj Hotel in Mumbai. Let's get right out to Mallika Kapur. She's live on the phone outside the hotel.

Mallika, what's going on there right now?

MALLIKA KAPUR, CNN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Well, it's just about ten minutes ago that we heard a loud bang and we are told that was the result of a hand grenade. A little while earlier about an hour and a half ago, we heard two bursts of what sounded to us outside the hotel, two bursts of gunfire. So it does seem that the situation here is very fluid, very active. We believe that there are still some hostages and some militants holed up inside the hotel. How many are still there, we just can't be able to tell.

JOHNS: Have you been given any indication from the authorities that they are communicating with the individuals who presumably are holding the hostages inside?

KAPUR: No. We have not been given any details about that. We imagine that they are probably are. But no, the authorities have not told us that they've been touch with the militants who are holding up the hostages. We have not heard of anything. And then such, we do not know what their demands are and we don't know who these people are or how many of them are still inside in any of the hotels whether it's the Taj or the Oberoi. We just know that there definitely appears to be an ongoing and very much live and fluid situation at the moment.

JOHNS: Now when we heard the last gun shots, was there any indication to you that someone was injured?

KAPUR: We cannot tell that at the moment. There are ambulances lined up outside the Taj Hotel. They have been there all day, about six or seven ambulances. There are people walking around with fluorescent jackets being rescue teams.

It seems that there are provisions made here in case there are any more injuries or there are any more people wounded in the attack. But we don't know whether this attacks have -- whether this gunfire, what sounded to us that gunfire has actually hurt anybody or even killed anybody. We just don't know that at the moment because the area has been cordoned off, and the press can only get to a certain distance and we're ready to see what happens.

JOHNS: All right. Thank you very much, Mallika. Stay safe.

COSTELLO: People have to wait for Mallika. Explosions have also been heard outside the Oberoi Hotel where it's believed that terrorists are holding an unknown number of hostages.

CNN producer Phil O'Sullivan live outside of the Oberoi.

Phil, at last check, the military was going into the hotel, storming through the doors, going floor to floor. Bring us up to date.

PHIL O'SULLIVAN, CNN PRODUCER: We're going into the building, Carol. Another truck loaded, just pulled in and pulled outside of the hotel and they're going in the main entrance as we

speak. I think I said that must be the fifth truck load. It looks like regular troops and one truck load of very heavily armed flak jacket sniper rifle- bearing troops that came and looked like a real crack commando unit. Then soon after that, the very crack commando, we then we thought we heard a couple of very large explosions inside the hotel.

Prior to that, there's been a very loud explosion about half an hour before. But there's been quite a bit of activity in the last couple of hours outside the hotel. You've got what looks like large sort of (INAUDIBLE) ambulances going in at the moment then start, one, two, three, four of them going into the hotel at the moment.

They're called the light brigade trucks here that they can at least save lives. And then we see trucks four of them going in behind a -- behind a truck load of troops. You really can't get away from the impression that something is going on inside the hotel. It's just so difficult to see from where I'm standing exactly where it is.

COSTELLO: I understand. Hey, Phil, when you say explosions, what do you suppose those explosions are from? Are they from the grenades that the terrorists had used yesterday? Is it from the police and gunfire?

O'SULLIVAN: It's sort of difficult to tell, Carol. The sound of the explosion sounds like it's coming deep from within the hotel. And it's this mad sort of hump sort of noise that really reverberates around the whole area. And there was no mistake that a very big explosion has gone off.

The first one we heard today was very loud. It seems like knocking the trees around here and then the next wasn't quite so loud. Something obviously very, very big has gone off inside the hotel. It would seem to me to be much bigger than a grenade.

COSTELLO: So you say that the police and security personnel are going in. Is anyone coming out of that hotel?

O'SULLIVAN: No. That's the thing. I mean I was outside the Taj Mahal Hotel this morning and you could actually see guests or hostages actually coming out of the hotel front that was coming out during periods of -- maybe with sustained gunfire.

Here I haven't seen any guests come out. And (INAUDIBLE) I went down just to the back, though it's impossible. Even then, I never saw anybody coming out of the hotel. A lot of people going in though.

COSTELLO: And we hope some are coming out safely but you cannot see.

Phil O'Sullivan, thanks so much. He's live outside the Oberoi Hotel in Mumbai, India.

JOHNS: Both President Bush and President-elect Barack Obama are condemning the deadly attacks in Mumbai and offering assistance to the Indian government, and the international crisis is putting communication between the incoming and outgoing president to the test.

Ed Henry is live in Chicago where the Obama transition team is headquartered.

Ed, how is the president-elect handling the situation?

ED HENRY, CNN WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: Well, good morning, Joe. As you know, the president-elect is here in Chicago. He's at his residence. He was supposed to just be celebrating thanksgiving holiday with friends and family here in Chicago.

Yesterday, in fact, he was at a local church handing out meals for the hungry with his family. But instead, he's also been dealing with this crisis. He's been getting regular updates from his staff

we're told over the last 24 hours.

Specifically, though, he's getting a lot of cooperation from the Bush administration as well. He had a phone call last evening with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice where aides say that she promised to keep the president-elect and his staff in the loop as much as possible as well. There has been at the staff level Obama and Bush aides talking, making sure that they're on the same page during this transfer of power.

As you know, there's been a lot of concern previous to this that during this transition, the first post-9/11 transition in the U.S. that terrorists could try to take advantage of the situation either overseas or on U.S. soil. That is why, in fact, Barack Obama went to the White House so quickly after the election to confer with President Bush. So we're seeing some cooperation.

We heard last evening a statement, in fact, from the Obama transition team, Brooke Anderson, their national security spokeswoman, put out a statement condemning the attacks and saying, "These coordinated attacks on innocent civilians demonstrate the grave and urgent threat of terrorism. The United States must continue to strengthen our partnerships 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."

Now, as Obama aides in the transition team get more information, they've been having regular national security briefings for the president-elect here in Chicago so he stays on top of the situation. It's interesting because, as you know, most of this week has been dominated by the financial crisis.

The president-elect had three press conferences Monday through Wednesday, all focused on the economy as he rolls out his money team. But, obviously, this is a fresh reminder of the national security challenges ahead for this incoming president and, in fact, previous to all of this, he was already scheduled early next week to roll out his national security team.

Obviously, even more urgency will be attached to that now as we expect he will be unveiling Hillary Clinton, the U.S. senator, as his secretary of state and current Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the Pentagon chief under President Bush now expected to stay on for at least a year underneath the incoming president, Barack Obama. The thinking behind that as we've been told in recent days was that the president-elect wanted to have as much continuity as possible at the Pentagon given the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but also, clearly, because of all these threats around the world, Joe.

JOHNS: Ed Henry covering all the bases this morning there with Barack Obama in Chicago. Thanks, Ed.

COSTELLO: Of course, the situation continues to develop in Mumbai. CNN State Department correspondent Zain Verjee joining us now.

And you know, Ed Henry mentioned this. I mean, Barack Obama is just putting his team together. Condoleezza Rice is at work briefing President Bush and supposedly also briefing the Obama people. How is that going to work?

ZAIN VERJEE, CNN STATE DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENT: Well, that's going to be an extremely challenging thing. I mean, if this ends up flaring into a major catastrophic situation between India and Pakistan, then it really does have that potential.

If the Indians are saying, you know what, Pakistan, you're to blame. It could fuel a situation between two nuclear armed neighbors that would drag the U.S. into it. So that may be a

significant crisis that the new president may have to face. But as it works right now, there's one president and one government and the decisions will likely be made by --

COSTELLO: And hold that thought because they're going to have some -- we have some dramatic pictures coming out of Mumbai right now from our producers, Sara Sidner. This is outside the Taj Mahal Hotel. There were reports of gunfire. We're just going to play a sound up for you.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SARA SIDNER, CNN CORRESPONDENT: You guys, if you can come to me now, you probably should.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COSTELLO: Glad she's OK. Of course, you know, she's laughing there because what else can you do when you're as frightened as she must have been by that.

We've been hearing reports of gunfire inside the Taj Mahal Hotel and we know over at the Oberoi Hotel that the Indian security forces and the police have been going into the hotel floor by floor. They're in flak jackets. Sometimes they have vehicles breaking through the doors. They're trying to root out the hostage takers and trying to find any hostages in there. And we hope those hostages are safe.

JOHNS: And we saw last night pictures of that hotel. It was burning. It appears at least that the fire is out. So that is progress if you can call it that.

COSTELLO: I hope so.

Well, you know, Phil O'Sullivan was mentioning those explosions and that must have been what he was hearing at the Oberoi.

JOHNS: That's the live picture.

COSTELLO: He couldn't determine where that explosion was coming from. And you can see there is still smoke coming from the Taj Mahal. But you're right, it appears that the fire there is pretty much out.

JOHNS: But it's back. Perhaps there's a new one out.

COSTELLO: Oh, yes.

JOHNS: So a chaotic situation there in Mumbai right now.

Going back to our State Department correspondent Zain Verjee, we were just talking about the relationship between India and Pakistan, and there had been some progress, apparently. It looked as though these two countries which have had this uneasy peace for so long had started to experience a thaw. And the question is how will this affect that?

VERJEE: Well, the real issue between the two countries is the disputed region of Kashmir. And over the past short while, past few years, things have been improving. Overtures made by the current president of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, really historic in nature, sort of reaching out to the Indians saying, let's work together, peacemaking, counterterrorism, cooperation, trade. Let's open up the borders.

And something like this is really dangerous because now the Indian government is faced with two choices. They can either say, you know, we accept responsibility. It's our fault. We failed to

protect the public or they can say and it seems that this is the more likely root if it does turn out that there are Muslim, Pakistani links, militant elements to this. They can blame Pakistan and say you need to take action now. You know, the U.S. will get dragged into it. It's a strong ally of India. That they want to lean on Pakistan to crack down on the militants in their region. And they've been pushing that to do that for a long time.

So this is a really volatile moment. And as this plays out, you know, it may well be blown up into a full blown crisis between the two countries that will drag the U.S. government into it.

COSTELLO: Oh, yes, and it will be very important as to what the U.S. government decides to do about this. We'll get into that later.

VERJEE: Right.

COSTELLO: We're going to take a short break right now. So what do we do about the group that claims to be behind yesterday's massacre in Mumbai. CNN national security analyst Peter Bergen actually will tell us what may have motivated the attacks. That's coming up next.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There's smoke every where and the only option I had was to run down this atrium where I guess a lot of the gunfire had gone on. And I passed bodies and people with bullet wounds, and I guess an old man had passed out from the flames.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COSTELLO: And just moments ago, we showed you some dramatic video coming out of Mumbai, India, near the Taj Mahal Hotel. We've been telling you there's sounds of gunfire coming out of that hotel and sounds of explosion.

Our correspondent Sara Sidner standing outside the Taj. This is what happened to her moments ago.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SIDNER: You guys --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

COSTELLO: You've been hearing reports of that kind of sound coming from the Taj. Let's go to Sara now for her to explain more to us what happened.

Sara, take us through that. What happened there?

SIDNER: OK. So, about five minutes ago, we heard a single very loud blast and I ducked and tried and got out of the way and a lot of us just moved back. Then just after that, a few seconds after that, there was another smaller blast but still quite loud. We all turned to look. The birds go flying and we're all wondering what's happening. And then just after that, two more very large blasts sent the birds flying then we noticed some smoke coming out of the top of the top of the Taj.

There is smoke on one side that's been there for quite some time that may have something to do with the fire that had been happening overnight. But then on the right-hand side, there is smoke now coming out near one of the little bit close to one of the domes on the right-hand side of the Taj.

So a very active scene here at the Taj in Mumbai. Listen. Right now, listen. There are gunshots

going off just now. A succession of gunshots.

There was a succession just now of five gun shots. Let me let you listen. Let's see if they happen again. OK. A succession of three gunshots. So we've heard now a total of eight what sounds like gunshots and you can hear them loud and clear.

So basically, the situation outside is very quiet because everyone is trying to hear what's going on. Again, another round of what appears to be or sounds like rapid gunfire. We don't know if that's from the terrorists. We don't know whether that is from the armed forces that are inside but certainly there is some serious action going on inside the Taj at this hour. Everyone is hoping and praying that the people who might be in there, hostages are safe and sound -- Carol.

COSTELLO: I hope so. Sara, a question for you. We know at the Oberoi Hotel, Indian security forces have entered the hotel and they're going floor to floor. Has that happened at the Taj as well?

SIDNER: Yes. The army, actually, quite some time back stormed the area and went in. But it's been several hours. And so at this point, there are a lot of rooms in there and there are a lot of floors to get to, a lot of nooks and crannies. And so they too were likely going floor by floor trying to deal with this. But this is a pretty active scene and nobody really knows yet exactly what is going on in the confines of one of the most beautiful hotels here in Mumbai that's turned into really a palace of terror.

COSTELLO: So the Indian army is inside the hotel as are the hostage takers and maybe some hostages and they're very well could be a fight between the army and the terrorists inside that hotel.

SIDNER: That could very much be the case. We were told that the situation was clearing up a few hours ago. And then we got a call from a commissioner of police, one of the commissioners who basically told us wait a minute. We think that there may be five suspects still inside, and they're still checking that out. But we don't want to speculate too much as to what's going on inside because obviously authorities don't want to let us know every move they make.

They really want you, do the job of getting whatever hostages may be inside out safe and then trying to get a hold of the people that have caused such havoc here in Mumbai.

COSTELLO: Is there any sense of how many hostages, how many civilians might still be in that hotel?

SIDNER: It's a really good question, Carol, but the answer is simply no. Authorities have not given any numbers as to how many people might be inside this hotel and the Oberoi, although they are saying that there are likely hostages inside both.

And so at this point, we really have no real clear idea how many, but we do know many people did escape from this hotel and from the Oberoi. And so there are stories of survival there. But as to what's happening and how many are inside still, we just don't know at this hour and we will -- when we find out we will certainly bring that to you live as soon as we can, Carol.

COSTELLO: And, Sara, I want to illustrate to our audience just how frightening the situation is there where you are standing. So we want to replay that video and that big explosion that happened just about seven minutes ago now.

(Explosion) And how often has that sound been occurring since you've been standing there within the past hour, Sara?

SIDNER: Well, in the past two hours, there was one about two hours ago, what sounded like a

couple of noises that might have been gunfire possibly. But these happened within a few seconds of each other basically. One loud one, one that was a little bit less loud, a little bit quieter, and then two very loud bangs. And then you heard some of the sounds of what sounded like rapid gunfire.

So it's a very fluid scene. One that is very active and one that is certainly have a lot of people here on high alert, Carol.

COSTELLO: OK. Sara Sidner reporting from Mumbai, India. Thank you very much.

Now what we know right now, the Indian army inside the Taj Hotel. We know that there are explosions coming out of that building. We don't know if those explosions are a result of the army firing off their weapons or if the hostage takers or if there are any hostages inside that hotel.

Same kind of situation going on a few blocks away at the Oberoi Hotel. We know that Indian security forces have stormed that hotel. They're going floor to floor to root out these terrorists and to try to rescue any hostages -- Joe.

JOHNS: We also know according to reports in the media there that a group called the Deccan Mujahideen (ph) is claiming responsibility. What we don't know is much about them.

We'll be back with CNN's security analyst Peter Bergen to tell us a little bit more about what may have motivated the attack.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Very close to the metro theater.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JOHNS: Welcome back to the "Most News in the Morning." Some of the dramatic and disturbing images from Mumbai, India. It's a city gripped by fear this morning following the coordinated and deadly terror attacks that left more than 100 people dead and more than 300 wounded. The situation is still unfolding with gunmen holding hostages apparently in at least one of Mumbai's luxury hotels.

There are reports the attackers were targeting American and British citizens. A little known group, the Deccan Mujahideen, is claiming responsibility for the deadly violence in Mumbai.

Joining us live from Washington, CNN national security analyst Peter Bergen.

Good morning, Peter. Thanks for coming in.

PETER BERGEN, CNN NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST: Good morning, Joe.

JOHNS: When you look at this, what appears to be 10 coordinated attacks, almost simultaneous, what do you make of it?

BERGEN: Well, you know, this group, the Deccan Mujahideen that you mentioned has taken responsibility for it, I don't believe is really behind the attacks necessarily. We've never heard of this group.

Ten coordinated attacks suggest some larger organization capable of recruiting quite a lot of people. The investigation obviously hasn't even started. Right now, we're still in the middle -- middle of a hostage rescue mission. But my intuition is that the people involved in this are probably largely local guys on the ground, Indian Muslims who have been recruited into this

organization. It is quite plausible, however, that the coordination at the higher level is one of the Pakistani terrorist groups that has done these kinds of attacks before in India.

We've seen an attack on the Indian parliament in 2001 that almost brought India and Pakistan to war, which was conducted by a militant Kashmir group. So, you know, the jury is still out. The Deccan Mujahideen is simply a cover name. It's not a real group as far as we know, but it would be surprising if there wasn't some, somebody in this group who trained in Pakistan or has links to a Pakistani militant group. Because again and again when we see these kinds of terrorist attacks in India, there has been some Pakistani element to it.

JOHNS: Now the prime minister of India, we're told, has said that these people apparently came from outside the country. So that sort of comports with what you're saying here now, doesn't it?

BERGEN: Indeed. But you don't need that many people to come from Pakistan to coordinate the attack. I mean, I would imagine that a lot of the people involved in these attacks of people that they picked up in India. After all, India has an enormous Muslim population. There are almost - almost as many Muslims living in India or living in Pakistan.

The intent of these attacks is you asked the question here why are these attacks happening. One very puzzling thing is why these hostage takers haven't, you know, issued any demands.

We have seen news reports that one of the attackers talked about the need to release a fellow Mujahideen (ph) from prison. But we haven't really seen an official communique along those lines.

Another possibility is as you were discussing with Zain earlier before the break, that, you know, India and Pakistan have come closer together on the issues that divided them over the last several years. We've seen confidence building measures. The issue, of course, the main issue is Kashmir but we've seen bus services resume between India and Pakistan. We've seen flights between India and Pakistan. We've seen cricket matches, small things intended to bring these countries closer together.

This kind of an attack obviously is going to do quite the reverse. And so part of the motivation here is to complicate relations between Pakistan and India, countries that had three and a half wars in the last 60 years, countries that have been coming together. But this kind of attack, of course, can only probably drive them apart.

Certainly, as you mentioned, Prime Minister Gandhi's (ph) statements suggest outside coordination for these attacks. And over the next few days, it will be interesting to see what the Indian government actually says and goes.

You may recall, Joe, that there was an attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul a few months back. And both the CIA and the Indian government have claimed that the Pakistani military intelligence service was involved in coordinating those attacks.

And so, it will be interesting to see what the Indian government says about this attack, because clearly there will be signals intelligence. There'll be perhaps some of these terrorists may be arrested and interrogated. And the Indian government has shown a lot of restraint in the past when these attacks have happened and they try not to try and ratchet up the pressure. But I think it would be very hard to ignore this kind of attack. And if there is, the evidence --

JOHNS: All right. Peter, let me jump in there, because apparently we have some news. But stay with us. We'll be back to you -- Carol.

COSTELLO: Yes, Joe. We understand there is smoke, more smoke coming from the windows of the Taj Hotel in Mumbai. We heard some explosions -- actually, we witnessed one with our correspondent on the scene just about ten minutes ago. There was a series of several

explosions. We know the Indian Army inside the Taj right now and they are going floor to floor trying to root out these terrorists.

Let's go back live to Mumbai and Sara to bring us up on what's happening now -- Sara.

SIDNER: Carol, like you mentioned, there's some black smoke that appears to be coming out of the old wing of the Taj Mahal Hotel although it started to come down a bit. You can just see a little bit that looks like it's coming out of the Taj.

Now, we heard a succession of five blasts that went off over about a ten minute period. And then, live with you guys on the air, Carol, and you heard this yourself. There were three rounds of a series of gunshots, what sounded like automatic gunfire inside the Taj Hotel.

What we do not know is who is creating those blasts, who is creating those sounds, who is firing and whether this is action between say the army and the suspected terrorists, or whether this is a scare tactic. We don't know at this point. We certainly know what we heard. Again, five blasts that went off inside and three rounds of a series of what sounded like gun shots, what sounded like rapid fire or machine gun type of apparatus inside the hotel. I should also mention that if you look down towards what is normally the way in, the front area, people are not looking all that scared. Their backs are to the building. So when these blasts are going off, we assume that maybe they are deeper into the area and maybe they are a tactic being used, but nobody knows for sure. And it certainly a very tense situation here at the Taj in Mumbai -- Carol.

COSTELLO: Yes. Most of the people have nerves of steel. You know, last night, Sarah, we saw flames coming from the Taj. You don't see flames today, however. Is that correct?

SIDNER: Yes, that is correct. But you do see some smoke coming from that area. There are two places where smoke is now occurring on the Taj. One is sort of near the left-hand dome all the way to the far left of the large dome. And then there's another bit of smoke coming out from the dome on the far right. So, we're curious as to know what caused this smoke to happen on the right-hand side where there was not any fire.

But certainly we don't see any flames at this hour. What we're just seeing is smoke. This smoke looks like sort of a white hazy kind of smoke and then there was a little bit of black smoke. A third little plume of smoke happening, but no real flames that we're seeing at this hour. We don't know what caused that. We do know that the second plume of smoke came after some of those blasts that we heard a few minutes ago -- Carol.

COSTELLO: Sara, stay with me. I want to bring our viewers just joining us up to date. We're continuing our breaking news live coverage from Mumbai, India. This incident started, what, 20 hours ago now, where armed gunmen, some armed with automatic weapons, others with grenades, they invaded two very posh hotels.

We understand there were 10 coordinated attacks throughout Mumbai in all. 101 people dead including nine of the gunmen. 14 police officers also dead, including the chief of Mumbai's Police Anti-Terrorism Squad. We understand there are more than 300 people wounded. And hospitals throughout Mumbai are just overwhelmed. In fact, they are asking for blood donations.

And Sara, what can you tell us about the wounded? Did they come from inside the hotels? Were they people on the streets? Who were they?

SIDNER: Well, some of them came from inside the hotel, certainly. We went out to one of the hospitals that was also a scene of attacks and is also accepting patients right now, and there are a lot of ambulances still going in there. We were told by a man who was inside helping with the dead bodies inside. And he said he's lifting up to 25 dead bodies that were inside -- inside of the

hospital.

What we do not know is if those -- some of those bodies have come from some of these hotels or if that was the death count inside J.J. Hospital. But there is still a live scene at the hospital. And like you said, there are scores of people being asked to donate blood. We noticed about a dozen people who all said look we're going to go donate, we're going to do something for the people of Mumbai and frankly for the people of India who are dealing with these terrible attacks.

Carol, we should also mention these are not the first attacks but they are very much unusual. There have been about five bombings here in India this year alone in several cities including New Delhi, including Ahmedabad, where a lot of people lost their lives. But this one authorities says is different. This one seems to be much more well-coordinated. Much larger scale and done in a different way, where instead of having someone on a bicycle blow up some people in a crowd, this one was done with large groups of people with guns and grenades. A very different scenario than what's happened across India in the last year.

There's a lot of concern because they heard that witnesses were saying basically these terrorists were looking for Americans. People with American passports and people with British passports, specifically. What that means we don't know, but certainly sounds like foreigners were also quite the target in these attacks.

COSTELLO: All right. You stay safe there. We'll get back to you.

Sara Sidner, reporting live from Mumbai, India.

JOHNS: And more breaking news. We have new details about the group suspected in the **Mumbai attack**, coming. We're bringing in our State Department correspondent Zain Verjee, next.

JOHNS: We're following breaking news out of Mumbai. The Associated Press reports the Indian Navy says forces are boarding a cargo vessel that may have links to the attacks.

Also, explosions and gunfire rocked the Oberoi Hotel, where a gunman first opened fire yesterday. Blasts have also been heard at the historic Taj Mahal Hotel this morning. More than 100 people killed. More than 300 injured. Right now, the city of 13 million has been locked down. Police telling residents to stay inside. And closely watching this crisis unfold is State Department correspondent Zain Verjee joining us now.

So, you heard in that interview that I had with Peter Bergen just a few minutes ago, apparently the Indian prime minister is saying these attackers came from outside the country.

What do you make of that, Zain?

ZAIN VERJEE, CNN STATE DEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENT: And that's a very significant comment that he's making. This is the first official public comment from the Indian government. And the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is saying this is from elements outside the country. So, he's saying, this is not an internal issue. You know, there may be internal groups that have carried this out, but they came with help and critical support from outside the country, translate Pakistan. And that's a really tenuous and potentially dangerous situation that can lead to inflammation between India and Pakistan.

COSTELLO: Yes. I just wanted to bring our viewer's attention to the flames coming out. This is the Taj you're looking at. The big hotel in Mumbai. Within the last 15 minutes, there have been five large explosions coming from that Hotel. We know the Indian army is inside. Also, we understand, terrorists are inside. We don't know exactly what's going on, of course. But those loud explosions and now flames coming from one of the windows and there's also black smoke

coming from other windows on the upper floors of the Taj.

JOHNS: This known as a simply spectacular place. And Zain, could you sort of give us some sense of the city where we are and a little bit of comparison so our viewers can sort of know what we're looking at when we're talking about Mumbai? The financial district.

VERJEE: Right. Right. When we were talking about Mumbai, we're talking about an economic center, really -- the financial district. You know, you have businessmen, tourist, celebrities. Mumbai is Bollywood. This is where all those Indian movies come from. You know, celebrities frequent in this hotel all the time. You know, if I were to make a comparison, one of our analysts on the air actually put it this way. Imagine if terrorists took over The Ritz here in New York or the Plaza Hotel. You know, terrorized Times Square, took over a Pen Station, took over a hotel -- sorry, a hospital where there were women and children, and held them all hostage.

It's a similar situation and the headline on the Times of India today is saying it's war on India, and they may well look at this as their 9/11.

COSTELLO: And part of the difficulty is the Taj is a huge hotel. So just imagine -- you've been there, so describe to us how big this hotel is?

VERJEE: It's massive. I mean, both the Taj and the Oberoi are extremely, you know, elegant, glamorous hotels, five star hotels in town. You know, those who can afford it always stay there. But it's massive to go through floor by floor by floor, room by room. So all the places and the rooms and the nooks and crannies that the terrorists could be hiding out in these areas is extremely tough.

JOHNS: And it's also the kind of place if you were going to find Americans traveling in India...

VERJEE: Right. Exactly.

JOHNS: ...you might very likely find them in that hotel.

VERJEE: Exactly. Most of the people in this hotel are foreigners. Indians can't afford to stay in hotels like this. It's a very small percentage of Indian population that can afford this hotel, like the movie stars and the big businessmen. It's mainly foreigners. So there's a high probability that there were a lot of Americans or some Americans, tourists or business people staying at these hotels.

The State Department is saying that they have no record of any Americans taken hostage, injured or killed. It's a fluid situation and they are trying to figure it out.

COSTELLO: We should mentioned that these pictures are coming from our sister station in India, IBN. We see the flames coming from the Taj. Also, Mumbai is a massive city. 19 million people live there. And I'm sure it's a ghost town right now. And that's another problem the authorities might have, because it's easy to hide in a city like that.

VERJEE: Well --

COSTELLO: (INAUDIBLE) route out terrorists or find who's responsible is very difficult.

VERJEE: It is. And the city is on lock down. Everyone is being told to stay inside. Don't go out. You know, keep your head down. There are -- some of these terrorists that have been arrested and taken in. So it's like they will find out more information about who these guys are, what their agenda is and whether or not they are, in fact, this Deccan Mujahideen group that nobody has ever really heard of, and that could just be a red herring, or if you know this has been orchestrated in connection with a larger group that has the operational capacity to carry

something like this out.

COSTELLO: Well, somebody said last night it would take a massive amount of money and planning to do this sort of operation. So, there's got to be some figure entity behind these fishermen, so to speak, who came off these boats.

JOHNS: Let's talk a little bit about the sort of politics on the ground there in India. You have reports of young men having carried out these attacks. Now, it's up in the air as to whether they come from inside the country or outside the country, but it's safe to say that there are large numbers of disaffected young men inside the country of India that could lend to a situation like this.

VERJEE: Yes. There are about 150 million Muslims that live in India. That's about the same if not slightly more than the entire population of Pakistan.

You know, within that, there is a group of young disaffected men. Many of them say we don't like the strategic relationship that India has with the United States. The war on terror is really a war on Islam. As the Indian government has cracked down on terrorists elements or suspected militants, they've targeted these young men in Muslim populations. They've dragged them in. They've been a little bit rough. And these anti-terror squads, you know, have focused on these guys that feel modularized and criminalized. And so, they provide an ideal and ample population for terrorist to recruit. So, that's part of what's playing into this. COSTELLO: And the other thing we should point out is last night we heard a lot about this group might be connected to al-Qaeda. We don't really have evidence of that. This is not exactly their M.O., right?

VERJEE: No. No, there's no evidence. We just don't know at this stage. I mean, we're talking -- you know, there's names being flung out like Deccan Mujahideen. Another group called Indian Mujahideen responsible for other attacks across India over the past few months. You know, it's a big -- or it has a big operational capacity, inspired by al-Qaeda. Then we hear of, you know, possible connections, according to some U.S. officials saying Lashkar-e-Toiba, which is a group that operates in the disputed region of Kashmir maybe involved and they have links to al-Qaeda. But we don't really know at this stage.

COSTELLO: We got to take a break. As you can see -- before we go, though, I want to point out once again the flames outside of the Taj Hotel in Mumbai. Have been five explosions there within the past 15 minutes. Of course, we have a reporter on the ground in the middle of it all. We'll take you there, live, next. It's 45 minutes past the hour.

JOHNS: Mumbai, India, The Taj Hotel. You're looking at live pictures there, flames shooting out of a window. Resetting the table for you this morning, this is Mumbai, India, after a night of chaos. 10 coordinated attacks throughout the city -- 101 dead including nine gunmen, 14 police officers, and the chief of the police department's anti-terrorism squad. 314 wounded. Militants we're told still inside the Taj Hotel along with the Oberoi Luxury Hotel.

Hostages still in the city. There are nine suspects arrested, we're told, including seven fishermen. And there is a report of a group calling itself the Deccan Mujahideen, claiming responsibility at least to news media organizations, though the authorities so far have not confirmed that.

Good morning. This is Joe Johns in Washington along with Carol Costello. I'm sorry in New York. I keep forgetting where I am. Along with Carol Costello here with me in New York, as well as Zain Verjee on a Thanksgiving Day in the United States and there's a lot going on.

I think right now we want to go to Sara Sidner who is out there in Mumbai. She has actually been witnessing some of the action on the ground and had a few moments of excitement just a

little while ago.

Are we live with you as I'm looking at you down there on the ground, and can you talk to me, Sara?

SIDNER: Yes. Yes, I can talk to you now. We're not exactly sure why everyone started running, but everyone has been told, the police are saying, get away, get away, get away. So, we all got down. What is happening over my right shoulder is there's a huge fire out of control, obviously, at the Taj on the east side of the building, basically, in the old wing. And it's obviously out of control. It's breaking windows. You can hear glass breaking. You can hear the fire. It is so strong. You can hear it going.

And it's such a sad scene because this is such a fabulous and beautiful hotel. But what is more scary and what is more sad is there may be hostages still inside. And as you know, there are already dealing with what police say may be five terrorists who are still holed up inside this Taj Hotel.

And now, there is smoke and flames, again. Earlier and overnight, there were smokes and flames coming from one side of the building, on the dome, on the left-hand side, and now more flames, more smoke. So the danger of smoke inhalation and being burned and that sort of thing they are now facing if there are, in fact, several hostages inside.

Again, police have not confirmed that there are -- how many hostages might be inside, but they did say there are still hostages in both this and the Oberoi. Everyone, all of the journalists, are crouching low and the army officials and some of the police out here have been telling everyone to get back, get back, get back.

Joe?

JOHNS: And with no explanation so far as to why you should get back other than the fact that there could be rounds emanating from the building?

SIDNER: Exactly. We have heard five blasts over the past 45 minutes, about five blasts. We have also heard several series of gun shots which sounded like automatic gunfire for those who are familiar with that sound -- a rat-tat-tat-tat-tat, that went eight in a row about and then stopped. And then another round about five or six in a row.

Who that was shooting, we don't know. Was that the army? Was that the terrorist? We don't know. But there is still definitely concern and this is a very, very active scene right now. You know, dozens of ambulances sitting out here waiting to take any possible victims. And there are -- the fire brigade showed up about 10 minutes ago and had gone in a little bit into the lobby of the building.

Right now an active scene, obviously, with this fire. There's just a lot going on and there are a lot of lives that may be at stake. But again, the army and authorities here, police, are not telling us anything about what might be going on inside. But we can certainly hear it and we can certainly now see some of what's going on in the Taj here in Mumbai.

Joe?

COSTELLO: This is Carol Costello. We're just going to pause for a moment because there's also developing news at the Oberoi Hotel, which is near the Taj. Gunfire emanating from that hotel as well. You just can't imagine how overwhelmed the Indian security forces are at this moment.

And, Sara, I guess the most terrible thing is firefighters can't fight that fire in the Taj either because I would -- I would assume they can't get close enough because it's too dangerous.

SIDNER: Right. You know, you have this problem. You have what may be five terrorists, gunmen, inside of this hotel and then you have the issue of the fire that is definitely now raging at least in the fourth floor --it appears to be there, of the Taj. And it's completely burned out one room. That's definitely gone and done for. And how far it goes back, we don't know. There are, you know, dozens upon dozens of rooms inside of there.

A lot of people are standing around now. There have been -- people have sort of come back to try to see what's going on. But we've all been pushed back from the scene. It is a scary situation. It is a situation where I'm certainly nervous. The people standing around me are certainly nervous. We have a job to do, certainly. But we're all watching this and being very careful about where we stand and trying to keep our eye on what's going on just behind us because you just never know from moment to moment what's going to happen.

Carol?

COSTELLO: Are most of the people standing with you, reporters?

SIDNER: Yes, yes. There are -- there are dozens of reporters. But actually, some of the people that were moved away, there was an evacuation at one point. So, you know, dozens of people were all sort of milling about and just kind of looking in awe with their mouths open and just watching everybody and seeing what's going on. They've all been moved out.

But now, a few of them has trickled back and they're sort of standing near the water. I say maybe, I don't know, 100, 150 people that are sort of standing about. But they've been definitely pushed way back. The people that are closest are the journalists. We're the closest to the action.

JOHNS: Sara, let's go back to the big picture now just for a minute. Number one, can you give us a sense of what you know about what is going on inside that building? Do we know that there are authorities essentially going room to room?

SIDNER: That is what we heard. But here's the problem. They're really not releasing information about their tactics because, obviously, they don't want someone that is associated with the terrorists to be able to give them information inside as to what the army might be doing and what the police might be doing. So, they really have been hush-hush about exactly what they're doing inside.

But we do know that the army went in and stormed the building. We saw it ourselves. We were here for that. So, we do know that happened. What we do not know is what tactics they're using, how far they have gotten through this hotel and exactly how they're doing it. We don't know that. We do know this. They did tell us that there were, they believe, five suspects still inside this hotel in particular and several inside the Oberoi as well. So, still an active scene. We do not know how many hostages there are, but we're told that there are some. And that is all they would give us.

Carol and Joe?

JOHNS: Sara, great reporting. Stay safe. Do not endanger yourself and we'll be getting back to you shortly.

COSTELLO: Yes. We're going to stay with these live pictures, however, as we go to London and Paula Newton. She's been checking into who might be responsible for this, what larger group might be behind these terrorists.

Paula, have you come up with something new?

PAULA NEWTON, CNN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT: You know, all I can tell you is that authorities even here in Britain are trying to work on this. There's a very large Indian and Pakistani population here. What concerns authorities here is anyone who would have helped them financially or otherwise.

What is the troubling scenario now from the pictures, the live pictures that we're looking at is that because Indian intelligence doesn't really know much about this group, doesn't know what their demands are, doesn't know what they would be at all. They do not seem to be in communication with them, which means so you're getting the scenes of chaos, the fire, the explosions that you're seeing right now.

Another worrisome development that we've been bringing up all morning is an Indian ship that's now boarded a cargo ship. We believe that that was en route from Karachi, Pakistan. This is a problem. We've now had the prime minister of India saying that he's convinced that outside forces motivated this attack. As Zain Verjee has already said, Zain Verjee, that translates into Pakistan.

Right now, it's as if India is crouching around looking for a way to blame this on Pakistan, whether or not they were involved, and that -- it goes to the boarding of this ship.

I want to take viewers back to where a lot of the explosives apparently came from, the ammo. It apparently came from the sea. That hotel that you're looking at right now is right along the water. And apparently, a lot of these militants came in on small boats packed with automatic weapons, grenades and we, unfortunately at this point, don't know what else.

From the gunfire that was heard from these locations, they had ample ammunition to keep them going for quite some time. One confusing part here, the Indian prime minister did point to the fact that perhaps these were outside forces, foreigners as you might say. There were reports that some of them were speaking Urdu, which normally is spoken in Pakistan. That might have really jolted some people.

Although other reports said they were speaking Hindi to each other. It's the predominant language used in India. It is a very confusing picture. What is causing a headache on this Thanksgiving Day right now for officials in capitals like here in London and in Washington, in Delhi, is that this is the trigger point.

This is why they continually say that relations between Pakistan and India are on a hair trigger because they are both nuclear-armed nations. And it is this kind of event where people are scrambling -- they don't know who's responsible, they don't know what to do, where you start to really raise the temperature between both of these countries, but right now...

(CROSSTALK)

COSTELLO: Well, you know what, Paula, it does make you wonder -- it does make you wonder what the United States can do and who will be the one intervening? Will it be Barack Obama or will it be President Bush?

NEWTON: This is a very difficult situation. And Barack Obama, the president-elect, has been brought up to speed on many security issues since he's been elected. We know that. But it takes a great amount of intelligence and sophistication, at this point, to really deal with this problem.

Remember, many administrations before that, the president-elect had tried to deal with that India-Pakistan problem, and all it got us was India is armed and then Pakistan was a nuclear-armed nation. We've seen that this is a very sensitive issue and certainly there are no short cuts. One of the things that people speculate about as Peter Bergen, our terror analyst,

said...

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNS: OK, Paula, we're going to have to jump in on you. Can you hear me, Paula? So sorry to interrupt. We need to go back to the Taj Hotel because we have breaking news. Stay with us. We'll be back to you. We want to try to get to Sara if she is still there and in a position to talk to us right now.

Are you, Sara? What happened? What just happened?

SIDNER: There was such a huge blast in what looked like sort of in the middle of the Taj. The other ones have sort of sounded like they were sort of further back. And then this one, I actually sort of yelled when I heard it because it was so loud. And again, the birds go flying and everyone ducks.

So, the scene again -- it keeps changing. And there is always this sort of noises and blasts. And we don't know whether those blasts again are the army doing something to try and scare the terrorists out or a tactic, or whether they have anything to do with what maybe the terrorists that are inside. We don't know. We do know we just heard another very loud blast, Joe.

COSTELLO: Sarah, this is Carol again. I just wondered, we know that the terrorists were armed with grenades.

What kinds of weapons do the police have? What have they brought inside?

SIDNER: We don't know. I mean all -- you know, all you can see is sort of what goes in. But, again, they're trying to keep some of that information away from us and for obvious reasons. You really don't want to let the terrorists know what exactly you have in there and what exactly you might be able to use against them or try to flush them out. But this is certainly a liquid scene, a scene that frankly having my back to this hotel makes me a little nervous, because every now and then there are bursts of sounds.

We heard a couple of muffled what could be. We don't know if there were gunshots. We don't know if there were blasts or what they were. But we heard a couple of muffled sounds just before this very large sound, very large blast. But you're not seeing, for example, large plumes of smoke or fire coming off that, or sparks or anything like that. So it may just be a sound and not be doing any sort of damage. But we don't know what's going on inside and it's very frustrating for us and worrisome, of course, for people who are wondering about people who may be inside whether they are possibly hostages or whether they are just inside the hotel and hiding.

This is a very tense situation. One that is very difficult for family members and for people wondering what is going to happen and how is this going to end? It's been about 20 hours since the very first attack happened, and how this will all end is still a mystery to everyone. And it's a scary scene out here, Carol.

COSTELLO: It certainly is. Well, you stay around, take cover. We'll get right back to you, Sara.

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