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Terror attacks in Mumbai: eyewitness accounts

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A British national who was lucky enough to escape being taken hostage at the Taj hotel in Mumbai, said on Thursday that the militants were young men with weapons.

While talking to the media, he said: *"They were not more than 20-25 years of age. They were dressed casually in jeans and T-shirts but were very aggressive in their demeanour. They kept screaming that they wanted anyone with a British or an American passport."*

"There were 15 of us and I was really scared since I am a British national. Two of the terrorists, while screaming constantly, took us up the stairs to the 18th floor. Luckily for us, the room was full of smoke and two of us escaped by the stairs," he said.

"Another three escaped after us but I have no idea about the others. I think about five to seven people are still on the roof," he added.

Another eyewitness, Amit Varma, a resident of Mumbai, who also



has a blog, said he was out on the night of the terror attacks in the same area in Mumbai. He went with a group of six friends to the opening of an art exhibition by one of his friends. While they were at a restaurant called All Stir Fry, in the Gordon House Hotel, they heard gunshots, and saw people running towards them from the left side.

One of the hotel employees rushed out and told them to get back in. *"There must have been an encounter. Get back in, you'll be safe inside,"* the hotel guy told him.

Verma and his friends did as they were told and followed him in. They waited in the lounge-bar upstairs for a while. They heard that terrorists with AK-47s had opened fire outside Leopold's, the pub down the road. There were reports of firing elsewhere in the city as well, including in the Taj Hotel.

Since they could not go home at that time, they were given a vacant room to watch television. They even heard the second blast at the Taj Mahal Hotel from the window of the Gordon House Hotel, where they were staying. A diner was shot while coming out of the Indigo Deli, where they were standing minutes earlier.

Photographer's description

Another witness, Vinukumar Ranganathan, who is also a photographer, has posted his pictures on the social networking site – Flickr. These are the first Flickr photographs of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. He lives in Colaba, just a two-minute walk from where the attacks took place.

"Taken late night Nov 26 at Colaba. Arranged in the order I took the snaps as I visited this place – 15 mins after I heard the sound. 2 mins walking distance from my house," he writes along with the pictures.

Member of parliament escapes

N.N. Krishnadas, a member of parliament in India, says he and other members were dining at the Taj Hotel restaurant Wednesday night when masked militants entered.

"They fired indiscriminately. I saw three people being shot. The terrorists left the room soon after," N.N. Krishnadas said. Hotel staff rushed Krishnadas and others into another room.

"We stayed there through the night. In the morning, commandos rescued us," he said.

Bloggers across Mumbai fed live updates of the action after Islamist gunmen launched waves of attacks in the heart of India's financial

capital, highlighting the power of citizen journalism in news coverage.

British tourist recalls the mayhem

Cheryl Robinson, a British tourist who was trapped inside Mumbai's Taj Mahal hotel with two friends told the media that the hotel staff locked the doors and warned them to sit. After a while the restaurants and rooms were flooded with water as one of the pipes burst. Robinson had to lie down in the water for seven long hours.

A couple of tourists from Spain, Italy and Britain were seen running barefoot holding water bottles. They did not want to talk to journalists.

Eye witness at CST station

Nasim Inam's was one of the witnesses at the Chattrapati Shivaji railway station last night. He told media persons that he saw four young men carrying big guns and wearing black T-shirts and blue jeans. The men just fired aimlessly at people and then ran away. He said the attackers were 25 years old at the most.

The state government has ordered schools and colleges to shut on Thursday.

Families looking for missing relatives

Meanwhile, anxious relatives gathered outside the JJ Morgue in south Mumbai early on Thursday morning to find out what happened to missing loved ones.

S Raman was searching for his friend, SR Bhonsle, an employee at the Oberoi Hotel. He said he had been running from St George Hospital to another all morning trying to get information. *"I have not been able to trace my friend yet. No one wants to take responsibility and release the bodies."*

Maniben Solanki, another Mumbai resident who has been searching for her nephew Lala, said that he had gone to have some snacks near the Cama Hospital when the terrorists attacked. *"I have been searching for him since 6am. I don't know what to do."*

Meanwhile, Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister R R Patil said a compensation of INR 5 lakh will be given to the immediate family of those killed in the terror attacks. INR 50,000 will be paid to the seriously injured.

Jewish Hostages

The director of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, and his wife Rivika, are suspected to be among those being held hostage at its office in Nariman House, Colaba, in South Mumbai, since Wednesday night.

One terrorist has been killed and four others remain inside with the hostages, the Jerusalem Post has reported. The couple's young son and his nanny were released by terrorists in the morning. They told media that the rabbi and his wife were alive but unconscious.

Foreigners want to go home

Many of the foreigners injured or who witnessed Wednesday's terrorist attack in Mumbai are in a hurry to leave India. *"It was a bad dream. I just want to go home,"* said a foreign national as he came out of the Bombay Hospital.

He did not want to reveal his identity and said he just wants to go home. *"I don't want to talk about it,"* said his friend, who also refused to be named.

There are reports that people from different countries like Spain, Australia, Great Britain, Japan and Jordan were among those admitted to hospital.

According to Sanjay Sawant of the Bombay Hospital Employees Union, 20 foreign nationals were admitted to hospital. Another 40 being treated there are Indians. One Japanese man died at the hospital, Sawant added.

Cricket series called off

The last two matches of the India-England seven-match one-day series have been called off over safety fears following a series of terrorist attacks in south Mumbai on Wednesday night in which around 100 people were killed and more than 300 injured.

A statement from the England Cricket Board (ECB), said the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had agreed to its request to postpone the remaining two one-dayers.

A Russian flight attendant's account

Tatiana Lutovinova, a flight attendant for Aeroflot, describes an attempt by her and others to escape a hotel Thursday morning.

"In the morning we tried to leave the hotel. We got almost all the way to the exit. We saw blood everywhere, but the head of security told us it was safer for us to return to our room. He told us the hotel had been seized by

terrorists. We don't know what to do, we're on the verge of breaking down. We hear shooting, but we have no idea what is going on as we are locked in our room," she said.

Nidhi Sharma for RT

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