

# At Least 100 Dead in India Terror Attacks

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Prashanth Vishwanathan for The New York Times

Police watched the Taj Mahal Hotel, set ablaze by terrorists, in Mumbai on Thursday. [More Photos >](#)

By **SOMINI SENGUPTA**  
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MUMBAI, India — Coordinated terrorist attacks struck the heart of Mumbai, India's commercial capital, on Wednesday night, killing dozens in machine-gun and grenade assaults on at least two five-star hotels, the city's largest train station, a Jewish center, a movie theater and a hospital.

Even by the standards of [terrorism in India](#), which has suffered a rising number of attacks this year, the assaults were particularly brazen in scale and execution. The attackers used boats to reach the urban peninsula where they hit, and their targets were sites popular with tourists.

The Mumbai police said Thursday that the attacks killed at least 101 people and wounded at least 250. Guests who had escaped the hotels told television stations that the attackers were taking hostages, singling out Americans and Britons.

A previously unknown group claimed responsibility, though that claim could not be confirmed. It remained unclear whether there was any link to outside terrorist groups.

Gunfire and explosions rang out into the morning.

Hours after the assaults began, the landmark [Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel](#), next to the famed waterfront monument the [Gateway of India](#), was in flames.

Guests banged on the windows of the upper floors as firefighters worked to rescue them.

Fire also raged inside the luxurious [Oberoi Hotel](#), according to the police. A militant hidden in the Oberoi told India TV on Thursday morning that seven attackers

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were holding hostages there.

"We want all mujahedeen held in India released, and only after that we will release the people," he said. Some guests, including two members of the [European Parliament](#) who were visiting as part of a trade delegation, remained in hiding in the hotels, making desperate cellphone calls, some of them to television stations, describing their ordeal.

**The New York Times**

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Alex Chamberlain, a British citizen who was dining at the Oberoi, told [Sky News](#) television that a gunman had ushered 30 or 40 people from the restaurant into a stairway and, speaking in Hindi or Urdu, ordered them to put up their hands.

"They were talking about British and Americans specifically," he said. "There was an Italian guy, who, you know, they said, 'Where are you from?' and he said he's from Italy, and they said, 'Fine,' and they left him alone."

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[Inside the Oberoi](#)

Mark Abell, a British lawyer, spoke to Reuters when he was locked in his room at the Oberoi hotel in Mumbai.

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Sajjad Karim, 38, a British member of the European Parliament, told Sky News: "A gunman just stood there spraying bullets around, right next to me."

Before his phone went dead, Mr. Karim added: "I managed to turn away and I ran into the hotel kitchen and then we

were shunted into a restaurant in the basement. We are now in the dark in this room, and we have barricaded all the doors. It's really bad."

Attackers had also entered Cama and Alless Hospital, according to Indian television reports, and struck Nariman House, which is home to the city's Chabad-Lubavitch center.

A spokesman for the Lubavitch movement in New York, Rabbi Zalman Shmotkin, told the Associated Press that attackers "stormed the Chabad house" in Mumbai.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said it was trying to locate an unspecified number of Israelis missing in Mumbai, according to [Haaretz.com](#), the Web site of an Israeli newspaper.

Several high-ranking law enforcement officials, including the chief of the antiterrorism squad and a commissioner of police, were reported killed.

The military was quickly called in to assist the police.

Hospitals in Mumbai, a city of more than 12 million that was formerly called Bombay, have appealed for blood donations. As a sense of crisis gripped much of the city, schools, colleges and the stock exchange were closed Thursday.

Vilasrao Deshmukh, the chief minister for [Maharashtra State](#), where Mumbai is, told the [CNN-IBN](#) station that the attacks hit five to seven targets, concentrated in the southern tip of the city, known as Colaba and Nariman Point. But even hours after the attacks began, the full scope of the assaults was unclear.

Unlike previous attacks in India this year, which consisted of anonymously planted bombs, the assailants on Wednesday night were spectacularly well-armed and very confrontational. In some cases, said the state's highest-ranking police official, A. N. Roy, the attackers opened fire and disappeared.

Indian officials said the police had killed six of the suspected attackers and captured nine.

A group calling itself the Deccan Mujahedeen said it had carried out the attacks. It was not known who the group is or whether the claim was real.

Around midnight, more than two hours after the series of attacks began, television images from near the historic Metro Cinema showed journalists and bystanders ducking

for cover as gunshots rang out. The charred shell of a car lay in front of [Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus](#), formerly Victoria Terminus, the mammoth railway station. A nearby gas station was blown up.

The landmark [Leopold](#), a favorite tourist spot, was also hit.

Reached by phone, some guests who had been trapped in the Taj said about 1 a.m. that they had heard an explosion and gunfire in the old wing of the hotel.

A 31-year-old man who was in the Taj attending a friend's wedding reception said he was getting a drink around 9:45 p.m. when he heard something like firecrackers — "loud bursts" interspersed with what sounded like machine-gun fire.

A window of the banquet hall shattered, and guests scattered under tables and were quickly escorted to another room, he said. No one was allowed to leave.

Just before 1 a.m., another loud explosion rang out, and then another about a half-hour later, the man said.

At 6 a.m., he said that when the guests tried to leave the room early Thursday, gunmen opened fire. One person was shot.

The man's friend, the groom, was two floors above, in the old wing of the hotel, trapped in a room with his bride. One explosion, he said, took the door off its hinges. He blocked it with a table.

Then came another blast, and gunfire rang out throughout the night. He did not want to be identified, for fear of being tracked down.

Rakesh Patel, a British businessman who escaped the Taj, told a television station that two young men armed with a rifle and a machine gun took 15 hostages, forcing them to the roof.

The gunmen, dressed in jeans and T-shirts, "were saying they wanted anyone with British or American passports," Mr. Patel said.

He and four others managed to slip away in the confusion and smoke of the upper floors, he said. He said he did not know the fate of the remaining hostages.

Clarence Rich Diffenderffer, of Wilmington, Del., said after dinner at the hotel he headed to the business center on the fifth floor.

"A man in a hood with an AK-47 came running down the hall," shooting and throwing four grenades, Mr. Diffenderffer said. "I, needless to say, beat it back to my room and locked it, and double-locked it, and put the bureau up against the door."

Mr. Diffenderffer said he was rescued hours later, at 6:30 a.m., by a cherrypicker.

Among those apparently trapped at the Oberoi were executives and board members of Hindustan Unilever, part of the multinational corporate giant, The Times of India reported.

Indian military forces arrived outside the Oberoi at 2 a.m., and some 100 officers from the central government's Rapid Action Force, an elite police unit, entered later.

CNN-IBN reported the sounds of gunfire from the hotel just after the police contingent went in.

The Bush administration condemned the attacks, as did President-elect [Barack Obama's transition team](#). The White House said it was still "assessing the hostage situation."

*Reporting was contributed by Michael Rubenstein and Prashanth Vishwanathan from Mumbai; Jeremy Kahn and Hari Kumar from New Delhi; Souad Mekhennet from Frankfurt, Germany; Sharon Otterman and Michael Moss from New York; and Mark Mazzetti from Washington.*

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