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# Snipers in position near Nariman House

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MUMBAI: The hostage drama which began at the 100-year-old Nariman House on Shaheed Bhagat Singh Marg late on Wednesday night was far from over when reports last came in. Several Israelis including members of an ultra-orthodox Jewish group named Chabad-Lubavitch were believed to be in the building, held captive by a group of terrorists.

By around 6.45 pm on Thursday, commandos had entered a neighbouring building to carry out a recce before mounting a rescue operation. Snipers were in position at different points. At 9.45 pm, commandos evacuated seven residents from nearby apartments.

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Earlier, for most part of the day, there were no signs of movement inside the building; the terrorists were believed to be holed up on the fourth and fifth floors. Their hostages included a rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife Rivka. Their son and his German nanny were released by the terrorists in the afternoon.

As the NSG commandos began planning an operation to storm the building, a 19-yearold local, Hanif, emerged the hero of the hour by volunteering to guide the force with the layout of the building.

Outside, anxious bystanders waited for good news. Taxi driver Zakir Hussain said if he had his way, he would have led a team into Nariman House to rescue the captives. At 1 pm, he had even got a band of likeminded individuals willing to break into the building and rescue the Israeli group.

" I am not afraid of death," said Hussain with a great deal of bravado, adding he had escaped death thrice. The gregarious Hussain made the long wait easier for journalists staking out the scene by providing a regular supply of water.

Another resident came forward and organised a dinner of dal, subzi and rice for police officers posted outside Nariman House.

" I think it's time we wake up and do something for these guys," he said. He even got tea for some of the policemen in a plastic bottle; when one of them said he didn't drink tea, the man even bought him a cold drink instead.

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