

50-hour Mumbai Siege Ends With 155 Dead, 327 Injured

By M Rama Rao, - India Editor, Asian Tribune, New Delhi

New Delhi, 29 November, (Asiantribune.com): Over 48-hour siege of Oberoi Trident hotel ended Friday night, but battle raged at the iconic Taj, amidst grenade blasts and exchange of fire. Commandos blasted their way into the nearby Nariman House in the flush –out operation that saw the death of two terrorists and five hostages. The building was badly damaged after a strong explosion took place at the third floor of the four-story building. An NSG Major and a commando were killed in the operation.

Two AK-47 rifles, one pistol, few unexploded grenades, few thousand dollars and Indian rupees, credit cards, and a Mauritius identity cards were seized from the terrorist at the Taj; nine terrorists were killed and one was caught alive. The police said 24 dead bodies were found at Oberoi hotel.

Police and Intelligence officials believe that at least 40 fidayeen were involved in the Mumbai operation. According to their assessment, the LeT fidayeen had conducted a thorough recce of both the Taj and Trident. Some of them, about 12 or more entered Mumbai through the sea-route. The key man has been identified as Imran Babbar. Lashkar operatives left Karachi in a merchant ship early on Wednesday, Nov 26. Late that night, the fidayeen left the ship in an India fishing trawler which was hijacked off Gujarat coast earlier, and rowed some 10 nautical miles to Mumbai's Gateway of India area. Once they reached close to the alighting point near Colaba, where heritage Taj hotel is located, they had lowered themselves into a smaller inflatable boat with a 20 HP engine and split into two groups for their raid.

Israeli security experts have opined that Indian Security forces were premature in storming the besieged hotels.

"Indians should have sanitized the area and collected intelligence about the terrorists before launching flushing out operations," a former official at Israel's famed anti-terror agency Shin Bet the expert said. 'In hostage situations, the first thing the forces are supposed to do is assemble at the scene and begin collecting intelligence. But in this case, it appears that the forces showed up at the scene and immediately began exchanging fire with the terrorists instead of first taking control of the area', he said.

Eight Foreigners Dead

The dead include at least eight foreign nationals, the Union Home Ministry said on Friday night. The dead deceased included three German nationals and one each from Japan, Canada and Australia, Special Secretary (Internal Security) M L Kumawat said at a press briefing on the Mumbai attacks. The nationality of two others was not known.

Kumawat said among those injured, five are from UK, three from Germany, two

each from the US and Oman, and one each from Norway, Spain, Canada, Finland, Philippines, Austria, Italy and China. The nationality of two others was not known.

51-year-old German national Burgeroch was brought dead from the Taj Hotel to the Breach Candy hospital, where two other German nationals -- Bernardelite (45) and Benjamin Matthiys (26) -- are undergoing treatment.

At the Jaslok Hospital, three British nationals --Michael Murphy (58), Dianne Murphy (53) and Harsh Patel (29) -- have been admitted.

Two visitors from Oman -- Al Zadjali Miran Sahil (19) and Al Raisi Muneera Mohd (35) -- have been admitted at the Saifee Hospital.

A 62-year-old Italian Juarini was admitted to the JJ Hospital, where a bullet-riddled body of a male foreigner was lying unidentified.

At the KEM Hospital, 49-year-old Austrian B Gilbert Tailor, 68-year-old German Jurgan Hedros Rudalf, 73-year-old Canadian Michele Stuart Moos, 50-year-old German Sider Daffne and an unknown foreigner were brought dead.

41-year-old Hisa Si Tsuda of Japan died in the Bombay Hospital, where 14 foreigners were undergoing treatment. They are Shih Fung Chen (China), Zahed (Jordan), Tan Eugene (Philippines), Helen Connolly (nationality unknown), Katherine Instea (Austria), Michael Rudder (Canada), Oskari Polcho (Finland), Axel Nordmeter (German), Arne Stromme (Norway), Maria Trossa (Spain), Simon and William Pike (both UK) and Andolina Vaoagta and Lind Orchistala (both US).

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