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The Lede

Blogging the News With Robert Mackey



November 29, 2008, 10:26 am

Mumbai Attacks, the Aftermath

By [LIZ ROBBINS](#) and [KEITH BRADSHER](#)



Security officials surveying a destroyed room inside the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower hotel after the armed siege ended Saturday. (Julian Herbert/Getty Images)

Questions Raised About Intelligence Operations | 3:51 p.m. Questions are emerging from the Mumbai debris, stemming from “Who did this?” to “How did it happen?” to “Why?”

But as the city and the nation recovers from the deadly attacks, criticism of India’s military in ending the siege seems to be giving way to questions about how its intelligence operations did not foresee the assault.

“Without detracting from the heroic efforts at the front line by the troops and police, this is a terrible indictment of the Indian intelligence apparatus,” said Stephen G. Vickers, the president of International Risk Ltd., a Hong Kong-based security company that issued a report just six weeks ago warning that India should beware of an increased risk of terrorist attacks given other incidents in the region.

Once the security forces “realized what was happening, they responded with great courage, tenacity and commitment; this under very difficult and confusing circumstances,” Mr. Vickers said, adding that the deaths of three top Indian counterterrorism officials at the start of this week’s assault had made the task even more difficult for the military. “The loss of life, awful though it appears from the outside, could have been much worse.”

India’s commandos have been greeted like heroes in Mumbai, with crowds seeking to shake their hands after they vanquished each group of attackers,

no longer how long the gun battles took.

People on the streets have mostly been in mourning or focused on the apparent ability of the commandos to defeat the gunmen, but a few politicians have begun publicly questioning why Mumbai had no warning of an attack that apparently took months to prepare.

President Bush Issues Brief Statement | 1:29 p.m. President George W. Bush pledged full support to the government of India in a brief statement he gave on the White House lawn this afternoon, after his return from Camp David and the Thanksgiving holiday.

“The killers who struck this week are brutal and violent, but terror will not have the final word,” President Bush said. “People of India are resilient. People of India are strong. They have built a vibrant, multiethnic democracy that can withstand this trial. Their financial capital of Mumbai will continue to be the center of commerce and prosperity.”

Mr. Bush held a video-teleconference at 7:30 a.m. Saturday regarding the terror attacks in Mumbai with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Ambassador David Mulford, Consul General Paul Folmsbee in Mumbai, and several others on the national security team.

“We reviewed the latest developments, and we are working to ensure that American citizens in India are safe,” Mr. Bush said, adding that he kept President-Elect Obama informed.

Mr. Bush took no questions, concluding: “As the people of the world’s largest democracy recover from these attacks, they can count on the world’s oldest democracy to stand by their side.”

Searching for Survivors, Hearing Stories | 12:07 p.m. The siege is over. Now comes the accounting and the recounting.

Security officers are combing the Taj Mahal hotel for survivors, bodies and clues at the scene of the last battle, which ended Saturday by mid-morning in Mumbai, according to the head of the elite National Security Guard, J. K. Dutt. Three terrorists, he said, had been killed inside. One commando leader said earlier that his team had come across a single room in the Taj containing a dozen corpses or more.

Israel’s foreign ministry confirmed that eight Israelis had died in the attacks, seven of whom were inside the Nariman House, home to Mumbai’s Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

Jeremy Kahn, a contributor for our sister newspaper, The International Herald Tribune, filed this dispatch of the scene in Mumbai after the end of the siege, with accounts of some witnesses of the attacks:

As word came that the siege at the Taj Mahal hotel was over today, many Mumbai natives came into the streets and walked down to the Gate of India, which is located adjacent to the Taj, to look at the damage. There was palpable feeling of relief among residents in the blocks immediately around the Taj. Many Indians asked to pose for photographs with Indian Army soldiers and gave high fives to police officers.

In an interview recounting his experience, Nisar Suttar, who works as a part-time guide for tourists in the Colaba section of Mumbai, said that he was standing just outside Leopold's Cafe at 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, when two young men entered the cafe, one carrying a heavy bag. They approached the counter and seemed to order food, Mr. Suttar said. Then, five minutes later, they pulled out automatic rifles and began shooting at the diners before running out of the cafe.

Reaching a nearby corner, Mr. Suttar said, he saw the two gunmen open fire down the street. He said one of the gunmen seemed to be talking on a mobile phone even as he used his other hand to fire off rounds. The men then ran off down a side street and Mr. Suttar said he and three other bystanders went to help a bloodied man who was lying on the ground just outside Leopold's. They said they put the man in a taxi and asked the driver to take the injured man to a hospital. Mr. Suttar said unarmed police officers in the area ran off while the shooting was going on, but soon returned to try to help victims within Leopold's.

Two musicians who had been working at the Oberoi hotel said in interviews that they were allowed to return Saturday afternoon along with guests to pick up their luggage. Pramod Pandit, 45, said that he was a tabla player. His partner, Jamil Ali Khan, 54, played sitar. Mr. Pandit said that he and Mr. Khan had been playing background music on a small stage at the Khandahar restaurant on the second floor of the Oberoi hotel, when at approximately 9:40 p.m. Wednesday he heard gunfire from the lobby, one floor below. People in the restaurant began to panic.

Within two minutes, he said, one of the gunmen entered the restaurant and began shooting at the diners. He said he saw one man fall to the ground, covered in blood. He later learned that one of his managers at the Oberoi had been killed as well. He and Mr. Khan raced to an emergency exit along with many of the other diners and ran down the stairs, which eventually took them outside. He said he was not permitted back into the Kandahar restaurant to pick up his instrument; someone from the hotel staff brought it down to him. The staff member told him the restaurant was badly damaged and might not be able to open again for many months.

Stories are emerging worldwide of survival and courage, and how, in the case of a Chicago couple, text messaging helped keep them informed before their rescue.

Carole and Benjamin Mackoff were concluding a three-week trip with Tauck Tours, staying at the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower when shots rang out. They hid in their room, and their son, Jonathan Mackoff, a chiropractor in Chicago, gave United States consulate officials their cell phone number and room number. According to [The Chicago Tribune](#), Jonathan kept text messaging his parents throughout the ordeal, until Indian commandos knocked on the door of his parents' room with a special password that they received on the phone.

Tauck Tours, according to a news release issued by the company, had a group of 26 guests and three Tauck tour directors concluding the November 10th departure of our "A Portrait Of India" tour at the Taj Mahal on the day the attacks began:

- Eight of those guests, accompanied by one tour director, had left the hotel for the airport prior to the attack. All are safe.

- We deeply regret having to confirm that one Tauck guest, a 71-year-old resident of Sydney, Australia, lost his life in the attack.
- Our 17 remaining guests and the two remaining tour directors are all safe. All have left Mumbai and have either arrived home or are en route.

From the United Kingdom:

Lynne and Ken Shaw of Wales told the [BBC](#) of hiding under tables while the attackers stormed a restaurant across the hall from where they were eating in the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel. In the interview, Mrs. Shaw said that “little things that night — just timing — saved our lives.”

Restaurant workers led them and others through a warren of hallways into a conference room, where the group hid for hours. They were being led out in groups of six when “all of a sudden gunfire broke out in the corridor and they had executed a six-year-old in front of his parent,” Mrs. Shaw said. “My life was saved because as I was running I stumbled and I think that really saved me as I fell back into the room.” The next morning men with guns burst into the room where they were hiding and ordered everyone out. “At that stage I thought this is the end,” Mrs. Shaw said, but the men turned out to be Indian Army personnel.

Will Pike and Kelly Doyle, from Camden in North London, told [The Guardian](#) of knotting towels, bedsheets and curtains together to escape from their room in the Taj.

They had fled to their room after hearing gunfire and explosions, and sat for hours listening to gunshots come closer and closer. After they had armed themselves with knives and forks and making a plan to surprise any attacker, their room began to fill with smoke. Mr. Pike went first on the 60-foot climb down the makeshift rope.

“But clearly I never did my boy scout knot badge because my knots were rubbish,” he said. The knots came undone and he fell, breaking three vertebrae, both arms and his pelvis. Shortly afterward, firefighters rescued Ms. Doyle with a hydraulic lift. Mr. Pike remains in a Mumbai hospital in intensive care.

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1. 126. November 30, 2008 10:44 pm [Link](#)

Well said Farooq. We Indians do not hate Pakistan as a country, we always feel Pakistan thoo apana hai. But some extreme elements both in Pakistan, India and in western world want the situation to remain like this for their vested interests

— *Petrov*

2. 127. November 30, 2008 11:32 pm [Link](#)

May the good God bless all in India. I hope all that committed these acts of violence will be punished. I want to take a moment to thank the brave Indian soldiers trying to save innocent people's lives in Mumbai.

Santosh Ancheril

— *santosh ancheril*

3. 128. December 1, 2008 6:24 am [Link](#)

>But as the city and the nation recovers from the deadly >attacks, criticism of India's military in ending the siege

Why is it that you feel compelled to provide the negative angle only, however minimal that negative angle might be? As far as my knowledge goes, there has been very little criticism of the Indian military operation (even the Israeli's are speaking in multiple voices in this regard).

You guys are opinion creators and I believe with that power comes a certain responsibility to be balanced and not one dimensional.

Best

Mukund

— *Mukund*

4. 129. December 1, 2008 6:46 am [Link](#)

Dear Keith,

Your story today on security at hotels mentions the strict screening procedures in place in Indonesia since attacks there, giving the impression that such is not the case in India. However, it is precisely in Mumbai — at the Grand Hyatt adjacent to the airport — where I have seen such measures in recent years. There is a high perimeter fence, and any car entering the grounds is searched with mirrors that can scan the underside. Anyone entering is subject to polite but thorough screening.

thank you for your great reporting.

Jeff

— *Skeptical in Shanghai*

5. 130. December 1, 2008 8:40 am [Link](#)

this is a bad thing

— *cj*

6. 131. December 1, 2008 11:38 am [Link](#)

The station is the one I travel regularly, both the hotels are the ones used by me for my clients and friends. My office is just opposite the Oberoi . I feel a great sense of anger as to how Mumbai is spoken of its resilience of how we move on after every attack.

PLEASE! We are fed up of seeing our fellow Mumbaikars Die, just don't know when its going to be me or my family member... This time we have to DO SOMETHING.

Lets for once get to the root of the problem. When is West going to realize that what is happening here is very soon coming their way and instead of helping that one nation its time to take some concrete action against them.

I was in tears of the last few days as I saw all of this unfolding..... My prayers are for the family who lost their loved ones.

Deeps

— *Deepali Pathak*

7. 132. December 1, 2008 5:44 pm [Link](#)

165,000,000 PAKISTANTIS DID NOT ATTACK INDIA (10 did).

The NY Times should have this as a banner headline. As people get upset about the relations between India and Pakistan over the Mumbai incident, they play into the hands of the fringe extremists.

The media's greedy desire to excite fear and attract eyeballs is a disgrace. Tell the whole story: a half truth is a lie. Why talk about the few that committed this crime and not mention the hundreds of millions that had nothing to do with it. This imbalance is a pernicious evil.

— *Mel*

8. 133. December 3, 2008 7:19 am [Link](#)

While it is heartening to see so much voices of support from people around the world, it is strange that some people want to connect it to the caste system in India. It is somewhat like saying that 9-11 was an unnecessary blow to the US because their society is already suffering from racism and school shootings.

Every society has its shortcomings and evils. And terrorism is terrorism. It is the same challenge world over, regardless of what the underlying societal dynamics are. It is time that saner elements of the world unite and focus and strengthen all the positive aspects of each others' cultures rather than pity the negatives and rubbing salt on wounds.

— *Sri*

9. 134. December 4, 2008 9:43 am [Link](#)

Meher baba. i hope every one from the cafe is ok

— *Brendan Montague*

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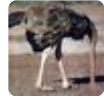
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State TV anchor: "Russia, as usual, has stood up to American tyranny." This is Egyptian state tv, not Syrian. Mabrouk

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Liz Sly @LizSly 12h

Another sign the old days are back in Egypt: a security guy sitting by the elevator in the hotel, watching people's rooms. Like in Syria.

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Serhatcan Yurdam @syurdam 13h

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Four months after 8-year-old Martin Richard was killed in the Boston Marathon bombings, his family is inspired by their surviving daughter, who has made remarkable progress after losing a leg.

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[Video Shows Civilians Gunned Down in Cairo](#)

As the death toll continued to rise, supporters of Egypt's deposed president, Mohamed Morsi, pointed to video of civilians being cut down by gunfire on Wednesday in Cairo during an assault by security forces on a sit-in.

About The Lede

The Lede is a blog that remixes national and international news stories, adding information gleaned from the Web or gathered through original reporting to supplement articles in The New York Times and draw readers in to the global conversation about the news taking place online.

Readers are encouraged to take part in the blogging by using the comments threads to suggest links to relevant material elsewhere on the Web or by submitting eyewitness accounts, photographs or video of news events. [Read more.](#)

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