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# Terror expert Paul Wilkinson on motives behind Mumbai attacks – and their effects

## Were there any intelligence warnings of the attacks?

There are rumours that the Indians did get a warning message of a seaborne attack on Mumbai. It appears to Indian observers in security that the message was lost in the huge bureaucracy India has.

What appears to have been the motive?

The surviving terrorist said he was trained in a camp run by Lashkar-e-Taiba, an extreme fundamentalist movement now affiliated to al-Qaeda, which shares the same global ideology. They believe they can create a climate of terror. The economies and infrastructure of their enemy states, not just the United States but pretty well every other government of a democratic nature, are regarded as particularly attractive targets. India is also regarded as an enemy because it has a secular democratic political system and has friendly relations with the US. Lashkar-e-Taiba originated as a Kashmiri militant group so also has a bitter resentment against India.

Is India right to blame Pakistan for the attacks?

The Indian prime minister has so far been careful to refrain from blaming the Pakistan government. He's referred to foreign or external influence, but that can include the influence of non-state organisations. Pakistan has, for some years, been a sanctuary where extremists could retreat to: a big country, with the problem in the north-west where people involved in terrorism, and al-Qaeda leaders themselves are using the uncontrolled frontier areas as a safe haven for their base.

What marks this attack out as different from other recent terror atrocities in India?

This al-Qaeda-linked group has developed the tactic of unleashing a squad of well-armed, well-trained killers, with their very efficient weapons, into gathering places in a major city, planning rapid successions of attacks designed to cause mass casualties, and creating maximum fear and disruption. The drawn-out nature of the crisis – something like 60 hours – also meant terrorists were able to wreak a great deal of publicity, and create more disruption and fear.

Where does this leave India/Pakistan relations?

A poisoning of the atmosphere in India, with politicians being unwilling to continue dialogue with Pakistan, would be a serious setback, likely to lead to more terrorism. These countries have nuclear weapons. The danger of increasing tensions is something we must bear in mind, and I'm sure Barack Obama's advisers will strongly recommend America does its best to prevent those tensions from breaking up the process of easing of relations.

How were so few men able to do so much harm?

This indicates the extent of training and preparation that went into this attack. These guys were clearly working to a very careful plan based on close knowledge of the geography of Mumbai and the internal geography of those huge hotels. They had people infiltrated into the hotels, gathering information. They almost certainly knew more about the layout, the hiding places, than the security forces, who clearly were taken by surprise. That helped them hold out for a long time. They had very quick-firing weapons – AK-47s are very efficient, and they appear to have modified weapons to make sure they reloaded more rapidly.

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