

Outgunned Mumbai Police Hampered By First World War Weapons

Mumbai (Bombay) police had First World War weapons 3 Dec 2008 ... "That's 16 too many," Maxwell Pereira, a former joint commissioner of Delhi police, said. "These casualties could have been prevented if ...www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5276283.ece -

From The Times December 3, 2008 Outgunned Mumbai police hampered by First World War weapons

Jeremy Page in Delhi

Indian police who bore the brunt of last week's attacks on Mumbai had defective bulletproof vests, First World War-era firearms and insufficient weapons training, police sources have told The Times.

Many wore plastic helmets and body protectors designed for sticks and stones, rather than bullets, as they fought highly trained militants armed with AK47 rifles, pistols, grenades and explosives.

The contrast between them was vividly illustrated yesterday by CCTV footage of two militants attacking Chhatrapati Shivaji terminus, Mumbai's main railway station, last Wednesday.

It shows the gunmen spraying automatic fire while two constables cower behind pillars, one armed with a .303 rifle similar to the Lee-Enfield weapons used by British troops in the First World War.

Similar scenes were played out at other targets in the first seven hours of the attacks, in which 16 policemen died, including three of India's top officers.

"That's 16 too many," Maxwell Pereira, a former joint commissioner of Delhi police, said. "These casualties could have been prevented if they'd been properly equipped." The abysmal state of police equipment helps to explain how ten gunmen managed to paralyse a metropolis of 18 million people for more than 60 hours.

It also illustrates how ill-prepared India's 2.2 million-strong police force is to tackle another such attack.

"We'd react exactly the same way tomorrow," Ajay Sahni, of the Institute for Conflict Management, said.

He described India as one of the "least policed" places in the world, with 126 officers per 100,000 people, compared with 225-550 per 100,000 in most Western countries.

Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, has one of India's better police forces, but even it is woefully ill-equipped because of a centralised and highly corrupt procurement system.

Y. P. Singh, who retired after 20 years in the Maharashtra police in 2005, said that he knew of two batches of body armour that had failed tests in 2001 and 2004. "They couldn't take rounds from AK47 or AK56," he said. "The bullets pierced the jackets."

He now believes that the Maharashtra police purchased the defective vests and

issued them to officers last week.

On Wednesday, television stations showed Hemant Karkare, the head of the AntiTerrorist Squad, donning a bulletproof vest and a battered tin helmet as he arrived at the scene in Mumbai.

He was shot in the chest three times soon afterwards and died.

Two other senior officers who were travelling in the same car as Mr Karkare and were also wearing body armour were shot dead at the same time.

“If they’d been properly equipped they might have only been injured,” Mr Singh said. “Their vital organs would have been protected.” Other officers were only issued 5mm-thick plastic body protectors designed for riot control.

That is because India has only 100,000 bulletproof vests for police and paramilitary forces, according to Anurag Gupta, the managing director of MKU, which supplies the vests to the Government.

“The helmets used last week were World War Two-era, not designed for combat,” he said.

Most of the police involved were carrying .303s or self-loading rifles like those adopted by the British Army in the 1950s.

Some officers said that they were not given enough weapons training because of a shortage of ammunition and shooting ranges. In theory, all officers shoot 50 rounds a year in training. In practice, senior officers get their full quota with small arms.

“The rest is all bunkum,” Mr Pereira said. “It’s target practice with a .303 rifle. I wouldn’t call it suitable knowledge of weapons and their uses in urban policing.”

All those interviewed said that the issue was not money: the Government allocated £154 million for modernising the police in 2007-08 alone. The problem, they said, lay with the Home Ministry’s procurement system, which is dominated by corrupt bureaucrats and politicians rather than technical experts.

“It’s a cartel,” Mr Singh said. “The Government is spending millions, but the police isn’t getting the equipment it needs.”

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Comments

'Hampered by WW1 weapons', really, I wonder how we won that one then? In fact, most Indian soldiers and police were carrying the brilliant - 7.62mm SLR rifle (no doubt sold to them by the British for a song) a military weapon now denied to the British troops in Ahfganistan. --Dennis, Plymouth, Devon, UK
The problem has far reaching consequences in India. Isn't it by now obvious that the politicians cover themselves with advanced protective forces and equipment while the common man's life is dispensed with? And this from leaders who pledge among other things to die for the country and its people??? --Priya Rajaram,

Chennai, India

This type of terrorist attack could happen anywhere with similar results. The police should be sent to compete in civilian IDPA, Glock, and 3 gun type contests. With competition comes proficiency and confidence in your self. Most police training ignores the practical use and application of guns. --Sam, Birmingham, USA

I have both an SMLE in .303 British, and an AK-47 in 7.62 caliber. I would go into any combat situation with the SMLE. Accuracy and performance are not benchmarks of the AK-47, the SMLE is a tremendous rifle. The problem in India, I believe, is lack of training and adequate resources. --Matamoros, Miami, USA

One or two motivated police officers could have cut the casualty rate in half by simply shooting some of the terrorists as they walked about in the open. Lee Enfield rifles are old, but a .303 bullet will kill anyone and go right thru body armor. The failure of the police was lack of determination.--Patrick Creed, Philadelphia, USA

Be serious on the armaments issue. An AK-47 loses all accuracy by 200 yards and is uncontrollable on auto fire. A Lee-Enfield (the Indian rifles were in 7.62 NATO, not .303) has match-grade accuracy to 800 yards. The Indian police and military became substandard when the Sikhs were purged from them. --James AF Compton, La Mesa California , USA

The Indian police behaved like a bunch of cowards. Reports of them hiding and failing to even shoot back are numerous. A dozen or so terrorists could have a city of 20 million cowering for 60 hours before the attack was foiled? That is a disgrace on its face in this age of terrorist plots. --jack Weedley, Alpharetta Georgia, usa

Whilst some of the equipment they need, such as proper body armour was clearly lacking, the weapons weren't necessarily poor. The guns that were listed in this article are perfectly potent, what was lacking was training. The most important piece of equipment is the one between an officer's ears. --TC, London,

In close quarters city fighting, I would take an AK47 over a bolt-action anyday. At the very least they should have semi-auto rifles. --Richard Wood, Gelly, KY

Lots of gun experts, I see... That was close quarters. Accuracy it's not the issue. Fire rate is. That copper on the alcove needed to be extremely well trained to be able to aim from a ground level non cover position at a guy firing an AK at him from less than 20 meters. We're talking John Rambo. --Swift, Lisbon, Portugal

Though serious questions can be raised about the quality of body-armor issued to the police, the criticism of the weapons "...carrying .303s or self-loading rifles..." shows a lack of weapons familiarity by the journalists involved. A properly trained rifleman should have been effective with either. --AOracle, Downey, USA

Terrorists should have been shot dead as fast as they showed themselves by FAL and Enfield riflemen, starting at 700 meters- twice AK effective range. Indian RIFLES outclass AK CARBINES in terms of power and range. Does India value arms ownership, access and proficiency? Armed= less vulnerable. --Francis Marion, Dana Point, USA

It is really shame for all indians ,that the police using these type of weapons to fight against terrorists. But we are very proud of our police because they are very courragious to fight against terrorists with these antique weapons. think about

corrupt politicians and punish thanks Mumbai Police. --eltho, London, UK
 It's a perfect example of a country trying to run before it can walk, what a joke. Yet individuals are worth billions in India. How heartless can people be? Especially when you see videos of your police force "sharing a gun"! How much money does 1 honestly need. Especially when your people are starving! --Dave Smith, London, U.K

We don't have time. We got to improve our defence and border security. Spend money on military and counter-terrorism not on bureaucracy. We can not afford to wait until the next attack comes. --Sheela, Edinburgh, U.K.

I think India has come a long way very quickly. I think poor Domestic policies are a result of this enormous growth. They're slowly changing everything however comparing them with the UK and USA is unfair because they spend Billions on military and counter-terrorism whereas India only spends 70 pp ---Sun, Cov, Procures system in India needs to be under an independent organisation chaired by eminent elite to avoid corruption that is so endemic in India's government procurement. ---sur pars, London, U.K

well.....what to say but that India needs to up-grade itself and the police by having people who are honest and straight. ---Laurence Goh, Punggol, Singapore
 Corruption and laziness is the only reason for the deaths of three best police officers and policemen. I don't think that the Indian and state gov. will wake up and act to upgrade the police force. Only Indian army and NSG are well armed. Others are left to die by enemy's AK-47 and grenades. ---Vithal, Mumbai, India
 Good luck stopping a 5.56X45 or 7.62X39mm round with standard issue body armor. Even with plates a decent 3A is going to have a difficult time with an angled shot a close range; much less a straight-on shot. They need to focus on better weapons/equipment and tactics. ---Dave, Las Vegas, USA

Nothing wrong with those weapons the police had. A .303 is hardly a "pop-gun". That is a powerful round. Also, the AK47 (as in 1947) isn't exactly a new weapon design either. ---Ernest Radly, Kakinoki, Japan
 those .303's carried a heluva punch but were single shot bolt action rifles ---peter c, Devizes, Wessex

we need a safe world to live in ---Manisha, Delhi, India

Rifle was probably a 7.62 Nato Ishapore 2A1 the final version of the SMLE pattern.

As for its adequacy in the field, many a soldier did house to house fighting with them, that being said it does take more practice to work a bolt action, the police needed proper training whatever weapon they use ---N.Rivera, San Antonio, USA

The centralized procurement bureaucracy has to go! It should be replaced by a panel of experts that have the expertise and knowledge to procure necessary weapons and supplies. I agree with Pushpa from Brisbane, Australia, in this.
 World War I era weapons? Good God! We live in 2008! ---Lev D. Zilbermints, Newark, United States of America

The Lee Enfield may not have the rate of fire of an AK47, but it is more powerful and far more accurate. It was highly effective in two world wars and was still the main British infantry weapon in 1945. An AK47 is far better at close quarters, but a Lee Enfield only needed one hit to be effective. ---Martin, London,
 C Hill, been to Central London recently? Armed Police are a common sight, the

Met has a specialist firearms unit who are highly trained and there are Special Forces Soldiers based in the city. It is hard to prevent an attack like this, but the response would of differed, they picked a soft target. ---Andy, Northants, UK
At least, top officers should be well equipped and well trained with the very latest available technological weapons. This will definitely create a kind of fear on the attackers. ---Rajendra, Bangalore, India

To the guy who said English Police are unarmed, have you been to London? The regular guys are unarmed but when i went to london i saw plenty of cops carrying MP5's around tourist attractions, it was rather intimidating ---Justin, Santa Barbara, United States

Perhaps before criticising the Indian police and their equipment too much, people should consider how well the UK police, who are mostly unarmed, would be able to react to a distributed group of fanatics for example in London. ---C Hill, Houston, USA

The moment I saw the "elite" troops in action I knew they were ill equipped; their clothing, weapons were nothing short of ragtag, and they were rather hesitant on the helicopter landing - commandos are supposed to be precise and ruthless. ---Howard, Manchester,

It is very sad to hear that Hemant Karkare & other senior Mumbai police officers were killed due to out dated Bullet Proof vests & plastic helmets they wore. The entire Indian Police Force needs a complete overhaul immediately & be supplied with latest bullet-proof vests, helmets & automatic weapons ---Pushpa, Brisbane, Australia

For a country that has recently launched a mission to the moon and received millions in aid from the UK this year, you would think the era of pop guns and tin hats would be long past. If this is not a wake up call, I don't know will be. ---Martin, York, UK

So: India failed to heed warnings; cops failed to contain 10 men; elite troops failed to move quickly; "elite" troops failed to cope with 8 men armed only with rifles & grenades.

And now India lacks the courage even for the gesture of striking terror camps within Pakistan. Superpower ? Hah ! ---T Hunter, London,

Excerpted from *Maxwell Pereira's Blog: 081203: The Times: Outgunned Mumbai police hampered by First*

World War weapons

<http://maxwellpereira.blogspot.de/2008/12/081203-times-outgunned-mumbai-police.html>

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