

November 27, 2008 -- Updated 0530 GMT (1330 HKT)

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Gunfire heard at two Mumbai hotels

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- **NEW:** Gunshots heard at two Mumbai hotels where hostages are being held
- Gunmen strike at series of targets popular with tourists and business people
- 85 dead, 200 wounded, police spokesman says
- Police say it is unclear who carried out attacks

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(CNN) -- The morning after teams of gunmen carried out a brazen series of attacks across southern Mumbai, killing scores of people and taking hostages in three locations, the situation showed little signs of a quick resolution.

A series of gunshots rang through the air at the Oberoi Hotel Thursday morning, where about 100 members of a specialized unit of the Indian police undertook an operation to rescue four to five foreigners hostages on the 19th floor.

A few blocks away, a series of gunfire sent curious onlookers scurrying for cover at the Taj Mahal Hotel. Shortly afterward, police escorted dozens of people -- who appeared to be mostly westerners -- out of the hotel. A.N. Roy, the police chief of Maharashtra state, where Mumbai is located, said all hostages there had been freed.

A standoff at a third location -- the Cama Hospital for women and infants -- also appeared to have been resolved by Thursday morning, CNN's sister station CNN-IBN reported. It was not immediately known whether gunmen at the hospital fled or were killed.

Israel Foreign Ministry was attempting to locate about 20 Israeli nationals missing in the city as police said four suspected gunmen took cover in a building called Nariman House, where several Jewish families live.

Police said gunmen fired indiscriminately from the building throughout the night. Stray bullets killed a couple in their home and a 16-year-old boy who stepped outside, police said.

Authorities asked residents in Mumbai to stay inside, uncertain whether other attacks were planned in the city.

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That warning failed to stop knots of curious onlookers from strolling Thursday through the streets of this financial center to survey the damage at some of the 10 sites that, without warning, had turned into battlegrounds late Wednesday.

Mumbai remained locked down with police checking cars randomly. The stock market in the city -- the financial capital of India -- was closed, as were schools and colleges.

Government officials said the attacks caught them completely unawares, with no intelligence chatter indicating that such a coordinated assault was in the works. Instead, authorities had focused their attention on securing movie theaters and malls after receiving indications that terrorists were intending to attack those locations, CNN-IBN reported.

"It's war on Mumbai," read the banner headline on the front page of The Times of India.

Mumbai police spokesman Satish Katsa put the death toll to be at least 85 and another 200 wounded. An earlier report said an additional nine attackers had been killed.

At the five-star Taj Mahal Hotel, a fire continued to burn hours after it began on the top floor of the majestic, century-old Victorian building popular among Western tourists and diplomats.

CNN employee Yasmin Wong was among the guests at the Taj Mahal who holed up in her fourth-floor room for several hours, then ran out her door, down the stairs, into the lobby and past the pool in the rear of the hotel to safety.

"I saw a few casualties on the way down," she told CNN. She said she also saw the guest in a room above hers. He had smashed out his fifth-floor window to escape the fire and was hanging out his window, but no one was there to help.

International hot lines

Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs offers these numbers: In Australia: 1-800-002 214. Australians overseas, call 61 2 6261-3305.

UK: The British Ministry of Foreign Affairs is directing concerned UK nationals to call 44 (0)20 7008-0000

U.S.: The State Department has established a Consular Call Center: The number is 888-407-4747.

"He was just screaming and yelling for help," she said, adding that she did not know what became of the man. "I'd been instructed just to get out of my room," she said.

Bhushan Gagrani, a spokesman for Maharashtra, said no one had claimed responsibility for the attacks.

But several Indian news outlets reported receiving e-mails from a group calling itself the Deccan Mujahideen that claimed responsibility for the attacks. CNN was not able to verify the reports.

Gagrani said nine suspects were arrested overnight and three other people were detained for questioning. CNN-IBN reported that seven of the nine arrested are fishermen. The network said that police found a boat loaded with explosives near the Taj Mahal.

Hemant Karkare, chief of Mumbai police's anti-terrorism squad, was among the fatalities at the Hotel Oberoi, officials said.

In addition, 11 other police were killed, Deshmukh said. He said officials did not know how many attackers were involved.

A man told local television that he was in the Oberoi around 10 p.m. when gunmen entered the lobby and began rounding up guests, asking for anyone with a U.S. or British passport and taking hostage about 15 of

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them.

The Cafe Leopold, another popular hangout for Western tourists, was also targeted, and one police official said an attack occurred at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station, a Victorian building.

CNN-IBN reported the attacks began shortly before 10 p.m. (12:30 p.m. ET) Wednesday and witnesses were reporting new explosions and gunfire into early Thursday morning.

A.N. Roy, the police chief of Maharashtra, said the gunmen used grenades and automatic weapons.

India has suffered a number of attacks in recent years, including a string of bombs that ripped through packed Mumbai commuter trains and platforms during rush hour in July 2006. About 209 people were killed in that attack.

Last July, a series of synchronized bomb blasts in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad left 49 dead and more than 100 wounded, police said.

But Paresh Parihar, a businessman in Mumbai, described Wednesday's attacks as unlike any previous ones.

"They really don't fear for their lives or any other activity that could put them in danger," he told CNN. "This is really a very unusual situation."

Mumbai ordered schools closed Thursday. [E-mail to a friend](#) | [Mixx it](#) | [Share](#)

CNN's Hameet Shah Singh and Correspondent Andrew Stevens in Mumbai contributed to this story.

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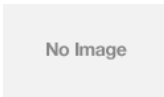
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