



10-43: Be Advised...

with Doug Wyllie, PoliceOne Editor in Chief

FBI Director Mueller: A Mumbai-style attack can happen in the U.S.

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Editor's Note: *Two weeks after the terrorst attacks in Mumbai, PoliceOne presented a special report consisting of articles from SWAT Columnists Lt. Dan Marcou and Sgt. Glenn French, as well as analysis from Stratfor and opinion from P1 members. Two weeks ago, we published the first in a three-part series from PoliceOne columnist Dick Fairburn on the important subject of police readiness and training for a Mumbai-style attack (part two in that series will appear on Friday, March 5th). Today's report summarizes remarks made by FBI Director Robert Mueller to the Council on Foreign Relations last week. The transcript (as well as streaming audio) of Director Mueller's speech can be found on the CFR Web site.*

How many cities around the world could fall prey to a Mumbai-style attack? How many cities here in the United States? Could a similar attack happen in Seattle or San Diego,

These were the questions posed by FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III in an address before the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C. last week.

Muller said that the terrorist attacks that killed more than 170 and wounded more than 300 others in Mumbai three months ago “reminds us that terrorists with large agendas and little money can use rudimentary weapons to maximize their impact” and that “the simplest of weapons can be deadly when combined with capability and intent.”

Mueller warned that while the United States continues to face threats from al Qaeda, we must also focus on lesser-known terrorist groups—particularly extremists from ‘visa-waiver countries,’ who are “merely an e-ticket away from the United States.”

In the aftermath of September 11th, the United States was principally focused on al Qaeda, Mueller said. He emphasized that our primary threat continues to come from the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan but noted that “we are seeing persistent activity elsewhere, from the Maghreb and the Sahel to Yemen.”

The FBI is increasingly concerned with pockets of people around the world that identify with al Qaeda and its

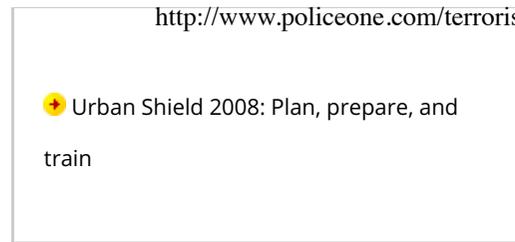


FBI Director Robert Mueller arrives for a meeting at the Indian Home Ministry in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday, March 3, 2009. Muller told the Council on Foreign Relations that the terrorist attacks that killed more than 170 and wounded more than 300 others in Mumbai serve as a warning for U.S. law enforcement. (AP Photo/Gurinder Osan)

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ideology although they have little or no actual contact with—or connection to—al Qaeda. Mueller went on to say that there is a real threat from “homegrown” terrorist activities, and that a balance must be struck between acting early to disrupt a plot in its planning stages, and “continuing to investigate until we are certain that the individuals in question are poised to attack.”



“In each of the plots the FBI has disrupted since September 11th,” Mueller said, “some have asked whether the individuals in question had the intent and the capability to carry out their plans. Take the planned attack against Fort Dix, for example. The men we convicted had engaged in target practice in the woods of Pennsylvania. They had watched Al Qaeda training videos. They had a map of the base, and a plan to get in. And they had purchased semiautomatic weapons from an FBI sting operation.”

Like the attackers in Mumbai, the men who plotted to attack Fort Dix wanted to inflict as much damage as they could, Mueller said.

While the FBI continues to work closely with intelligence partners around the world, Mueller said that the agency is redoubling its efforts here in the United States. He said that part of that effort involves breaking the barriers that exist between law enforcement and the community it serves, particularly within immigrant communities where young men are likely to become indoctrinated and radicalized and then carry out attacks either here or overseas.

“Too often, we run up against a wall...based on myth and misperception of the work we do. We know that the best way to tear down that wall is brick by brick, person by person. Yet we understand the reluctance of some communities to sit down at the table with us. They may come from countries where national police forces and security

To illustrate his point, Mueller spoke about a man from Minneapolis who is believed to be the first U.S. citizen to carry out a terrorist suicide bombing. The attack occurred last October in northern Somalia, but it appears that this individual was radicalized in his hometown in Minnesota. Mueller said that the prospect of “young immigrant men being induced to travel to take up arms—and to kill themselves and perhaps many others—is a perversion of the immigrant story.”

Mueller said that in every case where an individual poses a threat, key questions must be asked and answered: Where has this individual been? Who are his associates, and where are they now? What are they doing, and who are they talking to?

“This targeted intelligence-gathering takes time and it requires patience, precision, and dedication,” he said. “It requires a unity of effort, here at home and overseas. Intelligence enables us to see the unseen, to discover new threats on the horizon. Yet even the best intelligence will not provide complete certainty, given the nature and number of the threats we face.”

About the author

Doug Wyllie is Editor in Chief of PoliceOne, responsible for setting the editorial direction of the website and managing the planned editorial features by our roster of expert writers. An award-winning columnist — he is the 2014 Western Publishing Association "Maggie Award" winner in the category of Best Regularly Featured Digital Edition Column — Doug has authored more than 800 feature articles and tactical tips on a wide range of topics and trends that affect the law enforcement community. Doug is a member of International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association (ILEETA), an Associate Member of the California Peace Officers' Association (CPOA), and a member of the Public Safety Writers Association (PSWA). Even in his "spare" time, he is active in his support for the law enforcement community, contributing his time and talents toward police-related charitable events as well as participating in force-on-force training, search-and-rescue training, and other scenario-based training designed to prepare cops for the fight they face every day on the street.

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