

**THE GLOBE AND MAIL**

## Terror attacks put Mumbai under siege

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Indian authorities struggled overnight to gain control of Mumbai, the country's financial hub, after gunmen stormed a series of hotels and major centres, targeting both Western foreigners and anti-terrorism officials and killing at least 101, including six foreigners. At least 287 were injured.

The series of armed attacks and bombings targeted several high-profile buildings in the coastal city, including the five-star Oberoi and Taj Mahal hotels, the city's largest railway station, a police station, two hospitals and a popular café for foreigners, largely in the southern tip of the Mumbai peninsula, near the famed Gateway to India monument.

Gunmen also seized the Mumbai headquarters of the ultra-orthodox Jewish outreach group Chabad Lubavitch, the New York-based group said. Indian commandos surrounded the building in the morning, and media reports said gunfire was heard from the building.

A small Islamic extremist group, the Mujahedeen of India's Deccan region, claimed responsibility, but some media cited American sources who suspected the larger, Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist group or the Indian Mujahedeen may have been behind the attack.

The terrorists remained determined this morning, 12 hours into their attack. A militant holed up inside the Oberoi told Indian media that seven attackers were still holding hostages in the hotel.

"We want all mujahedeens held in India released and only after that, we will release the people," the man identified as Sahadullah said. "Release all the mujahedeens, and Muslims living in India should not be troubled."

The attack was extensive, spread out and appeared to be well-planned. It included at least one police van. Witnesses said it was carried out by young, masked men carrying AK-47s, some of them wearing jeans and T-shirts. Some approached the waterfront hotels by boat.

The attacks began late in the evening on Wednesday, and took place over several

hours, including a midnight bombing that lit the top floor of the five-star Taj Mahal ablaze. Guests were told to turn out the lights and wait for help throughout the night.

We have only a very tenuous grasp on what is happening so far. People are scared. The incidents being reported are so many. Gunmen are under siege at several locations but we are worried about hitting civilians," a police spokesman told The Times of London overnight.

Among the dead were the chief of the city's anti-terrorism squad, Hemant Karkare, and two other local anti-terrorism officers. About a dozen police officers in all were killed. At least nine Europeans were reported to have been admitted to hospital with gunshot wounds, while one Japanese man was shot and killed.

An Israeli rabbi and his family, who live in Mumbai, had also reportedly been taken hostage in their home. As dawn broke, police spokesman A.N. Roy told reporters that authorities hadn't brought the city under control, though four suspects had died in car crashes and two in gunfights, and nine more had been arrested.

The luxurious Taj and Oberoi hotels are popular with foreign tourists. When gunmen got inside, they sought out Britons and Americans specifically, reports indicated. Some civilians managed to flee, including a British politician, while as many as 40 were apparently still being held in the Oberoi by this morning.

"I was in the main [Taj Mahal]lobby and there was all of a sudden a lot of firing outside," Sajjad Karim, part of a delegation of European lawmakers visiting Mumbai, the former Bombay, told The Associated Press.

As he turned to get away, "all of a sudden another gunman appeared in front of us, carrying machine gun-type weapons. And he just started firing at us. ... I just turned and ran in the opposite direction."

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon said there were no reports of Canadians injured or killed in the attacks. CTV News, citing Indian media reports, said that 10 Canadians were among those held hostage.

Canadian Manuela Testolini was staying at the Taj Mahal, but was eating at the Oberoi hotel restaurant when the attacks broke out. When she heard gunfire, she and other patrons fled with the young gunmen in pursuit.

"We ran through the kitchen, and the gunmen followed," Ms. Testolini, 32, told CNN from a cellphone while in hiding. The group of about 200 guests and 40 staff sought refuge in a dark ballroom, passing around what phones they had to call family while the battle continued outside.

"We can still hear the gunfire, we've heard a couple grenades go off," said Ms. Testolini, whose charity work brought her to Mumbai. "We're absolutely exhausted.

This has been going on for seven hours or so."

Ms. Testolini, who'd earlier made headlines with her marriage to pop star Prince, called her mother in Toronto to say she was all right. She'd been set to fly home Thursday.

"When I saw [her hotel] on fire, I was beside myself," her mother Monica told The Globe and Mail. "I was crying. She said, 'Mom, don't cry, I'm okay.'" The son of another Canadian couple told a Vancouver radio station his parents had been staying in the Taj Mahal, but weren't hurt. His mother narrowly escaped injury.

"She went outside to get something, and then they found out there's terrorists in the hotel," her son Bobby Waliea said. "As she was pulling out of the parking lot, that's when the first bomb exploded."

The niece of a couple from Surrey, B.C., 21-year-old Indian national Jasmine Bhurji, was shot and killed while working at the Oberoi, one of the first to die in the attacks.

"She was reportedly shot by the terrorists there, and she couldn't make it to the hospital. She has passed away," her uncle, Nirbhye Singh, told The Globe. "We never thought this would happen."

Mr. Cannon did not say whether Canadians are among those who may have been taken hostage, and didn't take questions from reporters.

"Canada strongly condemns the savage terrorist attacks in Mumbai which have left hundreds of innocent civilians injured or killed. These cowardly attacks are truly appalling. On behalf of all Canadians, I extend my condolences to the families and friends of those who've lost their lives," Mr. Cannon said. "Canada stands firmly united with the Government of India in condemning these despicable acts of violence."

The attacks also brought swift condemnation from many Western governments, including those in London and Washington. No details were released on Britons or Americans who may have died.

Briton Alex Chamberlain said one gunman, a man of 22 or 23, ushered 30 or 40 people from the Oberoi restaurant into a stairway and ordered everyone to put up their hands.

"They were talking about British and Americans specifically. There was an Italian guy, who, you know, they said: 'Where are you from?' and he said he's from Italy and they said 'fine' and they left him alone. And I thought: 'Fine, they're going to shoot me if they ask me anything' - and thank God they didn't," he said.

Mr. Chamberlain, who later escaped, said the gunman spoke in Hindi or Urdu.

Soldiers had been called into the city Thursday morning. Fresh gunfire broke out at both hotels just before 9 a.m., local time, after which a curfew was issued around the Taj, where all hostages were thought to have been released, suggesting military and police were attacking remaining terrorists inside.

About 10 a.m., black-clad soldiers stormed the Taj, while terrorists remained holed up in the Oberoi.

"We're gong to catch them dead or alive," State Home Minister R.R. Patil told reporters. "An attack on Mumbai is an attack on the rest of the country."

The Indian stock markets were closed for Thursday. The other targets of attack included the popular Café Leopold and the Chhatrapati Shivaji train station, formerly Victoria station, in which terrorists were also thought to have barricaded themselves briefly overnight.

Witness Nasim Inam's hands shook when he spoke of seeing commuters gunned down.

"They just fired randomly at people and then ran away. In seconds, people fell to the ground," he said.

None of the targeted sites are as important to Mumbai residents as the elegant Taj Mahal hotel, built in 1903 and located prominently on the water. Reports indicated it was hit by half a dozen bombs. "My heart is just breaking, watching it burn," Mumbai resident Dina Mehta, 42, told The Globe and Mail. "It's part of our heritage. It's always been there. It's something to be proud of, and we don't have very much to be proud of architecturally in the city."

Canadians of Indian descent gathered to watch for news of the attacks Wednesday night.

"This is the most daring attack that one could imagine," said Shri Gopal, 59, an Ottawa resident and past president of the India-Canada Association. "We are Canadians, but we are also Indo-Canadians. We still have relatives there. ... It's shocking, actually."

Mumbai has been hit repeatedly by terror attacks since March, 1993, when Muslim underworld figures tied to Pakistani militants allegedly carried out a series of bombings on Mumbai's stock exchange, trains, hotels and gas stations. Those attacks killed 257 people and wounded more than 1,100, and were thought to have been aimed at avenging the deaths of hundreds of Muslims in religious riots that had earlier swept India.

Ten years later, in 2003, 52 people were killed in Mumbai bombings blamed on Muslim militants. In July, 2007, a series of seven bombings on trains and at commuter rail stations killed at least 187 people.

Since May, a militant group calling itself the Indian Mujahedeen has taken credit for a string of blasts that killed more than 130 people.

*With reports from the Associated Press, Canadian Press, Reuters and Bill Curry in Ottawa*

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