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### CAMPBELL BROWN: NO BIAS, NO BULL

Timeline of Terror

Aired November 28, 2008 - 20:00 ET

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WOLF BLITZER, CNN ANCHOR: Good evening. I'm Wolf Blitzer reporting with a special edition of NO BIAS, NO BULL, our continuing coverage of terror attacks in India. We want to welcome our viewers in the United States and around the world.

Tonight, gunfire at the Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel, Indian troops mopping up resistance, looking for one or more gunman may still be holed up in this historic complex.

And a Jewish center raided this morning, but forces could not prevent a bloodbath inside, two New York City rabbis killed there, two Americans also murdered elsewhere in Mumbai, at least 160 fatalities in all. That number could go up..

And survivors from the Taj Hotel to the Oberoi Hotel and elsewhere now emerge with truly remarkable stories, many of which you will be hearing tonight.

The investigation well under way, with Indian officials pointing fingers at Pakistan, the picture tonight slowly, slowly coming into focus of a well-prepared, tightly disciplined, ruthlessly dedicated pack of killers.

For the latest on all of what's going on right now, let's go to CNN's Nic Robertson. He's joining us live from Mumbai with the big picture.

Set the scene for us, Nic. What a horrible, horrible series of terror attacks.

NIC ROBERTSON, CNN SENIOR INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Wolf, and people will be bearing witness to those attacks. In an hour or so, it will be daybreak. Some of the first of the funerals for those 160 people who have been killed will take place in and around Mumbai.



The standoff at the Oberoi Hotel ended a few hours earlier. Yesterday, here in Mumbai, the police and commandos there securing the release of several tens of people taken out of a building, more than 36 people found dead. And the siege at the Chabad center, the Jewish center in Mumbai not far from those hotels, ended in tragedy. The commandos that were airdropped onto the roof of the building blew a hole in the building, climbed down the outside. When they got inside, an intensive shoot-out and explosions with the attackers inside the building there.

But Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, his wife and three other people, also found dead in that building, two attackers in that building killed in the exchange of gunfire.

Just the standoff at the Taj Mahal going on, the investigation gathering pace, evidence police here say that the attackers arrived by boat. The foreign minister here pointing the finger of blame at Pakistan, saying they were involved in the terror that took place in Mumbai, Pakistani officials saying one of the Pakistani intelligence officials from the ISI, Pakistani's intelligence service, is available and can come to India to help Indian officials continue with the investigation -- Wolf.

BLITZER: All right, Wolf, Nic. Nice has got the big picture.

But let's go over to the Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel right now in Mumbai.

CNN's Sara Sidner is just outside.

What's going on right now? The last time we spoke, Sara, we were hearing gunfire.

SARA SIDNER, CNN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Yes.

Now we have just seen about a half-dozen commandos run behind us, run behind the media, and toward the building, but sort of in a roundabout way. They were running at a very fast speed just trying to get to a certain location. We cannot see where they went exactly, but definitely some action going on here.

And, again, over the past 10 minutes, we have heard gunfire. We have not been hearing the big blasts that have been breaking out every now and then, but definitely plenty of gunfire, a succession of gunfire. I counted about five or six shots in the last 10 minutes. Before that, there were at least 10 shots going off inside the building.

What we still understand is that there still is at least one terrorist inside this hotel who has basically been up for more than 48 hours. We're into the third day. I can tell you light has now finally come here in Mumbai. It is now 6:30. So, it is now light enough for everyone to see each other and everyone to see the Taj very clearly.

The Taj has been lit up for most of the day. I can look into the lobby right now. And I'm looking into the lobby. You have commandos standing just at the door. They're standing outside and inside of the door with their helmet, with their guns, and completely ready to make a move if they need to. But, certainly, there has still been gunfire. And this has lasted for so long. What we are not yet hearing is what the status of any of the guests who may be inside, locked in their rooms with the lights turned out, and if there are any hostages who are still there and still in the clutches of the terrorists.

What we also are not hearing are numbers. We have still not been able to get numbers of people who may still be inside. We do know that over the past 24 hours, there have been some good stories, people who have been able to make their way out. And so that is good news, but we have not seen anyone coming out of that hotel since then.

So, we're still waiting to hear exactly what is happening inside of this hotel, but this siege has lasted for so long. People here who have been covering these sorts of things for years and years and years just cannot believe things has gone on for so long if in fact there is only one gunman still inside -- Wolf.

BLITZER: and just remind our viewers, Sara, this Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel, it is really a landmark in Mumbai. It's been around forever. And people must be stunned at what is happening to this hotel and clearly to all the guests who are inside.

SIDNER: Absolutely.

This is a historic monument, really. People come to Mumbai to see this. You don't have to stay in this hotel. You can just come outside and you can look at the majestic beauty of this hotel. It has got three beautiful domes. It's got one extra tower that goes up. It's about 18 feet high.

But, basically, what you're seeing is a beautiful piece of architecture. It is 105 years old. And it's a shame to see so much damage to the building. I mean (INAUDIBLE) from the outside, there have, since I have been covering this, and since my colleagues have been covering this, there have been three separate fires. You can see some of a window that has been burnt out, so you know the inside of the room is charred.

You can see the top of one of the small domes has been burned. And the roof as well has been burnt, Wolf. So, right now, it just is a mess in there. We have no idea what it looks like inside, but judging from the loud bangs, judging from the flashes, judging from all of the gunfire that is going on and that has gone over the past more than 48 hours, there has got to be a lot of damage inside that hotel.

But the number-one concern, of course, Wolf, for the commandos and for anyone, family member and journalist alike, we're all wondering who is still inside and hoping that the guests that are inside their rooms and any possible hostages are still OK at this hour -- Wolf.

BLITZER: All right, Sara, stand by. We are going to get back to you. As we have saying, gunfire still being heard at this beautiful hotel. We are going to have more insight shortly on who might have done this and why. Al Qaeda expert Peter Bergen, he's standing by live. We will talk to him after the break.

First, though, how all this unfolded minute by minute from CNN's David Mattingly.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

DAVID MATTINGLY, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Bursts of gunfire, grenade attacks and death.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It was dark and there was blood all over the steps.



ranning out across Mumbai, their targets, luxury hotels, a hospital, cafe, Chabad House Jewish center, and a train station.

Around 9:30 p.m., the highly coordinated suicide attack is under way.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We were shocked. We saw men running down our hallway and we could see through the peephole in the door. We could see guns in their hands. They actually rang our doorbell two times.

MATTINGLY: Within the next few hours, the horror sets in.

ANTHONY ROSE, EYEWITNESS: They were using hand grenades to try and blow in doors. And then they seemed to retreat from that and started focusing on other areas of the hotel. We could hear people, it seemed like, being dragged up to the -- the roof of the hotel.

MATTINGLY: During that first night, the gunmen kill dozens, injure hundreds, and take scores of hostages.

Early Thursday morning, the fight intensifies. Explosions rock the Taj Mahal Hotel, and a huge plume of smoke rises into the night.

By daybreak, the terror remains. Gunmen continue to hold hostages. Some are freed by soldiers and police officers.

PATRICIA SCOTT, TERROR ATTACK SURVIVOR: Everybody grabbed hands. And there was a woman's heel. And it was just standing there. And you knew that people had died before as we're walking out.

MATTINGLY: Friday, the assault on the Trident Oberoi Hotel ends with at least two extremists dead and more than 100 guests freed.

But there are casualties, among the killed, two Americans, Alan Scherr and his 13-year-old daughter, Naomi. At the Chabad House, where government forces have surrounded the building, the standoff ends. When officers enter the center, they find two gunmen dead. They also recover the bodies of five hostages.

David Mattingly, CNN, Atlanta.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

BLITZER: And coming up, what the killers' tactics say about who might have trained and sent them. Stand by.

And we will have more on the teams who took back Mumbai, what they found when they did.

Also, survivor stories. We're talking live to the people who escaped a massacre and what they went through in those awful hours.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SCOTT: The TV wasn't working. The lights were hardly working. And they have reinvented our tour. And we're not going home. We're not going to let the terrorists win.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BLITZER: Cheering for the commandos who raided the Chabad House in Mumbai, ending the siege there, but not before five hostages lost their lives, including two New York rabbis and the wife of one of them, the killers targeting Jews, Britons, Americans, other Westerners.

The questions tonight, who were they? Who trained them? Who gave them the orders?

Let's get some more now from CNN's Kelli Arena.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

KELLI ARENA, CNN JUSTICE CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): It is still not clear exactly who is responsible for the attacks in Mumbai. Counterterrorism officials say investigators are still looking closely at extremist groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, or LET, made up of Pakistani militants who have fought Indian troops in Kashmir. Intelligence sources say the group's fighters have been sighted in the Pakistan border region and the U.S. believes some have attended al Qaeda training camps there.

PAT D'AMURO, FMR. FBI COUNTERTERRORISM OFFICIAL: Somewhere between 15,000 to 20,000 individuals went through those training camps. And that may be a conservative figure. They trained on these types of events. They trained on urban assaults, they trained on attacking vehicles, they trained in taking hostages.

ARENA: Far different from many of the suicide attacks and vehicle bombings we've seen recently, these terrorist terrorists came in guns blazing. Experts say the coordination of the attack, hitting at least nine sites, and the specific targeting of westerners signals a broader new radical Islamic agenda in the region and warned the U.S. could face a similar attack.

HAROLD COPUS, FMR. FBI AGENT: We've always thought that in the past, that the terrorists, when they hit the United States, would hit targets that were high profile. What that now means is they could hit any building in any city in the United States, go in that building and get as high up as they can, and then take their hostages and have a standoff.

ARENA: The FBI sent out a bulletin late Thursday night to its law enforcement partners citing the Mumbai attacks and urging them to remain vigilant



ARENA: The United States and several other countries lost citizens in those attacks, and they all want answers. It's not clear, though, what kind of investigative access the FBI will get if its team is allowed in. The Indian government has the final say-so -- Wolf.

BLITZER: There usually, Kelli, as you know, is an FBI attache assigned to U.S. embassies, especially in friendly companies. In India, I'm sure there's an FBI representative already there. Do we know how much access this individual may or may not be receiving?

ARENA: Well, he's actually based in New Delhi, Wolf, 700 miles away from Mumbai. And he -- they are getting briefings. FBI stands ready to help.

But it's very different to get a team in on the ground with forensic specialists and interrogation experts. That's what they're hoping for.

BLITZER: All right, Kelli, thanks very much -- Kelli Arena with that.

Coming up, we're going to be speaking with a pair of people who truly have amazing stories to tell us of courage and good fortune and survival.

But, up next, some perspective from terror experts, Peter Bergen, Paul Cruickshank, and Ken Robinson.

Stay with us. Our coverage continues.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SIDNER: ... sustain long hours, and dealing with...

(EXPLOSION)

SIDNER: OK. All right. We're -- another loud bang you heard there. Now, if you listen, probably in the next few minutes, there will be a succession of -- of gunshots.

All right. The journalists are now moving back. This is getting really serious, and it's getting too close for comfort.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BLITZER: That was Sara Sidner of CNN outside the Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel. It's a very dangerous place to be right now, but she's one courageous journalist.

Tonight, we're trying to piece together the story of how the terrorists planned and carried out their bloody attacks on Mumbai. Everything we're learning points to a very sophisticated operation.

An Indian official today said the gunmen were young men in their 20s who knew the layout of the hotels well enough to vanish after confronting security forces.

Joining us now to discuss what's going on, our CNN national security analyst Peter Bergen. He's in Washington. In New York is terrorist analyst Paul Cruickshank, who is a fellow at the NYU Center for Law and Security. And former military intelligence officer Ken Robinson, he's joining us from L.A.

Let me go to Peter first.

Peter, there doesn't seem to be, as far as I can tell, any direct evidence at this point linking al Qaeda. But the scale and sophistication of the operation, the multiple targets, the simultaneous attacks, what does that tell you about the people who may have done this?

PETER BERGEN, CNN TERRORISM ANALYST: Well, according to a U.S. counterterrorism that was in communication with recently, he thought that there might be more anywhere between 40 to 80 people involved in the attack.

As Nic Robinson was reporting earlier, each of these locations seems to have two gunmen. So -- but to organize something like this, you don't -- it's not just about the gunmen. It's about the people who brought you in on the boats. It's about the people who financed this. It's about the people who planned this.

And we saw, on the 9/11 operation, there were 19 hijackers, but there were dozens of other people who in one way facilitated the attacks with money transfers. And these are sorts of things, Wolf, that investigators will be looking at.

I would suspect that investigators in particular are going to be looking at the city of Karachi, which is somewhere al Qaeda has had a presence, somewhere where numerous Kashmiri militant groups have a presence, and also where this Dawood Ibrahim, an Indian gangster who has allegedly masterminded attacks in Bombay killing up to 250 people back in '93, he is supposedly living there as well.

So, I think that is where a lot of investigation will be directed at.

BLITZER: I assume, Peter, if they capture some of these terrorists alive, the Indians will be able to get information on who may have been responsible, how they did it. They're probably pretty good at that kind of stuff; is that right?

BERGEN: Well, I'm not sure about what investigative techniques they will use, but, presumably, they will be pretty direct in their approach.

BLITZER: I assume.

All right, Paul, how many groups are there who can pull off something as sophisticated as this?

PAUL CRUICKSHANK, FELLOW, CENTER ON LAW AND SECURITY: Well, there are not that many groups. There was a claim of responsibility from this group called Deccan Mujahideen. Well, no one has really heard of them. It's very unlikely that they carried out this attack.

I think it's much more likely that this is a combination of maybe an indigenous group, like Indian Mujahideen, working in collaboration with a Pakistani



attacks would continue, Wolf.

BLITZER: Ken Robinson, you are really an arms expert, among other things. We have seen these dramatic explosions inside the hotel room at the Taj, at the Oberoi Hotel.

What is really going on? What are we seeing? Because it could be deceptive.

KEN ROBINSON, CNN NATIONAL SECURITY ANALYST: Well, it has the appearance of a counterterrorism tactic known as dynamic entry.

What you have is a problem. When you try to clear a building like that, you're going to meet a terrorist at a place of his choosing. So, the tactic is to use what's known as a flash-bang simulator. This is a device that creates shock and it creates wave and it has a phosphorus light that is very explosive.

And then, when they enter the room, they may enter the room firing their weapon. So, it's not necessarily every time you hear a weapon fire or an explosion, that they're actually engaging directly in combat with someone. It's a technique which is used to clear the room to reduce the amount of casualties on the counterterrorist side. So, there's a possibility that that should be considered as well.

BLITZER: Peter Bergen, the fact that they took hostages, but made no public demands, what does that say to you?

BERGEN: Well, that is very strange, because hostage-takers almost always make demands.

And so one thing it says is that from the very beginning these guys intended to commit suicide. There was no plan to really release prisoners. There was a call to an Indian TV station in economy they talked about they wanted to release prisoners, the fellow mujahedeen. They mentioned Kashmir.

But they made no formal demands to the Indian government that any of us are aware of. So, clearly, it was entire -- they knew this was going to be sort of death by policemen in a sense. They went in there knowing it was going to be a suicidal operation. And they really made no formal demands, merely propaganda of the deed, in a sense, by killing Westerners, killing Jews, and killing a lot of Indians, of course.

BLITZER: Paul, let me ask you what I asked Peter earlier. They have captured some of these gunmen alive, the Indians, that is. How much information are they likely to get from them?

CRUICKSHANK: Well, I would expect over time quite a lot of information that will come from. Where are they from? Are they Indian groups? Are they Pakistani groups? Are they from some other country?

All this information, I think, will start to come out over the next days. And they must have some of this information already. But they don't seem to be publicly releasing this yet.

BLITZER: Yes, with good reason.

Ken, Ken Robinson, if you were giving advice to U.S. authorities right now, based on what we have seen in Mumbai over the past couple of days, what lessons, immediate lessons, would you be learning?

ROBINSON: The first one is to take a breath.

Terrorism is theater. They're trying to shape our behavior. What needs to happen is, the United States government needs to very carefully help and work with the government of India and the government of Pakistan to be able to identify who the true sponsors of the event are. There's been a lot of proxy -- use of proxy forces by both governments over the years. And this exploitation of this center of attacking us and attacking the Indians economically is the larger issue, not the actual event of the attack, but the impact, the measure of effectiveness.

They want to hurt economically and they want to create a lack of governance in that area of the world right now, where governance is really the most important question. Because of Afghanistan and because of a junior government just getting started in Pakistan and the elections which are getting ready to come up in the government of India, this is designed to fracture that.

BLITZER: Good point. Ken Robinson, thank you.

Paul Cruickshank, thank you as well.

And, Peter Bergen, our national security analyst, thanks to you, as well.

BLITZER: All right, this is just coming in. We have just received word from the State Department that yet another American has died in this attack in Mumbai.

We don't know yet any of the specifics about the latest casualty, but will bring you more information as it becomes available -- once again, the State Department saying yet another American is confirmed dead in Mumbai.

Up next: He was nearly face to face with a terrorist. We're going to be live with one of the survivors, who shares how he escaped.

And, later, on the front lines in the E.R -- CNN's exclusive video of hospital workers and the wounded, that is coming up as well.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: These people, they are very, very familiar with the layout of the hotel. They knew all entries and exits.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WOLF BLITZER, CNN ANCHOR: Clues to the Indian (ph) commando says the killers were very well prepared. For one businessman, a split second



not exactly sure why you made it when you heard that knock on the door in the middle of the night.

**JONATHAN EHRLICH, SURVIVED ATTACK AT MUMBAI HOTEL:** That's right. I was lying in bed and I'd fallen asleep about an hour ago. And there was a knock on my door followed by a ringing of the bell. There's actually doorbells in the hotel rooms of these hotels. And I couldn't quite figure out who it was.

I know the only person who could have been was my friend and colleague, Alex Chamberlain, who was in the bar in the Oberoi lobby and it couldn't have been the hotel staff given the hours. So I had no idea who it was. I just knew that I was tired and I didn't get out of bed.

**BLITZER:** And so that may have saved your life, if in fact the terrorists were knocking on doors, looking for Westerners and you're a Canadian so that could have been the end of you, no doubt about that. Let's talk a little bit about what you did next. You began to hear, what, gunfire? Grenades? What was going on?

**EHRLICH:** Well, about five minutes after the knock at the door, I heard the first explosion outside my window and I went to the window and looked down and saw a large cloud of gray smoke coming up from the road. I knew there was something wrong. And I made a few steps toward my door when the second explosion happened and this one was much bigger and much louder and the whole building shook.

And I knew that something was really bad and I made my way out into the hallway when I turned around and I saw a couple of the other guests and I heard the word "bomb." And when I heard the word "bomb" something immediately switched off in my head. Adrenaline started to move through to my body. I thought my heart was going to explode.

And I quickly ran back to my room, threw a couple of things into a bag and started to make my way downstairs. I went down about 18 flights of stairs and probably about three minutes, I landed in the lobby area of the hotel, not actually in the lobby, just outside of it where the hotel staff usually stay. And there was a whole bunch of people standing around and I honestly couldn't figure out what they were doing. I honestly felt like a sitting duck.

There was no police. There was no hotel staff. There was no security in any way, and I just knew I had to get out. So I took a few steps out into the main lobby area and I saw the destruction there.

I saw the glass all over the place. I saw some blood on the floor and people like walked in it. And I knew that direction was a wrong one. So I turned around, went back to that area where the other folks were and the numbers were even larger. And I just basically said to everybody, look, we've got to get out of here. We've got to get of here. We're sitting ducks.

And I made my way to the nearest emergency exit, ran down to the bowels of the building and out into the alley way. And again, in the alley way, there was nobody around. I looked to my left and to my right and about a hundred yards away was a couple of Indian security guards who saw me and then started waving for me and yelling for me to run. And I ran to them and rounded the corner and then on the street were literally thousands of people who were all eerily quiet. And I don't know if you've ever been to India, but if you're on the street it's loud. And that night, it was dead silent.

And I started yelling airport, airport. And one of the gentlemen from the hotel, he probably was a cook or something, grabbed me and my bag and threw me into a cab and off I went.

**BLITZER:** What were you doing in Mumbai to begin with, Jonathan? Did you ever suspect that there was any danger from terrorism there?

**EHRLICH:** No. I work for an Internet company here, and we have a joint venture with a local Indian firm. And I think, you know, even if there is the potential threat or specter of terrorism anywhere, it's really important that we don't actually change our behavior. We obviously have to be vigilant but if we do, Wolf, I mean, they win. And we can't let them win.

I mean, the moment that we start to not feel free is the moment that they actually start to win. And so, I would encourage everyone here who is watching to go to their computer and book a ticket to Mumbai because these people are wonderful people. They're just like us.

We need to put our arms around them. We need to stand up and brush ourselves off and stand with them and show the terrorists that they can't win because you know what? Mumbai is New York, and New York is Vancouver. Vancouver is Menlo Park. Menlo Park is Plano, Texas.

We have to stop them. It doesn't matter whether you're on the left. If you're Noam Chomsky (ph) or you're Pat Buchanan, they don't care. As long as you are a Westerner or near Westerner, you are a target and you're most likely dead. And we need to understand that and we need to make sure that these people have no room to move.

**BLITZER:** What was the most frightening moment for you when you were there?

**EHRLICH:** You know, you don't -- you don't really process fright. What I really became was singularly focused on really one word which was, or two words, which was get out.

I wasn't afraid. I was a little freaked, but I was just so intensely focused on getting out. I would have jumped out of that window. I would have moved a car. I would have plowed through anything to get out of that hotel. And that's all I was focused on.

I didn't really actually, really understand the gravity of what I was in until I actually got to the airport and saw on CNN actually that it was not an isolated attack, that there were several attacks going on. But even then, I was still incredibly, incredibly tense. And, to be honest, it's only when I got in the car, with my wife and I on the way from the airport to my house when I -- when I really sort of broke down and I basically lost it. All of the stress of the last 48 hours took its toll, and I knew that I was going to be seeing my kids in about five minutes and that was pretty intense.

**BLITZER:** Yes. I can only imagine what you went through, Jonathan. And I know you told CNN earlier that, in addition to being a Westerner and a Canadian, you're also Jewish. And that was playing heavily on your mind as you were living through this terror?

**EHRLICH:** That's right. Look, sadly, the Jewish people have faced this sort of thing in the past. It's very curious that, you know, in India, a country of a billion people, maybe 10,000 Jews, they found a way to hit the Jewish people.

But look, we're tough. We've been through this before. We're going to shake ourselves off and stand up. And I can tell you right now that the Jewish people, the friends of the Jewish people, Israelis are all lining up right now at the travel agents to book tickets to Mumbai because they know that they, too, stand with the Indian people. And I think the important thing here is that it doesn't really matter whether you're Jewish or Christian or Muslim, or whatever. If you're in that hotel and you look like a Westerner, you were dead.



BLITZER: I'm glad you made it out and you're back in Vancouver. Jonathan Ehrlich, thank you very much for sharing your story with us. We appreciate it.

And we'll be speaking with more survivors as our coverage continues. Jonathan Ehrlich joining us from Vancouver.

Tonight, there's lots of political fallout from the Mumbai attacks as well. We're taking a closer look at what this means for India and Pakistan, as well as for the current and incoming U.S. presidents.

And there's other important news we're following tonight as well, including a deadly stampede of holiday shoppers. What happened? Stay with us.

Everyone in the country is going to be talking about this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BLITZER: This is a special two-hour edition of "NO BIAS, NO BULL." Still to come, both the current and incoming U.S. presidents keeping a close watch on the unfolding tragedy in India.

First, though, a look at some of today's other headlines. Tom Foreman joining us with "The Briefing" -- Tom.

TOM FOREMAN, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Wolf. The holiday shopping season is off to a bizarre and tragic start here. A temporary worker at a Long Island, New York Wal-Mart was trampled to death by shoppers rushing into the store when it opened this morning. Police say the metal doorway crumbled like an accordion. Four or five other people including a pregnant woman suffered minor injuries.

In California, two people were shot to death inside a toy store. Police in Palm Desert, California, about 120 miles east of Los Angeles, are still trying to sort out what happened. One theory is that members of two rival groups were in the store, which led to an argument and then shooting.

A new tape from al-Qaeda's number two man contains a prescription for the U.S.'s economic crisis. Ayman al-Zawahri (ph) calls on Americans to embrace Islam to overcome the financial meltdown. He says that way we can live free of greed, exploitation and forbidden wealth -- Wolf.

BLITZER: Tom, thank you.

The attacks in India are indeed an urgent and unexpected test of the Bush administration and the Obama transition team's ability to work together. Stand by for an update from our White House correspondent, Ed Henry.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BLITZER: Both President Bush and President-elect Barack Obama issued statements late today. Let's go to our White House correspondent. Ed Henry is in Chicago.

Ed, fill us in, first of all, what the White House is saying.

ED HENRY, CNN WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: Well, Wolf, it's interesting. The president has been at Camp David for the Thanksgiving Day holiday and all weekend he's there. And basically, he's had Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice giving him face to face briefings so he can get the latest on the situation.

As you know, yesterday he called the prime minister of India and then today, he put out a statement in reaction to the fact that some Americans had died. He said, "Laura and I are deeply saddened that at least two Americans were killed and others injured in Wednesday's horrific attacks in Mumbai. We will continue to cooperate against these extremists who offer nothing but violence and hopelessness."

Now he also mentioned that the U.S. will be offering India any help it needs at all. This could possibly include trying to restore stability on the ground there. It also could, as Kelli Arena has been reporting, means that FBI agents going there on the scene to try and help with the investigation -- Wolf.

BLITZER: The State Department has just issued a statement, Ed, saying that five Americans have now been confirmed dead in the Mumbai attacks. So go ahead and tell us how this cooperation, this level of coordination is unfolding between the outgoing and the incoming presidents.

HENRY: Wolf, what's interesting, is very much what we've seen with the financial crisis in recent weeks as well. Barack Obama has been restraining himself to not attack the Bush administration's handling of that crisis. There's been a lot of, you know, talks openly back and forth, the line of communication. In fact, President Bush just this past week had briefed him on the Citigroup bailout, for example. Now, we're seeing the same.

Secretary Rice, while briefing the president at Camp David, is also calling here to Chicago. The last couple of days she's briefed Barack Obama a couple of times and he in fact put out a statement as well late this evening, talking about the sad news about Americans dying and saying that he passed along his condolences and added this. "There's one president at a time. I will continue to closely monitor the situation on the ground in Mumbai, and I'm grateful for the cooperation of the Bush administration in keeping me and my staff updated."

And that is something we are hearing from the Obama transition team, that the line of communication has been open. They're getting a lot of information about the situation on the ground. So far in this transfer of power, the line of communication is open both ways, Wolf.

BLITZER: And that's the way it should be. Ed Henry in Chicago covering the story for us.

Want to go right back to Mumbai. Sara Sidner is standing by outside the Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel. Sara is on the phone.

I take it more gunfire being heard right now, Sara?

ON THE PHONE: SARA SIDNER, CNN CORRESPONDENT: My goodness, Wolf. Yes, gunfire. There had been a lot of rapid succession gunfire. And I know now the difference between what is gunfire inside and what is coming towards us. All of us had to run, just one second ago had to run and take cover.

You can hear shots coming out towards us as opposed to going inside of the hotel. So the touchy situation very tense for the journalists here who are, of



unfolding yet again. Yet again, another round of gunfire and blasts inside the Taj Hotel -- Wolf.

BLITZER: We're showing our viewers there live pictures of the Taj Hotel. Right now, it's early morning, Saturday morning. We just saw at the bottom of the screen. The viewers -- late (ph) viewers probably noticed a group of, it looked like security personnel going into that building. How close can you and other reporters get? I want you to be really careful where you are, Sara?

SIDNER: Frankly, we can get way too close. I mean, we've tried to assess our own safety throughout this. But we can get I think way too close. Every time there is a blast, every time there are gunshots, they're so close and that the sound is so loud, that I think at some point, you know, you have to take the initiative and say, OK, wait a minute, let us get back. Let's not become one of the casualties in this.

We are standing right now behind some light trucks that are stationed here. But there is really nothing between the journalists and this building. It's a big wide open space. And you know that these bullets can fly a lot further than where we're standing.

So, yes, I think the situation has become -- hold on a second, I'm going to have my photographer move back.

(INAUDIBLE) Let's back up. Let's back up. Let's just back up.

OK, I don't know if you heard that, but another explosion coming from the hotel. And I just brought my photographer back even further because this just really sounds quite out of control at this point inside the Taj -- Wolf.

BLITZER: Yes. I'd like you to be really careful, Sara. We're going to get back to you, but we're looking at these live pictures of what's going on over there. We see security personnel outside, but we heard -- we definitely heard the gunfire that's been going on now for at least two hours outside this hotel and inside as well.

Much more coming up tonight from Mumbai. Our coverage continues. For one survivor, there was only one way out. How he and others escaped the terrorists at the Taj Mahal Hotel.

Stay with us. We're going to speak with him. That's coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BLITZER: A gunfire earlier outside the Taj Mahal Intercontinental Hotel in Mumbai. At least one gunman is still inside, perhaps more. And you just heard our Sara Sidner tell us that gunfire continuing right now.

Tonight, a hotel guest relives the horror of being caught inside this hotel. Peter Dillane barricaded himself in a room as the gunmen roamed around the halls. So how did he get out?

Peter Dillane's plane has just landed in New York. He's joining us now live.

Thank God, Peter, you made it out. You're safe, you're back in the United States. But I want you to go back to what it was like when you first heard those shots ring out. I take it you were having dinner with some friends at the Taj Hotel. Pick up the story. What happened next?

PETER DILLANE, ESCAPED FROM TAJ MAHAL HOTEL: Yes. I was having a dinner meeting with five of my colleagues on the third floor. At around 9:30, we heard what we thought were firecrackers and we looked out the room down the corridor. And we saw two gunmen at the end of the corridor.

We backed into our room and looked out for the people and saw them come down. And there were kids and they had automatic weapons and backpacks and we saw them methodically knocking and kicking on the doors.

BLITZER: Peter, I will interrupt you for a moment. Now these are live pictures our viewers are seeing in the United States and around the world right now of the Taj Hotel in Mumbai. You're seeing smoke now coming out of these historic windows at this beautiful hotel. We've heard lots of gunfire over the past two hours both inside and outside the hotel.

You're familiar with this hotel. I don't know if you have access to these live pictures we're showing our viewers right now. But it must have been so terrifying to you to be inside when all hell broke loose there?

DILLANE: Yes. I mean, two of the most frightening things were the explosions we heard at around 11:00, a really loud explosion that shook the room. And we also had a grenade go off right outside the windows that shattered the glass. And probably the most frightening thing was around 2:00 in the morning, the room was filling with smoke and we had to put wet towels down around the bottom of the doors to seal it off.

BLITZER: How long were you holed up in those rooms, Peter?

DILLANE: So we -- we got out at around 6:30 in the morning, through the cherry pickers from the fire brigade.

BLITZER: So what was going through your mind as you heard the shots, as you were -- as you were almost face to face with these masked men inside that restaurant?

DILLANE: I mean, initially, it was surreal. We couldn't believe it was happening. And then to see the gunmen that were so young, it just didn't feel -- it didn't feel real. But then, I mean, throughout the night, it was a roller coaster of emotions. Sometimes, it was calm and then the explosions, we felt like we were trapped and we didn't know how it was going to end. So we just -- the good thing was there was six of us and we were able to keep one another calm.

We were also helped a lot by our cell phones. We were able to talk to people on the outside. It kind of kept us surprised of how the building looked on the outside.

BLITZER: How did you finally get out, Peter?

DILLANE: We finally got out when the fire brigades put the ladders up to the windows, broke through and then took us down. And it was a good feeling when we landed on the ground outside.



Thank you very much. Peter Dillane was barricaded in a room when all of that unfolded.

Let's go back to Sara Sidner right now. She's outside the Taj Hotel. We're looking at these live pictures, Sara. We see smoke coming out of these historic windows, as I've been saying. What can you tell us? What do we know?

SIDNER: This has been an absolutely crazy gun battle that has been going on over the past hour or so. And as this has been going on, lots of firing, lots of bullets flying. You may be able to hear, we had to take cover. Really this is getting so close and so dangerous, we all had to take cover behind a truck. But I can have a very clear view of the smoke that is billowing out.

It's the first story, the first floor of this hotel. The ground floor also has two large copious amounts of smoke coming out of two of the archways. And there are windows just behind those archways of this historic 105-year-old building that is obviously getting massive damage going on inside. There's smoke that is pouring out of this one area.

Now this area is the exact same area that we have been noting that appears to be a target for commandos. Certainly a target. It is on the first floor. And we are literally facing it. We have a dead shot center of this very section of the hotel.

It is the one that is closest to journalists. It is the one that is closest to the new tower, the new part of the Taj, which is a tall tower that commandos cleared 24 hours and more ago. But this is the heritage hotel -- hotel that has been around for years and the crown jewel really of Mumbai.

There is so much smoke still flowing out of the first floor. It looks as though it is part of the turret. There is a turret at the top, a beautiful dome that is at the very top, and it's around (INAUDIBLE) windows there. All of the windows now have been blasted out, smoke pouring from three of the windows on the first floor and two windows on the ground floor, Wolf.

BLITZER: It looks like this could be coming to a head, even as we speak. Sara, stand by. We're going to take a quick break. Our special coverage continues right after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BLITZER: All right. These pictures only moments ago. These are pictures from the Taj Hotel in Mumbai, where you see smoke now coming out of the windows. Over the past two hours, lots of gunfire at this hotel. Perhaps one, two or three terrorists still holed up inside. It's been an amazing, amazing story and CNN is clearly not leaving this story. Our special coverage is going to continue.

We're going to turn things over to my good colleague and friend, Larry King. A special "LARRY KING LIVE," including developments on what's happening in Mumbai starts right now -- Larry.

