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Are we any safer?

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On 26 November last year, everything that could go wrong went wrong in Mumbai. A batch of welltrained, highly motivated terrorists just sailed in and for almost three days held the nation's commercial capital hostage. It was the most brazen act of terror since the attack on Parliament in 2001 and exposed just how dysfunctional India's security and intelligence apparatus was.

Whether it was the lack of intelligence, a bungling city police, delayed response by anti-terrorist forces or dithering politicians, the systemic failure was apparent. Soon after 26/11, the India Today group had declared a war on terror to highlight the deficiencies and also laid out an agenda for action. It called for a total revamp.

One year after Mumbai's horror, is India any safer? Have our porous coastlines been secured? Is our intelligence up to scratch? Is the average constable better equipped and trained to respond to sudden, overwhelming terror? Have the elite forces been overhauled? Most important, has the political leadership of our country seen the light at the end of this tunnel of terror? Our editorial team fanned out to assess just how much had been done. The findings:

NSG: Getting there

Four hubs are up, but force not fully equipped

The Home Ministry has stepped in with NSG hubs in Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad, each with 240 commandos to fight terrorists. But basic issues are yet to be addressed. In the 60 hours of 26/11, the NSG fought through the dark smoke-filled mazes in the Taj and Oberoi hotels and Nariman House battling a critical shortage of specialised equipment. It was as though their equipment clock had stopped in 1984—the year they were raised. A year after India's worst terror strike, the clock continues to remain still for the NSG.

A host of specialised equipment, ranging from helmets with integrated communication sets and lightweight bulletproof vests are still in the pipeline. Why is this necessary? Special forces are compact, highly trained and use equipment that is generations ahead of what the terrorists can field. This is necessary to offset the one advantage terrorists have: surprise. If another attack does come, there is a real danger that the NSG will be fighting terrorists with the same equipment they used in Mumbai.

The NSG is spending an estimated Rs 2,000 crore on buying land and erecting buildings. The question being asked by NSG officials is: If the current force of nearly 6,000 commandos continues to be ill-equipped, what will be the equipment profile for the nearly

What's done

- New NSG hubs in four cities created
- Manpower for NSG increased
- Force allowed to requisition civil aircraft in times of emergency

What's not

- No new specialised anti-terror equipment like night vision devices and weapon sights procured
- Troopers not equipped with lightweight bulletproof jackets and helmets for protection
- Helicopters not provided for rapid response within cities

10,000-strong force when it is finally established in these new hubs? There are dangers that the force will become another paramilitary force rather than the special force it is supposed to be.

Another serious lacunae is that the NSG units are still subject to the gridlock of city traffic in all their hubs. In the event of another Mumbai-type attack, for instance, it will take the NSG over an hour merely to reach South Mumbai from their current location at Kalina in suburban Mumbai. The solution is for dedicated helicopters to rapidly ferry them anywhere in the city in a matter of minutes. But this is not even on the horizon.

by Sandeep Unnithan

Intelligence: Looking smart

The Multi Agency Centre goes ahead full steam

One of the untold stories of 26/11 is of a brave Jammu and Kashmir policeman who had infiltrated the Lashkar-e-Toiba and planted a set of mobile phone SIM cards which were eventually used by the Mumbai attackers. Not only did the activation of these SIM cards in Mumbai not ring alarm bells but the Kolkata Police arrested the police constable as a terrorist. It was a classic case of the left hand not knowing what the right was doing. Post-26/11, perhaps the biggest achievement has been coordination.

The Multi Agency Centre (MAC) energised after the attacks, now runs at full strength, coordinating between 23 representatives from the intelligence agencies in the home, defence and finance ministries. State MACs or SMACs have been set up in all the states to encourage intelligence collection and collation from the very grassroots.

Alerts picked up at the field level are instantly transmitted to the MAC in hours. The next stage: powerful mainframes with dedicated software to process the mass of raw intelligence flowing in through the MAC.

These computers will form the core of a National Counter Terrorism Centre like its counterpart in the US which Home Minister Chidambaram hopes to replicate in India. The national intelligence grid will throw up matches and generate patterns that would immediately generate suspicion.

by S.U.

Police reforms: Political sloth

The states still have a lot of catching up to do

Even 26/11 had little impact on the three-year-old Supreme Court directive to accelerate reforms. Ten states have agreed to implement it on paper. Seven states are partially compliant. Twelve others have passed laws with a view to circumventing the implementation of the apex court fiat while Bihar has adopted a particularly regressive law. Meanwhile, the Central Government is raising more battalions of

What's done

- Intelligence sharing through the MAC has been energised
- Intelligence agencies hold daily meetings
- Coordination among various agencies has become better

What's not

- The manpower of the IB has not increased
- Networked technical infrastructure for faster data transfer has not been acquired
- Coastal security has not been linked with state MACs

What's done

- Half the states are implementing police reforms while others circumvent a Supreme Court directive to do so

paramilitary forces. Till January 1 this year, the IPS was 557 officers short of its sanctioned strength of 3,889, of whom 314 fell in the direct recruitment quota. A recruitment plan, drawn up post-26/11, recommends 130 recruitments be made annually in the next 11 years in addition to holding of a limited competitive examination for deputy superintendents of police.

But states show complacency. Besides the four southern states, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Haryana have attempted at spending their allotted modernisation budgets. But states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have barely spent their modernisation funds. There is a lot to be done—create a separate ministry of interiors whose sole purpose would be to ensure the internal security of India; shift to top gear the Prime Minister's Police Mission; increase the number of security experts in the MHA; choose police chiefs apolitically and establish Quick Reaction Teams (QRTS) in major cities of India.

- Centre is raising more battalions and recruiting more IPS officers
- Modernisation funds are spent efficiently only by some states

What's not

- Training for all personnel not improved
- Massive manpower augmentation remains the big hole

by Amarnath K. Menon

Megacity policing: Rapid reaction

The Mumbai Police gets a makeover

As the first anniversary of the worst terror attack on Mumbai closes in, the authorities are working tirelessly to modernise the city police and beef up coastal security. If Mumbai Police's QRT was a measly group of 35 commandos on 26/11, it is now 1,500-strong with the police chief deploying them across the five regions of Mumbai city. Where the sanctioned budget for upgrading the police force was a meagre Rs 36 crore last year, this year it is Rs 102 crore. In terms of weaponry too, 39 combat vehicles with three sub-inspectors and 12 men in each have been deployed in 39 divisions.

The force has also added 160 new beat marshals, bulletproof speedboats and amphibious vehicles and even armed troop carriers besides the latest weapons. "Motivating my force is as important as adding modern weapons and technologies. I have made efforts to create a web of people that is more aware and have built on our intelligence-gathering skills," says Police Commissioner D. Sivanandhan.

Safeguarding the city's and also the state's coastline is also one of the main concerns of the Maharashtra government, but it has not as yet moved on the 12 sanctioned coastal police stations. However, Maharashtra additional chief secretary, Home, Chandra Iyengar says, "Eight of these stations are in various stages of construction while four are still in the process. We have 43 trawlers patrolling the waters." Also, 4,000 identity cards have been distributed to fishermen. "We are emphasising heavily on community-based interaction. Our motive is to involve civilians in the security process," she adds. Where the coastal policing may be lacking, the state government has attempted to make up with the formation of a 216-strong commando force, called Force One, along the lines of the NSG.

What's done

- Eight quick reaction teams have been created
- Mumbai Police has augmented its budget, weapons and vehicles
- ATS to investigate all terror-related cases

What's not

- Coastal police stations yet to see the light of the day
- Force One on lines of NSG created but still homeless
- Recruitment rules for personnel for patrol boats still to be done

The orders for the formation of the force were passed on April 2, 2009. Of the total 352 posts sanctioned for the force, 256 posts have been created under the Action Group, while 94 have been earmarked for Technical

and Administrative purposes. Of these, 216 commandos have already completed their training at Vadachi Vadi, Pune. The force is equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry like AK-47 assault rifles, MP 5 sub machine guns and Glock pistols. The Force One commandos have been trained in the use of explosives as well. "They have been trained by the best in the business from across the world. Each commando has undergone rigorous training and has passed out after meeting over 30 criteria set aside for them," says S. Jagannathan, DIG Force One.

However, though the training for the Force One commandos has been completed, the officers and men have to travel some distance for their daily training sessions. Stationed in Mumbai, the commandos are currently housed in temporary quarters. While 80 acres of land have been earmarked for the actual head quarters of Force One, the construction is yet to begin and will take at least one more year to complete.

by Swati Mathur

Kasab in court: Showcase trial

Despite full speed, justice is still months away

With all eyes on the first anniversary of India's worst terror attack, 26/11 will hold a special significance for special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam this year too. Even after examining 253 witnesses over 170 days, the case against prime accused Ajmal Amir Kasab, is nowhere near conclusion. Nikam, who wants to conclude the prosecution case by November 26, says, "I have to set an example. I have to prove that even a case with international ramifications can be concluded effectively and efficiently."

On trial on several charges, including waging war against India, Kasab can face a death sentence or life imprisonment. In the interim months since the trial began, Kasab has also transformed from an arrogant youngster to a depression-ridden individual.

Staying in solitary confinement in Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail, he is now a shadow of his former self, preferring to hang his head and sit in court. Though his lawyer Abbas Kazmi describes Kasab as a man who has given up, Nikam dismisses his transformation as the wily moves of a "cunning fox", playing a shrewd game.

What's done

- 86 charges framed against Kasab, of which waging war against the country invites the greatest punishment
- Prosecution has examined over 154 witnesses

What's not

- Trial isn't speedy: more prosecution witnesses are to be examined
- Judgement likely to take nearly two more months

by S.M.

Money laundering: Still leaking

We know the tap, but closing it is not so easy

Cutting off the money supply of terrorists is a key strategy in curbing terror. The US has warned India that the 'hawala' system of illegal money transfer is "directly linked to terror financing". As India continues to be a drug-transit country, falling between the heroin-producing countries of the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent, it is imperative for India to create a strict legal and enforcement framework to stop this.

To be able to do that, India passed the Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill, 2009, that aims at combating

What's done

- Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill, 2009, passed
- RBI has advised all NBFCs to maintain records of clients
- SEBI has directed stock exchanges

money laundering, terror financing and crossborder economic offences. It came into force from June 1 and financial intermediaries like full-fledged moneychangers, money transfer service providers such as Western Union and International Payment gateways, including VISA and MasterCard, have also been brought within its ambit.

Even casinos will have to report to enforcement authorities and now there is a legal framework to check misuse of the "proceeds of crime",-be it from sale of banned narcotic substances or breach of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1999. India plans to become a member of the Financial Action Task Force on money laundering by next year.

No instrument of money seems safe, neither stock exchange nor the banks. In October, SEBI directed all stock exchanges and other securities intermediaries to keep a strict watch on UN-listed terror funding entities. They have to inform the Union Home Ministry within 24 hours if they find a client whose particulars match with those of UN-listed terror entities.

The RBI this month directed all banks and financial institutions to scan existing accounts to ensure that these are not held by or linked to any entity or individual figuring in the UN list of terrorrelated organisations. It also advised all NBFCs to maintain records of clients, including identity of the clients, both domestic and international, for a period of 10 years from the date of transaction. But it remains to be seen how these measures will translate on ground.

by Mihir Srivastava

Coastal security: Cruising along

They've got going, but there's a long way to go

The 26/11 attacks highlighted for the first time the vulnerabilities of India's sea coast which at over 7,600 km is simply too much to be fenced or adequately patrolled. Putting into play the coordination mantra that has come in after the attacks, the navy has been given the overall responsibility of coastal security, the neglected Coast Guard has been beefed up and a new marine police is now beginning to be set up. The Coast Guard will add 54 new vessels and 20 aircraft and induct 3,000 new personnel. A network of 46 coastal radars is to be set up for Rs 300 crore. The problem? It will take over five years for the new force to come into effect.

"You cannot fill the deficiencies of a decade in just a year," a senior Coast Guard official says. Of still greater concern is the marine police, drawn from the state police, who are meant to patrol a 5-km belt of coastline. Months after the attacks, the Home Ministry speedily sanctioned the construction of 168 modern speedboats at the state-owned defence shipyards Goa Shipyard Ltd and the Garden Reach Shipyard Limited, Kolkata. These boats were to be handed out to the coastal states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and West Bengal.

to keep watch on UN-listed terror funding entities

What's not

- Slack enforcement of financial guidelines by RBI and SEBI
- Political will lacking over illegal money transfer and 'hawala' as it is used by many corrupt people

What's done

- More patrol vessels and aircraft for Coast Guard sanctioned
- Aircraft for Coast Guard increased
- 30 per cent increase in manpower sanctioned

What's not

- Domestic shipbuilding yet to be speeded up. Still takes five years to build a patrol vessel.
- Regulation of all landing points in coastal cities not done
- Marine police not allowed to use speedboats operated by Customs

As of September, only 22 interceptor boats were delivered against the target of 36 boats. At the current rate of production at the shipyards, officials admit it will be difficult to have all 168 boats in the water by next year. Orders for boats have now been placed at private sector shipyards in an effort to boost production. The Government has accepted the need to create the post of maritime security adviser, a three-star officer from the Indian Navy, with a Maritime Security Advisory Board (MSAB) to coordinate all the 15 agencies responsible for maritime activities. But this is yet to materialise even a year after the attacks.

by S.U.

Jammu and Kashmir: Groping around

The quiet political dialogue is yet to deliver

The 26/11 attacks may have generated war hysteria in the country but ironically Kashmir—which has been at the centre of acrimony between India and Pakistan—became a source of confidence for Delhi. The attacks came just after phase two of the seven-phased elections for the state Assembly. As heavy polling continued even afterwards, the Manmohan Singh Government interpreted the successful elections as a "defeat of separatism".

That, everyone knew, was simply not true. Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram who appeared to acknowledge the difficult political situation in Kashmir, announced an offer of a "quiet dialogue" for resolving the issue. Later, the prime minister declared open a season of dialogue with separatists during his recent visit to the state in an attempt to consolidate the gains from the polling.

On the security front, the Government has moved to enhance its control in the state, banning pre-paid cellphones. Top security officials say the ban was aimed to "prevent another Mumbai-like attack" feared by the intelligence agencies. While the situation seems to be under control but an incident like alleged rape and murder of two young women in Shopian goes to show that the Valley continues to remain on the edge and needs a spark to explode.

Experts say the security situation is reaching a tipping point. Change cannot be envisioned unless the dialogue process is not seen as an event to further manage the conflict but institutionalised to achieve a political solution to Kashmir.

by Aijaz Hussain

Tackling Pakistan: Some success

But India dare not let up on the pressure

A year after 26/11, it has been a mixed bag for India when it comes to tackling Pakistan diplomatically. After countless note verbales and diplomatic notes have been exchanged between the two countries on the Mumbai 26/11 attacks, and reams of pages in seven diplomatic dossiers traded between the two neighbours, there is a sense of déjà vu on India's relationship with Pakistan.

India blames Pakistan for terrorist acts, and Pakistan promises action, but there is no change of heart. Another terror attack happens and the story gets repeated yet again. While the culprits

What's done

- Enhanced security and surveillance in Kashmir Valley
- Acknowledgement that Kashmir is a political issue
- Initiation of dialogue

What's not

- Confidence-building measures like demilitarisation of civilian areas and repeal of impunity laws
- Infrastructure development
- Institutionalisation of the dialogue process

What's done

of 26/11 are yet to be punished, key conspirators like Hafeez Mohammed Saeed, who has been chargesheeted by India, roam freely in Pakistan. As fresh revelations emerge from the interrogation of David Headley and Tahawwur Hussain Rana, there are leads that the trail of 26/11 may well lead to state actors in Pakistan.

The Mumbai attack itself was a game changer in some ways and drew international support for India. As calls for action grew, the UN put Jamaat-ud-Dawa on its terror blacklist in December 2008. A month later, Islamabad conceded that the plot was hatched on its territory and that Pakistan-based terror group Lashkar-e-Toiba was involved. While this is more than what Pakistan had ever conceded and was a step-up for India, given Pakistan's track record, there was enough drama in the diplomatic script. As India upped pressure through its dossier diplomacy at frequent intervals to put pressure on Pakistan, the strategy worked. While India is all set to conclude the 26/11 trial soon with the Mumbai court issuing non-bailable warrants

against the 27 accused who are now absconding, including LeT founder Saeed, Islamabad diluted the case hiding behind the recent terror attacks. The case has been adjourned several times and three judges have been changed. Though a fresh date for hearing has been set for December while Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi and Zarar Shah are being tried, there are no charges against Saeed. This gives little assurance that 26/11 victims will get justice.

Frustration is setting in India and as Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao says: "We are concerned at the slow and tardy action against those responsible for the Mumbai attacks." But what should be the Indian strategy now? While India should continue with its policy on no composite dialogue, it should engage with Pakistan with the limited agenda of terrorism and getting the 26/11 guilty punished should be a sustained campaign. Then, along with international interlocutors like the US, India should insist that a segmented approach is harming the fight against terror and that rogue elements in the Pakistan Army and the ISI would have to be effectively neutralised. A recalcitrant Pakistan will never address India's terror concerns till it realises that it will have to pay a heavy cost if it continues to perpetuate terror. While diplomacy should be the soft cushion, India should strive to work on a policy of multiple options with Pakistan. If this can be sustained, it could be a turning point for India's Pakistan policy.

- Pressure on Pakistan saw it admit that attacks planned and executed from its territory
- Engaged international interlocutors to turn the heat
- Dossier diplomacy put Pakistan on notice

What's not

- Not been able to force Pakistan to expedite 26/11 trial
- Big fish like Hafeez Saeed still free
- Focussed approach on terror missing

by Saurabh Shukla

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