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## Commandos and terrorists battle in Mumbai, 101 dead

By Indo Asian News Service | Thursday, November 27, 2008 | 3:49:46 PM IST (+05:30 GMT) [0 Comment](#)

**Mumbai, Nov 27 (IANS) Indian commandos fought gun battles Thursday with terrorists who continued to hold scores of hostages after sneaking into Mumbai from the sea and attacking landmark targets in the country's most brazen terror strike that has killed at least 101 people.**

Mumbai, Nov 27 (IANS) Indian commandos fought gun battles Thursday with terrorists who continued to hold scores of hostages after sneaking into Mumbai from the sea and attacking landmark targets in the country's most brazen terror strike that has killed at least 101 people.

About 30-40 Indians and Westerners were in the custody of gunmen at the Oberoi Trident, one of the two five-star hotels the terrorists barged into Wednesday night soon after landing on the city's coast near the Gateway of India monument with arms and ammunition, officials said.

Hostages were also believed to be holed up at the Nariman House, just behind Oberoi Trident hotel. But more than 15 hours after the mayhem began around 9.20 p.m. Wednesday in India's financial and movie capital, police said there were no more hostages at the 565-room Taj Mahal Palace and Tower Hotel and commandos were searching every room for hidden militants and possible booby traps.

The other key targets the terrorists, some of them masked, attacked included the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station, which during the day is packed with thousands of people, the Cama Charitable hospital, the hugely popular Leopold Cafe at Colaba, the Metro junction and Vile Parle. The gunmen struck at 10 places in all.

'It's a motivated, well planned terrorist attack and they are out to cause damage,' said Major General R.K. Hooda of the Indian Army.

Gunshots and minor explosions continued to be heard from the now damaged Taj hotel. A similar blast also took place at the Oberoi Trident hotel.

The well-planned terrorist onslaught, which caught the authorities unawares although Home Minister Shivraj Patil had warned of a possible sea strike two years ago, also left some 250 Indians and foreigners injured.

Among the dead were 14 men of the Mumbai Police who were the first to react. They included Hemant Karkare, head of Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad probing the bomb attacks in the state blamed on Hindu radicals. Outwitted, the police hurriedly sought help from the Indian Army.

A stunned international community condemned the wanton killings. US president-elect Barack Obama asked Washington to work with India to root out and destroy terrorist networks worldwide. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: 'Such violence is totally unacceptable.' The European Union also denounced the terrorists.

Maharashtra Director General of Police A.N. Roy said the security forces would kill or catch the terrorists, who some speculated might be linked to the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and could have sailed from Karachi.

But in Chandigarh, Pakistan Foreign Minister Makhdum Shah Mahmood Qureshi denounced the killings as 'barbaric'. He said Islamabad had faced similar situations and it would be immature to link the attack to his country.

Witnesses said the gunmen were young, mostly in their 20s and wore jeans and dark colour T-shirts. One of them, calling himself Shahadullah, telephoned India TV channel to say he was from Hyderabad and belonged to a previously unheard of group called the Deccan Mujahideen.

Speaking in Hindustani with an accent, the man said the attack had been carried out to avenge the 1992 destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya and the 'repression' of Muslims in India. He said the hostages would be freed only in exchange for the 'mujahideen' in Indian prisons.

With naval commandos joining the anti-terrorist operation, Vice Admiral J.S. Bedi said in Mumbai: 'There are four to five terrorists in the Oberoi hotel area and 40-50 hostages. However, we can't confirm that the hostages are all guests at the hotel.'

The comments came as the security forces managed to nab one of the terrorists and the Coast Guard chased a mysterious vessel in the sea near Mumbai.

A British national who escaped from the terrorists at the Taj Hotel said the hostage takers were 20-25 years of age. 'They were dressed casually in jeans and T-shirts but were very aggressive in their demeanour. They kept screaming they wanted (people) with British or American passports.'

Another Briton, Alex Chamberlain, said the terrorists let him leave the Kandahar restaurant at the Oberoi along with other diners after he did not reveal his nationality. He told Sky TV that the terrorists shot a waitress in the arm before allowing diners to take the stairs down to the lobby.

The bloody drama began Wednesday night when the gunmen landed on Mumbai's coast and simply walked into the city after crossing the road. In no time, they commandeered vehicles and sped to different targets, including hotels where they opened fire and hurled grenades at unsuspecting guests.

Indian Communist MP N.N. Krishnadas said after being rescued by commandos Thursday: 'I was having dinner with some colleagues when two masked militants barged into the restaurant. They fired indiscriminately. I saw three people being shot. The terrorists left the room soon after.'

Most of the dead were Indians, police and hospital sources said.

The authorities ordered a holiday in Mumbai, but the otherwise bustling city remained on the edge. The Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange were also closed.

'This is a most audacious attack. It is a very serious situation,' Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh said.

Television footage showed some terrorists holding automatic rifles, near some of the buildings under attack. One looked grotesque, blood oozing from near his nose.

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Mumbai Police Commissioner Hasan Ghafoor said AK-47 and AK-56 and semi-automatic rifles besides grenades were used in the 'coordinated terrorist acts'. On Thursday, a five-kilometre radius in south Mumbai, including the business districts of Cuff Parade and Nariman Point, was cordoned off.

Train services resumed in Mumbai Thursday but there were few passengers. There were few vehicles on the roads.

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