



Comments on Mumbai Attacks

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QUESTION: From your point of view how important are last events in Mumbai in the more global framework of the battle against the terrorism?

KIRKHOPE: "I believe that the recent attacks in Mumbai mark a significant turn for radical groups following the Al-Qaeda model for at least 4 reasons:

a) I made particular emphasis at my briefings in Poland last week of the threat posed by "hostage-barricade" in which attackers take over a facility, keep authorities away, and maximize the effects on the media. The Mumbai attacks signify a return to this tactic of "hostage-barricade" attacks which were most prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s by Palestinian and Lebanese groups such as the Munich Olympics attacks in 1972, the airline hijackings of the 1970s-80s including TWA-847 in 1985, the Achille Laura ship hijacking in 1985, etc. The most recent significant "hostage-barricade" attacks were conducted by Chechen rebels when they stormed a Moscow theater in 2002 and the Beslan school attack in 2004.

b) In the past, terrorists used such attacks to read statements to the media and negotiate with the government and security officials. In the Mumbai attack, the terrorists are not identifying themselves and are not making demands. It is the attack itself which is the statement. In this way, the Mumbai attacks are similar to other Al-Qaeda or radical Islamic attacks of 9/11, Bali, Madrid, Kenya, etc. Western media is emphasizing that British, American, and in at least one case, Jewish civilians have been specially targeted in the attack, although obviously hundreds more Hindu (and even some Muslim) Indians have been killed and injured in these attacks.

c) If the Mumbai attacks are linked to Al-Qaeda, they indicate that Al-Qaeda's global reach has been limited by increased security and disruption of known militant cells in the west which has prompted planners to attack closer to the headquarters in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The attackers no longer possess the logistical capability to conduct sophisticated operations far away on different continents and now choose to attack representatives of enemy governments which travel closer to their area of operations.

d) These attacks also highlight the Al-Qaeda-minded terrorist trend towards attacking softer targets – meaning that the targets chosen with less security. Military bases,



diplomatic facilities, and government offices are much more fortified, so terrorists are seeking targets with weak security and a high concentration of international visitors such as travel hubs, hotels, tourist attractions."

QUESTION: Terrorist did not use the tactics of suicide attacks. It looks like attackers were people with good combat training. What could we learn from it? Do you think it could be a new trend? Or is better to say renewed trend?

"I believe it is a mistake to say that the Mumbai attacks are NOT suicide attacks. Especially in light of the fact that the attackers have not identified themselves and have not established demands or asked to negotiate, it is clear that the attacks have no exit strategy – no plan to get out of the attack alive. As such, in many ways I believe it is more difficult to convince attackers to keep themselves alive in an operation that continues for several hours or even many days knowing they will die rather than a short operation which delivers attackers to a site and the bombs and bombers are quickly detonated. Therefore, my first point is that the Mumbai attacks were definitely suicide attacks.

Second, the actual attack teams did not seem to be extremely well trained. They knew where to attack, but they only used basic firearms. They did not use very sophisticated explosives, did not attack well-guarded facilities, and were not required to communicate messages to authorities. As such, I believe the sophistication lies in the planning of the operation. The planners who developed the attack identified weak targets and deployed numerous small commando teams only to attack, take hostages, set fires, and ultimately get killed. The planners apparently secured at least a few boats or rafts for attacks from the water and perhaps even a ship to transport the 7 or more attack teams. In summary, the planners were sophisticated, but they utilized unsophisticated attack teams which were expendable - suicide attack teams.

What we learn from these attacks is that Pakistan remains perhaps the biggest source of radical militant Islamic terrorists despite the fact that it is now a civilian government. The Pakistani government is weak, unable to control most of its territory and therefore allows terrorists to live and train, and elements of the Pakistan military and intelligence services actually support such operations. Another lesson from this attack is that Asia, especially South Asia, most especially India is increasingly the most likely target for jihadist terrorists due to the following factors:

- a) India has long historical ties to the West
- b) India has long historical struggle against Islam/Pakistan
- c) India has close proximity to the training and logistical bases of Al-Qaeda and its allies in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Regarding whether this is a new tactic or renewed tactic, I suggest that this attack is a qualitatively NEW tactic – and probably will be will be utilized again several more times.



This suicide "hostage-barricade" attack differs from the hostage-barricade attacks of decades past is that there is no formal interaction with the media – rather the extended media coverage of the bloodshed is enough. In effect, the Mumbai attack is a slow motion suicide bombing which draws out the carnage, magnifies the intensity and prolongs the media coverage. This modus operandi (tactic) ensures that sophisticated planners stay protected and that the groups only utilize attackers who require minimal training."

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