



MUMBAI INVESTIGATION: THE OPERATIVES, MASTERMINDS AND ENDURING THREAT

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Abstract:

The shocking attack perpetrated by militants of Lashkar e Toiba (LeT) in November 2008 showed that India can be considered a country of maximum alert regarding the threat of Islamist terrorism. Given the shortcomings of the Indian intelligence services and the weakness of Pakistan's ones, India remains unprotected against threats stemming from three sources: Indian Muslim communities, terrorism coming from neighbouring countries and the tension in Indo-Pakistani relations. The prospects are quite clear: a growing Hindu nationalism while Pakistan will still be unable to control its territory as a launching path for terrorist attacks. The solution does not lie in accusing to each other and risking worsened relations. Both countries have to meet in a serious attempt to solve existing conflictual problems.

Keywords: Mumbai, Lashkar e Toiba, Islamist terrorism, nationalism.

Resumen:

El cruento ataque llevado a cabo por militantes de Lashkar e Toiba (LeT) en noviembre de 2008 mostró que la India puede considerarse un país de máxima alerta en lo que al terrorismo islámico concierne. Dadas las limitaciones de los servicios de inteligencia indios y la debilidad de sus contrapartes pakistaníes, la India se encuentra desprotegida frente a amenazas procedentes de tres fuentes: las comunidades islámicas indias, el terrorismo proveniente de países vecinos y las tensiones en las relaciones Indo-Pakistaníes. Las perspectivas son de un creciente nacionalismo hindú al mismo tiempo que Pakistán seguirá sin poder controlar su territorio como plataforma de lanzamiento para ataques terroristas. La solución consiste en no ceder a la vía fácil de las acusaciones mutuas y un empeoramiento de las relaciones: ambos países han de reunirse y acometer con seriedad la resolución de todos los problemas pendientes.

Palabras Clave: Mumbai, Lashkar e Toiba (LeT), terrorismo islámico, nacionalismo.

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“Brother, you have to fight. This is a matter of prestige of Islam. Fight so that your fight becomes a shining example. Be strong in the name of Allah. You may feel tired or sleepy but the commandos of Islam have left everything behind. Their mothers, their fathers, their homes.”

Phone call intercepted from terrorist handler in Pakistan to hostage taker in India at the Jewish Centre in Mumbai at 10.26 p.m. on November 27, 2008.²

1. Introduction

The most devastating terrorist attack in 2008 was the coordinated near simultaneous no-surrender attack on India’s entertainment and financial capital from November 26-29.³ After reaching Mumbai by sea on the eve of November 26, ten attackers in pairs engaged in a serial killing spree for 60 hours shocking the entire world.⁴ Sequentially and consecutively, they attacked Mumbai’s soft and symbolic targets - the Victoria Terminus,⁵ Leopold Café, Jewish Centre at the Nariman House, and two iconic hotels, frequented by Westerners. To gain global attention, the terrorists took hostages in the Nariman House, the Taj Mahal, and the Oberoi. The strike bore similarities to the 8 member PLO attack on the Savoy hotel in Israel on the night of March 4, 1975 where they landed by boat on the Tel Aviv beach. They fired and threw grenades and held 13 hostages. The Israeli commandos Sayeret Matkal stormed the hotel, killed 7 and captured one terrorist. Three soldiers, including the Sayeret Matkal commander Uzi Yairi was killed. Although the attack was reminiscent of the Savoy siege, the Indian response was not.

India is nearly a decade behind the West in counter-terrorism. India had failed to develop a multi-agency threat alert capability that would fuse all source intelligence, assess, and share information with multiple operational agencies with the responsibility to prevent and protect. With no national threat integration capacity, both the central and the state government failed to anticipate and develop an action-response plan for a catastrophic attack. Mumbai suffered repeatedly from terrorism since 1993. In the face of the sustained threat to and vulnerability of Mumbai, India’s elite counter terrorism units capable of quick-reaction to such events had no contingent stationed in Mumbai. The police was ill-equipped with vintage weapons and the Indian marine commandos were not hostage-rescue trained.

Despite intelligence by foreign and national security agencies, India was gravely under-prepared for the attack. The U.S. government’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its Indian counterpart, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), warned of the impending threat of an attack to Mumbai.⁶ Though intelligence reporting did not specify the date and time of the attack, the identity of the operatives, and the attack method of operation, it

² Translation of some selected intercepted conversations, *Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*, November 26-29, 2008, New Delhi, Government of India, January 2009, Annexure-VII, p. 52

³ As opposed to suicide attacks, where the perpetrator fully intends to die, in fedayeen or “no surrender” attacks are high risk missions. The perpetrator intends to fight until he is either killed or captured by his adversary. There is a very small chance that he is able to complete his mission and escape.

⁴ The attack killed 182, maimed and injured about 300 and caused an economic damage and loss of 30-40 billion dollars.

⁵ VTS, renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), is one of the busiest railway stations in the world.

⁶ Swami, Praveen: “Pointed intelligence warnings preceded attacks”, *The Hindu*, November 30, 2008. The first report was based on a phone call made by ‘Muzammil’ alias ‘Abu Hurrera’, a LeT leader responsible for mounting operations in India.



specified the Taj Mahal Hotel as a target.⁷ The security of the Taj was enhanced in late September but a stand-down was ordered a week before the attack.⁸ In addition, from interrogations of LeT operatives, the Indian police knew of a sustained interest the terrorists had in the Taj, Oberoi Trident, Stock Exchange, Mumbai Vidhan Sabha, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai police commissionerate and ATS-Mumbai.⁹ “I took photo and video. I drew a diagram of roads/buildings,” stated Mumbai resident Fahim Arshad Ansari alias Abu Zarar, a LeT operative arrested in India in February 2008.¹⁰ Another 8-member cell disrupted in Mumbai in March 2007 revealed that LeT planned to hit a dozen targets including the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and the Mumbai Stock Exchange.¹¹

Since the attack, India is determined to restructure its national security architecture and capabilities. One of the attackers, Mohammed Ajmal Amir Qasab, injured in a police encounter, was captured. Qasab’s interrogation, the international investigation, and, pre-and post attack intelligence shed unique light into the terrorist planning, preparation, execution and the continuity of threat.

2. The Context

As Mumbai attacks demonstrated, India is among the category of nations worldwide that face a tier-one terrorist threat.¹² The other countries in that class are Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. India will face an enduring threat from three sources in the foreseeable future. First, radicalized segments of India’s Muslim community; second, radicalized segments of neighboring Muslim communities; third, deterioration of relations between Pakistan and India.

The best organized terrorist group in mainland Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba [LeT: Army of the Pure], staged the attack.¹³ Furthermore, the international target selection demonstrates the evolving role of LeT from a national and a regional into a global threat group. The Mumbai attack is over but the threat to the region endures. The group’s vast conceptual, support and operational infrastructure overseas and in neighboring Pakistan is still intact: its ideologues, masterminds, operatives and supporters remain active, planning and preparing in the next attack. Although ideologically and operationally opposed to Al Qaeda and to its principal host Tareek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), for the first time LeT adopted as its enemy, the “Jews and crusaders.” As opposed to a suicide attack, a classic Al Qaeda tactic that does not require high-level training, the LeT attackers received higher quality training to stage a no-surrender attack.

⁷ “Intelligence reports foreshadowed attack”, *Seattle Times*, December 2, 2008 and Praveen Swami: “Pointed intelligence warnings preceded attacks”, *The Hindu*, November 30, 2008.

⁸ Interview, Alan Orlob, Vice President for Security, Marriott, December 15, 2008.

⁹ Dayal, Prashant: “Ahmedabad, Mumbai, one mastermind?”, *Times of India*, December 22, 2008.

¹⁰ Chowdhury, Sagnik: “Kasab’s version matches that of Fahim, say cops” *Indian Express*, December 7, 2008.

¹¹ Swamy, Praveen: “Pakistan Restraining LeT But Doing Little to Dismantle Capability,” *The Hindu*, May 14, 2007.

¹² “The terrorist attack in Mumbai terror was the 13th strike in India in 2008. What’s next?”, *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, December 7, 2008.

¹³ To disassociate Hafeez Mohamed Saeed, the LeT leader, from the Mumbai attack, Muhammad Yahya Mujahid, his spokesman stated that LeT is a separate entity from Jamaat-ul Dawa. Perlez, Jane and Sengupta, Somini: “Mumbai Attack Is Test for Pakistan on Curbing Militants”, *New York Times*, December 3, 2008.



The State of Pakistan is not implicated in the attack.¹⁴ On the other hand all the attackers came from Pakistan. After the U.S.-led coalition intervention in Afghanistan, the threat from Afghanistan has shifted to Pakistan. Instead of blaming Pakistan, which is the easiest thing to do, the international community should work with Pakistan to build its counter terrorism law enforcement (especially police), intelligence and military capacities. Otherwise, the current and emerging threat both from mainland and tribal Pakistan is unlikely to diminish but will most likely grow and continue to threaten international security.

3. Background

The terrorists that attacked Mumbai operated in milieu where Indians and Pakistanis hated each other. While India's foreign intelligence agency – the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) destabilized Pakistan, and Pakistan's Inter-Services-Intelligence (ISI) destabilized India. Despite attempts to hide the issue under the carpet, resolving the dispute over Kashmir is at the heart of normalizing relations between these two nuclear neighbors. The perpetuity of the animosity, tension and fighting has hampered the economic growth of the subcontinent at a time when the global centre of economic power is steadily moving from the West to the heart of Asia. Like North America and Europe dominated the global economy for two hundred years, India and China has the potential to dominate the global economy in the coming decades. Political and military might will naturally follow economic power. However, both India and China faces many challenges: The dominant national security threat facing both India and China is from terrorism. Without internal security and regional stability, these two emerging powers are unlikely to achieve and sustain superpower status.

With a dozen other Pakistani groups, LeT fight the Indian military in Kashmir and its clandestine cells attacks mostly government targets throughout India. Operating against 500,000 troops in Kashmir, the largest concentration of troops anywhere in the world, LeT attempted to indigenize the insurgency in Kashmir but failed. However, in the Indian mainland, LeT was successful in infiltrating, recruiting and training Indian Muslims in Pakistan and creating an “Indian LeT.” Known as the Indian Mujahidin, in the lead up to the Mumbai Carnage, this group has been responsible for the bulk of terrorist attacks in India. As attacks in Kashmir evoked little response, LeT and its affiliate Indian Mujahidin increasingly shifted their operations to the major cities. For their focal attack on Mumbai, the Indian Mujahidin surveilled the Mumbai targets, but LeT employed Pakistani attackers. As security was paramount, LeT trusted Pakistani operatives over Indians.¹⁵ LeT leadership believed that Indian operatives may “chicken out” at the last moment, especially because the attack was indiscriminate and led to many Muslim deaths.¹⁶

4. The Surviving Attacker

¹⁴ Adams, Jonathan: “In unconfirmed raid, Pakistan seizes Mumbai attack ringleader” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 8, 2008.

¹⁵ An interesting parallel was Al Qaeda employing only non-American Muslims to plan, prepare and execute the 9-11 attack.

¹⁶ In the Victoria Terminus, nearly half of the victims were Muslims. Of 58 victims, 22 were Muslims. Interview, Arabinda Acharya and Sujoyin Mandel, Field Team, Mumbai, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore, January 10, 2009.



The only surviving attacker, Mohammed Ajmal Amir Qasab, like the other nine attackers, came from a poor family in Pakistan. The son of Wasib Ajmal Amir, Qasab studied only up to fourth standard from Government Primary School in Faridkot, Punjab, Pakistan.¹⁷ Almost all the LeT attackers came from poor families and had low paying jobs. They were driven by poverty or incendiary speeches at mosques of Indian atrocities against Muslims and congregations receiving irresistible offers, “the prospect of economic security for the family” and “a meaning for an otherwise miserable life” and afterlife.¹⁸ After leaving school in 2000, Qasab joined his brother Afzal in Lahore and found employment in the capital of Punjab until 2005. After a quarrel with Wasib, his father, Qasab ran away from home and stayed in a boy’s home in Ali Hajveri Darbar at Lahore. Shafiq, a caterer from Zhelam, invited Qasab to work for him on daily wages. Paid Rs. 120 to 200 per day, Qasab worked with him till 2007. Intending to engage in a robbery, Qasim joined Muzaffar Lal Khan, aged 22 years, they relocated to Rawalpindi. After hiring a flat at Bangash Colony, they surveyed and drew maps of likely targets and intended to procure weapons. While searching for firearms, they saw LeT stalls at Raja bazaar, on the day of Bakri-id, a religious day. “We thought that, even if we procured fire-arms, we could not operate them. Therefore, we decided to join LeT for weapon training.”¹⁹

5. Joining LeT

After approaching LeT office, their names and address was noted and asked to return next day. They were given Rs. 200 and asked to visit Marqas Taiyyaaba, Muridke for training. After arriving by bus at LeT’s main training camp, a reference note given from the office was presented at the entry gate. After filling two recruitment forms, they enlisted in the 21 days Daura-Sufa training, the next day.

Daura-Sufa Training Schedule:

04.15: Wake up call and namaz

08.00: Breakfast

08.30-10.00: Hadis and Quran by Mufti Hafeez Mohomed Sayyed, Leader, LeT

10.00-12.00: Rest

12.00-13.00: Lunch Break

13.00-14.00: Namaz

14.00-16.00: Rest

16.00-18.00: PT and Game Instructor Fadulla

18.00-20.00: Namaz and other work

20.00-21.00: Dinner

¹⁷ Statement of accused Mohd Ajmal Amir Qasab; Age 21 yrs. Occupation: Labour, Resident of Faridkot, Tehsil -Dipalpur, Â Dist -Ukada, State -Suba Punjab, Pakistan, provided by the Mumbai Police to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore, December 2008.

¹⁸ Swamy, Praveen: “Pakistan Restraining LeT But Doing Little to Dismantle Capability,” *The Hindu*, May 14, 2007.

¹⁹ Statement of accused Mohd Ajmal Amir Qasab; Age 21 yrs. Occupation: Labour, Resident of Faridkot, Tehsil -Dipalpur, Â Dist -Ukada, State -Suba Punjab, Pakistan, provided by the Mumbai Police to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore, December 2008.



After the basic training, Qasab was selected to follow Daura-Ama, an intermediate training course. After traveling to Mansera, Buttal Village by vehicle, Qasab participated in the 21 day course at another LeT camp.

Daura-Ama Training Schedule:

04.15 - 05.00: Wake up call and namaz
05.00-6.00: PT Instructor Abu Anas
08.00: Breakfast
08.30-11.30: Weapons training. Trainer Abdul Rehman, Weapons AK-47, Green-O, SKS, Uzi gun, pistol, revolver
11.30-12.00: Rest
12.00-13.00: Lunch break
13.00-14.00: Namaz
14.00-16.00: Rest
16.00-18.00: PT
18.00-20.00: Namaz and other work
20.00-21.00: Dinner

Afterwards, Qasab served at the camp for two months. Qasab was permitted to visit his parents for one month. Thereafter, Qasab traveled to Shaiwainala, Muzzafarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir, for further advanced training called Duara-khas. At the LeT camp, Qasab was photographed and asked to fill application forms. The three month course at Chelabandi pahadi lasted 3 months.

Duara-khas Training Schedule:

04.15-05.00: Wake up call and namaz
05.00-06.00: PT Instructor Abu Mawiya
08.00: Breakfast
08.30-11.30: Weapons training, handling of all weapons and firing practice, from hand grenade, rocket launchers and mortars, Green-O, SKS, Uzi gun, pistol, revolver, rocket launchers. Trainer Abu Mawiya
11.30-12.00: Rest
12.00-13.00: Lunch Break
13.00-14.00: Namaz
14.00-16.00: Weapon training and firing practice. Lecture on Indian security agencies
16.00-18.00: Physical Training
18.00-20.00: Namaz and other work
20.00-21.00: Dinner

Qasab's initial motive for joining LeT was criminal. However, during the indoctrination and training Qasab became fully convinced of LeT's vision and mission. Before becoming a fully fledged international terrorist, Qasab underwent four terrorist training courses – basic, intermediate, advanced and specialized - in four different locations. The entire training lasting one and a half years had two elements – the ideological, to indoctrinate the mind and physical, to prepare the body for the mission.

Upon completion, the trainees visited with their family members for 7 days and returned to the LeT camp at Muzzafarabad. Out of 32 trainees, 16 were selected for a secret



operation in India by Zaki-ur-Rehman alias Chacha, the military commander of LeT and Kafa. Three trainees ran away from the camp. The remaining 13 were assigned for two successive training courses at two locations, Muridke and Karachi. They were courses designed and developed for the specific mission.

Zaki-ur-Rehman instructed Kafa to take the trainees to the camp at Muridke. In Muridke, the 13 trainees were taught swimming, boat operations, and how to operate in a maritime environment for a month. Except the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), no other terrorist group offers specialized training in maritime operations. During the training course, the trainees were instructed on India, the operation of Indian security agencies, including RAW, and how to mount operations, evade and escape. They were strictly instructed not to make phone calls to Pakistan after reaching India. To motivate the trainees, they were also shown video clippings highlighting the atrocities on Muslims in India. Continuous ideological indoctrination and physical training enabled motivation to be sustained and constant improvement of skill set needed for operational success.

6. Transformation

After completion of model training, Zaki-ur-Rehman selected 10 members and formed five teams each having two persons. On September 15, 2008, each team was assigned targets. They were Mohd Azmal alias Abu Muzahid, Ismail alias Abu Umar, Abu Ali, Abu Aksha, Abu Umer, Abu Shoeb, Abdul Rehman alias Bada, Abdul Rehman alias Chhota, Afadulla and Abu Umar.

Each target had a code name and the attacking team was known by that code. The code name for Qasab and Ismail that attacked the railway station was VTS team. The attackers were shown their targets on 'Google Earth' on Internet. Qasab said: "On the same site, we were shown the information about Azad Maidan, [the independence ground where rallies are held], [the city of] Mumbai, how and where to get down at Mumbai. We were shown the film on VT railway station and the film showing the commuters moving around at rush hours at VT railway station." In preparation for the attacks, LeT is likely to have dispatched surveillance teams to India to case the targets. It is also very likely that LeT agents in India including its sympathizers, supporters as well as members of the Indian Mujahidin provided sound and timely intelligence on the targets.

Qasab said: "We were instructed to carry out the firing at rush hours in the morning between 7 to 11 hours and between 7 to 11 hours in the evening. Then kidnap some persons, take them to the roof of some nearby building. After reaching at the roof top, we were to contact Chacha. After that, Chacha would give the telephone or mobile no of electronic media. We were then to contact the media persons on the same phone. And as per the instructions received from Chacha, we would make demands for releasing the hostages. This was the general strategy decided by our trainers."²⁰

The date fixed for the operation was September 27, 2008. The arrest of Fahim Arshad

²⁰ Statement of accused Mohd Ajmal Amir Qasab; Age 21 yrs. Occupation: Labour, Resident of Faridkot, Tehsil -Dipalpur, Â Dist -Ukanda, State -Suba Punjab, Pakistan, provided by the Mumbai Police to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, December 2008.



Ansari and three of his associates in India delayed the operation.²¹ Qasab was not aware of the arrests. They remained in Karachi learning Hindi and undergoing a maritime course. The LeT attackers trained in the use of speed boats on the sea. Ten attackers were organized as five teams. The overall leader of the attack was Ismail Khan, 25 years of age from Dera Ismail Khan in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan.

1st Team

- 1) Ismail
- 2) Qasab

2nd Team

- 1) Abu Aksha
- 2) Abu Umar

3rd Team

- 1) Bada Abdul Rehman
- 2) Abu Ali

4th Team

- 1) Chhota Abdul Rehman
- 2) Afadulla

5th Team

- 1) Shoeb
- 2) Abu Umer

On November 23, 2008, the attack teams led by Zaki-ur-Rehman alias Chacha and Kafa left from Azizabad, Karachi to the sea shore at 4.15 a.m. After boarding a trawler and traveling for 22 to 25 nautical miles, the attack team boarded a bigger trawler. After journeying for 1 hour, the team boarded Al-Huseini, a LeT ship, in the deep sea.²² While boarding the said ship, each attacker was given a backpack containing 8 grenades, one AK-47 rifle, 200 cartridges, 2 magazines and one cell phone for communication. Afterwards, the Al-Huseini navigated to the Indian waters, where the crew members hijacked Kuber, an Indian fishing trawler. Except the captain, the Indian seamen shifted to Al-Huseini ship were murdered. Thereafter, the LeT attack team boarded the hijacked Indian trawler. The captain, held at gunpoint, navigated the trawler to Mumbai, a three day journey. The operational commander Ismail and another team member Afadulla took the captain below the deck and killed him. After reaching Mumbai in the trawler, the attack team boarded a floatable dinghi and reached Budwar Park Jetty. As the LeT did not wish to leave behind any traces to Pakistan, the LeT pre-instructed the attackers to throw the satellite phone to the sea, and to sink the boat after killing the seaman. When a LeT caller from Pakistan checked: "What did

²¹ Four LeT men's arrest delayed 26/11 attacks: Police, MSN, December 24, 2008

²² Like the LTTE, the LeT is one of the few terrorist groups in the world with a maritime capability. After it became difficult to move men and materiel across the land border, LeT built its maritime capability. The LeT fleet from ships to trawlers and small boats play a key role in moving personnel, arms, explosives and other equipment to transit and target countries.



you do to the dead body?”, the attacker said: “Left it behind.”²³ When the caller asked: “Did you not open the locks for the water below?”, the attacker responded: “No, they did not open the locks. We left it like that because of being in hurry. We made a big mistake.”²⁴ When questioned “What big mistake?”, the attackers admitted their operational mistake to their handlers, “When we were getting into that boat, the waves were quite high. Another boat came. Everyone raised an alarm that the Navy had come. Everyone jumped quickly. In this confusion, the satellite phone of Ismail got left behind.”²⁵ Later the Indian authorities recovered the body and the boat, especially the phone uncovering the links to Pakistan.

After reaching Budwar Park, Qasab went along with Ismail to VT railway station by taxi. To quote Qasab: “After reaching the hall of VT railway station we went to the common toilet, took out the weapons from our sacks, loaded them, came out of toilet and started firing indiscriminately towards the passengers. Suddenly one police officer in uniform came towards us and opened fire. In retaliation, we threw hand grenades towards him and also opened fire towards him. Then we went inside the railway station threatening the commuters and randomly firing at them. Then we came out of the railway station and started searching for a building with roof top. But we did not find a suitable building. Therefore, we entered a lane. Then we entered a building and went upstairs. On 3rd or 4th floor we searched for hostages but we found that the said building was a hospital and not a residential building. Therefore we started coming down.”²⁶

The police in Mumbai believed that the gun fire was a result of a fight between two gangs. As such, the response was not sufficiently robust. Qasab narrated government response: “At that time policemen started firing at us. As such we threw some grenades towards them. When we were coming out of the hospital premises, we suddenly saw one police vehicle passing in front of us. Therefore, we took shelter behind a bush. Another vehicle passed in front of us and stopped at some distance. One police officer got down from the said vehicle and started firing at us. One bullet hit my hand and my AK-47 dropped down. I bent to pick it up when second bullet hit me on the same hand. I got injured. Ismail opened fire at the officers who were in said vehicle. They got injured and firing from their side stopped.”²⁷

Unknown to the terrorists, their firing killed Mumbai’s Anti-terrorism Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare, Additional Commissioner Ashok Kamte and encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar who were in that vehicle. To quote Qasab: “We waited for some time and then went towards the said vehicle. Three bodies lying there. Ismail removed the three bodies and drove the said vehicle. I sat next to him. While we were moving in the said vehicle, some police men tried to stop us. Ismail opened fire towards them while we were on the move; our vehicle got punctured near a big ground by the side of road. Ismail got down from the driver seat, stopped a car at the gun point and removed the three lady occupants from the said car. Then Ismail carried me to the car and sat me inside as I was injured. Then he drove the said

²³ Translation of some selected intercepted conversations, *Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*, November 26-29, 2008, Government of India, Annexure-VII, “Hotel Taj Mahal, November 27, 2008, 1.26 a.m.”, p. 52.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Statement of accused Mohd Ajmal Amir Qasab; Age 21 yrs. Occupation: Labour, Resident of Faridkot, Tehsil -Dipalpur, Â Dist -Ukada, State -Suba Punjab, Pakistan, provided by the Mumbai Police to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore, December 2008.

²⁷ *Ibid.*



car.

While we were moving in the said car, we were stopped on the road near sea shore. Ismail fired towards them. Some policemen got injured. Police also opened fire towards us. Due to the police firing Ismail got injured. Then police removed us to some hospital. In the hospital I came to know that Ismail succumbed to the injuries he has sustained.”²⁸

7. The Attack

Only one of the five attack teams was neutralized. The four teams reached the two hotels and Nariman House, a hostel, an educational center, and a synagogue and layed seige. The two hotels were the most prestigious hotels in Mumbai. A few days before the attack Henry Kissinger was staying at the Taj Mahal and on the day of the attack Israel’s deputy foreign minister was about to visit the Oberoi Trident for a meeting. The attackers resumed communication with their handlers for operational direction and inspiration. The attackers had significant tactical independence.

LeT leadership in Pakistan communicated to the attackers holding Israeli and Jewish hostages in the Nariman House at 7.45 p.m. on November 27, 2008: “the Major General [a code for the LeT operational leader] directed us to do what we like. We should not worry.”²⁹ The LeT high command controlled the overall operation. They wanted to conclude the siege in the morning of November 28th. “The operation has to be concluded tomorrow morning. Pray to God. Keep two magazines and three grenades aside, and expend the rest of your ammunition.”³⁰ At 10.26 p.m. the LeT Pakistan called again to inform the attackers at the Nariman House, Brother, you have to fight for the victory of Islam. Be strong.”³¹

The LeT handlers wanted to set fire to the hotels by initiating fires in the rooms. At 1.26 a.m. on November 27, 2008, when a LeT caller phoned and asked the attacker at the Taj Mahal hotel: “Are you setting the fire or not?”, he responded: “Not yet. I am getting a mattress ready for burning.”³² Again at 1.37 a.m. when the caller said: “Try to set the place on fire”, the attacker said: “We have set fire in four rooms.”³³ They asked the attackers to look for a government minister. “The “Vazir” [Minister] should not escape.”³⁴ At 3.10 a.m., the LeT caller phoned and informed an attacker at the Taj Mahal hotel: “Greetings! There are three Ministers and one Secretary of the Cabinet in your hotel. We don’t know in which room.” When the attacker responded: “Oh! That is good news! It is the icing on the cake,” the caller said: “Find those 3-4 persons and then get whatever you want from India.” Based on TV coverage of the event, these experienced handlers controlled the attackers. The same caller added: “Do one thing. Throw one or two grenades on the Navy and police teams, which are outside.”³⁵

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Translation of some selected intercepted conversations, Mumbai Terrorist Attacks, November 26-29, 2008, Government of India, Annexure-VII, p. 51

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52

³² *Ibid.*, *Idem.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, *Idem.*

³⁵ Translation of some selected intercepted conversations, Mumbai Terrorist Attacks, November 26-29, 2008, Government of India, Annexure-VII, p. 51.



The LeT handlers motivated and guided their attackers throughout the episode. “Brother Abdul. The media is comparing your action to 9/11” said an LeT caller from Pakistan to an attacker at Hotel Oberio at 3.53 a.m. on November 27, 2008.³⁶ Speaking from Azizabad, Karachi, Kafa, the deputy operational leader of the LeT said: “Everything is being recorded by the media. Inflict maximum damage. Keep fighting. Don’t be taken alive.”³⁷ On the same phone, another caller instructed, “Kill all the hostages, except the two Muslims. Keep your phone switched on so that we can hear the gunfire.” When the attacker Fahadullah said, “We have three foreigners including women from Singapore and China, the caller responded: “kill them.”³⁸ In the background were the voice of Fahadullah and Abdul Rehman directing the hostages to stand in a line and telling the two Muslims to stand aside. Momentarily after the gunfire in Mumbai, there were cheering voices in Karachi.

8. Did ISI Know?

The perpetrating group, LeT is the most structured guerrilla and terrorist movement in the subcontinent. Created immediately after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan to fight Indian presence in Kashmir, LeT grew under the watchful eyes of Pakistan’s Inter-Services-Intelligence (ISI). Contrary to press reporting, ISI had no role in establishing it but was instrumental in guiding its direction. In the subcontinent, the intelligence services use existing groups to advance their short-term national interests but after a while threat groups develop their own momentum. The LTTE, the group responsible for the largest number of suicide attacks, was financed, trained, armed, and directed by RAW from 1983-1987. Subsequently, LTTE declared war on the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka and dispatched an Indian trained female suicide bomber Tenmuli Rajaratnam alias Dhanu, to kill Rajiv Gandhi, a former Indian Prime Minister.

Reporting by the international intelligence community suggest that ISI attempted but failed to contain LeT operations in India’s mainland. As Pakistan curtailed LeT activities, LeT started to operate clandestinely to conceal “the scale and size of its military activities” even as far as ISI was concerned.³⁹ Referring to Umm al-Qura, a LeT camp near Bait-ul Mujahideen, LeT HQ in Muzaffarabad, Praveen Swamy, India’s respected writer on LeT commented: “Firing practice was sharply restricted for fear of drawing attention of nearby Pakistan army positions. When Inter Services Intelligence personnel visited Umm al-Qura, the recruits were ordered to hide.”⁴⁰ Even the initial land journey of 8 LeT operatives trained was compartmentalized, suggesting that “Lashkar now wished to conceal major operations from ISI itself.”⁴¹

³⁶ Translation of some selected intercepted conversations, Mumbai Terrorist Attacks, November 26-29, 2008, Government of India, Annexure-VII, p. 52.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 53

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 56

³⁹ Praveen Swamy, “Pakistan Restraining LeT But Doing Little to Dismantle Capability,” *The Hindu*, May 14, 2007.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

⁴¹ “They had strict instructions to travel in groups of two, using separate compartments on the Rawalpindi-Karachi train and avoiding conversation with other passengers. After a long wait in a window-less room on the Karachi coast, the group was finally told that the time had come from them to be launched forward into Jammu and Kashmir – but that their route would first involve a journey by sea.” Swamy, Praveen, “Pakistan Restraining LeT But Doing Little to Dismantle Capability,” *The Hindu*, May 14, 2007



9. The Future

The LeT attack is a set back to normalizing ties between India and Pakistan. The Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmud Qureshi was in New Delhi when Mumbai was hit by terrorist attacks. Since the attacks, the Indian focus has been to punish Pakistan. The attack also strengthened the hand of the Hindu extremists and empowered Hindu Politics. On February 18, 2007, the Hindu terrorist group, Abhinav Bharat, attacked Samjhota train between India and Pakistan killing 68, most of them Pakistanis. A serving Lieutenant Colonel of Indian Army, Prashad Srikant Purohit, former Major of Indian Army Ramesh Upadhyay and 10 others including a Hindu priest and priestess were linked to the attack.⁴² As a result of India's limited options vis-à-vis Pakistan, it is very likely that Hindu extremism will rise in India.

Unless and until India normalizes its relations with Pakistan, over its bilateral disputes, Pakistani soil will be used to wage terrorism against India. Despite the international pressure on the state of Pakistan, the government is unlikely to dismantle either the LeT or its educational, welfare and humanitarian front Jamaat-ul Dawa. There is no easy solution rather than to resolve these long standing conflicts that cause seething anger and action across the divide. The easiest way is a tit-for-tat response or to accuse and blame each other. The most intelligent response is for the leaders of India and Pakistan to sit down, discuss how best to address each other's concerns. Both the Indians and the Pakistanis live in pain. A year before the Mumbai attacks, the President of India has suffered the loss of his wife the late Benazir Bhutto to terrorism. The Prime Minister of India is under mounting pressure to act against Pakistan. With LeT emerging under the guise of another front, the Indo-Pakistan conflict is likely to escalate in the coming months. The limited role played by the Bush Administration by sending Secretary Rice has not helped except to temporarily calm both sides. The new U.S. Administration under Obama can play a strategic and a long term role to mediate and negotiate a resolution. Failure to do so will mean an increase in threat not only to India and Pakistan both also to the world at large.

With an increase in threat by India to Pakistan, Islamabad is likely to move its troops on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and in FATA to the Indian border. This means, greater freedom for Al Qaeda, Pakistani Taliban, Afghan Taliban and their associated groups operating against US and coalition targets in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the world. As tribal Pakistan is the epicentre of global terror, withdrawal of Pakistani troops from FATA will have major implications for global security and for the incoming Obama Administration.

⁴² Gilani, Iftikhar: "Pakistan to grill India over Samjhota train blast probe", *Daily Times*, November 22, 2008.