Spot Report
Serial Bomb Blasts in Delhi, India
13 September 2008

The Incident

Twenty people were killed and about a 100 injured in a series of five bomb explosions carried out in busy market areas in New Delhi on 13 September 2008. The first explosion took place at Karol Bagh at 6.10 p.m. near a three-wheeler vehicle which got ripped apart. Two bombs were successively triggered in a dustbin near Gate No. 1 of the Barakhamba Road metro station around 6.35 pm and at 6.40pm in Central Park, Connaught Place in central Delhi. Two low-intensity bombs planted in a dustbin and on a cycle in the crowded M-Block Market in Greater Kailash in south Delhi also went off at 6.30 p.m. and 6.40 p.m. Later, a live bomb was defused outside the Regal cinema at Connaught Place, while two more bombs were found at Central Park at Connaught Place and at India Gate.

Map and Pictures

3 Site of the Blasts in Delhi

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2 Ibid
Modus Operandi

Initial investigation reports revealed that the Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) were configured using ammonium nitrate and timer devices were used for synchronizing the explosions that took place between 6.10 and 6.40 p.m. The IEDs used in the Delhi serial blasts were similar to those used in the recent explosions in Jaipur, Bangalore and Ahmedabad, indicating the involvement of the same group i.e. the Indian Mujahideen (IM). The bombs

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were planted at busy market places and triggered during peak hour with the obvious intent to cause maximum casualty. It is also believed that the militants planted the bombs minutes before they exploded. The manner in which the explosives used in the Delhi blasts were packed, the C-shaped boxes they were kept in, and even the carpentry of the box, all point to the same group behind their assembling.

Suspects behind the Serial Blasts

Indian Mujahideen, the militant outfit who took responsibility for the recent blasts in Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Bangalore has done the same for the serial blasts in Delhi on 13 September 2008. The fact that after the first blast, a warning email titled ‘Message of Death’ from al_arbi_delhi@yahoo.com was received by certain media organizations minutes before the other four explosions occurred indicates the involvement and audacity of the group who carried out the attacks. The email stated that “the Indian Mujahideen strikes back once more…within five minutes from now…this time with the message of death, dreadfully terrorizing you for your sins…Inshallah. Do whatever you want and stop us if you can” and stating that the purpose of Saturday’s blasts was to “stop the heart of India from beating”. The e-mail was sent using the Wi-Fi Internet connection of a company named Kamran Power Control located in Mumbai. The same technique was used to send a similar e-mail claiming responsibility for the recent Ahmedabad blasts.

The e-mail contained a 13-page manifesto and a video slide-show using photographs of previous blast victims with captions. The manifesto is largely devoted to issuing threats against the media and the police force e.g. the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Maharashtra, Gujarat and the Organization for Countering Terrorism (OCTOPUS) in Andhra Pradesh. Certain analysts believe that the email which was sent by IM follows Al Qaeda’s pattern of

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communication of sending an audio-visual attachment with the email.\textsuperscript{11} However, this is still speculation at best and there is no concrete evidence that the entity is influenced either in tactics or ideology by Al Qaeda. There is however some concern that IM is getting support from operatives in Pakistan, UK and Saudi Arabia.

For the first time, the IM has made a direct reference to the conflict in Kashmir and attributed the Delhi blasts to the ‘brethren martyrs in Kashmir’.\textsuperscript{12} This indicates that the Kashmir issue is still salient and the recent dispute over the Amarnath shrine land transfer may have prompted IM to focus attention on Kashmir.

**Concluding Analysis**

Today, there is a disturbing trend of Islamic radicalization in India which is specially manifested in the number of attacks in urban India since 2007. While some analysts believe that the Indian Mujahideen is merely another name for the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and has support from foreign groups and elements like Lashkar-e-Toiba, the credo of Indian Mujahideen, while still focusing on local grievances nevertheless seems to blends the causes of Islamic extremists world-wide - the invasion of Iraq, the plight of the Palestinians- with specifically Indian grievances.\textsuperscript{13} By seemingly conducting numerous attacks since last year, IM has proved that it has the capability to strike and carry out militant attacks in all parts of the country.

Also, although Indian intelligence agencies had recently warned of a renewed bombing campaign, there was no concrete stepping up of security in the country. Gujarat Chief Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party member Narendra Modi stated that he had personally alerted Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to the threat, while the blame game between the different


\textsuperscript{12} “Terror mail threatens to stop India’s heartbeat”, *Hindu*, 14/09/2008, [http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/14/stories/2008091458990800.htm](http://www.hindu.com/2008/09/14/stories/2008091458990800.htm)

political parties, intelligence and police was on display after the blasts had taken place.\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, the level of public vigilance and awareness in India has to be stepped up by persistent public awareness campaigns to bring home the reality that terrorism poses a serious threat to the nation. In the case of Delhi, just before the blasts occurred, a 12-year-old balloon seller, as an eyewitness, stated that he saw a few men placing packets in the dustbins at Central Park and Barakhamba Road. However, he did not alert any authorities and moments later, the explosions which could possible have been averted, took place.\textsuperscript{15} Public vigilance is thus especially important in a country and huge and crowded as India where civilian soft targets are very difficult to monitor and protect.

\textsuperscript{14} “Poor security blames for Indian bombs”, \textit{Financial Times}, 15/09/2008, \url{http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d6da3b38-8256-11dd-a019-000077b07658.html}