



## INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH

A Centre of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

### Triple Blast at Mumbai, 13 July 2011

On 13 July 2011 three bomb blasts took place within 11 minutes at three different locations at the India's financial capital Mumbai. Three blasts between 6.54 p.m. and 7.05 p.m. rocked the crowded areas of the city, killing 21 persons<sup>1</sup> and injuring 141 others.<sup>2</sup> The locations are Zaveri Bazar, Kabutarkhana, and Opera House. No group has so far asserted responsibility for the blasts. Indian authorities are currently investigating the incident.

The first explosion rocked Zaveri Bazar, a popular jewellery market, at 6.54 pm and a minute later another blast shook Diamond Market near Opera House, a busy business area. The third blast ripped through crowded Kabutarkhana area in Dadar area at 7.04 pm.<sup>3</sup>

#### Tactics

This is the worst attack on Mumbai since 2008 that was perpetrated by Pakistan-based militants. This incident is a well coordinated attack. The timing and locations also appear to have been chosen carefully to maximize casualties. Indian Home Ministry said that the IEDs (improvised explosive devices) were found to have sophistication.

The most powerful bomb, set off by an IED, occurred at Zaveri Bazaar in south Mumbai, a congested part of the city. It can be noted that Zaveri Bazaar was attacked twice before. Back in 1993, a bomb was planted in the bazaar in a series of explosions in the city, and in 2003, a blast there resulted in many dead.

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<sup>1</sup> The death tolls might rise since many are critically injured

<sup>2</sup> "21 killed, 141 injured as terror strikes Mumbai again", *The Hindu*, 13 July 2011, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2224356.ece>

<sup>3</sup> "Three blasts rock Mumbai, 18 dead" *Zeenews.com.*, [http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/three-blasts-rock-mumbai-21-dead\\_719503.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/three-blasts-rock-mumbai-21-dead_719503.html), July 14, 2011, 11:11 (IST)

Zaveri Bazaar, the popular jewelry market is vulnerable area, with very crowded and narrow alleys. According to Mumbai police an improvised explosive device had been hidden in an umbrella in Zaveri Bazaar. The umbrella was apparently used to camouflage the explosive during the downpour being witnessed in the city, in the bustling Khau Gali in Zaveri Bazaar.

The Zaveri Bazaar and Opera House bombs caused more fatal havoc. Eye-witnesses reported seeing severed limbs, diamonds and bloodied glass shards littering the bombed narrow lane with small eateries patronized by diamond traders. Most of the fatalities came from this bomb.<sup>4</sup>

The second blast took place at Kabutarkhana near the Dadar suburban railway station in central Mumbai and the third at Opera House, also in south Mumbai. The bomb at Opera House was hidden under garbage.<sup>5</sup> The blast at Dadar West was caused by an explosive device planted inside a Maruti Esteem car.

According to the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, ammonium nitrate with timer devices was used in the IEDs used in the attacks. At least seven IEDs were used in the blasts<sup>6</sup>, timer mechanism is also used.<sup>7</sup> One more unexploded device was recovered from Dadar. The police are probing a suspicious tiffin box found near the blast site. A headless body with a circuit has been discovered at one of the blast sites. There are speculations that this might be a case of suicide bombing. But Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) Chief Rakesh Maria said it was too early to say whether a “human bomb” was involved.<sup>8</sup>

No terrorist group so far has claimed responsibility but Mumbai police suspects the hand of Indian Mujahideen (IM). Police sources have said the IEDs used could be

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<sup>4</sup> “Mumbai rocked, Pakistan suspected”, Asia Times Online, 14 July 2011, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/MG15Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MG15Df01.html)

<sup>5</sup> “Sophisticated IEDs used to trigger Mumbai blasts: Govt”, *The Times of India*, 14 July 2011, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Sophisticated-IEDs-used-to-trigger-Mumbai-blasts-Govt/articleshow/9220205.cms>

<sup>6</sup> “Three blasts rock Mumbai, 18 dead”, Zeenews.com, [http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/three-blasts-rock-mumbai-21-dead\\_719503.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/three-blasts-rock-mumbai-21-dead_719503.html)

<sup>7</sup> “Govt. will do everything to prevent attacks: Manmohan”, *The Hindu*, 14 July 2011, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:fXihAE6OiDUJ:www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2226775.ece+Mumbai%2Btimer+mechanism%2BThe+Hindu&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=sg&client=firefox-a&source=www.google.com.sg>

<sup>8</sup> “Suicide bomber suspected, CCTV footage holds key”, *The Deccan Herald*, 15 July 2011, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/176209/suicide-bomber-suspected-cctv-footage.html>

similar to those used in the past by terror group Indian Mujahideen.<sup>9</sup> Mumbai Police Commissioner Arup Patnaik said the blasts at Opera House and Zaveri Bazaar were of higher intensity than the one at Dadar.<sup>10</sup>

From the familiar pattern of the attacks, Indian security agencies unofficially mentioned the involvement of the Indian Mujahideen. But this group has not sent its trademark e-mail to the media outlets claiming credit for its latest exhibition of terror.

Following the blasts, a high alert has been sounded in major cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad and precautionary security measures are being taken by the respective local administrations.

### **Impact of the attack on India-Pakistan peace talks**

In a statement, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani condemned the blasts and expressed sympathy over the loss of life. However, the attack comes while India and Pakistan is holding peace talks. The Foreign Ministers of both countries are expected to meet in New Delhi in 27 July 2011. The two countries have tried to mend their relations in recent months, with high-level officials restarting talks on a range of issues. But there is still major distrust between them. Indian officials want Pakistan to do more to punish those responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attack and generally crack down on militant groups on its soil.

Indian officials have accused Pakistan's intelligence agency of helping coordinate and fund earlier attacks in India, including the 2008 Mumbai siege, which lasted three days. Peace talks between the countries were suspended after the siege and resumed only recently. The possibility of sabotaging the peace talks as a motive behind the attacks cannot be ruled out.

Terrorists have targeted the city of Mumbai multiple times<sup>11</sup> since 2000, including a siege in November 2008 that killed 166 people. A lone surviving gunman Ajmal Kasab of Pakistani origin, was convicted in that case on charges of terrorism, criminal

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<sup>9</sup> "Mumbai terror attacks: Not an intelligence failure, says Chidambaram,"NDTV, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/mumbai-terror-attacks-not-an-intelligence-failure-says-chidambaram-119146> (Updated: July 14, 2011 11:11 IST)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Mumbai was attacked by the terrorists in 2003, 2006, 2008.

conspiracy and waging war against the Indian state.<sup>12</sup> As claimed by some reports, the bombings coincided with the 24th birthday of, Kasab.

While no suspects were named by the Indian authority and no group came forward to claim responsibility while this report was filed, if Pakistani-based militants ultimately are found to be responsible, it could throw the countries' détente off course and lead to new tensions between the historic rivals.

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<sup>12</sup> “Mumbai blasts kill 21 in apparent terrorist attack”, *The Washington Post*, 13 July 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/mumbai-blasts-kill-at-least-10-injure-dozens/2011/07/13/gIqAMC4SCI\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/mumbai-blasts-kill-at-least-10-injure-dozens/2011/07/13/gIqAMC4SCI_story.html)