



# Defeating Terrorist Support Structures After Mumbai

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The picture that has emerged from the November 26-29th terrorist attacks on Mumbai indicates that there was an extensive support network in place. In regard to broad terrorist support infrastructure, the Mumbai cell represents barely a spec in the wider universe of Jihadist organizational capabilities.

Defeating terrorist support networks is a potent but underused weapon that can degrade the ability of terrorists to conduct attacks. By severing access to money and material support, rabid and violent terrorist ideologies can be constrained. On the other hand, a bountiful supply of funds and recruits combined with a necessarily violent ideology will result in attacks of higher degrees of magnitude, as the latest attacks on Mumbai clearly demonstrate. Therefore, both the private and public sectors must reexamine counterterrorism policies and maximize efforts to fortify the system to prevent exploitation and support for terrorist networks and their attack cells.

This is the first of a three-part report focused on terrorist support structures in the wake of the latest Mumbai attack. The first report provides an initial summary of the latest Mumbai attack with an emphasis on operational support. Part two provides an examination of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) in regard to its broader organizational infrastructure. Part three identifies key vulnerabilities in the private and public sector that the LeT network and its Mumbai cell breached and then provides recommendations for closing those gaps.

## MUMBAI

The LeT cell that terrorized Mumbai for 59 hours beginning on 26 November required extensive material support. The attack cell of 10 apparently took a maritime route – hijacking vessels and murdering their crews – from Karachi to Mumbai using GPS receivers and satellite phones. Disembarking from rubber dinghies to Mumbai, each attacker reportedly carried a dozen grenades, a 9-millimeter handgun with two 18-round clips and an AK-47, seven to nine 30-round magazines and more than 100 rounds of loose ammunition. Each operative also reportedly carried a 17.6



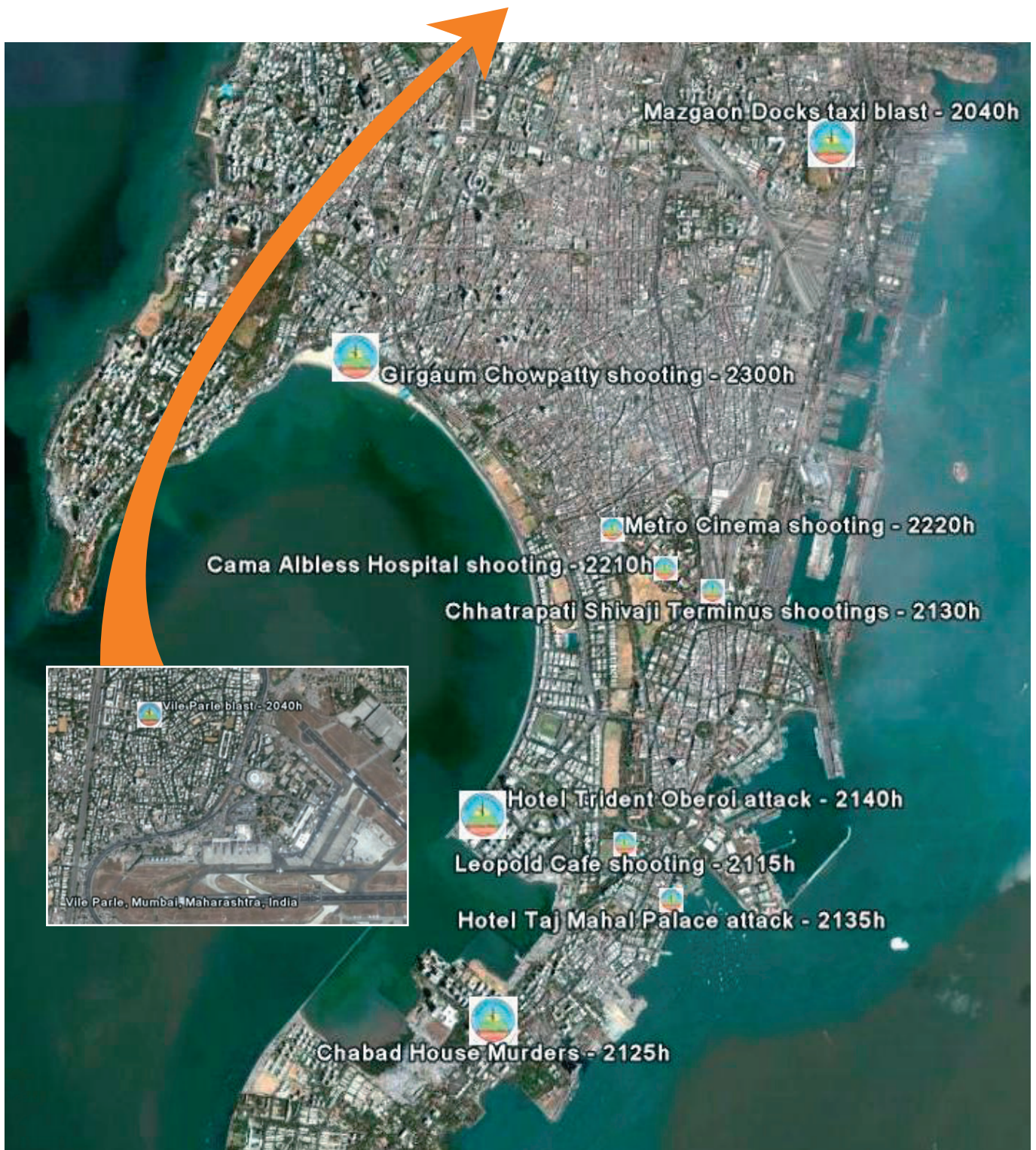
*This satellite image indicates the locations of the attacks in the greater Mumbai area.*

pound bomb. The cadre had at least four GPS devices and all 10 had mobile phones to communicate with their handlers. Forged documents including a Mauritian ID, credit cards from major banks and \$1200 in cash were also found on the cadre.

The swift, deliberate movements of the two-man attack teams can be explained by extensive support, reconnaissance and planning activities that relied on technical and human sources. The operation made use of commercial technologies including imagery intelligence from Google Earth. In addition, the handlers in Pakistan used Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone services – commercially offered by services like Skype and Vonage – because the calls are more difficult for authorities to trace. Furthermore, the e-mail claiming responsibility under the name “Deccan Mujahideen” was disseminated using similar tech-savvy encryption techniques to mask identities.

Support cells – including Indian nationals – may have also been in place to assist in the planning and intelligence collection at Nariman House and the Oberoi and Taj hotels. The attack cadre knew the Jewish target at Nariman House well as either they or their support cells may have stayed there, pretending to be





Malaysian students. Similar reports have emerged regarding the hotel targets. According to one Straits Times report, a cadre or support operative had interned as a chef at the Taj Mahal Hotel for 10-months. Other unconfirmed reports indicated that a support cell had checked into the hotels as guests in order to stockpile ammunition for a prolonged hostage situation. Both the Oberoi and Taj hotels have denied that any of the terrorists had ever worked or stayed as guests in the hotels. Yet the ease with which the assailants moved through both hotels does suggest at a minimum that they somehow obtained firsthand knowledge of the premises and its security. There is a precedent in Jihadist tradecraft for targeting luxury

hotels after first infiltrating them as employees. Al-Qaeda's 1993 "Landmarks" plot conceived of tactical teams laying siege to New York City landmarks and luxury hotels including the St Regis and Waldorf-Astoria. In order to conduct reconnaissance, the terrorists would use human probes to ascertain the layout, intending later to infiltrate the hotels as kitchen staff. This attack plot bears striking resemblance to the latest Mumbai attack.

**VAST SUPPORT NETWORKS**

While details are still emerging regarding the support structures of LeT's latest attack in Mumbai, the existence of its robust infrastructure and recruits to carry out similar attacks is certain.

The network supporting the Mumbai cell represents a tiny spec in the wider universe of Jihadist organizational support.

Pakistani president Asif Zardari addressed the challenge in a December 8th op-ed in the New York Times. In the article, he implored India (and the world) to empathize with his and Pakistan's struggle against terrorism, and to unite together to fight a common enemy, rather than fight each other, at a time when an Indian strike inside Pakistani territory seems like a strong possibility. That this common enemy – the Salafi Jihadist movement -- has bloodied Mumbai, Islamabad, New York, Washington DC, Madrid, and London, leads him to conclude that "terrorism is a regional as well as a global threat, and it needs to be battled collectively." And this fact relates directly to Mr Zardari's other key observation: the terrorists have "a vast support network" in Pakistan, which is a "huge" challenge requiring outside help. The implication being that Pakistan needs the world, and the world needs Pakistan as an ally to defeat the networks. LeT and other proscribed terrorist entities in Pakistan, India, the

Middle East and Europe raise funds and recruit openly and legally under the guise of non-profit fronts. In fact, that is how Mumbai terrorist Ajmal Mohammed Amir Iman connected with the LeT in the first place. He contacted the local non-profit front of the LeT known as Jamaat ud-Dawa with organized crime ambitions. Subsequently, he was ushered through an 18 month training program that transformed him into a suicide terrorist and mass-murderer. Until the broader organizational anatomy of terrorist movements is identified and defeated, devastating terrorist attacks like the latest one in Mumbai will remain a perennial threat.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/10/world/asia/10mumbai.html?ref=asia>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/world/asia/09mumbai.html?\\_r=1&ref=world](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/world/asia/09mumbai.html?_r=1&ref=world)

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1042203.html>

[http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20081203\\_new\\_york\\_landmarks\\_plot\\_mumbai\\_attack](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20081203_new_york_landmarks_plot_mumbai_attack)

#### **NEXT TIME...**

Part two of this report will examine the scale of LeT infrastructure including its recruitment and welfare wing, Jamaat ud-Dawa (JuD). With over 2,200 offices and tens of thousands of orphan students in its madrasas in Pakistan alone, LeT is poised to remain a major terrorist group capable of authoring and executing attacks for years to come.