



Response to Mumbai terrorist incident from global security specialist red24

In response to last night's (November 26 2008) attack on Mumbai, **Neil Thompson, red24's Director of Special Risks** and a former Detective Superintendent in the UK's National Crime Squad, said: "The coordinated, large-scale nature of the incident combined with reports of the explicit targeting of US and UK nationals, as well as the incident at the Jewish centre at Nariman House, suggest that a jihadist or Islamist extremist group is responsible. This is further bolstered by the fact that a group named Deccan Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

"The attacks focused on Western and economic targets, revealing a shift in tactical and targeting patterns of India's Islamists. Although Deccan Mujahadeen is an unknown group, the name does not necessarily indicate that the group itself is new. India has a history of Islamic militancy. The traditional groups operated under the banners of the Students Islamic Movement (SIMI), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) or Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami (HUJI). It should be noted that the LeT and SIMI are thought to be responsible for the 2006 Mumbai train bombings in which 209 people lost their lives and more than 700 were injured. In more recent terrorist incidents in India, the name Indian Mujahideen (IM) has been seen with increasing frequency. The name is probably designed to imply the group is homegrown and is recruiting and planning attacks under the noses of the Indian security forces.

"Deccan is a plateau region that covers most of southern India, and the name Deccan Mujahideen suggests a more localized offshoot of IM, creating the impression that the group is fragmenting or proliferating into smaller, more autonomous branches. The ambiguous nature of terrorist group names is nothing new. Terrorist and criminal groups have frequently adopted new identities as a tactic to spread confusion within law enforcement apparatus. If members are arrested, they can intentionally lead security forces down the wrong path by claiming they are from a new group, or deny membership in an organisation to protect other group members.

"The group responsible may also have Al Qaeda connections. The high level of training and coordination demonstrated in last night's attack, coupled with recent praise for the Indian Mujahideen (IM) from Al Qaeda's deputy leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, suggests such a slant, although any such assistance is likely to have been limited to training or financial support. This attack does mark a tactical departure for India's Islamists. Past attacks have focused on igniting communal, religious or sectarian tensions. This incident focused on foreign nationals and the tourist sector."

Notes for editors:

For more information or interview requests, please contact Lucy Ferguson on 01869 353 803 or on email: lucy.ferguson@razor-pr.com

More about Neil Thompson

Neil Thompson, a global security specialist, is red24's Operations and Special Risks Director. Neil has over 30 years' UK law enforcement experience. He retired as Detective Superintendent in Charge of Operations for the National Crime Squad (NCS). He is a trained hostage negotiator and has extensive experience of operating abroad, having worked closely with a number of foreign governments as well as foreign intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

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