



THE MUMBAI MASSACRE

A CANADIAN'S
PERSPECTIVE

by Tim Lynch

On November 27, 2008, while vacationing in Goa, India, I checked my email to discover a message from a friend in Toronto; he was inquiring if I was affected by events in Mumbai, 600 km up the road. Instinctively, I switched on CNN and immediately became aware that the city was under siege. Terrorists were killing innocent bystanders, destroying some of Mumbai's landmarks, attacking Jewish residents and seeking out holders of British and American passports. As the day progressed, we learned of a band of terrorists assaulting the city from offshore, using high speed inflatable marine craft – the possibility of a similar scenario unfolding in my home community of Metro Vancouver during the 2010 Olympics was impossible to avoid considering.

The new geo-political reality in this world is that nations have to come to terms with such acts of terror and it is important that lessons are learned when they occur. The first reaction to such inconceivable behaviour, is to ask "why." The second has to be a desire to learn how to manage the new reality of such occurrences.

Had the British given Dominion status to India when it gave such self-government to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, it is conceivable that Gandhi's

vision of a united, pluralistic and peace loving society might have evolved. Instead, the British (Churchill) engaged in a policy of divide and rule, exploitation of Indian soldiers in World War II, and discriminatory racial practices towards loyal citizens. To begin to understand why the terrorists attacked Mumbai one must analyze events in the context of this history. Similar accounts of British and other colonial decisions underly terrorist insurgencies originating between the Pakistan/Afghan border and the Palestinian/Israeli border(s).

Dealing with the reality of such colonial history, and the terrorist hotspots it has spawned, requires a new approach in the defence of the nation state. Being familiar with the challenges Canada faces in coming to terms with this new reality, I felt compelled to make some comparisons with the Indian situation.

Canadian Comparisons

While acknowledging the significant differences in demographics, India and Canada share a similar pedigree with the British Empire. Both countries encompass large areas of the globe and are governed through a confederate parliamentary government connecting quasi-autonomous jurisdictions. Their coastlines require the need to main-

tain east and west naval theatres. These features pose similar challenges in developing any counterterrorism policy.

Noting that Mumbai houses the headquarters of India's Western Naval Command, retired Brigadier Ian da Costa described the attack on the City as a major intelligence failure. He stated that several sources knew such an attack was imminent. Collaboration among government departments was not in place, nor was any one authority responsible for connecting the dots. Da Costa criticized the qualifications of those serving in intelligence, the strategic positioning of Commanders across India, and the absence of a rapid deployment capability in responding to such incidents. He called for greater collaboration among all sectors of Indian society, noting that the Taj Hotel, one of the terrorists' targets, didn't have a map of its premises when the Commandos arrived at the hotel. He described the need for a program that I consider similar to the "Harbour Watch" initiative being administered by the RCMP in the Port of Vancouver.

Da Costa's account of the challenges that India faces further reminds me of the situation Canada hopes it has addressed with the establishment of its three Maritime Securities Operation Centres (MSOCs) and also Canada Command.

Mumbai and 9/11

Commentary in the Indian media compared the Mumbai attack with the 9/11 attacks. However, such observations did not acknowledge the difference between administrations of law in India relative to the United States. Indian society seems to function more in accordance with the “law of the jungle” than “law and order.” This is clearly illustrated in the way people drive and the casual way in which police corruption seems to be accepted. Corruption is an integral part of Indian society, as anyone attempting to obtain a building permit quickly learns. Admittedly, no society is immune from such behaviour, but a credible assumption that the law is being administered fairly would appear to be the first step towards achieving national security. India’s culture of corruption could prove, in my view, a major impediment to its becoming accepted as a safe and secure society.

Formal Inquiries

Various inquiries into the Mumbai massacre are being established at the municipal, state and national levels. Calling on the Indian people to make sacrifices in order to avenge the humiliation of what happened in Mumbai, activist Dr. Oscar Rebello listed the following questions, some of which could have application outside India:

- Are we prepared to reform our police force so that they don’t end up as mere bullet-proof vests for venal politicians?
- Are we prepared to say an emphatic “No” to every form of corruption?
- Are we prepared to honestly pay our taxes to ensure funding and modernization of our valiant armed forces and intelligence agencies instead of funding our overfed cricketers?
- Are we prepared to educate and lift out of poverty the teeming unwashed millions who are easy recruits for any radical cause?
- Are we prepared to adopt a zero tolerance policy towards anyone who subverts the law of the land?
- If you are a Muslim, are you prepared to acknowledge this (the Mumbai terrorist attack) is the most vile form of Islamic fundamentalism that needs to be condemned as passionately (or more) as cartoons on prophet Mohamed?
- Are we prepared to say that we do not need less politics but more political accountability?

Indian rhetoric about Pakistan’s involvement in the Mumbai massacre caused Pakistan to go on the defensive and move troops from its Afghan border to its border with India.

Observing the Mumbai attack while in India, has reinforced for me the importance of a society having strong and respected law enforcement capability if it is to counteract terrorism. Those working for the state must earn and deserve a reputation for integrity and fairness. Citizens must be encouraged to proudly respect those working in the service of the country – such is not the case in India. Terrorists with the intent to attack such a society need only have spare cash to find critical information and gain access to vulnerable targets.

If India is to achieve international respect as a safe country to visit and do business, questions such as those presented by Dr Rebello need to be addressed by all inquiries into the Mumbai massacre. The real test will be the readiness of foreign intelligence agencies to exchange information with India’s agencies. As long as there is suspicion that sensitive information could be sold or bought, India will be marginalized in the fight against global terrorism.

A Collaborative Civil/Military Response

As reported in the *Hindustan Times* (28 Nov 2008), the need for better organization and follow-up action plans were acknowledged by Ratan Tata, Chairman, Tata Group, owners of the Taj Hotel:

“We had a blast some years ago. We should have learnt to get a crisis infrastructure in place that could snap to attention as soon as something happens.”

With due respect to Mr. Tata, nobody could be totally prepared for what happened in Mumbai on evening of November 26, 2008. The incident should not have been allowed to get to the stage it did. Prevention of such incidents is beyond the expectation of private sector organizations. Prevention is dependent upon the national government’s intelligence capability, and its ability to respond accordingly. With its new antiterrorism laws, passed December 18 2008, India expects to be better prepared the next time.

Nationalism and Global Terrorism

Many articles following the Mumbai Massacre concluded with the battle cry “Jai Hind,” which means “Victory to India” or “Long live India.” This nationalist sentiment was particularly apparent in the speed with which India’s media accused Pakistan of being responsible for the attack. The Indian government, plus the U.S. and UK governments, expressed concern about possible involvement of Pakistan government officials in the attack.

The Pakistan government denied any direct involvement and responded by arresting Pakistani nationals suspected of being associated with the attack.

Indian rhetoric about Pakistan’s involvement in the Mumbai massacre caused Pakistan to go on the defensive and move troops from its Afghan border to its border with India. Such antagonism between both (nuclear) countries has an outdated sense of nationhood in this era of global terrorism. Pakistani troops are needed at their Afghan border to stop locally trained al Qaeda terrorists from crossing into Afghanistan. Any weakness in this defence places Canadian and other NATO troops at added risk from attacks by terrorists in Afghanistan. Such military manoeuvring by Pakistan does not inspire confidence among its allies in the fight against terrorism, and could precipitate unilateral military action against terrorist locations within Pakistan.

Clearly, the Mumbai terrorists are geographically linked with Pakistan, as were those terrorists that attacked the London underground. However, Pakistan national pride appears to be more threatened by Indian rhetoric than associations with terrorist training camps.

During the peak of IRA attacks on Britain, the British Government never overtly accused the Irish government of initiating such acts of violence. Accusing a sovereign country of a terrorist attack has to be as close to a declaration of war as one can get. This just might be what the terrorists want to see happen; thereby making it easier for their brothers to attack Canadian and other NATO troops serving in Afghanistan. **S**

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