

Extra Feature Story

Residents of India Blame Pakistan and Their Own Leaders for Attack

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Residents of Mumbai, India, where a three-day terrorist siege killed over 170 people last week, are blaming neighboring Pakistan, but also their own government for a lack of leadership and security.

The one gunman who was captured alive is from Pakistan, but the investigation into the deadly attack is just beginning.

Deadly attack

The attack started the evening before Thanksgiving, when at least 10 terrorists armed with automatic rifles and grenades came ashore on rafts from the Arabian Sea. They shot people in a train station, restaurants and took control of a Jewish center and two luxury hotels. Six Americans are among the dead.

The highly-trained militants took police – who are mostly either unarmed or carry bamboo sticks - off guard.

It took two days for a full contingent of Indian special operations soldiers to get to Mumbai -- no planes were available to transport them -- and take the buildings back by killing all but one of the gunmen.

Weak response

While many in India are angry at Pakistan, they are also angry with their own government for not protecting them.

Mumbai has been the target of a series of attacks recently including one in 2006 on the mass transport system that killed 219.

On one Indian news program, a panel of prominent Mumbai residents vented their anger.

"We have not been done in by terrorists. We have been done in by incompetent politicians," one resident said.

Several Indian officials, including its top domestic security official, have resigned over the government's response to the attack.

Who did it?

While Indian, British and American investigators are all trying to figure out the identities of the terrorists and why they wanted to kill so many people, attention has focused on the one captured gunman, 21-year-old Pakistani Ajmal Qasab.

Qasab said he trained with Pakistani Islamic militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Lashkar-e-Taiba is a right-wing Sunni orthodox group that was at one time fostered by the Pakistani Intelligence Service to help in the fight over the disputed area of Kashmir.

But the group has become broader and harder to control, according to Shuja Nawaz, a former Pakistani journalist.

"Many of the members of this group and its offshoots are now seen as franchisees of al-Qaida and the Taliban and have been seen operating in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan," Nawaz said on the NewsHour.

Pakistan banned the group six years ago after the United States and Britain labeled it as a terrorist organization.

Qasab told investigators that he and the other terrorists, aged 18 to 28 years, received extensive training in navigation, sea survival skills and combat for 6 months.

Investigators are also looking into whether they received any support from residents of Mumbai.

Neighbor problems

The attacks are already stoking tensions between Pakistan and India -- particularly important for the international community because both countries possess nuclear weapons.

Indian officials warned the Pakistani ambassador that "strong action would be taken."

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi replied that his government will cooperate with India in its investigation.

"We have to let the dust settle to dispassionately judge," he told the Wall Street Journal.

"We are a responsible neighbor and we will behave and act responsibly."

But in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, residents are already expressing anger over Indian accusations and rising nationalism on both sides of the border could make it harder for the two countries to cooperate.

America's interest

The United States has a close relationship with India, but also needs to stay friendly with Pakistan because of that country's importance in fighting terrorist organizations in the region.

Pakistan's long, mountainous border with Afghanistan is where Sept. 11 organizer Osama bin Laden is believed to be hiding, if he is alive, and where Taliban fighters plot and launch attacks on American soldiers.

If Pakistan is preoccupied with an Indian conflict, it would be harder for it to help the United States fight terrorists in Afghanistan and in its own border areas.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveled to Mumbai immediately after the attack to try to calm the situation and President-elect Barack Obama called Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to say that America stands with the people of India.

Complicating the political situation is the fact that there is a national election coming up next year in India, and the current government is under a lot of pressure to show that it can act to protect its people.

-- **Compiled by Quinn Bowman for NewsHour Extra**

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