

Terrorist Attack in India – Summary from the Jihadi forums

Despite the closure of several leading online forums associated with al-Qaeda, other Jihadi forums have devoted wide coverage to the terrorist attack in Mumbai. For the time being, forum members rely primarily on foreign media reports, quoting a great deal from the articles and posting photographs from the scene of the attacks. It is likely that in the next several days, various online forums will post more in-depth analyses of the attacks.

Although the two leading al-Qaeda-associated online forums – Al-Firdaws and Al-Ikhlaas – have been shut down, two other primary online forums still remain active – Al-Hesbah and Al-Faloja. Over the last ten days, however, the two forums have not been active in their regular format. The Al-Hesbah forum became inactive starting November 19, 2008 with Ayman Al-Zawahini's speech protesting the election of Barak Obama as the U.S president. The Al-Faloja forum changed its appearance and removed its primary chat rooms. A warning, posted on several Jihadi forums, claimed that the Al-Faloja forum was under surveillance by foreign intelligence services.

Forum members have not yet been able to identify the exact organization behind the attack, instead suggesting they wait for a formal announcement made on behalf of those responsible. Forum members did not assign much importance to the "Deccan Mujahideen" organization, which took responsibility for the attacks.¹ They describe it as an unknown, anonymous organization. The fact that the perpetrators successfully attacked targets symbolizing democracy and capitalism was, according to forum members, the most important aspect of the attack.

¹ http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122790731776065137.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

A number of responses were posted to the "Al-Jazeera Talk" online forum from the day of the attack up until the publication of this report.² Some of these posts claimed that Jihad warriors from Kashmir were behind the attack. At the "Shabakat Ana Al-Muslim lil-Hiwar Al-Islami" online forum, operating out of Egypt, forum member Abu Yusef Al-Bashir identified al-Qaeda as the organization responsible for the attacks. He continued, however, that he prefers to wait for a formal claim of responsibility to be proven right. He claims that the terrorist attack attempted to achieve several goals, including:³

1. An attempt to kill the most possible Jews for Israel's activities in Gaza. Since it is difficult for al-Qaeda to target Jews in Israel because of a "ring of neighboring countries protecting Israel," al-Qaeda attempted to attack Israelis in Mumbai, just as it has previously attacked Jews in Tunisia.⁴
2. An attempt to kill Europeans, because of their offenses against the Prophet Muhammad and "the response [is expressed] in what they see and not in what they hear as Sheikh Osama bin Laden has said in a threat [sent] to Europe after the drawings that maligned the Messenger [Muhammad]".⁵
3. An attempt to injure as many Hindus as possible, in retaliation for the murder of Indian Muslims in Gujarat, where 2,000 Muslims were killed by the Indian authorities.⁶
4. An attempt to kill American and British citizens because of their activities in Iraq and Afghanistan; "We must not forget the murder of the chief of the Anti-Terrorism Squad in Mumbai".⁷

² <http://www.aljazeeratalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=170157>

³ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=320018>

⁴ On April 15, 2000 al-Qaeda carried out a suicide attack using a truck bomb at the old synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia. 17 people were killed in the attack, most of them German tourists.

⁵ This quote refers to caricature drawings that angered the Muslim world in September 2005.

⁶ This refers to a massacre of Muslims on September 2002 in the city of Gujarat in India.

5. The attack was intended to attract world attention and simultaneously launch a painful blow against a foreign location. This method employed was "military style," according to Al-Bashir. In the days that follow, Al-Bashir assumes that the public will witness an additional blow "in another area, where the crusaders and their collaborators congregate."

According to Al-Bashir, the selection of Mumbai as a target for the attack indicates a high level of understanding, intelligence, and military experience, since Mumbai is a meeting point for Europeans, "in addition to the strike being a surprise and at a place unexpected by all intelligence corps."⁸

Along with ongoing reports on the Mumbai attacks, forum members rejoice in the amount of world-wide media attention attracted by the attacks.⁹ Forum members additionally called for continued attacks against the enemies of Islam. For example, Abu Yusef Al-Bashir praises the terrorists' behavior, claiming they succeeded in causing major losses to Hindus, Americans, Brits and Israelis and calling to continue to strike fear in the heart of the infidels.¹⁰

⁷ This refers to Hemant Karbare. See:

<http://www.ptinews.com/pti%5Cptisite.nsf/0/7589DD5230EAF8056525750E0011FF9F?OpenDocument>

⁸ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=320018>

⁹ See for instance the talk back section of the Hanein forum, where members "thanked Allah for the good news": <http://94.75.200.163/vb/showthread.php?t=81709>, <http://94.75.200.163/vb/showthread.php?t=81692>, <http://94.75.200.163/vb/showthread.php?t=81639>.

Some of the forum members even quoted al-Qaeda leader in Iraq, Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, and al-Qaeda's second in command, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who recently threatened to carry out terrorist attacks against western and Jewish targets:

<http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefaobama1108-2.pdf>,

<http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefazawahiri1108.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=320017>

On November 28, 2008, the "Bayt Al-Maqdis" online forum¹¹ published a post by forum member Al-Kashef, who identifies himself as a student from Palestine.¹² Al-Kashef calls for praying "for your brothers from the Deccan Mujahideen group" who took hostage about 50 "infidels," including "15 Zionists." He ends his post by concluding, "Jihad is victory or death for the sanctification of Allah." The chat room monitor, Khaled Al-Askelani, replies by wishing that Allah would help the Jihad warriors and humiliate the "infidel Jews," along with Bush, Obama and their agents.

At the "Al-Boraq" Jihadi online forum, several members call the terrorist attack genius and suggest executing similar attacks against the "Zionist entity" in order to end the siege on the Gaza strip. Forum member Sayyaf adds that this attack is a "political, security, economic and terrifying retaliatory action, which was meant to injure the crusaders, the Zionists and their criminal Hindu minions."¹³

Sulathn Al-Jazairi, one of the monitors of the "Al-Medad" forum, also referred to the attacks in a post on November 27, 2008, claiming that the "painful blow [suffered] by the world intelligence services and especially in the west, who battle Islam" is the reason many countries have expressed their sympathy to India.¹⁴

¹¹ The body operating the forum defines itself as a Jihadi Islamic branch that strives first and foremost to liberate Palestine by way of Jihad and bring about the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. In addition, it welcomes any cooperation with other Jihadi Islamic branches. http://www.al-amanh.net/arabic/modules.php?name=Html_Content&op=page&folder=1&contentsite=1.htm

¹² <http://www.al-amanh.net/vb/showthread.php?t=2403>

¹³ <http://www.alboraq.info/showthread.php?t=77317>

¹⁴ <http://www.almedad.com/vb/showthread.php?t=8985>

A relatively extreme and unusual response appeared on the "Al-Jazeera Talk" online forum. Forum member Omar Al-Hada, from New Zealand, explained that the terrorist attack may hurt Muslims in India and lead to the strengthening of anti-Islamic elements in the government. However, most forum members disagreed and argued with him. As for the modus operandi, Al-Hada wondered if such a large-scale attack was necessary to kill the Indian chief responsible for anti-terrorism operations. Killing him by sniper or poison could have sufficed, he wrote.¹⁵ In response, many of the "Hanein" online forum members stressed that it was a legitimate target. In the words of one member, "these are legitimate targets for the Mujahideen as these are infidels, Jewish intelligence officers and agents and other bloodthirsty murderers."

Another forum member explained: "these actions are a natural response to the slaughter performed by the Hindus against the Muslims. If they cease murdering Muslim men, children, old people and women, we will cease attacking them."¹⁶

Another interesting response was written by a member of the "Shabakat Al-Mujahideen Al-Elektroniya" online forum, which raised several ideas calling for the rest of the Mujahideen to be incorporated in the terrorist attacks in Mumbai:¹⁷

1. Publishing report updates accompanied by praise and preaching in **non-Jihadi Arab** online forums (highlighting appearing in source).
2. Publishing photographs of the Mujahideen.

¹⁵ <http://www.aljazeeraatalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=170157>

¹⁶ <http://94.75.200.163/vb/showthread.php?t=81728>

¹⁷ <http://majahden.com/vb/showthread.php?t=15338>

3. Preparing movies that call for providing aid to the "Deccan Mujahideen" against the infidel Hindus, and publishing them on websites, such as YouTube, Video Google, and DailyMotion.
4. Writing responses in support the Mujahideen on the aljazeera.net website and other news websites.
5. Answering anyone who condemns these attacks on **non-Jihadi** Arab forums (highlighting appearing in source).
6. Releasing movies that offend Muslim women in Iraq, as they provoke the call for Jihad.

Insight and Analysis

Jihadi forum members have been closely following the developments in India while praising the attackers. In the next few days, online forums may post more in-depth analyses about the terrorist attack.

Based upon the forum discussions, it appears that the Mumbai attack may serve as a model for future attacks. The attack's success, meticulous planning, intelligence gathering, and the choice of the targets may inspire other Jihadi organizations to adopt the modus operandi.

The successful attack on the Jewish target may also serve as a form of inspiration. Al-Qaeda, an organization dedicated to an uncompromising battle against the "Zionist entity," has difficulties carrying out large terrorist attacks in Israel. As such, it views attacks on Jewish targets around the world as an alternative.

Based upon these discussions, concern arises that the Mumbai attack was launched to divert attention from the rest of the world onto India, in order to enable another – more serious – terrorist attack in another part of the world.