

Aftermath of 26/11 Mumbai Terror Attacks: Role of Mumbai Police & ATS (Mumbai)

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Abstract

Terrorism is a global menace spreaded throughout the world. The terrorism denotes the focal point of the problem. Terrorism is emerging as a global security threat. India is the prime victim of terrorism from last many decades because of its vulnerabilities, having a total 32 lakh square kilometer of land size, 15,000 kilometers of land borders & 7500 KM. coastal frontier. India continues to bleed by the transnational terrorist actors from last many years. To counter the terrorist attacks, modernization of police force plays a key role. The counter terrorist grid needs to be much stronger & efficient enough. The 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks was the most devastated attack aimed to destabilize the nation's economic development. The attacks on Mumbai extends visible trauma and shook the nation completely in deep terror. The attack was considered as one of the lethal terror incident of India. The scale of the attack was very high that paralyzed Mumbai metropolitan region under severe risk. It also raises questions about the operational preparedness of security forces to counter the terrorist attacks in future. India needs a comprehensive effective policy to tackle the terrorism. The paper describes about the overall security architecture post the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks.

KEYWORDS: Terrorism, 26/11 attacks, National Security, Modernization of Police Forces

1.0 Sequence of 26/11 Terror attacks:

On November 26, 2008 the fidayeen terrorists attacked Mumbai, the economic hub of India by the Pakistan based terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Taiba. The attack took place simultaneously at ten different locations of Mumbai city and in which total of 166 innocent lives and 304 peoples wounded reflects the intensity of the attack. The well trained and highly equipped Lashkar-e-Taiba team of ten terrorists used the vulnerable maritime borders of India to reach the spot and operated in four modules as one four members and three team of two members each. This terrorist attack in Mumbai was an eye opening experience for many in the public safety community and signaled a new wave of small-arms attacks that has continued steadily for the past ten years. The main question from the aftermath of the attack is still relevant today. How do a small number of terrorist operatives run a disciplined, coordinated, and sustained attack on a large metropolitan area with virtual impunity? The incident was first handled by the Maharashtra police and ATS, one hand half hours after the siege, the central forces were called, the state police took preventive steps in certain alerts but much proactive steps

such as police deployment and follow up actions were missing in the warnings. The attack happened after the retrieval of the warning in few months before and several warned targets happen to become the actual targets in the attack proved the state's failure to act in accordance with the intelligence warnings. It also evident from the safe arrival of terrorist via sea route irrespective of the warning about the possible LeT invasion through seas also reflects the failure. Even though, the state police took preventive steps in certain alerts but much proactive steps such as police deployment and follow up actions were missing in the warnings. Another major fallout of intelligence in the incident was the inadequacy of operational intelligence received during the counter operations. The Mumbai police who initially handled the operations were completely ill equipped. At that time the state civil police were not at all trained for these operations. The fall out of proper management during the counter terrorism operations were greatly noticeable from the handling of the incident.



Figure 1.0: Locations of Mumbai Terror attacks

The role of Mumbai police during the 26/11 attacks were considered as the first defenders with the terrorists. The Mumbai attacks were shown high intensity conflict in the Maharashtra metropolitan region. There was a need to bring change in the security preparedness. The terrorists came with precise reconnaissance and armed training. There was major coastal security lapse. Post 26/11 terror attacks there are many significant changes have been made in police force, coastal security agencies intelligence agencies on the recommendations made by HLEC (High Level Enquiry Committee) constituted post 26/11 attacks inter agency coordination is now much more efficient and effective in nature. Many steps have been taken up to counter any future terror threat.

1.1 Impact on socio-economic of India:

After the 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai it has been the worst time for India's financial hub. There was incalculable impact and investors climates, tourism and hospitality industries affected. There has been a significant decline in the number of foreign tourists

arriving in India. The stock markets i.e. SENSEX almost down after day, big terror incident in the country took place due to attack, financial capital of India has been hit by almost nearly 4000 crores. After 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai, the stock market reopened for trading on Nov. 27, and SENSEX opened at 137 points down.

1.2 Aftermath of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks:

The 26/11 attacks brought nation in a complete shock as city like Mumbai had never faced such terror siege ever. What happened in Mumbai on 26 November is typical of how the police have been fighting this battle against terrorism in various parts of the country. Their handling of the terrorist attack in Mumbai has amply demonstrated that they are neither trained nor well equipped for this difficult task. In the aftermath of these attacks things have changed as far as security architecture of Mumbai is concern. There are significant changes made in the operational planning and preparedness of Mumbai Police & ATS (Mumbai), Coast Guard etc. to counter any future eventualities especially across Mumbai metropolitan region.

Maharashtra Police preparedness:

After a decade of 26/11 Mumbai attacks police force have been upgraded in a larger way to counter any future terror threats. As per DGP (Maharashtra) Maharashtra police have been upgraded mainly in under 3 structures.

- i) Mobility
- ii) Weaponry
- iii) Wireless Communications Network

i) Mobility:

Maharashtra police has taken up large numbers of initiatives post attacks one such is *MERS (Maharashtra Emergency Response System)* MERS is enabled with the latest technology in which the “Emergency Response Vehicles” (ERVs) deployed in the field would be equipped with mobile data terminals that will help to locate the ERVs on GIS map and receive the information about the incidents without any delays. At present department has total 3000 vehicles and it has been provided to different police stations. It is equipped with GPS for effective monitoring.

ii) Weaponry:

Maharashtra police is now well equipped, well trained with modern upgraded high tech & sophisticated weapons in place like Sub Machine Guns (MP5, MP9, Carbine), Assault rifles (AK-47s, AK-56, INSAS), Sniper with IR, LMGs UBMGs etc. apart from this state police force now also uses modern combat devices like corner shots, rifle mounted thermal imager, torch attachments, tactical sights, reflex sights, binoculars, fire arms etc.

iii) Wireless communication Network:

As per DGP a complete overhaul of the wireless communication system of Mumbai city post 26/11 attacks. Legacy EDACS (Enhanced Digital Access Communication System) has been replaced with APCO 25 phase 2 digital radio trunking system with enhanced coordination, timely response, and effective use of communication equipment. Mumbai police is the first police force in the country to use this technology.

Mumbai Police Preparedness:

Mumbai Police is now much more modernized, equipped and several significant changes have taken place in the police machinery, to cop up with any terror like threats across the city. As per the Ram pradhancommittee recommendations Mumbai police have developed **3 TIER SECURITY SHIELD** in Mumbai to counter any terrorist attacks.

1) QRT (Quick Response Team):

Mumbai police have established 6 operational teams of QRT on the lines of NSG with almost 600 personnel. These teams are deployed under the charge of Addl. CP of a region. One unit has also been kept vacant for emergency in the event of a terrorist attack. These units are capable of taking over with their state of the art weapons within 10 minutes. In their own area.

2) Force One:

Second security tier of Mumbai police is force one, given the severity of the Mumbai attack, QRT alone was not enough government of Maharashtra set up an elite commando unit force one is an elite urban counter terrorism specialized commando force set up in 2010 on the lines of NSG to guard the Mumbai metropolitan area. Currently unit has 350 troops located in Goregaon with 96 acres of campus. They are capable to respond any terror attack in Mumbai region within average response time of 10 minutes. The force one commandos have been equipped with 800 Mhz digital radio communications system which has vehicle mounted devices. The commandos has received training from the elite anti-terror units like the famous Israeli Special Forces and acquired sophisticated equipment, arms and explosives like the MP, Glock pistols, corner shots and armoured amphibious patrol vehicles.

3) NSG:

The NSG regional unit in Mumbai set up in the aftermath of 26/11 terror attacks spreaded over 26 acres of land comprises of Maharashtra's first composite indoor shooting range. 26 Special Composite Group (SCG) comprises of around more than 250 black cat commandos 24X7 stand by with fully automatic assault weapons with response time of 30 minutes. Apart from this Mumbai police have installed 4717 CCTV cameras across the city at vital spots including fixed cameras, thermal cameras, pan/tilt/zoom cameras which is beamed to the Mumbai police control room. Moreover, according to Commissioner of Police Mumbai, 2 coastal police stations (CPS) have been functional in Mumbai to coordinate with Indian coast guard to safeguard the 114 km vulnerable coastal area of Mumbai. Mumbai coastal police have responsibility to patrol the shore up to 12 nautical miles. All beyond this Mumbai police has total 39 armoured

vehicles, upgraded and better trained bomb detection and disposal squad, Mumbai police also have 2 dedicated marine police stations functional.

ATS (MUMBAI):

ATS Maharashtra was created on July, 2004 after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks a lot of changes have been made in the functioning of ATS (Mumbai Unit). ATS units are functional in all key regions of state. Unit have better modern weapons and tactical equipments to counter any terror attack. ATS has also established a close working relationship with other central and state agencies like the IB, Mumbai police special branch. ATS Mumbai is ever ready to react any such attack. Anti Terror Cells (ATCs) have been established in every police station exclusively to combat terrorism with upgraded weapons.

Coastal Security:

As per response recorded to take a stock of coastal security preparedness in the aftermath of 26/11 attacks from IG, Indian Coast Guard “It will be difficult to penetrate the systems now, but 100 percent can’t be ensured” post the attacks of 26/11 in Mumbai, “SAGAR KAVACH” was introduced as a maritime inter agency security exercise and its held every year twice since 2009. Coast guard, Indian Navy and marine wing of state or city police responsible for coastal security involved in the operation. Mumbai has the vast & vulnerable coastline of almost 114 kms. Stretch to protect this highly sensitive coastal region the Indian coast guard has the responsibility of monitoring between 12 kms to 200 kms. The coast guard capabilities have also been greatly increased over the years, Automatic Identification System (AIS) has been installed in 2, 20,000 boats over 20 knots out. He further firmly said that the years after the 26/11 terror attacks, India’s maritime security is much stronger, with far better inter agency coordination and improved security structure. Indian coast guard is now infrastructure, such as coastal radars, speed boats, AIS etc. new SOPs have been in placed with better inter agency coordination.

1.3 Observations:

The operational changes in the security paradigm and structure of Mumbai police and ATS are quite significant. Some points of recommendations have been made. Containing the attack and the perpetrators that in the first response during a terrorist attack is to contain the terrorists. Till the time the specialized forces reach the site, the local police forces must be capable and equipped to engage the terrorists through the use of force. There should be greater cooperation and dialogue between the public and decision makers. It is time for India to give serious thought to the idea of creating neighborhood “Awake Cells” comprising youth activists and concerned citizens. Given the media practioners reach a terror attack site faster and interact with people around the area, it is important to quarantine such early information and pass them on security forces that have deployed to react. Moreover, it is important that respondents are able to reach the site of the attack in the shortest time. This is a serious challenge in India’s urban spaces, given in the heavy congestion and their haphazard layouts. The imperative is for the seamless movement of forces and their equipment through planning and physical power to

manage, restrict and divert traffic movement. The planned development of cities is a prerequisite for any sound internal security apparatus. Given the increasing clustering of populations in the cities as well as the concentration of economic output largely within urban areas, the terrorism landscape is also undergoing transformation.

Objective of Study:

- i. To comprehend pre & post Mumbai police administration and modernization (Mumbai Specific).
- ii. To study future preparedness of police force in Mumbai.

Methodology:

The study includes both primary and secondary methods. The research paper adopts descriptive method by utilizing all the available literatures pertaining to the present study. Further, personal interviews of senior police officials going through the documents available on modernization of police forces. Charge sheet, annual reports, closure report, articles, HLEC committee report etc.

Limitations:

Limitation of the study would be in gathering the documental information to the internal security of the country. Primary research through interviews with police officials, would have given more authenticity to my paper, but access to the officials is a limitation and paper would purely concentrate on secondary data.

1.4 Conclusion:

Over ten years since the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, there has been a discernible improvement in India's counter terrorism mechanisms. Complex challenges however, continue to confront India. These include the lack of inter agency coordination and inefficient decision making. Still there is a need to change in the intelligence management apparatus. The fallouts of proper management during the counter terrorism operations were greatly noticeable from the handling of the incident at scale of 26/11. The technological advancement in policing to counter the terrorist incidents in future is essential. There should be world class modernization in specialized forces as and when required. Simultaneously an up gradation of investigative agencies is also need of the hour. As the manifestations of terrorism continue to change rapidly and become increasingly technology centric, Mumbai police will have to adapt to these shifts and build the resilience of India's security ecosystem.

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