

Opening Statement of
Senator Susan M. Collins

‘Lessons from the Mumbai Terrorist Attacks’

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
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As we begin a new year, this hearing is a sobering reminder of the continuing threat that terrorism poses to this nation and to civilized people throughout the world.

The consequences of the Mumbai attack reverberate worldwide:

- **Six Americans were among the victims, once again raising concern for the safety of our citizens at home and abroad.**
- **In addition to the tragic loss of life, the attack temporarily crippled the financial**

**center of India – the world’s largest
democracy and a friend of the United States.**

The implicated terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, has links that reach far beyond South Asia. In 2004, for example, two men sentenced for violent felonies admitted helping members of a Virginia jihadist network gain entry to Lashkar training camps in Pakistan.

The murderous assault on Mumbai deserves our attention because it raises important questions about our own plans to prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorist attacks in the United States. Careful analysis of the tactics used, the targets chosen, and the Indian security forces’ response will provide valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of our own nation’s defenses.

The Mumbai attacks focused on soft targets like hotels, restaurants, a railway station, and a Jewish cultural center. And the Mumbai attackers used conventional – but still dreadfully lethal – weapons like automatic rifles and hand grenades to carry out their bloody mission.

While terrorists will certainly still seek to acquire and use a weapon of mass destruction, the Mumbai attack underscores the threat posed by a few well-armed and well-trained individuals. It raises the question whether the Mumbai attack may signal a shift in terrorist tactics toward conventional weapons and explosives used in coordinated attacks by small groups. Indeed, in 2007, a group of homegrown terrorists plotted a similar, low-tech attack against Fort Dix in New Jersey.

Such tactics and goals may require rethinking our standard response doctrines:

- Is securing a perimeter and waiting for specialized tactical squads the best way to deal with terrorists who are moving about and seeking to inflict maximum bloodshed?**
- Does local law enforcement need improved, rapid access to building plans and pre-arranged contacts at all likely targets, from transportation hubs and government buildings, to large shopping malls, schools, theaters, hotels, and restaurants?**
- Do the federal government, state and local officials, and the private sector have sufficiently well-developed information -**

sharing procedures for use both before and during emergencies?

By examining the command, control, and coordination of the Indian government's response, the adequacy of their equipment and training, and the public-information arrangements in place during the Mumbai attack, we can improve our efforts to prevent similar attacks.

On the diplomatic front, we must redouble our efforts to pressure states like Pakistan that tolerate terrorist safe havens.

Finally and fundamentally, we need to ask whether the Mumbai atrocities shed any new light on the nature of the violent, extremist mindset and on opportunities for the United States and the international community to work cooperatively to

prevent and counter the process of violent radicalization.

I welcome our witnesses and look forward to hearing their testimony on the lessons that we can draw from the attacks in Mumbai.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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