

Terrorist atrocity in Mumbai

The Editorial Board
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The *World Socialist Web Site* condemns the coordinated bombing attack carried out yesterday in Mumbai, India's most populous city and financial center. At least 179 people were killed and 400 injured when eight bombs exploded, in quick succession, on or near seven commuter trains traveling along the Western Railway during the Tuesday evening rush hour.

The bombs were timed and placed to inflict maximum loss of life. They blew apart railway cars packed with passengers, sending blood and body parts in all directions. The huge number of head and chest wounds indicate, police investigators said, that many of the bombs were placed in overhead luggage compartments. The death toll is expected to rise, as rescue efforts are still underway and many of the injured are in critical condition.

Heavy rainfall, streets clogged with panic-stricken commuters trying to make their way home, and jammed mobile telephone networks all contributed to the chaos that prevailed in the wake of the bombings and hampered rescue efforts.

"The aftermath was televised across the nation," reported the *New York Times*, "with images showing the wreckage of mangled trains, torn limbs and stunned, injured commuters, some with blood-streaked faces."

Whatever the ostensible aims of the bombers, the deliberate wanton slaughter of commuters and other train travelers is a horrific crime and can only aid political reaction in India and around the world.

The Bush administration, as would be expected, seized on the events in Mumbai to try to promote its "war on terror"—the pretext it has invoked in seeking to establish, through military conquest, strategic dominance in the oil-rich Middle East and Central Asian regions and in mounting sweeping attacks on democratic rights at home. "We will stand with India on the war on terror," declared Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice.

The Indian government has ordered security forces to go on high alert in all India's cities. In a statement released to the press, Prime Minister Manmoham Singh vowed that state authorities "will work to defeat the evil designs of terrorists and will not allow them to succeed."

As of early Wednesday morning (Indian time), no group had claimed responsibility for Tuesday's terrorist attack. But Indian media are reporting that unnamed high-level government sources have said that the bombings were "clearly" the work of Lashkar-e-Taiba (The Army of the Pure), an Islamicist terrorist organization that is opposed to the majority-Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir remaining part of the Indian Union. The bombings, according to these sources, were aimed at provoking communal strife within India, in the belief that a Hindu backlash against India's Muslim minority would rebound to the benefit of the anti-Indian insurgency in Kashmir and undermine peace negotiations between India and Pakistan.

The Lashkar-e-Taiba and other Islamicist terrorist groups opposed to Indian control over Kashmir have repeatedly staged attacks on civilians and perpetrated communalist atrocities.

Earlier Tuesday, eight people were killed and more than 35 injured in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, in three grenade attacks that targeted tourists.

But if Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was the author of the coordinated bombings in Mumbai, it would represent a new level of technical sophistication.

A spokesman for the organization has denied it had anything to do with yesterday's terrorist attacks in either Srinagar or Mumbai. According to the *Hindu*, LeT representative Dr. Abdullah, condemned both attacks as "inhuman and barbaric" in a telephone call to

several media organizations in Srinagar. “Blaming the LeT for such inhuman acts is an attempt by the Indian security agencies to defame the freedom struggle in Jammu and Kashmir,” claimed Ghaznavi.

By their very nature, terrorist acts make it impossible to determine where terrorist conspiracy ends and the machinations of intelligence agencies, security forces and right-wing provocateurs begin.

India’s security forces have sought to crush the insurgency in Kashmir and separatist agitations in other parts of the country through ruthless repression. Torture, murder, infiltration and provocation, and campaigns aimed at uncovering “terrorists” through mass detentions are routine.

It cannot be excluded that yesterday’s atrocity in Mumbai was organized or facilitated by agents provocateurs working for one of India’s intelligence agencies or that elements within the security forces allowed the terrorist attack to take place, with the aim of panicking the public into accepting increased repressive powers for the state. It is also possible that the Mumbai bombings were the work of Hindu supremacist fanatics bent on stoking up anti-Muslim violence.

Indian Home Minister Shivraj Patil has said authorities were warned that an attack was coming, but the “place and time was not known.”

In December 2001, India’s government, then led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), seized on a terrorist attack on India’s parliament, blamed on the LeT, to push through a draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) and to threaten war on long-time arch-rival Pakistan, which it accused of supporting the LeT. In an attempt to force Pakistan into making major concessions, India’s government kept a million troops in battle formation near the Pakistan border for almost a year.

The United Progressive Alliance, which replaced the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, as India’s government following the May 2004 elections, repealed POTA, but many of its anti-democratic provisions were included in the legislation that it introduced in its stead.

In contrast to the reaction of the BJP government in December 2001, the Congress Party-led UP government has—at least thus far—leveled no accusations of Pakistani involvement in either the Mumbai or Srinagar terror attacks. Islamabad, for its part, was

quick to denounce the Mumbai bombings.

The Shiv Sena—the BJP ally and fellow proponent of Hindu supremacy that control Mumbai’s municipal government and forms the official opposition in the state of Maharashtra—responded to yesterday’s terrorist atrocity by demanding that the Congress Party-Nationalist Congress Party state government resign, since it had failed to ensure the safety of the citizenry.

Shiv Sena party boss Bal Thackeray sought to blame the bomb blasts on the Congress’ pursuit of better relations with Pakistan. “The Centre is busy operating bus services to Pakistan and Islamabad, on its part, is busy pushing terrorists into India,” Thackeray told the *Times of India*. “I wish to warn Congress that people’s patience is wearing very thin. If the terrorists are not dealt with firmly, there will be an explosion of discontent against Congress governments not only at the Centre, but in the states as well.”

For months, the BJP has been accusing the Congress Party-led UPA government of being “soft” on terrorism and agitating for the government to restore POTA in its entirety.



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