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Mumbai siege: 'Kill all the hostages – except the two Muslims'

Phone conversations between Mumbai attackers and their 'Pakistani handlers' cast chilling new light on massacre

Pakistan has bowed to weeks of international pressure and admitted that the sole surviving militant responsible for the terror attacks in Mumbai is one of its citizens.

In what could prove to be a crucial move in easing tensions between the south Asian neighbours, a government minister last night confirmed that Ajmal Kasab was from Pakistan. The concession came as details emerged of the contents of the dossier that India presented to Pakistan this week.

The evidence included detailed transcripts of conversations between the militants and their handlers, allegedly based in Pakistan. The transcripts clearly suggest that the handlers, said by India to be senior members of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militant group, controlled almost every move of the militants and directed their actions, both in response to the hostages they had seized and to the Indian commandos trying to end the carnage.

An intercept of a conversation published in The Hindu newspaper offers an insight into how much the remote handlers were directing events at the Oberoi Trident hotel, offering instructions on maximising the terror. "Everything is being recorded by the media. Inflict the maximum damage. Keep fighting. Don't be taken alive," said one handler at 3.53am on 27 November. Another interjects: "Kill all the hostages, except the two Muslims," before adding: "Keep your phone switched on so that we can hear the gunfire."

The 69-page dossier is the most comprehensive insight yet into the planning behind the November attacks that left about 170 people dead. It includes details of how the militants obtained Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) numbers that allowed the handlers to call the 10 gunmen while seeking to hide their location. There were also photographs of items recovered in the investigations launched after the attacks, including GPS units, mobile phones, guns, explosives and data from satellite phones the militants had left behind.

The dossier contained considerable information from the interrogation of Kasab, 21, from Pakistan's Punjab province, who has been held by the police in Mumbai since the attacks. "We are confirming that Kasab is a Pakistani citizen but I cannot say a word more [on this]," said the Pakistani Information Minister, Sherry Rehman.

The confirmation by the authorities in Islamabad came just two days after the Pakistan high commissioner in Delhi was presented with the dossier of evidence, which was also shared with the governments of 14 countries who lost citizens in the attacks and other allies.

Yet the decision has almost certainly been taken for political reasons rather than being based on any new evidence presented to Pakistan. Ever since India revealed Kasab's identity in the aftermath of the attacks, officials from the ISI intelligence agency have been carrying out their

own investigation and are believed to have questioned the surviving militant's parents.

Rather, it appears the government decided to act in the face of mounting international pressure. It is probably no coincidence that the US Vice President-elect Joe Biden is due to arrive in Pakistan later this week, carrying with him the weight and influence of the incoming US administration.

"I think they had no choice because their credibility was getting worse day by day by being in a state of denial," said Talat Masood, a retired Pakistani general turned political analyst. "As pressure built up from India, the US and the UK, they had to accept the fact. It's a shame really that they waited so long. If they had done so immediately, it would have helped Pakistan's image."

Lt-Gen Masood said the admission by Pakistan was likely to ease the tension between the two countries. India, he said, might believe that Pakistan was "coming around". It also means that Pakistan will probably seek consular access to Kasab in the coming days. Until now, it has resisted requests from the prisoner for officials to visit.

Taj Mahal Hotel

Conversations as published by the Indian newspaper, *The Hindu*. All on 27 November 2008

0108 hours

Pakistan caller: How many hostages do you have?

Mumbai terrorist: We have one from Belgium. We have killed him. There was one chap from Bangalore. He could be controlled only with a lot of effort.

Pakistan caller: I hope there is no Muslim amongst them?

Mumbai terrorist: No, none.

0126 hours

Pakistan caller: Are you setting the fire or not?

Mumbai terrorist: Not yet. I am getting a mattress ready for burning.

Pakistan caller: What did you do with the dead body [on the boat]?

Mumbai terrorist: Left it behind.

Pakistan caller: Did you not open the locks for the water below? [Thought to be a pre-arranged plan to sink the vessel.]

Mumbai terrorist: No, they did not open the locks. We left it like that because of being in a hurry. We made a big mistake.

Pakistan caller: What big mistake?

Mumbai terrorist: When we were getting into the boat, the waves were quite high. Another boat came. Everyone raised an alarm that the Navy had come. Everyone jumped quickly. In this confusion, the satellite phone of Ismail got left behind.

n 0137 hours

Pakistan caller: The ATS (Anti-Terrorist Squad) chief has been killed. Your work is very important. Allah is helping you. The *Vazir* (Minister) should not escape. Try to set the place on fire.

Mumbai terrorist: We have set fire in four rooms.

Pakistan caller: People shall run helter skelter when they see the flames. Keep throwing a grenade every 15 minutes or so. It will terrorise.

0310 hours

Mumbai terrorist: Greetings!

Pakistan caller: Greetings! There are three ministers and one secretary of the cabinet in your hotel. We don't know in which room.

Mumbai terrorist: Oh! That is good news! It is the icing on the cake.

Pakistan caller: Find those three, four persons and then get whatever you want from India.

Mumbai terrorist: Pray that we find them.

Pakistan caller: Do one thing. Throw one or two grenades on the Navy and police teams, which are outside.

Mumbai terrorist: Sorry. I simply can't make out where they are.

Oberoi Trident Hotel

0353 hours

Pakistan caller 1: Brother Abdul. The media is comparing your action to 9/11. One senior police official has been killed.

Mumbai terrorist 1: We are on the 10th/11th floor. We have five hostages.

Pakistan caller 2: Everything is being recorded by the media. Inflict the maximum damage. Keep fighting. Don't be taken alive.

Pakistan caller 1: Kill all hostages, except the two Muslims. Keep your phone switched on so that we can hear the gunfire.

Mumbai terrorist 2: We have three foreigners, including women. From Singapore and China.

Pakistan caller 1: Kill them.

(Voices of gunmen can be heard directing hostages to stand in a line, and telling two Muslims to stand aside. Sound of gunfire. Sound of cheering voices.)

Nariman House

1945 hours

Mumbai terrorist: Greetings! What did the major-general say?

Pakistan caller: Greetings. The major-general directed us to do what we like. We should not worry. The operation has to be concluded tomorrow morning. Pray to God. Keep two magazines and three grenades aside, and expend the rest of your ammunition.

Pakistan caller: Keep in mind that the hostages are of use only as long as you do not come under fire because of their safety. If you are still threatened, then don't saddle yourself with the burden

of the hostages. Immediately kill them.

Mumbai terrorist: Yes, we shall do accordingly, God willing.

Pakistan caller: The army claims to have done the work without any hostage being harmed. Another thing: Israel has made a request through diplomatic channels to save the hostages. If the hostages are killed, it will spoil relations between India and Israel.

Mumbai terrorist: So be it, God willing.

Pakistan caller: Stay alert.

2226 hours

Pakistan caller: Brother, you have to fight. This is a matter of prestige of Islam. Fight so that your fight becomes a shining example. Be strong in the name of Allah. You may feel tired or sleepy but the Commandos of Islam have left everything behind. Their mothers, their fathers, their homes. Brother, you have to fight for the victory of Islam. Be strong.

Mumbai terrorist: Amen!



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