

Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection
Opening Statement, as Prepared
Chairwoman Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX)

“The Mumbai Attacks: A Wake-Up Call for America’s Private Sector”

MARCH 11, 2008, 2:00 P.M.

I am proud to convene today’s hearing to engage our Members and the witnesses on important issues that have arisen from the terrorist attack in Mumbai last November. I sincerely hope that we can learn from that tragic event and apply its lessons to what we are doing to secure the same types of assets in the United States that were targeted in India.

As the Subcommittee with jurisdiction over the security of critical infrastructure – 85% of which is owned by the private sector – it is imperative that we study these types of attacks, our government’s outreach to its private sector partners, and whether the private sector is acting on any information provided. This requires us to have an understanding of the groups involved in the attack and their international aspirations. I believe today’s hearing will shed a great deal of light on these matters and I am looking forward to our witnesses’ testimony and our discussion. The scope of this hearing includes several dynamics, all of which are necessary for us to understand in order to have a better idea about policy going forward.

- First, DHS, NYPD, and FBI are here to provide an overview of what happened in Mumbai, both in terms of events and tactics. They will also provide their perspective about what steps need to be taken domestically to secure these types of assets from such attacks.
- Second, our witnesses, especially Dr. Fair from RAND, will be able to shed some light on the group implicated in the attacks, Lashkar-e-Taiba, as well as its potential aspirations beyond South Asia.
- Third, we will examine the Department’s outreach to the private sector during and in the aftermath of the attack to discern whether it provided private sector stakeholders – such as hotels – with meaningful information about these groups and relevant mitigation measures for bolstering security at their critical assets.
- Fourth, we will explore, with the help of Mr. Bonnell from InterContinental Hotels and Mr. Raisch of NYU, the implementation of security efforts at these types of critical infrastructure since September 11, 2001, and the status of security in America’s hotels.

As many of you are well aware, this Subcommittee takes the security of our Nation’s critical infrastructure very seriously. In the last Congress, we held several hearings on the effectiveness of the

Department's approach and whether voluntary security efforts were working. I am proud of our work in the last Congress – particularly the 9/11 Act, which sought to promote private sector security in a market-based manner – and I stand ready to make improvements where they are necessary. In the 111th Congress we will build on our strong record and continue to engage in thoughtful and robust oversight of these issues.

In this context, the attack in Mumbai offers us a pivotal moment to reassess whether we are securing the types of targets that are being attacked worldwide – hotels, hospitals, rail stations, and other public places – and what we need to do to improve. We must also understand the emerging tactics of groups like LeT, and whether our local law enforcement community is prepared to subdue them quickly and effectively.

It must be said that DHS has taken many important steps to make America more secure since it was created, and the multidimensional issue of critical infrastructure protection cannot be resolved overnight. This Subcommittee stands ready to aid the efforts of all stakeholders, whether Federal, State, local, or in the private sector.

The timeline of the events in Mumbai are familiar to many of us. On the evening of November 26, 2008, ten men arrived in Mumbai, India, by way of small boats in the Arabian Sea and attacked a number of high-profile targets with automatic weapons and explosives. By the time the siege was over, they had killed more than 160 people and terrorized the city for more than 60 hours.

Among the sites attacked in Mumbai, India's business and entertainment capital, were two luxury hotels – the Taj Mahal Palace and the Oberoi-Trident – along with the main railway terminal, a Jewish cultural center, a café frequented by foreigners, a cinema house, and two hospitals. Six Americans were among the 26 foreigners killed. These sites are they very types that, in concert with State and local law enforcement entities as well as the private sector, DHS is charged to protect.

To be sure, this was not the first significant terrorist attack in India; the July 2006 commuter train bombings in Mumbai resulted in more than 200 deaths. Nonetheless, aspects of the November attack were significant – the style of attack, the weapons and technology used, and the diversity of the targets raise new questions for how we should approach counterterrorism and security measures here at home, at all levels of government and in the private sector.

It has become clear that the type of attack carried out in Mumbai – a “Fedayeen”- style attack, where small groups engage in combat operations, as distinguished from a suicide bombing – poses a challenge to our soft targets and our law enforcement community. A recent op-ed in the *New York Times* by a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School posited that, “Right now, most of our cities would be as hard-pressed as Mumbai was to deal with several simultaneous attacks.”

I think today's hearing is an important opportunity to learn more about what happened in Mumbai, who the groups of interest are, how information was shared here with the private sector, whether we are doing enough to secure these types of facilities in the United States from this style of attack, and how Congress can help.