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## Terrorist Strikes – Deny Space to the Terrorists

10 Feb, 2010 [Ajit Doval, KC - Former Director, VIF](#) [View832](#) [Comments 0](#)

*Text of the article sent to Hindustan Times – Published in Hindustan Times on 16 April 2006 under the caption "We have not kept terrorists on the run"*

One wrong way to assess terrorist incidents is to evaluate its gravity and import merely in terms of persons killed and injured. Considering the quar ingredients of the improvised device, place where it was kept, etc., it is evident that the terrorists did not intend to cause any serious damage to the life and Masjid. The objective apparently, was to incite the congregation who had assembled there for namaz of 'Asar' in large number, being a Friday and a public holiday. They would have been joined on the streets of walk others who at any point of time can be found aimlessly loitering around the Masjid, joining anything that is exciting. Their failure to invoke this response is a and augers well for communal harmony in the country. The self restraint exercised by the Hindus during the attack on Sankat Mochan Temple in Varanasi explosions were much more severe and casualties much larger, was a good precedent.

There is, however, another equally serious side of the problem. The terrorists strike anywhere, anytime and against any target is a myth. Had that been the case, it would have caused havoc not only in India but rest of the world. The terrorist strikes take place when their intentions and capabilities meet the opportunity. The success of the terrorist strategy lies in degrading their capabilities, forcing them to change their intentions and denying them the opportunity to strike. Events in recent months are losing ground on all these counts. Terrorists are demonstrating their capability to take on targets from Kashmir to Karnataka and Sankat Mochan to Jama Masjid. Such wide areas and against such diverse targets necessitate local network for logistic support, sources for procuring, transporting and storing explosives, se gathering of operational intelligence and the manpower to execute the job. Only fortified with these capabilities they can strike at the intended target. The local ingredients are being used for fabricating Improvised Explosive Devices is another indicator of their enhanced capabilities and not a matter of comfort to the use of ordinance grade explosives like RDX, Semtex, PETN, etc.

Degradation of capability essentially has to be an intelligence driven activity which should include busting of terrorist modules, neutralization of network runners, over-ground supporters, etc. Proactive operations to neutralize 'critical operators' is also essential to blunt their striking capability. Under no circumstances the entire country can be placed under a constant scanner to ensure that no incident takes place. We have to prevent it by keeping them on the run which appears to be not – or at least to the degree required.

Changing intentions is a much more complex and multidimensional exercise. In addition to efforts of the security agencies it involves political action, diplomatic effort etc. The situation on this count has become more complex as international environment, neighborhood factor, internal vote bank politics, etc. come on the motivation and intention factor. The ISI, and Islamic groups patronized by them, still pursue what they consider as unfinished agenda of the partition of Bangladesh. Bangladeshi immigrants advocating the concept of lebensraum or living space militates against our security interest. The only way to change intentions can be for the adversaries for such misadventures. Unless convinced that bleeding India can jeopardize their own safety and security, they are unlikely to abandon option against their asymmetric adversary. Withdrawal of POTA was a wrong initiative. At a time when the entire world is strengthening laws against terrorism, India, the largest sufferer of terrorist depredations abandoned the law which had psychological pressure on the terrorists and their over-ground supporters. The withdrawal emboldened them.

The area where the Indian security system has consistently proved its excellence is denying terrorists the opportunity to strike. India's defensive security has always been commendable and while each incident of terrorist strike makes a big story, large number of incidents averted are probably known to very few. With our resources and capabilities, we have denied to the terrorists opportunities to strike at most of their sought after targets. Events in recent months, however, give indication that Delhi's walled city has always been an area where security agencies have maintained very high vigil for suspected persons and it was this sustained effort that has kept saboteurs, spies, etc. to avoid these areas. Pak ISI had often advised their agents not to visit the walled city. The fact that they have started considering it as a matter of concern. The vigil need to be increased.

Of late, the brand names like Lashkar-e Taiba, Jaish-e Mohammad, Harakat-ul Jehadi Islami, etc, have become less relevant in relation to actual perpetrator. While these outfits are involved in planning, financing, procurement of materials, etc. they are outsourcing real execution of tasks to unknown youth with various skills. These organizations. In this task, the illegal diaspora of Bangladeshis in the country is providing a big human resource to these tanzeems. Most of these Bangladeshis have been exposed to influence of radical Islam in their home country and have a strong anti-India mindset. For reasons of ideology or money, or both, they have been indulging in acts of terrorism and criminality. After the incident they find it easy either to escape to Bangladesh or melt away in the ever expanding ocean. Their being too widely scattered in different parts of the country with total freedom of movement within the country is going to make large areas vulnerable. It is unfortunate that they are able to leverage their voting strength to mobilize political support.

On the face of it the blasts in Jama Masjid are unlikely to be the handiwork of Indian Muslims. It is only the Muslim from outside who will calculate that an attempt to divide a communal divide and possibly communal violence. In the interest of India's larger security interest, it will be necessary for the police to take stern action and keep a close watch on them. The government should also seriously consider reviving the scheme of issue of national identity cards which was initiated in 1988 but has been relegated to cold storage. The scheme needs to be implemented under a time bound programme if we have to deny outsiders a free run to meddle with

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