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Assault On Mumbai Planned In Pakistan

Country Makes Admission, Says It Charged 9 Suspects

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NEW DELHI, Feb. 12 -- [Pakistan](#) admitted for the first time Thursday that part of the planning for November's bloody assault on [India's](#) financial capital, Mumbai, occurred on Pakistani soil, and it announced criminal charges against nine men involved.

Pakistan's interior minister, Rehman Malik, said at a news conference in Islamabad that six of the suspected conspirators had been arrested and were in Pakistani custody. A seventh, the lone surviving gunman, Ajmal Amir Kasab, was captured by Mumbai police and is in jail in India, and two other suspects are at large. "Some part of the conspiracy has taken place in Pakistan," Malik said, confirming assertions by Indian authorities that Pakistan had previously resisted.

Malik pinned the blame for the assault on "non-state actors," countering India's claim that officials in Pakistan's intelligence services were involved. In making the announcement, he described a far-reaching conspiracy that ranged across several continents but that apparently was directed by the outlawed, Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Lashkar-i-Taiba, which India had blamed for the attack. One of the group's top leaders, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, is among those arrested.

"Pakistan's response on the Mumbai attacks demonstrates its commitment to bringing those responsible to justice," Malik said.

Pakistan has faced intense international pressure to act against the planners of the Mumbai attacks, which left more than 170 people dead, including six Americans. Ten gunmen arrived by boat and attacked two luxury hotels, a train station, a Jewish cultural center and other sites in Mumbai during a three-day siege. The attack led to new tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, which have fought three wars since 1947.

India's Foreign Ministry called Pakistan's report "a positive development" and said that it "will now examine the issues raised in the response by Pakistan."

"It remains India's goal to bring the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks on Mumbai to book, and to follow this process through to the end. We would also expect that the Government of Pakistan take credible steps to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism in Pakistan," the ministry said in a statement.

Malik said that all the accused would be prosecuted in Pakistan, blocking an Indian demand for extradition. He confirmed that Kasab was a Pakistani national but said he could not confirm the identities of the nine other gunmen who were shot dead by Indian police.

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Giving details about the possibility of a widespread global network of accomplices in the attack, Malik described some aspects of the investigation that led to today's announcement.

The conspirators, he said, communicated using Internet telephone accounts. "The Internet phone calls between the terrorists were set up by a militant operating from Barcelona, who was later lured to Pakistan on a pretext and arrested," Malik said. Investigators traced a \$238 payment from a Spanish account to purchase a domain name registered in Houston. Another was registered in [Russia](#). A satellite phone used in the attacks was registered "in a Middle Eastern country," Malik said. Austrian SIM cards were used by some of the alleged conspirators, he said. SIM (subscriber identity module) cards allow the transfer of data between phones.

Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency identified the three boats used to transport the gunmen from Karachi, on the Pakistani coast, to Mumbai. It traced the engine purchased for one boat to a particular shop, and the shopkeeper provided a telephone number that investigators used to identify the bank account of a person Malik identified as the "main operator" of the conspiracy, Hamad Ameen Sadiq. Malik accused Sadiq of making money transfers to support the attack and noted that funds for the attack came from Italy and Spain. After Sadiq was arrested, Malik said, he provided information that led to the hideouts of two others accused.

An e-mail sent soon after the attacks asserting responsibility in the name of Deccan Mujahideen, which suggested an Indian rather than a Pakistani militant group, was sent by Zarar Shah, one of main leaders of Lashkar-i-Taiba, Malik said. Shah was arrested at a Lashkar camp in the Pakistani-administered region of Kashmir.

Malik said Pakistan has sent 30 questions to India seeking more information, including "fingerprints and DNA samples of all the terrorists." Pakistan has also requested that India share information about the role of any Indian accomplice in the attacks and asked how some cellphone SIM cards were bought in India.

Last month, India sent Pakistan a dossier with information from its extensive interrogation of the surviving attacker. Mumbai police officials met Thursday with FBI agents at their Washington headquarters to discuss how Indian authorities could use some of the tips and evidence that FBI agents had gathered when they traveled to India to help investigate the attacks. The meeting was designed to smooth the way for some of that material to be introduced into any forthcoming court proceedings in India, according to one source briefed on the talks.

"Pakistan's response and investigation appear to be reasonably comprehensive. It does address India's mounting frustration against Pakistan's attempts at denial, delay and obfuscation about the Mumbai attacks," said C. Uday Bhaskar, a strategic analyst in New Delhi.

But he said that the response has some predictable caveats. "They have tried to firewall the Pakistani state from any role in the planning of the attack," Bhaskar said. "By asking the 30 questions, they have also subtly cast aspersions on the rigor of information provided by India."

Hussain reported from Islamabad. Staff writer Carrie Johnson in Washington contributed to this report.

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