

## **The Mumbai Massacre: a lesson for all**

By Tim Lynch\*

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On November 27, 2008, while vacationing in Goa, India, I checked my email to discover a message from a friend in Toronto; he was inquiring if I was affected by events in Mumbai, 600 km up the road. Instinctively, I switched on CNN and immediately became aware that the city was under siege. Terrorists were killing innocent bystanders, destroying some of Mumbai's landmarks, attacking Jewish residents and seeking out holders of British and American passports. As the day progressed, we learned of a band of terrorists assaulting the city from offshore, using high speed inflatable marine craft, the possibility of a similar scenario unfolding in my home community of Metro Vancouver during the 2010 Olympics was impossible to avoid considering.

The new geopolitical reality in this world is that nations have to come to terms with such acts of terror and it is important that lessons are learned when they occur. The first reaction to such inconceivable behaviour, is to ask "why." The second has to be a desire to learn how to manage the new reality of such occurrences.

Had the British given Dominion status to India when it gave such self-government to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, it is conceivable that Gandhi's vision of a united, pluralistic and peace loving society might have evolved. Instead, the British (Churchill) engaged in a policy of divide and rule, exploitation of

Indian soldiers in World War II, and discriminatory racial practices towards loyal citizens.

To begin to understand why the terrorists attacked Mumbai one must analyze events in the context of this history. Similar accounts of British and other colonial decisions underlie terrorist insurgencies originating between the Pakistan/Afghan border and the Palestinian/Israeli border(s).

Dealing with the reality of such colonial history, and the terrorist hotspots it has spawned, requires a new approach in the defence of the nation state. Being familiar with the challenges Canada faces in coming to terms with this new reality and the presence of Canadian military forces in Afghanistan, I felt compelled to make some comparisons with the Indian situation.

### **Canadian Comparisons**

While acknowledging the significant differences in demographics, India and Canada share a similar pedigree with the British Empire. Both countries encompass large areas of the globe and are governed through a confederate parliamentary government connecting quasi-autonomous jurisdictions. Their coastlines require the need to maintain east and west naval theatres. These features pose similar challenges in developing any counterterrorism policy.

Noting that Mumbai houses the headquarters of India's Western Naval Command, retired Brigadier Ian da Costa described the attack on the City as a major intelligence failure. He stated that several sources knew such an attack was imminent. Collaboration among government departments was not in place, nor was any one authority responsible for connecting the dots. Da Costa criticized the