Case Study
TOPSLINE 1252 rescue operations during 26/11

The Background

Terrorism factions are focused on attacking centers of economy like NYC, London and Mumbai for maximum impact. The 26/11 terror struck Mumbai in 2008, when multiple sites were attacked with bombs and gunfire in a coordinated terror attack that began on November 26, 2008, and lasted for three days.

The attacks killed around 179 people and over 300 injuries were reported and caused an approximate loss of over US$ 800 MN. to the financial capital of the country.

Sequence of Events

The terrorists infiltrated the Indian western coast and divided themselves into groups and strategically targeted key points of the country's financial capital to achieve maximum devastation. After having minor encounters with locals, the terrorists initiated the attack on Nov 26, 2008 with an attack on Cafe Leopold. The cafe which is popular among foreign tourists was targeted for the very same reason.

Two terrorists showered rounds of bullets indenting the centuries-old walls of the cafe and turning the floor into a pool of blood. 10 people were killed here and many injured. After this, bombs exploded in two taxis across Mumbai killing five people and sending around 15 people to hospitals.

Kasab along with his accomplice Ismail Khan take a taxi to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST). The two men ravaged the nation's busiest railway station killing over 52 people and injuring more than 100, most of whom were just returning home after a hard day's work.

They then headed to the Cama Hospital and opened fire. ATS chief Hemant Karkare who tried to chase them in a jeep was killed along with three of his men. The terrorists, who took the jeep and fled, were intercepted by a police team at Girgaum Chowpatty where Ismail was killed and Kasab arrested.

Meanwhile, four men (including two who attacked Cafe Leopold) enter the Taj Hotel turning over 200 guests into hostages. The landmark five-star hotel became another scene of massacre as the body count began and security forces carefully planned the operations to ensure the safety of civilians.

The hotel was under seize from 26th to 29th of Nov 2008 with grenade explosions and gunshots reminding the forces that innocent lives were at stake.

In a bid to attack the social and economic elite of the country, two terrorists attacked Oberoi Trident, located very close to Taj. Explosions and gunshots resounded the site as terrorists took
hostages. NSG commandos and other forces were rushed in and the situation was under control by Nov 28, 2008.

Two other attackers entered Nariman House carrying out that part of the plot aimed at targeting American Jews. On Nov 27, the evacuation and other rescue operations began. On Nov 28, 2008, commandos descended from helicopters onto the roof of the house, only to find the six hostages, including the rabbi and his wife, tortured and murdered. However, the terrorists were killed and the building sanitized.

Nine out of the ten terrorists were killed during the operations. The 60-hour long terror strike claimed over 170 lives and injured hundreds. And the terror attack permanently scarred the collective memory of the country. (Source: Oneindia.com)

The situation in hand

A call from TOPSLINE Emergency Service subscriber

At 21:55 hrs, TOPSLINE 1252 control center receives a call from its subscriber mentioning that there is firing near Leopold café between two groups and her husband is trapped inside, so needs the emergency service’s help. A call is made to inform Colaba police about the incident and TOPSLINE 1252 life brigade are sent to the incident location.

On reaching at location, the crew finds gun firing in Leopold café and police had cordoned off the area and was not allowing any one to enter.

New channels flashing news about terror attack at different places.

After watching the news reports, TOPSLINE 1252 Emergency Response Service life brigades and patrols were deployed all the three locations i.e. Taj Hotel, Nariman house and Oberoi Trident subsequently.

The Planning and Rescue Operation

After receiving the first call, the TOPSLINE Emergency Response Team immediately swung into action. An emergency meeting was held at the TOPSLINE Command and Control Center (TC3) to discuss and freeze the Plan of Action (POA).

While the senior operations and management team took over the TC3, sixteen TOPSLINE life brigades were dispatched to manage the disaster at different terror spots. The brigades were mobilized based on latest news and calls that were coming in from different subscribes in that area. For the next 2 days i.e. 27th and 28th of November, maximum casualties were rescued from the terror laden spots and
shifted to safety and hospitals as and when required. One hundred and sixty three (163) TOPSLINE personnel were involved in the rescue operations at the three locations i.e. Taj Hotel, The Oberoi Trident and Nariman House till the attack was finally suppressed by the NSG team.

Since the terrorists exploded hand grenades and set many floors of the two hotels on fire, there was practically no visibility. To combat this, high power emergency lights was transported to the venue to light up the area to help aid the rescue operation. Ample first aid kits, ropes and stretchers were also made available at the venue.

Seven TOPSLINE brigades each were stationed at the Taj Hotel and The Oberoi Trident and three at the Nariman House during the deluge. A team of dedicated Doctors, Paramedics, and Response officers were functioning day and night during the operation, which lasted for around 72 hours.

Several rescue operation teams were formed which were lead by TOPSLINE’s Operation in charge Mr. Baburao Wankhede, Mr. Jasbir Singh, Mr. D A Siddiqui, Mr. H K Nikam, Mr. Arvind Veer, Mr. Omveer Singh, and Mr. Ganga Datta at three different locations.

Since the area was completely cordoned off by the security forces, it was ensured that all our personnel were in full uniform and equipped with valid identity proof. Also, it was ensured by TOPSLINE team that all rescued were taken to the nearby Police Station for security check. This approach helped in the following ways; firstly, it helped smooth flow of hostages and casualties to various hospitals and secondly a quick check of documents could be done ensuring no terrorist escapes taking refuge of the situation.

When TOPSLINE’s crew members were taken inside the Taj for rescue, they were without arms and bulletproof jackets, hence proper care was taken not to come in the line of gun fire to avoid any further casualty. The injuries were big, so we had to purchase bigger size gauge pieces and first aid medicines.
The Result
Over 150 lives saved.

The Learning
Time spent in disaster response planning equals time saved when a disaster occurs. Disaster management has to be integral into the educational system, with mock drills at least twice a month, if need be with assistance from the experts.

Key steps to be followed during:

Terror Attacks

- Check for injuries. Seek medical assistance for seriously injured people.
- Check for fires or hazards. Shut off damaged utilities. Sniff for gas leaks. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.
- Check for damage in your home. Use flashlights, do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Clean up spilled household flammables and poisonous liquids.
- Locate your emergency kit and keep it with you. If you don't have one make sure you have an adequate supply of water.
- Leave the area immediately. Cover your mouth and nose with any available material such as a napkin, cloth or newspaper.
- Close the door or section off the contaminated area to prevent others from entering. Turn off fans or ventilation units if possible.

Explosions

- If there is a fire:
- Cover nose and mouth with a wet cloth, stay low to the floor and exit the building as quickly as possible.
- When approaching a closed door, use the back of your hand to feel the lower, middle and upper parts of the door. If it is not hot, brace yourself against the door and open it slowly. If it is hot to the touch, DO NOT open the door – seek an alternate escape route.
- Stay below the smoke at all times. Smoke and poisonous gases collect first along the ceiling.

If someone is in the immediate area, yet not injured by the explosion, one should:

- Seek medical assistance for seriously injured people.
- Do not enter collapsed buildings or go closer to the site of the explosion. Do not attempt to rescue people who are inside a collapsed building unless you are trained to do so. Wait for emergency personnel to arrive.
- Check for damage using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fire, fire hazards and other household hazards. Sniff for gas leaks. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly. Shut off any other damaged utilities.
If trapped under Debris

- If possible, search for an escape route. In some buildings, you may be able to break through wallboard or climb through a false ceiling to another unblocked room.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so that rescuers can hear where you are. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort—shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.
- Use a flashlight if needed. Do not turn on light switches or light a match.

This is not to suggest that we must start arming ourselves to fight terrorists. But it’s important and indeed imperative to ask ourselves - “What can we individually and collectively do to prevent and pro-actively deal with such a situation?

THE SOLUTION: ‘PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE’

About TOPSLINE 1252

TOPSLINE 1252, launched in September 2004, has ensured the safety of lives of more than 7 lakh Mumbaikars and 200 reputed corporates since its inception. India’s answer to the famed 911 in USA, TOPSLINE 1252 is the country’s first & fastest Emergency Response Service. Going a step beyond security, it ensures safety of one’s life with a commitment to reach the victim in 9 minutes flat!

TOPSLINE 1252 covers all kinds of emergencies, be it Medical, Fire, Physical Assaults, Accidents, Gas Leakages, Short Circuit, Intrusion, Burglary or any other life-threatening emergencies.

About TOPSGRUP

TOPSGRUP is Asia’s largest and leading Services Group, providing a broad range of people and supportive services for the last 46 years through bespoke offerings. The company delivers ISO 9001:2008 certified services to a growing community of 9,700 customers including globally-renowned names such as IBM, Airtel, Microsoft, Tata Group, Apple, Twitter, LinkedIn and many more. TOPSGRUP has over 1,30,000 trained professionals guarding human and capital assets at over 30,000 locations across the country. Media reports and customer surveys consistently rank TOPSGRUP as one of Asia’s most trusted services brands.

TOPSGRUP’s comprehensive suite of integrated and customised offerings, delivered through a large network of over 251 offices, range from Manned Guarding, Integrated Facility Management, Logistics Solutions to Emergency Response services, System Integration and People Services. Leveraging its 46-year legacy of proven excellence, TOPSGRUP serves customers present across sectors such as manufacturing, technology, retail, government, infrastructure, banking, e-commerce, and entertainment, among others.
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