



Zetek

WHITE PAPER: HOTEL SECURITY IN THE WAKE OF MUMBAI

In the terrorist attacks on Mumbai, India, that occurred on November 26–29, 2008, and killed 164 people and injured 308, two of the biggest targets were hotels. The Taj Mahal Palace & Tower and the Oberoi Trident in South Mumbai were invaded by heavily armed gunmen from the Pakistan based Islamist group Lashkar-e Taiba, who apparently had prior access to the floor plans for these buildings. The local police and the Indian National Security Guard, on the other hand, did not.

Even the blueprints they eventually managed to obtain were out of date and, according to J. K. Dutt, the director general of India's National Security Guards, "did not show recent construction." The terrorists were able to keep "moving among large halls with multiple entrances, not allowing themselves to be cornered in small rooms without other exits," while the security forces had trouble navigating the mazelike structures, Mr. Dutt told *The New York Times*. The terrorists were able to take their time, calmly murdering defenseless people until eventually nine of them were killed by law enforcement officers and one captured alive. Of the 10 sites hit by the coordinated attacks, the Taj Mahal hotel was the last to be secured.

While the public outcry following the incident focused on the authorities' perceived indolence and lack of preparation, the fact is that Mumbai is by no means an egregious exception to the rule. The situation is not necessarily any better in the United States. The vast majority of vulnerable complex structures—such as hotels, hospital, housing complexes, theaters and convention centers—still do not maintain current versions of their floor plans, and when they do, the information may not be easily available to all types of first responders.

Since the Mumbai attacks, there has been much discussion in U.S. security circles about how to increase preparedness for similar types of attacks, should they ever take place here. According to *The New York Times*, security professionals are advising police and first response agencies to work "with the hotel industry to devise crisis action plans that would include computer programs detailing all internal and external aspects" of hotel building structures. Cities such as Boston and Seattle are monitoring hotels more closely, and in December, Seattle police chief Gil Kerlikowske "met with fire officials to review building plans and emergency preparations," *USA Today* reported.

Los Angeles had already taken the initiative with its "Operation Archangel," the purpose of which is to collect, digitize and analyze the floor plans and other structural information for 500 buildings identified as possible

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terrorist targets, from Disneyland to nuclear plants. If a system like Operation Archangel “sounds obvious, it isn’t,” assistant FBI director John Miller recently observed. While some cities, including Phoenix and Chicago, have systems that transmit electronic floor-plan information to fire department first response teams, others are still far behind. New York City’s initiative to create digitized blueprints is still in the data-gathering phase, and in the meantime the NYPD has simply advised hotel owners to “have an emergency action plan” and to “take protective measures.” In the Oregon state legislature, a bill was introduced several years ago to require a state-wide first-responder building mapping information system.

The problem remains, though, that the floor plans collected by fire departments are often created primarily to help get the public out of a building in the event of known-quantity event like a fire. Such plans may be of little use to security forces entering a building to deal with a fluid, unforeseen event like a terrorist attack. What is needed is a flexible system that can cope with rapidly evolving situations, direct police and emergency personnel to the hot spots where they need to be, and allow for easy updating of information whenever a building’s internal geography changes due to new construction or any other reason.

Zetek’s Wayfinding System has been developed to help first responders, employees and visitors find destinations within structures quickly and easily, and therefore would be an ideal tool not only for planning against possible terrorist incidents but also for managing the operational response to an attack on a public building. The following are the key reasons why:

- 1) It is intuitively easy and quick to view. The Wayfinding System uses the latest structural and architectural information to generate combinations of intuitively presented three-dimensional, axonometric maps, vividly outlining the best routes between any two points in a facility.
- 2) Dynamic rerouting of paths allows facility and safety managers to assign information to building locations so that responders can be routed directly to personnel, assets, equipment or items that need to be secured. Emergency managers can change the accessibility level of areas in the building on the fly, so that the system can route responders or visitors away from places in the building that have been compromised during an incident and if necessary aide in their evacuation.
- 3) The Wayfinding System is browser-based, so that floor plans and routes can be made available in a secure fashion to many types of incident responders, including building personnel, fire and police departments in addition to federal responders. The Wayfinding System can be accessed from a web browser. The maps and other information can be easily viewed on nearly any type of display.
- 4) Any type of alarm system (fire, security, etc.) can be integrated with the Wayfinding System, so that maps and routes can be created automatically to lead responders directly to the location of a triggering event.
- 5) Information from other types of sensors and security cameras can also be incorporated into the Wayfinding

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System, allowing incident responders to incorporate real-time data about activity into the layout of the building's structure. The system supports adding layers of data to maps, so that responders can visualize patterns of emerging danger, for example, the dispersal of materials in a biological or chemical attack.

Municipalities, building owners, police departments and government security forces should not wait for laws and mandated programs to catch up with today's reality. While improving the regulations that dictate minimum compliance is certainly desirable, many building owners and municipalities will want to go beyond that. Zetek's Wayfinding System can help insure that they will not be caught short.

For more information about Zetek Corporation and its products, please visit www.zetek.com.

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