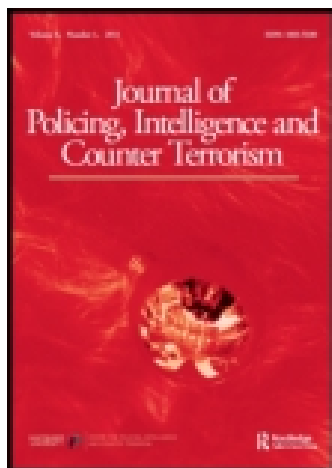


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The Islamabad Marriott in Flames: The Attack on the World's Most Protected Hotel

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, the Islamabad Marriott Hotel was arguably the most protected hotel in the world. Targeted twice previously by terrorists – in October 2004 and January 2007 – it had in place multiple physical target hardening measures as well as a well-trained security staff. But on 20 September 2008, these measures were no match for a massive truck bomb that, while stopped from entering the hotel premises, somehow still triggered a fire that engulfed the hotel and burnt for two days.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack although explosives experts believe the modus operandi bears resemblance to the attacks on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, the FIA building in Lahore, Hamza camp and the Pakistan Air Force base in Saragodha. The June 2008 suicide attack on the Danish Embassy has been claimed by al-Qaeda, which recently released the martyrdom video of the Saudi suicide bomber “Abu Ghareeb al-Makki” (a.k.a. Kamaal al-Hadhli).

This case study raises two important questions for hotel security that are just as applicable outside Pakistan:

1. How was it possible for a truck containing 600 kg of explosives to enter a sensitive 1 km city zone that includes the Prime Minister's residence, the Presidential office and the Supreme Court? Once the truck bomb was on the road to the Marriott Hotel, the only thing stopping it from reaching its target were the physical barriers at the hotel gate. Fortunately the multiple layers of protection worked, but at the cost of the lives of the security guards manning them.
2. What more can a hotel do to enhance security without compromising its basic function – to encourage the public to enter its premises? If it is a question of when, and not if, hotels succumb to terrorist attacks, how prepared are they to mitigate the consequences of an attack? A paradigm

shift in response strategy, moving beyond perimeter security to include consequence management, is clearly required.

Introduction

In the world of terrorism, yesterday's embassies are today's hotels. The threat against diplomatic targets persists but due to target hardening, the terrorists seek to attack international hotels. As Westerners frequent international hotels, they should be considered second embassies. Failure to understand the threat and creatively harden international hotels, especially in conflict zones, could lead to loss of life, property and business.

Since the beginning of the current wave of terrorism on September 11, 2001, the damage to the Islamabad Marriott on September 20, 2008 is the largest terrorist attack on an international hotel. The attack originating from the Afghan-Pakistan border, the global epicentre of terrorism, demonstrates the recurrent and growing threat to the international hospitality industry.

The context

During the past five years, the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, has suffered three terrorist attacks. An explosives-laden laptop in the lobby injured seven persons in October 2004. The assassination targeted a VIP who managed to escape. Two years and three months after, the terrorists attacked the Marriott just hours before an Indian High Commission function to celebrate Republic Day. At the side entrance leading to the Marriott's basement nightclub, a suicide bomber intercepted by a security guard managed to initiate a blast, killing a security guard and injuring five others in January 2007 (Withana, 2007). The most recent attack killed 56, injured 265, and destroyed the majority of the upper floor rooms. Of the 56 reported deaths, 30 were hotel associates. A majority – 17 – were hotel security personnel. A valet driver, a doorman, two from the engineering department, and the front desk duty manager also died. Along with many others, the manager of food, beverages and banquet sales who was in the *porte cochere* (the roofed structure extending from the hotel entrance over the driveway) was badly injured. There were five registered guests killed: two Americans, including 34 year-old Air Force Maj. Rodolfo I. Rodriguez, Danish security and intelligence officer Karsten Krabbe, the Czech Ambassador Ivo Zdarek, and his Vietnamese partner. Eight persons were killed off-property. Fourteen non-registered guests died, one of them an American.

Despite a 132-foot (40.23 m) setback from the gate to the hotel, the explosion caused unprecedented devastation. The standard rule is for diplomatic and other high value targets to maintain a standoff distance of 100 feet (30.5 m) from the public. Had the fortified gate not prevented the suicide truck from entering the hotel compound, the fatalities and injuries would have increased dramatically. Said Chief of Security for the hotel, Major Tahir Qureshi: "If not for the barrier, there would have been 1000

casualties.” (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008.) At the time of the bombing, there were upwards of 1,500 people in the hotel. Most of them were non-registered guests who were there to celebrate *Iftar* – the breaking of the fast – practised during the Ramadan period when Muslims fast all day. The restaurants were full and the main ballroom was open for a buffet dinner. Major Qureshi added:

We never thought of this type of attack. It is like an unconventional attack. As if there were chemicals, there was a lightning effect. Everything exposed to the fireball was burnt, the hotel, the cars and even trees. It is the worst explosion



Bomb crater at the Marriott Hotel (Darwar, 2008)

Pakistan has seen (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008).

The explosion could be heard 18 miles (30 kilometres) away, created a deep crater 59 feet by 25 feet (18 m by 7.6 m) and ignited a fire that burnt for two days.

On that fateful day, the entire Pakistani leadership – President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, Speaker of the National Assembly, the Army Chief and other important figures were supposed to have dinner at the Marriott. A major tragedy for Pakistan was averted when the venue of the dinner was changed to the Prime Minister’s house at the last minute. The Interior Ministry announced after the attack that it had received a non-specific warning of an attack (Waraich, 2008). On a visit to Washington, D.C. immediately after the bombing, Zardari commented: “I was supposed to be there with my Prime Minister, with my Speaker, with a lot of us. Just by chance that night it was changed”. (Zardari says he escaped assassination

at Marriott hotel 2008.) Pakistani authorities are investigating if there was a leak. Although low-ranking military personnel were involved in two assassination attempts on former President General Pervez Musharraf, it is unlikely that the terrorists received prior information about the dinner plans of the Pakistani leadership on September 20. The plans made by the Speaker were kept secret; even the hotel was not informed.

Epicentre of the explosion

At 55 seconds past 7.54 p.m. on September 20, 2008, an explosives-laden truck turned into the driveway of the Islamabad Marriott. Instead of running away, two security guards at the checkpoint barrier braced themselves for what looked like an imminent traffic accident. The headlights of the truck were on full beam. Anyone observing the approach would have had to look away or be blinded by the lights. The headlights masked the truck, making it difficult to appreciate what exactly was happening. The body container carrying approximately 600 kg (1,320 lb) of explosives, including artillery shells, mortar bombs and shrapnel, dwarfed the truck cab. The truck swung around in a small arc with the driver's side closest to the security booth, then straightened full on towards the hydraulic barrier and arm gate with headlights still on full beam. While one guard remained in position, the second guard stepped back quickly under a large tree as the truck went through the trolley wheel barrier.

The truck smashed into the hydraulic barriers and canted to the nearside. The two front tyres went over the top of the hydraulic barrier with the nearside tyres appearing to puncture. The front of the cab hit the arm gate barrier, which held in position. The front axle and wheels of the cab hooked over the hydraulic barrier, resulting in the truck becoming stuck and unable to move forward or reverse.

Security worked – the hydraulic barrier contained the vehicle. As there was no movement from within the cab, there was no action by the security guards, who stood to one side and began to assess the situation. Their initial actions were completely consistent with people thinking that they had just witnessed a road traffic accident. The body language of the security personnel did not display a reaction consistent with anyone shooting at or being fired at from the truck.

Surrounded by approaching security guards, the suicide driver could not move the truck stuck on the hydraulic barrier. Apparently concerned that he might be shot or apprehended, and unable to reach the intended target of the hotel building, he took the next best option of detonating the truck at the gate. Thirteen seconds after the impact on the hydraulic barrier, the suicide bomber initiated an explosion from within the cab area of the truck (Andy Williams, personal communication, September 26, 2008). The detonation by the bomber did not immediately initiate the larger charge in the truck. Although the rigged explosives device malfunctioned, it incapacitated the bomber instantly and caused a fire inside the cab area of the truck. The security officers backed off – they went off camera, the most credible device recording the events on that day.

After forming a cordon to prevent spectators from approaching the vehicle, the security personnel informed the CCTV operator inside the hotel. The fire brigade was called. The security guards responded to it as if it was an automobile fire. While waiting for the fire brigade, the guards decided to fight the fire themselves. As there was no fire extinguisher at the security booth, an engineer brought one out from the hotel and proceeded to use it on the fire. The extinguisher, once activated, appeared not to dampen, but to escalate the burning with intense bright light.

It is obvious from the body language that no one thought the vehicle contained a bomb. As there were bricks on the back of the vehicle concealing the explosives, the truck deceived the security personnel and other hotel staff at the gate (Please see Annex A for chronology of events as analysed from the hotel's CCTV footage).

The threat and response

As Pakistan faced a very high threat from terrorism, the Islamabad Marriott was exceptionally well protected. Previously, Islamabad had suffered ten suicide attacks starting with the bombing of the Egyptian Embassy on November 19, 1995, killing 14 persons. All the other nine attacks took place after May 2006. The first attack that targeted Westerners occurred on March 15, 2008. One foreigner was killed and 15 persons were injured when a suicide bomber targeted an Italian restaurant. On June 2, 2008, an al-Qaeda member from Saudi Arabia attacked the Danish Embassy in a vehicle-borne IED, killing six and injuring 25 (<http://www.nefafoundation.org/multimedia-prop.html#nafaabughareeb0608>, 2008, para 5). As such, the threat to Western nationals was well established in the lead-up to the Marriott attack. Described both by the US State Department and Pakistani media as Pakistan's 9-11, the worst terrorist attack in Islamabad was the bombing of the Marriott Hotel.

The Islamabad Marriott was the world's most protected hotel until September 20, 2008. One of the two five-star hotels operating in the Federal Capital, Marriott Islamabad complied with the security standards established by Marriott International. With a full-bodied security system developed by Marriott's Global Vice President for Security Alan Orlob for its hotels worldwide 15 years ago, the Marriott chain was considered the safest. As Orlob said:

Marriott has a robust crisis management programme. We employ two full time analysts – one in Washington and another based in Hong Kong – to assess security conditions on a worldwide basis. When we determine that a threat exists, hotels are directed to employ prescribed counter-measures in three tiers – blue, yellow and red. We audit compliance with these procedures or 'threat conditions' using a third party auditor (Alan Orlob, personal communication, September 27, 2008).

At the time of the attack, the Marriott in Islamabad was operating at 'Threat Condition Red'. Included in 'Threat Condition Red' are (a) mandatory vehicle inspections, (b) luggage inspections and, (c) metal detector screening of personnel. The hotel had been audited the month before and had been shown to be in 100%

compliance. However, the terrorist attack mounted against Islamabad Marriott was unprecedented in its destructive force.

At the time of the attack, hotel security was robust. Scrutiny of CCTV footage as well as interviews with survivors and government investigators demonstrate the operation of effective security procedures and vigilance prior to the incident. In a 290-room hotel, the occupancy at the time of the attack was 47%. The hotel was protected by 196 hotel security personnel and four bomb-sniffing dogs. At the time of the attack, 60 hotel security personnel, a government intelligence officer, four policemen, and one sniffer dog were on shift. Most of the victims killed were security personnel, drivers, and other hotel employees. The security of the hotel is not outsourced but managed by Karakoram, the hotel's own security company led by Colonel Zulficar. The Chief of Security for the hotel, Major Tahir Qureshi, said:

“I have lost my entire evening shift. I have lost 17 security guards and officers including my deputy. 14 were injured, including five seriously. They included the assistant chief security officer, a security officer, three assistant security officers and 12 guards. They were excellent and outstanding, loyal



Security measures at the Marriott Hotel entrance before the attack

and dedicated” (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008).

He added: “In addition, two government security officers assigned to the hotel were killed. They were from the Intelligence Bureau and traffic police”. Most of the security personnel serving at the hotel, including Major Qureshi, were formerly with the military.

Over the years, the hotel enhanced its security. The hotel security personnel stationed on both sides of the entrance to the property were armed with shotguns. The security supervisors were armed with handguns. New bollards had been placed alongside the street – pushing the standoff further out. There were plain-clothes security personnel conducting surveillance detection. There was an officer from the Special

Branch of Pakistan stationed at the vehicle checkpoint. He called the attack in when the truck first struck the hydraulic barrier.

Prior to the attack, the security consisted of 62 CCTV cameras that are always monitored by three security officers. The hotel placed window film on glass in all public areas to provide fragment retention in the event of explosions. In March 2008, the vehicle inspection area was enhanced. Included in that security enhancement was a combination of a drop-down barrier and hydraulic barriers. It had under-vehicle cameras that sent pictures to a monitor in the security booth. These cameras also recorded on stand-alone CCTV in the security booth. Additional cameras recorded the licence plates of vehicles.

The response to the attack

The CCTV camera recording events at the main entrance to the hotel provides invaluable details of the event. Of the two gate entrances to the hotel – Gate 1 and Gate 2 – the truck rammed Gate 2, which is to the right of Gate 1 when viewed from the hotel lobby. Separating the gates is a hedge, obscuring a security booth, where a CCTV operator monitored the underside of vehicles at the checkpoint barrier. However, six external CCTV cameras feeding into the security booth were lost during the explosion. There was no dedicated cable feed to the main CCTV control room in the hotel building. Crucial close up recording relating to the vehicle arrival and search was lost (Andy Williams, personal communication, September 26, 2008).

Physical security of the gates began with a single trolley barrier at each gate. This small barrier on wheels indicated to drivers that a security checkpoint was ahead and he ought to slow down. In normal circumstances, when the car slows down, the security guard wheels the trolley barrier to one side. The car then moves slowly up to the hydraulic barrier in a position adjacent to the security booth. While the guard who wheels the trolley barrier then opens the trunk (boot) of the car, another guard inside the booth screens the underside of the car with the fixed underside CCTV camera. Another guard speaks to the driver and looks into the inside of the vehicle. If the vehicle is deemed to have passed all inspection, the guard inside the booth will operate the hydraulic barrier to lower. Directly in front of the hydraulic barrier is a heavy-duty arm gate barrier – as the hydraulic barrier lowers the arm gate barrier is raised manually via a rope. As the vehicle clears the arm gate barrier, the hydraulic barrier rises and the trolley barrier is rolled back into place.

Prior to the arrival of the truck, CCTV footage demonstrates that the physical security barriers were fully operational. The security officers were following standard procedures and also acting with vigilance, with at least two officers maintaining constant observation of oncoming traffic. In addition to the policeman, a sniffer dog was positioned between the two gate entrances. When the attack took place, the CCTV control room by the main loading dock operator went into full swing. After the initial explosion, the CCTV operator informed the assistant chief security officer. He sat next to the operator in the control room and watched the developments

before moving to the gate to take charge of the situation. The Security Chief, Major Qureshi, was not at the site during the attack but returned to lead the rescue and relief operations. The CCTV operator had called and informed him of the situation, prior to the final explosion (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008).

The security personnel thought that it was an accident initially. The driver was on fire. "The body was in one whole piece but on fire." (Andy Williams, personal communication, September 26, 2008.) If the driver had exploded a grenade or a suicide belt/vest, the body would not be intact. The CCTV controller and supervisor on duty in the hotel security control room who heard conversations during the two minutes when everyone was standing back from the truck said the driver was on fire but appeared to have died immediately during the first explosion in the cab. As the driver was apparently dead, the truck had not blown up, and the fire appeared to be going out, the security and hotel emergency response team waited for the police. Their understanding was that the incident was now under the supervision of the police and they were awaiting further instruction.

Seven security personnel can be identified at various times in the video, several minutes after the suicide truck approached the target. While the suicide vehicle remained stuck on the barrier, vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians passed by on the main road. Although the security personnel did not block the access road to the hotel entrance, with the help of the doormen and other staff, they formed a cordon in front of the hotel. The video footage from the camera at the front entrance does not show this effort but the cordon saved lives (Andrew Williams, personal communication, September 26, 2008). Only five registered guests perished during the ensuing fire. The Czech Ambassador, who was living on an upper floor of the hotel, was alive after the explosion. He was injured. He called for help and phoned the embassy to rescue him. But the intensity of the fire prevented the rescue teams from reaching him (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008).

Contrary to what was portrayed by segments of the press, there was no 'weakness' or dilution of security procedures at the time of the incident, even though it occurred during Ramadan. The most glaring security lapse was the failure of the government's security measures; they allowed a truck full of explosives to enter the high security zone. Furthermore, government response was too slow. Although the hotel is located on the edge of the security Red Zone, police and emergency support did not arrive prior to the main blast. From the time people reappeared to deal with the incident following the 2-minute standoff to when the final explosion occurred, 25 vehicles drove past the scene at various intervals. In all, some 40 vehicles drove past from the start of the incident. The traffic police officer on duty who saw the initial crash and first explosion radioed this information to his HQ. Within this crucial 7 minutes, the Assistant Chief Security Manager also called for the fire brigade on his cell phone. But, from the time the suicide bomber rammed into the retractable metal barrier and bar at the security checkpoint, until it turned into a fireball, there was no government response.

Although not captured on CCTV, one traffic policeman, an armed Sergeant and three policemen, a plain-clothes special branch surveillance officer and one sniffer dog were also on duty. When the vehicle caught fire, the armed Sergeant and the three policemen left the site. When interviewed, the Chief of Security alleged that the police realized it was a bomb and abandoned the target area (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008). While they survived the explosion, the IB officer at the hotel's porch and the Traffic Sergeant across the road were killed (Major Tahir Qureshi, personal communication, September 28, 2008). It was hotel security measures that worked to prevent an even greater loss of life and property. The anti-terrorist vehicle crash barrier worked effectively to prevent the suicide truck driver from gaining entrance to the hotel's forecourt and parking area. The standoff



The hotel car park sign says it all

between the gate and the front of the hotel mitigated the effects of the blast. Had the gate not stalled the truck from gaining access to the hotel compound, the devastation would have been manifold.

Clues to attack planning on the jihadi websites?

The jihadi websites celebrated the attack. A jihadi website identified the hydraulic barrier as the single most important factor that prevented the destruction of the hotel. The website issued a report on the capabilities of barriers available.

Immediately after the attack, a jihadist website, the Islamic Fallujah Forum (<http://faloja1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=29488>, 2008), posted pictures of the hotel

before and after the attack. The insurance giant AIG and Marriott International initially believed that the photographs were terrorist pre-surveillance pictures. After researching the source of the images in the Islamic Fallujah Forum, ICPVTR-SITE Institute analysis concluded that the images of the hotel prior to the attack were not related to the attack or used as surveillance photographs. They appear to have come from the personal album of an individual using Photobucket (<http://s15.photobucket.com/albums/a381/Techno-Architect/ISLAMABAD/>, 2008).

The individual that took the pictures appears to have stayed at the hotel and took pictures from around the hotel, including shots of the bathroom and the bed in the hotel room, and furniture in the hotel, which indicates that it was not done for surveillance purposes. Furthermore, the same individual posted his Photobucket images of the hotel on the Urbanpk.com message board on November 10, 2006 (<http://www.urbanpk.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=1651>, 2008), nearly two years before the attack, which also indicates they were not surveillance photos. An Internet search on this individual reveals that he might be a student of architecture.

A Google image search using the words “islamabad marriott” provides the same photos of the hotel prior to the attack as the ones posted on Fallujah Forum; they are from the Urbanpk.com message board with the images from 2006. The message thread was also updated after the attack with images taken showing the aftermath of the bombing. Thus, it seems very likely that “Abu Usama”, the user who posted the message with the images on the Fallujah Forum, simply did a Google image search for Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, found the urbanpk.com message board with all the images of the hotel, both before and after the attack, and then re-posted them to the Fallujah forum.

Unanswered questions

As in every attack, there are many unanswered questions in the Marriott Islamabad bombing. As of today, there is no evidence of a gas leak. As such, the massive fire remains a puzzle. The Government of Pakistan claimed that the main charge in the IED was RDX and TNT – military explosives. However, foreign EOD specialists argue that it was a Potassium Chlorate and possibly diesel oil bomb. They argue that the attack modus operandi was similar to the attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, FIA building in Lahore, Hamza camp and Pakistan Air Force, Saragodha attacks.

There are indications that the bomb used in the Marriott attack, while big at possibly 700-800 kilos, was not well-made. Al Qaeda and Taliban are poor at producing quality VBIEDs. Yet, as an EOD specialist points out: “When you stand next to one; it does not really matter, you will die. However, it does matter when you move further away or if you are inside a building” (confidential source, personal communication, September 24, 2008).

The perpetrators have not been identified but it is very likely that Al Qaeda and Taliban are responsible for the attack. Today, multiple threat groups operate together

in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, especially in Waziristan. As it marked the 9-11 attacks in September, Al Qaeda called for attacks in Pakistan.

The future of hospitality security

Today, Marriott has over 3,000 hotels, 331 operating outside the United States, making it one of the world's largest and most prestigious hotel chains. Marriott International is the parent group and Marriott Lodging manages Marriott, Renaissance and Courtyard hotels operating outside the US. Marriott International also owns Marriott Vacation Club and Ritz Carlton.

It was only in 1993 that Marriott started to expand internationally. At that time, Marriott only had three international hotels. The only properties Marriott had outside the US were in Cairo, Amsterdam and Athens. Starting with Latin America, they knew they were going to high risk countries. Marriott Lodgings President Ed Fuller came to Alan Orlob, the Vice President for Security, and asked him to develop a security plan. Orlob said:

15 years ago when we developed a crisis plan, people said it gathers dust. But today, it has become a bestseller. We developed threat conditions. Two analysts were dedicated to scanning and informing threat 24/7: when one watched, the other slept. Three years ago, we knew that an outside audit was necessary to maintain the credibility of the programme. We hired Control Risks to audit the hotels. An announced audit, they use a check list that we developed (Alan Orlob, personal communication, September 27, 2008).

Referring to Marriott Islamabad, Orlob said: "This hotel has always been operating at threat condition Red. A month ago, it was audited and passed the audit with 100% compliance. We have more security at this hotel than most of our hotels in the system" (Alan Orlob, personal communication, September 27, 2008).

Despite the attack against Marriott Islamabad, there is a spirit in the hospitality industry to fight back. Marriott will continue to look at projects in Iraq and Afghanistan and maintain its presence in Pakistan – the three countries in the world that suffer most from suicide terrorism. Orlob said: "Within the last six months, I visited all the three places: Baghdad (June), Afghanistan (July) and Pakistan (October)" (Alan Orlob, personal communication, September 27, 2008). It is likely that the Marriott hotels in Iraq and Afghanistan will be protected to the same degree as the U.S. embassies in Baghdad and Kabul.

Vowing that a new Marriott hotel will rise from the ashes, the owner of Islamabad Marriott, Sadruddin Hashwani is determined to start operating again on January 1st 2009 (Hashwani Vows a New Marriott will Rise from Ashes, September 25, 2008). Hashwani personally visited and supervised the rebuilding and the refurbishing of the hotel. Within a week, the lobby was cleared and the workers started to repaint the premises. Hashwani's daughter, Sara Hashwani, launched the Hashoo Foundation Sahara Fund to provide financial support to the families of the victims. Sara called them "martyrs" (Sara Hashwani, personal communication, October 2, 2008). More than ever



The hotel lobby post-attack

before, there is a greater understanding internationally and a will to fight terrorism and extremism within the community. Although they all realize the limitations to securing hotels in high-risk countries, there is a tremendous will not to give up.

Paradigm shift in response strategy?

When responding to natural and man-made disasters, hotel strategies are different. While natural disasters are inevitable, vulnerable targets can be protected from terrorist attacks. Ideally a hotel's resources are allocated to managing the consequences of a natural disaster and protecting it from a terrorist attack.

Despite significant investment, the terrorists were successful in causing significant loss of life and property at the Islamabad Marriott. Does the Islamabad Marriott case study change the paradigm? The lesson of Marriott Islamabad is that hotels and other open facilities should operate on the principle that a terrorist attack is inevitable. In future, hotels in conflict zones have to equally invest to protect as well as to manage consequences.

With international hotels becoming second embassies, hotels alone cannot protect their facilities. No longer can a hotel be protected only by securing its perimeter. To manage their security, hotels must build liaison with law enforcement authorities to protect, intelligence agencies to prevent, and emergency services to manage the crisis after an event. With 90-95% of the infrastructure owned or operated by the private sector, law enforcement authorities should create a specialist cadre of

policemen to work with the private sector. Governments with access to intelligence and specialist resources should guide and assist the private sector, including the security industry, to develop the specialist understanding and knowledge to prevent, protect and respond.

Lessons learnt

Today, the hospitality industry is facing a dilemma in high-risk countries. The question is how they can protect a hotel any more than they already are – how can they add another layer without creating the impression of a fortress?

In addition to a security plan to protect the hotel, there should be a robust response action plan. The focus must be not only to deter and prevent an attack but also to respond when an attack is successful. During the crucial seven minutes, the security personnel were perplexed as to the exact course of action to take against the truck. In any attack, unless personnel are trained to respond to specific scenarios, they take considerable time to make sense of the event. Was it an ordinary vehicle fire or a terrorist incident? Does a vehicle fire generate the bright flames the truck generated? There should be training specific to meet the challenges of safety and security incidents. Such model training and rehearsals will enable security personnel to anticipate the most likely modus operandi and respond effectively.

Both the security and non-security personnel at the Islamabad Marriott had conducted exercises on emergency evaluation. In a crisis, most security and non-security staff are likely to respond the way they have been trained. At least at the back of the hotel, guests were evacuated by staff in an orderly fashion thus reducing secondary injuries that would have risen due to panic.

To integrate and synthesize capabilities, government-private sector partnership is crucial. To better understand and respond to the threat environment, future hotels should build robust and lasting partnerships with government. It is not only the private sector that must reach out to government, but government intelligence and law enforcement should create specialist liaison units. If there were a terrorist attack, it would erode investor confidence and tourism causing the entire country to suffer. For example, after the attack against the Islamabad Marriott, British Airways suspended all flights to Pakistan. Government leaders must thus understand the high cost of non-cooperation. The basic building block of an effective partnership with government is for hotels themselves to work together. For instance, every country under threat should form a hotel security association to share best practices. Unfortunately, there is severe competition between the hotels. Most hotels do not realize that if one single international hotel were attacked, it would impact the entire hospitality industry (Reservations at luxury hotels drop by 50%, September 22, 2008).

An enduring threat

With the Afghan-Pakistan border re-emerging as the global epicentre of terrorism, terrorists worldwide are likely to learn from the successes and failures of this attack. As terrorists are constantly maximizing their successes and minimizing their failures, it is paramount for governments never to underestimate the terrorist threat. For instance, on the day of the attack, Rehman Malik, the Interior Ministry chief, boasted to reporters outside parliament that terrorism had diminished “by 90%” after the new government came to power (Waraich, 2008).

Until government forces establish territorial control of Pakistan’s frontier, the threat from Pakistani Taliban, Al Qaeda and their associated groups will persist. As the Taliban controls parts of tribal Pakistan, the Taliban collects taxes from businesses. (Bacha, 2008). Furthermore, the Taliban has access to contractors using heavy vehicles to transport construction material from tribal Pakistan to mainland Pakistan (Shah & Perlez, 2008). Furthermore, the Taliban has access to explosives used to blast quarries (Shah & Perlez, 2008). Merely by cordoning the Federal Capital and other urban centres, Pakistan cannot be protected from the threat emanating from tribal Pakistan. Unless dismantled, the Taliban capabilities to mount attacks of this scale on mainland Pakistan will grow.

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Annex A

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ATTACK AS RECORDED ON CCTV

- 7.53.00: A dark four-wheel vehicle passes through gate and turns left into the lower external car park.
- 7.53.03: A security guard at public road perimeter boundary of entrance to Gate 1 rolls single trolley barrier back into place following entry of the dark vehicle and remains in position.
- 7.53.07: Another guard joins the first guard at Gate 1 perimeter road entrance. Facing direction of oncoming traffic, they appear to be talking.
- 7.53.42: A dark car turns left into Gate 2 entrance checkpoint. Two guards standing at Gate 1 entrance in position observe arrival of car and oncoming traffic.
- 7.53.58: Another two guards stationed on Gate 2 complete stop and search of dark car. Two officers at Gate 1 entrance are still in place.
- 7.54.09: Barriers seen to be fully functional, i.e. hydraulic barrier lowers, arm gate barrier lifts to allow car to go through. As soon as car passes, hydraulic barrier begins to rise and arm gate is lowered. As hydraulic barrier is fully raised, dark car turns left into lower car park.
- 7.54.54: The suicide truck with the headlights on full beam approaches the road leading to the entrance of the hotel. Two security guards have been in position since 7.53.07 are facing oncoming traffic. Unless they are to the side of the vehicle, the headlights mask the truck's approach.
- 7.54.55: The security guards do not move as the truck turns sharply into the entrance of gate 2, then they appear to both step back in unison in anticipation.¹
- 7.54.56: The truck goes through trolley wheel barrier – truck body container appears oversized to truck cab. The two guards at Gate 1 edge back towards large tree.
- 7.54.57: Instead of running away, two security guards at Gate 2 brace themselves for what could be a traffic accident. The truck swings around in a small

1 Freeze framing at this time gives a good view of the side of the truck and an indication of size and wheel-base.

arc with the driver's side closest to the security booth, then straightens full on towards the hydraulic barrier and arm gate with headlights still on full beam.

- 7.54.58: Two guards at Gate 2 move quickly across to Gate 2 from what appears to be the security booth as the truck smashes into the hydraulic barrier.
- 7.55.00: Two additional guards run out from security booth area across to Gate 1 on the hotel side of the arm gate barrier. Another officer runs across from Gate 2 to Gate 1. Driver's side headlight turns off, possibly damaged with the crash impact. Seven officers are now seen in area of Gate 1.
- 7.55.05: One guard walks from direction of Gate 1 to Gate 2 out of CCTV coverage, behind the security booth towards the truck cab.
- 7.55.07: Second guard runs forward in same direction obscured from CCTV view.
- 7.55.08: A third guard runs forward from Gate 1 in same direction. A fourth person approaches from lower car park in bottom right hand of screen.
- 7.55.11: Bomber detonates the truck. From the point of impact and the first explosion of bright white light, the bomber took 13 seconds to make that decision.²
- 7.55.12: All persons in view of camera run out of sight in various directions. The person who walked up from the lower car park to approach the truck holds his hands over his ears and keeps them there directly after the explosion.
- 7.55.17: Everyone has now disappeared from view – the truck is left standing alone with white smoke billowing up from the cab. The truck remained still with a body inside for nearly 2 minutes (1955.17-1957.10). During the next one minute and 53 seconds, the security team formed a cordon in front of the hotel to keep people back from the truck.³ There was no traffic for 31 seconds (1954.59-1955.30).⁴
- 7.56.20: Flames start to appear from truck cab.
- 7.57.10: People start to emerge into CCTV view from direction of hotel. Dressed in white, the valet car driver was the first to appear. He was joined a few seconds later by a security guard.
- 7.57.25: After approaching cautiously, the guard appears to be looking down at the bottom of the truck by the cab. He is joined by another security guard carrying a fire extinguisher in his right hand. The fire extinguisher, a powder or CO2 type, is brought out from the hotel; it appears there are no

2 On first view of the cab explosion there appears to be debris or shrapnel flying across the top of the screen – however on analysis these are birds scattering from within the trees directly above and around the gates.

3 This event is not covered by CCTV.

4 No pedestrians or other activity is seen outside the gate or the opposite walkway during this period of time. Andy Williams considers this an anomaly compared to the rest of the video footage where there is consistent movement of traffic or pedestrians in either direction outside the gate entrance. There are 15 vehicles (9 x cars – 1 x 4x4 – 3 x m/cycles – 2 x mini vans – 1 x pedestrian in opposite carriageway) going past the truck at various intervals. Author's interview with Andy Williams, Regional Director Loss Prevention, Marriott Hotels International Ltd U.K. September 28, 2008.

- fire extinguishers at the security gate entrance. He does not approach the truck to try to extinguish the fire.
- 7.57.38: A group of security officers appear in view, approaching the Gate 1 barrier. They make sweeping move towards but at a cautious distance from the truck.
- 7.58.01: Black car slows down and appears to start to turn left into hotel but on seeing truck moves off and passes by hotel without trying to enter through Gate 1. Since the truck crashed into the gate, after a hiatus of three minutes, this is the first car that appears to try and enter the hotel.
- 7.58.13: The first guard on scene seems to be leading. Although the truck is still smouldering, the guard with the fire extinguisher moves away. Neither he nor anyone else has engaged the fire in the cab.
- 7.58.17: Two guards reappear with first guard, one carrying an extinguisher.
- 7.58.24: There appears to be a short consultation between the three guards. Two guards then go out of sight in direction of the rear of the truck.
- 7.58.36: Two additional guards appear, followed by more, including one engineer. All stay in area of Gate 1.
- 7.58.46: First activation of fire extinguisher by security guard. He goes to the rear driver's side of the truck. He moves forward so he can attack the fire from inside the truck. This is where the driver would be if the body is still on fire. There is one minute and 36 seconds elapsed from the time people approach the cab after the two minute standoff, to when a fire extinguisher is used (1957.10 – 1958.46).
- 7.59.00: The guards move away thinking that the extinguisher may be too small and they need a bigger one.
- 7.59.13: The fire becomes more intense. The fire is bright white light with blue haze.
- 8.00.01: Very intense white light fire from cab area rising vertically from front of truck, possibly molten white slick on roadway in front of truck.
- 8.00.22: Activity from security guards outside Gate 1 to the left of the tree.
- 8.00.29: One guard moves into view of Gate 1 entrance by roadway.
- 8.00.33: A guard standing at Gate 1 appears to give the guard an instruction at 2000.29. The guard appears to run in roadway in direction of Gate 2.
- 8.00.36: This guard can be seen running down the road out of view in the same direction as where the truck originally came from.
- 8.00.53: Another guard appears from back of truck area or roadway. He is the original guard who appears to give an instruction – he eventually moves back out of site past Gate 1, and is joined by another guard who runs out from the hotel and turns left past Gate 1 out of site.
- 8.00.59: Engineer runs forward with another extinguisher – cab area burning more intensely – flames look like they may be coming from behind cab.

- 8.01.04: Engineer attacks front of cab, flames fan upwards.
- 8.01.08: A small explosion at top right hand side of cab; fire becomes more intense.
- 8.01.11: Another flare-up or small explosion causing engineer to react to it and direct extinguisher to where flash comes from.
- 8.01.16: The arm gate at Gate 1 lifts possibly to allow easier access for emergency services to arrive and enter hotel compound.
- 8.01.19: Engineer continues to use extinguisher but fire now too intense; engineer cannot see but extinguisher is fanning flames upwards.
- 8.01.27: Everyone in front of truck starts to run away.
- 8.01.31: Another small CO₂/powder extinguisher is used to engage fire at front of truck but to no effect.
- 8.01.58: Truck cab area becomes a fireball; people start to move away and evacuate the area.
- 8.02.00: End of footage due to main blast explosion. All persons seen in footage appear to have been killed.