

# “I wish I'd had a gun, not a camera”: Looking Back at Mumbai 15 Years Later

By [Ranjit Singh](#) November 27, 2023 [Story source: Bearing Arms](#)



*Sebastian D'souza*

It has been 15 years since the city of Mumbai, India was attacked by 10 Islamic terrorists in an [unprecedented, complex, and utterly diabolical operation](#). Jihadis from the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (“Army of the Good”), armed with AK-47s and explosives, got on boats in Pakistan on November 26, 2008, sailed over the Arabian sea, and hijacked an Indian fishing vessel to get to the coast of Mumbai. They split into teams of two, attacking several locations across the city, lobbing grenades, blowing up taxis, and shooting innocent people.

They unleashed mayhem never seen before. They shot and killed scores at a train station. They attacked upscale hotels, killing locals and foreign tourists alike. They targeted a Jewish Chabad house, killing the Rabbi and his pregnant wife, leaving their son an orphan. The total death toll from the attack was 166 innocents with more than 300 people injured.

The attackers were free to rampage around the city because there was no armed resistance from the ordinary, decent people of Mumbai. There were armed police at some of the locations, but they didn't do anything. As we saw a decade later in Parkland and then again in Uvalde, law enforcement failed, leaving innocents to be slaughtered at the hands of evil.

The iconic photograph pictured above was taken by photographer Sebastian D'Souza of the *Mumbai Mirror*. [This is what he said to say \(archived links\)](#) about the police response:

**‘Armed police would not fire back – I wish I'd had a gun, not a camera’**

[...] Sebastian D'Souza, a picture editor at the Mumbai Mirror, whose offices are just opposite the city's Chhatrapati Shivaji station, heard the gunfire erupt and ran towards the terminus. "I ran into the first carriage of one of the trains on the platform to try and get a shot but couldn't get a good angle, so I moved to the second carriage and waited for the gunmen to walk by," he said. "They were shooting from waist height and fired at anything that moved. I briefly had time to take a couple of frames using a telephoto lens. **I think they saw me taking photographs but they didn't seem to care.**"

The gunmen were terrifyingly professional, making sure at least one of them was able to fire their rifle while the other reloaded. By the time he managed to capture the killer on camera, Mr. D'Souza had already seen two gunmen calmly stroll across the station concourse shooting both civilians and **policemen, many of whom, he said, were armed but did not fire back.** [...]

**But what angered Mr. D'Souza almost as much were the masses of armed police hiding in the area who simply refused to shoot back.** "There were armed policemen hiding all around the station but none of them did anything," he said. "At one point, I ran up to them and told them to use their weapons. I said, 'Shoot them, they're sitting ducks!' but they just didn't shoot back." [...]

The militants returned inside the station and headed towards a rear exit towards Chowpatty Beach. Mr. D'Souza added: "**I told some policemen the gunmen had moved towards the rear of the station but they refused to follow them. What is the point of having policemen with guns if they refuse to use them? I only wish I had a gun rather than a camera.**"

In another [article in NDTV \(archived links\)](#), D'Souza added:

"There were two police battalions present near the station, but did nothing," said Mr. D'Souza, 67, who retired in 2012 and settled in Goa.

"Had policemen posted near the railway station killed Kasab and the other terrorist inside the station, so many lives could have been saved," he said.

I felt powerless watching the mayhem unfold on TV from the comfort of my home in America. I wished I had been able to stop the terrorists. But I understood that even if I was physically present in Mumbai, I wouldn't have been able to do anything. I didn't know how to use guns.

The Mumbai terror attack is still an open wound for me. I don't think it will ever heal. But this open wound set me on a course that I have stayed on for the past 15 years. I took firearms classes. I became a gun owner. I became a Second Amendment activist. [I wrote a book](#). I became an instructor myself. And I continue to be a student, taking more classes whenever I can.

As time passes, each attack on innocents has only motivated me to work harder in supporting the right of armed self-defense. Tragedies like Mumbai must never be forgotten, but the biggest part of not forgetting is to make sure that something like that never happens again, and when evil makes a move, to stop it as quickly as possible with as few casualties as possible. There are [numerous successful acts of self-defense](#) that prove beyond a reasonable doubt that it's important for ordinary people to adopt gun ownership and exercise this constitutionally-protected right. Now it's up to us as Second Amendment supporters to make sure that these lessons are spread far and wide.