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# U.S. cultural center attacked in India

## Islamic militant group based in Pakistan claims responsibility

CALCUTTA, India (AP) — Indian officials said Tuesday an Islamic militant group based in Pakistan claimed responsibility for an attack at a U.S. cultural center in Calcutta that killed four Indian policemen and wounded 20 other people.

Both Pakistan and a representative of the group disputed India's claim, and American officials played down suggestions the attack was terrorism directed at the United States.

Since a deadly attack on Parliament in New Delhi on Dec. 13, both India and Pakistan have massed troops at their border. Pakistan offered Tuesday to ease its war footing if India first starts moving soldiers away from the border, but there was no immediate response from New Delhi. Indian officials also blamed the attack on Parliament on Pakistan-based militants.

The rivals have fought two wars over the divided province of Kashmir, which both claim in its entirety. India accuses Pakistan of supporting Islamic militants fighting for independence in the province. Islamabad denies it, and accuses mainly Hindu India of oppressing Muslims in Kashmir.

At about 6:30 a.m. Tuesday, four gunmen on motorcycles drove up to the U.S. government cultural center in Calcutta and opened fire, killing four police officers and wounding 18 officers, a pedestrian and a private

security guard, state Home Secretary Amit Kiran Deb said. No Americans were hurt. The assailants fled.

The American Center houses a library, the embassy's public affairs office, a press section and a wing for cultural programs. The center was closed Tuesday. Spent AK-47 bullets littered the street, which was guarded by hundreds of police.

India's home minister, Lal Krishna Advani, called the shooting a "terrorist attack" against U.S. and Indian interests. Indian officials said a man called police to say the Pakistan-based Islamic militant group Harkat-ul Jihad-e-Islami carried out the attack. The group's leader died in a shootout with Indian police in October.

In Kashmir, the head of Harkat denied his followers carried out the attack. "We are against terrorism of all sorts, wherever it occurs," Sheikh Muzaffar Hussain Kashmiri said.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Mohammed Aziz Khan, dismissed allegations of Pakistani involvement as "baseless."

The attack came as both FBI director Robert Mueller and President Bush's point man for counterterrorism, Ambassador at Large Francis X. Taylor, were in New Delhi. Taylor was concluding a two-day Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism, and



SOURCES: ESRI; Associated Press

Mueller met with senior Indian officials after the attack. Mueller sounded cautious note, saying it was too early to call it terrorism.

"I think I will describe it as a tragedy and an assault on police officers," Mueller said. "But categorizing it as terrorism, in the absence of the facts... would be inappropriate at this time."

# Palestinian gunman wounds 8 in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (AP) — A gunman opened fire with an assault rifle on Israelis waiting for a bus on a busy, rain-slick downtown street Tuesday afternoon, wounding eight people before he was shot dead by police, officials said.

Palestinian security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the gunman was Saeed Ramadan, a member of the Al Aqsa Brigades, which is linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

Ramadan's uncle, Adnan Ramadan, mayor of the West Bank village of Tel, confirmed his nephew was the gunman and said he was a member of the naval police.

Israeli authorities said they held Arafat and the Palestinian Authority ultimately responsible and a strong Israel response was likely.

"We are witnessing a continuous and endless campaign of terror against Israeli civilians, perpetrated by different

Palestinian terrorist organizations under the umbrella of the Palestinian Authority," said Israeli government spokesman Avi Pazner.

A source in the Al Aqsa Brigades said the attack was revenge for the killing — widely attributed to Israel — of the group's leader, Raed Karmi, in the West Bank town of Tulkarem.

The shooting came hours after Israeli commandos killed four members of the militant Islamic group Hamas in a raid on their hideout and explosives lab in Nablus in the West Bank. The Islamic militant group said in a leaflet it would respond with an "all-out war" against Israeli soldiers and settlers.

In Jerusalem, the gunman began firing on people at a bus stop near one of the busiest intersections in west Jerusalem. Pedestrians dived for cover. Some Israeli civilians who were armed drew their weapons, but did not fire.

Witness Akiva Harari, 21, was shot from a parking lot onto Jaffa Street, Jerusalem's main artery. "I saw two women and they fell," he said. Police then chased the gunman back to the parking lot.

Sporadic gunfire continued for minutes, according to an Associated Press reporter who was in the area when the shooting started. Large numbers of police quickly arrived on the scene.

Rescue officials said six of the wounded were seriously hurt and 20 other people were treated for injuries. Police initially said at least 20 people were injured in the shooting.

"The terrorist tried to run away, but a short chase, police succeeded in catching him and killed him," said Jerusalem police chief Mickey Levy. "There was no terrorist attacker, his rifle is in our hands and the area is being evacuated."

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