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We wanted to kill 5000, says surviving terrorist



Kasab: wanted many more to die.

Photo: Reuters

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AJMAL AMIR KASAB, one of the terrorist gang that devastated Mumbai, was under instruction to keep killing until he died.

But the opportunity to deliver the final act of his mission was taken from him - he was the only terrorist captured alive during the 62-hour siege of the city. Kasab, 21, has since revealed chilling detail of the co-ordinated attack to his police interrogators.

The terrorist gang, thought to number as few as 10 gunmen, had planned to kill 5000 people and destroy the iconic Taj Mahal Palace hotel and

the stock exchange. In the end, their murderous toll was closer to 200, and left the Taj Mahal and the Tident-Oberoi hotel badly charred and damaged.

Kasab had months of training before the attack where he was instructed in the use of military weapons and explosives. He and his fellow attackers, aged between 18 and 28, were also drilled in close quarter combat.

An Australian witness, Ray Lacey, who saw the attackers in the foyer of the Taj Mahal, said they were highly disciplined and did not waste bullets.

Kasab told investigators they were instructed to conserve their ammunition so they could sustain their attack for as long as possible. "I have done right. I have no regrets."

Kasab told interrogators that most of the volunteers for the suicide mission spoke Punjabi. They were given false identities and were discouraged from interacting with each other beyond what was barely necessary.

The meticulous planning for the terrorist mission took more than a year, investigators say. The preparations for the atrocity began in a remote mountain camp in Muzaffarabad, in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Associates of the terrorists are understood to have carried out a detailed reconnaissance four months ago. The mission included the covert acquisition of ships and speed boats and careful study of the tides to allow some of the attackers to enter the city from the Arabian Sea under the cover of darkness.

Kasab told police the attackers had spent time memorising the various targets.

According to the *Telegraph* newspaper in London, the terrorists were taught marine commando techniques such as beach landings at another camp at the Mangla Dam, located on the border between Pakistan-administered Kashmir and India's Punjab province.

Kasab was quoted as saying that once their training was complete his team of four travelled to the garrison town of Rawalpindi, where they were joined by another six terrorists, who had been trained at other camps close by.

It was in Rawalpindi that the 10-man team were briefed in detail with digitised images of their prospective targets - the Taj Mahal and Oberoi Hotels, the Jewish Centre and Victoria Terminus railway station. Each member of the team memorised street names and routes to each location. Kasab told his interrogators that most of the targeting information came from a reconnaissance team that had selected the targets earlier in the year.

From Rawalpindi the team moved to the eastern port of Karachi, where they chartered the merchant ship MV Alpha and headed for Mumbai.

It was during this crucial phase, as the cargo ship headed into the Arabian Sea, the terrorists appeared to almost lose their nerve. The Indian Navy was very active, Kasab was quoted as saying, boarding foreign vessels and searching their holds. The terrorists thought their plan might be compromised, so on November 15 or 16 the teams used their inflatable speed boats to hijack a fishing boat, the Kuber.

Indian media reported Kasab was one of four terrorists who entered Mumbai with fake identities, posing as overseas students.

They booked into the Taj Mahal hotel four days before the attack and allegedly stockpiled weapons and explosives.

There is great anger in India that a small group of terrorists could mount a siege that paralysed the city for nearly three days.

Yesterday the politician responsible for counter-terrorism, the Home Minister, Shivraj Patel, resigned. He has been under pressure for months following a spate of attacks in big Indian cities since May. He resigned amid allegations that authorities received recent warnings that Mumbai was vulnerable to attack from the sea.

Police believe attacks at the Leopold cafe, popular with tourists, and at CST station may have been diversions to provide cover as other members of the gang stormed their two main targets: Mumbai's two luxury Hotels, the Taj Mahal and Trident-Oberoi.

Kasab was pictured, with assault rifle in hand, entering the CST railway terminal where he and another terrorist fired indiscriminately into the packed terminal.

Kasab and his accomplice, Abu Dera Ismail Khan, also shot dead three of Mumbai's top policeman including Anti-terrorism chief, Hemant Karkare.

Kasab was captured at the Girgaum Chowpatty Naka in Mumbai while he was trying to escape in a car he had taken from its owner. Kasab, understood to speak fluent English, told police he was trained to "kill to the last breath".

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