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Mumbai attack: FBI helped decrypt GPS data

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Ranjani Rajendra, TNN, 8 March 2009, 04:04AM IST

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MUMBAI: It may come as a surprise that forensic labs in India did not have the technical wherewithal to analyze the most crucial piece of evidence linking Pakistan to the 26/11 attack — the GPS (global positioning system) handsets used by terrorists during the siege. The police was forced to send the sets to FBI to further its investigations and ultimately nail the Pakistani hand.

The terrorists were carrying five GPS phones with them and these contained a detailed account of the route they took to sail from Karachi to Mumbai. Thus when FBI's forensic labs gleaned the information from the handsets, it became clear how the attack on Mumbai was mounted from the sea by Lashkar-e-Taiba operatives.

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A senior official from Mumbai's Forensic Sciences Laboratory at Kalina confirmed that the lab returned the GPS handsets used by the terrorists since they lacked the facilities to test them. The state-run lab has now ordered for software to study such GPS systems.

"The software helps investigate way points and identify the locations a person has visited apart from retrieving deleted data. However, the most important function of the software is to help form a correlation between different systems and GPS devices," said director of forensic guru.com, Sameer Dutt.

"The software also helps in decrypting data and tracing its origin. Even if three people using separate GPS devices go to different locations, they leave a trail leading to the single origin from where they all started," said former IPS officer Sanjay Pandey who runs an e-security firm.

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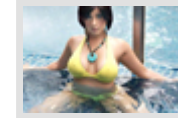
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