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Karkare, Kamte, Salaskar in pool of blood at Bhawan: wireless operator

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A wireless operator, who was deputed with slain Anti Terrorism Squad chief Hemant Karkare, on Wednesday told the special court hearing the 26/11 case that he saw Karkare, ACP Ashok Kamte and encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar in a pool of blood near Rang Bhavan. The operator, Nitin Mathane, who was present with Karkare before he was shot, narrated to the court the incident as he witnessed it.

Mathane said he saw the three lying in a pool of blood after the terrorists had gone on rampant firing. There were glass pieces and empty cartridges around, he said.

Mathane said he had left with Karkare and his five-member escort team from his Dadar residence around 10 pm.

On reaching the decided spot near the Haj House at CST, Karkare met senior officers Vasant Koregaonkar, Sanjay Mohite, and KP Raghuvanshi who informed him that the terrorists had opened fire at CST and they had now left from the foot over bridge.

Mathane recalled that Karkare immediately put on his bulletproof jacket and helmet and walked towards the rear gate of Cama Hospital. The team was joined by Kamte's and Salaskar even as the firing continued.

According to Mathane, when they reached the CST, an emergency

message was sent across about the injured wireless operator with Additional Commissioner of Police Sadanand Date, who lay at the Cama Hospital rear gate. "Sir (Karkare) helped him by breaking the lock (of the rear gate) and ensured that he got medical help," said Mathane.

Mathane added that the firing had stopped for a while till about 10:45 pm, when the team heard firing again near St Xavier's College. It was at this point that Karkare, Kamte, Salaskar and two others left in a Qualis , with Salaskar driving, he said.

At 10:55 pm, Mathane and others heard a long exchange of fire. "We thought it was police firing," Mathane said.

Around 25 minutes after the firing stopped, Mathane proceeded towardsthe special branch 1 gate in a police van. He told the court that it was then that he saw the three officers in a pool of blood near Rang Bhavan.

He said he had the officers sent to different hospitals. He told the court that he personally took Kamte to Bombay Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. Mathane later went to JJ Hospital and found out that Karkare too was dead. Mathane was then sent to Karkare's residence to inform his family of his death

"I informed Sir's wife (Kavita Karkare) and then registered a compliant with the Azad Maidan police station," said Mathane.

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