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## Karkare jacket dumped in garbage a copout?

Vijay V Singh, TNN Dec 24, 2009, 05:49am IST

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MUMBAI: The city police, which is feeling the heat over slain ATS chief Hemant Karkare's missing bullet-proof jacket, is exploring an escape route by holding the J J Hospital staff responsible for its disappearance.

Dinesh Gatar, a sweeper at the J J Hospital, had told the cops months ago that the jacket was cleared as part of non-medical waste and dumped at the Deonar dumping ground. The cops tried to search for it in the dumping ground for several days but in vain. They had no option but to believe Gatar.

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There was no further progress, but home minister R R Patil's statement in the assembly about tough action against police personnel responsible for its disappearance, took the cops once again to Gatar. The sweeper's statement was recorded in the presence of the magistrate where he reiterated his earlier stand. This statement could help the cops to finally put an end to the controversy and close the case.

Senior police officers insisted that there was no conspiracy behind the disappearance of the jacket and that it was misplaced by a hospital staff. "This is a tricky situation. If someone contradicts Gatar's statement by producing a bullet-proof jacket, we are not in a position to even verify whether it was the same that was worn by Karkare," a source said.

Karkare was killed along with another senior IPS officer Ashok Kamte, senior police inspector Vijay Salaskar and other policemen in a lane near Cama Hospital on the night of 26/11. They all were travelling in a police jeep when the lone arrested terrorist Ajmal Kasab and his accomplice Ismail Khan opened fire on them. Karkare was the only person in his team who had worn the jacket and after the incident, he was rushed to the J J Hospital.

According to the police procedure, they did a panchnama and noted down the belongings found with Karkare. In this case, though, there is no mention of the jacket in the panchnama.

The jacket was removed from Karkare's body when policemen brought him to the hospital's casualty ward where Gatar claimed to have dumped it amongst the waste. The officials said it's not proper to hold the police responsible as the situation at the hospital was chaotic.

After Gatar's first statement was recorded, the police had submitted a report to the home department. Subsequently, a social worker approached the court which directed the J J Marg police to register an FIR about the missing jacket for the investigation.

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