



The Encounter Endgame

Sagnik Chowdhury Posted online: Tue Sep 02 2008, 00:25 hrs

Vijay Salaskar

Rank: Police Inspector

Profile: The son of a professor and a 1983 batch police officer like Pradeep Sharma, Salaskar is credited with having broken the backbone of the Arun Gawli and Amar Naik gangs. He shot to fame in 1997 when he killed Naik in an encounter. Some of his other well-known victims are Gawli aides Sada Pawle and Vijay Tandel, Sadhu Shetty, Jaggu Shetty, Kundan Singh Rawat and Zahoor Makhanda. Salaskar was posted as head of the Anti-Robbery Squad of the Crime Branch, and was shifted to the Anti-Terrorist Squad in the wake of the 7/11 serial blasts. Over the years, a marked rift appeared between batchmates Salaskar and Sharma. Salaskar has gunned down over 75 criminals to date.

status: He is the only famed encounter specialist who has not fallen from grace, with no criminal cases or probe against him. Currently, he is posted as head of the Anti-Extortion Cell of the Mumbai Police.

Daya Nayak

Rank: Police Sub-Inspector

Profile: Hailing from Yennehole village in the Udipi district of Karnataka, Nayak moved to Mumbai to earn a living in 1979. He worked for some time at an Udipi restaurant, and was encouraged to complete his education by its owner. Nayak joined the police force in 1995 at Juhu police station. While he was posted at the Crime Intelligence Unit, he soon shot to fame as a crackshot. Nayak, known for his intelligence network, was popular in Bollywood circles. The film Ab Tak Chhappan is based on his life. Actor Amitabh Bachchan was present during the inauguration of a school set up by Nayak at his native village. Nayak has killed 84 criminals.

status: In 2003, former journalist Ketan Tirodkar submitted a private complaint at the special MCOCA court alleging that he, along with Nayak, had acted at the behest of the mafia. However, while the police later filed a chargesheet against Tirodkar under MCOCA, Nayak was cleared for lack of evidence.

In January 2006, the Anti-Corruption Bureau raided Nayak's residence and booked him for having assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. After a non-bailable warrant was issued against him, Nayak surrendered and was taken into custody. He was immediately suspended from his post at Charkop police station. Nayak is still under suspension, but the ACB is yet to file a chargesheet against him.

Praful Bhonsle

Rank: Police Inspector

Profile: A 1983 officer, Bhonsle is credited with having slain Chhota Shakeel aides Arif Kalia and Anwar Badshah as well as Chhota Rajan sharpshooter Arun Mahajan. In 1987, he killed three alleged Khalistani militants in an operation at Vikhroli, for which he was awarded the police gallantry medal. In 2000, he was awarded the best investigating officer award. He has 75 encounter victims to his name.

status: Bhonsle is currently under a cloud of suspicion in the Khwaja Yunus custodial death case after he was

named by the state CID in its probe. He was posted as head of the Ghatkopar unit of the Crime Branch, in whose custody Yunus died. He is currently under suspension.

Ravindra Angre

Rank: Police Inspector

Profile: Also a 1983 batch officer, Angre's most famous scalp is gangster Suresh Manckekar, who had over 30 cases of murder and extortion against him. Angre killed Manckekar in an encounter in Thane in 2003. Angre was posted at the Thane Anti-Extortion Cell at the time. While in the Mumbai Police Crime Branch, he eliminated some members of the Ashwin Naik gang, and was involved in a major seizure of assault rifles and grenades. He has slain over 60 criminals.

status: Angre was arrested in February this year, in a case of extortion and assault filed against him by Ganesh Wagh, a Thane-based builder. In his complaint, Wagh alleged Angre, along with three others, barged into his office and assaulted him. Angre allegedly wanted Wagh to make his wife a partner in his business, and also allegedly forced Wagh to sign a blank paper, besides taking away a Scorpio and Santro belonging to the builder. Angre, who was posted at Pune at the time, is presently in jail and under suspension.

Aslam Momin

Rank: Police Inspector

Profile: Yet another encounter specialist from the 1983 batch of policemen, Momin was posted at the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Crime Branch along with the likes of Sharma and Daya Nayak, though he maintained a low profile. While posted in charge of Unit 3 of the Crime Branch, Momin was handling sensitive cases like the probe into bookie Shobhan Mehta's connections with cricket players.

status: On July 22, 2005, then Mumbai Police Commissioner A N Roy dismissed Momin, using Article 311 of the Constitution, after evidence of telephonic conversations between Momin and Iqbal Kaskar were unearthed by the Crime Branch. Momin approached the Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal, which held that his dismissal was issued by the wrong authority. He is currently moving the authorities for his reinstatement.

Sachin Vaze

Rank: Assistant Police Inspector

Profile: Vaze was posted at the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Crime Branch in Andheri, and was Pradeep Sharma's right hand man. He took part in several encounters.

status: On March 3, 2004, Vaze was arrested by the state CID for murder and fabricating evidence in the Khwaja Yunus custodial death case. It was Vaze who had floated the theory that Yunus had fled after the jeep in which he was being taken to Aurangabad met with an accident on the Ahmednagar Highway.

Vaze was released on bail, following which he resigned from service.