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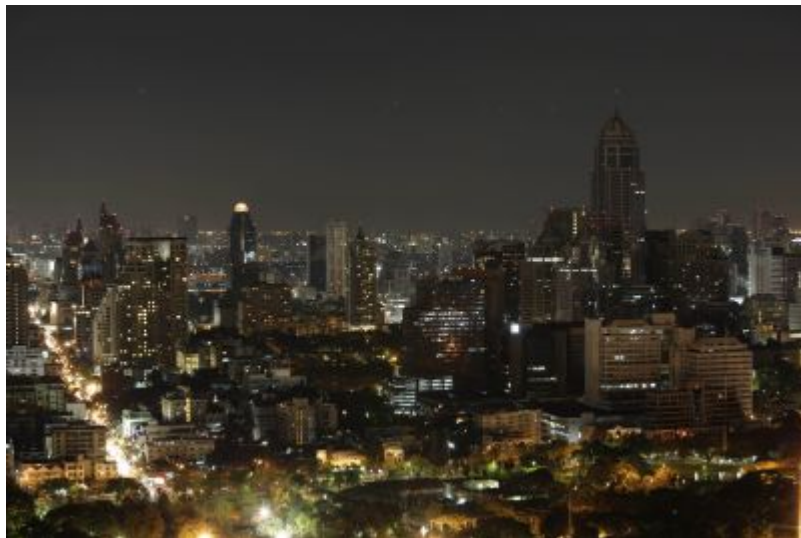
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## NIA inches closer to busting Thailand angle in 26/11 case

June 26, 2013 14:27 IST



**Indian agencies feel that it will be easier now to bust the arms and drugs corridor that passes through Thailand, as this is the money that is used to fund terror against India, reports Vicky Nanjappa.**

The signing of the extradition treaty with Thailand recently has been seen as a key development in fighting both terrorism and the drug menace that India faces. While all the focus is on Munna Zingada, the Dawood Ibrahim aide serving the last few days of his sentence in Thailand, the National Investigation Agency has now been sniffing for more information on an operative named Athar Butt for his alleged role in the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai.

Athar Butt, who is currently in a jail in Spain, has a deep rooted network in Thailand. Butt is not part of any terror group, but all groups based out of Pakistan have outsourced the task of creating fake documents to his team which comprises nine persons. While India is yet to get a formal approval from Spain to interrogate Butt, the NIA would pursue the case against his accomplices, some of whom are still holed up in Thailand.

According to the NIA investigation into the 26/11 attacks case, there is a great deal of information that could come out from

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Thailand. The Lashkar-e-Tayiba has utilised the services of various operatives from Thailand, Spain and also Italy for the dastardly attacks on Mumbai in which 166 people lost their lives.

However, speaking specifically about Butt and his team, they had helped forge documents for all operatives involved in the attack. Passports, identification cards, travel documents among others were outsourced to the agency run by Butt, NIA stated.

Sources in the NIA pointed out that the extradition of Zingada will also be crucial to the case. The Dawood Ibrahim gang, which has a sizeable clout in the Thailand drug market, was also in touch with Butt and his team.

Thailand had become a major route for the D gang to smuggle arms, ammunitions and drugs, and for this they had used fake documents created by the same agency that the Lashkar used.

Through the investigation, the NIA would look to find out if it was the same agency which helped detained Pakistani American LeT operative David Headley with the documents although the United States had claimed that it was Tahawwur Rana who did this job.

With the case against Rana appearing to be weak following his acquittal in the 26/11 case by the US court, the NIA, which plans on questioning him soon, will expect that their case would become stronger if they are able to crack the Butt angle.

They would want to find out if Rana had any link with the Thailand team which helped Headley with the documents.

The information that the NIA has on Butt is that he had created over 40 fake documents for the Lashkar for the 26/11 attacks. He was also involved in creating documents for the Al Qaeda and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam sometime back.

His team would steal documents and use the same to forge documents for drug dealers and terrorists, the sources in the NIA said.

In addition to this the team also stole SIM cards and provided them to terrorists. But, according to the NIA, although the group has been in the business for the past two decades, they were never considered to be part of any one terror network.

Indian agencies say that the recent treaty that was signed with Thailand will help them crack several cases. The major thing would be to bust the drug corridor and arms corridor that passes through Thailand since the money raised through this is used to fund terror against India.

**Image: Bangkok by the night**

**Photograph: Sukree Sukplang/Reuters**

[Vicky Nanjappa](#)

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