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26/11: FBI officer highlights sloppy response

Vishwa Mohan, TNN Jul 12, 2010, 03:56am IST

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NEW DELHI: The security establishment's glaring shortcomings were all too obvious in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks but the FBI officer who coordinated the US probe from Washington has now given a damning indictment of the sloppy response.

Anthony Tindall, who was in the thick of the action at the time, described how ill-equipped and ill-trained policemen virtually allowed the 10 terrorists to wreak havoc in the metropolis and how it was the US agency which helped them not only in tracing Lashkar's footprints but also getting planners and conspirators arrested in [Pakistan](#).

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Sharing lessons from the 26/11 attacks with South Florida law enforcement officers in the US on Wednesday, Tindall said the Mumbai attacks illustrated how terrorists "with little funding and basic weapons" could wreak havoc in a large metropolitan area.

As reported by [Miami Herald](#) and [Sun Sentinel](#) newspapers in the US, Tindall said many Indian officers (Mumbai cops) who responded were unarmed or lacked the anti-terrorism training that officers in the US have.

Though he did not name any Indian agency, he said logistical constraints had led to a delayed response -- the episode which saw NSG commandos take over 10 hours to reach Mumbai from Delhi. He said, "Other Indian authorities with greater terrorism experience were delayed in responding because they lacked a helicopter among other emergency vehicles."

It is not a secret that the NSG commandos had to first travel to [Delhi](#) airport from Manesar in Haryana by road on November 26, 2008 and then had to take bus to reach the attack sites from Mumbai airport the next morning in absence of helicopters.

During his presentation before South Florida law enforcement officers, the US agent also showed video surveillance footage of the Mumbai attacks. As reported in US media, one surveillance video showed that a couple of armed policemen at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (railway station) had, in fact, ran away instead of confronting two armed terrorists -- an example of how poor training led to a meek response during the crisis.

Referring to Mumbai policemen, the FBI agent, as quoted by [Sun Sentinel](#), said, "Half of those guys were unarmed. That's half the battle right there." The presentation on 26/11 attacks was done to make US policemen aware of such situations so that they could be prepared if a similar crisis confronted them.

Emphasising the role played by FBI, Tindall, who is currently based in [Hawaii](#) as the FBI's liaison to the US Pacific Command, said the US agency had immediately deployed eight agents from [Los Angeles](#) as well as technicians who were "able to glean significant information from

GPS, cellphones, satellite phones, Internet data, financial records, witnesses and boats". He said, "A lot of the information led back to Pakistan."

The FBI special agent, however, also stated that the arrest of [Ajmal Kasab](#) -- the lone surviving terrorist -- by Mumbai cops was a major turning point, terming him "an incredible source of information".

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