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what conspiracy, ask cops

Mateen Hafeez, TNN Dec 18, 2008, 03:38am IST

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MUMBAI: There's fear of politicians. But there's also loathing for them. These two emotions stood out most clearly in the response that senior police officials had to union minority affairs minister A R Antulay's statement in New Delhi on Wednesday. The former Maharashtra chief minister said he could not comprehend why Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Hemant Karkare had gone to Cama Hospital instead of the Taj or the Oberoi, hinting that there was more to Karkare's death at the hands of Pakistani terrorists than what met the eye.

No senior official would come on record to speak out against Antulay's innuendo, indicating how the police brass was scared to respond to a politician's rant. But officer after officer, off the record, said it was sad to see that politicians could stoop so low as to use even a national tragedy for their own political advantage.

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Many officials said they were "too small" to comment on what Antulay had to say. "But it is unimaginable that even this tragedy can be used for personal gain," one of them added. This officer was part of the anti-terror operation on 26/11, a night when politicians were conspicuous by their absence on the streets.

Another police officer, who was stuck at the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower for around 60 hours, termed Antulay's statement as a "sad thing". "Cops lost their lives fighting terrorists and politicians should not use it for their advantage," he added.

Though city police commissioner Hasan Gafoor refused to comment, another officer said politicians should be speaking about measures to tackle terrorism insisted of making controversial statements in Parliament.

But former IPS officer Y P Singh, who opted out of the service, did not mince words. "There are overwhelming circumstances to show that the attack on cops, including Karkare, was unforeseen and they were victims of a chance attack. Even if you overstretch the various conspiracy theories floating around in Pakistan, you cannot link Karkare's death to the Malegaon probe. Any attempt to even probe such allegations of conspiracy shall derail the main thrust of the investigation and will block the attempt to apprehend the major conspirators being protected by Pakistan. It will only help Pakistan make their lies sound as truths," he said.

Former intelligence chief V N Deshmukh said he had visited the spot where the shootout (which claimed Karkare's and cops' lives) happened. "I spoke to several witnesses and officers. I am convinced it was not a conspiracy," he said.

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