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Trawler terrorists used may have been hijacked in Pak

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A six-member team of Mumbai police's Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) is in Porbunder to piece together how the terrorists hijacked the fishing trawler Kuber and how they travelled to Mumbai on it. On Sunday, the team spoke to Coast Guard, Customs and their counterparts in Gujarat. Later, they began to interrogate the trawler's owner and a local fisherman, Vinod Masani.

Cops believe the terrorists used a black and yellow rubber dinghy found near the site of the attacks

"ATS had information that Kuber was possibly hijacked in Pakistani waters as the boat may have been making short forays for better catch. Kuber was seized by the Pakistan Marine Agency for allegedly crossing the International Boundary Line in 2004. However, in 2006, Pakistan released 86 fishermen and 12 boats, including Kuber," sources said.

Now ATS wants to know if Kuber's owner played any role in helping the terrorists. It is also suspected that the Pakistan Marine Agency helped the terrorists hijack the trawler.

It is now believed that the terrorists boarded a Pakistani vessel Al-Hussaini, likely to be owned by Dawood, to reach Indian territorial waters near the Gujarat coast.

To avoid being caught by Indian marine security agencies, the terrorists then hijacked Kuber probably near Jakhau in Kutch and instructed Captain Amarsingh Solanki to cruise towards Mumbai, an official said.

The trawler had gone to net fish at Jakhau, near the India-Pakistan border on November 14. Usually these boats return in 10 days after fishing, but Kuber did not.

The Fisheries Department was alerted about this on November 24. Kuber, with a 118-HP marine engine, had five crew members on board. It has a maximum speed of seven to eight nautical miles per hour.

Kuber was last spotted off Jakhau in Kutch on November 22. The distance between Jakhau and Mumbai is 300 nautical miles and the trawler could not have had that much of fuel so it must have bought diesel from a vendor on the high seas.

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A senior Gujarat police official said, "ATS is trying to piece together how the terrorists managed to reach Mumbai so fast in such a slow trawler."

Kuber was found by the Indian Coast Guard on Thursday about five nautical miles from Mumbai coast, with the body of a captain on it. Four crew from Navsari and Junagadh districts are still missing. The Coast Guard is also looking for another missing boat, which may have been used by the terrorists.

An ATS spokesperson, however, refused to accept or deny if the team was in Gujarat.

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