



National / Cover Stories

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CCTV images of the two terrorists at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai

INVESTIGATION

## The Armies Of The Night

Intelligence goof-up apart, a wealth of evidence points crucially to a Pak hand

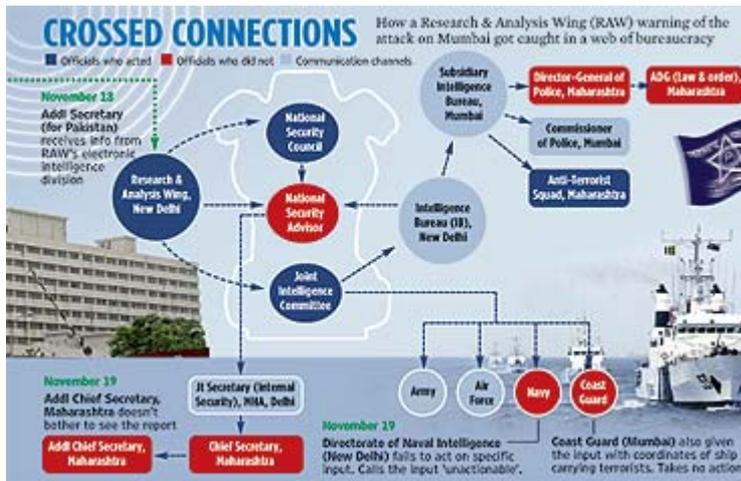
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**T**here's a crucial difference between investigations into all previous terrorist strikes in India and the one on the attacks on Mumbai. This time, a wealth of information has become quickly available to the security set-up and the police investigators. And key to this is a young man, now identified as Ajmal Amir Kasab, the one terrorist caught alive by the Mumbai police on the night of the attack.

What emerges from his interrogation, collated with other strands of investigation and mobile intercepts, has thrown considerable light into who targeted Mumbai. And all fingers point to the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e Toiba (LeT).

Kasab's revelations to a joint team that includes officers of the Mumbai police's crime branch, the IB and RAW have helped investigators piece together several key elements of the plot. Investigators now know that Kasab was part of a 24-member team of terrorists who underwent two years of commando training. While most of it was of a general nature, involving basic training in firearms, explosives and physical toughening, it became focused and more mission-oriented six months ago. According to Kasab, they had been through not just *daura aam* (general training) but also *daura khaas* (special training). While Kasab has been unable to identify some of his trainers, he has confirmed that much of it was designed and conducted by Zakir-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, a 51-year-old man whose pictures and travel documents have been made available to investigators by US intelligence.

The hijacked boat yielded a wealth of Pakistani clues; 'Touch Me' shaving cream, 'Medicam' dental gel....



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Fondly known as "Chacha", Lakhvi has been a key figure in all LeT operations. He is instrumental in identifying young men, indoctrinating them in jihad and then training them for specific missions.

**Some RDX-laden bombs were left deliberately behind in cars to mislead the police, create chaos.**

The attack on Mumbai has been the most daring among the missions Lakhvi has trained his wards for. But the man credited with planning the entire Mumbai strike has been identified by Indian intelligence as Yusuf Muzamil (known as 'Yusuf' or as 'Abu Gure'), a Muzaffarabad-based LeT operative, believed to be its chief of operations. Ironically, quite a bit of the plans drawn up across the border was known to Indian intelligence. However, it was not acted upon. A sampler:

A September 24 intercept with RAW's signal intelligence indicated that an operation was being planned by the LeT. A few days earlier, the CIA station chief in Delhi had warned his RAW counterpart that a terrorist group was planning a strike in Mumbai that would come from the sea. RAW's international listening posts also picked up intercepts that the Taj Hotel would be one of the targets. Prabhakar Alok, joint director, IB, had also alerted the Maharashtra government in a report dated November 19 (DIB uo No. 21/JTF7-Nodal/ 2008(23)-4405). Muzamil was heard talking to a LeT/HuJI operative identified as 'Yahya' in Bangladesh asking him to arrange for "foreign sim cards" for an operation.

- The SIM cards recovered from the nine terrorists killed in the operation confirms this intelligence input. The cards were procured from various countries, including Austria (Vienna) and the US (New Jersey). Three were procured from Calcutta. The last three SIM cards were purchased in the name of Hossain-ur-Rehman and a fake voter identity card was supplied as proof of a house in Bahirhaat, Calcutta. The cards were brought from South Park Street in Calcutta, 24 Parganas (South) and Maheshtola and then handed over to HuJI operatives in Bangladesh across the international border in Murshidabad. Sources told *Outlook* that a man identified as 'Feroz' carried these cards to Muzamil in Muzaffarabad.

**A key man during the pep talks sessions was Abu Hamza, the terrorist credited with the IISc bombing.**

- Kasab has identified Muzamil's voice from the intercepts the interrogation team played for him. It appears that Muzamil was in touch with the terrorists at the Taj, Oberoi Trident and Nariman House using a voice over internet protocol (VOIP) telephone. This has since been traced to a computer in Lahore by the FBI.

- The hijacked Gujarat-registered boat, *MV Kuber*, used by the terrorists, and later seized by the Coast Guard contained a wealth of clues that establishes the Pakistan link. A bag of wheat flour from Karachi, Medicam dental gel made in Pakistan, tubes of 'Touch Me' shaving cream, T-shirts with 'Made in Pakistan' labels, and toilet paper from 'Zik Brothers' in Karachi. Even an empty diesel can bearing a Pakistan manufacturing stamp. The Garmin GPS recovered from the boat had a route planned from Karachi to Diu and then Mumbai and also a return route map fed in for November 28 night with exact points used for navigation. Investigators concluded that the terrorists had every intention to return after the operation, a fact confirmed by Kasab.

- The 14 blankets and eight winter jackets recovered from the *MV Kuber* had caused some confusion about the number of terrorists. Kasab has told investigators that the four additional blankets were for the Gujarati fishermen they later beheaded. He even told the interrogation team that he fought with the other terrorists over these 'spare' blankets since it was very cold. They spent nearly 72 hours out at sea on the *Kuber* after being dropped from the Pakistani vessel *Al Hussaini* before moving towards Mumbai. The location of the *Al Hussaini* was 24°16' North, 67°62' East.



The FBI team leaving the Maharashtra DGP's office after a meeting on Dec 1

- The 'Thuraya' satellite phone found on the *Kuber* shows several calls to Jalalabad in Afghanistan and to Lahore and Karachi in Pakistan. Interestingly, the phone is from a Dubai-based company and the FBI, part of the investigation, is getting details of its batch number. Investigators say the phone was purchased from a Karachi-based dealer. Apparently, the terrorists were in constant touch with Lakhvi for instructions. The satellite phone was abandoned as soon as they hit Mumbai and cellphones were switched on to stay in touch with handlers in Pakistan. The cellphone data is being analysed to see who the terrorists were speaking to. The numbers called will form a crucial part of the evidence.
- The terrorists worked in five teams of two men each. They hailed taxis after disembarking near Badhwar Park in Cuffe Parade and the Gateway of India. Each team had a separate GPS with detailed maps of the targets.
- Kasab told investigators they were asked to shoot at random, CST being a prime target to effect maximum casualties. Some RDX-laden bombs were deliberately left behind in cars to mislead the police and create chaos and confusion while they could assault the main targets. Kasab reveals there were plans to blow up the Taj. Incidentally, a bomb was located near CST on December 3, exactly a week after the November 26 strike.
- Kasab has revealed that before they embarked on the mission from Pakistan the group received pep talks from other terrorists who had operated in India earlier. A key man during these sessions was known as Abu Hamza, the terrorist credited with the attack on the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, two years ago. "The fact that Hamza had managed to escape from India was a great morale-booster for these boys. Kasab also told us that Hamza encouraged them saying the Indian police was inefficient and also coordinated sessions with detailed briefings on where the police stations were and how teams could evade them and successfully carry out the attack," an officer told *Outlook*.
- As part of the indoctrination, several films that depicted "atrocities on Muslims in India" were screened at the camp. Kasab says he belongs to a poor family from Faridkot village in Deepalpura taluka of Okara zilla, Punjab, Pakistan. He studied only up to the fourth standard and then worked as labourer, briefly took to petty crime before being inspired to join the LeT on a trip to Rawalpindi. He has revealed that the other terrorists on the team were from Dera Ismail Khan, Multan, Mindi Gumri and Burewala. Besides these sketchy details, he claims to know very little about the others. They were instructed to keep assuming different aliases every two months to develop several layers of identities to confuse anyone tracking their movements.

- Finally, Kasab has revealed details of several LeT training camps in PoK and other locations—Danna, Abdul-Bin-Masud, Mangla Dam and Um-Al-Qura in Muzaffarabad and Badli in Kotli. The LeT, he told interrogators, has opened two new camps for handpicked cadre to train them for suicide missions at Akas in Muzaffarabad and another camp in an area known as "Point". His team, he says, was trained in marine commando tactics for weeks in an isolated place off the coast of Karachi. The trainers, Kasab feels, were retired military commandos. A former US Pentagon official has also stated that former Pakistani military officials had trained the terrorists.

With the wealth of evidence available, investigators believe the Indian government now have a strong case. The Pakistan connection seems clearer than ever before. Interestingly, chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, who was in Islamabad on December 3, is believed to have told Pakistani officials that Washington has enough evidence to establish a Pakistani hand. New Delhi is equally certain of an ISI role although, as of now, there is no hard evidence to back this claim.

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with **Dola Mitra** in Calcutta

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