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**The Rediff Interview/Joint Commissioner of Police Rakesh Maria**

## 'The Pakistan connection is beyond doubt'

December 12, 2008

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**Mumbai Joint Commissioner of Police Rakesh Maria** [\[Images\]](#), the lead investigator in the attacks case, in his first interview on the acts of terror. Exclusive to *rediff.com*'s Sheela Bhatt!

**Part I: ['Our operation was not about 10 terrorists, it was about saving lives'](#)**

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**At what point did Kasab** [\[Images\]](#) **started talking to you?**

A lot of psychology comes into play when we tackle such a terrorist. An interrogation by the police is like a game of chess.

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He told us first about the boat [MV Kuber](#). He didn't know its name, but he described it as a brown colour boat. He gave us the description of the inside of the boat too.

We in turn told the Coast Guard and early in the morning they surveyed the sea by helicopters and traced the *Kuber*. Kasab only told us that the Indian *tandel (captain of the fishing vessel)* was killed and that his body is lying in the engine room of the boat.

Kasab told us that the GPS and Thuraya phones are lying in so and so part of the boat. He only gave us the detail of his family and village address.

The Lashkar-e-Tayiba provided the dinghies and phones to these ten people. We believe that the entire equipment and explosives was supplied to these terrorists in Karachi by the Lashkar.

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### **You are under international scrutiny in this case. Without getting emotional, does India have concrete proof of the Pakistan connection?**

There are many proofs. Like, all the 9mm pistols that have been recovered have markings of a Peshawar-based company manufacturing such weapons.

Hand grenades belonging to the same company and carrying marks of Arges (*the Austrian arms company*) were recovered.

The Austrian arms company marks were also found in the explosives recovered during the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts.

These guys were given a contact number and that number is a Pakistani number. The training of the group took place in Pakistan.

Kasab has given us the location details of training grounds in Muridke, Manshera and Muzaffarabad (*in Pakistan occupied Kashmir*). What else do you want? What other proof do you want to establish the Pakistan connection?

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You don't expect him to carry a CD of the meeting when the conspiracy was planned. All the terrorists are from the Punjab province of Pakistan. I think three are from Okra, three are from Multan, two are from Faisalabad, one from Dera Ismail Khan and one from Sialkot. All of them were poor.

### **How will India prove that such training was given, such training grounds exist?**

On the basis of Kasab's in-depth interrogation we have collected all possible evidence that we can from our side. The Pakistan connection is beyond doubt. On the *Kuber*, we got a medical kit made in Pakistan. The toothbrushes and toothpaste are Pakistan made.

The flour and sugar are from Karachi. The shawls on the terrorists' bodies were from Pakistan.

We have recovered nine mobiles from the accused along with four GPS and Thuraya phones. We have evidence of them making calls to Pakistan. I won't tell you what more proof we have regarding it.

### **In a perfectly planned operation, why did they give out evidence in the form of phone calls to Pakistan?**

Probably, during the operation, at some point of time, they lost confidence and they were going to give up. And under stress they called their controllers in Pakistan. I will not say more, but we have evidence to that effect. In our chargesheet against them we will tell you all.

### **What about the involvement of the ISI and the Pakistan army [\[Images\]](#)?**

Our investigation is at an early stage. We are still verifying. At the moment we have been able to identify the Lashkar-e-Tayiba, which has trained these guys. Kasab has mentioned Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Abu Hamza, Kafa and Lashkar chief Hafiz Saeed.

Saeed is responsible for giving talks on jihad, he provoked them to kill by saying that these boys are the chosen ones. Lakhvi was the man who has been tutoring them all about the operation. He chose these guys. How told them how they will perform. Lakhvi told the terrorists that they are going to Mumbai for martyrdom and for jihad. In fact,

Lakhvi came up to Karachi to hug them, embrace them before they boarded the (*Pakistani vessel*) *Al Husseini* to sail to Mumbai. (*They later hijacked the Kuber on the high seas.*)

### **What is Kasab saying about Lakhvi?**

Mumbai is the financial capital of the country. If you hit at hotels, tourism gets affected. They wanted to terrorise foreigners. They don't want them to come to India. Kasab has told us that all his instructors were (*Pakistan*) military trained people.

You do not expect civilians to teach you how to use Kalashnikovs, how to throw hand grenades and how to make explosive devices.

### **Has he given you the names of people who belonged to the ISI or army?**

He has given names and we are in process of verifying it. [Abu Hamza](#) is one such name. We are trying to verify the names of those trainers who are in service of the Pakistan army. We also know about an ISI army major who was in touch with this group, but we are still verifying it. The investigation is still on.

### **What is Dawood Ibrahim's [\[Images\]](#) connection in the Mumbai attack?**

We are examining his connection deeply. We are examining the underworld connection and the link, if any, of the Indian Mujahideen [\[Images\]](#) to it. We are examined if anybody came before to do a recce. We are interrogating [Fahim Ansari](#) and Sahabuddin, who were arrested in the Rampur CRPF (*Central Reserve Police Force*) attack case. That is very important.

### **Did they get any local support?**

We are examining it. We have not found anything so far nor have we arrested anybody. If they had substantial local support, then these people would have been provided guides. When these two fellows, Kasab and Ismail, ran from CST they did not know what to do. They were just running into lanes and bylanes in South Mumbai with these deadly weapons. If they had any local contact, that guy would have told them what to do. The terrorists would have tried to make contact with the locals, if they knew any.

### **What thoughts came to your mind when you saw Kasab in custody?**

21 years old, uneducated. I could see the level of indoctrination that prompts a young boy to leave Karachi, come by sea, enter another country, place bombs, open fire and kill people. It's thought provoking.

He does not hate India anymore. He was indoctrinated against India, but now he expressed a desire to write a letter to his parents in which he wants to say that he has been misled. He wants his parents to speak to other parents and youngsters of his village to not get attracted by talk and indoctrination of the Lashkar scouts there.

### **How fit is your legal case?**

We are 100 percent sure that he will be convicted.

### **Where were you on November 26?**

I was with one of my crime units when information came about firing at the Leopold Cafe [\[Images\]](#).

My immediate reaction was that it must be a gang war. Immediately, I came to my

office (*at the Mumbai police headquarters*). By that time a message came about firing at the CST and the Taj hotel [\[Images\]](#). Subsequently, the news of firing at the Oberoi hotel came. Once the news came, one knew this is not a gang war and a terror attack. I spoke to the police commissioner (*Hasaan Gafoor*) and the joint commissioner of police law and order (*K L Prasad*). The forces were sent to various places. As per protocol, I was asked to go to the Mumbai police control room. I was asked to coordinate everything from the control room which I did.

### **When did you call for help from the army?**

At 9.31 pm, the first incident at Leopold was noted. At 9.40, CST and by the time we realised the trend we called army for commando assistance at around 11 pm.

### **Why do people feel that help from outside came too late?**

See, the Mumbai police is prepared to deal with riots, communal disturbances, civil disturbances, underworld wars, natural disasters, gang wars and bomb blasts. This was something unique. Simultaneously, so much violence was taking place and look at the equipment of the terrorists.

Still, our cops did a commendable job. Note, how we chased these guys from *The Times of India* [\[Images\]](#) office to Chowpatty. They could not go anywhere. The same thing happened at the Taj. The Mumbai police reached the Taj within seven minutes and within nine minutes or so at the Oberoi. It is a matter of record.

### **If that is so, why they were not overpowered or killed in the initial few minutes?**

Because, in the first few minutes only they had done brutal firing in the lobby and were moving to higher floors. They were not waiting in the lobby. The first encounter with the police took place when they were on the second and third floors of the hotels.

At the Taj, they could not take people hostage because the police reached so fast. In Oberoi, they took hostages from the Khandahar and Tiffin restaurants in the first ten minutes. In fact, [at the Taj](#), the [security forces chased them and confined them to those floors](#) without allowing them to come down and fire into the rooms and other places till the NSG came to help in the morning.

### **When you look back, do you think you could have done your job differently?**

Look, the police job is such that no matter what you do there will be somebody who has a different opinion and theory of how it could have been done. I think, under the circumstances, the men and officers rose to the occasion. Ashok Kamte and Sadanand Date's jurisdiction was not around the Cama Hospital, still they came to assist. Hemant Kakare was a joint commissioner of police, Anti-Terrorist Squad. There was no need for him to join in, but he went there. Vijay Salaskar was with the crime branch, but still he went. There are so many such cases of that night which I can quote.

Our constable Tukaram Omble, who helped catch Kasab, did not let Kasab go though he kept firing at him. We did the best under the circumstances and we are proud of it.

### **How do you feel at the end of the story?**

One feels.. I think... what do I say? I think Pakistan needs to address this issue. This indoctrination of uneducated youth that is going on in Pakistan is a danger to the whole world not just to India.

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