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Captured Mumbai terrorist gives investigators vital leads

Source: BI-ME and media reports , Author: BI-ME staff
Posted: Sat November 29, 2008 12:00 am

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INTERNATIONAL. The image of a gunman as he walked around Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) dispensing death, captured by the Mumbai Mirror newspaper was the first glimpse of the terrorists who have held Mumbai hostage over the last 48 hours.

His name is Mohammad Ajmal Qasam, he is 21 years old, comes from Faridkot in Pakistan, and is the only terrorist from this operation to have been captured alive.

On the night of Wednesday to Thursday Qasam and his colleague opened fire at CST creating havoc before moving on to Girgaum Chowpatty in a stolen Skoda, where they were intercepted by a team from the Gamdevi police station.

But in that encounter Qasam's colleague was killed and he himself was injured in the hand. He pretended to be dead giving rise to the news that two terrorists had been killed. However as the 'bodies' were being taken to Nair Hospital, the accompanying police figured that one of the men was breathing.

According to sources reported by Mumbai Mirror, Qasam who was tight-lipped initially, cracked upon seeing the mutilated body of his colleague and pleaded with the medical staff at Nair to save his life. "I do not want to die," he reportedly said. "Please put me on saline."

Ammunition, a satellite phone and a layout plan of CST was recovered from him. According to sources the young terrorist has given investigators vital leads including how the chief planner of the Mumbai terror plot had come to the city a month ago, took picture and filmed strategic locations and trained their group and instructed them to "kill till the last breath."

Every man was given six to seven magazines with fifty bullets each, eight hand grenades per terrorist with one AK-57, an automatic-loading revolver and a supply of dry fruits.

Qasam reportedly disclosed that the group left Karachi in one boat and upon reaching Gujarat they hoisted a white flag on their boat and were intercepted by two officers of the coast guard near Porbandar and while they were being questioned one of the terrorists grappled with one of the officers slit his throat and threw the body in the boat. The other officer was told to help the group reach Mumbai.

When they were four nautical miles away from Mumbai there were three speedboats waiting for them where the other coastguard officer was killed. All the ammo was then shifted into these three speedboats they reached Colaba jetty on Wednesday night and the ten men broke up into groups of two each.

According to the report, four of these men went to the Taj Mahal hotel, two of them to the Trident hotel, two towards Nariman House at Colaba and two of which Qasam was one moved to CST.

For the first time, the Indian government directly blamed arch-rival Pakistan for the militant attack.

"According to preliminary information, some elements in Pakistan are responsible," Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee said.

A number of Indian officials suggested the militants were from the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, notorious for a deadly assault on the Indian parliament in 2001 that almost pushed India and Pakistan to war.

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said his country had "nothing to do with the attacks in Mumbai," and Pakistan's foreign minister appealed to India not to get "sucked" into a blame game and put the arch-rivals on a dangerous path to confrontation.

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