

[FIRSTPOST](#) [FIRSTBIZ](#) [TECH2](#) [FAKING NEWS](#)

[Mumbai 24°](#)

-
-
- [Sign in](#)
-

[Firstpost](#)

[Read More](#)

[Live: China deploys satellites to find missing Malaysian plane](#) [118 Comments](#)

[Media fixing: Why 'leaked' video of Kejriwal, journalist is a big deal](#) [962 Comments](#)

[see more »](#)

[FRONT PAGE](#)

[Politics](#)

[Sports](#)

[India](#)

[World](#)

[Business](#)

[Life](#)

[Bollywood](#)

[Tech](#)

[Delhi](#)

[Mumbai](#)

[Photos](#)

PLUS [Firstvote](#) [Money Tutor](#)  [Working Patient Series](#) 

- [Videos](#)
- [Mobile Apps](#)
- [Live TV](#)

[Firstpost](#) >

[India](#)

Abu Jundal's terror map: Let's all shut up, please!

by [Venky Vembu](#) Jun 28, 2012

[#Abu Jundal](#) [#Lashkar-e-Taiba](#) [#Syed Zabiuddin Ansari](#) [#Terrorism](#) [#ThatsJustWrong](#)

Tweet 19  Teilen 2  Share 3  Like 7

[51 Comments](#)[Email](#)[Print](#)

The steady trickle of details of the intricate web of terror that Syed Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal wove in all the time that he was in India doubtless makes for gripping reading.

From the accounts that are coming out, Ansari was a raging killing machine. He plotted the Jama Masjid blast in 2006; was a key figure in the Aurangabad arms haul case of 2006; was assembling teams of Indian Mujahideen *bakras* (presumably with motivational speeches about 72 virgins waiting for them in the beyond-life); setting up sleeper cells of the Lashkar-e-Taiba that could be activated at will; and, of course, he was the Karachi control room handler who primed the Lashkar terrorists who slipped into Mumbai in November 2008 and purveyed death and devastation for three days.



PTI

But as exciting as these microdetails are, and however much of an insight they may offer into the working of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism modules in India, I'm not convinced that we need to hear a live commentary of this sort *even while the investigations are going on*. For one thing, revealing details of the Ansari's interrogation prematurely - and having them splashed all over the newspapers - could alert the terrorist sleeper cells, causing them to either flee or cover their tracks, thereby defeating the possibility of nabbing them in an unguarded moment. For another, our best chance to nail Ansari for his various acts of terror - and conclusively establish Pakistan's involvement in the 26/11 terror attacks - lies in conducting the investigation and prosecution in a transparent manner, observing due process of law. A "media circus trial" of the sorts that is currently under way will compromise with this objective, and give a handle for the terrorists and their propagandists to claim a mistrial. There is, of course, much propaganda potential that can be milked from having secured Ansari, a prize catch, to expose Pakistan's continuing sponsorship of terror in India, and of its continuing to live in denial about its culpability. But unless a propaganda victory alone is the objective, that exercise must await a successful prosecution of Ansari - and whoever else may be dragged into the net from his investigation.

There is, moreover, another compelling reason why the trickle of revelations about Ansari's 'terror map' needs to be discounted for now: because our political leaders and investigating agencies have a history of deliberately putting out misinformation about terror attacks. Indicatively, after the 1993 serial bomb blasts in Mumbai, [Sharad Pawar](#), who had been deputed to take charge of Maharashtra barely days earlier, deliberately put out misinformation in the public domain (to serve a larger, nobler cause). In an interview to *Indian Express* in 2006 ([here](#)), Pawar gave details of his deception thus:

"I got a message that explosions had happened in 11 places, more than 365 people had died. I immediately realised that all these places were essentially dominated by Hindus. I guessed there must be some design, and that design must be that Hindus should react against the minority..."

"I realised that basically the design seems to be that there should be riots. So I straight went on television and I misled people, deliberately misled people, instead of 11 bomb explosions I said 12. And one of the places that I mentioned was Masjid Bandar, an area dominated by minorities. So I spread the message that it's not only in Hindu areas, it's in a Muslim area also... I said... the type of material that had been used was used essentially by some of the southern Indian side terrorist organisations. And I tried to (point a) finger at the Sri Lankan side... That was also deliberately fudged, I wanted to divert the attention from the Muslim angle to other areas. Because the design was to create further problem in Mumbai..."

That deliberate misinformation was, of course, upheld by the Justice Srikrishna inquiry commission as the right decision, taken in the interest of society, the city, and the country. But not always are leaders' intentions so benign. The Congress' prime mischief-monger, Digvijaya Singh, has in the past deliberately played politics with riot investigations by blaming "Hindu terror outfits" - [as he tangentially did](#) soon after the July 2011 Mumbai blasts.

Even investigators are prone to get it horribly wrong, as happened to Fahim Ansari and Sabahuddin Ahmed, who were implicated in the 26/11 case, but who were eventually [given the benefit of the doubt by the court](#), which ruled that there wasn't evidence to establish their culpability. But if you had gone by the real-time narrative put out by investigators ([for instance, here](#)), Sabahuddin Ahmed was the Lashkar-e-Taiba's "blue-eyed boy".

Investigators have a habit of shooting off their mouths and weaving fanciful theories that eventually don't stand in a court of law.

Indicatively, within days of the David Headley-Tawahhur Rana story breaking in 2009, Indian sleuths put out an avalanche of stories in the media about how Headley had cased the joint ahead of the 26/11 attacks, stayed at Osho communes and so on. The irony of it was that if these had been true, they had happened under the very nose of the same investigating agencies, without them having the faintest clue about it. Yet, within the space of a few days, they had pieced together everything about him and what he'd done.

The Ansari investigation already looks like it will be dragged into a turf battle between investigators in Delhi and in Mumbai. The Mumbai crime branch, which wants to question him in the 26/11 case, has sought custody of Ansari, but has been told that the Delhi police, which is interrogating him in connection with the other terror attacks, has custody of him until 5 July.

Earlier this year, the investigating agencies in Mumbai and Delhi were locked in a similar turf war that made a mockery of the investigation process into the July 2011 bomb attacks. In January, the head of the Maharashtra Anti-Terror Squad announced in Mumbai, to much fanfare and media flourish, that its ace team had cracked the July 2011 bombings, with the arrest of two persons. He even gave merciless details of the investigations, which took the ATS team to 18 states, led them to interrogate over 12,000 witnesses and review 180 hour of CCTV footage of the blasts.

But barely hours later, central intelligence and Delhi Police officials were rubbing the claims – and saying that in fact the ATS had got the wrong man. They were sure, they said, because one of the arrested men was in fact a Delhi Police informer who was to lead them to the masterminds behind the attack, including two Pakistani nationals. The Delhi Police claimed that the premature revelation of the facts of the case by the ATS had “botched up” the investigations by alerting the masterminds, who had fled. ([More on that here](#).)

There's a risk that premature leaks of the details of Ansari's investigation and a turf battle over the rights to interrogate him could have similar negative consequences for the larger cause of nailing the terror network.

The Indian security establishment has scored a major diplomatic and security victory in securing Ansari from Saudi Arabia despite efforts by Pakistan to block his extradition. This points to the opening of a new counter-terrorism cooperation initiative with Saudi Arabia, which is an unlikely ally in this cause, given its own culpability in sponsoring Wahhabi hatred in South Asia.

Now that they have him in their custody, the agencies must milk it for what it's worth - and demolish the terror network that he and other Pakistan-backed handlers put together in India. If that means keeping their lips sealed and conducting the investigations and interrogations away from the glare of the media, that's what they should do.

If they nail the investigation properly and secure a conviction in a transparent trial, they will have plenty to preen about later. Premature leaks, on the other hand, may compel them to eat crow - and allow the terror networks to flourish.

ALSO SEE



[Court to hear argument on charges against LeT's Abu Jundal from 24 Mar](#)



[Thousands protest killing of militants in Kashmir's Kupwara](#)