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'Little chance' of suicide bid by Kasab

Kartikeya, TNN | Feb 23, 2009, 02.49AM IST

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MUMBAI: The danger to the life of Ajmal Amir Kasab in Arthur Road jail has sent security agencies into a tizzy. Potential threats to his life include a murderous attack by gangster Dawood Ibrahim's henchmen or a murder bid by Pakistan's ISI. But what may seem ironic is that according to experts there is little chance of Kasab taking his own life.

"We call them `fidayeen' or suicide squads but in reality Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) terrorists rarely commit suicide," said a senior police officer who has served in Jammu and Kashmir. "In encounters that we engaged them in, they fought till they were gunned down. I have not heard of members of LeT blowing themselves up — which is the common perception of a suicide attacker," the officer added.

Several terror groups like LTTE in Sri Lanka or those operating in Iraq, the Middle East and Afghanistan use suicide attackers as an effective means of spreading terror. But LeT operatives' refusal to kill themselves in a terror attack stems from their ideology.

LeT's name translates as `Army of the Pure' and its fundamentalist ideology is based on the preachings of Jamat-ud-Dawa — a radical umbrella organisation of clerics in Pakistan. "They consider suicide to be against the tenets of Islam and thus LeT militants like Kasab do not kill themselves," said the officer.

Kasab is the lone surviving terrorist from a group of ten LeT members that attacked Mumbai on November 26. The rest were killed in fierce gunbattles that lasted over 60 hours. The gunmen were not carrying suicide vests or cyanide pills to indicate that they had any intention of killing themselves during the terror strike.

Since Kasab is currently lodged in a high security cell at Arthur Road jail it means that authorities have taken precautions to prevent any suicide bid by him. According to guidelines of the central government, all high security cells in India are without a fan or electrical sockets. This is meant to prevent high risk inmates from hanging or electrocuting themselves.

Jail officials say that suicide is a common cause of death in jails and inmates who remain on death row for several years are most prone to it because of depression. Thus prisons, which house death row convicts, have special guards to keep a watch on them and raise an alarm in case they attempt suicide.

In Mumbai, the last case of a prisoner committing suicide was that of a woman inmate, Chhaya Kadam, at Byculla jail in August 2008. Kadam was arrested after she flung her child out of a running train. Depressed, she hanged herself to death with her sari in toilet on the third day of confinement.

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