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# Mumbai widow's book alleges police lapses over attacks

By Prachi Pinglay  
BBC News, Mumbai

**The widow of a senior policeman killed in the 2008 attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai (Bombay) has criticised police for what she says were lapses.**

Vinita Kamte said police were slow to respond to the attacks and had still to tell her exactly how her husband died.

Ashok Kamte was killed with two other top officers in the attacks. Mumbai's police now admit there were lapses.

At least 174 people, including 14 policemen, died when 10 gunmen attacked the city on 26 November 2008.

Police caught one of the gunmen alive and he is currently on trial. Nine other attackers were killed.

Mrs Kamte makes her claims in a book released on Tuesday evening.

The book uses information gathered by Mrs Kamte from freedom of information requests, meetings with eyewitnesses, police control room records and post mortem reports.

"There were no clear answers forthcoming for simple and basic questions," she writes.

Her book contains several uncomfortable questions for police - relating to co-ordination between the police control room and officers on the ground.

Additional police commissioner Ashok Kamte was killed along with anti-terrorism chief Hemant Karkare and inspector Vijay Salaskar in the first hours of the attacks.

### 'Stings my heart'

Mrs Kamte's book provides a detailed account of how the policemen ended up in a lane near the Cama hospital, where they were killed when two of the gunmen ambushed their vehicle.

She argues that the police control room did not pass on to the officers crucial information which might have saved their lives.

"With prior information, they would have ambushed the terrorists... This is what stings my heart."

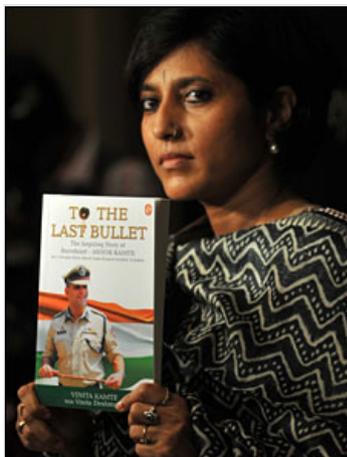
On the basis of police records obtained by freedom of information requests, Mrs Kamte says it took 40 minutes for help to reach the officers.

"When after a full 40 minutes help arrived, Mr Salaskar was still breathing as he was taken to the



Ashok Kamte was shot dead with two other senior officers

**“ What happened was unprecedented and we were unprepared to handle such things ”**  
Police commissioner D Sivanandan



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hospital," she writes.

"If only help had arrived earlier, Mr Salaskar would certainly have been saved and may be Mr Karkare and Ashok too.

“ The thought of our husbands lying bleeding for 40 minutes with no help haunts our families ”

Vinita Kamte

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"The thought of our husbands lying bleeding for 40 minutes with no help haunts our families."

Mrs Kamte also says she was not allowed to make a submission to an inquiry into police handling of the attacks.

"It is surprising to note that the persons on whom the committee relied were mostly persons who were themselves interested in covering up their lapses."

### 'Confusion'

Last week Hemant Karkare's widow demanded an inquiry into his death.

Kavita Karkare said she wanted answers following media reports questioning the quality of bulletproof jackets used by the police.

An independent inquiry has already criticised the city police for a lack of co-ordination in dealing with the attacks.

On Wednesday, Mumbai police commissioner D Sivanandan admitted there had been lapses in dealing with the attacks.

"I am not giving any excuses but all I can say is that what happened was unprecedented and we were unprepared to handle such things," he told an Indian television channel.

He promised that answers would be found to questions raised by Mrs Karkare and the families of other officers who died in the attacks.

"We will look into that and find. We'll look for the bulletproof jacket, but yes there was some kind of confusion at the time - because of that some slips might have taken place," he added.

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