

MONEY TRANSFERS TO INDIA

Guaranteed Rates and Low Fees. Try Our Services For Free Today!



AdChoices

[Home \(/\)](#) » [News \(/news\)](#) » [India \(/india\)](#) » [Mumbai \(/mumbai\)](#)

# Why police command and control failed on 26/11

Friday, 27 November 2009 - 12:20am IST | Place: Mumbai | Agency: DNA

Nikhil S Dixit (/authors/nikhil-s-dixit)

[\(https://twitter.com/\)](https://twitter.com/)

Shares

Share on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dnaindia.com%2Fmumbai%2Freport-why-police-command-and-control-failed-on-2611-1317007>

Share on Twitter

<https://twitter.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fdnai.in%2F8Kw3&lang=en&text=Why+police+command+and+control+failed+on+26%2F11&via=dna>

Share on Google+

<https://plus.google.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dnaindia.com%2Fmumbai%2Freport-why-police-command-and-control-failed-on-2611-1317007&hl=en>

Share on Reddit

<http://www.reddit.com/submit?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dnaindia.com%2Fmumbai%2Freport-why-police-command-and-control-failed-on-2611-1317007&title=>

Vinita Kamte's book raises questions. *DNA* pieces together possible answers.

Even as Vinita Kamte, widow of slain Mumbai additional commissioner of police (eastern region) Ashok Kamte, has raised a storm by asking pointed questions about the circumstances in which her husband and two other police officers were killed by terrorists at Cama Hospital on the night of 26/11, *DNA* has pieced together the details of what was actually happening on that fateful night.

It appears to be a case of confusion and crossed wires in the police command and control structure, with then police commissioner (and now director-general of police, housing) Hasan Gafoor giving orders to the main control room (MC) from his post at the Trident, the MC relaying orders to officers on the field, and the officers taking their own decisions based on ground-level inputs.

Vinita Kamte's book — *To The Last Bullet* — quotes several such transcripts of conversations between the MC, then manned by Rakesh Maria and Kamte, apart from Hemant Karkare, chief of the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), who was killed along with Kamte and Vijay Salaskar at Cama.

The Mumbai police lost the plot at the very start of the terror attack when Gafoor deviated from the standard operating procedure (SOP) that was agreed just a week earlier (see story below). Had that been done, each senior officer would have known his duty and acted accordingly. The SOP was prepared after

the July 11, 2006, serial train blasts, but had not been implemented. It was revived only a week before 26/11, when intelligence reports talked of a possible terror attack on Mumbai. Karkare had played a major role in preparing the SOP.

The control room was a scene of command confusion. The SOP specified that joint commissioner of police (law & order) KL Prasad would be there in the event of any emergency, but Gafoor asked Maria, joint commissioner of police (crime), to man the MC on 26/11.

So, at a critical point in the early stages of the strike, there were two officers at the MC, when only one was needed.

In the first three hours on the first day of the attacks, the control room at the police headquarters at Crawford Market received 7,000 calls informing them about possible sightings of terrorists, bombs, etc.

All of them turned out to be false, but in that time of crisis, each and every call had to be checked and verified before being termed a hoax.

The command and control interface with the administration was also disrupted, since additional chief secretary (home) Chitkala Zutshi, who would have been coordinating the operations from the bureaucracy, was stuck at the Taj and Gafoor himself was in the field. From his station outside the Trident, Gafoor gave his orders to officers through the control room. On the other hand, when some officers - including Ashok Kamte - sought orders from Gafoor on where they should be going, the commissioner of police could not sometimes be contacted.

Vinita Kamte says her husband had been asked by Gafoor to come to the Trident, but the control room does not have any records showing this. On the other hand, Kamte himself, on his way from Chembur to south Mumbai, asks the control room where he should head. It is not clear why he should have done this if his boss Gafoor had asked him to come to the Trident. As he reaches the GPO near Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), scene of Kasab's initial carnage, he again asks the main control room where he should proceed. He is told that he should proceed to the special branch office, since by then Sadanand Date, additional CP (central region), who was already at Cama, was seeking reinforcements due to heavy firing by the terrorists.

Given the number of places the terrorists were operating in, the control room was regularly receiving requests for reinforcements from many places. Karkare, who was handling the situation on the ground at Cama, had 155 police personnel at his command, including the Quick Response Team, the ATS commandos, crime branch units, SRPF and the local police force. This number was greater than the force deployed at the Taj, Oberoi and Nariman House.

The confusion occurred because each senior officer on the ground was reacting to the situation to the best of his knowledge, skills and abilities. Additional CP Sadanand Date stormed the Cama Hospital without adequate backup because innocent citizens were likely to be killed. Kamte came all the way from Chembur and reached Cama just in time to help Karkare. He was one of the few officers on the ground who was skilled in gunbattles and also had an AK47. He fired at the terrorists in the Rang Bhavan lane, reportedly injuring Ismail Khan and Mohammed Ajmal Kasab, before succumbing to their bullets.

The only mistake, if at all, made by three of the finest officers - Karkare, Kamte and Salaskar - of Mumbai police, was to travel in the same car at the same time. The command and control confusion ended up as a tragedy of errors.

Shares

Share on Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dnaindia.com%2Fmumbai%2Freport-why-police-command-and-control-failed-on-2611-1317007>)

Share on Twitter

(<https://twitter.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fdnai.in%2F8Kw3&lang=en&text=Why+police+command+and+control+failed+on+26%2F11&via=dna>)

Share on Google+

(<https://plus.google.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dnaindia.com%2Fmumbai%2Freport-why-police-command-and-control-failed-on-2611-1317007&hl=en>)

Share on Reddit

(<http://www.reddit.com/submit?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dnaindia.com%2Fmumbai%2Freport-why-police-command-and-control-failed-on-2611-1317007&title=>)