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Pakistan says it arrests Mumbai attack plotters

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By Kamran Haider

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - The Pakistani government said on Thursday for the first time that last November's attack on Mumbai was launched and partly planned from Pakistan, and it was holding in custody a ringleader and five other suspects.

"Some part of the conspiracy has taken place in Pakistan," Rehman Malik, adviser to the prime minister on the interior, told a news conference remarkable for the extent to which it acknowledged Pakistani involvement.

Malik said six suspects were in custody and two were known but still at large.

He detailed how the gunmen had sailed from Karachi to carry out the attack that killed 179 people in the Indian financial capital between November 26-28.

Pakistani officials shared the findings of the investigation with India's High Commissioner Satyabrata Pal, and the Indian foreign ministry later issued a statement describing the Pakistani actions as a "positive development."

Tensions have been running high between India and Pakistan since the attack by 10 gunmen on India's financial capital last November, though fear of a conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbors has receded in recent weeks.

India has maintained the plot was hatched in Pakistan, and the slow speed with which Islamabad has acted fueled Indian suspicions that Pakistani intelligence agencies have not cut their old ties with jihadi groups.

In particular, New Delhi has pressed for forceful action by Pakistani authorities against militants belonging to Lashkar-e-Taiba, a jihadi group it says was responsible.

Pakistan, which had earlier complained that India had failed to furnish it with enough evidence, released the long-awaited results of its investigation as Richard Holbrooke, President Barack Obama's new special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, rounded off a four-day visit to the country.

Holbrooke was scheduled to arrive in Kabul later on Thursday, and would visit India early next week on the final leg of a regional tour to devise a grand strategy for stabilizing Afghanistan and eliminating the al Qaeda threat in Pakistan.

Tracing telephone calls and bank transfers had led to the capture of a key figure in the conspiracy, Hammad Amin Sadiq, Malik said.

"He was basically the main operator," Malik said, adding that his interrogation led to the raid on two hideouts, one in the port city, and one two hours outside.

"We have located those locations which were used by the terrorists before launching themselves," Malik said.

"They had some kind of training, they went into the ocean," he said, saying they had sailed from Karachi.

"Some of the accused who have been arrested, they have given us the full rundown."

Malik said the breakthrough in the investigation had resulted from tracing the fishing vessel used by the militants, purchases of equipment like life jackets and the engine for the rubber dinghy that militants came ashore in Mumbai.

Rehman said Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and Zarar Shah, two members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, were still in custody.



He said two other men being held were Khan and Riaz, withholding their full names so as not to compromise the investigation.

LINKS TO EUROPE AND U.S.

One of those arrested, identified as Javed Iqbal, was lured back to Pakistan from the Spanish city of Barcelona, Malik said.

Investigators had also discovered some funds transferred from Italy and Spain were used to finance the attack, and Austrian telephone sim cards were used. Malik spoke too of a link, possibly an Internet domain, to Houston in the United States.

Malik said investigators had been unable to confirm the identities of the nine gunmen killed in the attack, though Pakistan has confirmed Mohammad Ajmal Kasab, the gunman caught alive, was a Pakistani.

He said only nine of the 10 gunmen came ashore in the dinghy, and the fishing boat they had used to sail from Karachi had refueled on the coast of India's Gujarat state.

The Pakistani official said one suspect was allegedly involved in the 2007 bomb attack on the Samjhauta Express in India that killed 68 people as the train headed for the Pakistani city of Lahor, and India had been requested for more information.

Malik said a first information report (FIR), the term for a police complaint, had been lodged to initiate a case but Pakistan needed more help from India to make charges stick.

(Additional reporting by [Zeeshan Haider](#) and Augustine Anthony; Writing by [Simon Cameron-Moore](#); Editing by [Jerry Norton](#))

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