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# Antulay's allegation not borne out by facts

S Ahmed Ali & Mateen Hafeez,TNN | Dec 19, 2008, 04.15 AM IST

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MUMBAI: The events of 26/11 night that claimed the lives of three of Mumbai's top cops refute the Union minorities affairs minister A R Antulay's conspiracy theory. Here's what happened that night.

Around 9.45pm, the city police control room flashed a message saying there was a terror attack at CST railway station. Within minutes, the road outside the station was deserted. Not even policemen on duty, most of whom were armed with only lathis, were ready to go to the spot.

Hemant Karkare, then ATS chief, reached CST from his Dadar residence, and donned a helmet and bullet-proof jacket. Additional DGP (Railways) K P Raghuvanshi also joined him. But, while Raghuvanshi stayed back, Karkare, along with his four policemen, first went to the CST station's platform number 1 (opposite Anjuman-e-Islam School) and found it deserted, with no trace of any terrorists.

"A fellow policeman informed them that the terrorists were spotted walking towards (the nearby) Cama Hospital," said city police commissioner Hasan Gafoor. Meanwhile, Karkare received a wireless message, saying, "Additional police commissioner Sadanand Date is injured at Cama Hospital. A bodyguard is seriously injured, while another constable is dead."

Karkare, accompanied by the four constables, made for Cama Hospital, while the Z-security guards were instructed to take position outside the TOI building.

The team moved cautiously towards Cama and tried to get a clear idea of what was happening. "Later, inspector Vijay Salaskar and additional commissioner Ashok Kamte, who met at CST, arrived on the scene. Salaskar was accompanied by five of his subordinates," said Akhtar Shaikh, Kakare's orderly, who was present along with Karkare that night.

"As we headed towards the rear entrance of Cama Hospital, we heard gunshots. Kamte returned the fire, and the terrorists threw a grenade at us, but it fell within the hospital premises," said Shaikh.

Inspector Nitin Alaknure, Salaskar's colleague, said, "Karkare, Kamte and Salaskar were discussing their next step. Kamte then suggested they enter the hospital from the main gate. They got into a police Qualis stationed there, and later, as they approached the special branch, Salaskar took over the driver's seat," Alaknure recalled.

Salaskar ordered his two constables to take position at the rear gate, while Karkare's four constables were assigned to take position at the other gates. "They got a wireless message that the terrorists were hiding behind a red vehicle near Rang Bhavan. They started looking for the red vehicle and suddenly spotted one terrorist, who was later identified as Mohammad Ajmal Kasab. Kamte and Salaskar opened fire," said crime branch chief Rakesh Maria.

The officers were about to get down from the vehicle when all of a sudden. another terrorist

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showered bullets from his AK-47, injuring all the cops. Kamte and Karkare died on the spot. The terrorists then threw the three policemen out of the car, and hijacked the vehicle. It was Arun Jadhav, the lone survivor, who later informed the control room about the incident.

Meanwhile, police officials across ranks expressed shock over the Union minister's controversial statement. No senior official would come on record to speak out against Antulay's innuendo, indicating how the police brass was scared to respond to a politician's rant.

But officer after officer, off the record, said it was sad to see politicians could stoop so low as to use even a national tragedy for their own political advantage. Though city police commissioner Hasan Gafoor refused to comment, another officer said politicians should be speaking about measures to tackle terrorism insisted of making controversial statements in Parliament.

However, former intelligence chief V N Deshmukh said he had visited the spot where the shootout (which claimed Karkare's and cops' lives) happened. "I spoke to several witnesses and officers. I am convinced it was not a conspiracy," he said.

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