



Get more from Yahoo Mail with the app

[Upgrade now](#)

Congress saw 'political opportunity' post 26/11: Wikileaks

IANS By Indo Asian News Service | IANS India Private Limited – Fri 10 Dec, 2010

London, Dec 11 (IANS) A section of the Congress party saw 'political opportunity' when one of its leaders A.R. Antulay claimed that Hindutva forces may be behind the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, by backing Muslims 'who would continue to play up the conspiracy theory', revealed a US official memo leaked by WikiLeaks.

'The Congress party's initial reaction to Antulay's outrageous comments was correct. But as support seemed to swell among Muslims for Antulay's unsubstantiated claims, crass political opportunism swayed the thinking of some Congress party leaders,' David Mulford, then US ambassador to India, said in a confidential memo to Washington.

'What's more, the party made the cynical political calculation to lend credence to the conspiracy even after its recent emboldening state elections victories. The party chose to pander to Muslims' fears, providing impetus for those in the Muslim community who will continue to play up the conspiracy theory,' he wrote.

'While cooler heads eventually prevailed within the Congress leadership, the idea that the party would entertain such outlandish claims proved once again that many party leaders are still wedded to the old identity politics,' according to Mulford.

'The seventy-nine years old Antulay was probably bewildered to find that his remarks, similar in vein to what he would have routinely made in the past to attack the BJP, created such a furor this time,' Mulford commented.

Antulay sparked a political controversy Dec 17 with comments insinuating that the killing of Maharashtra Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare by the Mumbai terrorists was somehow linked to Karkare's investigation of bombings in which radical Hindus are suspected.

Home Minister P. Chidambaram, however, officially dismissed the comments made by then minority affairs minister A.R. Antulay in parliament.

The outlandish comments suggested that somehow Hindutva elements were in league with the Mumbai attackers, or used the attacks as a cover to kill Karkare.

The opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) immediately called for Antulay's resignation and protested with boisterous walkouts in parliament over the course of five days.

Compounding matters, the Congress party, after first distancing itself from the comments, two days later issued a contradictory statement which implicitly endorsed the conspiracy.

During this time, Antulay's completely unsubstantiated claims gained support in the conspiracy-minded Indian-Muslim community.

Hoping to foster that support for upcoming national elections, the Congress party cynically pulled back from its original dismissal and lent credence to the conspiracy, according to the Wikileaks report posted by the Guardian newspaper on its website Friday.

