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# Anatomy of Terror

A riveting retelling of the 26/11 attack on Mumbai shows how unprepared India is

Pravin Sawhney November 22, 2013 | UPDATED 14:29 IST



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Unlike the 9/11 in the United States and the 7/7 in London, the 26/11 attack in Mumbai was more than an act of terrorism. It was a successful 'war-by-infiltration across the sea' by the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). From 9 p.m. on November 26, 2008, until 3 a.m. on November 29, 2008, ten Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists-sponsored, supported, guided, armed, trained and motivated by the ISI-held India to ransom. With 166 people killed and 300 injured, India's national security lay in tatters; none in the Government knew how to combat the new challenge from the sea. With government credibility in shreds, it was only natural that the Pradhan Commission set up to investigate 26/11 attack would not be allowed to do its job; it was debarred from cross-examining the intelligence services, the NSG, the marine commandos, and even politicians.



The media alone dared and did its job. For months after 26/11, poignant stories of innocent lives lost and families decimated were brought to the people. So, when investigative journalists Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark approached Mumbai's chief of Anti-Terrorist Squad, Rakesh Maria, to recount the horrific 26/11 moments for their book, *The Siege*, his reaction was that "everything's been said that needs to be". He was right: What has not been said would require an honest introspection by the Government, something it rarely does. Not deterred by Maria's reaction, the two journalists adopted a two-pronged approach for their real-life thriller: Talk with all those who would, and keep the focus on the iconic Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai. While just 33 of the 166 died in the Taj, the hotel symbolises the magnificence, majesty and the history of Mumbai.

Among officials who opened up wholeheartedly to the writers were people who lived the harrowing time, such as the general manager of the hotel, Karambir Kang, and the Deputy Inspector General of the NSG, Brigadier Govind Sisodia, who on retirement was made head of physical security by the Tata Group which owns the hotel. In a riveting account, the book dissects India's helplessness and unpreparedness. On that fateful night of November 26, 2008, the Mumbai ATS chief, Hemant Karkare, could not muster a single quick reaction team despite 60 officers being available on radio traffic. The Police Commissioner Hasan Gafoor sat hopelessly in his car for 10 hours, waiting for the NSG to come from Delhi and the MarCos to show results. His police force gave exaggerated number of terrorists inside the Taj to the marine commandos. Despite being ready in Manesar near Delhi, the NSG under Brigadier Sisodia had to cool their heels for six hours because it was not decided who would provide the aircraft, the Indian Air Force or the raw. When the NSG did arrive at the Taj, Karambir Kang did not have the hotel layout plan to give to them. The Taj Chief Security Officer, Sunil Kudiyadiwas, cluelessly huddled with his scared unarmed men.

The story on the other side, however, is sensational. There are details of the terrorists' training in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Karachi. The central figure of course is David Headley, the Pakistani-American, probably a triple agent working for the US, ISI and himself, who, in two years,

travelled six times from Mumbai to Lahore on reconnaissance missions with none in Indian intelligence and customs wondering what was going on. The book also has hints about an Indian source called 'Honeybee' who helped in 26/11 preparations. The book is riveting, but without depth.

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