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Was Mumbai suspect a double agent for US?

The Indian press is abuzz with news that Indian Home Ministry officials are investigating whether a terror suspect in the Mumbai attacks, David Headley from Chicago, was working as a 'double agent' with the US.

By Huma Yusuf

December 16, 2009

The Indian press is abuzz with news that Indian Home Ministry officials have said they are investigating whether Pakistani-American terror suspect David Coleman Headley was working as a "double agent."

Indian officials reportedly raised questions about Mr. Headley's links with US intelligence agencies – even as another terror suspect accused of involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks was denied bail by a US federal court. These latest and widely-publicized accusations against Headley are expected to put pressure on India's ruling Congress Party, which has emphasized closer ties with the US as part of its foreign policy.

The US has not allowed Indian authorities to interrogate Headley over the Mumbai attacks, much to India's consternation.

According to the **Hindustan Times**, Indian Home Ministry officials raised questions about Headley's involvement with the American intelligence agency.

India is investigating whether a Chicago man accused of helping plan the deadly 2008 Mumbai siege was a double agent working for the United States and a Pakistan-based militant group, an official said on Wednesday.

"India is looking into whether Headley worked as a double agent. That is one of the many angles we are probing," a home ministry official said

Indian media reported that New Delhi was suspicious because the United States had not shared vital information about Headley's movements prior to his arrest....

Headley could have been a member of the US Drug Enforcement Agency which allowed him to make frequent trips to Pakistan and gain access to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant group.

The **Times of India** reports that Indian officials suspect that the CIA knew about Headley's link with the banned Pakistani militant outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba, one year before the Mumbai attacks, but did not alert Indian agencies.

The [Indian] investigators believe that the US agencies kept away the information from India and never allowed the Pakistani-origin Headley to get "exposed".

The 39-year old terror suspect, arrested by FBI for his role in Mumbai attacks, had visited India in March 2009 – four months after Mumbai attack carried out by LeT – but FBI still did not inform India that Headley is a LeT operative, apparently fearing he could be arrested in India.

According to the Times of India, Indian officials will also be investigating how Headley's credit card bills were settled in American banks while the suspect was traveling through India.

The **Hindu**, an Indian daily, reports that "highly placed government sources said if [Headley] was given lesser punishment in a U.S. court, it would only strengthen India's suspicion that he was a 'double agent'."

As Indian officials debate the role played by Headley in carrying out terror attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, a federal US court has ruled that Headley's alleged accomplice, Tahawwur Rana, is to remain in detention, reports **The New York Times**. A judge denied Pakistani-Canadian Mr. Rana bail on the ground that he is a 'flight risk' with substantial resources and immigration expertise.

According to the **Hindustan Times**, Rana is to be charged with a direct link to a terror conspiracy, and, if convicted, could face life imprisonment. But Indian analysts fear that US agencies will want to tap Rana for more intelligence on terrorist movement rather than allowing him to go to jail in Mumbai, which many Indians want.

Some are speculating that having trapped Headley and turned him approver, the prosecution will use the 26/11 link in Monday's memorandum to do the same with Rana. He clearly dealt with retired Pakistani army officer Abdur Rehman Hasim Syed, alias "Pasha", a conduit to Ilyas Kashmiri, one of Pakistan's most-wanted terrorists. US may be more interested in forcing Rana, who ran an immigration service, to tell them if he used it to facilitate the movements of terrorists, and who and where they are.

Headley's alleged involvement in the Mumbai attacks has recently strained US-India relations, a cornerstone of the ruling Congress Party's foreign policy. Last week, Indian authorities announced that they would be changing visa regulations for American tourists, requiring them to take a 60-day break between each exit and re-entry to India, reported the **Hindustan Times**.

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