



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 1, 2010

Mumbai Terrorist Was US Agent

After terrorist conspirator and “former” U.S. government agent David Coleman Headley received promises of leniency and extradition protection from American prosecutors for his role in the 2008 Mumbai massacre, speculation about his true masters was set ablaze as outrage erupted across India.

Headley — a former Drug Enforcement Administration agent and the son of a Pakistani diplomat — pled guilty to various criminal charges on March 18 in connection with his terrorist activities in India, Pakistan and Denmark. He is reportedly “cooperating” with investigators.



In exchange, the government vowed not to allow foreign authorities to question him or subject him to trial. Prosecutors also agreed not seek the death penalty, and he may not even serve a life sentence. Links to U.S. intelligence agencies will remain classified. And his guilty plea ensures that there will be no drawn-out trial that could publicly reveal any relationships with various intelligence agencies — most notably, the Central Intelligence Agency-linked Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence.

Headley [admitted](#) in the plea bargain that he helped plan the bloody massacre by conducting surveillance and selecting targets, gathering GPS coordinates for the terrorist team’s boat landing along the coast, and more. He was also helping to plan an attack on a Danish cartoonist. And while the Federal Bureau of Investigation was given almost 10 hours to question the only surviving attacker in India, a team of Indian investigators who traveled to the U.S. to interrogate Headley was turned away.

The plea deal and the lack of American cooperation immediately sparked fury and despair in India, as the U.S. is [reportedly](#) bound by treaty to surrender Headley to Indian authorities. It also fueled accusations in the media that Headley still may have been linked to the American or Pakistani governments in some capacity. He began his terrorist training around the time that he was working for the U.S. government. But the connections, however, remain shrouded in mystery.

The terrorist group he was known to be working with — [the ISI-linked Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba](#) — carried out the devastating Mumbai attack in November of 2008 that dominated headlines around the world. The terrorists rampaged through the city with machine guns and grenades, leaving over 150 dead and hundreds more wounded. And as it turns out, the terrorist group was actually created with the help of Pakistan’s secret services, which have well-known ties to the American Central Intelligence Agency and other government agencies.

“The LeT’s close links with Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) are legion and it is inconceivable that such a massive operation — with huge international ramifications and the potential to trigger war with India — could have been undertaken without the knowledge of the ISI, headed by General Ashfaq Parvez Kiani, the present army chief, from October 2004 until October 2007,” [wrote](#) M.K. Bhadrakumar, a former Indian ambassador who served in Pakistan, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, among other



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assignments.

Along with many prominent Indians, Bhadrakumar strongly condemned Headley's plea agreement in the press. "The deal enables the US government to hold back from formally producing any evidence against Headley in a court of law that might have included details of his links with US intelligence," he wrote in the article for *Asia Times*. "Headley's links with the US intelligence will now remain classified information and the Pakistani nationals involved in the Mumbai attacks will get away scot-free."

He also noted that the Obama administration was "behaving very strangely" and that it had something "extremely explosive" to hide. "The speculation gaining respectability in Delhi is that Washington knew in advance about the Mumbai attack and deliberately chose not to pass on details to Delhi," the ambassador noted in the piece, entitled '[A spy unsettles US-India ties](#).' "Clearly, the Obama administration was apprehensive that Headley might spill the beans if the Indians got hold of him and the trail could then lead to his links with the CIA, the LeT and the Pakistani military."

Headley's involvement with the U.S. government began when he was caught trafficking heroin. To reduce his sentence, the DEA convinced him to work as an undercover agent in Pakistan. And in exchange for his cooperation, he only served two years. After 9/11, the agency worked closely with other government outfits, and they were forced to share information. So anti-terror operations had to have been aware of Headley's activities. These facts have led Indians to conclude that he was, in fact, still working for American intelligence.

"Many Indians are convinced that Mr. Headley is a CIA agent, perhaps gone rogue, and that the U.S. intransigence represents an attempt to shield him and his past activities from scrutiny," [said](#) writer Akash Kapur in a piece published by the *New York Times*. Another *New York Times* piece, entitled '[American Scout for Mumbai Attacks Was Jokingly Called 'Agent Headley' by Friends](#),' points out that Indians who knew Headley had long suspected that he worked for the CIA.

"I had a hunch then and I have a hunch now that he was an American agent of some sort," Headley's Indian friend Rahul Bhatt [told](#) Channel 4 News. "I nicknamed him Agent Headley. I thought, and I suggested to him, that he worked for the Central Intelligence Agency, and he used to not like it." Apparently, Headley even "begged" Bhatt to stop calling him "Agent Headley" in public.

An important former Indian government and counterterrorism official was blunt with his conclusions as well. "The mishandling by the US is due to its anxiety to prevent a public admission of the US intelligence community's links with him and to protect Pakistan from the legal consequences of its role in the 26/11 terrorist strikes," [noted](#) security analyst Bahukutumbi Raman, a former top counter-terrorism official with India's foreign intelligence service.

"The plea bargain entered into by the FBI with Headley last week has created strong suspicions in India that the FBI wants to avoid a formal trial of Headley and was reluctant to allow Indian investigators to interrogate him because Headley was a deep penetration agent of the US intelligence," he added. Raman [explained](#) that Headley "was not a double agent, but a quadruple agent." He also allowed for the possibility that Headley may have gone horribly "out of control."

Speculation about the U.S.-agent-turned terrorist continues to run rampant in the Indian press. But how much is really known? In court documents, Headley's associates are referred to simply as A, B, C and D. So the truth about Headley may never be known to the public. And while that is a veritable tragedy, the truth must still be sought. The theories remain as varied as they are numerous, but the secrecy and strange deals seem to confirm people's suspicions that their governments are totally out of control and



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out of touch with the citizenry. Pakistan and India have even moved their “[proxy war](#)” into U.S.-occupied Afghanistan, complicating matters even further.

But there are several lessons to be learned from the tragedy and its fallout. For the Indians, be much more careful when “cooperating” with “allies.” Also, examine your own government carefully — [many](#) of the theories surrounding the attack involve cooperation of at least some Indian officials.

Even more importantly, the government must respect the right of the people to keep and bear arms. The terrorists stormed through the city unhindered — slaughtering everyone in their path — for more than two days! As famed Indian pacifist Mohandas Gandhi [wrote](#) in his autobiography: “Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the act of depriving a whole nation of arms, as the blackest.” And still, decades after independence, the government continues its counterproductive and dangerous policy of keeping law-abiding people disarmed, and therefore, easy targets.

For Americans, there are serious implications too. If the federal government would stick to the Constitution and quit meddling in foreign nations, these sorts of issues would not even crop up. The anti-American animosity and suspicion built up around the world would not exist. “[Blowback](#)” would not threaten American citizens and interests around the world. And the billions of dollars saved could be returned to the citizenry. So for the sake of U.S. taxpayers, victims of terrorism around the world and all of the casualties of the “war on terror,” it’s time for some serious changes in American foreign policy. The people must hold the government accountable, or the tragic consequences — death, oppression and confusion — will continue to mount.

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