

TIMELINE

Sikh extremists vow retaliation after Indian troops storm Golden Temple

1978 to May 1984 A few Sikh leaders in India and abroad start talking about separatism. **1978** In Vancouver, suspected Air India mastermind Talwinder Singh Parmar starts the militant separatist group Babbar Khalsa. **June 29, 1983** Parmar is arrested in Germany on an Interpol warrant saying he is wanted for three murders in India in 1981. He is assisted by two friends in Canada, Ripudaman Singh Malik and Surjan Singh Gill, and in July 1984, he wins his release. **June 5, 1984**

Indian government troops storm Amritsar's Golden Temple, galvanizing Sikh extremists who favour armed struggle to get a Sikh nation called Khalistan carved from Punjab. **July 1984** Parmar addresses supporters at a Calgary Sikh temple, saying Air India planes will fall from the sky in retaliation for the Golden Temple attack. **June 4, 1985** Agents of the fledgling Canadian Security Intelligence Service follow Parmar to the Vancouver Island community of Duncan, B.C. *Continued on next page*

AIR INDIA REPORT

ANALYSIS

Culture change needed at CSIS, RCMP: Major

WORK TOGETHER

By Stewart Bell

The RCMP and CSIS are Canada's defence line against terrorism.

But they can be terrible teammates.

According to the Air India inquiry report, the RCMP philosophy is "the less information we receive from CSIS, the better," while CSIS is reluctant to hand over its intelligence to police for fear it will be disclosed in court.

The 9/11 Commission found a similar problem when it examined the U.S. government failures leading up to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. It used a football analogy to explain: The players were in position but they weren't working together and there was no quarterback calling the plays.

Air India commissioner John Major wants Canada's national security advisor to play quarterback; he has proposed a much bigger role for the advisor in deciding how government agencies respond to terrorist threats.

Suppose a suspected member of a terrorist group flies to Canada after training at an overseas camp. Should the RCMP arrest him at the airport? Should CSIS instead follow him to see what he does and whom he meets? If he's not Canadian, should the Canada Border Services Agency deport him?

Those calls would be made by the national security advisor (NSA), who works out of the Privy Council Office. "In these and other situations," Judge Major writes, "the NSA

will act in the public interest, transcending institutional self-interest."

The advisor would have the power to pass CSIS intelligence on to police, part of a series of proposed reforms that appear to be nudging Canada in the direction of the United States and Britain, where criminal prosecutions of terrorists are much more common.

The Air India report proposes making greater use of CSIS intelligence by police, restructuring the RCMP to better deal with terrorism prosecutions and improving the relationship between the two agencies.

During the Air India investigation, CSIS and the RCMP "were unable to co-operate effectively, or sometimes at all," the report says. And that awkward relationship continues to some extent to this day.

That is partly a reflection of conflicting mandates. The RCMP fights terrorism by collecting evidence that can be used to prosecute suspects in open court. CSIS fights terrorism by collecting intelligence that guides government action and that is not intended to be publicly disclosed.

The system apparently worked during the Toronto 18 investigation. CSIS found out about the young extremists and notified the RCMP, which conducted its own parallel investigation and made the arrests.

But to use the 9/11 commission's football analogy, the two agencies sometimes find themselves covering the same man. And that overlap only got worse after Canada criminalized terrorism in 2001, throwing police into areas — such as the investigation of terrorist financing and planning terrorist acts — that had once been the domain of CSIS.

The report calls for a "culture change" in both agencies. Judge Major wants the RCMP to stop avoiding CSIS intelligence that could protect Canadians. And he wants CSIS to accept that its secrets may have to be disclosed as evidence against terrorists.

The commission goes so far as to propose the national security advisor have the authority to compel CSIS to hand its intelligence to police.

Judge Major wants fundamental change at CSIS. He wants the agency to treat the information it collects as evidence that might be used in a prosecution. To that extent, he wants CSIS to begin acting as a law enforcement agency.

He also recommends CSIS end its practice of destroying its records, suggesting it hang on to them for at least 25 years. At the same time, the report recognizes the need to keep sensitive intelligence from the public.

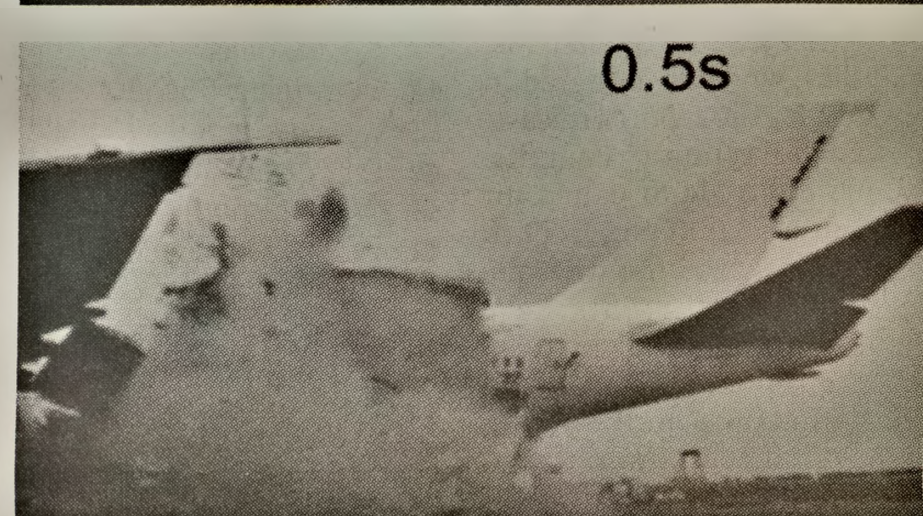
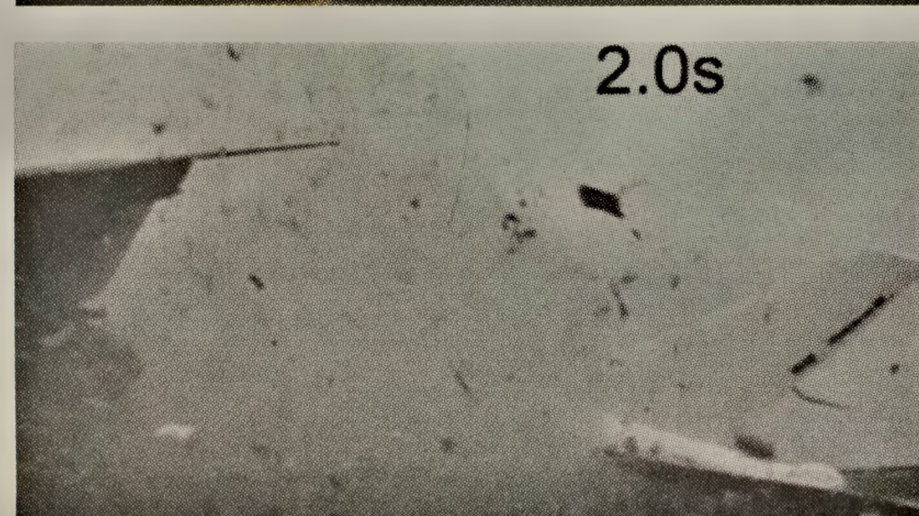
In a passage reminiscent of the 9/11 report, Judge Major writes: "What must be avoided is a diffusion of responsibilities, where each agency and each official acts properly but where they fail collectively to achieve the ultimate goal: protecting the security of Canadians to the greatest extent possible."

"Promises by agencies to co-operate with each other are only part of the answer. Better rules, supported by legislation, are required."

National Post
sbell@nationalpost.com



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE FILES



HANDOUT

Top: Irish authorities bring debris ashore from the Air India bombing. Above, clockwise from top left: A controlled explosion in the baggage compartment of a Boeing 747 as part of the Air India investigation.

Officer still 'haunted' by missed chance to screen flight for explosives

REPORT

Continued from Page A1

Other advance warnings were similarly ignored or fumbled. It took more than five months for CSIS to get a warrant to monitor telephone conversations of Talwinder Singh Parmar, a man wanted for murder in India who was travelling across Canada preaching violence to avenge the Indian government's attack on the Golden Temple in Punjab.

"What if there had been an additional five months of intelligence?" the report asks. Could it have provided "sufficient intelligence to prevent the bombing?"

Even when the wiretap was up and running, delays in transcribing and translating the calls meant agents had no warning of a planned trip Parmar made to Vancouver Island, three weeks before the bombing.

CSIS agents scrambled to secretly follow him, Inderjit Singh Reyat and a third, unidentified, person onto the ferry and along a logging road into the woods near Duncan, B.C.

There, the two agents heard an explosion, powerful enough that it lifted the female CSIS agent out of her car seat. A subsequent but cursory search of the area found nothing and surveillance was called off early before the suspects had even left the area.

The mystery man was not even photographed because none of the surveillance officers had a camera. It is believed the explosion was a test blast of a bomb.

"The failure to obtain a photo of Mr. X was a significant missed opportunity, with the result that, to this day, the identity of Mr. X remains a key mystery in the Air India narrative," the report says.

Two weeks before the bombing, a Vancouver police officer working with a source in the Sikh community had also been told an attack was coming "in two weeks" by Sikh extremists. This informa-

tion was not properly acted on until it was too late.

Then there was the warning read by James Bartleman, at the time the director the Intelligence Analysis and Security Bureau in the Department of External Affairs. He saw a Communications Security Establishment document warning that Air India was being targeted the weekend of June 22, he said. He said he brought it to the attention of the RCMP.

Flight 182 was the only Air India flight leaving Canada that weekend.

(The government denied such a document existed and dismissed Mr. Bartleman's testimony. The report, however, vindicates him.)

Building on that, was a telex warning of sabotage ef-

board. Cleaners liked to know which flights might be the dirtiest in order to avoid them.

Despite Air India planes supposedly being under a heightened security regime, he walked on board unchallenged and unnoticed. The access codes to the secured doors were written on the wall beside the locks.

"He went to the cockpit and sat in the captain's chair for a few moments to enjoy the view. He had access to the entire plane," the report says.

The bomb that brought down the plane was concealed in a piece of checked baggage and put aboard a CP Air flight in Vancouver and delivered to Air India in Toronto, where the doomed jet started its voyage.

The airline scanned checked

Few of the authorities responsible ... responded with any sense of purpose

forts against its planes sent by Air India on June 1, 1985. It received "a half-hearted Canadian response" and was dismissed, partly, as an attempt by Air India to get more security paid for by the Canadian government rather than by the airline.

Long before the passengers started boarding Flight 182, various intelligence and police agencies had reason to believe an attack was imminent. Individual and collective failures meant it was not prevented.

"Information-sharing failures," the report says, "prevented any one agency from piecing together the mosaic of the threat information that would have pointed to the high risk of a bombing to Flight 182."

Once the doomed passengers started gathering for their flight to India, there was still time to save them, the report says. But airport security was appalling.

The day before the bombing, by coincidence, Brian Simpson, an aircraft cleaner in Toronto, saw a parked Air India aircraft and went on

baggage for explosives using an X-ray machine, but that evening, the machine malfunctioned, with only about half the bags being loaded onto Flight 182 inspected.

Furthermore, Air India did not conduct passenger-baggage reconciliation, meaning that every bag in cargo was not linked to a passenger on board. Had that been done, the suitcase with the bomb would have been flagged and removed because it did not match any passenger.

But even as Flight 182 sat on the tarmac fully loaded and ready to take off again from Montreal's Mirabel airport there were still more missed opportunities to save those on board.

Three suspicious checked bags were identified before the flight left. Security guards notified the airline but the RCMP was not alerted until three hours later, just 13 minutes before departure.

Even then, they were hampered by the fact that all of the RCMP explosives detection dogs at both Montreal and

Toronto were away with their masters at a training session.

"Serious consideration must be given to the question of why all of the RCMP dogs were away at the same time during a period of high threat to Air India," says the report.

Sergeant Serge Carignan, a Quebec provincial police officer, and his explosive detector dog Arko were called in from home to check the plane.

When Sgt. Carignan and Arko arrived, however, the flight had already left. The plane had been cleared for departure because the three suspicious bags were left behind. They were the wrong bags: none contained explosives.

"Carignan has been haunted by this tragedy and by the decision made by others to release the aircraft," the report says.

"He believes that, had he and Arko been able to search the unaccompanied baggage on the flight as he had wanted to on the night of June 22, 1985, they would have found the explosives."

Given what Air India knew of the threats and the problems with the baggage that night, it is "incomprehensible" that airline officials allowed the plane to leave.

"At a time when no security measure should have been overlooked, few of the authorities responsible for the safety of Air India Flight 182 responded with any sense of purpose to the numerous failures and warning signs that day," the report says.

"The puzzle pieces take the form of possible leads, tips and warnings: some coming from human informants, some coming from intercepted conversations, others coming from the intelligence community in other countries, still others coming from direct observation by domestic security and intelligence personnel," the report says.

"A series of seemingly unrelated clues appear that may fit together to solve a puzzle. At the time these events took place, there was no awareness that such a puzzle existed."

Despite its harsh criticism over the system failures, however, the report offers a word of caution about assigning blame.

"Hindsight always makes it easier to notice gaps, identify errors and point out failures."

National Post

No-flylist won't stop threats, report says

By Mike De Souza and Laura Stone

OTTAWA • Weaknesses in aviation security from the time of the Air India bombing still plague airports, while new measures such as the no-fly list are not enough to counter the threat of terrorism, says the final report of the inquiry into the tragedy.

"In aviation security, there is a tendency to focus on 'fighting the last war' instead of taking necessary, proactive measures.... While fortress-like security is applied to the more publicly visible side of civil aviation, the side that is more hidden from public scrutiny remains exposed," said former justice John Major, commissioner of the inquiry.

"Lax perimeter security also allows vehicles and their occupants to enter airside portions of the airport with minimal, if any, screening. As a result, aircraft and passengers are vulnerable to attack."

Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said the government would examine the recommendations in the report carefully over the coming months.

Canwest News Service