

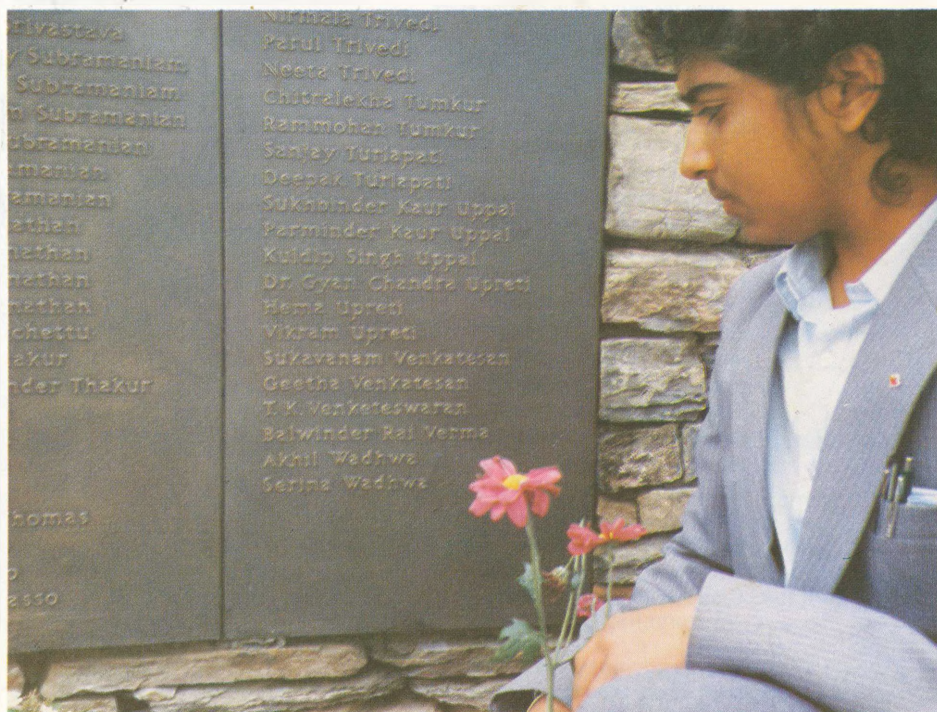
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Painful Scars of 'Kanishka' Remain in Canada



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KAMAL DANDONA

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HONG KONG SUBHASH CHULANI

CONTRIBUTORS

Ajit Jain, Dr. K.N. Prasad, Farrokh D. Kamdin, John Nunziata,
Alan Redway, Rakesh Mathur, Daniel C. Gallagher,
Dr. Shailendra Kumar & Nitya Rao.

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INDIA WORLDWIDE, INC.
114 WEST 29th STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10001
Tel: (212) 629-6767
TLX: 254931 IWVI UR
FAX: (212) 629-6729

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On the cover: The memorial built for the victims of the Kanishka crash in Cork, Ireland (top); a young relative of a victim places flowers at the memorial (bottom).

Deep Scars Remain 30 Months After Air-India Crash

By AJIT JAIN

Thirty months after the Air-India bomb blast over the icy waters of the Irish coast in which 329 people perished - most of them Canadians of Asian Indian origin - the scars of relatives remain visible and their tears have not dried.

The smile of their souls has not returned. They go to work and may sport a smile publicly, but inside their true self, they have all been hurt. Hurt badly.

"People tell us time will heal," said Bal Gupta, an engineer in the Ontario Hydro, who lost his beloved wife, Ramwati, in the tragedy. "Our life will never be normal," Gupta said in an interview.

Dev Gossian, 40, an aerospace engineer who lost his wife, a young daughter and son, said he continues to cry. He went to Cork, Ireland, the place of the tragedy, in 1986 "to cry some more."

There were warnings and tips about impending terrorism and threat against Air-India in May and June of 1985. The legal documents, filed in the Canadian courts on behalf of the victims' families, charge that the Canadian government was warned verbally and in writing in May and June of 1985, that Air-India feared its operations could be in danger, John Nunziata, Liberal Party member of the House of Commons said recently.

It's further alleged in the legal docu-

ments that a "dangerous device," placed on board the aircraft at either Pearson International Airport in Toronto or Mirabel Airport, near Montreal, caused an explosion that led to the crash of Air-India flight 182 June 23, 1985 and took all passengers and crew members to "their watery graves."

The smile of their souls has not returned. They go to work and may sport a smile publicly, but inside their true self, they have all been hurt

An Indian government-appointed probe panel, headed by Justice B.N. Kirpal, after eight months of investigation and testimony, concluded in February 1986, that a suitcase bomb planted by a terrorist caused the Air-India jumbo jet to explode. The testimony of Canadian experts coincided with the Indian experts that indicated that a bomb was placed in a suitcase checked into a Canadian Pacific Air plane at Vancouver and transferred to the Air-India flight 182 at Toronto.

The Canadian Aviation Safety Board appeared to agree with the Kirpal Commission finding that an explosion was caused by a bomb.

Nunziata and Bob Kaplan, former Solicitor-General and now Liberal Party member of the House of Commons, want a full judicial inquiry into the investigation. Nunziata says Air-India "didn't know a bomb was going to be placed on that particular flight, but they were worried about something happening. They wanted extra security."

Therefore, when "there was a threat and the federal government was aware of it, every piece of luggage should have been hand searched."

Solicitor-General, James Kelleher claimed last September, "It's a question as to the point when you can go before a court and lay a charge." That hasn't materialized so far. Meanwhile, it was recently disclosed that several hours of taped conversations among the alleged Sikh extremists believed related to the Air-India bombing conspiracy have been erased by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS).

Nobody seems to know the contents of the tapes erased. Some vital information relating to the conspiracy may have been lost in the process.

Victims' families want the investigation



Memorial for the Air-India victims at Cork

Deep Scars Remain 30 Months After Air-India Crash

to be completed as soon as possible and criminal charges filed against the terrorists who may be responsible for bombing the Air-India flight 182.

"To lessen our pain the Canadian government should speed up the inquiry and bring the culprits to justice," said S. Kalshi, who lost his 21-year old daughter, Indira, in the crash.

"Our pain is the same after 30 months," he said. "But we continue to endure it as there's nothing else we can do." Wiping his tears, he told this writer, "Indira was a bright, intelligent girl and it was at the prime of her youth that she was taken away from us."

All members of the victims' families are unanimous in their anger over the delay on the part of the Canadian government to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice.

"Families are now doubting the capacity of the government to bring the culprits to justice," Gupta said.

A Canadian government official claimed in Cork at the time of the first anniversary of the tragedy that police know "precisely" who was responsible for an explosion that ripped through the luggage hold of the Air-India jet. But investigators, he reportedly said, lack the evidence to guarantee criminal prosecution. The official, whose name was not disclosed in a published report here said investigators believed it would be better to prolong the investigation than put their case to the rigorous criteria of a criminal prosecution in which the suspects might get off.

Salim Jiwa, a Vancouver-based journalist and author of the book "The Death of Air-India Flight 182" also claims "police know who the terrorists are and said at least

hours upon hours of wiretapped and bugged conversation, suspects remain unfettered.

A rift between the RCMP and the CSIS has hindered the progress of the enquiry. In



Indira Kalsi: victim of the fatal crash

fact, it's the result of this rift that the erasure of the tapes became public.

Globe and Mail newspaper observed, "Instead of resolving the bombing, the tapes are leading to other conspiracy charges that some critics say are being used as tactical maneuver to put pressure on the Sikh community. Extremist Sikhs are principal suspects in the Air-India tragedy."

"There's a known common tactic with police and security services: shake the tree

as long as you can and hope that something falls," says Yoram Hamizrachi, an expert in terrorism. He's a former commander of the Israeli army and currently head of study in counter-terrorism in the University of Manitoba.

"They are now doing this with the Sikhs and are hoping that someone will break down,"

Hamizrachi said.

According to the Globe and Mail sources, "The search for the terrorists has been fraught with initial confusion caused by 'political pressures from Ottawa that resulted in premature raids that tipped the hand of the police'."

The arrests of founder of the Babbar Khalsa, Talwinder Singh Parmar, and a mechanic from Duncan, British Columbia,

Inderjit Singh Riyat, in November 1985, on explosive charges connected with the Air-India tragedy was termed as "the downside" of the investigation.

"We blew it in the raids [on several Sikh homes and businesses] in British Columbia," an anonymous police investigator told Globe and Mail. "The upside is that we still have time on our side and somebody may still crack."

That hasn't happened after 17 months since a claim on these lines was made.

Parmar was set free without any charge against him. Riyat case ended with a \$2,000 fine and five years of probation. Judge Robert Metzger of the British Columbia High Court refused to admit testimony from the RCMP and CSIS stating that he was dealing with a serious criminal. The Judge rejected any connection of the charges before him with the Air-India and Tokyo tragedies.

Suspicion was focused on two fugitives, Ammand Singh and Lal Singh, of masterminding the bombing of flight 182. It was stated by the intelligence authorities, based on their initial investigations, that they checked two suitcases June 22. One man was booked on a CP Air flight to Tokyo and the other on a CP Air flight to Toronto. Both held connecting tickets for Air-India flights. Both cases bore tags indicating they were to be transferred to connecting flights. Neither man boarded the planes in Vancouver. One suitcase in any case was reportedly transferred in Toronto to the Air-India flight 182. The other suitcase exploded in the hands of the baggage handler at Narita Airport in Tokyo when it was being off-loaded the CP Air.

Some experts at Pearson International

"Families are now doubting the capacity of the government to bring the culprits to justice"

three are from Metro."

Despite such claims so, far there's been no success in filing charges against the terrorists. After 30 months having elapsed since the tragedy took place, investigations by dozens of Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and CSIS officers in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, New Delhi, London, New York, Bombay and Tokyo, \$60 million having already been spent, and

Suspicion was focused on two fugitives, Ammand Singh and Lal Singh, of masterminding the bombing of flight 182

Airport in Toronto feel that guards under contract from Burns International Security obviously missed the bomb. An x-ray machine had broken down that day and the guards were using a hand held scanner that the RCMP later described as "useless." Despite a baggage number system at the Toronto airport designed to make sure no unaccompanied baggage was loaded, Am-

Deep Scars Remain 30 Months After Air-India Crash

mand Singh's suitcase was put aboard.

Jiwa claims, even if the unaccompanied suitcase of Ammand Singh had been opened and physically inspected it is doubtful the bomb would have been spotted as Indian passengers sometimes pack television sets, electronic instruments etc. in their suitcases.

But a close contact by the hand held scanner would have set off the "loud piercing" scream, indicating the presence of explosives, Jiwa suggests. Instead, he says, Burn security guard on duty, James Post, heard a feeble beep and passed the suitcase containing the bomb shipped from Vancouver.

Families of victims are tired of claims by Ottawa that the RCMP know who planted a bomb aboard Air-India jet, Kanishka, but lack enough evidence to lay charges. They say they are being denied justice.

Prakash Bedi, a metallurgist from Sarnia, MI., lost his entire family: wife, Saroj, daughter, Anu, 15 and son, Jatin, 9, in the crash. "The souls of the innocent victims of Air-India are still crying because there is no justice," Bedi lamented.

Hanan Radhakrishnan, an engineer in Ontario Hydro, said, "Terrorists are being sheltered in Canada." Radhakrishnan lost his wife and two children: Jyoti, 13, and



Ramwati Gupta, lost her life in the disaster

up at four in the morning with a "curse on my breath for them."

To Chatlani, a garment industry broker in Montreal, "What happened has totally destroyed my house. I am 48. I cannot go back, and I cannot go forward." He calls himself "Mister Zero". When he prays, he asks "God to take me too."

Gupta asked, "What effort is the RCMP really making to lay [file] charges against the terrorists? If they know who they are, why can't they prove it?"

Canadian Security Intelligence Review Committee (CSIRC) is concerned that investigation into the Air-India crash be conducted effectively and quickly.

Ron Atkey, Chairman of the Committee, recently told the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor-General that the "country's top priority must be to bring the culprits to justice."

In case there was any bungling on the part of the Canadian security services, Atkey said: "That can be determined later after the culprits have been punished or when all hope of ever finding them and bringing them to justice is gone." Atkey would like to wait for some time "before launching a full enquiry."

In his remarks before the Justice Committee, Nunziata said there was a need for "a more in-depth look at some of the very serious concerns" about the Air-India investigation. He referred to repeated assertions by the Solicitor-General that criminal

investigation is going on. The fact was the investigation "was bungled, and a lot of other stuff was bungled" and he called it a "Mickey Mouse" operation because of what has happened.

"The families of the victims have a right to be told frankly what is going on with the criminal investigation."

Gupta, who is the convener of the group representing victims' families, broke down while speaking to India Worldwide recently. "I do not know anything about the progress of the investigation. The government has never told us about it. They have never established direct contact with us."

"Nobody can undo what has been done, but we have been comparing what the Irish people and Air-India people have done for us with what we haven't received from the Canadian government - and it makes us bitter," Gupta said when he was in Cork shortly after the tragedy to identify his wife's body.

According to him, victims' families were not met by any official representing the Canadian government when they arrived in Cork, and that there was little effort to help them adjust to the confusing procedures there.

"We are Canadians, but we were treated like third-class citizens," Gupta emphasized. "What we were looking for was a caring touch, or just some moral touch."

"The souls of the innocent victims of Air-India are still crying because there is no justice"

Tejas 8. He declared, "More and more people are becoming victims of terrorism. There is sense of frustration and lack of confidence in the intelligence services."

Padmini Turlapati of Scarborough, whose two sons died in the crash, said: "There was a plot, a sacrifice and then senselessness. And the fellows who did it didn't even have the guts to come forward." What happened," she said, "shook my belief in man, society - even a thing called God." Turlapati said he was now "trying to live from day to day and build up again the trust that I used to have."

Even 30 months after the tragedy, Harry Chatlani, who lost his wife and son, wakes

"We are Canadians, but we were treated like third-class citizens. What we were looking for was a caring touch, or just some moral touch"

It was at the first memorial service in June 1986 that House of Commons member Rolland de Corneille (Liberal Party) touched on the theme that the tragedy was perceived as an Asian Indian tragedy by too many Canadians.

He bluntly noted, "I feel if we are honest....not enough Canadians were deeply touched. Not enough Canadians gave it enough thought; not enough Canadians considered that many Canadians were killed."

(Ajit Jain is a writer based in Toronto.)

Canadian Politician Seeks Royal Commission to Probe Crash

By JOHN NUNZIATA

Two and half years after the Air-India crash on June 23, 1985 there are far more questions than answers about this national tragedy. It is becoming increasingly evident that there were many significant warning signals that went unheeded by the Canadian government officials.

The unrest that triggered the passions that resulted in the bombing of the Air-India jet can be traced back to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab in June, 1984. Escalating tension as a result of Sikh nationalism in the Punjab through May and early June made a violent confrontation with the Indian government inevitable. On June 5 and 6, 1984 the Indian Army stormed the Golden Temple leaving many casualties, including the Sikh leader Sant Jarnail Bhindranwale.

The desire for retribution among radical Sikhs was intense and the assassination of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 only seemed to whet the bloody appetite for revenge. Even though India was half a world away, Canada was drawn into the conflict by a small group of radical Canadian Sikhs. Unlike the vast majority of peace-loving Sikh-Canadians, these individuals were prepared to use violence and terror to accomplish their objectives.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) was well aware of the potential for violence by radical Sikhs in Canada. In fact, the CSIS had a number of radical Sikhs under surveillance and was producing a steady stream of "threat assessments" for the government.

As early as September 1984, intelligence officials were getting warnings about the possibility that Air-India would be bombed. Air-India, which was clearly a target, asked for increased security for its Canadian operations. In addition to the various intelligence reports in late 1984 and early 1985, speculation was rampant in the Sikh and Hindu communities on the West Coast about possible violence. A further warning was transmitted from the government of India to the Department of External Affairs in May of 1985, alerting the Department to possible



John Nunziata, Member of House of Commons

violence in the month of June, the first anniversary of the storming of the Golden Temple by Indian troops.

With only one Air-India flight a week leaving Canada, it was imperative that extra security be put in place. Although a general alert existed, when the x-ray

With only one Air-India flight a week leaving Canada, it was imperative that extra security be put in place. Although a general alert existed, when the x-ray machine at Pearson International Airport broke down on that fateful day, the Canadian airport security system collapsed like a house of cards

machine at Pearson International Airport broke down on that fateful day, the Canadian airport security system collapsed like a house of cards.

There was no hand-searching of baggage, no bomb-sniffing dogs and no system of keeping unaccompanied luggage off the plane. The only security between Air-India Flight 182 and the bomb that eventually blew it out of the sky was the grossly ineffectual PD-4 mechanical bomb sniffer, which the private security staff were not fully trained to use.

Should the government have taken more precautions? Should they accept responsibility for the Air-India crash?

The answer to both questions is "yes."

Unfortunately, the government has tried to avoid culpability for the crash of Flight 182.

The Air-India crash has never been considered a national tragedy by this government (headed by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney). In fact, the government has shown shocking insensitivity to the families of the victims. Mulroney's message of condolence to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, even though the vast majority of victims were Canadians, left the victims' families wondering if they were fully accepted as Canadians by their own government.

The absence of any program or effort by the government to assist and inform the families of the victims has also compounded the feeling of neglect. What is particularly painful for the families of many of the victims is the fact that the perpetrators of this heinous crime have not been brought to justice.

There is also evidence that the investigation was badly mishandled from the beginning; that CSIS and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) allowed jurisdictional jealousies to interfere with their investigative work. The inconclusive court cases in late 1985 involving Talwinder Singh Parmar and Inderjit Singh Reyat, the false CSIS affidavits in the Atwal case and the erasure of CSIS surveil-

lance tapes all point toward a bungled investigation that may never result in charges being laid.

Two and half years after the deaths of 329 people aboard Air-India Flight 182, it is time that the government of Canada established a Royal Commission of Inquiry to answer the many questions that still surround this national tragedy.

(John Nunziata is a Liberal Party's Member of House of Commons in Canada.)

A Public Probe into Kanishka Crash May Bring Justice

By ALAN REDWAY

I was shocked to learn from news reports that evidence relating to the investigation of the crash of Air-India Flight 182, a crash which took the lives of 329 people - the vast majority of whom were Canadian citizens - had apparently been deliberately destroyed.

Ever since the crash occurred on June 23, 1985, I have been monitoring the investigation as closely and carefully as I could. In response to my many regular enquiries of the Solicitor-General of Canada, I have been repeatedly advised that the investigation is the most extensive and the most costly criminal investigation ever undertaken in this country.

According to the Solicitor-General, there have been 200 RCMP and CSIS officers engaged in the investigation. The Solicitor-General has advised me each time that the investigation is ongoing and extremely active and that he hopes that there will be charges laid in the case very shortly.

Unfortunately, of course, assurances of this sort have been ongoing for two and a half years. It is astounding and incomprehensible to learn now that tape recordings of evidence relating to the case had been erased, and apparently deliberately erased.

Following the revelations, when I pressed the Solicitor-General on this sub-



Jyothi and Thajus Radhakrishna: Both died in the crash

ject, he again indicated most firmly that he could not comment on the specific allegations of tape erasures, but that the investigation was still being vigorously pursued.

If, in fact, the investigation is continuous and ongoing and being vigorously pursued, no one would want to interfere with it. If a public enquiry into the situation were undertaken while the investigation was ongoing, it would most certainly divert the energy of the police forces away

from the investigation and toward efforts to justify their own actions in this case. That begs the question - what evidence is there that the investigation is being pressed at this point?

I believe that it is important for the Solicitor-General of Canada to advise all Canadians of all the facts. How many agents were involved in the investigation initially? How many are involved in the investigation now? How many were engaged last month? How many were engaged the month before? Are the number of agents involved decreasing? Is the investigation becoming merely a routine baby sitting effort?

At the first indication that the investigation is being wound down, I personally believe that a public enquiry should be launched immediately to ascertain all of the facts and to ascertain as well if everything possible has been done in this case that should and could be done to bring before the courts, those responsible for this terrible act.

Ideally, however, we would be identifying those responsible and laying (filing) charges against them rather than investigating the investigators. Justice must be done in this, the most horrible crime ever perpetrated against Canadians.

(Alan Redway is a member of the Canadian House of Commons)

Reyat, wanted in Narita Explosion, is held by British Police

The British police recently arrestedINDERJIT Singh Reyat, a member of the extremist Babbar Khalsa organisation.

Reyat, arrested by the West Midlands police February 5, has been charged with eight counts, including two counts of manslaughter, as a result of explosion at Narita Airport. Even though he has not been directly linked with the bombing of Air India Boeing 747, the Canadian authorities say arrest of Reyat could be a major breakthrough in the Air India investigations, the worst tragedy in the aviation history, that brought international terrorism to the Canadian border.

After his first ordeal ended early 1986, when he was living in Duncan (British Columbia) Reyat, with his wife and three children, shifted to Coventry (England). He has dual - Canadian and British - nationalities.

West Midland police said Reyat was arrested at the request of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Canadian government lawyer, Clive Nicholas, told a British Court Judge, William Robins, February 7, that he needed two months time to present his evidence for extradition of Reyat to Canada. His case, Nichols said, will involve 65 Canadian and 95 Japanese witnesses. Many of the statements from the Japanese have yet to be recorded. So, the Canadian authorities needed time to present their case before the court.

Canadian authorities, Nichols indicated, were forced to seek Reyat's arrest before they would have liked. They decided they had no choice because of recent "press coverage in Canada on this... matter."

The Vancouver Province claimed the RCMP are investigating the possibility that a former Vancouver Airport employee helped check the bomb aboard the jetliner in June 1985.

William Pristanski, chief of staff of Solicitor-General, James Kelleher, was

unwilling to confirm or deny about the RCMP investigation.

Simultaneously the Sikh community in Vancouver said many other Sikh leaders have been questioned in Vancouver following Reyat's arrest.

British Sikh community is opposing Reyat's extradition to Canada to face alleged charges of manslaughter, etc.

Why did Canadian authorities not arrest Reyat before he moved to England in 1986, if there was any evidence against him? "Why is there evidence now?" Avtar Singh Sanghera, a spokesman for the Sikh community, asked soon after Reyat's arrest.

Leaders of the Indian community in Toronto are of the opinion "RCMP have iron-clad evidence this time. It will be terrible for the Canadian government if the case is blown once again."

(Ajit Jain is a contributor based in Toronto.)