



WEDS IN AN AMERICAN-BRANDED HOTEL

Summary and Action Request

1. (U) This is an Action Request. See paragraph 13.
2. (C) Like a bad dream, terrorist and underworld figure Dawood Ibrahim returned to the headlines of India's media in July when his daughter married the son of a famous Pakistani cricket player. An upscale wedding reception brazenly took place at the ostensibly American-run Grand Hyatt hotel in Dubai on July 23. Ibrahim, India's most wanted man for the 1993 Bombay bombings that killed hundreds, and a U.S. Specially Designated Global Terrorist, reportedly did not attend the event. One media outlet mentioned, however, that Ibrahim, believed to be living in Pakistan, traveled on forged documents to witness the nikah (wedding) ceremony of the couple on July 9 in Mecca. The wedding and subsequent reception generated intense interest in the Indian media, which reported that Indian police and security services were shadowing business, entertainment and underworld figures from India who might try to attend the reception. In the end, no prominent Indians actually showed up in Dubai. The manner in which Ibrahim could so blatantly stage such an event has infuriated our Indian contacts.
3. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Since Ibrahim has been a topic of effective US/India CT cooperation, we believe the USG should send a strong signal of solidarity and zero tolerance by generating a demarche asking the Grand Hyatt, per E.O. 13224, where the money for the reception came from, and how, and why they chose to associate an American brand so shamefully with an Indian terrorist. We should also publicize the fact that we are making such an inquiry. End Summary and Action Request.

Where in the world is Dawood Ibrahim?

4. (C) Dawood Ibrahim was the undisputed kingpin of the Mumbai underworld before he fled India in the 1980s. Indian security agencies believe he was involved in the 1993 Mumbai bombings that killed several hundred people. In 2003, the Department of Treasury designated Ibrahim as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under E.O. 13224. The Indian media is never short of speculation and rumors about his whereabouts and his continued involvement in the Indian underworld. In India, it is widely believed that Ibrahim is living in Karachi, Pakistan, from where he runs his underworld empire. Late last year, however, one Indian newspaper reported that Ibrahim, fearing that his Pakistani protectors might hand him over to the U.S., was actively seeking a new hiding spot in an unnamed third country. The press has also reported that Ibrahim underwent plastic surgery to change his appearance and that he regularly travels outside of Pakistan on forged documents. "Ibrahim knows where he



is, but I'm not sure if anyone else does," was all that Police Commissioner Roy was willing to tell us on the margins of an event in July.

Ibrahim's Daughter Weds in Dubai

5. (SBU) In July Ibrahim's daughter married the son of Pakistan cricket legend Javed Miandad. The couple had reportedly met while they both were studying in London. A reception attended by about 250 people was held on July 23 at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Dubai, UAE. A sizeable media contingent from India staked out the hotel, but was prevented by the organizers and their tough private security firms from filming the event or even getting close to the hotel ballroom where it took place. Ibrahim reportedly did not attend, although the India media alleged that he watched via an online connection from his supposed hideout in Pakistan. Any public appearance would have likely led to his immediate arrest, since Interpol had earlier issued a "red corner" notice against him. A second reception was scheduled for August 4 in Karachi, where the bridegroom's family also lives.

Was Ibrahim in Mecca for Nikah?

6. (SBU) After the Dubai reception, the Times of India reported that Ibrahim had earlier traveled incognito to Mecca for the July 9 nikah, the solemnization of the marriage. The newspaper claimed that Ibrahim entered Saudi Arabia with a false identity and a Pakistani passport. The media speculated that Ibrahim purposely fueled the media hype about his attendance in the Dubai reception in order to draw attention away from the more important objective of attending the nikah in Mecca. Indian police officials have remained tight-lipped about the newspaper's report, and like so much of the media coverage of Ibrahim, the Times did not follow up and the story was dropped quickly.

Police, Intelligence Services Shadow Potential Guests

7. SBU) Many of Ibrahim's family and former associates still live in Mumbai. It is widely acknowledged that he and his network continue to be a dominant force in the city's underworld. In the weeks prior to the Dubai reception, the Indian police and intelligence services reportedly monitored the movements and tapped the phones of many of Ibrahim's supposed contacts in the Indian underworld and in the business and entertainment sectors. The authorities hoped that the monitoring would reveal information about the wedding planning or even Ibrahim's whereabouts. None of the better-known names went to Dubai, however, possibly out of fear of being too closely identified with Ibrahim in public. Two of Ibrahim's associates were also arrested in Mumbai after a local businessman told the police that they had tried to extort money



from him to finance the Dubai reception.

Murky Arrest in Delhi: Is There an Ibrahim Connection?

8. (SBU) The media quickly linked the murky arrest of several alleged underworld figures in New Delhi on July 11 to Ibrahim and the wedding. Subsequently, however, it became unclear how, if at all, the arrests were tied to Ibrahim. In early July a group of Mumbai policemen traveled to Delhi to stake out Vicky Malhotra, an underworld figure who had been charged with numerous crimes, including murder, extortion and arms smuggling. On July 11 the Mumbai police arrested Malhotra while he was driving through central Delhi. Accompanying Malhotra was Ajit Kumar Doval, former head of the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB). Doval was allowed to go free, whereas Malhotra and two associates who were picked up later were taken to Mumbai where they now face criminal charges. Doval himself as well as GOI officials from the Home Ministry later declined to comment about the incident.

9. (SBU) Thereafter the Indian media was rife with speculation about why the former head of India's premier intelligence service was caught with a known underworld figure. As is often the case on media coverage of the underworld, Ibrahim was quickly assumed to have had a hand in the incident. Malhotra is the right hand man of gangster Chhota Rajan, a fierce rival of Ibrahim. Rajan was once Ibrahim's lieutenant, but broke up with Ibrahim after the 1993 Mumbai bombings. The two have reportedly been fierce rivals since. Communal tensions between Ibrahim, a Muslim, and Rajan, a Hindu, were also believed to have contributed to the breakup. Rajan reportedly objected to the bomb attacks, which were part of a chain of violent retributions surrounding right-wing Hindus' destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in 1992. Rajan was thought to be living somewhere in Southeast Asia, but recent press reports claim that is now hiding in Europe. He and Malhotra are believed to have been responsible for the targeted killing of a number of Ibrahim's associates.

10. (C) The media originally speculated that the IB wanted to use Malhotra to target and kill Ibrahim if he traveled to Dubai to attend the reception. According to this theory, Doval acted as the conduit between the IB and Malhotra. The Mumbai police were either unaware that the IB was collaborating with Rajan, and surprised the IB operation with its own sting, or, plausibly, some even speculated that Ibrahim was aware of the IB/Rajan plot against him and had tipped off the Mumbai police, many of whom work directly or indirectly for him.

11. (SBU) The GOI and the Mumbai police have not commented on the incident. The arrests and the presence of former IB chief Doval are established facts. Since the authorities are not publicly talking, everything else about the incident is speculation of media outlets, which have given much



contradictory information in their reporting as the story unfolded. For example, several newspapers originally reported that the Delhi police were unaware of the Mumbai police presence in their district. Later, however, the same papers wrote that the Delhi and Mumbai police had in fact worked together to apprehend Malhotra.

Continued Mumbai Police Links With Ibrahim

12. (SBU) In the days following the arrest Mumbai Police Commissioner A.N. Roy fired senior police inspector Aslam Momin. Roy said wiretapping had revealed that Momin had links with Ibrahim and Ibrahim's two brothers. The media immediately speculated that Ibrahim had used Momin to tip off the Mumbai police to arrest gangster Malhotra in Delhi, thus foiling the IS/Malhotra plot against him, Ibrahim. One paper quoted unnamed IS officials as saying the service was irate that the Delhi incident became public. Suspecting that Momin may have been the leak, the IS gave the Mumbai police evidence documenting Momin's underworld connections. Police officials did not comment on the rumors. (Note: Momin was a so-called "encounter specialist," a euphemism for a police hit man who carries out extra-judicial killings of highly sought after underworld figures. There is no legal basis for such killings, which are executed under the guise of a shootout where the involved police officers claim they act in self-defense. The publicly acknowledged link between a police hit man and Ibrahim highlighted the well-known interaction between police and the underworld. Human rights groups have long argued that police hit men often have close ties with the underworld figures they are supposed to target. The hit men spare their intended victims in return for bribes, it is argued, or they take bribes from one gang to knock off rivals from another gang. Read Sukethu Mehta's book "Maximum City" for more details on "encounters," Dawood, the police, and the Mumbai underworld. End note)

Comment and Action Request

13. (C) If the Mumbai police know the whereabouts of Ibrahim, they are not talking. Although most of the intense media interest in Ibrahim is speculation, Ibrahim continues to cast a broad and sinister web of influence in India. It is also an established fact that his daughter was the focus of an upscale wedding reception in Dubai on July 23 at a hotel carrying a famous American brand name. We find the hotel's judgment lacking, and its corporate parent ought to be asking some questions of its franchise in Dubai.

14. (C) Action Request: Ibrahim has been a topic of effective US/India CT cooperation, and our October 2003 listing of him as a specially designated terrorist was a turning point in our bilateral dialogue on the issue. Embassy New Delhi reports that Ibrahim's staging of his daughter's reception is such an open



manner is a serious concern to the GOI. Our Indian contacts are perplexed and angry at how Ibrahim could brazenly host such an event. We believe the USG should send a strong signal of solidarity and zero tolerance by generating a demarche asking the Grand Hyatt in Dubai where the money came from, and how. We should also ask the Hyatt corporation in the U.S. how their local franchise could have made such a questionable decision. Such a demarche should make the Hyatt chain, which is viewed here as an "American" company, explain why they took money for a wedding that was likely paid for -- directly or indirectly -- by the most wanted man in India, a man who is also on the US government's list of foreign terrorist entities. If Washington concurs, we suggest that we also inform the Indian and UAE governments (in Dubai and Abu Dhabi) of our approach to the Dubai Grand Hyatt.

15. (C) This action request was formulated jointly with Embassy New Delhi, which strongly endorses this request. End comment and action request.