

Shooting at CIA HQ remains a mystery

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Even though the FBI and Fairfax County, Virginia police have identified a Pakistani national, Mir Aimal Kansi, as the man who shot five people outside the main gate of the CIA at Langley on Jan. 25, many crucial questions about the terrorist incident remain unanswered, and many experienced observers believe that the mystery will never be solved. During the Monday morning rush hour on Jan. 25, a man armed with a rifle walked down a row of cars stopped at a traffic light on Route 123 just outside the main headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency and fired into five cars. He then disappeared on foot, leaving two career CIA officers, Frank Darling and Lansing Bennett, dead and three others wounded.

Despite a dragnet throughout Greater Washington, police failed to capture the shooter, and it would be days before any serious leads emerged. Sources close to the probe told *EIR* that from the outset, the CIA was largely uncooperative with the police investigation.

It was only on Feb. 8—two weeks after the shootings—that police honed in on Mir Aimal Kansi as the prime suspect. By that point, Kansi had fled the United States, returned to his home town of Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan, and then disappeared from Quetta. News accounts speculate that he crossed the border into either Iran or Afghanistan.

Despite public claims of an international manhunt involving cooperation between American and Pakistani officials, it was admitted on Feb. 17 that photographs of Kansi and information about his March 1991 illegal entry into the United States only arrived in Pakistan on Feb. 16!

A targeted attack?

Sources close to the probe have told *EIR* that top officials of the CIA are baffled and worried about the incident. In particular, they are not sure whether the attack was—as it has been widely described—“random,” or whether one of the two killed CIA agents was actually the target. Speculation has centered around Frank Darling, a 28-year-old clandestine Services officer who may have been involved in sensitive investigations in Southwest Asia as part of his last assignment for the agency. According to one source, Darling

had successfully penetrated an intelligence operation involving Israeli, Chinese, and Russian agents. According to published accounts, Darling may have been involved in supplying arms to CIA-backed Afghan Mujahideen rebels during the 1980s.

If the shootings were actually aimed at Darling (he was shot three times, whereas all the other victims were only shot once), the question then emerges: Was the “hit” carried out by one of the three intelligence agencies cited above? An assassination in broad daylight, outside the main gate of CIA headquarters, is quite a provocative act, and could trigger the kind of bloody intelligence warfare that often characterized the tensest moments of the Cold War.

A lot of blue smoke and mirrors

Predictably, the American media have had a field day speculating about the suspected killer Mir Aimal Kansi. Among the most bizarre features of his profile is his employment by a courier service owned by the son of former CIA official Victor Marchetti. A former executive assistant to the deputy to CIA director Richard Helms, Marchetti quit the agency in 1969 and wrote one of the earliest exposés of U.S. intelligence, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. Pundits like National Public Radio commentator Daniel Schorr and *Washington Times* reporter Bill Gertz waxed eloquent trying to link Marchetti’s anti-CIA profile to Kansi, in efforts to develop a possible motive for the killings.

In an interview with *EIR*, Marchetti—who says he never met Kansi or had any other kind of contact with him—said that he could not rule out that Kansi had worked with the CIA in Pakistan. Kansi’s home town, Quetta, was the base for CIA covert arms shipments to the Afghan Mujahideen rebels.

Whether or not Kansi had a past history of links to the CIA or any other intelligence agency, the circumstances of the shootings and his uncanny ability to stay one step ahead of the law certainly paint a picture of someone skilled in covert operations and backed up by others providing him with critical intelligence. The fact that neither the FBI nor the CIA made any effort to bring Pakistani officials in on the case in a timely fashion also raises more questions.

Israeli government agencies, as well as U.S.-based groups like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) are pressuring the Clinton administration to declare Iran’s fundamentalist regime and Islamic groups like Hamas to be the “new enemy image.” They have seized on the Kansi affair to push the line that the shootings outside the Central Intelligence Agency were the work of Islamic terrorists, further muddying the waters.

If recent history is any guide, the CIA will continue to obstruct the probe, while running its own parallel quest for the truth about the Jan. 25 attack. Chances are that the public will be treated to large amounts of “blue smoke and mirrors” and that the real story will never see the light of day.