

Attorneys say American who admitted scouting for [Mumbai](#) attack is telling terrorists' secrets

An American who admitted slipping quietly into the Indian city of Mumbai on scouting missions that led to the November 2008 attack that left 166 people dead already has started spilling terrorists' secrets to U.S. authorities, according to his attorney and federal prosecutors.

[David Coleman Headley](#) pleaded guilty Thursday in [U.S. District Court](#) in [Chicago](#) to laying the groundwork for the massacre in Mumbai and performing similar surveillance in anticipation of an attack on a Danish newspaper whose cartoons depicting the [Prophet Muhammad](#) were offensive to Muslims.

Federal officials say the 49-year-old Headley, who was arrested in Chicago in October, has become a valuable asset to the war on terrorism, furnishing information about terrorist networks in exchange for a promise that he won't be executed.

"Not only has the criminal justice system achieved a guilty plea in this case, but David Headley is now providing us valuable intelligence about terrorist activities," [Attorney General Eric Holder](#) said in a statement.

Headley appearing in leg irons and a prison-issued orange jumpsuit pleaded guilty to all 12 counts in the indictment against him, including conspiracy to provide material aid to the Pakistani-based terrorist group [Lashkar-e-Taiba](#) (Army of the Pure) and to the murder of six Americans in Mumbai. The U.S. and [India](#) say the 10 gunmen in the three-day siege in Mumbai were trained and directed by Lashkar.

"Are you pleading guilty of your own free, voluntary will?" [U.S. District Judge Harry Leinenweber](#) asked. "I am," Headley said softly, speaking with a slight British accent.

Defense attorney [Robert Seeder](#) told reporters afterward that Headley's decision to help the U.S. government was "a manifestation and example of his regret and remorse" and not based just on the agreement that spares him the death penalty. Headley still faces a potential life sentence but could get a lesser term.

"He has provided significant help to the [United States](#) and aided other countries," said Seeder, who declined to reveal specifics.

Headley was born in the U.S. as Daood Gilani to a Pakistani father and American mother. They later moved to [Pakistan](#), where Headley spent his early years. According to court documents, Headley changed his name in 2006 to get across international boundaries without too many questions.

In his signed plea agreement, Headley told how he met with terrorist leader [Ilyas Kashmiri](#) in [Waziristan](#) in the tribal areas of western Pakistan in May 2009. He said Kashmiri put him in touch with a European contact who could provide weapons and manpower for the Danish attack.

Kashmiri and a retired [Pakistani military](#) man, Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed, also are charged in the indictment. Their whereabouts are unknown.

According to the indictment, Kashmiri has been in regular contact with the No. 3 man in [Osama bin Laden](#)'s al-Qaida terrorist network, Sheikh [Mustafa Abu al-Yazid](#).

Headley said men he understood to be leaders of [al-Qaida](#) urged quick action in attacking the newspaper [Jyllands Posten](#), which printed the cartoons. The attack never happened.

Headley said Kashmiri wanted the attack on the newspaper to be a suicide mission. He said Kashmiri wanted the attackers to

take captives and behead them, then throw the heads out of the newspaper building.

According to a law enforcement official briefed on the investigation, the [FBI](#) had only the first name "David" to go on when it launched the investigation in the summer of 2009. The FBI did know that David traveled internationally, according to the official who spoke only on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to provide information to the public.

The FBI alerted Customs and Border Protection to be on the lookout for David, particularly among those going to and from Pakistan, according to the account. Customs and Border Protection apparently singled out Headley through a process of elimination.

When Headley returned to the U.S. in August 2009, Custom and Border Protection officers questioned him and alerted the FBI, which placed him under surveillance, the official said. Indian Home Minister [Palaniappan Chidambaram](#) said Friday that India had yet to receive permission from U.S. authorities to speak with Headley or his wife.

"We will continue to press our request for access to interrogate him," Chidambaram told reporters.

Chidambaram said he also planned to continue to push a request to extradite Headley to face charges in India but had little hope of success because the plea agreement expressly forbade his extradition to India, [Denmark](#) and Pakistan.

Under his agreement, Headley may have to testify against co-defendant [Tahawwur Hussain Rana](#).

Rana, a 49-year-old Canadian who also lived in Chicago, has pleaded not guilty to conspiring to provide material support to terrorists in Denmark and India, as well as to Lashkar.

Messages seeking comment were left for Rana attorney
Patrick Blegen.