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# FBI Frustrated by Fugitive

## Victims' Families Press Case of Killings Outside CIA Headquarters

By David B. Ottaway  
Washington Post Staff Writer

For now, Mir Aimal Kanshi is the fugitive who couldn't be caught.

More than two years after he allegedly opened fire on unsuspecting CIA employees waiting in their cars at a stoplight outside CIA headquarters, killing two and wounding three, Kanshi has become a painful reminder of the limits of the U.S. government's capability to apprehend a suspected international terrorist in today's unsettled world.

FBI agents have scoured the remote, dangerous area of Pakistan where they say he is hiding, sometimes disguising himself in women's clothing. Twice they attempted to set traps for him; twice they came back empty-handed.

It is hard enough to hunt down a man who does not want to be found. But the Kanshi case is further complicated by internal Pakistani politics, by the State Department's concern that an all-out effort to arrest Kanshi could lead to retaliation against American diplomatic personnel and by the possible ramifications of Kanshi's arrest on shaky U.S.-Pakistani relations.

Not everyone believes that the FBI, the lead agency in the manhunt, is doing all it could to get its man. The families of the victims have mounted a campaign to draw more attention to his case, enlisting a U.S. senator in their cause and pointing out that if U.S. authorities could overcome all the obstacles to track down another fugitive in Pakistan—the suspected mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef—then they ought to be able to catch Kanshi as well.

"I don't understand why they can't go in and get this guy," said Judy Becker-Darling, whose husband was one of two CIA employees shot to death that morning. "They got Yousef."

The families' frustration is matched by that at the FBI field office in Southwest Washington that serves as the nerve center for this far-flung investigation. A few



The FBI has sought information on Kanshi by distributing matchbooks.

months ago, the agency added Kanshi to its 10 Most Wanted List. Agents have distributed thousands

of bright-red matchbooks in Pakistan, with Kanshi's photo and the word "REWARD" in bold letters on the cover. There is even a Kanshi page on the Internet.

"AK-47 Attack," the Internet entry reads. "On January 25, 1993, Mir Aimal Kanshi murdered two persons and permanently injured three others. He attacked without warning or provocation, shooting his AK-47 assault rifle into cars waiting at a stoplight. . . . If you have information about Kanshi, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. In the U.S., call 1-800-HEROES-1."

But the 29-month-long hunt to capture Kanshi has bogged down recently over disagreements among the FBI, the State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan about how best to proceed.

The FBI has found that complex tribal customs of southwestern Pakistan, where Kanshi's family lives, are a formidable barrier to his capture. Kanshi is a native of Baluchistan, a border region that lies largely beyond the writ of Pakistan's central government. It is inhabited by tribes and clans that adhere to a code of justice based on an eye for an eye, upholding tribal honor and collectively defending the family. Local, and even federal, policemen often are tribesmen more interested in protecting than punishing their kinsmen.

Kanshi's family background is more tangled even than that. The Kanshi tribe belongs to the minority Pashtun people, who spread into neighboring Afghanistan, where they are the majority ethnic group. Kanshi's immediate family comes from around the provincial capital of Quetta, where it owns an entire downtown block, two hotels, orchards outside the city and other businesses. Shortly before Kanshi came to the United States, his father died, and Kanshi inherited \$100,000 in cash and real estate.

All this gives Kanshi an advantage that Yousef lacked in eluding authorities. Yousef has relatives in Pakistan, but he grew up in Kuwait and his family originally came from Iran. "Kanshi's family and tribe is large, powerful and influential in that part of Baluchistan," said a U.S. intelligence official. "Yousef never had that kind of strength of roots and home base."

To work in the region, the FBI needs the help of Pakistani police authorities. But in recent months, Pakistan's police have had their hands full with fierce sectarian

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## THE HUNT FOR MIR AIMAL KANSI

■ **Jan. 25, 1993:** A man wielding an AK-47 emerges from a car and fires at other autos at a stoplight outside CIA headquarters in Langley. Frank Darling, 28, and Lansing H. Bennett, 66, both CIA employees, are killed. Three others are seriously injured.

■ **Jan. 26:** Mir Aimal Kanshi, a Pakistani national living in Reston, flees the United States and returns to his home city, Quetta, in Pakistan.

■ **Feb. 10:** Kanshi is charged with the shooting spree after an AK-47 rifle and other evidence pointing to his involvement are found in his apartment.

■ **Feb. 7, 1995:** Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, suspected of building the bomb that detonated at the World Trade Center, is arrested in Islamabad, Pakistan. A colleague had alerted U.S. and Pakistani authorities to his whereabouts, apparently hoping to collect a \$2 million reward offered by the U.S. government.

■ **Feb. 8:** Yousef is extradited to the United States for trial in New York.

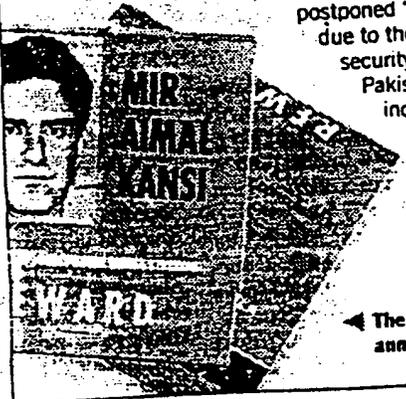
■ **Feb. 18:** The FBI places Kanshi on its 10 Most Wanted list.

■ **Feb. 22:** Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, urges President Clinton to classify Kanshi as an "international terrorist" and increase the \$100,000 reward for information leading to his arrest to \$2 million. He also writes Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto asking for Pakistan's help in apprehending Kanshi.

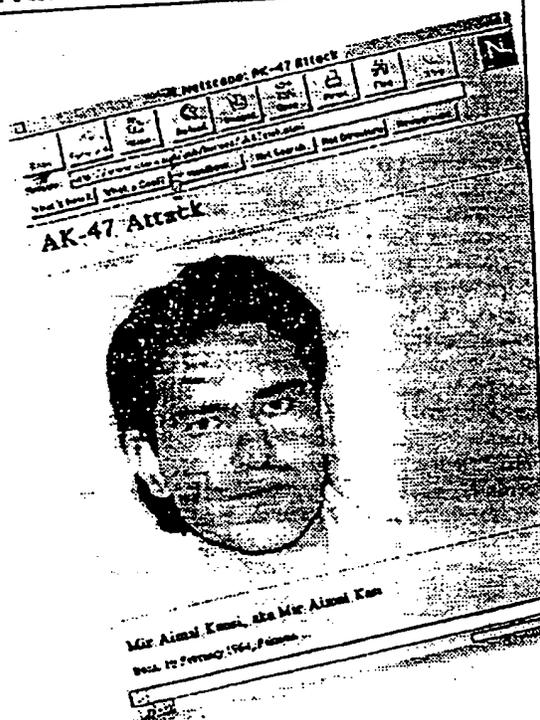
■ **March 31:** The FBI informs the State Department that it has determined the attack outside CIA headquarters was "an act of international terrorism."

■ **April:** The State Department prepares a statement announcing a \$2 million reward, but does not release it.

■ **June 16, 1995:** Judy Becker-Darling, widow of Frank Darling, is informed by the State Department that the statement will not be released and that a massive publicity campaign has been postponed "indefinitely" due to the deteriorating security situation in Pakistan and increased threats there to the lives of American diplomats.



◀ The department also has distributed 25,000 of these matchbooks, mainly in Pakistan, announcing a \$100,000 reward for information leading to Kanshi's capture.



The State Department has put this picture of Mir Aimal Kanshi, the suspected assassin of two CIA employees, and details about the shootings outside CIA headquarters on the Internet.



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clashes in Sind Province, which borders Baluchistan. Federal police resources that could be used to track Kansi are simply not available, said a police superintendent.

Investigating an American murder, even a high-profile one at the CIA, is not a high priority, according to the superintendent. "We are intensely engaged in day-to-day affairs," he said. "One doesn't do serious investigative work once engaged in combating mass-scale terrorism."

The hunt for a possible motive for Kansi's actions has led FBI agents and others to examine his school years. While at Baluchistan University in the late 1980s, Kansi became involved for a brief time in a Pashtun nationalist movement that had a distinctly anti-American edge.

Some reports have suggested that Kansi, or another member of his family, might have worked for the CIA when it was funneling weapons to anti-Soviet rebels in neighboring Afghanistan and there was a falling out. But the CIA has told the victims' families that it has conducted an exhaustive search of its files and found no evidence that any member of the Kansi family ever had any connection to the agency.

FBI officials will not say exactly what they are doing to try to penetrate this tribal network to get their hands on Kansi. Susan Lloyd, spokeswoman for the field office here, said a "handful of agents" remains permanently assigned to the Kansi manhunt and that they travel to Pakistan on a rotating basis. She described their activity over there as "more village-hopping than running with the tribes" as the agents pursue leads and clues to Kansi's whereabouts.

Since an outburst of sectarian violence in Karachi early last month, the FBI has proceeded with extra caution about sending agents there. "We don't want to put others [Americans] in harm's way for the sake of capturing Kansi," she said.

Lloyd said the FBI believes that Kansi had been staying "fairly close to home" even though he remains "somewhat mobile" within his own area. "He's a native son who knows a lot of people and is being sheltered by a lot of people," she said.

Earlier this year, the FBI strategy toward capturing Kansi began to change dramatically after the bureau came to the conclusion that its deliberately low-key campaign, aimed at catching him off guard, wasn't working.

At the end of March, the FBI reclassified him as a suspected international terrorist. This meant that the FBI could tap into the State Department's Counter-Terrorism Rewards Program and increase its offer for information leading to his arrest to as much as \$2 million.

In April, the FBI and State Department prepared to launch a massive publicity campaign inside Pakistan involving posters, pamphlets and ads in local newspapers, plus the distribution of tens of thousands of matchbooks. The State Department prepared a statement that was only missing the precise day in April for its release.

Then the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan had second thoughts. The embassy was concerned that Kansi's arrests would put American diplomats in Pakistan at risk. One reason was the rising tide of sectarian violence in Pakistan. Another was the assassination in early March of two American consular officers in Karachi by a group of well-organized gunmen who opened fire on their car.

The U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, John C. Monjo, cabled home strongly recommending that the campaign to get Kansi be put on hold, at least until the political turmoil in Pakistan abated.

Defending their decision, State Department officials note that many Pakistanis believe the shooting of the two

American consular officials was in retaliation for the arrest and extradition to the United States of Yousef—mainly because it took place exactly one month after his capture and extradition.

Kansi's extradition, if he were caught, would likely be just as problematic as his arrest, according to both U.S. and Pakistani officials.

In the case of Yousef, Pakistani authorities argued that he was not a Pakistani national, and therefore formal extradition proceedings were not required. Yousef was put on a special plane and flown back to New York within 24 hours of his arrest on Feb. 7.

But there is no doubt that Kansi is a Pakistani citizen. Thus, he would doubtlessly appeal to the Pakistani courts to stop extradition. His appeals could take weeks, time for public opposition to his extradition to build.

When Becker-Darling heard about the U.S. government's decision to postpone the campaign in mid-June, she exploded in anger. If the U.S. ambassador in Pakistan was so worried that upping the reward for Kansi's capture to \$2 million might provoke another attack on U.S. diplomats, why had he been so quick to announce a reward of the same amount after the killing of the two American consular officers in March?

Equally confusing to Becker-Darling was why it had taken the U.S. government until March 31—26 months after her husband's death—to decide his killing was "an act of international terrorism," not an ordinary criminal action.

Becker-Darling had set all her hopes on the new high-powered campaign to get Kansi. It had been four months in the making and was the result of a long lobbying effort by the victims' families, which she had spearheaded. After moving back home to Pittsburgh a few months after her husband's death, she had found her own campaign for action and justice was often a lonely battle. Furthermore, she was often criticized by U.S. officials for making such a public fuss.

While here to mark the second anniversary of her husband's death in January, she decided to take her cause to Congress and discovered a helpful ally in Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), her home-state senator and chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which oversees the CIA.

Specter wrote President Clinton on Feb. 22 urging that more be done to capture Kansi, first by declaring him an international terrorist and then by increasing the reward for his capture from \$100,000 to \$2 million.

Specter also wrote Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, asking for Pakistan's assistance to capture Kansi. He urged Clinton to bring up his case with Bhutto during her visit here in April, and the two leaders did discuss it, according to Specter's office.

Becker-Darling came to Washington in late June to air on Capitol Hill her frustrations over the State Department's decision to halt the new campaign to catch Kansi. She left with a promise from Specter to press the State Department on its decision to postpone a high-profile campaign to arrest Kansi.

"For once, I feel we're getting somewhere," she said. "Specter's not going to accept an indefinite time frame for this campaign."

*Correspondent Steve Coll and special correspondent Kamran Khan contributed to this story from Karachi, Pakistan.*