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India helped FBI trace ISI-terrorist links

MANOJ JOSHI

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [TUESDAY, OCTOBER 09, 2001 11:08:55 PM]

NEW DELHI: While the Pakistani Inter Services Public Relations claimed that former ISI director-general Lt-Gen Mahmud Ahmad sought retirement after being superseded on Monday, the truth is more shocking.

Top sources confirmed here on Tuesday, that the general lost his job because of the "evidence" India produced to show his links to one of the suicide bombers that wrecked the World Trade Centre. The US authorities sought his removal after confirming the fact that \$100,000 were wired to WTC hijacker Mohammed Atta from Pakistan by Ahmad Umar Sheikh at the instance of Gen Mahmud.

Senior government sources have confirmed that India contributed significantly to establishing the link between the money transfer and the role played by the dismissed ISI chief. While they did not provide details, they said that Indian inputs, including Sheikh's mobile phone number, helped the FBI in tracing and establishing the link.

A direct link between the ISI and the WTC attack could have enormous repercussions. The US cannot but suspect whether or not there were other senior Pakistani Army commanders who were in the know of things. Evidence of a larger conspiracy could shake US confidence in Pakistan's ability to participate in the anti-terrorism coalition.

Indian officials say they are vitally interested in the unravelling of the case since it could link the ISI directly to the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Kathmandu-Delhi flight to Kandahar last December. Ahmad Umar Sayeed Sheikh is a British national and a London School of Economics graduate who was arrested by the police in Delhi following a bungled 1994 kidnapping of four westerners, including an American citizen.

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