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Assessment of Disrupted ISKP-Affiliated Ricin Plot in India

Scope: This report provides an intelligence analysis of the disrupted ISKP-affiliated bioterrorism plot involving three arrested suspects in India from November 8–9, 2025. It examines the network's operational tactics, communication tradecraft, and logistics methods related to a ricin weaponization plot targeting government institutions, crowded public spaces, water supplies, and religious sites. Based on open-source reporting, this assessment offers actionable insights into the pre-operational indicators, methodologies, and transnational command-and-control structure of this contemporary, directed ISKP-affiliated terror cell. Users should independently verify critical details before making decisions based on this report.

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Executive Summary

In early November 2025, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) disrupted a significant bioterrorism plot, arresting three individuals, including a doctor, with confirmed links to the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP). The suspects allegedly planned to manufacture the highly toxic biological agent ricin for mass-casualty attacks targeting public spaces, water supplies, and religious sites in major Indian cities like Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow. [10, 11, 12, 16] This incident marks India's first foiled ricin-based terror plot and highlights notable TTPs, including the recruitment of a medical professional, the attempted production of "kitchen-made" bioweapons using commonly available materials, and direct coordination with a foreign-based handler who supplied weapons via drone. [1, 6, 8, 11]

Incident Overview

Category	Details
Date(s) of Arrest	November 8–9, 2025 [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
Location(s)	Arrests: Adalaj toll plaza, Gandhinagar, and Banaskantha district, Gujarat. [1, 3, 7] Searches: Hyderabad, Telangana. [1, 2, 5, 8] Reconnaissance: Ahmedabad, Delhi, and Lucknow. [3, 6, 8]
Individuals Arrested	Dr. Ahmed Mohiyuddin Saiyed (35), Azad Suleman Sheikh (20), Mohammad Suhail Mohammad Saleem Khan (23) [1, 2, 8]

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Charges	Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the Arms Act, and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) [3, 4, 6, 8]
Affiliation Claim	Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) [1, 2, 3, 4, 6]
Source Types	News
Confidence Level	Confirmed

Plot or Activity Description

The disrupted plot involved a multi-state operation directed by an external ISKP handler known as Abu Khadija. The central figure, Dr. Ahmed Mohiyuddin Saiyed, was tasked with manufacturing ricin, a lethal biotoxin derived from castor beans. He converted his residence in Hyderabad into a crude laboratory, acquiring precursor chemicals, castor beans, and an oil-press machine to facilitate production. [5, 7, 8, 9] Investigations revealed that Saiyed had not yet successfully isolated the toxin or determined a delivery mechanism at the time of his arrest. [2, 3, 4, 8]

Saiyed's accomplices, Azad Suleman Sheikh and Mohammad Suhail Mohammad Saleem Khan, were responsible for logistics and pre-operational surveillance. They collected a cache of firearms, including Glock and Beretta pistols, and ammunition that had been delivered via drone from Pakistan to a dead drop near the Rajasthan border. [3, 8, 14, 17] The pair then conducted extensive reconnaissance of multiple high-value targets to assess security measures and crowd patterns. [3, 6, 8]

The group's intended targets were diverse and designed for mass casualties and psychological impact. These included:

- **Government-Affiliated and Religious Institutions:** Offices of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Ahmedabad, Delhi, and Lucknow. [3, 6, 8, 13]
- **Crowded Public Spaces:** The Azadpur Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) in Delhi and the Naroda fruit market in Ahmedabad. [3, 4, 8, 13]
- **Mass Poisoning Vectors:** The plot involved plans to contaminate public water supplies and mix ricin with *prasad* (food offerings) at temples to trigger widespread, silent poisoning. [10, 12, 16]

The plot was disrupted by the Gujarat ATS based on specific intelligence, which led to the interception of Saiyed's vehicle near the Adalaj toll plaza on the Ahmedabad-Mehsana highway. A subsequent search of his car uncovered firearms, ammunition, 4kg of castor beans/mash, and 4 litres of castor oil, leading to the unraveling of the broader conspiracy. [1, 3, 4, 6, 17]

Methodologies & TTPs

TTP Category	Observed Behavior
Radicalization Pathway	Online radicalization through extremist propaganda on platforms like Telegram. One suspect was reportedly motivated by communal disturbances in his home region of Uttar Pradesh. [4, 6]

Communications	Used encrypted messaging platforms like Telegram for secure communication and to receive instructions from the ISKP handler. The primary suspect practiced operational security by disabling Google location services on his devices. [4, 7]
Recruitment & Networking	The cell operated under the direct guidance of a foreign-based ISKP handler, Abu Khadija, who provided instructions and logistical support. The network consisted of a small, compartmentalized domestic cell with defined roles. [1, 2, 3, 7, 14]
Training / Attack Prep	- Weapons Acquisition: Firearms and ammunition were smuggled from Pakistan via drone and left at a dead drop near the international border in Rajasthan for collection. [3, 8, 14, 17] - Surveillance: The two younger operatives conducted physical reconnaissance of targeted locations in multiple cities to study security and crowd movements. [3, 6, 8, 13] - Acquisition: Saiyed procured castor seeds, acetone, and other solvents both online and from local shops. He also purchased an oil-press machine for ricin extraction. [1, 5, 8, 9, 13, 15] - Guidance: Saiyed followed detailed instructions from his handler on ricin preparation and used search engines and ChatGPT to research materials and sources. [1, 3, 4, 7]
Financing	No specific details on financing were available. One account suggests Saiyed was deceived into collecting a parcel containing weapons under the pretense that it held a cash payment for an oil delivery. [9, 15]
Travel Facilitation	The suspects traveled between multiple states (Telangana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh) to acquire weapons, conduct reconnaissance, and coordinate activities. Saiyed disguised his travel from Hyderabad to Gujarat as a "business deal." [3, 4, 9, 14]
Propaganda Production	The group consumed ISKP and IS propaganda advocating for biological attacks, but was not reported to have produced its own media. [6]
Security Tradecraft	Employed a cover story (business trip, developing a commercial product) to conceal activities from family. Used encrypted communications, disabled location tracking, and utilized a dead drop for weapon transfers to minimize direct contact and detection. [3, 4, 7, 9, 14]

Indicators & Warning Signs

Several observable behaviors and digital footprints preceded the arrests, serving as potential indicators of the terror plot:

- **Suspicious Purchases:** Dr. Saiyed made online and local purchases of precursor materials, including castor seeds, large quantities of acetone, and an oil-extracting machine, just days before his arrest. [1, 5, 8, 9, 13, 15]
- **Behavioral Changes:** Family members observed that Saiyed's behavior had changed. He received frequent parcels containing chemicals, conducted unusual experiments, and would lock himself in his room for extended periods. He deflected their concerns by claiming he was creating a "valuable chemical" for commercial purposes that would "make them wealthy." [2, 3, 4, 12, 13]
- **Digital Indicators:** The suspects were under surveillance due to their online activities, which linked them to IS propaganda channels. Analysis of Saiyed's browser and ChatGPT search history revealed his research into chemicals and their sources. [3, 4, 16]

- **Covert Travel:** Saiyed traveled from Hyderabad to Gujarat under the false pretense of a business trip to deliver oil. This trip was intended to facilitate the collection of weapons. [3, 9, 12, 14]
- **Reconnaissance Activities:** The two accomplices conducted surveillance at sensitive locations, including RSS offices and crowded public markets in multiple cities, indicating target selection was underway. [3, 4, 6, 8, 13]

Network & Linkage Analysis

The terror cell was a directed network with clear transnational links to ISKP. The operation was not self-inspired but was guided by an external handler identified as Abu Khadija, who is reportedly based in Afghanistan or Pakistan and is a known ISKP operative. [1, 3, 4, 8, 14]

Key network characteristics include:

- **Direct Handler Communication:** Dr. Saiyed was in frequent contact with Abu Khadija via encrypted platforms, receiving detailed instructions for manufacturing ricin and coordinating logistics. [1, 7, 14]
- **Transnational Support:** The network's connection to Pakistan is evident through the weapons supply chain. Firearms and ammunition were smuggled across the border using a drone and left at a pre-arranged dead drop in Rajasthan for the operatives to collect. [3, 8, 14, 17]
- **Domestic Cell Structure:** The India-based cell comprised three individuals with distinct roles: Dr. Saiyed as the weapon-maker, and Sheikh and Khan as the logistics and surveillance team. This structure indicates a degree of operational planning and compartmentalization. [3, 6, 8]
- **Ideological Links:** The suspects were consumers of ISKP and IS propaganda that specifically promotes the use of biological and chemical agents to inflict mass casualties. Intelligence officials also noted that Saiyed may have links to individuals accused in a recent blast in Delhi, although this connection is still under investigation. [6, 7]

Suspect Profiles

Dr. Ahmed Mohiyuddin Saiyed

- **Alias/Name:** Dr. Ahmed Mohiyuddin Saiyed
- **Role:** Mastermind and weapon-maker, tasked with producing ricin.
- **Background:** Aged 35, Saiyed is a general physician from Khammam, Telangana, who obtained his MBBS degree in China (2007-2013). After failing the mandatory Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) required to practice in India, he ran a shawarma business and offered free online consultations. He is divorced, has no children, and lived alone in an apartment in Hyderabad that he converted into a makeshift laboratory. Sources offer conflicting information on his birth order, describing him as both the oldest and youngest of six siblings. [2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 13]
- **Motivation:** Believed to be driven by ISKP ideology, though his specific radicalization pathway is still under investigation. [1, 4]

Azad Suleman Sheikh

- **Alias/Name:** Azad Suleman Sheikh (also spelled Saifi)
- **Role:** Logistics and reconnaissance operative.
- **Background:** Aged 20, Sheikh is a tailor from Shamli, Uttar Pradesh. [2, 8, 16]

- **Motivation:** He was reportedly radicalized online and motivated by communal disturbances in his home region, including the riots in Shamli and Muzaffarpur. [6]

Mohammad Suhail Mohammad Saleem Khan

- **Alias/Name:** Mohammad Suhail Mohammad Saleem Khan (also spelled Mohd Suhel)
- **Role:** Logistics and reconnaissance operative.
- **Background:** Aged 23, Khan is a student from Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. [2, 8, 16]
- **Motivation:** He was also radicalized online through extremist propaganda. [6]

Inter-Suspect Connections

The three individuals formed a coordinated terror cell. Sheikh and Khan traveled from Uttar Pradesh to Rajasthan to retrieve the weapons consignment and deliver it to Saiyed. They were also responsible for conducting pre-operational surveillance on the chosen targets in Delhi, Lucknow, and Ahmedabad. Their activities were directed by the same ISKP handler, Abu Khadija, indicating they were working in concert towards a common objective. [3, 6, 8, 17]

Assessment

- **Capability:** The cell possessed clear intent and had progressed to the preparation and material acquisition phase. Their access to firearms and precursor chemicals, combined with the technical expertise of a doctor, presented a credible threat. However, their capability was still developing, as the primary suspect had not yet successfully weaponized the ricin, making the plot aspirational but dangerously close to becoming operational. [2, 3, 8]
- **Network Maturity:** This was not a case of lone-actor radicalization but a directed cell with a mature command-and-control structure. The presence of an external handler, transnational weapons smuggling, and a clear division of labor indicate a sophisticated network. [6, 8, 14]
- **Trend Relevance:** The plot is highly significant as it represents the first disrupted ricin bioterror attack in India. It aligns with a broader, concerning trend of terrorist groups like IS shifting toward low-cost, high-impact biochemical attacks. This strategy, sometimes termed "kitchen-made" bio-warfare or "medical radicalization," leverages easily accessible materials and professionally skilled recruits to bypass traditional security measures. [6, 11, 16]
- **Threat Implication:** The plot posed a severe national security risk. The intended use of ricin, a potent, easily concealed toxin with no antidote, in public spaces and water supplies could have resulted in mass casualties, widespread panic, and a public health crisis. The psychological impact would have been immense, potentially fueling social and communal unrest. [10, 11, 12, 16]
- **Disruption Impact:** The timely intervention by the Gujarat ATS successfully prevented a series of potentially catastrophic attacks across multiple Indian cities. The arrests neutralized an active ISKP cell and yielded critical intelligence on emerging terrorist TTPs, including the use of drones for cross-border weapons smuggling and the deliberate recruitment of educated professionals for specialized roles. [6, 11]

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