

AN ARDUOUS HUNT FOR AN EXPLOSIVES SMUGGLER-THE HUZURABAD EXPLOSIVES CASE

- P Venugopal Rao, CI [Karimnagar (R)]

It was in the month of December 1993 when the then DIG SIB having assumed charge, came to Karimnagar and conducted a meeting with police officers on the extremist issue, especially about the supply of explosives to extremists. In that meeting the DIG expressed that, it was not the AK-47 or Guerrilla warfare tactics of the extremists that was deterring the police....but a small aluminium tube containing a small quantity of primary & secondary explosives, the ELECTRIC DETONATOR which was terrorizing the police. The electric detonator was responsible for reducing several Government properties to debris, for tearing up the bodies of valiant constables into pieces of flesh by blasting landmines and for the destruction of communication systems, bridges, roads etc... Expressing his concern about the supply of electric detonators and other high explosives to the extremists, the DIG had pointed out the involvement of one Akkanapalli Satyanarayana more popularly known as 'Radio' Sathaiah, explosive dealer r/o Huzurabad. In several landmine blast cases, when the left over cartons collected from the scene of offence were examined, it was revealed that the explosives were supplied by this 'Radio' Sathaiah. Hence the DIG instructed to take all steps to stop the illegal supply of explosives to the extremists by Radio Sathaiah and others.

I was posted to Huzurabad Police Station few days before the above meeting. About two days after this meeting, the then SP Sri Tushar Aditya Tripathi IPS, summoned me and instructed to expose the clandestine explosives business of 'Radio' Sathaiah. As I was newly posted to that PS I did not have any idea about the explosives business of 'Radio' Sathaiah. However I tried hard to expose the explosives business of 'Radio' Sathaiah, but it appeared an impossible task at one stage. 'Radio' Sathaiah

was having a network through which he had been doing the explosives business clandestinely and breaking of that network was a tough task. He was having well-wishers spread in all branches of the government. I tried through my informants and PS staff to gather information about the clandestine explosives business of 'Radio' Sathaiah but I could not get any clue. The pressure from the SP was mounting on me. I had chosen two trusted constables, motivated them and kept them full time on this job. While efforts were continuing, on 6-1-94 morning when I was in the police station, two I.D party constables came to me and informed that they had got a clue from a cowhand that 'Radio' Sathaiah stored his explosives in an abandoned poultry farm, situated about 2 Kms away from Huzurabad town near some hillocks. On that, I immediately secured the presence of the local Mandal Revenue Officer and another respectable civilian by giving a requisition to them to act as panchas. I along with the panchas and force rushed to the abandoned poultry farm and started checking the poultry sheds. There were 11 poultry sheds surrounded by hillocks. There was only a cart track to that place. We checked the 1st poultry farm and found explosives in that shed which were about a lorry load. We thought it was all the explosive material that was illegally stored by 'Radio' Sathaiah and were about to start the seizure panchanama. Meanwhile, one of constables who checked the second poultry shed, alerted us to the fact that the second shed was also filled with explosives. To our dismay, on checking we found all the 11 poultry sheds stacked with explosives.

Immediately we informed the same to the superior officers. The DSP and CI came to the scene of offence immediately and the entire stock of explosives were seized under cover of

a panchanama before the mediators. The particulars of the seized explosive are as under.

1. IDL electronic detonators 4,00,000
2. ICI electric detonators 4,40,000
3. Gelatine 140 cartons (each carton 25 Kgs.)
3. Premier electric detonators 1,12,500
4. IDL ordinary detonators 90,000
5. Fuse wire 1,75,000 coils.

Apart from confession and recovery panchanama, a search list was also prepared. The cost of the seized explosives was estimated to be about Rupees 1 Crore. After completion of recoveries, a guard was posted at the scene of the offence to safe guard the seized property. In this connection a case in Cr No 2/94 u/s 4&5 of E.S. act and sec.4&5 of TADA was registered in Huzurabad PS. Before registering the case I obtained verbal permission from the Superintendent of Police. Later, the S.P issued proceedings confirming his verbal permission. The three accused i.e., Cheerla Prabhakar, Konda Buchaiah and Pittala Narsaiah who were the workers of 'Radio' Sathaiah and were found present at poultry sheds, were arrested and sent for judicial custody. Efforts were made to apprehend the main accused Radio Sathaiah but in vain.

Mean while, SP formed a special team under the leadership of the then Addl. SP Ops, Sri Umesh Sharraf IPS, to investigate this case since the investigation required unearthing of several facts i.e., collection of documents from various explosives dealers and explosives manufacturing companies situated in different parts of the country. The Addl.SP.Ops, who was known for his straightforwardness, endured all pressures from some of his seniors and other quarters and successfully completed the investigation. The team visited the Nagpur Noble explosive company and collected the supply details of explosives to A1 'Radio' Sathaiah. In the year 1993, 532 metric tons of gelatine was supplied to 'Radio' Sathaiah. The

team also visited the Premier explosives company situated at Pedda Kandukur village of Nalgonda dist and IDEL Hyderabad, and collected particulars of supply of explosives to 'Radio' Sathaiah and his company. The illegal receivers of explosives from 'Radio' Sathaiah were also examined and their statements were got recorded u/s 164 Cr.PC. Samples of explosives were sent to the controller of explosives, Hyderabad for analysis and report through SDPO Karimnagar.

In Ibrahimpatnam Police Station Blasting case and in Metpally police station blasting case some explosives were seized from PWG extremists, containing batch numbers 00289 and 00295 manufactured on 20-7-1993. On verification it was found that these explosives were delivered to 'Radio' Sathaiah from Noble Explochem Ltd, Wardha. Since the explosives seized from the PWG extremists were undoubtedly supplied by Sattaiah, it was considered as clinching evidence to prove the guilt of the accused A1.

The accused A1 was native of Huzurabad from where the then Prime minister hailed and since the accused happened to be an acquaintance of a very close aide to the PM, this case became sensational. Not only the state press but the national press also started writing articles about this case, alleging the involvement of important leaders holding important positions in the country. The Telugu daily Udayam started a series of articles on this issue. After publishing of the third episode, the newspaper management stopped circulation of its issue on the fourth day. Annoyed on this, the editor of the news paper resigned from the editorship. The mighty operators acted from behind the screen..... the S.P was transferred from Karimnagar to a remote place in the state. Next it was my turn.....I was transferred to Bhainsa P.S of Adilabad district. But later my transfer was cancelled due to the efforts of the then S.P. Despite all such odds the leader of our team stood like a rock and accomplished his task. The accused had tried his best to get

released the properties from the court by filing repeated petitions. But his efforts were negated by filing fitting counter affidavits. In this case the accused A-1 Akkenapelli Sattaiah @ 'Radio' Sattaiah was arrested on 19-1-94 and sent for judicial custody.

On 14-7-94, after completion of investigation, the case was charged against the accused A1 to A5 u/sec 4&5 of E.S act and section 5&6 of TADA (prevention) Act and section 9(B) of Explosives act. But the designated court returned the charge sheet objecting that it was not maintainable under TADA, since prior written permission was not obtained from the Superintendent of police, before issuing the F.I.R. The court had opined that the verbal permission given by the S.P was not valid For this, the designated court /Dist. Sessions court Karimnagar had quoted the judgement of the AP High court in writ petition no.1764 of 1994, in the case of Bala Gopal, Gen. Secretary APCLC v/s government of A.P

and others (popularly known as the Sandhya case) Since there was no chance of approaching the High court, we appealed in the Supreme Court against the orders of the Dist. Sessions court Karimnagar. On 11-10-2000 the Supreme Court of India in their landmark decision set aside the order of the designated court Karimnagar dated 4-8-1994, and passed orders that the verbal permission given by the SP Karimnagar was valid. Hence, the Designated court could take the cognizance of this case.

The case records and the returned original charge sheet had been handed over by the Addl SP (Ops) to the then Karimnagar DSP on his transfer in 1995. Now it is learnt that not only the case has never been taken further by the local police in the magistrate court since 1995 to 2000, or in the Sessions court since 2000 despite the favourable Supreme Court judgement in 2000, the original charge sheet itself has gone 'missing'!

