

Terror Thriller

Meet Mukul Deva, author of *Salim Must Die*, whose book talks of nuclear, chemical warfare predicts the days to come

By Udayini Sangala

The country's first military thriller writer Mukul Deva, an alumnus of La Martiniere College, Lucknow, caught everyone's attention with his hard hitting novel *Lashkar* last year. This time, he promises another treat with *Salim Must Die*, which is set for release at Crossword Bookstore in Hyderabad on Friday. Delhi-based Mukul Deva has served in all the four insurgency prone regions and is one of the rare people who has seen LTTE Chief V Prabhakaran in person. **Deccan Post** talks to **Mukul Deva** on the terror trail and his novels. **Excerpts:**

What inspired you to write this book?

Lashkar was a product of the extreme anger and frustration I felt post the Sarojini Nagar bomb blasts and the failure of our government to respond to it. *Lashkar* was about the making of a terrorist, about a young boy who gets drawn into the network and suffers the consequences. *Salim Must Die* extends the character, but is global in its exploration of *jihadi* terrorism. The action spans continents and countries, is not restricted to the subcontinent. Because the truth is that every action anywhere, has repercussions everywhere.

Are the plots in the book based on real incidents or fictitious?

The entire story is bed-rocked on reality; however some incidents have obviously been fictionalised. The endeavour is to have a really close look at the terror threats (from non-conventional weapons) looming large just over the horizon.

Oil-funded terrorism is the element of *Salim Must Die*. How deep are we thrown into that chaos?

We, like every other country, is automatically drawn into the chaos. Every action anywhere has repercussions everywhere else. India in any case suffers from severe terrorist problems kind courtesy the low proxy war that has been inflicted on us by Pakistan for almost three decades now. This is a historical fact that

we need to acknowledge and understand.

Does any character in the story resemble you?

No... But like every character in every book written by every author - each one of them has been used to bring forth a thought or idea that the author believes in.

Which part of the story you like the most and difficult for you to make it tacy?

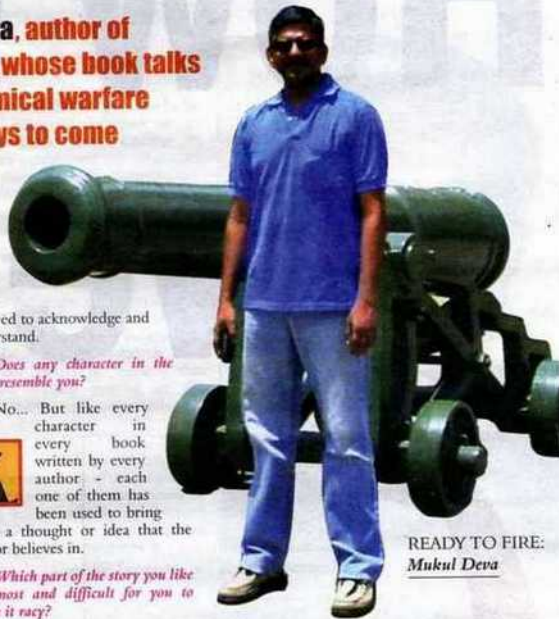
In a military action thriller, the technical construct (ensuring that every action is logically, geographically and tactically correct). A major challenge is to give the non-military reader a clear idea of the weapons, tactics and thought processes of an Army person/force without making it too technical or tedious.

How much time did it take to research and make plots for the book?

Both *Lashkar* and *Salim Must Die* took about eight months of solid research each. The plot construct of *Salim ...* took a lot longer since the action spans a dozen countries each in a different time zone. I had to ensure that the action was logical in each time zone and moved forward seamlessly.

How far is India prepared to face any terrorist attack after the Mumbai attack?

The situation today is not different in any way from what it was when 26/11 happened. It is not likely to change unless our political leadership waves up and starts handling the issue strategically instead of trying to fire-fight each event/attack



READY TO FIRE:
Mukul Deva

tactically. New Delhi also needs to understand that a state of permanent defence has never won a war and never will.

Hyderabad is also a terrorist target with two blasts in 2007. Are you planning to write any book incorporating these incidents?

In this four-book series, I shall be covering almost all the major terror attacks that India has suffered in some way or the other.

Now that the Taliban have occupied Swat valley in Pakistan, does that have an impact on Indian security?

Of course it does. The Swat Valley is just in touching reach. This takeover is just the forerunner to the Talibanisation of Pakistan and that is going to affect us big time. Pakistan is undoubtedly the terror epicenter and already a major threat to world peace. India being in touching reach is bound to bear the brunt. I say this not as an authority on terrorism, but who has been tracking terror very closely while researching for my books. ♦

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