

LICENCE TO THRILL

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IF YOU can imagine it, you can achieve it." That's the title of Delhi-based author-com-memoirist Mukul Deva's new book, *Must Die* — an alumnus of La Martinière College, Lucknow, the National Defence Academy, Pune, and the Indian Air Force. Deva has achieved quite a lot at 48. Commissioned in the Sikh Light Infantry in the Indian Army in 1981, he took premature retirement from the Army (in 1996) as a major after 15 years of service, including a decade of combat operational duties in India and overseas.

The managing director of MSD Security Pvt. Ltd. and founding director of CANVAS — which is "dedicated to developing technology, programmes and services that improve the quality of life of those with special needs" — Mukul has earlier authored *Time After Time*, a collection of short stories. *Straycase*, a study of military strategies, *Mohit*, which lays the "roadmap to happiness and success" in *Wagon in Indian Cinema*, and *Leak*, the on-screen-four book series on terrorism and counter-terrorism in the *Leak* series. *Salim* and *Must Die* are the latest in the series, published by HarperCollins. We'll be returning at the India International Centre in New Delhi on April 2.



face-to-face Nawaid Anjum

Mukul Deva with his dogs in New Delhi

MUKUL DEVA SALIM MUST DIE

By Mukul Deva
HarperCollins,
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It is best that India learns to deal with her own problems and not rely too much on others.

Q. They compare you to Robert Ludlum. Tom Clancy, et al. Is that flattering? Do you think we have a long way to go when it comes to the genre of crime thriller?

A. It is very nice to be compared to such globally established Masters of Thrill & Shock. However, (hopefully) the day will come when they compare me with me. After all, I am just Mukul Deva trying to be Mukul Deva (Smiles).

Yes, of course, Indian writing has yet to explore this genre fully. Hopefully this series will start the trend. We have so much to offer after all.

Q. Your writings have been quite eclectic in their range. Do you plan to explore any other genre?

A. My writings are reflective of my growth as an individual and of course the times we live in. In many ways, I just consider myself a profiler of the times. For the time being, I shall remain with terrorism, military action and crime — basically the shades of black that surround our lives.

Q. What identity of yours do you feel most strongly about — a writer, an ex-military, a soldier, a major or an entrepreneur?

A. At heart I will remain an Armyman, in my head an entrepreneur (after all we poor writers also need to make a living, Smiles) As for writing, I write therefore I am. For me, writing is the ultimate catharsis.

Q. Could you share something about your forthcoming works — the last of two novels of the *Leak* series as well as *The Shades of Black* and *Through the Fog*?

A. All I can say is: Watch This Space — It will contain a preview as well as the actual book every year for at least the next four years. My remaining, current requests are to meet, meet and wish to divulge about the forthcoming books at this stage. My books (three novels) I have dealt with in detail here.

affecting India and Pakistan when it comes to their fight against terror?

A. There is no comparison. Pakistan has always viewed terror groups as "strategic assets" and thus has always been reluctant to act against them. What India suffers is what has been inflicted on us by Pakistan's Operation Tropic (which is detailed in *Leak*). In any case please understand that Pakistan is a failed nation — the hand-dover of the Swat Valley to terrorism is just the beginning of the end for them. Whereas India is a strong and vibrant democracy. Despite whatever ails us today, India is on the way up. We just need to handle this war on terror differently.

Q. What expectations do you have from the Obama government? How do you foresee the shape of War on Terror in the years to come?

A. Historically, the Americans have never completed what they set out to do — they have the habit of pulling out when the going gets tough. I think instead of trying to guess the outcome, I will allow history to speak for itself — it does the habit of repeating for itself. In any case, this time around, the Obama administration requires a lot more time and grace than we have had. Suffice it to say that Books (Three novels) I have dealt with in detail here.

Q. How do you see the geopolitical realities

already at the door and will break through if we do not do something really smart/valued and really soon.

Q. Does one of its characters Raw's analysis of global terrorism and the war against it reflect your own personal views?

A. Smart question. There is a bit of the author in the views expressed by every character in the book. No. What is more important is do you feel the views are so/obscure? And also, do you think that the Obama administration is just one view-point — there will always be many more ways to look at it.

Q. How do you see the

and economic grievances can be resolved through diplomacy, political interventions and economic actions. However, what solutions do you offer to a terrorist who seeks one world-one religion and even tells you how to resolve that religion. No?

Q. "Every time a Salim dies, a hundred more will rise to take his place. No matter what you do, the blood will go on." Is this a statement that you think is realistic? Is it a statement that you think is realistic? Is it a statement that you think is realistic?

Q. With the four books in the series, did you want to make some sense of the counter of terrorism?

A. Making sense of terrorism was one of my primary aims of writing this series. I needed to dispel the illusions that most people have about terrorism.

Q. In the book, while talking to his nephew, Iqbal, he says, "There is no easy solution to terrorism. The political

and economic grievances can be resolved through diplomacy, political interventions and economic actions. However, what solutions do you offer to a terrorist who seeks one world-one religion and even tells you how to resolve that religion. No?

Q. How do you see the

and do it fast — the world is