

Mumbai's Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU)

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In news : Mumbai's CIU got new chief after the arrest of controversial Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Waze

About Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) Mumbai

- It was set up in 1990 as an ancillary unit providing intelligence and logistical support to various units of the Mumbai Police
- Mumbai's CIU was the brainchild of the then Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) R D Tyagi, who set it up after Sub-inspector Lakhmer Singh Sardar was gunned down by Khalistani militants
- Tyagi's brief was that it should act as the "eyes and ears" of the Mumbai Police and gather intelligence on terror organisations and the underworld.
- Tyagi's strict instructions were that CIU would not investigate any case and only gather intelligence.
- Although Mumbai Police's "special branch" was also an intelligence unit, it was more focused on gathering information related to law and order situations such as the mill strikes of those years. Tyagi believed the police needed a specialised unit dedicated to intelligence on criminals
- Since its inception, CIU's public image has been shaped by its focus on encounters, manned as it was by so-called "encounter specialists" associated with the killing of alleged criminals and gangsters in encounters, some of which embroiled the police in serious trouble for being "fake".

Its role in the initial years

- **Touch with central agencies:** It had a team of 18

officers whose role was to stay in touch with central agencies such as Intelligence Bureau, R&AW and CBI, gather intelligence from them as well their own sources, and feed this to field unit officers at zonal Crime Branch units.

- **As a feeder unit:** CIU was a feeder unit, which would give inputs to other units, and then they would take action. CIU did not have any rights to investigate
- **logistical department:** It also acted as a logistical department, it would keep an updated record on the release of any criminal and pass on the input to the zonal unit asking them to keep a close watch on movement.
- It offices would also go to court when a high-profile gangster was being produced as their gang members would come to meet them and, accordingly, they would make a confidential report and submit it to our superiors

Changed role after 1993

- **Investigation:** In 1993, It was asked to investigate the bomb blast that took place outside the regional passport office in Mumbai's Worli.
- **Era of encounters:** First time the unit courted controversy was with the alleged fake encounter of a peanut vendor, Abu Sayama alias Javed Fawda, in 1997. A petition was filed by a human rights organisation regarding 135 encounters, including Fawda's encounter, between 1995 and 1997.
- **Division of the unit and Encounters:**
 - In 2001, the CIU was divided into two units: one at police headquarters in South Mumbai and the other in Andheri called CIU Suburbs. This was also the time that high-profile "encounter specialists" joined the unit
 - It was during their stint in the CIU suburbs unit that engineer Khwaja Yunus died, allegedly during

custodial interrogation. He had been brought in for questioning related to the 2002 Ghatkopar bomb blast case

- In another instance, the Sharma-led unit gunned down three Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorists including two Pakistani nationals in Goregaon area in 2003, the first encounter in which AK-47 rifles were used.

Changes in the structure

- Owing to allegations of fake encounters and extortion against the CIU suburbs unit, Meera Borwankar, then Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime), issued an order in 2004 to close the CIU suburbs unit.
- **Operational powers:** From September 2004, apart from providing logistical support and collecting intelligence, the remaining branch of the CIU at headquarters was given operational powers, which meant they could investigate cases assigned by superiors, or carry out raids, for instance on dance bars or hookah bars
- With the arrival of recently suspended head of CIU, Sachin Waze in 2020, it was also made to investigate high-profile cases such as the TRP scandal, Instagram fake follower case, the Dilip Chabria matter and Hrithik Roshan's fake email case and changed purpose of the unit