

FBI investigating California shooting as act of terrorism

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Washington: The FBI is investigating the deadly mass shooting in California by a Pakistani-origin couple that killed 14 people as an act of terrorism, officials said today.

The massacre in San Bernardino on Wednesday that killed 14 people and injured 17 others, carried out by a Pakistani-American man and his Pakistani immigrant wife, is being investigated as an "an act of terrorism," David Bowdich, the Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Los Angeles office, told reporters.

"As of today, based on the information and the facts as we know them, we are investigating this horrific crime as an act of terrorism," he said.

Many questions remain unanswered about the motives of the killers and what contacts they had with other terrorists either domestically or overseas, he said.

A determination in this regard has been made given the extensive planning, the high-powered weaponry and the amount of armaments worn by Syed Rizwan Farook and his Pakistani-born wife Tashfeen Malik in carrying out the killing, he said.

The FBI which has the lead in the investigation has found that Chicago-born Farook, 28, had some communication with extremist elements, and at least one of them was on the US watch list.

Farook and Malik, 27, tried to destroy their digital trail by crushing their cellphones and tossing them into a public trashcan, he said.

But the phones have been retrieved and FBI investigators are extracting information from them, Bowdich said.

The FBI is not aware of any credible terrorist threat to the US, officials said, with the White House articulating that the administration is fully geared to take all necessary steps to protect the homeland.

"We are not aware of any further threats in the US at this time," Bowdich said.

Earlier, the White House said all necessary steps have been taken and will be taken to protect the country.

"The president continues to be confident that while the US government is vigilant in doing what's necessary, all that's necessary, all that's possible to protect the American people, that the American people can continue on with their lives with a sense of confidence about the future," White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said.

Obama and his national security team remain vigilant, Earnest said.

"We've got national security professionals who work 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, focused on keeping the homeland safe and trying to detect these plots and disrupt them when necessary. So this continues to get the intense focus of the president and his national security team," he said.

- PTI