

Indian security officials aghast at White House breach

Agencies in charge of VIP security in India are astounded at how two aspiring reality-television stars gatecrashed US President Barack Obama's state dinner for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Washington and say it is a costly lapse.

'We are glad that it happened in the US. If such a security breach had happened out here in [Hyderabad](#) House, or even Vigyan Bhavan, we would have never heard the end of it and heads would have rolled,' pointed out a senior protocol officer in charge of VIP security.

'How such a breach in the most important official residence in the world happened is something all of us are very keen to know.'

As the US Secret Service begins investigating how Tareq and Michaela Salahi, polo-playing socialites, managed entry into the White House Tuesday when they were not in the official guest list, agencies here say it was a major contravention of protocol.

'From the way they entered after a marine announced their names, it was clear that the White House social officer had not vetted their names or that someone from the White House staff slipped them in,' said a senior official.

Showing up about halfway through the guest arrivals, the duo posed for photographs with Vice President Joe Biden, Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, composer A.R. Rahman, Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty and Arun Singh, the deputy chief of mission at the Indian Embassy in Washington.

The Special Protection Group (SPG) responsible for the protection of the prime minister, has not raised any objection with the Secret Service.

Security and intelligence officials recall how they completely secured the Purana Qila, the ruins of a magnificent 16th century fort, when former president George W. Bush addressed Indian people in March 2006.

Around two dozen Indian security officials along with US officials sanitised the entire area and took complete control of the fort 72 hours before Bush's address.

'Those who were invited for the occasion were asked to come in almost an hour earlier and the guest list was gone through with a fine toothcomb,' said an intelligence official.

Officials in charge of VIP security believe they have been minor protocol lapses such as vehicular routes during visits of important dignitaries to India but say there has never been an infringement when it has come to an important banquet.

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