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NAVBHARAT TIMES

End of the road for terrorists at Chowpatty

Vijay V Singh, TNN | Nov 28, 2008, 12:27AM IST

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MUMBAI: At around midnight on Thursday, the D B Marg police received an assignment they will never forget. "We were asked to set up an emergency *nakabandi* and were informed that a Skoda car may be coming our way from Nariman Point.

So we put up barricades on the road outside Girgaum Chowpatty and took up our positions," said inspector Varpe.

After some time, they noticed a Skoda approaching them and signalled for it to stop. Officer Bhaskar Kadam remembered, "The vehicle stopped about 40 to 50 metres away. We asked the occupants to switch off their headlights, but they refused. They poured water onto the windscreen and started the wipers. We were not sure who was inside. Suddenly, the car took a small right towards the divider and stopped. The left front-door opened and, using it as a shield, a man inside bent and looked out from under it. He then started firing at us." The other occupant, the Skoda's driver, also started firing at the police, through the open left window.

The police realised they were in the midst of no ordinary encounter. They shielded themselves behind the iron barricades and began firing back at the Skoda. The terrorist firing from below the door, crawled out onto the road and, laying on his stomach, kept firing at the police.

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The exchange of gunfire between the two sides went on for about five minutes. The Skoda's driver was finally felled by bullets inside the car. The police then began moving the barricades towards the terrorist firing from the road, so they could get nearer to him. The cops approached him from three different directions, surrounding him. While his attention was on the police approaching from the front, cops approaching from another direction finally pounced on him.

However, the police paid a price. One head constable was killed and three policemen were injured.

Earlier, the terrorists had struck at Cama hospital. Vilas Rawal, who lives in the Cama staff quarters, said, "After gunshots at CST, several people went to the road. A police vehicle came by and fired in the air to send us indoors. We went in and after some time heard the terrorists jump over the gate and enter the hospital grounds. They shot a woman standing in the window." Deputy superintendent of the hospital, Sobha Tehra, said, "They shot two hospital guards, Bhanu Narkar and Baban."

The terrorists took hospital employee Chandrakant hostage and injured him, additional commissioner of police Sadanand Date and others with a grenade. Later, they killed two people at a nearby chawl. "My brother was having his food with his son when a man opened the door and shot him dead."

Three top police officers—encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar, ATS chief Hemant Karkare and additional CP Ashok Kamthe—also fell to the terrorists' bullets before the duo stole the police car the officers were in and went to the Metro junction.

The multiplex had stopped screenings after the firing at CST and convinced patrons to sit still till the situation was under control.

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Security in-charge of Metro multiplex, Kiran Thorat said, "We heard gunshots from Xavier's college and were standing on the road outside the cinema. There were several other people standing on the opposite side of the road. A police vehicle emerged from the Xavier's side and came to us. Everyone standing on the road and constables tried to move to the middle of the road to guide the vehicle. Then we heard a gunshot. A few more shots came from the jeep. One person died on the spot."

After that the terrorists went to Vidhan Bhavan, where they stole a Skodat at gunpoint from a hotelier and sped to Chowpatty.

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