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[Back](#)

[Front Page](#)

Why the action took as long as it did

Mumbai: The high motivation levels of the terrorists, who laid siege to the Taj Mahal hotel, prolonged the fierce gun battle for about 60 hours, said National Security Guard (NSG) commandos, who participated in the operation.

“The terrorists were trained but not as good as we were. But what really prolonged the entire operation was that they were highly motivated and never bothered about their lives and even if they did, it was only to take more lives,” havildar Azad Singh, a commando, said.

Mr. Singh, who had been at the hotel for the entire duration and was also involved in a dramatic shootout with two terrorists on Saturday, said the operation was hampered because of darkness as the lights were destroyed by the terrorists.

He said, “the area was also booby trapped which made it more difficult for the operation.”

Giving details of Saturday’s shoot-out, he said, “we were doing room checks when shots were fired at us. We ducked a grenade hurled inside the room.”

After a few seconds of the blast, the terrorists fired yet again making the commandos answer with double firepower.

“I was asked to move ahead and I did so by firing continuously. Inside the room was a terrorist who had got shot and he staggered behind and hit the window. I sensed an opportunity and fired at him and he fell out because of the shots,” he added.

Another commando, Rameshwaran, said, “we didn’t want to move in and we waited for some time. After some minutes, we saw another terrorist peeping out to see if we had left. The moment he did so, we fired at him killing him instantly.”

A commando, who did not wish to be identified, said, “The terrorists were mainly holed up in the upper section and we were downstairs. Initially every time we made an attempt to move out, grenades were hurled at us to prevent us from doing so.”

He said the terrorists had intentionally set on fire certain portions of the hotel to divert attention.

“Our top officers were present throughout the operation. It is a combined effort of the NSG, the Army and the Navy,” he added.

The NSG commandos, who executed the operation in the country’s longest terrorist siege

here in the recent past, are specially equipped with a set of special tools. — PTI

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