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Shot at, his pants were held together with staples

Priyanko Sarkar, TNN Nov 30, 2008, 12.26am IST

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Rajbir Singh Lamba, whose left hand is in plaster, and who had just come out of facial surgery, is a simple man at heart who holds your hand when he speaks.

The 32-year-old NSG commando from Dalanwas village in Haryana was engaged in the Taj battle. "We adopted a top-down approach. After sanitising the rooftop and sixth floor, I came down with my team to Room 473 where we found the terrorists. I put an explosive charge on the door and ran back but the explosion was neutralised because the terrorists had put tables and chairs against the wall. So instead, we were blown back and the roof fell on us." Fortunately, the damaged top half of the door allowed Lamba a peek into the room. As he had been informed, a terrorist wearing a red T-shirt was crouched at one end. "When I told him to put his hands up, someone fired from behind him, injuring my hand."

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Lamba then went in with the now slain team captain Sandeep Unnikrishnan and Subhedar Firechand, who gave a first-hand account of events. Lamba washed his bleeding hand and was told to lob grenades so that two teams could break into the room under cover of smoke.

When the door exploded, the recoil threw the entire team off its feet. "The passageway was small and the charge too much," says Lamba. The terrorists lobbed a grenade at the NSG team, ripping open Lamba's pants, now held together by staples. It also burnt the left side of his face. But the NSG attacked again, and this time the two terrorists were killed. But Unnikrishnan died too. "We had no maps and had to improvise all the time," says Lamba. "All this took up valuable time."

Also at Bombay Hospital is NSG's Captain Amitendra Kumar Singh , who was part of the rescue operations at the Trident Hotel. His left eye is bandaged. It wells up with blood every three minutes but he doesn't bother until a nurse wipes it with a tissue. He grimly warns, "These kind of operations are not restricted to Kashmir anymore. The attacks can happen anywhere, anytime. Till people are not aware and don't take a stand, no security force in the world can protect them."

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