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26/11 memory still haunts me: Constable to court

He saw the face of death on the night of November 26, 2008. Constable Arun Jadhav, attached to the Anti-Extortion Cell, narrowly escaped death as he lay buried under three injured constables inside the Qualis in which encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar, ATS chief Hemant Karkare and Additional Commissioner of Police Ashok Kamte were killed.

Nearly eight months later, Jadhav chronicled the chain of events before the special court on Friday. "Even today, bursts of bullets reverberate in my ears. I spend sleepless nights as the memory still haunts me," he said when defence lawyer Abbas Kazmi alleged that he had lied in his deposition.

"I lost my officers. I myself got injured," said Jadhav.

Salaskar, Kamte and Karkare were killed behind Cama Hospital while challenging Pakistani gunmen Mohammed Ajmal Amir Kasab and his slain partner Abu Ismail.

Jadhav said it was Karkare who had suggested that they proceed towards the hospital's front gate.

He added that a few minutes before the top three policemen were killed, they had received a message from the control room about two terrorists hiding behind a red four-wheeler in Rang Bhavan lane.

"Kamtesaheb asked Salaskar [who was driving the Qualis] to slow down," said Jadhav. "I spotted the red car parked some 100 m ahead of us. When we reached near the Corporation Bank ATM, two men jumped out from the bushes and opened fire on our vehicle."

Jadhav told Judge M.L. Taheliyani that they retaliated. He claimed Kasab had fired at them though he was shot on both his hands. He added that the two men then removed the three top policemen' bodies from the Qualis and drove with Jadhav and three injured policemen still in the rear.

Jadhav, who was injured, had pretended to be dead. "One of the bullet is still inside," he told the court.

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