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Top ATS cops were trapped in one jeep

ATS chief Hemant Karkare, additional CP Ashok Kamte, encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar and constable Arun Jadhav were all travelling in the same Qualis when the terrorists struck

RAVIKIRAN DESHMUKH AND DANISH KHAN

The lone survivor of the ambush of the jeep carrying top ATS cops, constable Arun Jadhav has a harrowing tale of death and brutality observed from up close.

Jadhav who was a close associate of encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar was accompanying ATS chief Hemant Karkare, additional CP (eastern region) Ashok Kamte and Salaskar in the jeep that was ambushed by two terrorists near Albless and Cama is at present in the ICU at Bombay hospital. He gave us a detailed blow-by-blow account of how they were trapped. On Wednesday night as the terrorists left CST to go towards Metro cinema Karkare, Kamte, Salaskar and Jadhav boarded a Qualis jeep belonging to an assistant commissioner of police and headed towards the Special Branch office located behind Sir J J School of Arts. They suspected the terrorists to be hiding there. Three more cops, a PSI, and a constable and a driver were also in the vehicle.

"We had barely started when we came to know through wireless that a red Maruti swift was parked outside police headquarters and could have a bomb," Jadhav told Mirror from hospital bed. At that moment, Inspector Salaskar offered to drive the vehicle, while Addl CP Ashok Kamte occupied the front seat. ATS chief Karkare was in the backseat. Jadhav was seated in the rear of the vehicle.

"As we proceeded towards the Xaviers college via Special Branch office, the two terrorists hiding in bushes on the right side opened fire at our vehicle from close proximity. The volley left all three ie Karkare, Kamte and Salaskar grievously injured," Jadhav said, adding that the terrorists immediately opened doors of the vehicles and pushed the injured officers down. Before hijacking the vehicle, the terrorists fired once again at Karkare and later at the men seated at the rear. The ATS chief, despite having put a bulletproof vest, sustained fatal injuries.

Jadhav, who till then was waiting for an opportunity to retaliate with the help of his automatic gun, was crippled when a gunshot hit his right arm and fractured it. The three others in the vehicle were not fortunate enough and were killed in the gunfire.

TERRORISTS SPEAKING IN

KASHMIRI ACCENT

"The two terrorist were speaking with a heavy accent which matches people from the north. They were perhaps Kashmiris," Jadhav said, adding that the terrorists before leaving the spot gathered the revolvers and pistols of these officials. First, they drove to Metro cinema square, where they fired from the pistols on a red beacon carrying Medical Education Secretary Bhushan Gagrani to Mantralaya and later moved towards Nariman Point.

On reaching near Vidhan Bhavan the duo fired indiscriminately, with their automatic weapons, he said. Here they drove in direction Mittal Tower. The ordeal for Jadhav was over when the terrorists deserted the vehicle as one of its tyres got deflated. According to Jadhav, the two terrorists then stopped a Skoda car and forced its occupants, a man, woman and their driver, to leave before speeding fast in it.

“My immediate concern was to check the condition of the three officials lying on the spot of the ambush. I used the wireless to convey the development to the control room and later told them about the terrorists who sped in the skoda”, Jadhav said. By the time cops reached the spot, Karkare, Kamte and Salaskar were in a bad condition and were declared dead on admission at the hospital. Jadhav too was rushed to hospital, where the dead cops in the hijacked qualis were also removed. Eventually the terrorists were intercepted near Girgaum Chowpatty.

Here, they had to stop the vehicle as the barricades put up by the police failed them to move forward. The police team waiting for them was so enraged on learning their draded act near CST, beat them mercilessly leaving one terrorist Ibrahim, the chief of the group, dead on the spot.

The other one, whose identity has not been revealed by the Police, fained as dead. Both of them were shifted to the morgue in J J Hospital. The staff at the hospital told the police about the terrorist whose heart eats were on.

TERROR UPDATE

Dead: 107 Injured: 350 All terrorists inside Taj killed Hostages still inside Trident Hotel at the time of going to press

DONATE BLOOD

Those who wish to donate blood can go to any municipal hospital. Tata hospital has also made arrangements to accept blood on the 6th floor of their blood bank.

HOW THE TOP COPS

JUMPED RIGHT IN

Soon after finishing his meeting with Deputy Chief Minister R R Patil at Malabar Hill, Karkare received a message of firing near Taj Mahal Hotel. He rushed there and within a few minutes constables accompanying him told him about the firing near CST.

On reaching the CST, a police constable told him that the terrorists were on the foot over bridge (FOB) connecting a bylane near the Times building. Here, Karkare told Railway Police DCP Vasant Koregaonkar to rush to the station to avoid any incident in the event of terrorists striking back.

Meanwhile, DCP Sanjay Mohite reached the spot. Karkare, Mohite and Salaskar heard the sound of firing and hand grenades exploding. On reaching the rear gate of Azad Maidan, Mohite rushed towards the Cama Hospital. Here Add. CP Ashok Kamte met Karkare and Salaskar. The trio moved towards the Special Branch Office.

They then stopped the blue coloured Qualis of an ACP. None of the three officials could bend down as they were wearing bullet proof jackets.

As soon as their vehicle reached Rang Bhavan, two terrorists came forward from the right side of the vehicle and indiscriminately sprayed bullets from the sophisticated weapons. Neither of the three officials or police constables sitting in the vehicles could move an inch. One bullet fired from the service revolver of one of the officials pierced through one of the terrorist's hand.

But the terrorist duo jumped into the Qualis and dragged the bodies of the three officials out, threw them on to the road and took control of the police vehicle.

The bodies of Karkare, Kamte and Salaskar were lying near Rang Bhavan for over 45 minutes in a pool of blood before a patrolling van reached the spot.

