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Terrorists did not make any demands: NSG chief

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NEW DELHI: A day after completing its operations in Mumbai, the National Security Guard (NSG) on Sunday said the terrorists who kept several guests as hostages in Taj Mahal and Trident-Oberoi hotels did not make "any demand" and had carried out almost all the killings before the commandos arrived. NSG chief J K Dutt said, "We did not receive any demand from the terrorists who appeared to have come with the sole intention of killing as many people as they could." Dutt also said the terrorists did not appear to have plans to blow up the Taj hotel as they lacked enough explosives. The amount of explosives recovered from them did not indicate that they could bring down the building, he told reporters after arriving from Mumbai. During 'Operation Cyclone' carried out in the Taj hotel, the NSG faced difficulties due to the building's old architecture, with long connecting passages, spiral staircases and rooms with high ceilings. Dutt said the terrorists were "quite conversant with locations" and kept moving from one place to another to avoid direct encounter with the commandos. The commandos did not know where the "passages would lead", thus posing a hurdle in the operations. Though the commandos had the layout plan of the hotel, the unique structure posed problems. The terrorists, however, knew the place very well and preferred big rooms with high ceilings and single exit and entry doors to take positions. "They avoided small rooms or kitchens where they could be easily trapped by us," Dutt said. The terrorists were setting the upholstery on fire to distract the commandos so that they could change their positions. "The moment a fire was started, fire brigades were called in and we paused shooting. They took advantage of this and changed their positions. We came to know about their tactics. Despite the fire, we entered a room and shot one of the terrorists who fell out of the window which was even caught on camera," Dutt said. During the function, commandos and officers described their experience as colleagues hung on to every word. Some even wanted to know whether the sequence of events portrayed by the TV channels was correct. "Even my wife did not believe what I told her after reaching here. She believed the TV channels more than what me," a commando who participated in the operation at Oberoi hotel said. Another commando described how he received a congratulatory greeting card by one of his buddies, right after the completion of Oberoi (Trident) operation. "I still cannot figure out how could he manage a card in that situation," he said. Meanwhile, the NSG has decided to include the Mumbai experience in its new training schedule for its elite Black Cat commandos. "The Mumbai siege has been a learning experience for us. We will include this in our future commando trainings," a senior official said, adding it was the first time the NSG had operated in crowded and densely populated areas.

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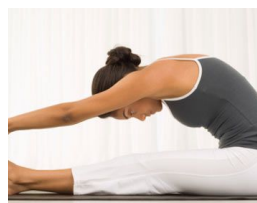
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