

Day 3 toll: 50 in Taj, 30 in Oberoi and 17 cops

Reuters Posted online: Fri Nov 28 2008, 16:23 hrs

Mumbai : Fifteen policemen and two NSG personnel martyred in anti-terror operations said Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister R R Patil, while the Mumbai Police Commissioner confirmed that 30 dead bodies have been taken out from the Oberoi/Trident towers.

Earlier, the Navy's elite Marine Commandos held a press conference in Mumbai where they claimed to have seen about 50 dead bodies during the flush out operation of the Taj hotel.

Gunfire and explosions continued to erupt from the Taj Hotel as a lone militant fought on. The crack commandos seemed to grant their foes a grudging respect for their military know-how and planning.

"These people were very, very familiar with the hotel layout and it appeared they had carried out a survey before," the chief of the elite Naval Commando Unit (MARCOS or Marine Commandos), his face covered with a black scarf and sunglasses, told reporters.

"A very determined lot, remorseless," he said, adding that he had seen around 50 bodies scattered through the Taj hotel, including at least 12 in a single room.

"He is moving in two floors, there is a dance floor area where apparently he has cut off all the lights. And sometimes he gets holed up into some of the rooms, and he has made the area dark," Lieutenant-General N. Thamburaj told reporters.

"This morning while carrying out the operation we heard the sound of a lady and a gentleman, so it is possible that this terrorist has got two or more hostages with him," he added.

Guests who escaped the hotel told of bodies littered in the corridors, although one Briton said the attackers had released some women hostages when they started to panic in the early stages of the siege.

They also found grenades, ammunition, dried fruits and almonds -- signs, they said, that the attackers had been prepared to sustain themselves during a long siege.

"We are not aware how many have been killed," the commando said of the battle at the Taj.