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## Cops to be armed and ready

Somit Sen, TNN Dec 14, 2008, 02.45am IST

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MUMBAI: Taking a cue from the NSG operation at Nariman House, the city police are procuring two helicopters on lease so that they would be able to rush their commandos to any part of the metropolis within three minutes and also airdrop commandos to combat terrorists holed up in buildings.

"We want our response time to be as short as three minutes," police commissioner Hasan Gafoor told TOI on Saturday. "The helicopters will be of added advantage to the NSG-like squad being set up in Maharashtra." Sources said the police will liaison with ONGC to avail of the chopper services, which could cost nearly Rs 1 lakh for a day's operation. The police commandos will also take part in mock drills, using choppers to alight on rooftops of buildings.

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Apart from speeding up response time, the police are also keen to increase their visibility. Gafoor plans to revive beat policing and set up more chowkies. Earlier this year, the high court had ordered the demolition of 137 illegal police chowkies. The police will now scout for land where the chowkies can come up. Every chowky will be equipped with firearms.

TOI has found out that the state government has ordered the immediate procurement of 500 AK-47s for the police. "These are being delivered on a priority," a Mantralaya official said, adding that 12 new speedboats (in addition to the existing 10), a few INSAS rifles (used by the Indian army), Self Loading Rifles, and a huge stock of ammunition would add more teeth to the city police force.

The police have also been receiving support from private business groups and individuals who are willing to sponsor the procurement of bullet-proof vests and advanced machinery to fight terror. Said Gafoor, "As people are willing to help us, we have asked for replacement of the existing barricades which have rusted." The police plan to procure 100 new barricades-which would be taller and sturdier-and used for nakabandis.

They will also get armoured assault vehicles which can carry police personnel to combat terrorists. He added that there was also a need to have a proper disaster management programme (terror), which would facilitate smooth co-ordination between various agencies during a crisis.

"I am proud of some tourist police constables who were among the first to face the bullets in the lane near Leopold Cafe," Gafoor said, adding that the yellow jeeps of the tourist police will now be equipped with sophisticated firearms.

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