

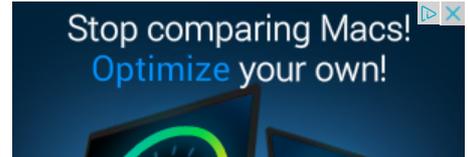


With 12 men, he fought terrorists for 18 long hours

Saturday, 13 December 2008 - 3:36am IST

Nikhil S Dixit

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He was sitting down for dinner with his family on the night of 26/11 when the phone call came, telling assistant commissioner of police (ACP) Isaque Bagwan that there was firing at Leopold

He was sitting down for dinner with his family at their Colaba home on the night of 26/11 when the phone call came, telling assistant commissioner of police (ACP) Isaque Bagwan that there was firing going on at Leopold Café.

Bagwan clutched his service revolver and rushed out. On his way to Leopold, he came to know that gunmen had barged into the Taj. Just as he was reaching the iconic hotel, he heard a loud bang.

"It was so loud that I could instantly make out that this was a bomb blast," Bagwan said. Within seconds he got a call from a source, telling him that the terrorists had bombed a petrol pump in Colaba market and entered Nariman House.

"I got a call from my superior. He asked me to rush to Nariman House," Bagwan said. He rushed to the spot with half a dozen constables, armed with .303 rifles. Bagwan gheraoed the site and asked his men to take up strategic locations. With the entire police force engaged in the operation across south Mumbai, Bagwan was told that he should not count too much on reinforcements.

An additional force of six commandos from the State Reserve Police (SRP), armed with SLR guns, was sent to Nariman House to assist Bagwan. The terrorists were firing indiscriminately and throwing hand grenades. The young SRP commandos were eager to fight back, but Bagwan knew that with limited manpower and ammunition, they would be no match for the terrorists in an open encounter.

"I asked them to take up strategic locations in the surrounding buildings. Whenever there was a burst of fire from the terrorists, I would instruct my team to fire one after another so that it gives an impression to that there was a huge police contingent surrounding the area," Bagwan said.

His problem increased when the terrorists fired at one of the buildings and two residents were killed. "It made me realise that I had to evacuate the surrounding buildings," he said.

Within a couple of hours, with local help, Bagwan managed to empty the surrounding

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buildings. "While this was on, the nanny of baby Moshe came rushing out with him in her arms. I arranged for a police vehicle to take them to a safe location," Bagwan said. Bagwan knew that he had to hold on for as long as possible. "We had decided that we would not let any of the terrorists to leave the building till the NSG comes in," he said. Eighteen hours elapsed before the NSG took charge of Nariman House. Police commissioner Hasan Gafoor said, "It was fantastic work by Bagwan. I am extremely proud to be the captain of a force which is so brave."

A crackshot too: Isaque Bagwan also has the distinction of being part of the team involved in the first ever encounter by Mumbai Police. He was instrumental in killing dreaded gangster Manya Surve in a gunbattle in Wadala in 1983.

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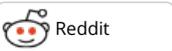
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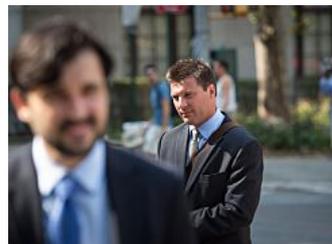
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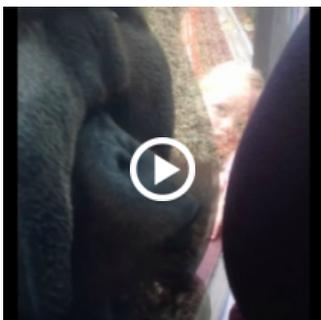
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