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'How can our .303 rifles fight against AK-47?'

Prasanna D Zore in Mumbai | December 02, 2008




While leaving his Airoli home in suburban Mumbai on Wednesday night, Sudam Aaba Pandarkar, an assistant sub-inspector of the Thane Railway Police, could never have imagined the terrible night that awaited him.

Pandarkar, who is usually on duty in the ladies' compartment in Central Railway trains, reached the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus at around 9.50 pm.

Pandarkar initially mistook the sound of gunshots as firecrackers being lit by happy cricket enthusiasts, after India's victory against England [\[Images\]](#) in the fifth one day international that day. The gravity of the situation hit him when he saw the terrorists firing from their automatic rifles.

As he tried to make his way to the place where the terrorists were spraying bullets, he came across a terrorist standing just 15 metres away from him, near platform number 6. Without wasting any time, Pandarkar unlocked his .303 rifle and fired three shots at the terrorist.

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Unfortunately, all three bullets missed the target. "When you shoot in such circumstances, it is to kill the target. The terrorist was fortunate that he was not hit by my bullets," he says when asked why he missed the target.

The terrorist fired back and the bullet hit Pandarkar in the chest. When the terrorist ran away, Pandarkar tried to follow him, but couldn't move beyond a few feet. His colleagues rushed to his rescue as he fell down, writhing in pain.

"The bullet narrowly missed his heart and ruptured his left lung. Had the bullet hit him just a few inches lower, it would have completely damaged his heart. He must thank his stars for that," says Dr Ashish Kumar Tiwari, staff physician and spokesperson of Bombay Hospital, who along with Dr D P Vyas, is in charge of all the injured patients.

Pandarkar's wife Parvatibai, who's been with her husband ever since he was hospitalised, stands at his bedside, as her husband talks to television reporters.

Though Pandarkar has no complaints against anybody for his condition, he wonders aloud, "It was .303 versus automatic rifles like AK-47s and AK-46s. Do we stand a chance?"

He also feels that something must be done to upgrade the outdated firearms used by the police, so that the force is better-prepared the next time.

Image: Sudam Aaba Pandarkar with his blood-splattered uniform

Photograph: Andri Tambunan

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