

## Mind the perimeter: On J&K terror attacks

The number of casualties in the [terror attack on the Sunjuwan Army base in Jammu](#) has risen to seven after clearing operations. The garrison of the 36 Brigade of Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry was attacked last Saturday by a small group of heavily armed terrorists that managed to enter the residential quarters of soldiers. While three terrorists were killed, six soldiers and a civilian lost their lives. Many more sustained injuries. This is the latest in a series of attacks on military installations over the last few years. The worrisome aspect is the repeated success of terrorists in infiltrating high-security military complexes. As in every case, the Army will conduct a court of inquiry into the incident to identify lapses. However, the Sunjuwan attack exposes the vulnerabilities in perimeter security and the scant progress made in improving the security protocol since the attack on the Pathankot Air Force station in January 2016. Since then, there have been major attacks in Uri, Handwara, Nagrota and Panzgam, with significant casualties. In the aftermath of Pathankot, a committee headed by a former Army vice chief, Lt General Philip Campose, undertook a security audit of all military bases across the country. It identified sensitive installations and recommended measures to fortify them. In addition, in July 2017 the government delegated substantial financial powers to the three services to strengthen perimeter security at military installations. The Sunjuwan attack underscores the need for speedy measures on the ground, beyond the inquiries and policy announcements, to overhaul the system.

Jammu Army camp attackers crossed LoC in August 2017: Centre

As the terror attack in Jammu was under way, the Defence Ministry sanctioned 1,487 crore to strengthen sensitive military installations across the country as per the recommendations of a 2016 audit. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has also directed the Army to complete its implementation by the end of the year. This impetus is welcome, but the implementation must be broad-based, and go beyond *ad hoc* measures. It must be borne in mind that a successful attack does not necessarily mean that the soldier on the ground is lax in performing his duties. Many bases along the border are located in tough terrain, and are in close proximity to civilian dwellings, demanding care from the soldier to avoid civilian casualties in crossfire while adhering to the standard operating procedures. For a country that takes pride in its modern, technologically advanced military, India still relies heavily on putting more boots on the ground and on the calibre of the soldier. It is time the Defence Ministry adopted a holistic approach, making sure that the soldier is fully backed by technology and calibrated security drills. Preventing terrorists from scoring a strike is the best defence.

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