

CRPF inducts 500 women to rein in stone-pelters

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, the CRPF has inducted five Mahila companies (500 combatants) for anti-terrorist operations in Jammu & Kashmir and will help in containing women stone-pelters and areas gheraoed by women during cordon and search operations by the security forces.

The companies operate from a base at Bemina in Srinagar and dispatched to locations based on operational requirements. The women personnel are equipped with assault rifles like AK-47 for operations in the hinterland and 9 mm pistol for close combat in urban settings besides bullet-proof vests.

As part of pre-induction training, the companies were initially deployed in guard duties at various places including the Srinagar airport. The women personnel have also been exposed to riot control and mob control. The companies have been trained in counter-insurgency and anti-terrorist operations for operational requirement in the Valley.

The CRPF has already deployed Mahila companies for anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

A senior CRPF officer handling training in the paramilitary said, "The decision to put trained women on the ground in the Valley was taken as part of tactical requirements as the separatist groups and terror-sympathizing outfits often bring women to the fore to disrupt cordon and



search operations and often engaged for throwing stones on the security forces. In such a situation, our boys (jawans) are at receiving end and the terrorists escape after taking advantage of the disturbance. The Mahila companies will now take care of the stone-pelting women and those disrupting anti-terrorist operations."

The separatist and terrorist groups often made a huge issue when protesting women were injured even inadvertently by security forces during operations or for controlling violent stone-throwing mobs. The human rights groups also used to make a huge issue out of such lawful operations by the security forces against the ultras who were readily backed by local women and children, a source said.

The CRPF has deployed over 60 battalions (60,000 personnel) in Jammu and Kashmir for law and order and anti-terrorist operations in the insurgency-hit State.

Earlier, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police that guards the Indo-China border had deployed five companies for combat operations in the high-altitude frontier.