

Brazen Pakistan Army hits Brigade HQ after 21 years

No casualty after shell from across LoC lands in Poonch

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In one of the gravest provocations from Pakistan, Brigade headquarters of the Indian Army in Poonch was targeted by the Pakistan Army on Tuesday morning. After 1997, this is for the first time a shell from across the Line of Control (LoC) has landed in Poonch city located more than 5 km from the LoC.

According to preliminary reports, the local police and Army authorities are investigating the nature of the shell used in targeting Brigade headquarters.

Late on Tuesday, Ministry



An Army official looks inside an 'unmanned' store hit by a shell fired from across the LoC inside Poonch Brigade headquarters on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

of Defence Spokesman in Jammu Lt-Col Devendra Anand said, "Around 10.35 am during ceasefire violation, Pakistan troops fired Rocket propelled grenades (RPG). One

round landed on a barrel type store shelter in Poonch causing it to catch fire. Initial analysis indicates calibre of 105/106 mm RCL was used."

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In another incident one round of 82 mm landed in Jhallas around 5.35 pm, he added. In the last 48 hours, this

is the second major strike by the Pakistan Army along the LoC.

On Sunday afternoon, the Border Action Team (BAT) of Pakistan Army had targetted an Indian patrol party in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri.

Three Indian soldiers were martyred in the 'tactical' attack inside the Indian territory.

According to ground reports from Poonch, one of the two shells fired by the Pakistan Army landed on an 'unmanned' store inside the Brigade headquarters around 10.50 am, while another shell exploded some distance away from the Brigade headquarters.

Immediately after the blast was reported, local villagers were asked to run for safety and educational institutions were closed down in the forward area. Local villagers were put in a state of high alert by the Army authorities apprehending fresh escalation in the region.

However, no loss of life or property was reported inside

the highly guarded Army installation.

Offices of Deputy Commissioner Poonch and SSP, Poonch are also located in the close vicinity.

Initially, Army authorities tried to cover up the nature of blast inside the brigade headquarters but later defence spokesman in Jammu clarified that, "the blast occurred in an unmanned shelter in Army camp. No casualties were reported. Internal investigation is going on".

On the other hand, Senior Superintendent of Police, Poonch district Rajiv Pandey told battery of reporters in Poonch that "initially we had received inputs that some kind of blast has been reported inside the Brigade headquarters. We immediately rushed to the spot along with other teams. Prima facie, a shell from across has landed inside the Brigade headquarters."

He said a store was hit but no loss of life and property was reported in the blast. He said, "The store caught fire and police parties were rushed to

the spot to douse the flames. We are carrying out detailed investigations to ascertain the kind of blast," he added.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi the External Affairs Ministry summoned a senior official of the Pakistan High Commission and lodged a strong protest over the cross-border infiltration attempt in Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday in which two terrorists and three Indian soldiers were killed.

"A senior official in the High Commission for Pakistan in New Delhi was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs and a demarche was made lodging strong protest at the fatal casualties of Indian soldiers during an attempted cross border infiltration on October 21 by Pakistani terrorists in Sunderbani sector in Jammu & Kashmir," the Ministry said in a statement.

"It was informed that two Pakistani armed intruders have been killed by the Indian security forces during the ensuing firefight and the Government of Pakistan (should) take custody of the dead bodies of its

nationals.

"The Ministry condemned in the strongest terms such provocative action by Pakistan, which reveals their complicity in aiding and abetting terrorism and exposes the hollowness of Pakistan's deceitful claims to promote constructive engagement and desire for peace," the statement said.

The Ministry statement also said that India shared its grave concern at the continuing incidents of unprovoked ceasefire violations by the Pakistan forces along the LoC and the International Border (IB).

"Despite repeated calls for restraint and adherence to the ceasefire understanding of 2003 for maintaining peace and tranquility, Pakistan forces have carried out 1,591 incidents of unprovoked ceasefire violations along the LoC and IB in 2018 so far.

"Pakistan was called on to abide by its bilateral commitment not to allow any territory under its control to be used to support terrorism against India in any manner," the statement said.