7 civilians killed in blast, 3 militants in encounter

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Troops at the site of encounter at Laroo, Kulgam on Sunday. —Excelsior/Sajad Dar

Dozens injured in clashes, police issues fresh advisory

Trooper killed in Tral grenade attack

Fayaz Bukhari

Srinagar, Oct 21: Seven civilians were killed and at least 43 others injured after a gunfight in Kulgam district of South Kashmir ended in the killing of three militants of Jaish-e-Mohammad this morning.

Three militants were killed and two soldiers injured in a gunfight at Laroo village of Kulgam in South Kashmir this morning.

Security forces including Army's 9 Rashtriya Rifles, CRPF and SOG of Jammu and Kashmir Police cordoned off Laroo village of Kulgam district last night after inputs about presence of militants in the village. During searches in the village, militants fired upon the troops leading to a gun battle in which two soldiers were injured.

Security forces fired UBGL grenades during the gun battle to blast off the house in which militants were hiding. Three militants were killed in the encounter which lasted for several hours.

The killed militants have been identified as Shahid Ahmad Tantary son of Abdul Rashid Tantary of village Wangam, Shopian, Zubair Ahmad Lone son of Manzoor Ahmad Lone of Ahwatoo, Kulgam and Yazil Ahmad Makroo son of Mushtaq Ahmad of Arwani, Bijbehara in Anantnag district. Arms and ammunition were recovered from the encounter site.

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As soon as the encounter ended and security forces left the spot along with the dead bodies of the three militants, the residents in large numbers visited the encounter site during which an unexploded UBGL went off leading to injures to around one dozen persons.

The injured were removed to hospital for treatment and seven of them succumbed to injuries while one of them is stated to be critical. They have been identified as Ubaid Shah, Tajamul, Irshad Ahmad Padder of village Shurat in Kulgam district, Uzair Ahmad of village Reshipora in Kulgam district, Masroor Ahmad of village Laroo in Kulgam district and Javed Ahmad Lone of Hawoora in district Kulgam. Two of them died on the spot while others succumbed to injuries in the hospital.

Clashes broke out during the gun battle as the stone pelting protesters gathered in the village and targeted security forces. Security forces retaliated and in the ding dong battles at least two dozen persons were injured in pellet and tear gas firing. The injured have been admitted

to hospital for treatment and majority of them have been discharged.

A police spokesman said here that in the Kulgam encounter while three militants JeM outfits were killed this morning, in the aftermath of the encounter when a large congregation entered the encounter site before it was cleared, leading to an explosion in which six people died.

“Moreover after the conclusion of encounter as the forces moved out, the locals from the area started assembling at the site of encounter and had apparently fiddled with some stray explosive materials leading to an explosion and killing of six civilians and injuries to five others. It is pertinent to mention that this incident occurred post encounter”, the spokesman said.

“Citizens are requested not to visit any encounter site until the site is sanitized by the bomb disposal team. We seek cooperation of people in this regard for avoiding accidents of such nature. Police has registered a case in this regard and investigation has been initiated”, the spokesman added.

Advisor to Governor Vijay Kumar and DGP, Dilbag Singh regretted the loss of civilian lives in Kulgam district. “They have expressed profound condolences to the bereaved families. Such sites should be avoided by civilians till they are properly sanitized,” said an official statement.

Separatist leaders Syed Ali Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin Malik called for strike against the killing of civilians in Kulgam tomorrow. They said that on Tuesday they will march to Lal Chowk and hold a protest sit-in against the killings.

Militants fired a UBGL grenade at 180 battalion of CRPF in Midoora, Tral in Pulwama district injuring one CRPF personnel. He was removed to hospital for treatment. He later succumbed to injuries and has been identified as Constable Vijay Kumar. The area has been cordoned off and searches are on to trace out militants responsible for the attack.

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