

Army using 'wall radars' to catch terrorists hiding in houses

By Surendra Singh

Highlights

- *Microwave radiation from these radar systems can detect the presence of people behind concrete barriers*
- *A multiple frequency beam scans an area and gets reflected from a person hiding behind walls*
- *This reflected wave is then detected by an analyser of the computing device*

New Delhi: With an aim to detect terrorists who hide behind walls or in houses in Kashmir, the Army has started using "through the wall" radars to catch jihadis during counter-insurgency operations in the Valley. "A few such radar systems have already been imported from the United States and Israel," a top source in the Army said.

The radar is being used to help the security forces pinpoint the location of terrorists, who hide behind specially created walls or in underground cavities in houses during combing operations. "Some Army formations have started using these imported radar systems in Kashmir," the source said.

The need for such hi-tech radars was felt after the security forces and J&K police failed to locate terrorists during combing operations despite specific intelligence about the presence of jihadis in the area. In circumstances where troops were unable to trace terrorists in densely populated areas despite a credible tip-off, they faced hostile crowds and stone-pelters.

Last year on July 8, terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen's poster boy Burhan Wani was gunned down only after a search party made three rounds of their hideout in a village in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. Despite a specific intelligence tipoff, the search team, it is learnt, entered the house twice but were unable to find any terrorists, who were hiding in a false ceiling. During the third round of searches, the hiding terrorists came out in the open by firing at the search party. It was only after that the three men, including Wani, were shot dead. The killing later led to unrest in the Valley.

The microwave radiation from these radar systems can detect the presence of terrorists hiding behind walls or any such concrete barriers.

Electronics and Radar Development Establishment (LRDE), the Bengaluru-based laboratory of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), has also been working on such hand-held radars. The project started especially after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. During the 26/11 strike, commandos were attacked when they were looking for terrorists hiding in rooms of the Taj Mahal hotel. The DRDO laboratory has developed two types of portable radars — hand-held and tripod-mounted — under the 'Divyachakshu' (divine eye) project to help security forces in such operations.

"These DRDO-developed hand-held imaging radars work on microwave radiation and are capable of scanning through walls. A multiple frequency beam from the device scans an area and gets reflected from a person hiding behind walls and this reflected wave is then detected by an analyser of the computing device integrated with the radar. These hand-held radars can produce images from the other side of the barrier up to a distance of 20 metre," said Ravi Gupta, former director (public interface), DRDO.

"Tripod-mounted radars have longer range (40 metre) than those of hand-held radars but are slightly difficult to carry. Currently, user trial of these radars is going on," says Gupta. "Such radars can be used by security forces and police personnel who are involved in low-intensity conflicts," he says.

Once ready for induction, the DRDO radar will cost just 35 lakh whereas the imported ones cost Rs 2 crore each.