

Women Maoists led attack on EFR jawans

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GIDHNI (WEST MIDNAPORE): The attack on paramilitary jawans [soldiers] at Gidhni on Sunday evening was led by two women — just like the assault on Sankrail police station. Police say one of them could be Tara, a Lalgarh native and Maoist leader Bikash's fiancée. The EFR [Eastern Frontier Rifles] jawans did not suspect the women, disguised as villagers, which allowed the attackers to get to point-blank range.

Locals told police on Monday that two young women in salwar-kameez [loose-fitting trousers and tunic] were commanding the rebels, and they are the ones who opened the attack by shooting two jawans in the head. The forces never expected an attack in a crowded bazaar, and not from women. Stunned by this, the security forces say they have no option but to counterattack with guerrilla tactics.

Eyewitnesses have given police a detailed description of the attack. No one had spotted the Maoists in the crowd, neither locals, nor the EFR. With AK assault rifles and 9mm pistols hidden under shawls and chadars [loose-fitting women's outer garment], the squad mingled with evening shoppers. Led by the two women, the team of four sauntered close to four jawans. Without warning, they whipped out guns and fired.

A back-up group of about eight Maoists sprinted in to pick up the rifles and ammunition of the fallen jawans. The four attackers kept firing as the remaining EFR jawans and forces from the Gidhni camp retaliated. "They seemed to be very well trained. Using minimum firepower, they completed their operation. They shot at point-blank range, giving police no chance to resist," said a senior police officer.

Intelligence agencies claim that the two women are from Lalgarh. "One of them is probably Tara. But we have no clue about the other, who is in her mid-twenties," said an official.