

## **INDIA: Pulwama attack - In worst terror attack in Valley, car bomber kills 37 CRPF men**

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Kashmir terror attack: The Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility and identified the bomber as a 20-year-old local boy from south Kashmir's Pulwama district.

**Pulwama attack: The Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed the bomber was Adil Ahmad Dar, a resident of Gundibagh village in south Kashmir's Pulwama, who had joined Jaish in March last year. (Express Photo: Shuaib Masoodi)**

**New Delhi:** At least 37 CRPF personnel were feared killed and 10 injured, five of them seriously, on Thursday in the single worst terror attack in the Valley when a suicide bomber rammed his Scorpio SUV laden with explosives into a CRPF bus in south Kashmir. The Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for the attack and identified the bomber as a 20-year-old local resident from south Kashmir's Pulwama district.

The bus, ferrying over 40 soldiers, was part of a convoy of 78 vehicles with 2,547 CRPF personnel, moving from Jammu to Srinagar. Most of the men were returning from leave to join duty in Srinagar, said sources.

It was about 35 km from Srinagar city when, at around 3.30 pm, the SUV is suspected to have emerged from a side road to hit the bus at a right angle. The convoy had started from Jammu at 3.30 am Thursday.

“The casualty figure is likely to go up as some more jawans have been critically injured in the attack,” said a senior CRPF official.

### **Pulwama attack: Security personnel near Awantipora blast site. (Express Photo: Shuaib Masoodi)**

At the scene of the attack in Lethpora, the bus was a mangled frame of wires, hurled up and across the road divider, the remains of the personnel scattered over a large area, their belongings draped from trees. A second bus was also hit but there was no casualty reported from it although some passengers onboard were injured.

“A car suddenly came in the middle of the convoy and there was a huge explosion,” said a CRPF man who was travelling in another vehicle that was part of the convoy. “When we came down, the bus was not there. It had been completely charred and the bodies were scattered all around.”

A resident of Lethpora told The Indian Express that the explosion seemed to shake the ground beneath. “We were sitting at home when there was a deafening bang and the earth shook,” he said. “It was so powerful that we were thrown away from the place we were sitting.”

Soon after the attack, the national highway was closed for traffic and the media barred from moving towards the explosion site. Internet services in the area were suspended.

**Pulwama attack: At the site of the attack on Thursday (Express Photo: Shuaib Masoodi)**

The bus, ferrying 42 soldiers, was part of a convoy moving from Jammu to Srinagar of 78 vehicles ferrying 2,547 CRPF personnel. (Express Photo: Shuaib Masoodi) The Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed the bomber was Adil Ahmad Dar, a resident of Gundibagh village in south Kashmir's Pulwama, who had joined Jaish in March last year.

**Pulwama attack: Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed the bomber was Adil Ahmad Dar of Pulwama**

“The forces responsible for insurgency in J&K are desperate and frustrated and they just want to prove their presence,” J-K Governor Satya Pal Malik said. “Visibly, it seems to be guided from across the border as the Jaish-e-Mohammad has claimed responsibility. Such actions will not deter the resolve of our security forces and people and we will finish these inimical forces to the end.”

“No words are enough to condemn the gruesome terror attack. How many more lives will be snuffed out before this madness ends?” tweeted PDP leader and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti.

National Conference chief Omar Abdullah said, “I condemn this attack in the strongest possible terms. My prayers for the injured and condolences to the families of the bereaved.”

**Pulwama attack: A second bus was also hit but there were no casualties reported from it although some passengers onboard were injured. (Express Photo: Shuaib Masoodi)**

Sources said that preliminary inspection of the attack spot revealed that the SUV had more than 50-60 kg of high-grade explosives. So massive was the impact that both the bus and SUV were reduced to heaps of twisted metal and the likelihood of survival of any passenger in the target bus was grim.

**Pulwama attack: A team of officers from the National Investigation Agency along with forensic experts has left for Srinagar to assist Jammu and Kashmir police. (Express Photo: Shuaib Masoodi)**

Sources said that the attack occurred at Latoomode on the Jammu-Srinagar highway. There are several side routes off

this highway to give access to local people in adjacent towns and villages.

Security sources said while the Intelligence Bureau did not have any input about an impending attack; all the SOPs were followed. A road opening party was sent before the movement of the convoy. The whole route was sanitised. IEDs were ruled out. How this attack happened still, is now in the realm of investigations,â€• CRPF IG (Operations), Kashmir, Zulfikar Hassan said.

Meanwhile, a team of officers from the National Investigation Agency along with forensic experts has left for Srinagar to assist Jammu and Kashmir police.

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