Sunjwan Army Camp Attack

Why in news?

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The Sunjwan Army camp near Chenni in Jammu was recently attacked suspectedly by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants.

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What happened?

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- At least three terrorists are said to have entered the camp through a nullah (water stream).
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- Six persons, including 5 soldiers and a civilian, were killed.
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- 3 suspected JeM terrorists were killed in Army's retaliatory action.
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- A large quantity of arms and ammunition was seized from them.
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- The army continued with the search operation at the camp.
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Is this new?

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- This is not the first time the Sunjuwan Army camp is targeted.
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- In 2003, it was attacked by 2 fidayeen, and 12 soldiers were killed.
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- They were said to have cut a wire fence on their way in.
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- Other notable attacks in the recent past include the following -
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i. 2002 - Kaluchak, where terrorists targeted a tourist bus and an Army camp, killing 38
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ii. 2003 - fidayeen entered the Army camp in Tanda, north of Jammu, and killed 8 men
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iii. 2015 - attack on a camp on the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway in Samba district; 2 army personnel were killed
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iv. 2015 - militants stormed a police station in Kathua, killing 7 people
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v. 2016 - fidayeen targeted an Army camp in Nagrota in Jammu, killing 7 soldiers
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What is the perpetual problem?

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- **Civilian settlements** - Jammu city alone has 5 major Army camps under the Western Command.
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- These are Chatha, Ratnuchak, Kaluchak, Satwari and Sunjuwan.
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- Besides, there are a couple of smaller camps.
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- Each of these small and large bases is surrounded by civilian settlements, with hotels, malls and even schools lining up.
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- The militants often choose these vulnerable sites with sprawling civilian population with women and children as their targets.
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- Efforts at evicting people closer to the camps have seen opposition from property owners and matters still remain in the court.
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- These make it difficult to monitor the militants' movements and thwart their plans.
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- **Security** - Army camps in the Jammu region have for long been vulnerable to militant attacks.
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- Notably, many of the camps are protected only by barbed wire.
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- Fortifying the camps is essential for securing them.
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- But converting camps in the middle of thickly populated urban areas into permanent fortresses is hardly possible.
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What were the responses?

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- After the earlier Sunjwan attack and 2016 Pathankot attack, fortifying the army camps was increasingly pushed for.
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- Strengthening the fortifications was also suggested.
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- “Smart” access control and fencing with sensors and alarm systems to detect intrusions in real time were suggested.
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- However, army camps still employ only limited resources and low cost solutions.
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- E.g. using treated Iron sheets to plug gaps in the wall
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- Only as the recent attack was underway, the government sanctioned around Rs 1,500 crore.
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- This was for perimeter fortification at military installations across India.
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What should be done?

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- It is important that any plan to address the issue of attacks should be multi-

pronged.
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- Clearly, **camp security** is just one aspect.
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- Boundary walls, some sort of smart fencing, sensors, a control room to monitor the perimeter are some of the options.
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- Security plans for camps must remain “dynamic” to keep pace with changing environments around them due to the civilian push.
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- **Consolidation** i.e. squeezing of smaller pockets of camps into bigger ones is another important aspect.
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- This may make it easier for guarding the troops that are spread out.
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- The plan must also include bringing down the levels of **infiltration** from across the border.
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- A combination of manpower and smart technology should be employed.
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Source: Indian Express

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