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Two Indian soldiers, one armed with a bazooka, look for Sikh deserters at a checkpoint on the outskirts of New Delhi.

Drugs reported found in Sikh temple

From Associated Press and Reuter

AMRITSAR, India — Soldiers combing the Golden Temple of Amritsar have recovered huge quantities of heroin and other drugs that Sikh separatists were selling to earn money for sophisticated weapons, All-India Radio reported yesterday.

The Government-controlled radio, quoting official sources, said the heroin and hashish were smuggled in from neighboring Pakistan, stored and distributed from the temple.

Army officers in Amritsar also told foreign journalists yesterday they had recovered \$300,000 worth of gold, silver and precious gems from the Golden Temple, the shrine that served as a base for Sikh extremists until army troops backed by tanks stormed it last week.

The army says 492 Sikh extremists and 84 soldiers were killed in the assault, and 86 extremists and 262 soldiers wounded. Independent

reports have put the death toll at more than 1,000 Sikhs and 200 soldiers.

About 100 Indian journalists and six Western reporters were flown to Amritsar from New Delhi yesterday for a military briefing and a carefully controlled one-hour tour of the Golden Temple, the first such tour since the battle.

Reporters found the seventeenth-century gold-domed temple intact except for a few bullet holes and broken windows, but the sacred building where the holy scriptures are kept was in shambles.

Troops had hoped to avoid firing at the Akal Takht, the ancient seat of Sikh gurus, but eventually they used a howitzer to blast the dome of the building, said Maj.-Gen. K. S. Brar. A tank also fired on the building.

About 50 soldiers were killed and 200 wounded by machine-gun fire raking the exposed esplanade — the “killing ground,” as military offi-

cals called it — in front the Akal Takht.

“What we did not know was how well the extremists were armed, or how elaborate their defences were,” said Lt.-Gen. Brar, the Sikh officer in charge of the assault.

Sikhs fired from manholes, staircases and basements and from slits in windows and doors that they had bricked up. Some of the commando units leading the assault took 30 per cent casualties, General Brar said.

Collapsed pillars lay in a heap, and gaping holes were shot through the dome. The blue mosaic facade of the Akal Takht was shattered. On the second floor, one still-smoldering room was ankle deep in spent machine-gun cartridges.

But the Kotha Sahib, a tiny room where the Sikh holy scriptures are kept at night, is intact.

Other buildings were less damaged, but scarred by deep bullet holes.

Reporters were not taken inside

the basement bunker where Mr. Bhindranwale and his top lieutenants reportedly were found dead.

Lt.-Gen. K. Sunderji said it was “most unlikely” that Mr. Bhindranwale, the leader of the Sikh militants, had committed suicide. He suffered a large wound on the right side of his head that could have been caused by a machine-gun bullet, a chunk of falling concrete or a soft-nosed bullet fired at close range, he said.

Meanwhile, authorities agreed to issue curfew passes to newspaper staff members and distributors, allowing newspapers in Punjab to resume publication today after an 11-day blackout.

Security forces said yesterday that about 90 people had been arrested in Punjab in the previous 24 hours.

Military sources said 50 soldiers belonging to the Sikh Light Infantry division in Amritsar district refused to obey orders yesterday.