



TRISHUL

Ladakh and Kargil 1947-1993



Brigadier (Retd) Ashok Malhotra

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1947 - 1993



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Battle Honours And Theatre Honours

Jammu and Kashmir Theatre 1947-48

Zojila

Kargil

Skardu

Ladakh Theatre 1962

Rezangla

Chushul

Jammu and Kashmir Theatre 1965

Jammu and Kashmir Theatre 1971

Shingo River Valley

Turtok



Dropping of supplies

CONTENTS

Battle Honours And Theatre Honours	v
Foreword	ix
Preface	xiii
1. 15 August 1947 To 31 December 1948	1
<i>Operations In Ladakh</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Operations In Kargil Sector</i>	<i>18</i>
2. 1949 - 1961	31
3. 1962 - 1964	35
<i>Raising Of 3 Infantry Division</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>1962 Operations In Ladakh</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Inter War Period 1963-1964</i>	<i>90</i>

4. 1965 - 1970: Operations In Kargil And Turtok Sectors	93
<i>Kargil Sector</i>	93
<i>Turtok Sector</i>	105
<i>1966-1970: Another Break</i>	105
5. 1971 - 1983	107
<i>1971 Operations In Kargil Sector</i>	107
<i>1971 Operations In Turtok Sector</i>	122
<i>1972 To 1983</i>	138
6. 1984 - 1993	139
<i>Operation Meghdoot</i>	139
<i>1985 To 1993</i>	144
Epilogue	150
<i>The Ladakh Region</i>	150
<i>The Kargil Region</i>	158
Honours And Awards	161

FOREWORD

The Ladakh and Kargil Sectors have gone through a tumultuous period since 1947. Operations in 1947 saved Ladakh from the Pakistani raiders. 3 Infantry Division came into existence when the Chinese posed a threat and claimed large areas of Ladakh. What went into meeting the challenges of tasks that the Division confronted since then makes interesting reading, not only to the student of military history, but to all those whose lives and homes were saved during this period. The twin tasks of defending simultaneously the borders with Pakistan and China combined with a limited offensive capability were the most challenging to 3 Infantry Division.

Strategically, in 1971, it had been planned that operations against Pakistan in the East will be undertaken in winter months so that China is not able to launch a major thrust across the Himalayas. For this purpose 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade

Group at Kargil was placed under command Headquarters 3 Infantry Division.

Operations in the Kargil Sector proceeded as planned but having to fight from Post to Post was both costly and time-consuming. Operations in the Partappur Sector achieved phenomenal results due to good planning and execution by Ladakh Scouts supported by Nubra Guards with very meagre logistical support.

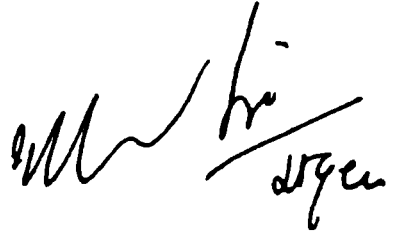
From the achievements of the Ladakh Scouts and Nubra Guards, they rightfully deserve to be rated as an excellent force, eminently suited for unconventional warfare. They should not be employed in a ground-holding role or conventional roles undertaken by the regular Army.

After the operations, with the spectacular advances made in the Partappur Sector, Headquarters 3 Infantry Division had raised the question of 1948-drawn Cease Fire Line terminating at NJ 9842. It is to their credit that Army Headquarters decided to dominate the area beyond NJ 9842 which ultimately resulted in our occupation of Siachen Glacier in 1984.

A lot has happened in this area since 1993, the major operation being the 1999 Kargil War. The area, therefore, continues to be active. For those who followed the 1999 Kargil War, the battles fought in Kargil Sector, recorded in this book, give a factual backdrop to all that happened in the steep and rocky mountains in this sector. This book is, therefore, a must for a military history student.

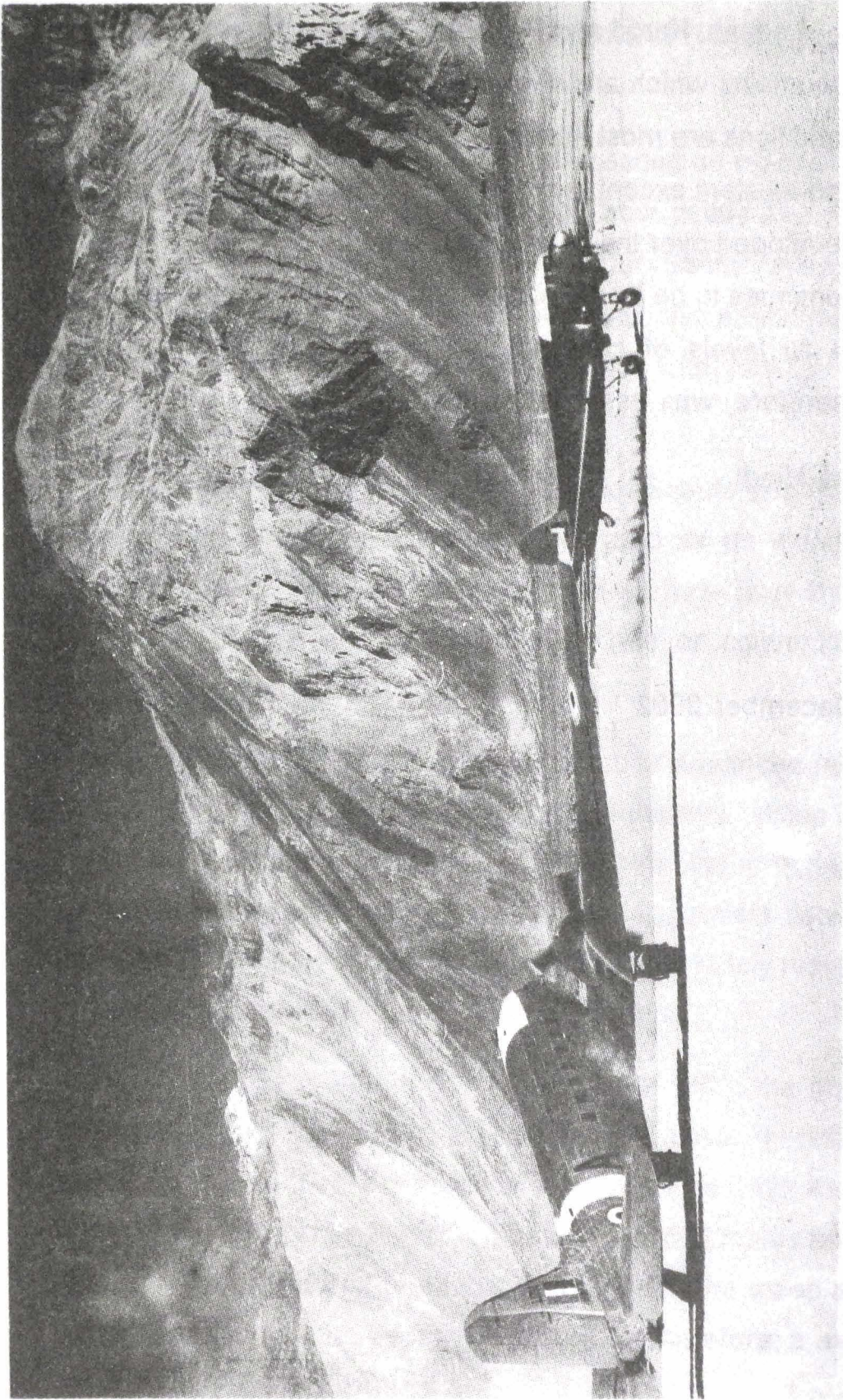
Ladakh, Kargil and Partappur Sectors are isolated by high mountains which are devoid of their sustenance. The climatic conditions are most hostile. The communications were virtually non-existent except in some areas where seasonal roads have developed over the years. Barring these, the logistical support continues to be by air. All these pose a challenge to leadership at all levels of command. A record of its military history, therefore, was essential for posterity.

Jai Hind!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SP Malhotra', written in a cursive style.

December 2002

Padma Bhushan
Lieutenant General SP Malhotra
PVSM



Fukche airfield

PREFACE

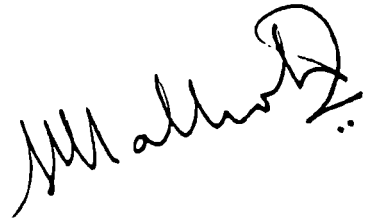
The idea of recording the history of Ladakh and Kargil was that of the then General Officer Commanding, 3 Infantry Division. The responsibility fell on me, as his Deputy, to compile this history. I enjoyed the experience.

Such a project couldn't have been completed by me alone. The effort of collecting the material and putting it together and finally having its security clearance from Army Headquarters was mine. But the material itself was collected from a number of scripts, after-action reports and drafts of the history compiled in the past. The effort of the then Colonel General Staff, Colonel LCS Manral was of great help to me. There are, therefore, many anonymous authors of this history, who I wish to thank through this medium.

Colonel Rajinder Singh, Commandant, Ladakh Scouts, Colonel Gautam Banerjee, Commanding Officer, 51 Engineer Regiment and members of the staff of Headquarters 3 Infantry

Division who helped me in this effort need to be individually thanked for their contribution. The credit of typing the first and subsequent drafts of this history goes to my personal assistants, Subedar Peter Thankachan and Havildar Jamil Singh.

Last but not least, many thanks to my wife Neera, who spent many hours reading the drafts of this history.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashok Malhotra', written in a cursive style.

November, 2002

Brig (Retd) Ashok Malhotra

1

15 AUGUST 1947 TO 31 DECEMBER 1948

OPERATIONS IN LADAKH

Before the Dogras occupied Ladakh, there were two main sources of threat to the security of this region - Tibet and Baltistan. Threat from both these sources ceased during the Dogra rule. Tibet, under its treaty obligations, and perhaps British influence, renounced its expansionist policies of the past, while Baltistan was made innocuous through its subjugation by the Dogras during the same period. This situation, however, changed in 1947. While Tibet continued its policy of peaceful co-existence, the Dogras lost control over Gilgit and consequently Baltistan, which opened the floodgates of aggression on Ladakh.

The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh had leased the Gilgit Agency to the British in 1935 for a period of 60 years. Consequently, the State Forces had been withdrawn from the Agency and instead, the British had raised the 600 strong Gilgit Scouts for the maintenance of internal security. This force formed the first line of defence in the event of hostilities with a foreign power. The Scouts were officered by the British themselves and were well trained, armed and equipped. Before the lapse of their paramountcy in the subcontinent, the British relinquished control over the Agency and handed it back to the State. The State immediately appointed a governor who took over formally from the British on 1 August 1947. The Governor, Brigadier Ghansara Singh, however, was hardly in a position to physically hold what he had taken over on paper. The loyalty of a section of the population, which must have been subverted by the British during their 12-year rule, was subjected to further stress on the creation of Pakistan. Besides, what loyalty could one expect from Gilgit Scouts who continued to be commanded by two British officers whose loyalty clearly lay with Pakistan. But the unkindest cut of all was when some officers and men of the 6th Jammu and Kashmir Infantry deserted the State service and joined the rebellious Gilgit Scouts against the Maharaja's authority. The Governor was imprisoned and the Gilgit Scouts took over the administration for handing it over to Pakistan. With the setting up of Pakistani administration, a recruitment drive was launched which resulted in the enlistment of about

2,000 local inhabitants, later known as raiders. They were armed, equipped and trained upon the arrival of small arms and other military equipment from Pakistan while preparations for further territorial acquisition began.

With Gilgit firmly under control, Pakistani attention was now focussed on Ladakh. As a strategic requirement, any advance on Leh had to be preceded by, firstly, control over Baltistan and, secondly, cutting it off from Kashmir at Kargil.

TOPOGRAPHY

The State of Jammu and Kashmir bordered by the erstwhile Soviet Union (now Turkistan), Afghanistan, Tibet and the

TURKISTAN
(Erstwhile Soviet Union)

CHINA
(Sichiang)



Not to scale

Jammu & Kashmir State As On 15 August 1947

Xinjiang region of China, is of great strategic importance. The State had three frontier areas, namely Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit. In 1947, the population of Jammu and Kashmir was under 5 million of which 3½ million were Muslims, and the remainder Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

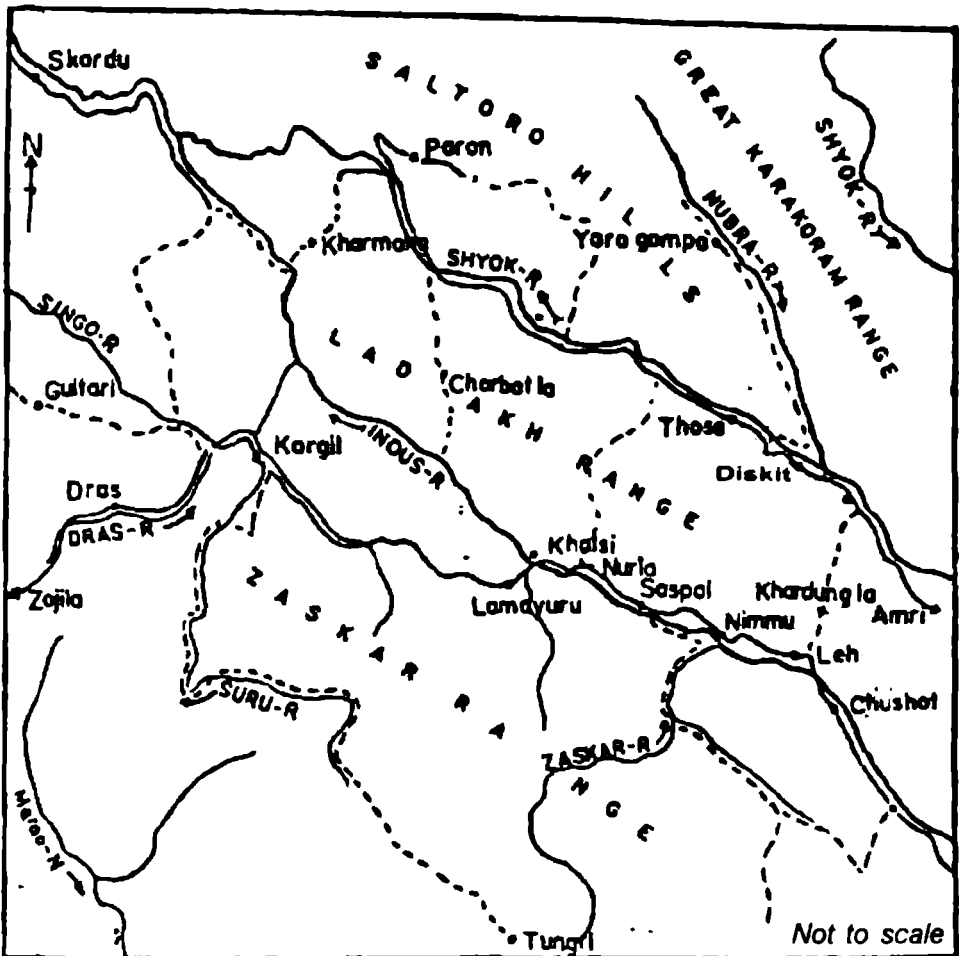
There were two major roads in 1947 leading into Jammu & Kashmir. The better one led from Domel-Uri-Baramulla on to Srinagar, a length of 160 kms. This was the main supply line to Kashmir during the British period.

The other major road was from Wazirabad-Sialkot on to Jammu then to Udhampur, over the Banihal Pass into the Kashmir Valley. From Jammu onwards it was a cart road. During winter, this road was closed for vehicles because of snow on the Banihal Pass.

OPERATIONS IN LEH SECTOR

Leh, Skardu and Kargil were, at that time, held by garrisons from the 6th Jammu and Kashmir Infantry under the overall command of Lieutenant Colonel Sher Jung Thapa, who had assumed command, with his headquarters at Leh, of what remained of the Battalion after desertion by fifty per cent of its strength. When the Pakistanis made their first move towards Skardu, the State Army Headquarters at Srinagar asked Colonel Sher Jung Thapa to proceed to Skardu with the maximum force that could be mustered from Leh and Kargil.

Reinforcements under Captain Prabhat Singh were also despatched from Srinagar and arrived at Skardu after crossing over the Zojila Pass in the dead of winter, just in time to beat off the first Pakistani attack on 10 February 1948. Thereafter, the Skardu Garrison was subjected to continuous attacks by the Pakistanis for the next three months; being each time



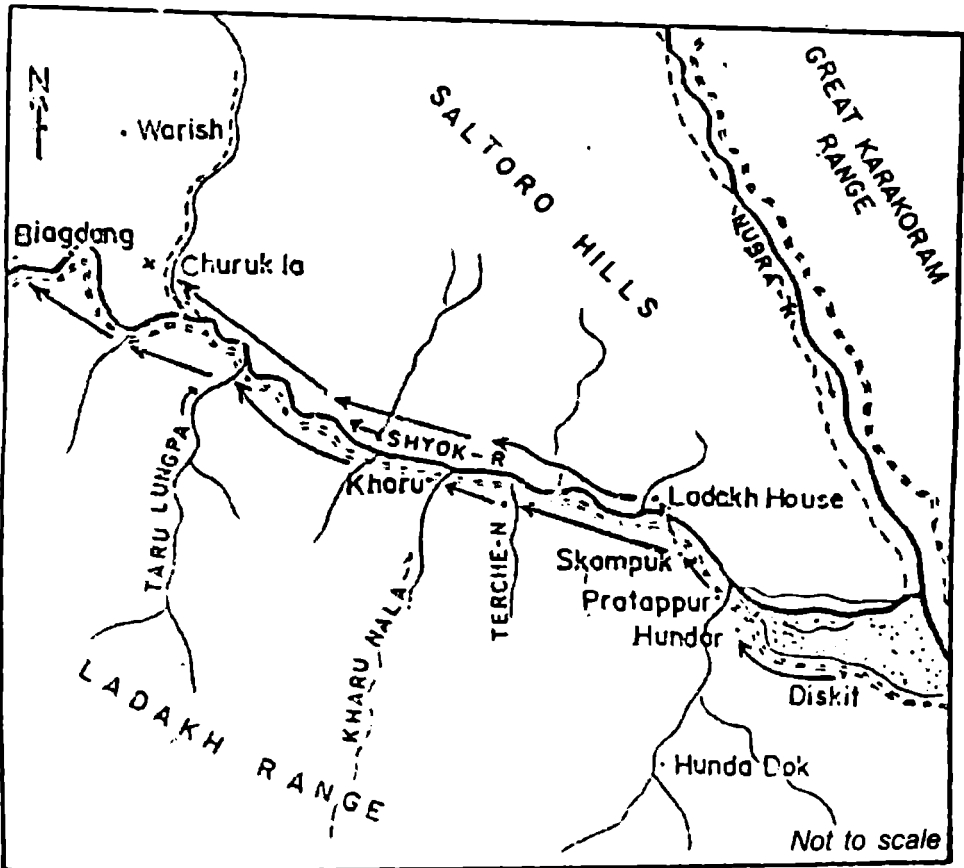
Topographical Map Of Leh Sector

repulsed every time by Colonel Sher Jung Thapa's gritty men. Kargil and Dras fell on 16 May 1948.

Approximately 400 raiders operated in the Ladakh Sector. The first infiltration attempt into Ladakh came to notice in

January 1948. Even though not serious, the attempt caused an alarm throughout Ladakh. Colonel Sher Jung Thapa had left behind at Leh just one platoon (about 33 men) of his Battalion before setting off to Skardu. From this strength, garrisons had to be provided for Leh, Khalsi and Nubra Valley, which allowed just about a section at each place. Urgent messages were, therefore, sent to Srinagar and New Delhi for reinforcements. Stories of Pakistani atrocities on non-Muslims in occupied territories, had by now reached Ladakh, and aroused the martial instincts of Ladakhis, which had lain dormant for the last hundred years. They volunteered to take up arms against the invaders and appealed to the Government of India for weapons and training facilities. In response to this request, Major Prithi Chand, Captain Khushal Chand, Subedar Bhim Chand and 15 soldiers of 2nd Battalion The Dogra Regiment, who belonged to the Lahaul and Ladakh area, crossed the Zojila Pass in mid winter and arrived at Leh on 12 March 1948. The object of organising a local Resistance Army there and its feats, cannot be better described than to quote from General Thimayya's Special Farewell Order of the Day to 2nd Battalion The Dogra Regiment: "The object of sending them to Leh was to restore confidence in the locals and raise a militia force. Two officers, one JCO and 15 Other Ranks under the command of Major Prithi Chand left Srinagar for Leh on 6 February 1948 and in heavy and blinding snow, crossed over the Zojila, which is 11,580 feet high. This, in itself, was an epic feat and could only have been carried out

by the toughest and most determined men. Their subsequent deeds and acts of gallantry against very superior forces in Ladakh Valley will go down in the annals of the Indian Army as one of its greatest feats". Sonam Norbu, a Ladakhi engineer, also arrived along with Major Prithi Chand and his party, had the task of immediate construction of an improvised airfield at Leh. Following closely at their heels, arrived two platoons of the State Forces under Captain Badri Singh as reinforcements for the garrisons in Ladakh, repeating the feat of Captain Prabhat Singh and Major Prithi Chand by crossing the Zojila at the peak of winter.



Operations In NUBRA VALLEY

As a first action for boosting public morale, Major Prithi Chand hoisted the Tricolour over the Residency (later Alfa Mess) where surprisingly, the Union Jack had continued to fly. He then gave a call for volunteers - one man from each house - for training to defend their motherland. Training camps were established at Leh, Nimmu, Saspol, Khalsi, Chushol and Diskit. A concentrated dose of training in handling of rifles, field craft and minor tactics was given to these volunteers for 15 days at the different camps by instructors from the State Forces and Major Prithi Chand's party. At the end of their training, they were organised into sections and platoons and sent off to various posts for 'on the job training'. Two platoons of these Home Guards under Subedar Bhim Chand took up forward positions in the Nubra Valley to augment the two platoons of the State Forces deployed along this approach. The Home Guards, however, were poorly armed and equipped at this stage. There being not enough arms for all of them, many had to be armed with lances, bows and arrows, and any other lethal weapons that they could lay their hands on. Armed with such indigenous weapons and dressed in their traditional costumes they were truly a people's militia out to defend their homeland. On the raising of militia battalions by the State Government, the Ladakh Home Guards, some 300 in number, were designated as the 7th Battalion of the Jammu and Kashmir Militia on 15 April 1948, with Major promoted to Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand as its first Commanding Officer.

Arms and ammunition were now immediately needed to equip the newly formed militia. Transportation of arms and ammunition by road was not advisable, as besides taking a long time, they had to pass through Kargil, which was precariously held by the State Forces, and could fall at any moment. The only solution to the problem was air supply. Even reinforcements, which were required urgently, could reach Ladakh in time only if they came by air. Realising this, Sonam Norbu had immediately upon arrival, set about laying out a small landing strip near Leh. With the help of the locals, he was able to have the airstrip ready by 26 May 1948, when a Dakota, flown by Air Commodore Mehar Singh, and carrying Major General KS Thimayya, General Officer Commanding Srinagar Division landed there.

Although Skardu was still holding out, the capture of Kargil by the Pakistanis enabled them to make a full-fledged advance on Leh along the Srinagar - Leh Highway. They reached Khalsi around 20 May 1948, and attacked the garrison which was defending the bridge over the Indus. The State Force platoon there was soon dislodged, but Major Khushal Chand was able to destroy the bridge at great personal risk before the Pakistanis could cross over it. In the meantime, Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand, collecting all the remnants of the State Force troops and men of his newly formed Battalion rushed to the aid of Major Khushal Chand at Khalsi and deployed at Skinding. The Pakistanis were delayed at Khalsi for six days.

On 1 June 1948, six Dakotas carrying a weak company of 2nd Battalion the 4th Gorkha Rifles, under Lieutenant PN Kaul, landed at Leh airstrip. This company was immediately moved towards Khalsi where it took up position at Komkhar. Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand handed over the command of his men to Lieutenant PN Kaul and returned to Leh for the overall control of preparations connected with the defence of Ladakh.

Simultaneous to their advance along the Kargil - Leh road, the Pakistanis also started activity opposite the Nubra Valley. Reports came in of Pakistanis crossing Biadangdo and occupying position at Waris and Churuk La. Believing in offence being the best form of defence, Subedar Bhim Chand decided to attack both these places with a view to dislodging the Pakistanis before they were able to launch any offensive action. He led his Home Guards first on Waris, but this proved to be a tame affair as the Pakistanis fled at the sight of the Home Guards. Next, Subedar Bhim Chand planned an attack on Churuk La, which was known to be strongly held. To ensure success of the first major operation of the Home Guards, Subedar Bhim Chand first moved to the top of Churuk La with a reconnaissance party of twelve men. He reached the top in two days from his base. After carrying out his reconnaissance, he called up the main party of about 60 Home Guards, the next day. Unfortunately, the weather turned bad just then and it began to snow. The Home Guards had to wait for a full 23 days before an attack could be launched. On the 24th day,

they moved up to the top, observed the Pakistanis and then assaulted the position under cover of light machine gun fire. Seven Pakistani soldiers belonging to the Gilgit Scouts were killed while the others fled. The Home Guards also made their first catch of arms consisting of three rifles, four local muzzleloaders and some ammunition. Subedar Bhim Chand then took some selected men and rapidly advanced to a ridge in front, where some more Pakistanis had been spotted.

Shortly thereafter, Subedar Bhim Chand received a message from Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand asking him to come at once to Leh for its defence. By then the situation along the Indus Valley had become very precarious. In mid June 1948, Lieutenant PN Kaul's company had been attacked at Domkhar and forced to withdraw to Hemis-Sukpachan. On arrival of a company of 2nd Battalion of the 8th Gorkha Rifles under Major Hari Chand, (popularly known as the 'chapatti column'), on 1 July 1948, it was hoped that the situation would now stabilise. But this Company which had been rushed forward to Hemis-Sukpachan immediately on arrival, had also been forced to retire, along with the 4th Gorkha Rifles Company, elements of State Forces and Home Guards, under the pressure of Pakistani raiders. The situation was indeed critical on the Indus Valley front but it was equally critical in the Nubra Valley. Subedar Bhim Chand requested Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand to be allowed to stay back for the defence of the Nubra Valley. While this correspondence between the

two was going on, the Pakistanis counter-attacked Churuk La and forced the small garrison of the Home Guards, that was holding it, to withdraw up to Tershe Nala. Subedar Bhim Chand immediately went forward and organised the defences on the Tershe Nala, which were held by his Home Guards and a platoon of the State Forces. After this, on receiving urgent messages from his Commanding Officer, Subedar Bhim Chand moved to Leh.

Having been pushed back from Hemis-Sukpachan, our troops under the overall command of Major Hari Chand, had ultimately withdrawn to Taru, after taking up successive intermediate positions at Bazgo, Nimu and Likir. Taru was just 12 miles from Leh and had to be defended at all costs. Every available man had to be sent forward to this front. Consequently, the Garrison Commander at Leh issued orders for all troops deployed in the Nubra Valley to move to the Taru front. He also issued orders for the Nubra Home Guards to be disbanded and their weapons carried to the front, so as to fully arm the Home Guards fighting on the Taru front. Subedar Bhim Chand, who had arrived at Leh by now, was given command of all the available Home Guards and ordered to take up a defensive position on the Stondok Hill feature covering the right flank of the Taru defences.

The order of the Garrison Commander, withdrawing all troops from the Nubra Valley and the disbandment of the Nubra Guards, even though perhaps necessary, left the Valley

completely defenceless and its people at the mercy of the invaders. It caused great panic among the people and many prepared to leave their homes and move towards Leh. There were, however, some among them who would not allow the Pakistanis to occupy their land without a fight. One such person was a seventeen-year old high-school boy, Chhewang Rinchen, destined to bring glory to himself and the force that he served. Rinchen who had responded to Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand's call to arms earlier in the year, decided to proceed to Leh and plead with the Garrison Commander the case of the people of Nubra, for arms to defend themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand was greatly moved by the spirit of this young man of Nubra. Even though hard-pressed for arms and ammunition, some were released and he asked the Nubra Guards to defend the Nubra Valley as best as they could. Rinchen, whose potential had been recognised by Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand, was appointed leader of the twenty-eight men enlisted for this task. He took up defences on Kharu Nala and to make a show of force he took with him an equal number of unarmed civilians. The Nubra Guards continued to hold on to these positions for nearly a month, before they were relieved by regular troops and could thus take the credit for saving the Nubra Valley from being over-run by the Pakistanis during a very crucial period.

The situation along the Indus Valley front was now fast stabilising and towards this the Home Guards had played an important part.

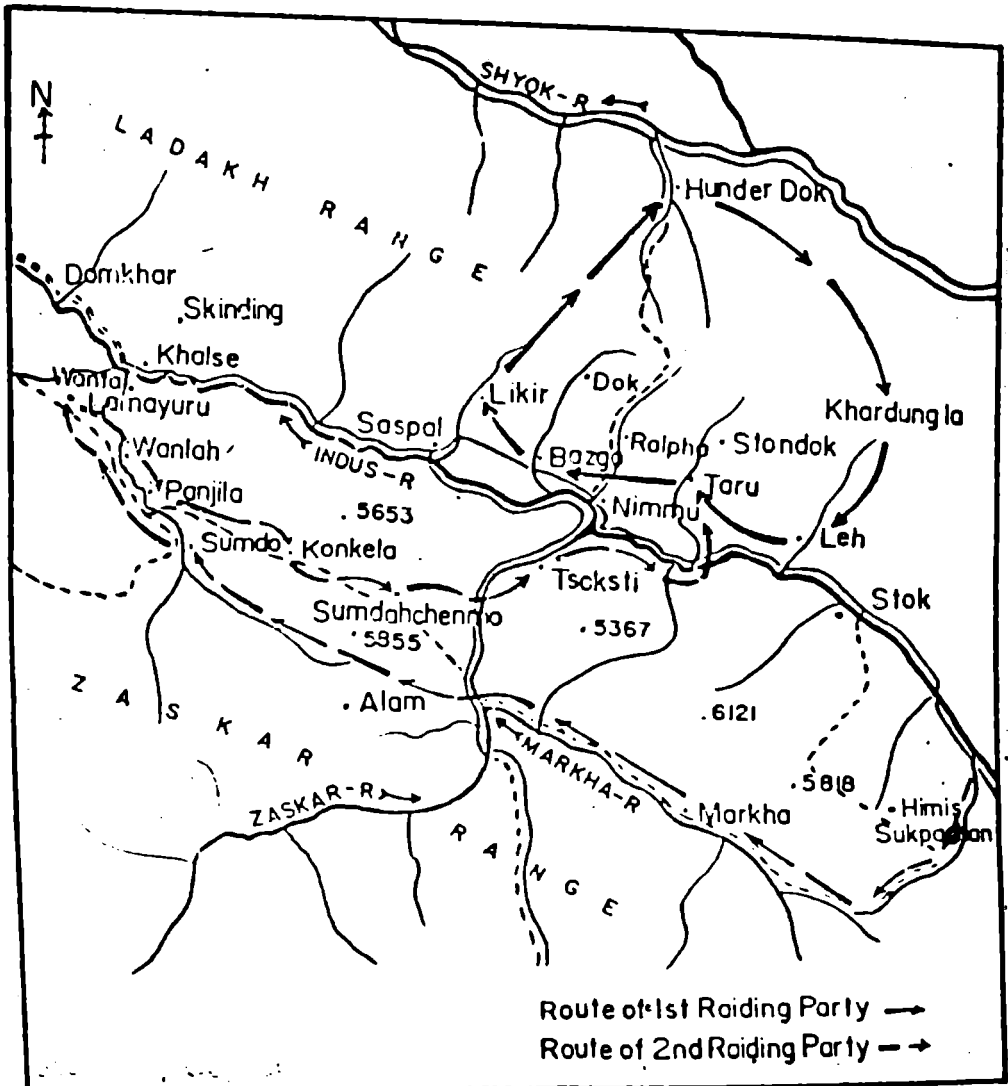
With the situation on the Taru front improving, a platoon of the Home Guards under a State Force Jemadar was withdrawn from this front and sent to the Nubra Valley. The platoon relieved Rinchen's volunteers at the Kharu Nala, who now moved to Diskit. The situation in the Nubra Valley was thus restored.

During the stalemate in the situation at Nubra Valley, the Ladakhis were employed by the Sector Commander, Major S Sidhu (who had replaced Major SS Bhonsle) for patrolling and carrying out small raids on Pakistani positions. The Taru front having been secured after the arrival of the rest of the 2nd Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles, the Leh force could now take offensive action by organising raids deep into Pakistani occupied territory.

The first raid was planned against the Pakistani battalion headquarters at Nimu sometime in September 1948. The composite party selected for the task by Major Hari Chand consisted of eight Ladakhis, eight Gorkhas, six Dogras and six Sikhs of the State Forces. It was already known that the Pakistanis had brought a 3.7-inch Howitzer to the area but its exact location was not known. The presence of the gun opposite the Taru front caused great concern to the Leh force. By deploying the gun at Ralpa the Pakistanis could even interfere with the aircraft landing at the Leh airfield, let alone the devastating effect that it could have had on the not too strongly constructed defences on the Taru front. A raid was

organised to destroy this gun. Major Hari Chand during the raid urgently instructed his men to destroy the barrel of the gun located at Likhil-Lubrang by putting grenades into it. Then setting the grass around the wheels of the gun on fire, the party withdrew towards Likhil-Thang. Here they destroyed the telephone line, which had earlier been laid by the State Forces and was now being used by the Pakistanis. The Pakistanis having been alerted, the raiding party could not obviously return to base by the route it had taken earlier. So it withdrew towards Leh via Hunder-Dok. The party had to go without food for two days and two nights before it could arrange food at Hunder village. From Hunder the commandos made it back to Leh in three days.

Major Hari Chand made his second major raid sometime in October 1948. Selecting a fresh composite group of volunteers, he proceeded to Lamayuru, taking a circuitous and a treacherous route via Markha, Sumdo and Wanta that involved climbing a steep mountain (Alam), and crossing the Zanskar River with improvised rafts. After reaching Lamayuru, a temporary commando base was established and from there the Pakistani dump was raided. The dump, which contained some 200 horse-loads of stores consisting of 3-inch mortar and rifle ammunition, and clothing, was not well defended. Killing the guards (seven of them), the commandos first helped themselves to ammunition and personal clothing and then destroyed the dump, using gun-cotton slabs. The party then



Not to scale

Operations Around LEH

withdrew to Wanla with one prisoner and from there to village Sumdoh Chenmo via Phanjila village. Realising that the men were very sick and tired, from Sumdoh Chenmo, Major Hari Chand took a shorter route back to the Taru Bagh headquarters.

Major Hari Chand and his commandos are also reported to have made forays behind Pakistani lines in the Nubra Valley. All these daring raids must have shaken the Pakistanis but

what actually unnerved them was the advance of the Para Brigade of the Indian Army over Zojila in early November 1948 and its subsequent advance to Kargil. With their rear on fire it became difficult for the Pakistanis to withstand the offensive action launched by the Leh force during the same month. The Pakistanis began withdrawing in unseemly haste as the Leh force started to advance. Major Hari Chand mounted his commandos on horseback and kept pursuing the Pakistanis and harassing them during their withdrawal right up to Nurla. Thereafter, the militiamen returned to Leh leaving 2nd Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles to chase the Pakistanis. Immediately after the capture of Kargil on 25 November 1948, the Leh force was able to affect a link up with the Para Brigade at Kargil.

Simultaneous to the advance along the Indus, offensive action also started in the Nubra Valley. For this purpose, as many militiamen as could be spared from Leh were despatched to the Nubra Valley under Subedar Bhim Chand. Here too the Pakistanis' morale was in their boots and soon a rout, of the type they suffered on the Indus front, set in. Giving no respite, the Gorkhas and Ladakhis chased the Pakistanis right up to Biagdangdo. Churuk La was cleared by Jemedar Chhewang Rinchen and his platoon while Subedar Bhim Chand established the forward-most post on the Tebe Nala. By the time the ceasefire came into effect on 31 December 1948, the whole of Nubra Valley had been cleared of the Pakistanis.

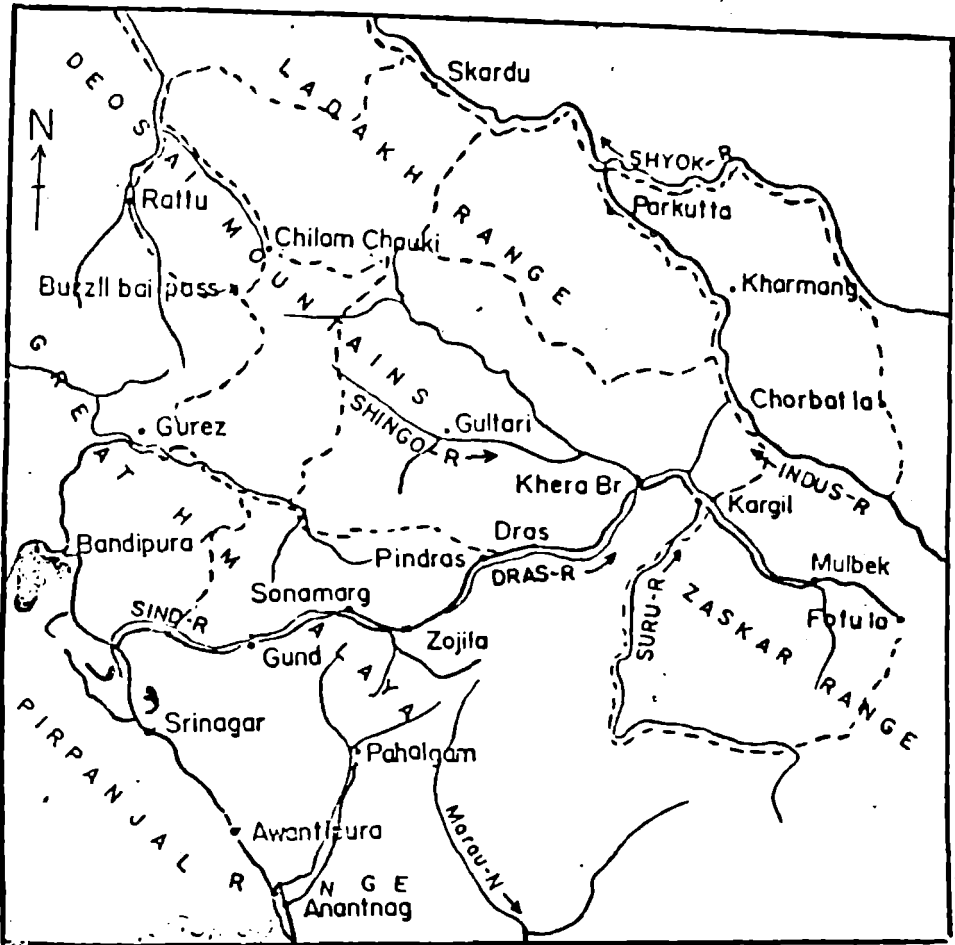
Ladakh was saved and the Ladakhis who had contributed considerably towards it had every reason to feel proud. Jemadar Chhewang Rinchen emerged as the hero and his bravery was duly recognised with the award of a Maha Vir Chakra. Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand and Major Khushal Chand were also awarded the Maha Vir Chakra, while Subedar Bhim Chand was awarded the Vir Chakra and bar. The doctor, Captain (AMC) Kartar Singh attached to the Ladakhi Militia was awarded the Vir Chakra.

Peace returned to Ladakh once again, but this time it was peace with a difference. It was a peace during which preparations for war continued to be made. Ladakh now bustled with military activity of a large force that was permanently located in and around Leh. What stirred the Ladakhis most, however, was military activity connected with the organisation and training of the newly formed 7th Battalion of the Jammu and Kashmir Militia.

OPERATIONS IN KARGIL SECTOR

The raiders that operated in Kargil Sector consisted of 800 men. They were disposed as given below:

- 200 men laid siege to the Fort of Skardu, cutting it off from Parkutta. The road from Kargil to Parkutta was also cut off by the raiders to prevent reinforcements from reaching it.
- 300 raiders were marked for Kargil and Dras. The route they took was Chilam Chowki, Gultari along Shingo River.



Not to scale

Topographical Map of Kargil Sector

Of these, 100 were earmarked for capture of Dras and 200 were to strike Kargil.

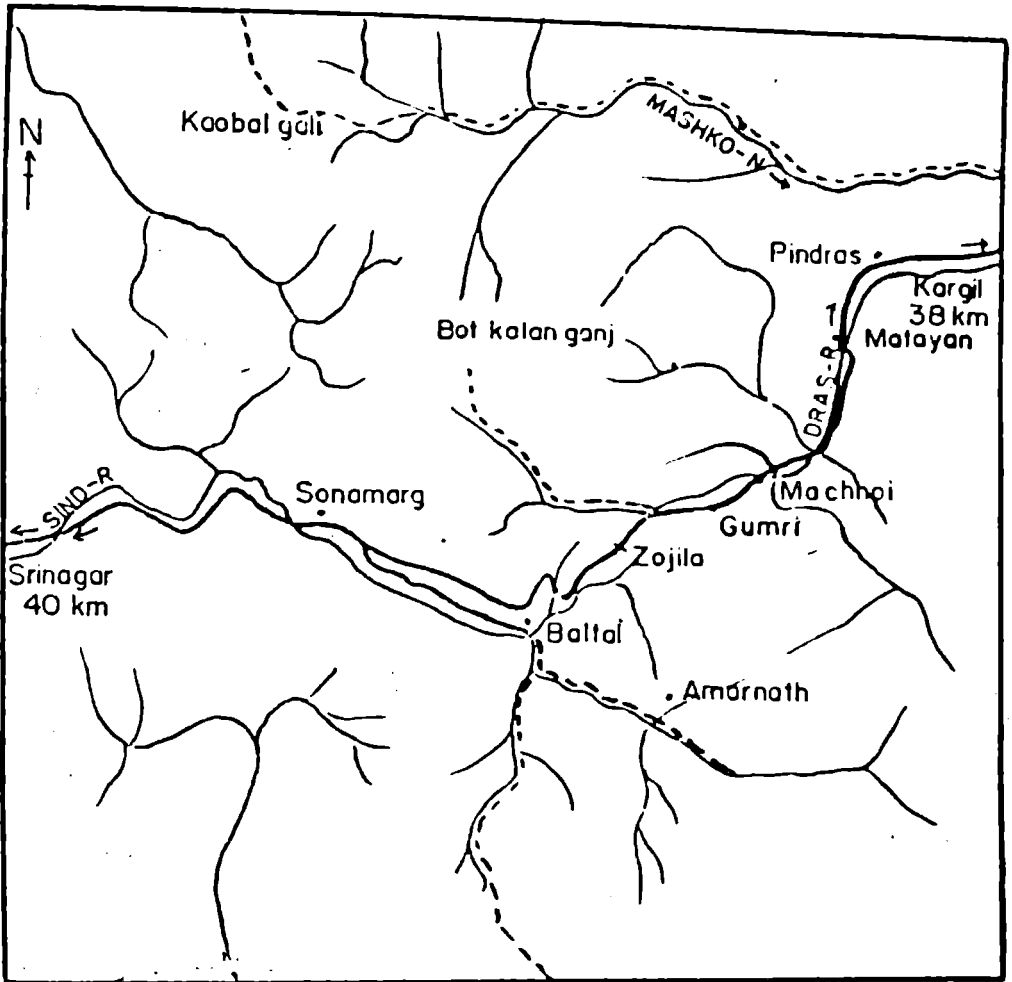
- The other prong of 300 raiders was to traverse Burzil Bai Pass, capture Gurez and demonstrate against Bandipur. Having drawn the Indian forces to those places they were to strike Gund and Sonamarg.

The raiders captured all objectives apart from Dras. The troops guarding the Khera Bridge (now known as Harka Bahadur Bridge) were over-run and taken by surprise. With

the fall of Kargil, the forces at Parkutta were ordered to recapture it. But while attempting to concentrate, the forces were attacked near Kharmong and suffered heavy casualties. Only 150 men made it to Sonamarg via Gultari. Meanwhile, the position of Dras Garrison became alarming and all attempts at reinforcement failed as Pindras was in the hands of the Pakistanis. An attempt made by the Garrison to withdraw also failed. Meanwhile, the raiders consolidated their hold over areas from Zojila to Khalsi.

Colonel Thapa and his force at Skardu, consisting of elements of the 6th Battalion The Jammu and Kashmir Infantry were besieged by the Pakistan Army. The Pakistan Army decided to launch a multipronged aerial attack on this strategic location, but around it was also located the bomb depot of the Pakistan Army. Wapitis and Spitfire aircraft were employed to strike the Fort. This meant going into the inner Himalayas across Nanga Parbat, causing destruction and returning to base.

Operation SLEDGE, the code name for the operation, took place when 1 PATIALA (now 15 PUNJAB), then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Sukhdev Singh, was inducted from the north-east to Zojila to keep the Zojila Pass open and also to ensure a safe retreat of the State Forces back to Srinagar. On 21 May 1948, the troops moved out of Sonamarg and reached Zojila. A patrol was sent to probe the areas beyond Machhoi where it encountered heavy Pakistani fire. The Battalion



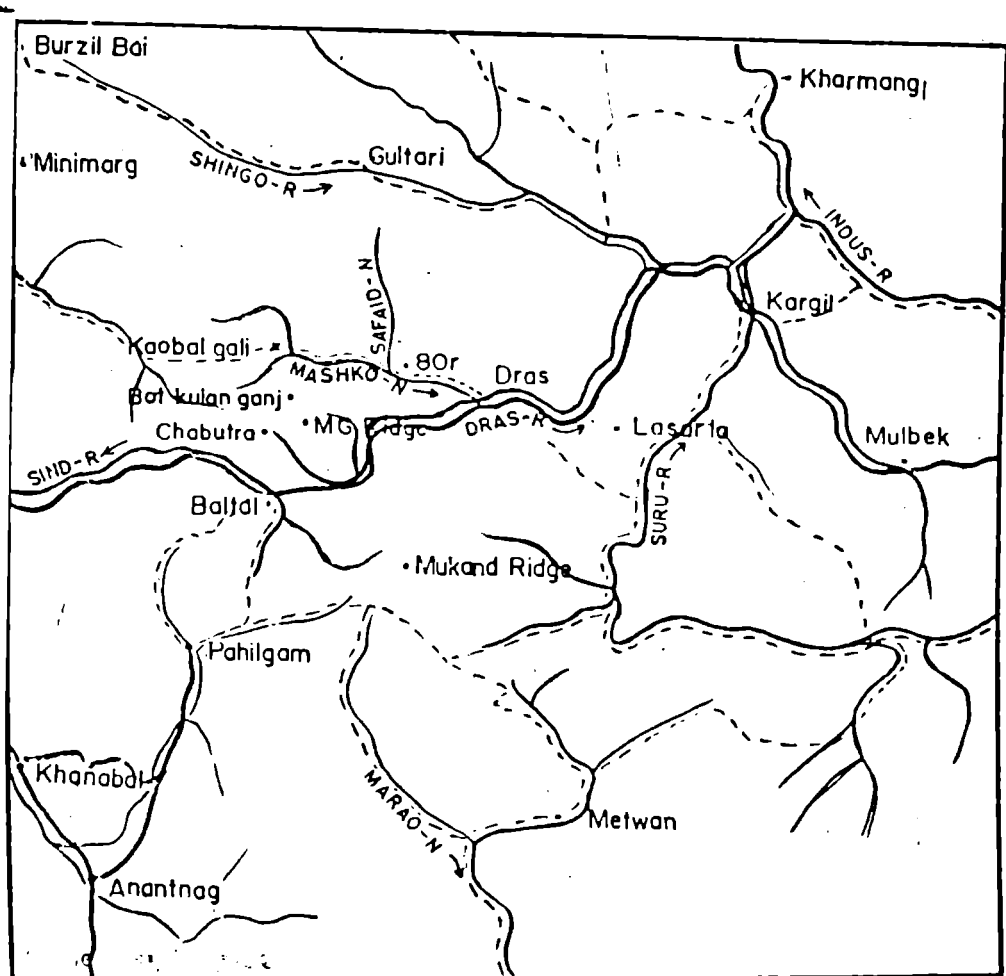
Not to scale

Operation SLEDGE

marched against all odds in the most inhospitable terrain, through the snow and facing the odd sniper bullets. Most of the fighting took place at heights varying from 12,000 – 15,000 feet.

The Pakistanis managed to occupy the heights overlooking Gumri and Machhoi and launched a series of attacks on all positions held by 1 PATIALA. For four months, 1 PATIALA held on to its position, but it soon became clear that clearing Zojila required a bigger effort and thus Operation DUCK was launched.

The plan entailed moving along the Suru River and capture of Lasarla. One battalion was to capture Dras and the other battalion to capture Kargil. The Brigade concentrated at Khanabal. However, 3rd Battalion The Jat Regiment had to move elsewhere and it was unable to join the Brigade on 28 August 1948. Thereupon, the plan was revised. Two battalions were to capture Dras via Botkulan Ganj, Mushko Nala and 80r. 5th Battalion The Maratha Light Infantry was to tackle Zojila when the main thrust came into contact with the Pakistanis at Pindras. 'A' Company of 1st Battalion The 5th



Not to scale

Operation DUCK

Gorkha Rifles was to move along the banks of the Suru towards Kargil as a diversionary attack.

1st Battalion The 5th Gorkha Rifles captured Botkulan Ganj after a frontal attack and started its advance along Mushko. However, when it reached 80r it was found to be occupied by the Pakistanis in great numbers. Since no progress could be made on this axis, the Battalion firmed in around 80r. The diversionary attack along the Suru River could not be undertaken, because of inclement weather conditions. The Pakistanis had deployed almost a battalion to counter the Indian thrust. The defences had been well prepared and the Pakistanis were strongly dug in. They had occupied important heights overlooking the Zojila Pass. They occupied Chabutra, Mukand Ridge and Machine Gun Ridge. 5th Battalion The Maratha Light Infantry had, on 6 September 1948, captured Mukand Ridge but had to fall back due to a Pakistani counter-attack. On 13 September 1948 Zojila was again tackled by simultaneous attacks put in by 5th Maratha Light Infantry on Mukund Ridge and 3rd Battalion The Jat Regiment on Chabutra. However, not much success was achieved.

With the failure of two well planned attacks on Zojila by 77 Parachute Brigade, the chances of dislodging Pakistanis from these positions appeared to be remote and the situation became desperate. It was imperative to capture Zojila before the onset of winter; otherwise the Pakistanis would consolidate their defences. By now it was known that there were only a

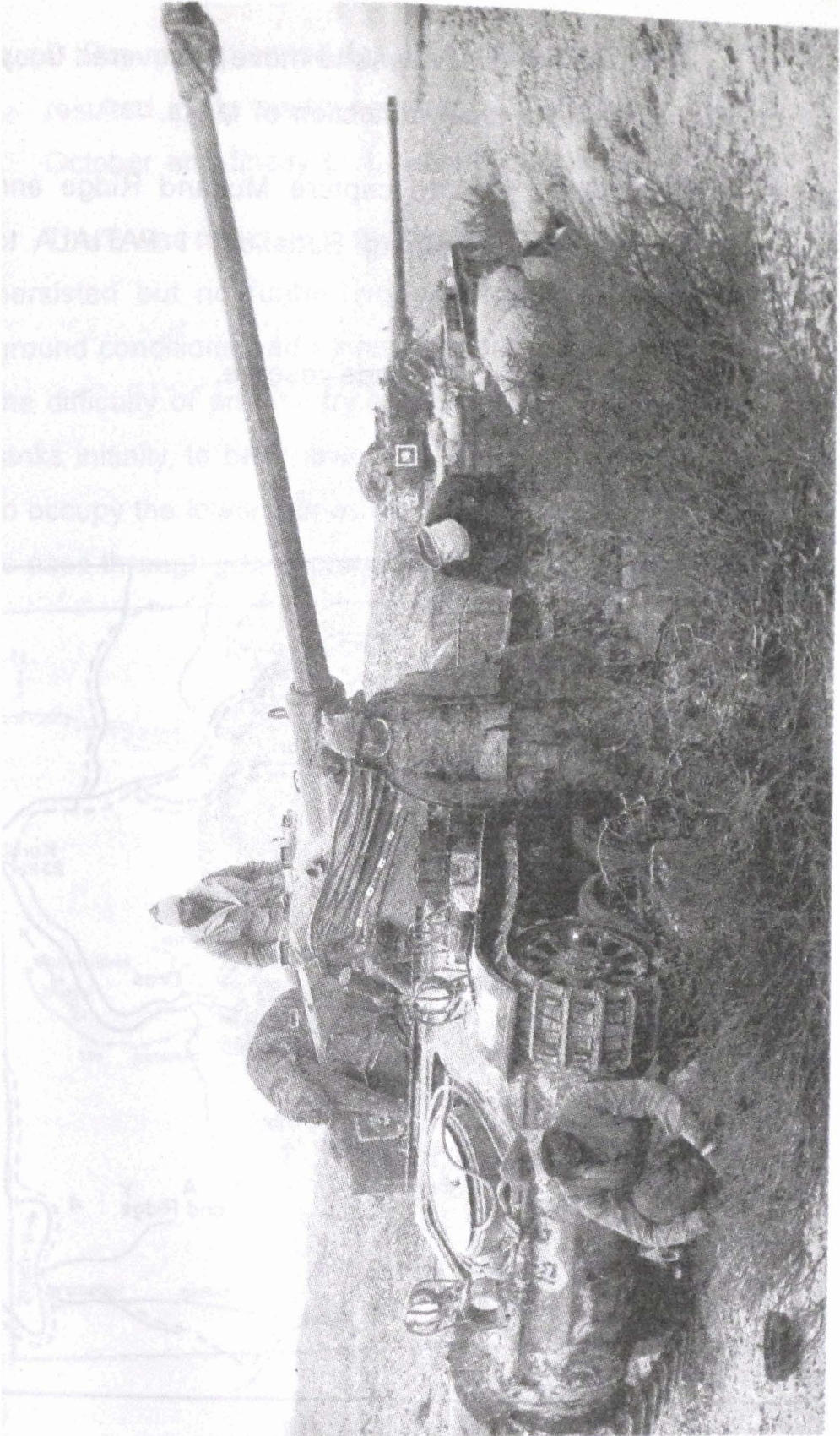
few courses of action available. Thus was born an idea, that of employment of tanks.

It was decided that tanks would have to be employed for the battle of Zojila. The employment of tanks in mountainous terrain as obtained in Jammu and Kashmir was unheard of, more so in high altitudes and glaciated areas such as those of Zojila. Apart from difficult conditions, there were the problems of maintaining surprise. Lieutenant Colonel Rajinder Singh "Sparrow", Commanding Officer, 7 Light Cavalry was asked for his views. In his usual cavalier manner, he replied confidently, "Yes I can, and it will be done".

7 Light Cavalry less a squadron concentrated at Baltal on 24 October 1948. There were several problems now facing the Commanding Officer such as lack of tracks, maintenance of surprise and others. But each man carried out his task with grit and determination. Major Thangaraju made the tracks in record time. Infantry troops winched up the tanks. All of them were determined to achieve the impossible.

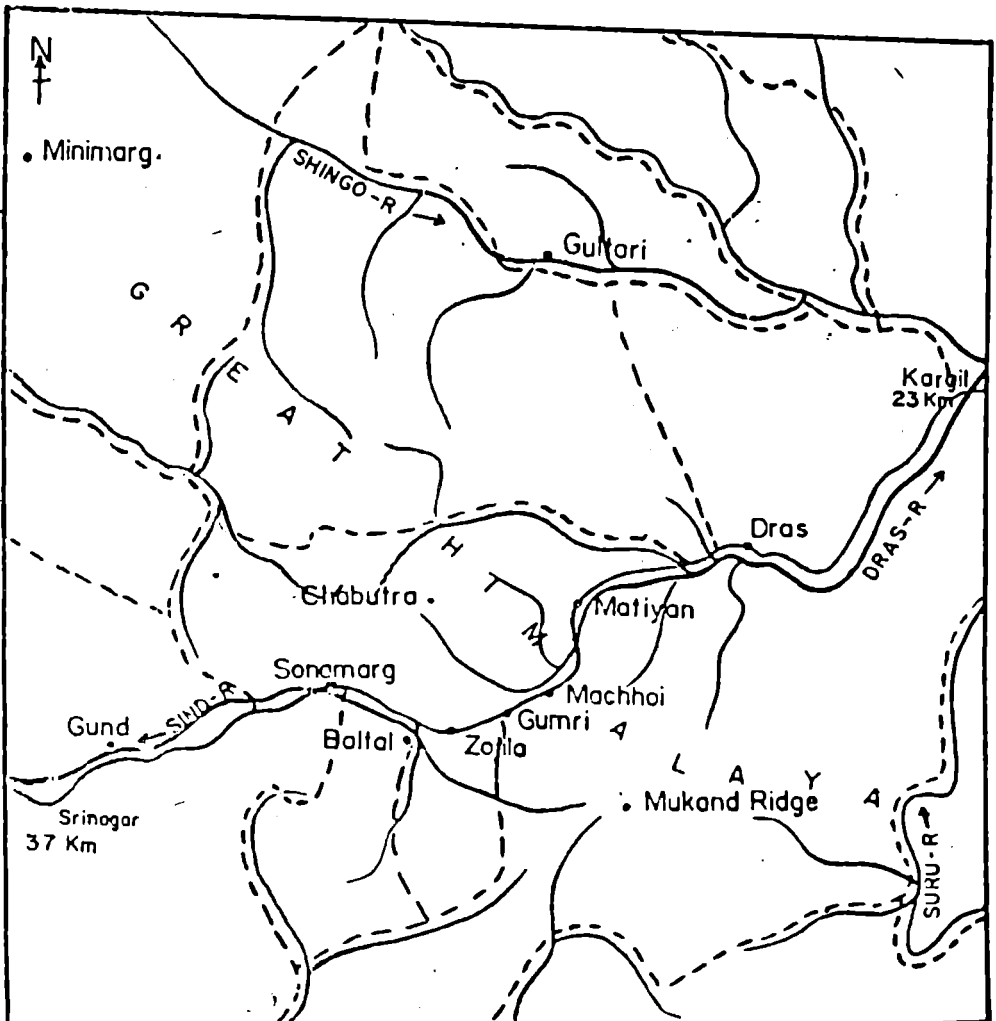
Trial runs were carried out by a move of tanks on 19 October 1949 and thus was set the stage for Operation BISON. The outline of the plan was:

- 5 Maratha Light Infantry was to take over all positions from 1 PATIALA.
- On D Day at 1000 hours the tanks and armoured cars of 7 Light Cavalry were to advance up to Gumri and neutralise the Pakistani position and probe towards Machhoi.



Maintenance of tanks

- 'A' Company of 1 PATIALA was to move in covered troop carriers at night for local protection of tanks.
- 1/5 Gorkha Rifles was to capture Mukand Ridge and Chabutra and the remaining Battalion, 1 PATIALA to capture Machine Gun Ridge.
- 4 Rajput was to act as Brigade reserve.

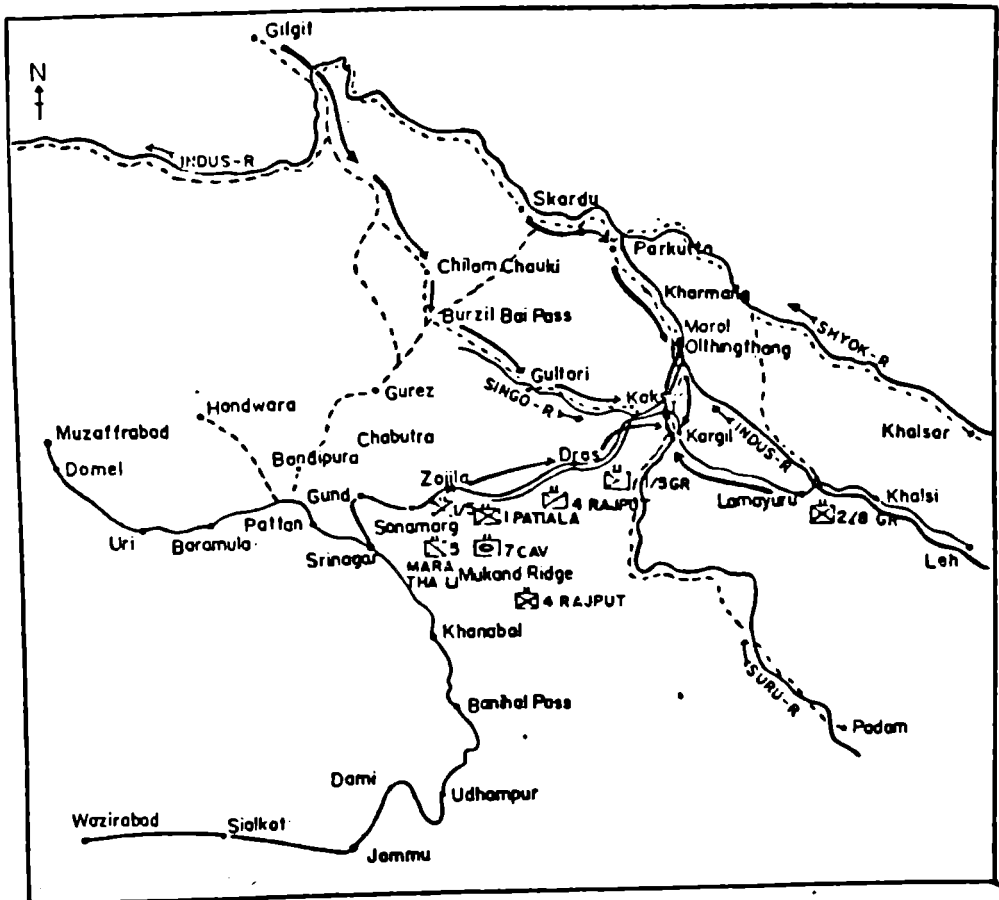


Not to scale

Operation BISON

- D Day was planned for 19 October but heavy snowfall resulted in its postponement to 25 October, then to 29 October and finally to 1 November 1948.

There was no let up in the weather conditions as a blizzard persisted but no further postponement was possible. The ground conditions had by now become worse and in view of the difficulty of an infantry assault, it was decided to employ tanks initially, to be followed by 1/5 Gorkha Rifles, who were to occupy the lower slopes of Mukund Ridge. 1 PATIALA was to pass through and capture Machhoi. The artillery opened up



Not to scale

Operations of Zojila, Advance to Kargil-Operation HIMALAYA

at 1030 hours and the tanks began their advance. The Pakistanis were taken completely by surprise. By 1 November at 1700 hours 1/5 Gorkha Rifles reached Gumri base. On 2 November, 1 PATIALA put in an attack on Machhoi and captured it by 1200 hours. The Rajputs passed through 1 PATIALA and captured Matiyani on 3 November at 1500 hours. Beyond that there was stiff resistance and tanks had to be brought in to destroy the bunkers and defensive positions. Thereafter, infantry troops attacked and captured its objective. Dras fell the same day. By about 23 November, Kargil was captured.

While the battle raged in Kargil, 2/8 Gorkha Rifles, which had been defending Leh, advanced along the Indus front. On 24 November 1948 a small column of the Battalion and local Leh militia entered Kargil and completed the link up.

With the recapture of Kargil it was decided to further exploit and capture Marol. A column of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles that had moved along the Indus met with stiff resistance three miles short of Marol. Further progress along the entire front came to a standstill due to the ceasefire, which became effective on New Year's Eve - 31 December 1948.

Thus ended Operation HIMALAYA. The stretch from Zojila to Khalsi abounds in tales of courage and the leadership of Officers, JCOs and NCOs. 4 Rajput and 77 Parachute Brigade while advancing on the road Zojila-Kargil took harbour near

Pindras. In the morning they found the ridge occupied in sizeable strength and our troops fell back. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Girdhari gave a kick to each of his commanders and showered the choicest of abuses on his troops. Thereafter, he personally led the attack and this time the Rajputs did not fail. Another incident that speaks of the bravery of the leaders is of 1/5 Gorkha Rifles. While advancing to Kargil, the advance element came under fire from Khera Bridge, four miles short of Kargil. The bridge had been completely burnt down. Subedar Harka Bahadur made an improvised raft and crossed the Shingo River and drove away the raiders. Yet another instance of bravery was that of a civilian porter who evacuated a wounded JCO at great personal risk.

The Ceasefire Line as it pertained to the Kargil Sector ran south of Point 13,620, Marol and Chalunka.



COL PRITHI CHAND MVC



CAPT BHIM CHAND Vrc



Nunnu - An Ideal Soldier

Nunnu means younger brother in Ladakhi. In the Army the young Ladakhi soldiers are affectionately called Nunnus. Born and brought up in Ladakh, the Nunnus are excellent troops for employment in this region. They are simple, hardy, brave, honest and dependable troops who always remain cheerful.

A NUNOO IN UNIFORM

2

1949 - 1961

THE 1950S

The ceasefire on 1 January 1949 was followed by the Karachi Agreement which delineated the Ceasefire Line and an uneasy peace prevailed in the region.

77 Parachute Brigade which had successfully recaptured Kargil was deinducted and it appears that only one infantry battalion remained to look after Kargil. 7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia, of course, remained in Leh and the area around.

In June 1951, the Kargil Garrison was established under Colonel K Bhag Singh. It was under command 19 Infantry Division and its area of responsibility included the entire Ladakh district.

In October 1952, the Kargil Garrison was reorganised and renamed as 'Able' Garrison but continued to be under 19

Infantry Division. Headquarters 'Charlie' Garrison at Leh and 'Quebec' Station at Dras were also placed under command the 'Able' Garrison. On 1 September 1956, this entire force was reorganised into 121 Infantry Brigade with Brigadier Budh Singh, Military Cross, as the first Commander. The Brigade became an Independent Brigade Group on 1 March 1961.

WAR CLOUDS GATHER

The annexation of Tibet by China brought to the fore the territorial dispute between China and India. In 1954, the Chinese published maps that showed certain territories in Ladakh and North East Frontier Agency (NEFA - now Arunachal Pradesh) as part of China.

The Chinese began surreptitious intrusions into Indian territory in 1957; building the Aksai Chin road was the first step. This 2,480-km road linking Kashghar in Xinjiang and Lhasa in Tibet came to be known as the Western Highway.

In 1958, the Chinese occupied the Khurnak Fort; of the two Indian patrols that had been sent forward, one was detained at Haji Langar in September 1958. In September 1959, the Government of China laid a formal claim to 50,000 sq km of Indian territory in Ladakh and NEFA. Official level talks were held but to no avail. Further Chinese intrusions continued and the situation kept aggravating.

During this period, 7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia was reorganised into two wings and despatched eastwards to the

border areas. Its deployment, which was completed in 1959, was as follows:

- **Shyok Wing:** Phobrang, Marsimik La, Tsogst Salu Man, Thakung, Chushul and Tsaka La.
- **Indus Wing:** Old and new Demchok, Jara La, Chang La, Fukche, Dungti and Koyul.

The ever-increasing threat from the Chinese led to the re-raising of 114 Infantry Brigade in March 1960 and the Brigade re-assumed responsibility for the defence of Ladakh against the Chinese. Meanwhile, 14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia having been raised at Srinagar was airlifted to Leh in May 1960 and was deployed with a company each at Diskit, Shyok and Spituk. Soon thereafter, it was decided to hold Daulet Beg Oldi (DBO) also and this Battalion was asked to carry out a reconnaissance. This was undertaken by a Subedar Major who reached the Karakoram Pass on 10 July 1960 and hoisted the Tricolour. Based on Government orders, the Brigade established 65 posts from Daulet Beg Oldi in the north to Demchok in the south, within a period of two years.

On 5 December 1961, patrolling was ordered to be carried out as far forward as possible. This led to further clashes and in July 1962, the Chinese violated the International Border and were entrenched at Haji Langar, Dambu Guru and Spanggur.

The Chinese offensive was finally launched on 20 October 1962.

Dedication

The History of 3 Infantry Division is dedicated to the near and dear ones of those who laid down their lives for the defence of the Ladakh Sector.

3

1962 - 1964

RAISING OF 3 INFANTRY DIVISION



MAJ GEN BUDH SINGH MC

3 Himalayan Division (later renamed 3 Infantry Division) was raised at Leh by Major General Budh Singh, Military Cross, on 26 October 1962. 70, 114 and 163 Infantry Brigades formed part of the Division.

The 'Trishul' was adopted as the insignia on 28 November 1962. Conceived by Major DHJ Gear, the then DAQMG, its

three snow capped peaks depict the number of the division. To this, the General Officer Commanding added a bayonet, giving it an infantry touch. The bayonet was later replaced by Shivji's trishul (trident) and since the Division had already been blooded in battle, the tips were reddened.

121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group exercised operational control over the whole of Ladakh till 1960. However, consequent upon the build up of tension, induction of additional troops took place. 114 Infantry Brigade was re-raised on 29 March 1960 to take over eastern Ladakh. Over a period of time more troops were brought in and upon raising of the Divisional Headquarters, all troops in the region came under it.

UNIQUE FEATURES

The Division is unique in many ways:

- It faces two enemies viz, Pakistan and China and is deployed in the most complex terrain and looks after 97,000 square kilometres of the area. This is the largest area for any Division in the Indian Army.
- Siachen Glacier, the highest battlefield in the world, is located in this sector. It is 76 kilometres in length, making it the second longest glacier outside the Polar region.
- The road over Khardung La is the highest in the world at an altitude of 18,380 feet above mean sea level.

- The airfield at Chushul, at 14,500 feet above mean sea level, is the highest in the world.
- The Hydel Project at Ganglas, at an altitude of 13,500 feet above mean sea level, is the highest in the world. It was constructed by the Military Engineering Services in 1965.
- AMX tanks were flown in AN-12 aircraft to Chushul airfield on 26 October 1962.
- Dras, known to be the second coldest inhabited place on earth, is located in this sector. The temperature here drops to below minus 45° C.
- A tennis court and a golf course located at Tangtse, at 14,000 feet above mean sea level are the highest in the world.

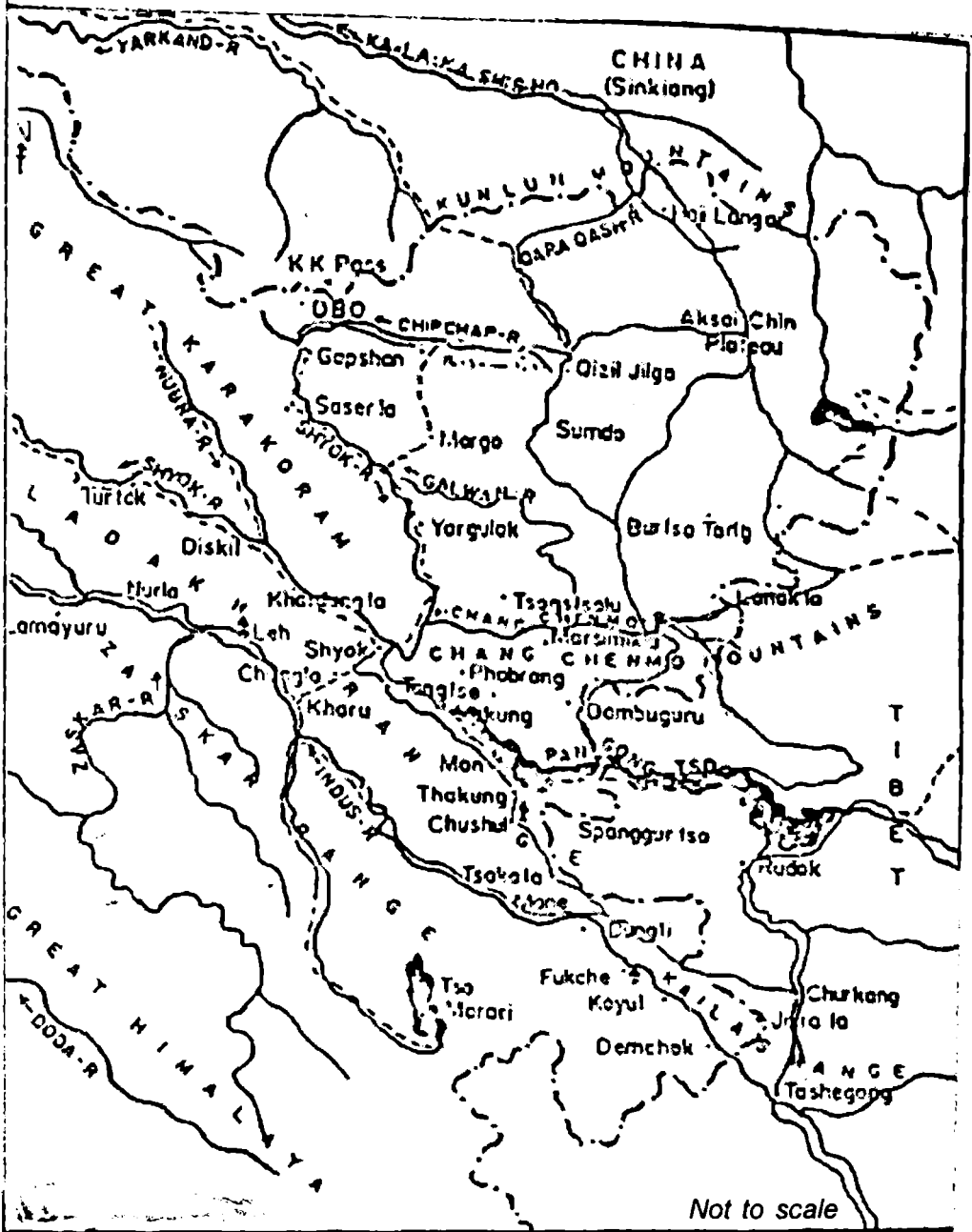
OFFICERS' MESS

The Alpha Officers' Mess was located in the historic 200-year old Karzu Palace. It is in this palace that General Zorawar Singh signed the instrument of peace with the King of Ladakh for the accession of Ladakh to the Durbar of Jammu.

1962 OPERATIONS IN LADAKH

Terrain

Ladakh is the largest district of Jammu and Kashmir. It is



Geographical Layout of Eastern Ladakh

bounded in the northwest by Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. To the north lies the Chinese province of Xinjiang and to the east lies Tibet. Ladakh is sparsely populated; the main habitations are concentrated in valleys. The average altitude of the area is between 9,900 feet and 16,500 feet above mean sea level.

The main entry into this region from Srinagar is over the Zojila Pass via Kargil and from Himachal Pradesh over the Rohtang Pass. (The latter route was constructed in 1978.)

Most of the area consists of high altitude mountain desert terrain with no vegetation and cover. The region experiences extreme cold winters from November to April during which the temperature goes down to minus 45° C. The snow line is above 18,000 feet as compared to 9,000 feet in the rest of the Himalayas. Because of the rarefied atmosphere and altitude, there is a need for acclimatisation. Physical effort is exhausting and working efficiency in some areas goes down by as much as 50 to 60 per cent.

All mountain ranges in Ladakh generally run from northwest to southeast and can be crossed over the existing passes. The important mountain ranges in eastern Ladakh are:

- **Kuen Lun Mountains.** These run east to west along the Yarkand River and separate Xinjiang province from the Aksai Chin Plateau.
- **Karakoram Mountains.** These are extremely formidable and rugged mountains. They run north of the Indus and Shyok River from Gilgit to the Karakoram Pass.
- **Chang Chenmo Range.** This is an offshoot of the Karakoram Range and takes off eastward along the Chang Chenmo River. One arm tapers off southwards towards Pangong Tso.

- **Pangong Range.** Runs northwest to southeast parallel to Pangong Tso. It is a formidable range with very few passes for crossing.
- **Ladakh Range.** This runs south of the Pangong Range.
- **Zaskar Range.** Lies further southwest of the Indus River.
- **Kailash Range.** Emanates from Mount Kailash in Tibet and runs westwards up to Demchok and then northwards till it meets the Pangong Range.

Eastern and northern Ladakh is higher than western Ladakh, hence most rivers flow westward till they cross into Pakistan and then turn southward. The rivers that flow through Ladakh are:

- **The Indus River.** It is the most prominent river in the region. The headwaters of the Indus consist of three main streams namely, Singhzi Chhu, Lang Chhu, and Gartang Chhu, which rise on the slopes of the Kailash Range and form a confluence with each other a few kilometres south of Tashigong. The river in area Tashigong and beyond into India is generally 4-5 feet deep, 100-300 feet wide with a sand or gravel bed and has a fast current of 2 to 5 knots. However, it has a few crossing places. In winter, the river is frozen and can be crossed at many places.
- **The Chip Chap River.** Originates in the higher regions of the plateau and runs westward to join the Shyok River at Gapshan.

- **The Shyok River.** It originates from the Rimo group of glaciers on the Karakoram Range and flows south of Gapshan towards the Nubra Valley and then enters Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Movement along the river where the track criss-crosses the river is only possible in winter when it freezes. In summer, movement along the river is not possible as the current is very fast with an average depth of 6-8 feet.
- **The Galwan River.** Originates from a glacier and flows west to join the Shyok River north of Yargulak.
- **The Chang Chenmo River.** It originates from Lanak La, flows westwards and joins the Shyok. The flow of the river between that confluence and Tsogtsalu is through a deep gorge; the current is extremely fast with a depth 4-5 feet making movement impossible during summer. Even during winter, movement through this gorge is extremely difficult.

Pangong Tso. This is the largest lake in the region. It is 135 kilometres long, 5 to 7 kilometres wide and more than 200 feet deep. It freezes completely in winter and can be crossed by animals and on foot. The water is brackish.

Spanggur Tso. This lake lies south of the Pangong Tso. It is 15 kilometres long and 2 to 3 kilometres wide. The water of this lake is also brackish.

The following main trade routes linked eastern Ladakh with Xinjiang and Tibet:

- Leh - Khardung La - Saser La - DBO - Karakoram Pass - Yarkand in Xinjiang. This route was used in summer only.
- Leh - Karu - Chang La - Darbuk - Shyok - DBO - Karakoram Pass - Yarkand in Xinjiang. This route was used in winters when the Shyok River had little water or when it was frozen.
- Leh - Karu - Mahe - Dungti - Demchok - Tashigong in Tibet.
- Leh - Karu - Chang La - Tangtse - Chushul - Rudok in Tibet

Using these routes, traders brought wool, carpets, pashmina, silk, borax and rock salt from Xinjiang and Tibet and carried back cloth, tea, cereals and other items from Leh.

The important roads and tracks as they existed in 1962 were:

- A class 9 road was constructed from Srinagar to Kargil in 1948. Construction of a road from Kargil to Leh commenced in 1959 and was completed in 1960.
- A class 9 road was constructed between Leh and Chushul via Dungti and completed as late as 2 October 1962.
- Other than these two roads, all other areas were connected by mule tracks.
- The Chinese on the other hand, commenced the construction of the Western Highway connecting Kashgar

and Gartok in March 1956. This 1,200-kilometre road was completed in October 1957, of this, 180 kilometres pass through the Indian territory of Aksai Chin. By 1962, this had been developed into a good class 9 road. The Chinese then built four class 9 fair weather roads taking off from this highway towards the west. They were:

- Lanak La - Hot Spring, 100 km.
- Rudok - Spanggur, 115 km.
- Churkang - Chang La, 40 km.
- Tashigong - Demchok, 25 km.

The airfield at Leh was constructed in 1948 and that at Chushul in 1952 and at Fukche in 1962.

The area of eastern Ladakh can be divided into five sectors as follows:

- **Northern Sector.** Comprising Karakoram Pass - DBO - Margo - Sultan Chusku and Gapshan. This is a vast, flat, undulating plateau with an average height of 16,500 feet.

Two important routes are:

- From Yarkand over the Karakoram Pass to DBO - Gapshan - over Saser La - Sasema - over Khardung La to Leh. This was a mule track, usable during summer months only.

- From Qizil Jilga along Chap Valley to Morgo - Sultan Chusku - Shyok - Darbuk - over Chang La to Leh. This was also a mule track and was approximately 350 kms - more than a month's trek - and could be used during winters only.
- **Central Sector.** Area between Galwan - Chang Chenmo River extending up to south Lukung. In this area the ingress routes were along the Galwan and Chang Chenmo Rivers, or over the passes or Marsimik La - Kiu La, Thratsang La and Ane La and converged on to Lukung. The routes over Marsimik La, Kiu La, Thratsang La and Ane La were mule tracks, while the others were foot tracks.
- **Chushul Sector.** Sirijap - Thakung - Chushul - Tsaka La. In 1962, a class 9 road from Rudok on the Western Highway came right up to Spanggur and linked up with a class 9 road from Leh to Chushul via Dungti. This gave the Chinese an opportunity to develop a division size thrust right up to Leh. Chushul had a fair weather airfield where heavy transport aircraft namely Dakota and AN 12 could land. This facilitated the sector to be easily reinforced and maintained. The following were the important routes:
 - Khurnak Fort - Dungere Fort - Yula - Thakung - Lukung - Darbuk - Leh. This was a mule track.
 - Rudok - Shingzhang - Spanggur - Chushul. This was a class 9 road.

- Rudok - Rezung La (also called Rechung La) on to Chushul. This was a mule track.
- **Southern Sector.** Dungti - Demchok. The important routes in this sector were:
 - Churkang - Chang La - Demchok - Dungti or Churkang - Tirtik La - Dungti. This road was motorable up to Chang La, thereafter a mule track led to Dungti.
 - Tashigong - Demchok - Dungti. This was a class 9 road.
- **Southwest Sector.** Area further to southwest including Zursar - Hanle - Chumar and Uti. No operations took place in this Sector. The routes in this sector were:
 - Mule track Sangong - Imis La - Zursar - Gongma La - Hanle.
 - Track Rando - Karak - along Pare Chu - Chumar - Uti.
 - Track Rando - along Sumkhai Chu - till Sumdo and then along Spiti River.

OPERATIONS IN THE NORTHERN SECTOR

The area of responsibility includes the Chip Chap Valley, the Depsang plains, Lingzitang and the Soda plains known as Aksai Chin. In the south are situated the Lingzitang Mountains, a continuation of the Karakoram Mountains. To the west is

Daulet Beg Oldi area, which is a depression of the Karakoram system. It is drained by the Chip Chap River. The DBO sector is mountainous with its lowest height being 16,100 feet.

As the posts were far-flung and isolated, the Chinese cut off the routes of withdrawal as well as surrounded some of them as early as July 1962. This was with a view to force vacation of these posts. Since the posts held out, the Chinese reinforced their forces by October 1962. Having cut off all routes of withdrawal, reinforcements and maintenance of posts



Not to scale

The Northern Sector

was difficult. These posts were subjected to intense artillery and mortar fire. The posts that still refused to withdraw were attacked by multi-pronged attacks and annihilated with a superiority of 10 to 1.

Chandi Post was located north of DBO to cover the track from the Karakoram Pass. It was captured on 20 October 1962. Out of two Junior Commissioned Officers and 27 Other Ranks, only one survived. He was captured but later managed to escape. A reinforcement column sent from DBO could not reach Chandi Post as it was intercepted enroute. The Post Commander, Subedar Sonam Stobdan was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra and three Sepoys, Chering, Wangchok and Phunchok were awarded the Vir Chakra. Other than Phunchok, they received the award posthumously.

The DBO Post was an important post of 14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia with a strength of 125 all ranks. It also had a section of medium machine guns and two detachments of 57 mm recoilless guns from 5th Battalion The Jat Regiment. The Chinese first surrounded the post by overrunning the small posts to its north, east and south. A reinforcement column under Second Lieutenant HC Gujral sent from the company headquarters infiltrated through the Chinese cordon and succeeded in reinforcing the post. The Chinese launched an attack against the post on night 20/21 October 1962 but this was beaten back with the Chinese suffering very heavy casualties. For his undaunted courage and inspired leadership,

Second Lieutenant HC Gujral was awarded the Vir Chakra. At about 0400 hours on 22 October a patrol led by an officer reported a concentration of over 1,000 Chinese troops in the vicinity of DBO. About 300 to 400 troops were located to the south and over 700 to the southeast. Lieutenant Colonel Nihal Singh appreciated that as there was inadequate ammunition to fight a protracted action, the only withdrawal route via the Saser Pass was in danger of being blocked. The post was thus ordered to withdraw and occupy positions at Morgo, Sultan Chushku and Saser Brangsa.

The withdrawal started at 2100 hours on 22 October 1962. The camp and dumps were set ablaze at 0300 hours on 23 October. Vehicles were loaded with rations, fuel, oil cookers, blankets, the sick and wounded and accompanied the withdrawing column. The route followed was DBO - Gapshan - along Shyok River to Saser Brangsa. The vehicles could only be brought up to a place 24 kilometres from DBO along the Chip Chap riverbed, which was frozen. Later, as it gave way, the vehicles got bogged down.

The column was divided into three sub columns. Major SS Randhawa, Maha Vir Chakra, led the leading column. He had travelled by this route earlier in 1960 and was, therefore, able to mark the route for the rest of the column. The main party was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Nihal Singh and the rear was brought up by Captain SP Rigzin, who with a platoon, stayed back till 0600 hours on 23 October 1962 to enable the others to make a clean break.

During the withdrawal, supply drops were successfully made and the sick were evacuated by helicopter from Gapshan as well as Saser Brangsa. By 30 October 1962, the move to new dispositions at Saser Brangsa, Morgo, Sultan Chushku, the confluence of Galwan and Shyok River, Shyok, Thoise and Baigdandu was completed.

After the fall of Chandi, the Chinese attacked post Biyog. Naib Subedar Rigzin Phunchuk and his 15 men fought heroically but were overwhelmed by the Chinese. The few who survived fell back and made a torturous journey to Sultan Chushku. Naib Subedar Rigzin Phunchuk was awarded the Vir Chakra for his resolute leadership and dauntless courage.

To block the Galwan River approach, a platoon-size stop was established in Galwan area by 1st Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles on 6 July 1962. On 10 July this post was completely encircled by about 300 Chinese. For four months the post was threatened and remained surrounded but it stuck on. Maintenance was carried out by helicopter. On 20 October 1962, when the Chinese struck, a company less a platoon of 5th Battalion The Jat Regiment had reinforced the post, bringing up the strength to two officers, three JCOs and 63 Other Ranks. After heavy artillery shelling, the Chinese employed a battalion to capture the post. The Regimental Medical Officer, two JCOs and 30 Other Ranks were killed and others wounded. The Company Commander, Major SS Hasabnis and others were taken prisoners of war.

Parmodak Post was the smallest post in the northern sector comprising five men of 14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia under Havildar Tulsi Ram. Located at an altitude of 5,485 metres (over 17,000 feet), the post dominated the surrounding area and enjoyed great tactical advantage over the attackers. On night 19/20 October 1962, the Chinese forces advanced towards the post. At 2330 hours the Chinese started shelling the post and closed-in on to it. The shelling had killed the Light Machine Gunner, whereupon, Havildar Tulsi Ram took over. Before long, three more men fell. A man of lesser courage would have tried to rush for safety but Tulsi Ram held firmly. Since the Chinese had approached dangerously close, and his ammunition was running out, Tulsi Ram leaped out of the trench carrying his Light Machine Gun with him. For his dauntless courage Havildar Tulsi Ram was awarded the Vir Chakra.

Bishan Post was set up at 5,650 meters (18,645 feet). This was the highest post in Ladakh. It had a strength of 12 men under Company Havildar Major Anand Ram of 14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia. The post enjoyed the same tactical advantage as did post Parmodak. On night 19/20 October, the Chinese shelled the post for about 45 minutes before attacking it. The shelling killed four men but that did not deter the rest who continued to fight gallantly under the inspiring leadership of Company Havildar Major Anand Ram. Two Chinese assaults were beaten back with the Chinese suffering

about 100 casualties. The Chinese then surrounded the post and cut it off. Finding a small opening, Company Havildar Major Anand Ram extricated his men one by one along a precipice. For his resolute leadership and courage, he was awarded the Vir Chakra.

Subedar Amar Singh commanded Patrol Base, a platoon post south of the Galwan Valley. On 21 October 1962, Amar Singh received instructions to leave one section at this post and to withdraw the remaining men to a given position in the rear. The section was to watch out for Chinese movement in the area and provide early information to the Hot Spring post. It was not to get involved in fighting but to withdraw at an opportune moment. Amar Singh decided to stay back with the section. At about 2230 hours on 22 October 1962, the Chinese started shelling the section's observation post. Thereafter, it was attacked by the Chinese. Soon the rest of the section also came under attack. Amar Singh and his men held their ground till physically over-run by the Chinese. Amar Singh was killed along with most of his men.

OPERATIONS IN THE CENTRAL SECTOR

Major Ajit Singh of 5th Battalion The Jat Regiment was the Company Commander at Hot Spring. The area entrusted to him extended from the mountains between Galwan River and Chang Chenmo River in the north, to the crest of the mountain system lying between the Chang Chenmo River and the

Pangong Lake in the south. To the east lay the Indo-Tibetan boundary and to the west the Shyok River. Changlung La, Lanak La, Marsimik La and Ane La are important passes in the area. The important rivers in the area are the Kugrang River and the Chang Chenmo River.

A company plus one platoon along with a section of 3-inch mortars under Major Ajit Singh were split between five posts; three were forward of Hot Spring and the remaining at Hot Spring itself.

The Kongma approach was important as it led directly to Phobrang. A platoon under a JCO was deployed there. The Chinese attacked this post with approximately two companies on 22 October 1962. The post fought till about 1820 hours without any artillery or mortar support, and till their ammunition ran out. All except six Other Ranks were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Naik Munshi Ram was awarded a Vir Chakra (posthumous) for his courage and selfless devotion to duty.

When attacking the Hot Spring Post, the Chinese commenced engagement of all other forward posts in this area on 19 October 1962. The troops prepared to pull back to area Hot Spring. The main action took place at Patrol Base and the Nala Junction posts, where one JCO and 17 Other Ranks each were deployed. The posts were able to withdraw with great difficulty. Since Kongma Post, which was guarding the main route towards Phobrang had fallen back on 22 October; the posts were ordered to pull back under Major Ajit

Singh to Phobrang via Tsogstsalu through Chang Chenmo River on 24 October 1962. They left behind one platoon at Tsogstsalu. The withdrawal to Phobrang along a foot track crisscrossing the Chang Chenmo River took ten days, as the fast flowing river had to be forded several times. Major Ajit Singh describes the withdrawal route as follows:

“In my opinion no major offensive can come over this route, at best a small self-contained patrol can come, but it will not be able to return up-stream by the same route due to the following:

- There is a continuous deep gorge with two waterfalls which no animals, not even the three Yaks with the column were able to cross.
- Cliffs on either side of the water line are 150 feet to 250 feet high. Construction of an animal transport track even with blasting is not possible.
- The route from Track Junction to Orortse La and beyond to Phobrang was snowbound and the going very difficult and slow.”

Before the actual assault, the Chinese harassed the posts and patrols, carrying out a show of strength and encirclement by a large force in order to frighten the troops.

All Chinese posts were connected and maintained by roads. Defences were normally foxholes with extensive wire

obstacles. All fighting trenches and bunkers were connected by crawl trenches and had overhead protection. Attacks were preceded by two/three days of extensive reconnaissance. No attempt at concealment was made.

Chinese artillery was accurate, suggesting that they had carried out accurate silent registration. Their maps appeared to be updated and their knowledge of ground was good. The Chinese attacked en masse. This was always preceded by heavy bombardment supported by Medium Machine Gun fire from the flanks.

Our defensive forces on the other hand faced the following shortcomings / handicaps:

- Our troops were deployed on a very wide and difficult front.
- Posts were isolated and had no mutual support. They had, therefore, to fight independently.
- The strength of each post was inadequate both in manpower and firepower.
- It was impossible to reinforce most posts.
- Posts were held in very difficult terrain.
- Very few posts were connected by road. Maintenance was mainly by ponies and porters. Many posts were dependent entirely on airdrops and weather conditions made air maintenance unreliable.

- Quick reinforcement was only possible through landing sorties. Such reinforcements were ineffective for 5/6 days till they had acclimatised.
- While Light Machine Guns had no major stoppages, 2-inch mortar bombs were defective and not reliable.
- Fire support was always inadequate. The lack of artillery and Medium Machine Guns were badly felt.
- The snow clothing did not provide adequate warmth, particularly boots and gloves, leading to frostbite and chilblain injuries.
- There were no emergency / composite rations. Carriage of ordinary rations on man pack basis was extremely difficult.

On the other hand, all Chinese posts were inter-connected by roads. It appeared to be their habit to work continuously in improving their road communications. Whichever Chinese could be seen, appeared to be well clothed. In attack they carried their semi-automatic rifles at the hip position, firing continuously during their advance. They made extensive use of Verey light signals, probably for control of their artillery fire plan. Their pattern of attack was first extensive shelling with 2-inch mortar and heavy mortars, then a forced advance from the front; thereafter, suddenly superior forces descended from the highest point on the right, left and rear of our positions. Chinese shelling was extremely accurate. Even the first salvo of shells used to

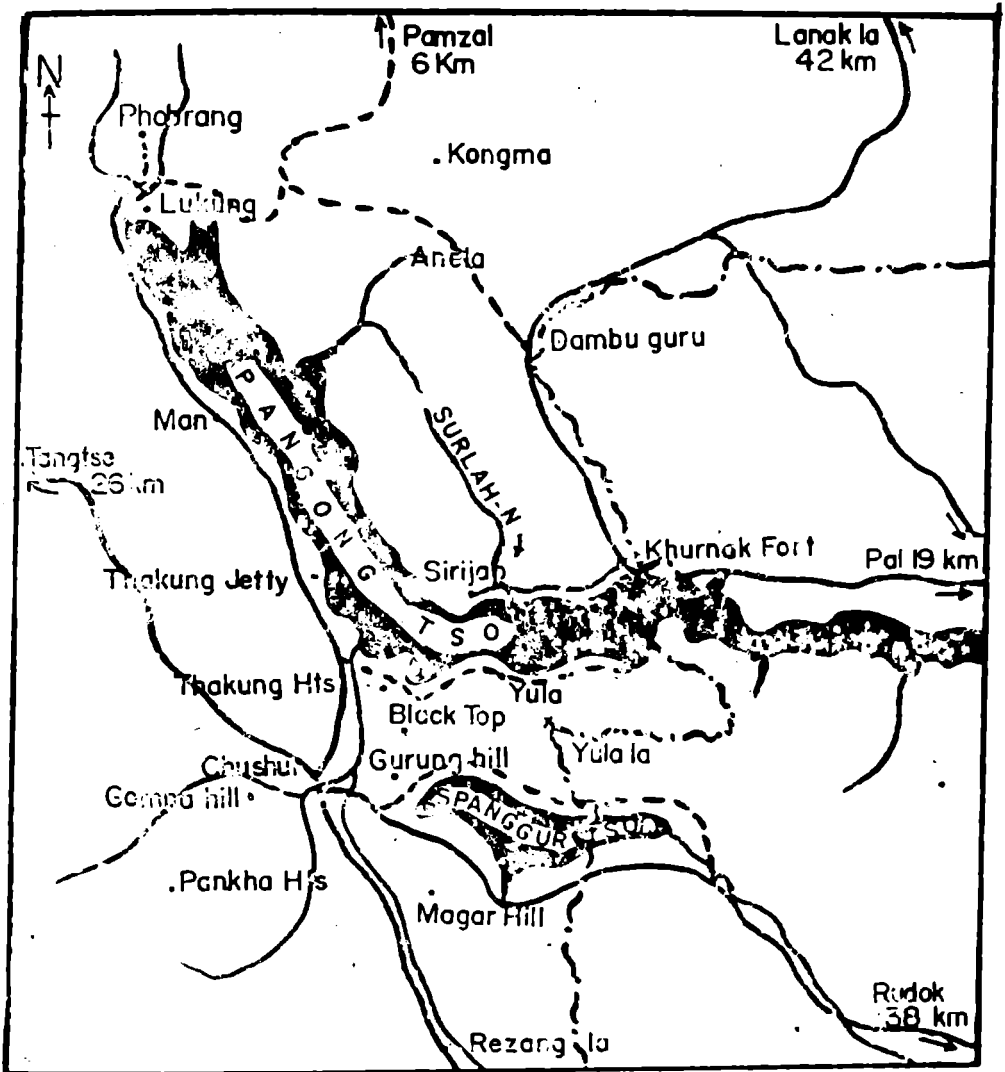
land accurately on our bunkers. Assaulting waves used no cover or assault formations. They came en masse and in waves.

OPERATIONS AT SIRIJAP AND YULA

Pangong Tso is a vast lake and forms a link between the Central and Chushul Sectors. Sirijap located on the north bank of the Pangong Tso dominated the approach from Khurnak Fort to Thakung and then to Chushul. From Sirijap, the Pangong Tso has to be crossed by boats to reach Thakung. Yula on the other hand, is located to the south of Pangong Tso. This feature dominates the approach from Sirijap to Thakung as well as the track running south along the Pangong Tso.

As both Sirijap and Yula dominated routes of ingress, the following posts were established:

- The posts at Sirijap: Post 1 was held by a company less two platoons and Post 2 was held by a platoon less one section. Post 1 was located on the ridgeline overlooking the Pangong Tso. The exact location of Post 2 has not been mentioned in the after action report or elsewhere. It can be assumed that Post 2 was located to the east of Post 1, on the same ridgeline, to dominate the eastern approach from Khurnak Fort and Suriah Nala.
- Thakung served as a ferry point for boats maintaining our posts at Sirijap, which had one section.



Not to scale

Sirijap and Yula Sector

- Two posts were established at Yula. Post 1 was held by a platoon and Post 2 with one section. While Post 1 was located on the banks of the Pangong Tso, Post 2 was located at Yula.
- No artillery or mortar support was available for these posts.

The Chinese commenced artillery shelling at 0600 hours on 21 October 1962. This came as a surprise to the post. The

shelling continued for 30 minutes. The post was surrounded and attacked in waves from all directions. Tanks were used to demolish our bunkers. The men fought valiantly but being hopelessly outnumbered, fell to the Chinese. There was no way to pull out. The post fell within an hour. No one survived.

The Chinese followed the same pattern as they had done at Sirijap Post 1. This post was also surprised and encircled. The period of engagement was brief, and so intense was the Chinese artillery fire that the post was reduced to a smouldering rubble. The attack was launched from all directions. The brave soldiers inflicted approximately 100 casualties on the Chinese and fought till their ammunition lasted. Two JCOs and 30 Other Ranks were killed. Only Major DS Thapa (later awarded the Param Vir Chakra) of the 1st Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles and five others survived. All were grievously wounded and taken prisoners. This post was also reduced in an hour. In a brief span of three hours, both the posts ceased to exist.

After having reduced the posts at Sirijap the Chinese shelled the Yula posts continuously for the whole day on 22 October 1962. On the night of 22/23 October the posts were surrounded. The posts were ordered to fight their way out and withdraw. Those that managed to get out were ambushed enroute to Thakung. Only four men survived. The Chinese suffered about 50 casualties.

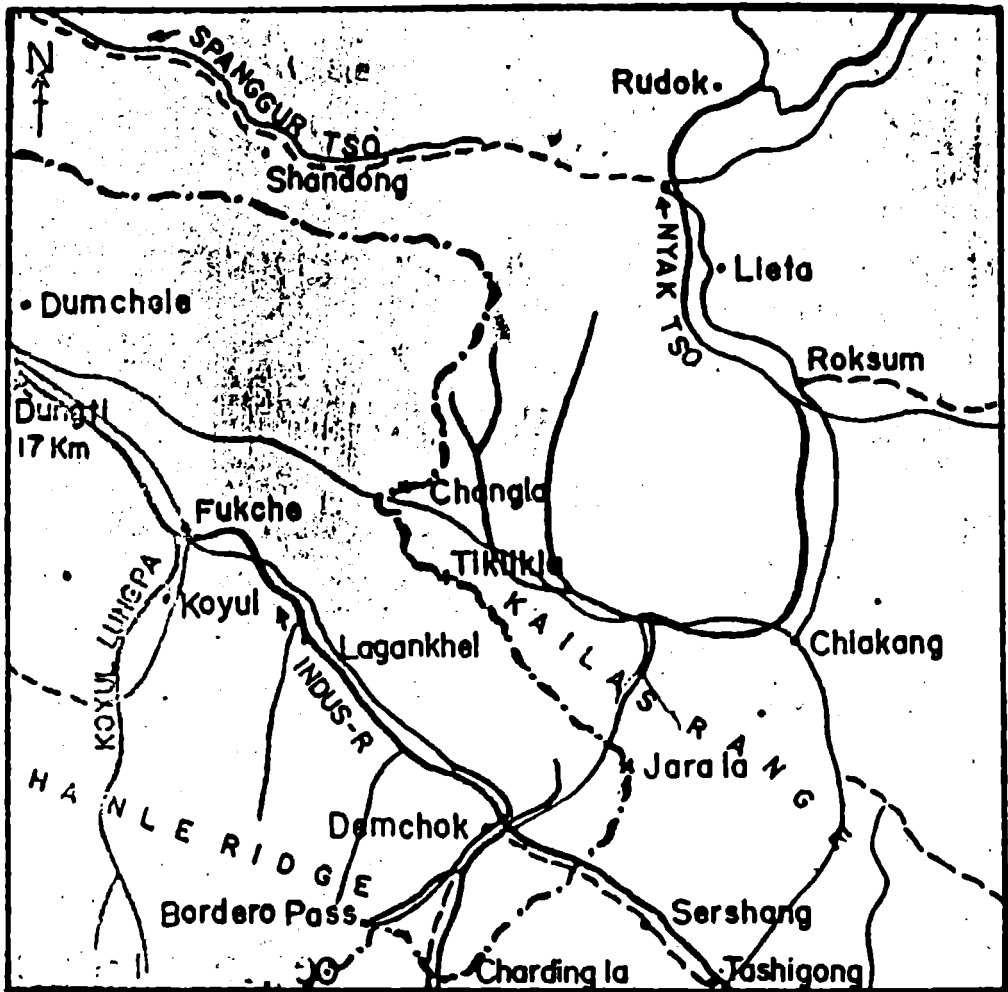
One feature of the Sirijap and Yula actions was the use of water transport by both sides. Assault boats were used to replenish Sirijap east, Yula 1 and Yula 2.

While launching an attack, the Chinese ensured that no escape route was left open for our troops. The Chinese advanced very closely behind their artillery, accepting some casualties in the process.

The Chinese defences comprised an extensive network of trenches and weapon pits connected by communication trenches. Communication trenches were deep enough to use as fire trenches. The Chinese bunkers were approximately 10 feet in diameter and protruded only two to three feet above the ground. The protruding portion was covered with earth, thus giving the appearance of a small mound both from the front and rear. Living accommodation was always on the reverse slopes.

OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTHERN SECTOR

The Demchok Sub Sector is the southernmost part of the battlefield where the Ladakh operations of 1962 were fought. To the west of Demchok lies a mountain ridge, which is referred to as Hanle Ridge which forms a part of the South West Sector. To the north lies Chang La, to the northeast Jara La and to the south Charding La.



Not to scale

The Demchok Sector

7th Battalion The Jammu and Kashmir Militia was deployed in this Sector. It comprised three wings, each wing having six platoons.

Area High Ground was held with three platoons, two sections of 3-inch mortar and one section of Medium Machine Gun. On 27 October 1962 at about 0730 hours the Chinese commenced their operations. A Chinese column of about 500 men descended into the Indus Valley along the Nala. Some

men proceeded to the west and laid an ambush. The rest crossed the river and assembled at the confluence of Demchok, Lungpa and the Indus Rivers. From here the Chinese fired on our troops who returned the fire. High Ground needed reinforcements but they were not forthcoming. The Chinese had intercepted the road to Leh and had also erected a few roadblocks in the area. In view of the danger of being overwhelmed, and of the Chinese descending from Charding La, the post was abandoned by Major Sharma, the Post Commander.

Chang La post was manned by two sections under Naib Subedar Ishe Tundup; a total of 17 men. The post had dug fire trenches and had barbed wire obstacles all around the post. On 27 October 1962 at 0545 hours about 300 Chinese troops were seen at Chang La advancing towards the post. The Chinese dismounted their Medium Machine Guns and other automatic weapons that had been mounted on vehicles, and under cover moved them into firing positions surrounding the picket. The Post Commander personally engaged the first two vehicles with the 2-inch mortar bombs and destroyed them. After an hour's fighting, one JCO and one Other Rank were killed and one Other Rank was wounded. When the post could not hold out any longer, and with ammunition running out, the seriously wounded Post Commander ordered his men to break contact at about 0800 hours. He, however, remained behind and provided covering fire till he was killed. Naib Subedar Ishe Tundup was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra

(posthumous) for his bravery and leadership. The post inflicted about 120 - 150 casualties on the Chinese.

Jara La post was manned by two sections under the command of a Havildar. Here also there were dug trenches and barbed wire obstacles around the post. About 200 Chinese mounted on ponies approached the post at approximately 0600 hours on 27 October 1962. As soon as they were in range, the post opened up with the 2-inch mortar, and Light Machine Guns. Though the Chinese suffered many casualties they succeeded in surrounding the post. Seeing no alternative, the post withdrew at 1730 hours. One man was killed, another wounded, while seven were taken prisoners. The rest managed to escape. The post inflicted about 100 - 180 casualties on the Chinese.

BATTLE AT CHUSHUL: 18 and 19 November 1962

The battle of Chushul was one of the most interesting battles in the Sino-Indian conflict. It saw the Indian Army in this sector standing up to the onslaught of the Chinese and bravely defending the area around Chushul. The troops of 114 Infantry Brigade fought valiantly with courage unmatched in the history of warfare to redeem some of the lost honour of the Indian Army.

Chushul occupied a prominent place in the defence of Ladakh. If the Chinese intended to take Leh then the Spanggur

Gap measuring two to three kilometres between the mountains, within which Chushul lies, was their obvious route. Positions had accordingly been taken up on the hills just across the Chinese claim line. Some of these were at an altitude of more than 16,000 feet.

The Chinese assaulted these positions with overwhelming numerical superiority of over 10 to 1. They came in waves, one after another, unmindful of casualties. Their attacks were well planned and were pressed home with vigour and determination. The Chinese mortars and guns shelled these locations for an hour before they launched their attack. The shelling was intense and aimed not only at inflicting casualties, but also at breaking our will to fight.

Notwithstanding the leadership of the Chinese commanders and their infantry and artillery, an honest verdict would give the Battle Honour for the Battle of Chushul to the Indian Officers and Jawans who fought most heroically.

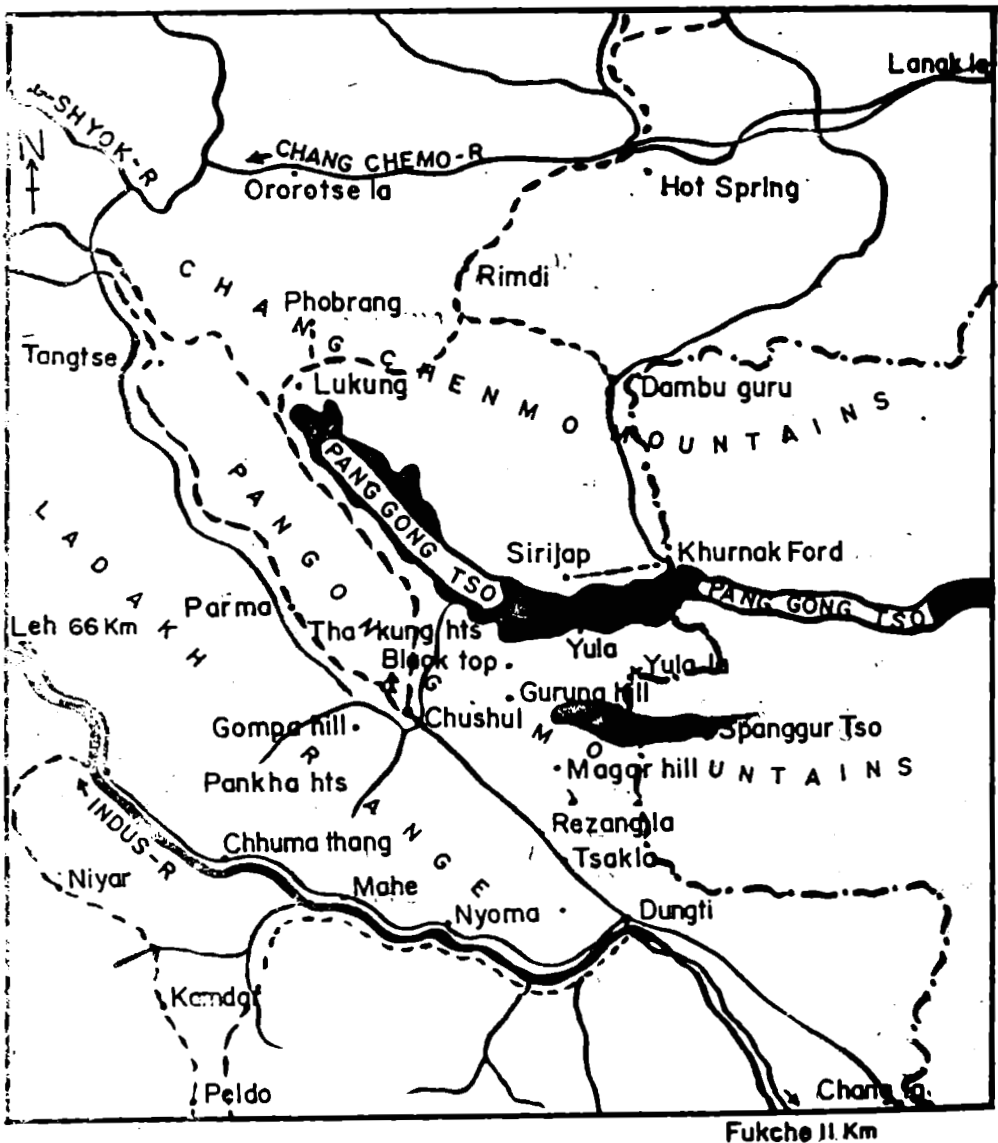
The tasks given to 114 Infantry Brigade were as follows:

- To defend Chushul as long as possible and to withdraw only when the continuation of the battle would annihilate or turn the garrison into a rout.
- To inflict maximum casualties on the Chinese.
- To save as much stores and equipment as possible.

Troops available to 114 Infantry Brigade were:

- Armour

- Two troops of 20 Lancers equipped with AMX-13 light tanks. These tanks had a 75 mm main gun and one .30 inch Browning coaxial Machine Gun.



Not to scale

Chushul Sector

- **Artillery**
 - 38 Field Battery (25 Pounders) of 13 Field Regiment.
 - Troop Heavy Mortar of 32 Heavy Mortar Regiment.
- **Infantry**
 - 1st Battalion The Jat Light Infantry.
 - 5th Battalion The Jat Regiment less one company (company deployed at Morgo).
 - 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment.
 - 1st Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles.
- **Medium Machine Guns.** 'Y' Company, 1st Battalion The Mahar Regiment (12 Medium Machine Guns).
- **Engineers.** Company Engineers.

114 Infantry Brigade was responsible for this sector, extending in the north up to Hot Spring and in the south up to Tsaka La. Road Chushul - Tsaka La - Dungti - Leh was the lifeline of the Brigade. However, the approaches to Lukung and Lukung itself were also to be defended. It was not desirable to let the Chinese creep up from behind or a flank. Should they be able to take Lukung, they would get behind the Brigade and be able to attack Chushul from the rear or develop their operations towards Leh through Darbuk - Chang La. Coming to Chushul itself, the approaches available to the Chinese were:

- **From northwest.** Phobrang - Lukung - Thakung - Chushul. This approach allowed the Chinese to come on the north flank of Chushul. Capture of Lukung would also allow access to Chang La. This would, however, be a longer approach for Chushul.
- **From northeast.** Khurnak Fort - across Pangong Tso - Yula - short of Thakung - Chushul. This was a relatively shorter approach and would again bring the Chinese to the northern flank. Basically an infantry approach, it could be combined with one or more of the other approaches.
- **From east.** Rudok - Shingzang - Spanggur - Chushul. This was an important approach and had the following advantages:
 - Spanggur was connected to Rudok by road; hence a quick build up was possible.
 - Tanks could be used in this area.
 - The Chinese could deny the Brigade the use of the Chushul airfield.
 - It was the shortest and most direct route.
 - By capturing the dominating heights astride the Gap, the Chinese could drive a wedge between the defences and could employ their armour to advantage.

- **From southeast.** Spanggur - Rezang La - Chushul. This was a difficult approach. A major build up was not possible. Heavy equipment could not be brought forward. It was basically an infantry approach. It was, therefore, appreciated that the Chinese might at best use this approach for infiltrating a small force with a view to establishing a road block on road Dungil - Chushul and to carry out raids.
- **From south.** Dungti - Tsaka La - Chushul. This approach was covered by 70 Infantry Brigade, which had been recently inducted into this area. Tsaka La would require to be held for two reasons viz., to dominate road Dungti - Tsaka La and to act as a link between 70 Infantry Brigade and 4 Infantry Brigade.

On the dominating heights, the Chinese already held Black Top, Point 5166 and Mukhpari, and their observation posts at these heights had excellent observation over the other features.

The Brigade Commander, Brigadier TN Raina, Maha Vir Chakra, made an appreciation to the effect that the main approach to Chushul Valley and the airfield was through Spanggur Gap. The ground being flat and firm was an ideal approach for both infantry and tanks. High hills on either side of this gap - Gurung Hill to the north and Magar Hill to the south, dominated the gap completely. Hence Gurung and Magar Hills had to be held in strength. Another approach to

the Valley was via Rezung La, which also had to be defended. In the extreme north as long as Thakung was held, the Chinese could not bring any major force through Pangong Tso. It was necessary to have some troops at Tsaka La to keep the route Dungti - Chushul open. Finally, in order to keep the route of withdrawal of the Brigade to Leh via Tangtse and Darbuk open, the defile at Lukung had also to be defended. Black Top, Point 5166 and Mukhpari were already held by the Chinese and dominated the features east of the road, therefore, the Commander had two options open to him:

- **Option 1.** To hold features east of the road. This had the disadvantage of being dominated by Black Top, Point 5165 and Mukhpari.
- **Option 2.** To hold features west of the road. This had the disadvantage of having the lines of communication and the airfield ahead of the main defences.

Keeping these two options in view, he decided to hold features east of the road. He planned to hold defences of Chushul as follows:

- 1st Battalion The Jat Light Infantry.
 - Company less a platoon - Thakung Jetty, with a section of 3-inch mortar.
 - Two companies plus platoon - Thakung Heights, and a section of Medium Machine Guns.

- Remainder - Gompa Hill.
- 5th Battalion The Jat Regiment (less one company at Morgo).
 - Company less platoon - Tsaka La, and a section of Medium machine Gun and two 57 mm recoilless guns.
 - Remainder - Lukung.
- 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment.
 - Company plus a section of 3-inch mortar - Rezang La.
 - Two companies less platoon with a section of 3-inch mortar and a section of Medium Machine Gun - Maggar Hill.
 - Remainder of the Battalion with 4 recoilless guns - Track Junction.
- 1st Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles.
 - Two companies less a platoon, with a section Medium Machine Guns and a section 3-inch mortars - Gurung Hill.
 - One company, platoon Medium Machine Gun and 6 recoilless guns - Spanggur Gap.
 - One company - Point 5167.
 - Battalion headquarters and an adhoc company - Chushul airfield.

- Artillery - Troops each to Gurung and Maggar Hill.
- Armour. Two troops of AMX - 13 light tanks were air lifted by AN 12 aircraft to Chushul by 26 October 1962 and located at the base of Gurung Hill. Captain AK Dewan, Vir Chakra, commanded the half squadron. The tasks given to the half squadron were as follows:
 - To deny Spanggur Gap approach to the Chinese, particularly to any Chinese tanks which may try to venture out towards Chushul.
 - To act as a mobile reserve with a company from 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment located in area Track Junction with a view to safeguarding the flanks and any sizeable Chinese infiltration, which may take place during the battle particularly along road Tsaka La - Chushul.

114 Infantry Brigade faced the following problems while preparing defences at Chushul:

- The bulk of the troops were unacclimatised. The rarefied air restricted even acclimatised troops to only short bursts of activity.
- Defences were to be dug at heights of over 16,000 feet. Everything had to be carried up by the troops in small loads from the Valley.
- The troops faced the severity of the Ladakh winter in the

month of November. The frozen ground could not be dug and had to be blasted.

Over and above this, the Brigade had to clear 100 tons of stores and equipment every day from the airfield, which included the requirements of 70 Infantry Brigade located at Dungti.

To deceive the Chinese about our deployment, 114 Infantry Brigade prepared dummy positions for artillery and tanks in the area west of the airfield. Mortar pits were dug and dummy gun structures were placed and camouflaged. To make it appear absolutely real, movement of gunners was simulated during the day and a few hurricane lamps lit at the site during night. For tank deception, unserviceable bulldozers, which had once been employed for the construction of the airfield, were used. A log was fixed on each bulldozer to simulate a tank gun barrel. They were then camouflaged. Similar activity was shown around the dozers to give an appearance of normal activity around the clock. Another deception was to depict that the kerosene and petrol dump was also located at the airfield. Troops kept adding to the empty jerricans to depict a large dump. The Chinese fell for this deception and pounded this area heavily, only to realise, to their surprise, that there was nothing there.

Despite many handicaps, good progress was made, and within a month of their occupation of Chushul defences, the defenders had achieved a basic minimum preparation.

At dawn on Sunday, 18 November 1962, the Chinese launched their second phase of attack in the Chushul area. It was an unusually cold morning, with a blanket of mist around, and visibility was barely a few metres. It was also snowing heavily. The Battle of Chushul was fought on the snowy heights of Rezang La and Gurung Hill. Both were attacked simultaneously.

The Chinese attack, between 20 and 27 October 1962 had been followed by a lull, which was utilised by the Chinese to consolidate and build up. The second phase of the Chinese offensive began on 18 November 1962. The Chinese attack was preceded by intense artillery and mortar fire on our posts at Rezang La, Magar Hill, Gurung Hill and Spanggur Gap at about 0615 hours. The Chinese infantry, meanwhile, was closing in for an assault on Rezang La and Gurung Hill. As they approached their objective, their guns and mortars shifted their fire to the airfield, dummy tanks, gun positions, and road Chushul-Tsaka La. The Chinese gunfire, proved ineffective. Notwithstanding that, by about 0900 hours, both Rezang La and a portion of Gurung Hill had fallen in the face of overwhelming Chinese superiority. Meanwhile shelling of the airfield area, and road Chushul - Tsaka La continued.

The Chinese had in fact become so bold as to move their artillery and mortars well forward of their Spanggur post towards the Spanggur Gap. This placed them under the direct observation of our artillery observation post at Magar Hill.

They paid for this, since our guns engaged them effectively. Later, they were forced to withdraw after a direct hit on one of their mortars. This saw the end of their shelling of the airfield area.

With the fall of Rezang La it was felt that the Chinese might establish a roadblock on road Chushul - Tsaka La to block the only exit route for our vehicles and battle casualties to Leh. It was also appreciated that the Chinese would require four to five hours to establish the roadblock after the fall of Rezang La. Meanwhile, evacuation of the sick and wounded as well as surplus transport was imperative. The main hindrance to this move, however, was the constant shelling of road Chushul - Tsaka La. With the effective neutralisation of Chinese guns and mortars a calculated risk was taken and approximately 100 vehicles comprising second line and a portion of first line transport along with all the available casualties were rushed to Dungti. This timely action saved valuable lives and transport.

With a portion of Gurung Hill and the whole of Rezang La with the Chinese, there followed a comparative lull throughout the afternoon and the remaining hours of 18 November 1962, except for sporadic shelling of the airfield area during night 18/19 November 1962.

At 1030 hours on 19 November, the Chinese infantry was reported to be concentrated for an attack on the remaining

defences on Gurung Hill. Our artillery and tanks immediately engaged the Chinese. Eventually, it was at 1400 hours that under cover of heavy snowfall and mist, the Chinese launched their attack. The attack was in such overwhelming strength that Gurung Hill finally fell at 1530 hours. Chinese movement towards the slopes of Gurung Hill was observed and small infiltrating parties were also seen moving down from Mukhpari towards the airfield. The Chinese pattern of attack was clear. They were obviously aiming at rolling down in strength from Gurung Hill and Mukhpari on night 19/20 November to cut off the rear of our troops in Spanggur Gap and at Magar Hill. It had been earlier appreciated that in such a contingency it would be futile to hold on to Spanggur Gap and Magar Hill. Accordingly, orders were given to our troops at these posts to commence thinning out at last light. Similar orders were also given to troops holding the line between Thakung and Gurung Hill. All withdrawing troops were to fall back on the second line of defence in areas already earmarked. This movement was successfully carried out and the whole Brigade with practically its entire equipment and stores, was redeployed at its new defences by first light on 20 November 1962. It may be mentioned here that with the fall of Gurung Hill, the Chinese advance during the hours of daylight towards the airfield from Gurung Hill and Mukhpari was prevented entirely by the effectiveness of our tank and artillery fire. Details of the brave actions at Gurung Hill, Rezang La and Magar Hill are given in succeeding paragraphs.

Action At Gurung Hill

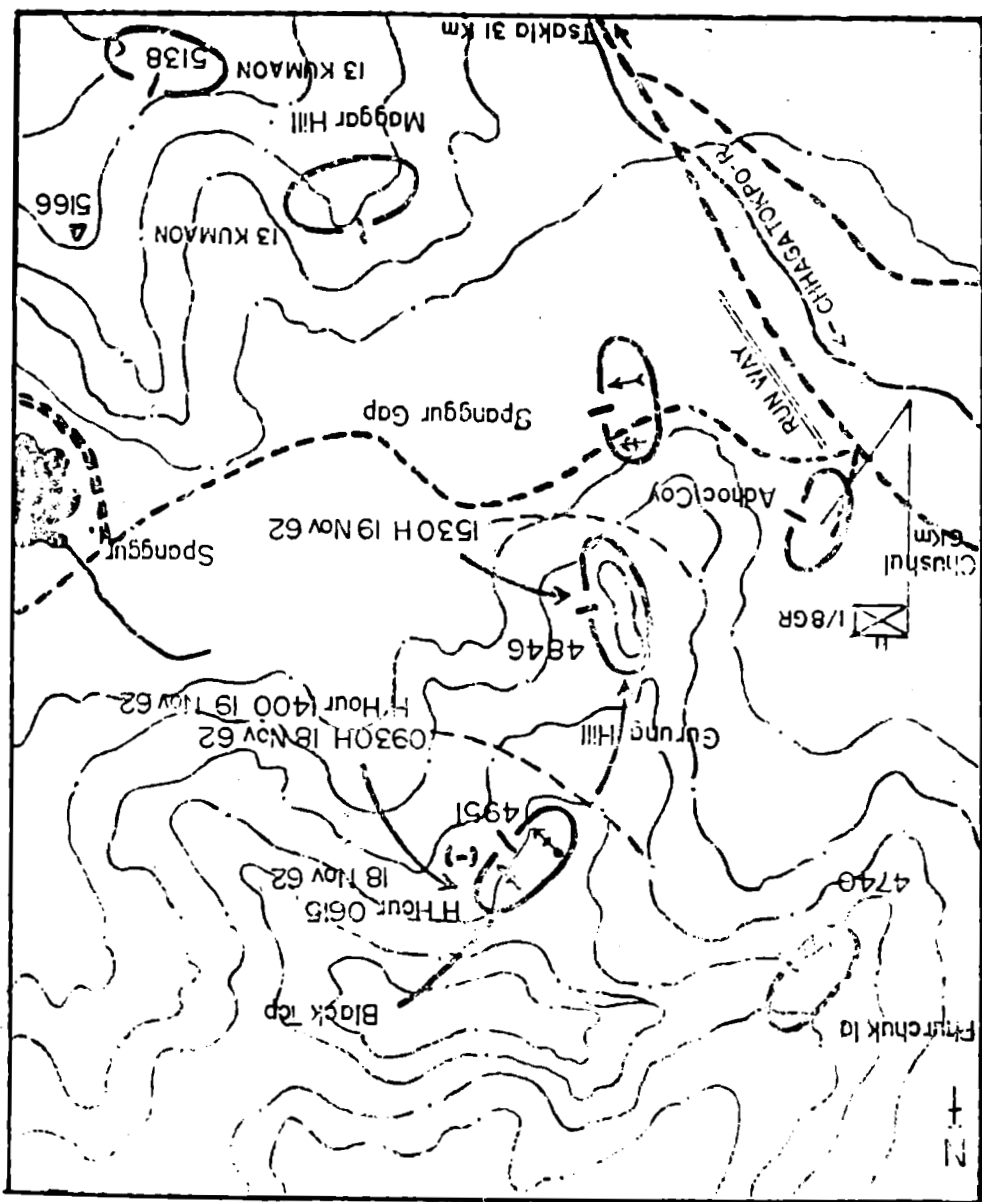
Gurung Hill is a large feature approximately 5,000 metres by 2,000 metres at an altitude of about 5,000 metres (16,500 feet). A feature called Black Top, which in fact is a continuation of Gurung Hill, dominates it. A Chinese observation post was located on the forward slopes of Black Top. The Chinese observation post was at approximately 19,600 feet and at a distance of 3,000 metres as the crow flies. The Chinese had their main defences on the reverse slope of Black Top. Two companies less one platoon supported by a section each of Medium Machine Guns and 3-inch mortars of 1st Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles was deployed on Gurung Hill. Two platoons were towards northeast and one company was towards southwest. The defences on this feature were well dug with adequate overhead protection and a protective minefield of 1,000 anti-personnel mines. An artillery observation post was also located at Gurung Hill.

The Chinese launched their attack with heavy artillery and mortars concentrated on the defensive positions. Under cover of shelling, a wave of approximately 150 Chinese was seen rolling down to our position from Black Top at about 0615 hours on 18 November 1962, which was immediately engaged by our artillery. The impact of this fire was not only sudden but also so devastating that whatever was left of the first wave fell back to Black Top. Hardly 10 minutes later, a second wave of approximately 450 Chinese was seen advancing from the same

direction. This was followed by a third wave, approximately 500 strong. Although the barrages of artillery fire continued and were later reinforced by tanks, 3-inch mortars and Medium Machine Gun fire, the firepower proved inadequate due to the vastness of the area to be covered and the numerical superiority of the assaulting Chinese. By sheer weight of

Action At Gungung Hill

Not to scale



numbers, the Chinese kept advancing and by 0930 hours a portion of the defences at Gurung Hill fell to the Chinese. When the two platoons at Gurung Hill were captured, further movement towards the southern part of the defences was observed. Our fire effectively stopped this, and the Chinese withdrew. At about 0800 hours Captain Bhasin, Adjutant of 1st Battalion The 8th Gorkha Rifles, came down from Gurung Hill to ask for help. One troop under Lieutenant Baswani went into action to engage the Chinese descending down the forward slopes. By 1015 hours the Chinese halted their advance due to our effective fire. Much of the shooting in the area was done by on the spot improvisation, as the tanks gunner's sights had graticules marked only up to 3,000 metres, and there was no method of carrying out semi indirect or indirect shooting. Further, due to the rarefied atmosphere, the ranges achieved did not bear any relation to the known range tables. While firing the coaxial machine gun, almost half the range was set on the sight. There was a lull in the battle for the remaining day of 18 November 1962.

An account of this day's battle would be incomplete without a mention of the gallant role played by Second Lieutenant SD Goswami, Maha Vir Chakra and his observation post party. This officer was responsible for engaging the Chinese to within 100 metres of his own position till he was wounded by a grenade. By this time his observation post bunker had been damaged and the infantry position around him almost overrun.

The control of fire was then taken over by his technical assistant, who kept firing the guns till the very end. Signal communication between the observation post and the gun end was maintained throughout, mainly due to the gallant devotion to duty on the part of Naik Pritam Singh, who on three occasions rushed into the open, amid intense shelling, to rectify his wireless remote control equipment. With the exception of the observation post officer the remaining observation post party are believed to have laid down their lives. On 18 and 19 November 1962, 32 Field Battery fired 2,720 rounds at the attacking Chinese. Registration by shooting of defensive fire tasks including SOS tasks, carried out a few days prior to the actual battle, enabled accurate fire to be brought down.

At 0800 hours on 19 November 1962 the Brigade Commander asked Captain Dewan the feasibility of engaging Gurung Hill from the front of Chushul Village, a distance of about 8,000 metres. Improvisation was again resorted to and data thus obtained paid handsome dividends when the Chinese resumed their attack at 1400 hours that day. The tanks continued firing till last light and kept the Chinese at bay facilitating the withdrawal of our troops and of the field guns.

At 1030 hours on 19 November 1962 the Chinese were reported to have concentrated for an attack on the remaining portion of the defences on Gurung Hill. This concentration was immediately engaged by artillery and tank fire. Eventually,

it was at 1400 hours that under cover of heavy snowfall and mist, that the Chinese launched their attack. The attack came from two directions, in almost the same strength as on the previous day. Three platoon locations on this portion of Gurung Hill, echeloned in depth from northeast to southwest, were overrun by overwhelming numbers despite maximum available fire support. At 1530 hours the whole of Gurung Hill fell to the Chinese.

Gurung Hill was the scene of bitter fighting which took place on 18 and 19 November 1962. Our gallant soldiers at Gurung Hill were responsible for inflicting over 500 casualties on the Chinese while our casualties were 1 JCO and 25 Other Ranks missing (believed killed) and 2 Officers, 11 Other Ranks wounded.

Action At Rezang La

Rezang La is a large feature approximately 3,000 metres by 2,000 metres with an altitude of about 5,250 metres (17,000 feet) 'C' Company of 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment (commanded by Major Shaitan Singh, Param Vir Chakra) supported by a section of 3-inch mortars was responsible for its defence.

No 7 Platoon was to the north, No 8 Platoon to the south of the Pass, and company headquarters and No 9 Platoon was in the centre. The company was stocked with six first line

scales of ammunition and approximately 1,000, 3-inch mortar bombs. Unfortunately, most of Rezang La was crested to our field guns. Additional Light Machine Guns were given to the company to cover the numerous approaches. Overhead protection for the main positions was constructed and barbed wire laid. Defensive Fire tasks were actually fired and registered. Lines were laid to platoons and buried. Weapon fixed lines were coordinated.

But the defence of Rezang La had some serious drawbacks. These were:

- Rezang La was out of range and even crested to our field guns and hence without artillery support.
- The company at Rezang La was too far from the rest of the Battalion. Since it was isolated, the Battalion was not able to influence the battle, nor rush reinforcement for its assistance. Thus the Chinese had no problem in surrounding it and subsequently in reducing it piece-meal.

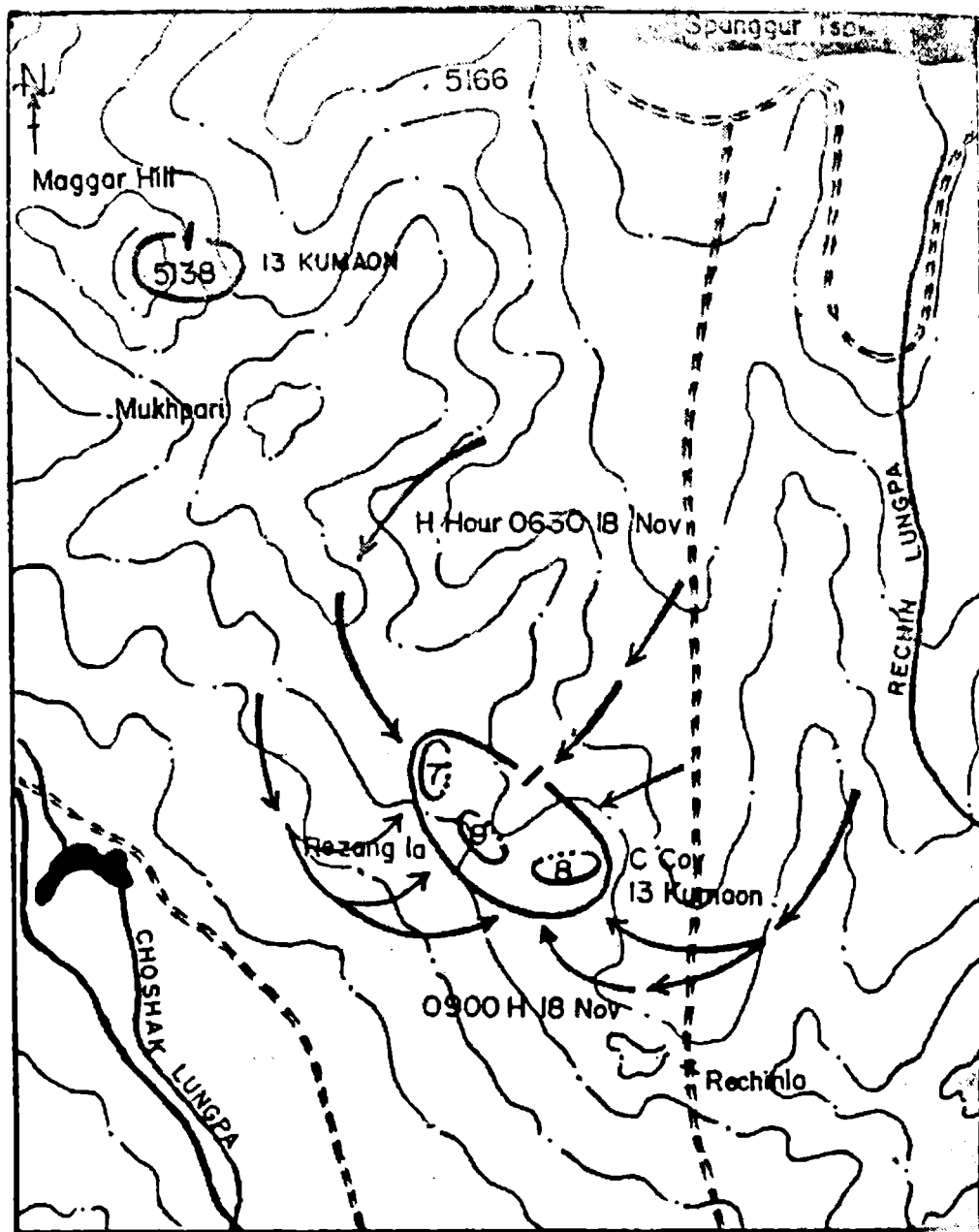
At about 0400 hours on 18 November 1962, a protective patrol operating about 400 metres in front of No 8 Platoon encountered a Chinese column of about 300 coming towards the post. The patrol commander, Naik Hukam Chand, Vir Chakra, fired a Verey light and a Light Machine Gun burst to warn the company. The company was immediately alerted and waited for the Chinese to come within range. The patrol, in the meanwhile withdrew, keeping a watch on the Chinese

and firing constantly.

At about 0500 hours on that day at the break of dawn, both No 7 and No 8 Platoons saw strong parties of Chinese coming up the re-entrants leading to their post. Fire was opened with all available weapons; 3-inch mortars fired their Defensive Fire tasks constantly. The nalas along which the Chinese were advancing were pre-selected "killing ground" and all weapons fired on their fixed lines. In about 30 minutes the nalas were littered with dead and wounded Chinese. Survivors were seen taking position behind boulders and the bodies of the dead.

Around this time, the company despatched a patrol from No 9 Platoon to the front of the company to check if two intervening re-entrants were free of the Chinese. The patrol reported 300 to 400 Chinese advancing through this approach. No 9 Platoon again opened fire with all weapons on the advancing Chinese. 3-inch mortar fire was also called for. Within moments these approaches were also full of dead Chinese.

At about 1030 hours on 18 November came the news that the Rezang La posts, which had been fighting most bravely since early morning, had suffered extremely heavy casualties and that the situation was precarious. A troop of tanks under Second Lieutenant Avinash Chand was rushed off towards Rezang La. One tank of the troop had earlier been put out of



Not to scale

Action At Rezang La

action and as such the officer set out with only two tanks. Unfortunately, on the way the engine of one of the tanks seized. Undaunted, young Avinash Chand carried on with the third tank on a solo mission to the battalion headquarter's. By then Rezang La had been given up as lost and all attention

was concentrated on holding the battalion headquarter's position. Avinash and his tank remained there for many days helping to guard the southeasterly approach to Chushul. In the meantime, the Chushul troops were pulled back to Chushul Village at about 2330 hours.

At Rezang La meanwhile, the Chinese realised that a frontal attack had failed and that they faced a well dug in and determined enemy. The Chinese used 132 mm rockets, heavy artillery 120 mm, 81 mm and 60 mm mortars. Also, 75 and 57 mm recoilless guns were used to reduce our bunkers. South of No 8 Platoon, approximately 500 empty shells were found. Despite the fact that nearly all bunkers were destroyed and heavy casualties had occurred, not one soldier withdrew. Corrugated sheets, *ballies* and sand bags used for bunkers were blown to smithereens by the heavy fire. Yet the brave soldiers continued to man their posts.

Under cover of this heavy fire, the Chinese carried out an enveloping move and closed the gap south of No 8 Platoon. Attempts to force a way through the barbed wire were met with a volley of hand grenades. The Chinese managed to blow away the wire obstacle by using explosives but could not progress operations from this direction. They, therefore, took a longer detour to attack from the west. The platoon quickly moved to its alternate position to face the threat from the new direction. Approximately 300 Chinese advanced on the platoon and again managed to create a gap in the barbed wire. The

first assault was halted by a heavy volume of fire from late Jemadar Hari Ram, Vir Chakra but the second wave managed to capture the depth position. After reorganising, the Chinese attacked the section and platoon headquarters. Every single man of the platoon fought till he was overpowered by the Chinese and died in his trench. Every man had more than 8 to 10 bullet or splinter wounds on his body.

Simultaneous with the attack on No 8 Platoon, about 400 Chinese soldiers came from behind Mukhpari and tried to envelope No 7 Platoon from the south under cover of intense artillery fire. 3-inch mortar fire landed in the middle of the first Chinese assault line composed of approximately 130 men. Only 30 got up to resume their advance towards the section. 10 to 20 of our men got up and charged them. Hand to hand fighting took place. In the meantime, the Chinese had brought up Medium Machine Guns, which engaged our men from the rear. Fresh Chinese reinforcement had also arrived. All men of the No 7 Platoon died fighting.

The 3-inch mortar section constantly engaged the Chinese. As the Chinese approached, the mortars kept reducing their range till they were firing just 30 to 40 metres from their own position. Tail fins of our own bombs were found as close as 20 yards from the mortar position. The Chinese charged the mortar position killing everyone. Out of the 1,000 bombs, 993 bombs had been fired. Seven bombs were found without the secondaries, ready for firing when the section was overrun.

The conspicuous gallantry of Havildar Ram Kumar, the Mortar Platoon Commander, is worth mentioning. He kept directing the fire of his mortars till he had nine bullet or splinter wounds on his body. Finally, a Chinese hand grenade knocked him unconscious. His nose was completely blown off. In the evening the Chinese, taking him for dead, picked him up and threw him into a bunker and set the bunker on fire. Due to the heat of his burning clothes he regained consciousness and came out of the burning bunker. The Chinese seeing his condition left him alone. Havildar Ram Kumar ran towards the edge of the ridge, rolled down and again fell unconscious. Eventually, at around 0400 hours he regained consciousness and walked six miles to the Battalion Headquarters to tell the story of the valour of his comrades.

The Company Headquarters and No 9 Platoon were subjected to the heaviest shelling. When all the bunkers were destroyed, the Company Commander reorganised the position again. Seeing the Chinese coming up from the rear, one Light Machine Gun was shifted to take on the threat from the new direction. The machine gun kept firing till it was physically knocked out. The Chinese having captured No 7 and 8 Platoons and the mortar section were now closing in from all directions. While reorganising the defences to meet the fresh Chinese threat, Major Shaitan Singh was hit by a burst of Chinese small arms fire and wounded in the arm. By 1300 hours, most men of No 9 Platoon had become casualties. The

Company Havildar Major Harpal Singh persuaded Major Shaitan Singh to move to a safer place. Major Shaitan Singh with four of his remaining men, attempted to move towards the base. The party was, however, observed by the Chinese and subjected to blistering Heavy Machine Gun fire. The Company Havildar Major was mortally wounded. Seeing the intense fire in which they were caught, Major Shaitan Singh ordered his men to leave him and to save themselves. Major Shaitan Singh's body was found three months later with multiple wounds.

The Company Commander, Major Shaitan Singh displayed outstanding courage and leadership and inspired his men to fight to the last. Even when wounded, he refused to be evacuated. Not only Major Shaitan Singh but also many others fought in the same way. In recognition of the gallantry and devotion to duty displayed by the men at Rezang La, the Company was awarded one Param Vir Chakra, four Vir Chakras and four Sena Medals.

Rezang La was the scene of very bitter fighting that took place on 18 November 1962. The Chinese launched their attack with approximate 1,000 troops; intense artillery and mortar shelling preceded the attack. The gallant Kumaonese fought almost to the last man and the last round, inflicting approximately 300 casualties on the Chinese. Nine Other Ranks were the only survivors from the company. The Company Commander, all JCOs and 114 Other Ranks laid down their lives in the defence of the post.

Chushul was revisited by Brigadier TN Raina, Maha Vir Chakra, accompanied by Commander 114 Infantry Brigade, Commanding Officer 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment and other officers of the Brigade on 11 and 12 February 1963 in connection with the collection of dead bodies. Ninety-six bodies were recovered from Rezang La and 26 bodies from Gurung Hill. The battlefield was littered with empty shells, heavy mortar blinds and countless machine gun and small arms fired cases. This bore testimony to the bloody fight that took place there. The brave soldiers were all found in their trenches still clutching their weapons including hand grenades. Broken light machine gun tripods and soldiers holding the butts of their rifles, gave mute evidence of their determination. All casualties bore multiple bullet and splinter wounds.

The deeds of valour and bravery of these gallant men who laid down their lives will live forever in the annals of military history as a shining example of all that is best in a soldier. It shall be said of them, "They died with their boots on". Two imposing memorials were constructed to honour those who died at Chushul. On the memorial of 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment is aptly written:

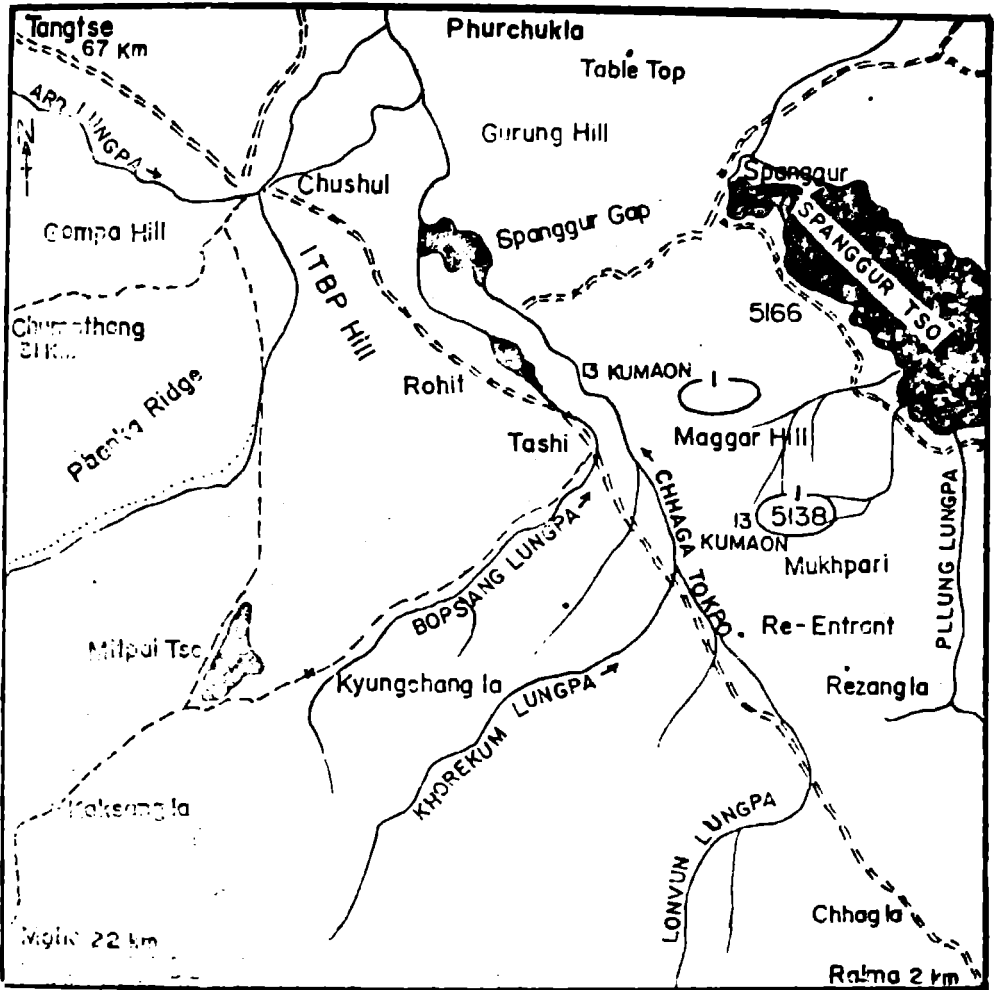
"HOW CAN A MAN DIE BETTER
THAN FACING FEARFUL ODDS
FOR THE ASHES OF HIS FATHERS
AND THE TEMPLES OF HIS GOD".

Action At Magar Hill

Magar Hill was held by 'B' and 'D' Companies of 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment. The position was well prepared with an anti-personnel minefield around it. The position was subjected to heavy artillery and mortar fire on 18 and 19 November 1962. On 19 November, after the fall of Gurung Hill, orders were issued to these companies to withdraw to the re-entrant as there were chances of the Chinese cutting them off from Gurung Hill and Mukhpari. As the withdrawal commenced, they saw some 700 Chinese forming up to attack Magar Hill. By first light 20 November 1962, 13th Battalion The Kumaon Regiment less 'C' Company completed their concentration in the re-entrant. The situation on 19 November was as follows:

- Rezang La had fallen on 18 November and the Chinese were seen rushing troops in strength from Mukhpari with a view to encircle and cut off Magar Hill.
- Neutral Hill (Point 5166) was also occupied by the Chinese and they were pressing hard south and southwest towards Magar Hill.
- Gurung Hill was captured by 1530 hours on 19 November 1962 and the Chinese were rushing their troops south in an attempt to cut off troops at Spanggur Gap and Magar Hill.

The Brigade also re-organised its defences by first light



Not to scale

Reorganisation Of Defences

20 November 1962 with a battalion each on Gampa Hill, ITBP Hill and the hill astride Tsaka La. The Brigade Headquarters was located on Phanka Ridge. On 21 November 1962 a ceasefire was declared.

CONCLUSION

On 20 November 1962 the Chinese suddenly put a halt to their offensive and declared a unilateral ceasefire. The Chinese proclaimed that:

- In the eastern sector, they would withdraw to 20 km north of the McMahon Line.
- In the middle and western sectors, they would withdraw 20 km from the line of actual control.

At the initiative of the then Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, six Afro-Asian countries, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ghana, UAR and Sri Lanka met at Colombo between 10 and 12 December 1962 to bring about a mutual agreement between India and China in a bid to settle the border dispute.

INTER WAR PERIOD 1963 – 1964

In the aftermath of the debacle with the Chinese, the Division occupied itself with introspection and intensive training. Raised in the midst of war, this period was utilised to help the Division stabilise along with its units so as to become a homogeneous entity.

Soon after the war, many changes took place in November 1962:

- Headquarters D Sector, which was raised at Partappur on 24 October 1962 and became responsible for command of all troops in Shyok Valley and Sub Sector North was re-designated as Partappur Sector in November 1962.

- Headquarters 114 Infantry Brigade moved from Chushul to Darbuk and later to Tangtse.
- Re-appraisals and re-deployment of formations was done.

Headquarters 3 Artillery Brigade having been raised on 4 March 1963 at Srinagar moved to Leh in May-June 1963.



Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru
addressing the troops



Column on the move



Evacuation of casualties

4

1965-1970

1965 OPERATIONS IN KARGIL AND TURTOK SECTORS

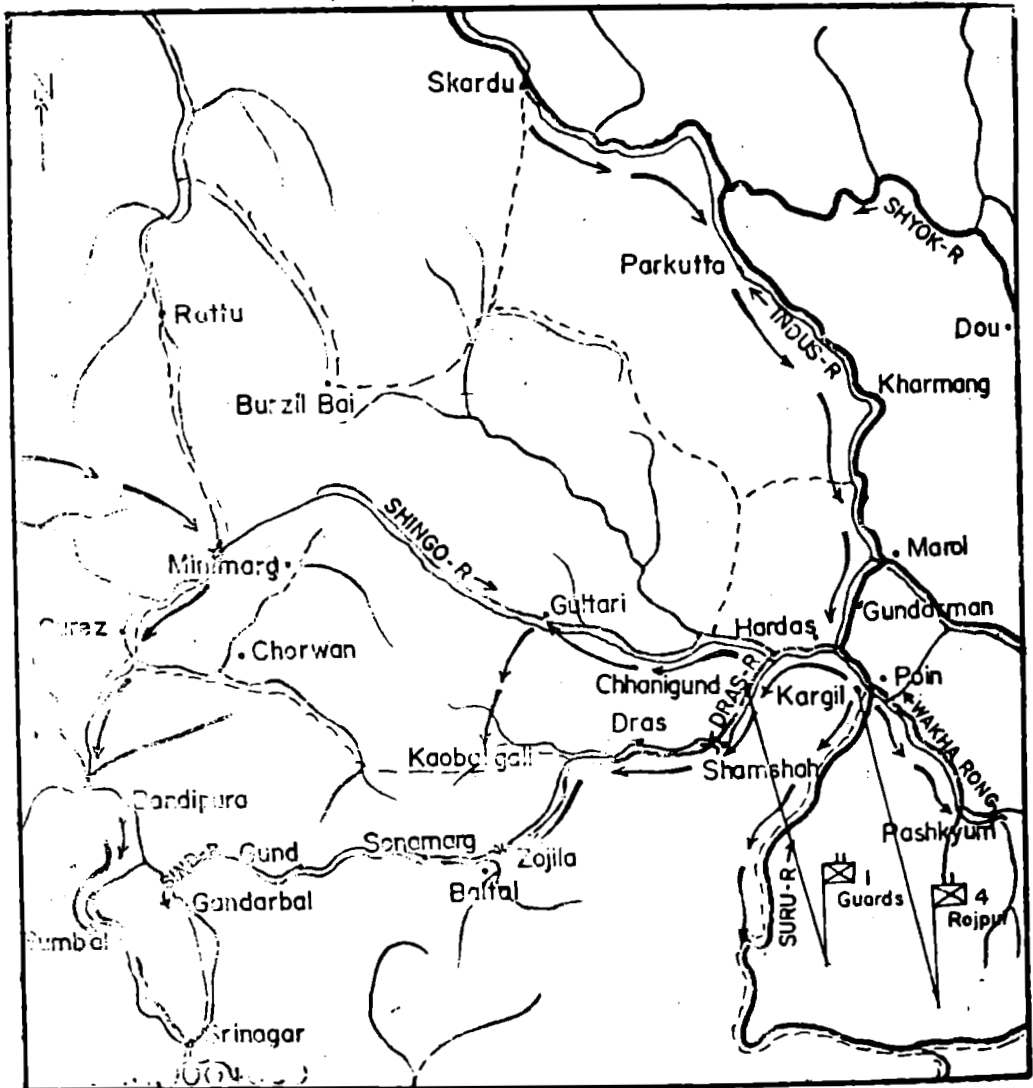
KARGIL SECTOR

SITUATION

The 1947-48 war between India and Pakistan had come to an end with the acceptance of an UN Resolution and simultaneous ceasefire on all fronts. 77 Parachute Brigade which was in charge of operations in the Kargil Sector was moved out leaving one of its battalions to look after the entire sector. The untimely ceasefire curtailed Indian ambitions of achieving all their objectives. There were a number of features of strategic and tactical importance still under the control of Pakistan. The most important such feature in Kargil Sector was Point 13,620,

which dominated the National Highway, Kargil Garrison and Brigade Headquarters, both by fire and observation.

In June 1951, the Kargil Garrison was established under Colonel K Bhag Singh and came directly under 19 Infantry Division, earlier known as Sri Division. The area of responsibility included the entire Ladakh District.



Not to scale 1:50,000 302 km

Kargil Operations 1999

In October 1952, the Kargil Garrison was reorganised as Able Garrison; Charlie Garrison at Leh and Quebec Garrison at Dras were under Able Garrison.

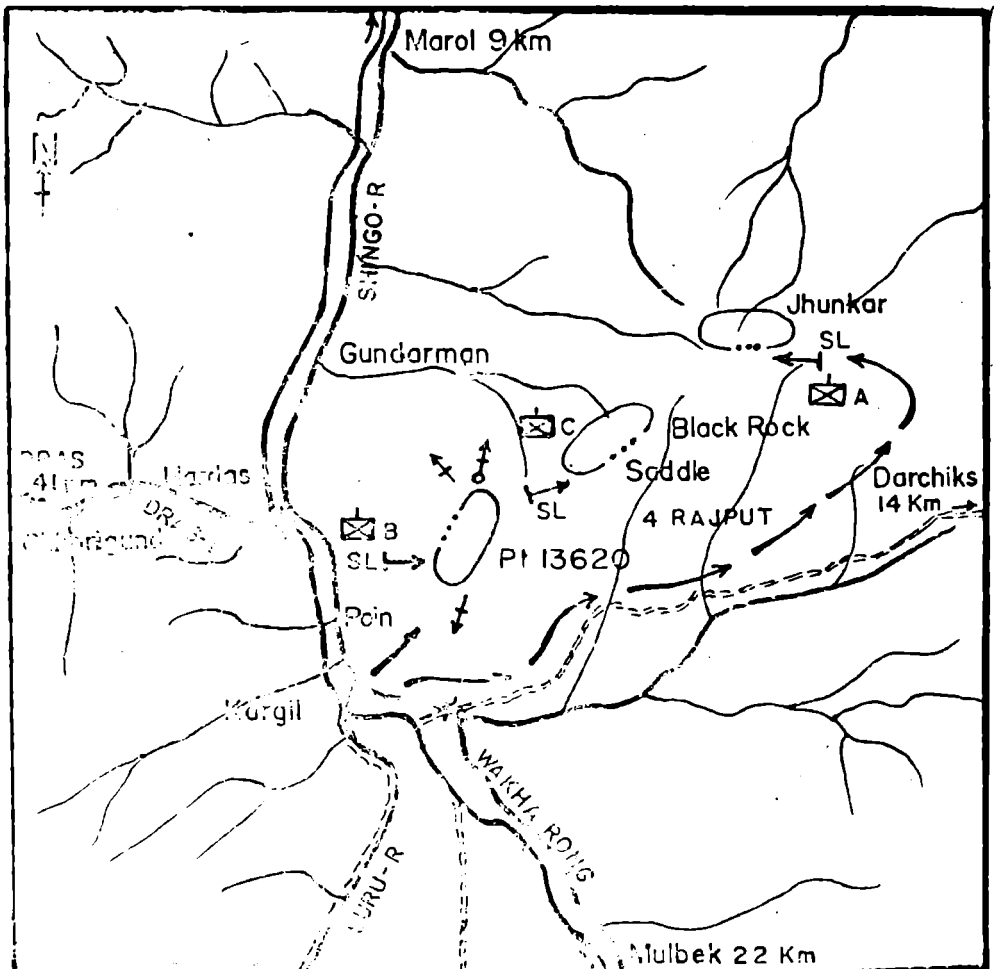
In September 1956, Able and Charlie Garrisons were reorganised as 121 Infantry Brigade. In 1960, 114 Infantry Brigade was inducted into eastern Ladakh to counter the Chinese threat. On 1 April 1965, 121 Infantry Brigade was reorganised as 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group. The Order of Battle of 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group, as in 1965 consisted of 1st Battalion The Brigade of The Guards, 17th Battalion The Punjab Regiment, 4th Battalion The Rajput Regiment and 1st Battalion The Jammu and Kashmir Militia.

CAPTURE OF POINT 13,620

After the Kutch adventure, ceasefire violations by Pakistan increased manifold. Point 13,620 which was under Pakistani occupation interdicted the National Highway and dominated the Kargil Garrison. On 6 May 1965, Brigadier VK Ghai, the then Commander 121 Infantry Brigade ordered 4th Battalion The Rajput Regiment to capture Point 13,620, Saddle and Black Rock on night 16/17 May 1965.

Intensive patrolling undertaken by 4 RAJPUT revealed that the Pakistanis had laid mines along all approaches, nallas and spurs. Their deployment was as follows:

- A platoon plus one section at Point 13,620. In addition there was a section of 3-inch mortar and a section Medium Machine Gun.
- A platoon minus one section at Saddle.
- A platoon plus one section at Black Rock.



Not to scale

Capture of Point 13,620

Plan

The attack was to be launched in two phases:

- **Phase 1.** Capture Point 13,620 with 'B' Company using the southwest approach. A simultaneous attack was to be launched by 'A' Company to capture Black Rock using the east - northeastern approach.
- **Phase 2.** Capture of Saddle by 'C' Company.
- The H Hour was planned at 0230 hours on 17 May 1965.

Execution

- **Capture of Point 13,620.** The approach to the Forming Up Place (FUP) was along a narrow spur that was barely 100 metres short of the objective. 'B' Company led by Major BS Randhawa reached the FUP at 0145 hours. Hence the H Hour was advanced by half an hour to 0200 hours. The attack achieved complete surprise and 'B' Company pounced upon the Pakistanis resulting in a hand to hand fight. Major BS Randhawa, the Company Commander was fatally wounded while clearing a Light Machine Gun bunker. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Sudarshan Singh regrouped the Company and neutralised the remaining resistance on the objective. Point 13,620 was captured by 0330 hours on 17 May 1965.

- **Capture of Black Rock.** 'A' Company under Major DP Nayar took the eastern - northeast approach for capture of Black Rock. The approach was difficult and steep, with determined Pakistanis sitting on the objective. However, the Company overcame all odds and Black Rock was captured by 0415 hours on 17 May 1965.
- **Capture of Saddle.** Phase 2 of the attack was launched by 'C' Company through Point 13,620 to capture Saddle. The Company, led by Major Chhetri, maintained the momentum of attack. After a fierce fight, the objective was captured by 0930 hours on 17 May 1965.

The casualties suffered by Pakistani troops during this attack were two Officers and 14 Other Ranks killed while one Officer, one JCO and 39 Other Ranks were wounded. 4 RAJPUT suffered one Officer, two JCOs and nine Other Ranks killed while two Officers, one JCO and 50 Other Ranks were wounded.

A total of 10 gallantry awards were given during this battle including one Maha Vir Chakra, three Vir Chakras, one Shaurya Chakra and five Mention in Despatches.

An agreement was reached on 29 June 1965 under the auspices of the UNO, whereby Point 13,620 was handed back to Pakistan, (UN observers were then located at Skardu and Kargil to monitor the sanctity of the Cease Fire Line).

CAPTURE OF KALA PAHAR

After the capture of Point 13,620 complex, Pakistan could no longer dominate the National Highway. As expected, it was looking for some other dominating height from where it could interdict the National Highway. Hence, the Pakistanis occupied Kala Pahar complex. Their presence was reported by a patrol of 1 J&K Militia in May 1965. This illegal encroachment was reported to the UN observers stationed at Kargil. The UN observers showed their helplessness in getting Kala Pahar vacated by Pakistan. Hence, it was decided to capture Kala Pahar. On 31 May 1965, 1 GUARDS was moved from Leh to accomplish this task.

Reconnaissance And Preparation

A number of patrols were sent out to gain information about Pakistani dispositions, which were:

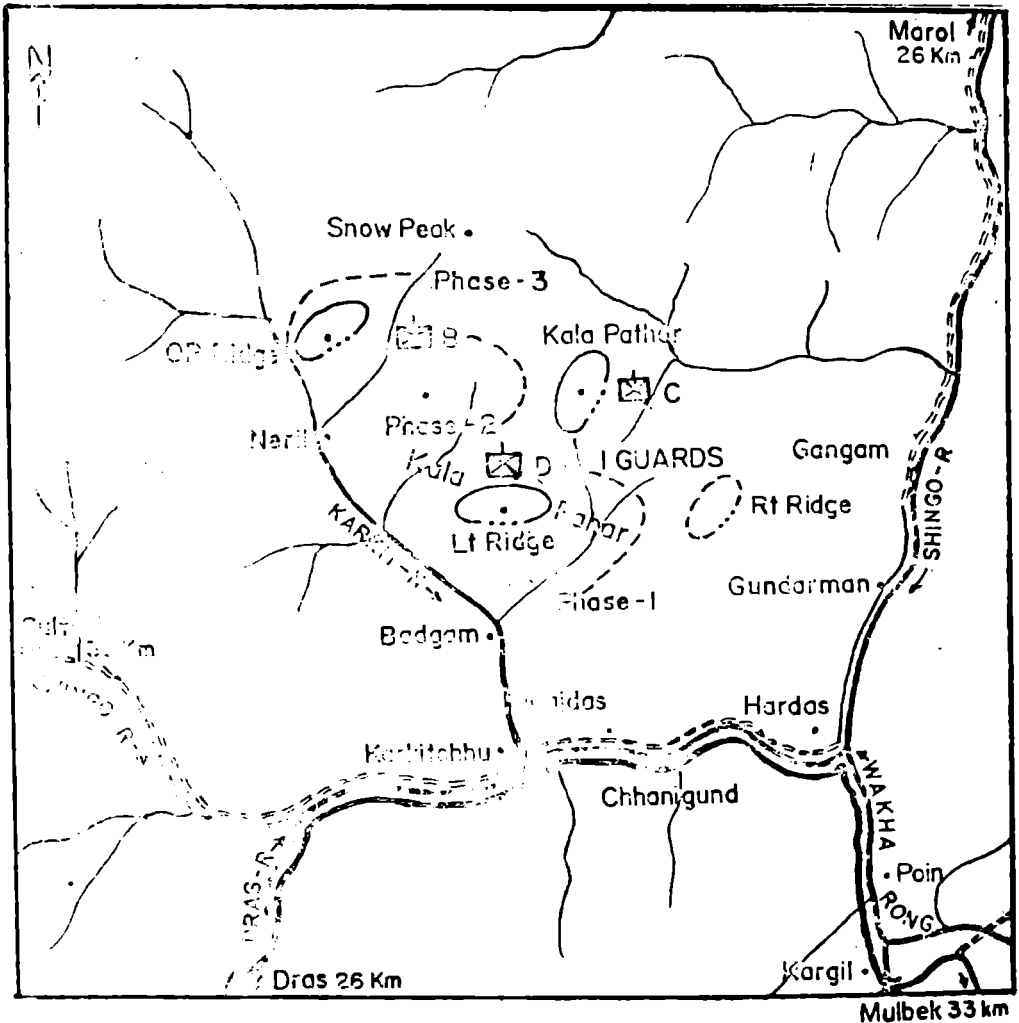
- One platoon at Kala Pahar.
- One platoon at Left Ridge.
- One platoon at OP Ridge.

Plan

The Battalion arrived at village Hardas by last light on 2 June 1965. The firm base was Right Ridge, which was cleared of a Pakistani protective patrol as part of the preliminary operations. The plan of attack was as follows:

- Phase 1. 'C' Company to capture Kala Pahar.
- Phase 2. 'D' Company to capture Left Ridge.
- Phase 3. 'B' Company to capture OP Ridge.

The H Hour for Phase 1 was 0230 hours on 5 June 1965.



Not to scale

Capture of Kala Pahar

Execution

The start line was crossed as planned at 0230 hours under covering fire from artillery and mortars. 'C' Company kept advancing onto the objective undeterred by the heavy volume of Pakistani fire. Fighting continued for approximately two hours and finally at 0545 hours Kala Pahar was captured. In Phase 2, 'D' Company assaulted Left Ridge and despite stiff resistance, captured it by 0730 hours. In Phase 3, 'B' Company passed through 'D' Company and captured OP Ridge by 0830 hours.

As a follow up of the capture of Kala Pahar, it was decided to exploit success. Hence a company of 1 J&K Militia, which was located at Dras, was tasked to occupy Snow Peak. This was done without any interference from the Pakistanis.

This action saw heavy casualties on both sides. Pakistan suffered fourteen dead and 50 wounded while 1 GUARDS suffered seven dead and 44 wounded.

OPERATION "GIBRALTAR"

The Tariq Force of the Pakistan Army was made responsible for operations in 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group Sector. This force was raised by Headquarters Northern Scouts at Skardu in May/June 1965. The force consisted mainly of Mujahids and personnel drawn from the Karakoram Scouts. It

was composed of six company columns with Captains of the regular army as their Company Commanders.

Conduct

- A column went along the Suru River and destroyed the suspension bridge at Kunare, which lay 25 km south of Kargil.
- One column operated along Wakha Rong and damaged the Pashkyum Bridge.
- A column operated between Kargil and Dras and damaged Samsha Bridge.
- One column operated between Dras and Zojila and attacked the Border Roads Camp located at Dras, killing four personnel. They also damaged the Minimarg Bridge.
- One beefed-up column of approximately 300 men infiltrated through Gultari and established its base at Sibal Jungle on road Baltal - Sonamarg. It destroyed the Sonamarg Bridge.
- One column infiltrated from Minimarg through Kaobulgali and Gujran west of Zojila. It damaged the Sumbal Bridge and thereafter raided the Government Sheep Farm, the powerhouse and water works at Gundarbal.

Destruction Of Infiltrators. 163 Infantry Brigade at Leh was moved to the Kashmir Valley to effectively deal with these infiltrators. They continuously harassed and raided the hideouts and bases of the infiltrators. Ultimately, the infiltrating columns broke up into smaller groups and ex-filtrated back across the Cease Fire Line into Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

Reaction Against Infiltration. The intention of the massive infiltration campaign launched by Pakistan became clear within a week or two of its launch. Hence, it was decided to seal all the entry and exit points along the Cease Fire Line. As part of this strategy to deal with infiltration, it was decided to recapture Point 13,620 Complex.

Recapture Of Point 13,620. 17 PUNJAB had relieved 4 RAJPUT in the Brigade Sector on 4 August 1965. The Commander tasked Commanding Officer 17 PUNJAB, Lieutenant Colonel Harnam Singh on 14 August 1965 to recapture Point 13,620. The Commanding Officer 17 PUNJAB asked permission to launch his attack on the same very night to achieve maximum surprise. The Commander reluctantly gave permission.

Information from previous patrol reports and operations at the Forward Defended Localities was compiled. It was assessed that Point 13,620 was unoccupied, however, the Pakistanis regularly patrolled it during daytime.

Major Balwant Singh, 'D' Company Commander was tasked to capture Point 13,620. He was given an additional platoon along with support elements. The plan for capture of Point 13,620 was as follows:

- One platoon to capture Point 13,620 from south.
- One platoon to capture Saddle from southeast direction.
- One platoon to capture Black Rocks from east.
- One platoon reserve - located southeast of Saddle.
- The H Hour was planned at 0001 hours on 15 August 1965.

The attack went as planned. It was a silent attack and 'D' Company did not encounter any opposition. All the objectives were occupied and the success signal was given at 0530 hours on 15 August 1965.

After the ceasefire and Tashkent Agreement in 1966, Point 13,620 was once again handed over to Pakistan. During the handing over of these pickets it was revealed that 17 PUNJAB were lucky to have launched their attack on night 14/15 August 1965. Thus a timely decision by Commanding Officer 17 PUNJAB resulted in avoiding casualties.

TURTOK SECTOR

The Pakistanis who were receiving a severe mauling at the hands of the Indian Army in the Kargil Sector did not make the first move in this sector, as a matter of policy. All the same, the Ladakh Scouts were put on the alert during the period of the war, ready to wrest from the Pakistanis the strategically important Chalunka-Turtok area held by them. As an interesting sideline to the planned counter offensive action in the Nubra Valley was the re-raising of the Nubra Guards by Major C Rinchen, Mahavir Chakra, Sena Medal under orders of the Sector Commander, Colonel TS Kapur.

Although the Ladakh Scouts could not be put to test in the Indo-Pak War of 1965, their usefulness was never in doubt. In September 1965, two more companies of the Ladakh Scouts were raised and designated as 'J' and 'K' Companies. The two companies were added to the four Ladakh Scouts companies already deployed in the Indus Sector. One of these companies was subsequently reorganised into the Support Company in April 1970. The Battalion Headquarters was shifted from Phyang near Leh to Partappur in Nubra Valley in 1966.

1966 - 1970: ANOTHER BREAK

The Division devoted the period from 1966 to 1970 to training so as to make it fit for executing the tasks that might be

allotted to it in any future war. There were many hindrances in the way of training arising from the operational commitments. However, at the end of the year 1970, commanders at all levels could feel gratified with the results that they had achieved. Little did they know then that they would soon be able to reap the fruits of their labour in another Indo-Pak War, that was just round the corner.

163 Infantry Brigade left the Division in April 1966.



Visit of Army Commandar

5

1971-1983

1971 OPERATIONS IN KARGIL SECTOR

GENERAL SITUATION

From 1965 onwards, 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group was tasked to defend Dras and Kargil. To carry out its tasks the Brigade had five battalions i.e.: 7th Battalion The Brigade of Guards, 18th Battalion The Punjab Regiment, 2nd Battalion The 11th Gorkha Rifles, 9th and 13th Battalions The Jammu and Kashmir Militia. However, in view of the national highway road Srinagar-Leh, remaining closed for almost seven months in a year, the Brigade was placed under command of 3 Infantry Division for operational purposes from 1971 onwards.

Later re-adjustments were carried out to create a viable brigade reserve of three battalions less two companies

comprising of 7 GUARDS, 18 PUNJAB less two companies and 2/11 GR. The Brigade, from its hitherto purely defensive role, was now poised for an offensive role.

OVERALL PAKISTANI DEPLOYMENT IN THE SECTOR

- Company occupying Posts 7 (WARCHA), 8 (GOLA), 9 (FEROZ) and 10 (BELLUR).
- Platoon at Sherquilla (Post 11).
- Company minus a platoon at Camel's Back, Black Rocks and Post No. 12.
- Company at Point 13,620 complex including Saddle and Post 15.
- Company occupying Posts 16 (BABDALI), 17 (CHAND), 18 (KISTI).
- Company stretching from Posts 19 (MUJAHID), 20 (TARIQ), 21 (CHAMELI), 22, 23 AND 24 (JAHANGIR).
- One company in area Brachil Pass holding Posts 25 (BULBUL), 26 (WALI), 27 (BAHAR), 28 (HAMID), 29 (GHORA), 30 (PANI), 31 (PATHAR) and 32 (CHECK POST).
- Wing Headquarters was located at Olthingthang.

Pakistan was well prepared. All posts had been well stocked with ammunition and rations. Extensive minefields had been laid on all likely approaches.

Our units that participated in the operations were:

- **Infantry**

- 7 GUARDS.
- 18 PUNJAB.
- 2/11 GR.
- 5/3 GR (Divisional Reserve).
- 9 J&K Militia.
- 13 J&K Militia.

- **Artillery**

- 87 Light Regiment.
- 101 Field Battery from 15 Field Regiment.

- **Engineers**

- 74 (Independent) Field Company.
- 298 Field Company.

- **Signals**

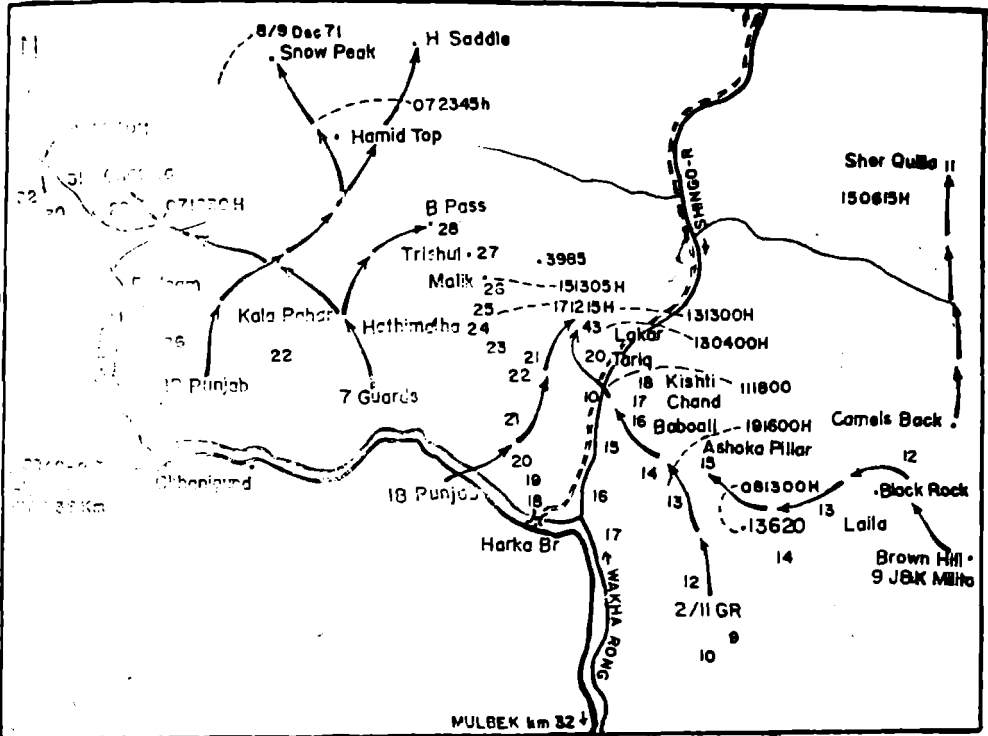
- 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Signal Company.
- 2 Company J Communication Zone Signal Regiment.

Our deployment prior to the commencement of the offensive was:

- 7 GUARDS - Post 22.
- 18 PUNJAB - Battalion less two companies at Posts 22, 26. Two companies were at Post 20.
- 2/11 GR - Battalion less company at own Post 12, company at Post 43.
- 9 J&K Militia - Battalion HQ with company at Post 9, 10, company at Post 17, two companies at Indus Defended Area.
- 5/3 GR - Hel.
- Brigade - Indus Defended Area (ex High Altitude Warfare School).
- 87 Light Regiment less two batteries. - Post 23, Battery - west of Chhanigund.
- 101 Field Battery - Area Harkabahadur Bridge.

PREPARATION STAGE

In anticipation of Pakistan's aggressive intentions, the Brigade had much earlier started preparing for meeting the threat. Limited offensive tasks were also planned. To make the Brigade offensive a success, the mule track from Karkitchu to Post 22 was improved. The road from Harkabahadur Bridge to Post 18 was made class 9. Permanent line routes to Post 18 and 12 were laid. A Brigade forward command post was established



Not to scale

Kargil Sector 1971

at Post 22. An improvised field hospital with sufficient facilities was constructed at Baru. A prisoner of war cage was constructed at Plateau. Exercises were conducted with troops to train them to operate in this hazardous terrain under unfavourable weather conditions. Helicopter flights were arranged for reconnaissance by Commanders down to company level.

CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

7 December 1971

18 PUNJAB was to capture Brachil Pass while 2/11 GR was to capture Post 12. However, the H Hour was staggered. For 18 PUNJAB it was 0015 hours and for 2/11 GR it was 0215 hours.

7 GUARD Post 72



Maj Gen SP Malhotra, PVSM, GOC 3 Infantry Division

18 PUNJAB, better known as "Har Maidan Fateh" was relatively a young Battalion having been raised in 1963. It was tasked with some of the most critical tasks on the west of River Shingo. The primary task was to capture Brachil Pass with Battalion less two companies by 0200 hours on 7 December 1971. The Brachil Pass is a vast hilly complex, comprising of left shoulder, the Pass itself, and the then Pakistani Post Bahar on the right shoulder extending over 1,000 metres. The Pass is at a height of 13,975 feet. The anticipated Pakistani strength was two platoons less two sections but in actual fact it was held by a company less platoon with each platoon having four sections with two sections of Browning Machine Gun (BMG) and a section of 3-inch mortars.

18 PUNJAB less two companies was earmarked for the capture of Brachil Pass. 'C' Company was the assault company while 'A' Company the reserve company. The troops left their assembly area, Kalapahar at 1830 hours on 6 December 1971. It was bitterly cold. The troops finally reached the Forming Up Place (FUP) at 0500 hours. The gallant Punjabis quickly formed up and moved to their objective. Complete surprise was achieved and the attack opened up at 0530 hours. By 1600 hours on 7 December 1971 the entire Pass was cleared of the Pakistanis.

Hamid Post is located on the northwest of Brachil Pass. After the capture of Brachil Pass by the Punjabis, it was

appreciated that no movement could be carried out on the spur or the Pass due to effective interference from Hamid Post. The Post was thinly held by, a platoon less a section, detachment BMG and detachment 3-inch mortar. 'A' Company 18 PUNJAB attacked this post in the early hours of the night of 7 December 1971 and captured it by 2345 hours on the same day.

After the capture of Hamid Post, the Punjabis finding Snow Peak vacant occupied it as well.

After the capture of Brachil Pass, 7 GUARDS was to pass through it and contact Olthingthang. But as there was undue delay and the Pakistanis interfered from adjacent heights, the plan was changed. This Battalion by then had been waiting in the open for a considerable time and was tasked to clear the remaining heights astride Brachil Pass.

After the capture of Brachil Pass by 18 PUNJAB, 7 GUARDS was tasked to hurry and capture Post 29. This Post is located on the spur coming to Karki Chu from Post Hamid. One Company less a platoon of 7 GUARDS was tasked to capture this post which was held by two sections and was captured by 1630 hours on 7 December 1971.

Post 12 is located east of River Shingo at a height of 14,350 feet. 'A' Company 2/11 GR under Major Vetrinathan was ordered to capture Post 12 on night 6/7 December 1971. The attack was supported by two Medium Machine Guns from

Brown Hill. The company concentrated at the assembly areas south of Brown Hill by 0600 hours on 6 December 1971.

The assault was pressed home in the traditional Gorkha form, fighting uphill, and destroying the bunkers with the 57 mm Recoilless Guns. A fierce battle took place for almost three hours. The time was now 0500 hours and the Pakistanis had vacated the lower slopes of Post 12. The Company Commander, Major Vetrinathan, who had volunteered to lead the assault, was in the forefront of the assault and had himself destroyed a bunker with a 57 mm gun, was hit by a burst of Light Machine Gun fire and died instantly. He was awarded a Vir Chakra (posthumously). Major Vetrinathan's death stalled the attack. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel RB Gurung who was just behind the assault company, sensing trouble as dawn was approaching, now chose to lead the assault. 2/11 GR captured Post 12 by 0745 hours on 7 December 1971 and captured Black Rocks by 1645 hours on the same day.

Thus, by 7 December 1971, Brachil Pass, Post Hamid in the west and Post 12 and Black Rocks in the east were captured.

8 December 1971

The Trishul feature located at a height of 14,414 feet dominates the entire area of the Brachil Pass complex. The capture of

this feature was essential for the liquidation of Post Wali and the Hathimatha complex. After some bitter fighting this feature was captured by 7 GUARDS at 0730 hours on 8 December 1971.

These posts located along Karkit Chu were arranged in depth to one another and were basically intended to forestall an advance. The assessed Pakistani strength at each post was:

- Post 30 (Pani) - section plus a few men and a detachment of Medium Machine Gun (MMG).
- Post 31 (Pathar) - two sections.
- Post 32 (Check Post) - platoon less two sections.

The Platoon Commander of Post 26, Naib Subedar Kabul Singh of 18 PUNJAB along with administrative personnel of 7 GUARDS was ordered to move forward. The platoon moved forward and captured these posts by 1140 hours on 8 December 1971.

Post 13 (Laila) is situated on the Saddle formed by the ridges of Black Rocks and Point 13,620. It covers the approach to Point 13,620. The Pakistanis had deployed a section and a detachment of MMG at this post. A patrol of 9 J&K Militia under an Officer was sent on a reconnaissance to verify the location of the firing. Artillery fire was then ordered to create a smoke screen between Post 13 and Post 14 (Point 13,620), which were bringing down heavy fire on the patrol. Seeing the

smoke screen the Pakistanis started pulling out. Remnants of Pakistani troops gallantly resisted capture. However, by sheer guts and the use of hand grenades, the post was finally captured at 0215 hours on 8 December 1971.

History repeats itself, *The Indian Express* of 12 December 1971 writes, "Indian Forces in the Kargil Sector had captured for the third time since 1965 the piquet which dominated the road Kargil to Leh. The fate of this strategically vital post has, in all battles, been tragic. Every time the enemy, despite the best of preparations and fortifications, had failed to hold the post against the onslaught of Indian troops. The enemy was holding Point 13,620 with approximately a company supported by a section each of 3-inch mortar and MMG and one 75 mm Howitzer Gun. 'A' Company of 2/11 GR under Captain Pathania rushed to capture the area, the post was captured by 1300 hours on 9 December 1971".

9 December 1971

Ashoka Pillar is located on the ridge emanating from Point 13,620 towards Gunderman Village. This post was not authorised by the UN Agreement; however, the Pakistanis established this post to dominate our Posts 13 and 14. It could also dominate by observation, the Kargil - Channigund road at certain places. The approach to this post was on an extremely sharp edge and assaulting troops moved in a single

file. 2/11 GR captured the post at 1600 hours on 9 December 1971.

10/11 December 1971

The posts located on the ridge emanating from Ashoka Pillar were echeloned towards the rear. They protected the eastern bank of the Shingo River and were held by Pakistanis as under:

- Post 16 (Babuali) - one section.
- Post 17 - platoon less two sections plus a section of 3-inch mortar.
- Post 18 (Kishti) - one section.

Fleeing Pakistanis from Point 13,620 had reinforced these posts. Our artillery engaged these posts. Pakistani Posts 19, 20 and Lakar, all on the west bank of Shingo River were also pounded so that the assaulting troops were not interfered with. At this stage the divisional reserve was pressed into the battle. 5/3 GR was ordered to capture these posts. Post 16 (Babuali) was captured at 1130 hours and Post 17 at 1645 hours on 11 December 1971. After the fall of these two, the Pakistanis withdrew from Post 18 and it too was cleared by 1800 hours on 11 December 1971.

The Pakistanis had fortified Point 3985 well, and two sections supported by a section of MMG held it. 7 GUARDS

who were tasked to capture Point 3985 met with stiff resistance. After bitter fighting the feature was captured during night 10/11 December 1971 and all interference to Brachil Pass ceased. At this stage a column was sent under the Commanding Officer of 18 PUNJAB towards Hardayal Saddle.

12/13 December 1971

The posts located on the west bank of River Shingo covered the main axis Gangam-Olthingthang. Extensive minefields and wire obstacles had been laid and the posts were held as follows:

- Post 19 (Mujahid) - two sections plus a section of MMG.
- Post 20 (Tariq) - platoon less section supported by a detachment of MMGs and mortars.
- Lakar Post - one section.
- Post 43 (Company Headquarters) - Company Headquarter with platoon less two sections.

The Pakistanis doggedly defended these posts in spite of heavy artillery fire. 5/3 GR commenced their advance at 1700 hours on 12 December 1971, and reached FUP at 2345 hours. Tariq was captured at 0045 hours and Post 19 (Mujahid) at 0245 hours; Lakar fell at 0400 hours on 13 December 1971. The capture of Post 43 was completed by 1300 hours by 'B' Company of 18 PUNJAB, which had been placed under command of 5/3 GR.

14/15 December 1971

Post 26 (Wali) and Malik were located along narrow and sharp ridges and were inter-connected. There was no information about Malik being held by the Pakistanis. Post Wali was known to be held by a platoon supported by a section of 3-inch mortar. But it appeared that the post had been reinforced by another platoon. After last light, 'D' Company of 18 PUNJAB marched forward hugging the Trishul feature. The post was captured at 1400 hours on 15 December 1971. Another attack had to be launched to clear the remaining position of Post Malik and the operation was completed by 1305 hours on 15 December 1971.

Post 11 (Sherquilla) lies in the vicinity of Jhunkar feature. The Pakistani dispositions were:

- Post 11 (Listening Post - LP) - one section.
- Post 11 (Sherquilla) - two platoons less section plus a section of MMG and 3-inch mortar.

Two companies of 9 J&K Militia were given the task of capturing this post. Post 11 (LP) was to be neutralised before negotiating Post 11. The Pakistanis put up a very strong fight, but at last gave in and Post 11 was captured at 0015 hours on 15 December 1971.

16/17 December 1971

Pakistanis were still holding out at the Hathimatha complex. Encircled by our troops, these posts bravely stuck to their guns till the last man was killed. They were in company strength supported by MMGs and 3-inch mortars. Mines had been laid along the approaches around these posts. It was impossible to capture these posts from any direction except from the rear. Two companies of 18 PUNJAB were tasked to capture it, but when not found possible, a siege was ordered to deny the Pakistanis their water source and route of withdrawal. 5/3 GR was then ordered to move from the rear and it was finally captured at 1215 hours on 17 December 1971.

CEASEFIRE

Our troops were gaining momentum for a big offensive. Their line of defence had been shattered and the Pakistanis were in a state of confusion. But to the surprise of our Commanders, the ceasefire came a little too early. Unilateral ceasefire was ordered on the western front with effect from 2000 hours on 17 December 1971. This brought operations in Kargil to an end. Area-wise the Brigade had snatched 110 sq km from Pakistan occupation.

1971 OPERATIONS IN TURTOK SECTOR

GENERAL SITUATION

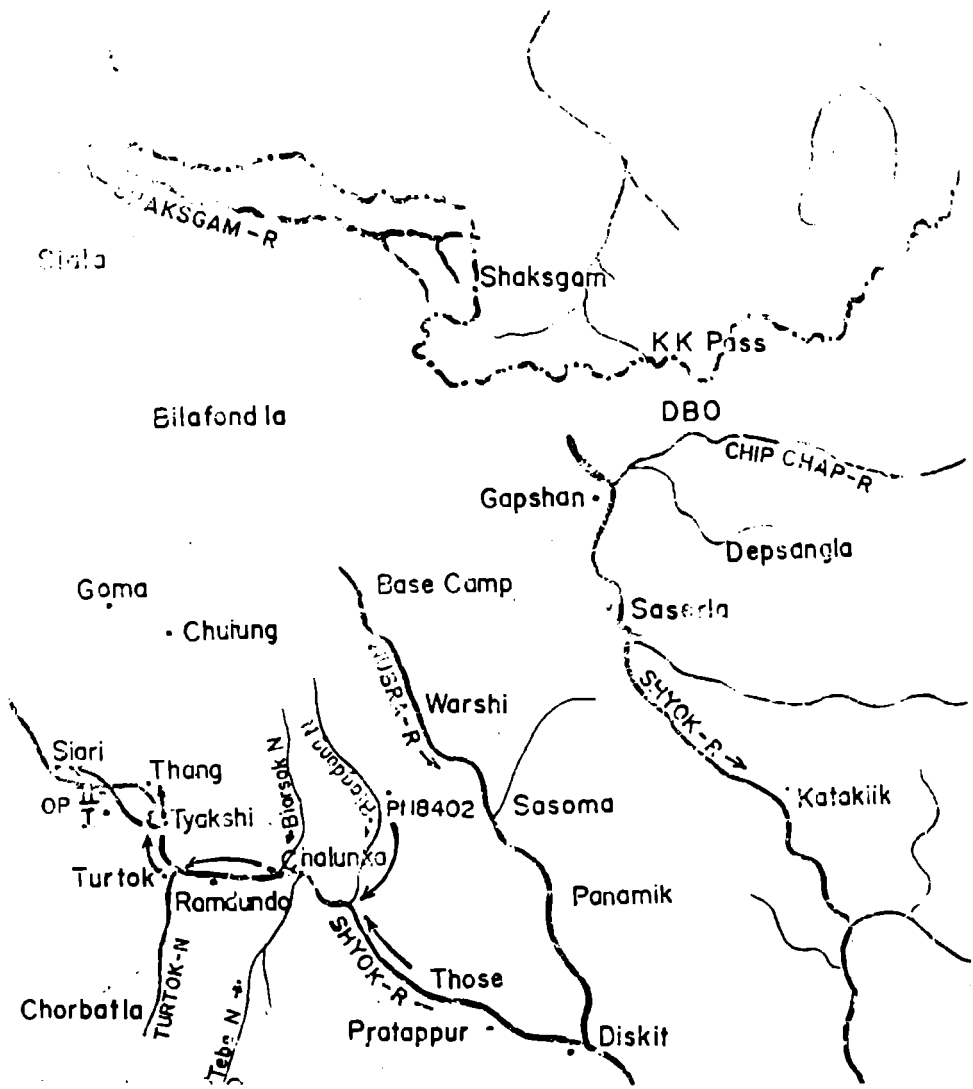
The Nubra Valley, besides being the biggest sub division of Ladakh, is important strategically. It has common borders with China in the north, Tibet in the northeast and Pakistan in the west. The old trade routes from India to Yarkand (Central Asia) via Leh passed through this Valley touching Panamik and Sasoma and going over the Saser La and Karakoram Pass. It is because of its strategic importance that Pakistan has always shown interest in the Nubra Valley.

In 1948 when the Valley was poorly defended, due to the paucity of troops in the region, the Pakistanis had, as brought out in the first chapter, occupied a good portion of it. On arrival of our troops they were pushed back to Biagdangdo, and a little beyond to the Tebe Nala. Although, the Nubra Valley had as such been cleared of Pakistanis before the ceasefire, they continued to hold positions across the ceasefire line that dominated the Valley, maintaining their potential for committing aggression in the Valley. The strategy for the defence of the Nubra Valley, therefore, revolved around gaining control of these dominating positions. It had, in fact, been planned to capture this area of Baltistan during the 1965 War, but only in case Pakistan started hostilities in this sector. This plan could not be implemented, as Pakistan did not oblige by making the first move. Plans for the capture of Point 18,402,

and the Pakistani defence complex around Chalunka and Turtok, were set into motion as soon as Pakistan set off the war with a pre-emptive air attack on Indian airfields on 3 December 1971.

The greatest asset of the Nubra Valley is its people. Physically tough and mentally robust, the people of the Valley have high traditions of valour and sacrifice. Ever since 1947 they have stood firmly behind the Army in the defence of the Valley. In fact, there is not a family in the Nubra Valley that has not provided at least one man either to join the Ladakh Scouts or the Nubra Guards or if nothing else, provide ponies for the Army. There is a saying that "Nothing moves in the Nubra Valley without the Nunoo". Little wonder that it has always been most expedient for the Army to associate the people of the Valley in every operation it conducts. As one of the first steps towards the preparation for the offensive, therefore, the 5,000 strong Nubra Guards were raised and trained by Major C Rinchen, MVC, SM, the expert in such matters.

Operations in the Nubra Valley were to be organised and conducted in the Partappur Sector under Colonel Udai Singh. There were a total of five rifle companies, a support company (consisting of a platoon each of 81 mm mortars and 7.62 mm Medium Machine Guns) and some administrative troops of the Ladakh Scouts under this sector. However, not all these troops were available for operations against Pakistan. Two



Not to scale

Battle Of Turtok 1971

rifle companies with a section of mortars and two sections of Medium Machine Guns were in Umlang area facing the Chinese and as such were not available. The newly raised Nubra Guards were organised into four companies - the Karakoram, Saser, Remo and the Saltoro Companies and were employed for occupying positions in depth, holding firm bases and standing static guard duties to allow the maximum

number of the Ladakh Scouts in the sector to take part in the offensive operations.

CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

The period from 3rd to 6th December was utilised for the re-organisation of troops earmarked for the offensive, their concentration at the Biagdangdo Nala and intensive patrolling of the forward areas to gain and confirm information regarding Pakistani strength, dispositions and the routes leading to their positions. By 7 December, when the green signal for the commencement of operations was received, the disposition of the troops in the Nubra Valley was as follows:

- Headquarters Partappur Sector - Thoise.
- 'D' Company Ladakh Scouts with one section each of mortars and Medium Machine Guns - Post No. 6.
- 'G' and 'K' Companies Ladakh Scouts - Biagdangdo Nala.
- Karakoram Company Nubra Guards - Biagdangdo Nala.
- Saser Company Nubra Guards - Post No. 9.
- Remo Company Nubra Guards - Thoise.
- Salto Company Nubra Guards - Diskit.
- Sector Rover Group - Post No. 7.

From the information received through patrols and other sources, the Pakistani strength and dispositions were assessed as:

- Area 'V' Point, Point 18,402 and Old Post - One platoon.
- Area Chalunka - Company less two platoons.
- Area Check Post (CP) and Observation Post (OP-1) - Two platoons with one section each of mortar and medium machine guns.

7/8 December 1971

The opposition actually encountered during the operations was, however, much more and turned out to be something like two companies. The whole operation had been planned to be carried out in four phases. In the first phase 'V' Point, Point 18,402 and Old Post were to be captured by 'G' Company by first light on 8 December 1971. The second phase was to be the capture of Chalunka by 'K' and 'G' Companies (less one platoon each) and two platoons Nubra Guards, while in the third phase, area Check Post and Observation Posts 1 and 2 was to be captured by 'D' Company. The last phase consisted of the advance up to and securing of Turtok by two companies less one platoon, which were to be detailed later.

On 7 December 1971 at 1500 hours, the assaulting column under Major C Rinchen, MVC, SM moved towards the first objective along Biagdangdo Nala with 'G' Company commanded by Major SS Ahluwalia, in the lead. Point 18,402 is the highest feature north of Shyok River and dominates the track from Biagdangdo to Turtok. It is a massive feature running

east to west with spurs running west and descending to the Shyok River and the Chalunka Complex. The point from where these spurs originate is in the form of a 'V' and thus referred to as 'V' Point. Approximately, one thousand feet below Point 18,402 and to the east of it, another spur leads on to the Biagdangdo Nala. Not more than a section can be deployed along this narrow spur. The going is also difficult due to the gradient of the slope; the residual snow made this worse at the time of operations.

The column moved along the Biagdangdo Nala following a zigzag route along the snow covered eastern spur. Despite this, the leading platoon under Naib Subedar C Angdus reached the selected Forming Up Place - approximately 400 metres short of 'V' Point at 0300 hours on 8 December, in time for launching a dawn attack. However, on probing further, 'V' point did not need an attack, as it was not defended. But as 'G' Company was reorganising for the next move, it came under heavy automatic and 2-inch mortar fire from Point 18,402. Major Ahluwalia, now finding it difficult to assault Point 18,402 from the south, decided to lead a column himself (eighteen men) from the east. This small column commenced its arduous move at 0400 hours and climbed almost a vertical face for the first 150 yards, (which the 'Nunoos' alone could have done). They were at the Pakistanis by 0630 hours. The Pakistanis were taken completely by surprise and after a brief fight deserted the post. Five Pakistani soldiers were killed and

one was captured at the cost of just three of the Ladakh Scouts wounded. With the capture of Point 18,402 the Ladakh Scouts created history by becoming the first troops in the world to assault and capture an enemy held piquet at such a height. Major SS Ahluwalia was awarded the Vir Chakra for his gallant action.

The remaining part of the day was then utilised in patrolling to gain information about the Old Post, which now remained to be captured before the completion of the first phase of the operation.

9 December 1971

At 1830 hours on 8 December 1971, 'K' Company under Major YS Thapa moved down from Point 18,402 towards Old Post. Old Post was located on the western spur of Point 18,402, leading towards Chalunka Complex. After the capture of 'V' Point and Point 18,402 the Old Post had been subjected to heavy mortar fire and some of the Pakistanis had even been seen leaving the position. However, heavy fighting ensued when 'K' Company made contact with them at about 0430 hours on 9 December and it was only by about 0800 hours that day that the locality could be captured. A large quantity of ammunition and 45 sets of extreme cold climate clothing fell into the hands of the Ladakh Scouts. The Ladakh Scouts fortunately suffered no casualties despite the fact that they had overcome the opposition of about two platoons of the

Pakistanis holding a developed defensive position. With the capture of Old Post the first phase of the offensive was now completed.

Meanwhile, Captain NK Kalia with a platoon from 'D' Company had been assigned the task of capturing Tebe Nala Observation Post by first light on 9 December 1971.

He started from Post No 6 and crossed the Shyok River at a previously selected crossing place, where he had kept three improvised rafts. The crossing was affected by 2145 hours on 8 December. He then moved tactically along a route that he had reconnoitred as early as 4 December. The going was difficult due to rocks and the residual snow on them. He reached the vicinity of the Pakistani position by about 0400 hours on 9 December. However, on assaulting the position with his platoon he found it abandoned.

After the capture of Old Post, reconnaissance patrols were sent towards Chalunka to gain information about the dispositions there. The Chalunka feature is located north of Shyok River. It is an 'L' shaped feature running along Biarsok Nala and Shyok River, west of the confluence. The village of Chalunka is situated at the confluence itself, north of the Shyok River and extending in a linear fashion along the river. The going is gradual for about 300 metres from Biarsok Nala to the Chalunka feature but thereafter it is almost a vertical climb. The track from the Nala to Chalunka Village runs along this

water channel. After observing the Pakistani defences from a vantage point it was decided to assault Chalunka from the direction of Biarsok Nala.

The assaulting troops, consisted of 'G' Company less one platoon, 'K' Company less one platoon, and a company of the Nubra Guards less one platoon, all under the overall command of Major C Rinchen, MVC, SM. They started moving towards Chalunka at 2200 hours on 9 December 1971. When the column reached near Biarsok Nala - Shyok River confluence, Major C Rinchen realised that it was not possible to assault from the Biarsok Nala. He, therefore, decided to attack from the rear through the Chalunka Village. Major Thapa with his 'K' Company was to enter the village first and 'G' Company under Major SS Ahluwalia was to follow. But hardly had Major Thapa entered the village with ten men when the Pakistanis were alerted and opened fire with Medium Machine Guns from the left and right flanks of Chalunka. This made any move forward impossible. Two Pakistani Medium Machine Guns opened fire from the direction of the Check Post. Immediately our own mortar fire was brought to bear on the Pakistani defences at Chalunka and Check Post but it was unable to neutralise the Medium Machine Guns. The only way to silence the Light / Medium Machine Guns was by stalking up to them and destroying them with grenades. Naib Subedar Chhering Wangdus and Naik Fateh Mohammad volunteered to accomplish this task. Accordingly, two small parties led by

them crawled up to their respective targets and by lobbing hand grenades into the gun positions silenced them for good. The company was now able to move into the village and attack the Chalunka positions from that side. The Ladakh Scouts war cry, "Ki Ki So So Lhargyalao" so shook the Pakistanis that at some places they came out of the trenches and surrendered in a manner not too dignified. The Pakistanis had by this time suffered 14 killed while two JCOs and six Other Ranks were taken prisoner. The booty that fell to the Ladakh Scouts included two Medium Machine Guns, two 2-inch mortars, 18 rifles and large quantities of ammunition, equipment, and rations. Naib Subedar Chhering Wangdus and Naik Fateh Mohammad were awarded Vir Chakras for the valour and courage displayed by them in silencing the Pakistani Light / Medium Machine Guns.

Having completed phase two, the Ladakh Scouts now braced themselves for the third phase, which was the capture of Observation Post 1 and 2 and the Check Post. The feature where Observation Post 1 is located, resembles a helmet and was, therefore, sometimes referred to as Helmet Top. The post was located opposite our Post No. 6, south of Shyok River and dominated the no man's land. To its southwest lay another feature on which was located the Pakistani Observation Post 2, with a sharp ridge connecting the two. The Check Post was located on a flat piece of ground between Helmet Top and the Shyok River.

10 December 1971

In phase three, the two Observation Posts, as described above, were to be captured by 'D' Company commanded by Major SK Singh, from the direction of Observation Post 2. The Check Post was to be captured by 'K' Company from the Chalunka side. The 'D' Company was moved to Tebe Nala Observation Post for its attack on Observation Post 2 only after the former had been captured by Captain NK Kalia. Captain NK Kalia had captured his objective in phase two itself but had not been able to communicate this fact to his Company Commander due to damage to his wireless set. His Veray light pistol also failed to fire the success signal. Captain NK Kalia after waiting for Major SK Singh up till last light on 9 December 1971, decided to launch an attack on Observation Post 2 on his own. He made a difficult and hazardous approach march during the night and reached the vicinity of his objective by first light on 10 December 1971, when he was fired upon by the Pakistanis. Appreciating that a day attack in open country would be difficult, he decided to wait for the night for his attack and utilise the day to reconnoitre the position, which was now being shelled by our mortars from Chalunka. While on reconnaissance, he was able to capture two Pakistani soldiers in an ambush. From the interrogation of these prisoners, Captain NK Kalia could make out that Pakistani morale was at very low ebb. He, therefore, decided to take full advantage of this fact and attacked the post immediately. The

attack went in at about 1200 hours on the 10 December 1971 and the post was captured without much fighting. Ten Pakistani soldiers were taken prisoners. The assault was watched by Major C Rinchen, MVC, SM from Chalunka with relief and joy, as it was the first time since the night of 8 December 1971, that the whereabouts of Captain NK Kalia could be known.

After the capture of Observation Post 2, Captain NK Kalia moved on to Observation Post 1. This post too fell to Captain NK Kalia's platoon at 1600 hours on the same day without much fighting. Major Thapa's 'K' Company now descended on the Pakistani Check Post from the Chalunka side. With Captain NK Kalia's platoon giving covering fire, 'K' Company advanced in a determined manner that evidently further shook the Pakistani morale. Here too, they hastened to surrender and by 1715 hours on 10 December 1971, the Check Post was in our hands. The Company captured 25 prisoners and took two medium machine guns, two 3-inch mortars and ten .303 rifles. With the capture of Check Post, the third phase of the offensive battle was over.

Ever since the commencement of operations on 7 December 1971, the Ladakh Scouts had been operating in extreme cold at heights where no other troops in the world had perhaps ever fought. Due to the continuous exposure of troops to such cold, there were a large number of frostbite casualties. Major SS Ahluwalia, Captain Judge and Captain NK Kalia were among the frostbite cases that had to be

evacuated to General Hospital, Leh for treatment. The Indian Air Force pilots did a commendable job in this regard by operating 70 sorties in 48 hours. The strength of 'G' and 'K' Companies having been greatly depleted due to these casualties, they were now amalgamated to form a composite company of four platoons under Major YS Thapa.

11-13 December 1971

The last phase - capture of Turtok was now planned. Colonel Udai Singh had moved to area Chalunka to supervise the operation. Information gained by patrols indicated that the Pakistanis had established a roadblock near Turtok and that they were preparing to hold Turtok Top with a strength of one platoon. The plan of attack entailed advance by 'D' Company with a section of 81 mm mortars under Major SK Singh, along the south bank of Shyok River to Turtok while the composite company under Major YS Thapa was to move along the north bank to clear that axis.

The advance commenced at 0930 hours on 12 December 1971. The Pakistanis opened fire on 'D' Company when it reached Ramdundo Nala. Consequently, the company established a firm base at the Nala and carried out extensive patrolling during the night 12/13 December 1971. Pakistanis were reported to be hastily preparing defences at Turtok Top. In order not to give them any more time for strengthening their defences, orders were issued for an immediate attack on

both Turtok Village and Turtok Top. The task of capturing Turtok Top was given to Naib Subedar Chhering Wangdus. This daring Junior Commissioned Officer successfully accomplished his task with his platoon and joined his Company in Turtok area at 1800 hours. 'D' Company encircled the village during the night and moved inwards to flush out the Pakistanis. But the Pakistanis had already withdrawn from there. An ambush was laid in Turtok Lungpa with the object of trapping the retreating Pakistanis. One soldier was killed and seven were captured along with their weapons in this ambush. By morning the entire area of Turtok had been rid of the Pakistanis.

14-16 December 1971

Although with the capture of Turtok, the last phase of the operations was over, the Ladakh Scouts did not want to let go an opportunity for making further gains and adding to their glory. Patrols, which had been sent ahead of Turtok revealed that there was no Pakistani between Turtok and Prahnu, where they had taken up a strong defensive position. Orders were, therefore, issued for advance up to Prahnu. Accordingly, Major SK Singh leading a mixed group of 'G', 'K' and 'D' Companies started advancing along the Turtok-Tyakshi-Thank road. Tyakshi was occupied by 2100 hours on 14 December and the Gorkha Ridge was secured on night 15/16 December 1971. From the Gorkha Ridge the advance to Thank, located north of Shyok River, entailed the crossing of the river. This

posed some problem. Although, the River was only two to three feet deep, it was ice-cold and it was not considered advisable to make the men wade through it. Crossing was, therefore, affected with improvised rafts. No Pakistani was found at Thank. According to the locals, who turned out to greet the Ladakh Scouts, the Pakistanis had withdrawn en masse towards Prahnu.

17/18 December 1971

Preparations for the capture of Prahnu were made for night of 17/18 December. But this was not to be. The Ceasefire that became operative from 17 December 1971, brought the hostilities between the two countries to an abrupt end, and with it came an end to the Baltistan operations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main credit for achieving the incredible must go to the 'Nunoo' - the Ladakhi soldier. Most of the handicaps under which the operation was launched, failed to have any effect primarily due to the peculiar characteristics of the 'Nunoo'. It was his characteristic hardiness which enabled him to fight at such high altitudes with meagre snow clothing, subsist on *sattu* for prolonged periods, and generally make do with the little administrative backing that he got during the operations. His astounding skill at climbing mountains gave him the degree

of mobility, which alone could have ensured the capture of such a large area in so short a time. Besides his enthusiasm and determination, his courage and valour helped him to perform much more than what could have been expected of other troops operating in these areas.

The work of the Ladakh Scouts was duly recognised and the Battle of Turtok was awarded to them as a Battle Honour.

The Nubra Guards also earned recognition as under:

- Shri C Targias, Company Commander - Shaurya Chakra.
- Shri S Tandup, Local Hakim - Shaurya Chakra.
- Shri Tashi, Guardsman - Mention-in-Despatches.

Describing these operations, Lieutenant General KP Candeth, PVSM (then Army Commander) remarked, "I doubt any other troops had ever battled in such appalling conditions and it speaks much for the determination, motivation and physical fitness of the troops and their commanders, that they were able to carry out this task so well."

The war ended with the humiliating defeat and surrender of Pakistani forces in the erstwhile East Pakistan. 3 Infantry Division had effectively contributed to the Indian victory and added another chapter of blood and bravery to its glorious history. The Division had captured 36 posts in Kargil Sector and pushed the Pakistanis far enough to ensure uninterrupted use of the Srinagar - Leh highway. In the Partappur Sector,

804 square kilometres of Pakistan occupied real estate was captured by just seven companies of Ladakh Scouts, which routed three Pakistani companies deployed in the area.

The population of Leh, in a rare gesture, organised a public reception on 31 December 1971, in honour of Major General SP Malhotra, the General Officer Commanding of the Division.

1972 TO 1983

There is not much information available on this period. However, there was an intensification of Chinese activities during 1972-73 for a short period. Thereafter, the Division remained engaged in training and mastering of the terrain by sending a number of expeditions to the massive yet majestic mountain ranges in this area.

On 5 May 1979, the Shangri-La Golf Course at Tangtse, the highest in the world, was inaugurated. A tennis court was inaugurated at Leh on 21 March 1982.

55 Artillery Brigade was redesignated as 3 Artillery Brigade on 1 February 1982.

The Karakoram Wing of the Ladakh Scouts was raised on 1 October 1982.

6

1984-1993

OPERATION MEGHDOOT

The Siachen Glacier lies in one of the most inhospitable regions of the world. It is located in the Karakoram Ranges in Ladakh, which contain some of the highest peaks in the world and is one of the most glaciated regions. The Siachen Glacier, 76 kilometres in length and varying in width from 2 to 8 kilometres, is the second longest glacier outside the Polar Region.

Geo-strategically, this area has immense strategic significance. It is the roof of Eurasia and is surrounded by Pakistan, Afghanistan, erstwhile USSR, China and Tibet. To the west of this region lies Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) sprawling towards the Karakorams, under whose shadow lie the Gilgit and Skardu areas. To the east is the Chinese occupied Ladakh, with the Chinese physically holding on to their claim-line. In this region India is, therefore, left with its

territory in the Siachen forming a wedge with the Karakoram Pass as its apex. The Siachen area, almost two-thirds the size of Sikkim, is the only barrier separating the Chinese and Pakistanis.

TERRAIN

The area around Siachen Glacier is mountainous, rugged, precipitous and glacial with heights varying from 12,000 to 24,000 feet. The altitude of the glacial region varies from 12,000 to 18,000 feet with the passes located between 18,000 to 21,000 feet. The heights dominating the passes range from 22,000 to 24,000 feet. There is no vegetation. Whereas larger columns can move only along glaciers, small teams may reach the tops of the heights.

CLIMATE

The area being glacial, high altitude and mountainous, it remains snow bound with sub zero temperatures practically throughout the year. Winter (November to April) temperatures are sub zero throughout and may go as low as minus 40 to 50 degrees Celsius. There is heavy snowfall resulting in a sizeable accumulation of snow, posing an obstacle to movement. In summer (May to October) the day temperatures may go up to 10 to 15 degrees C. The extreme cold conditions prevailing in the area necessitate troops to be deployed in this

area to be equipped with special clothing and equipment to sustain themselves in the environment. Low clouds and fog lead to poor visibility creating problems of navigation, coupled with high velocity winds, especially after mid-day, which makes flying extremely hazardous.

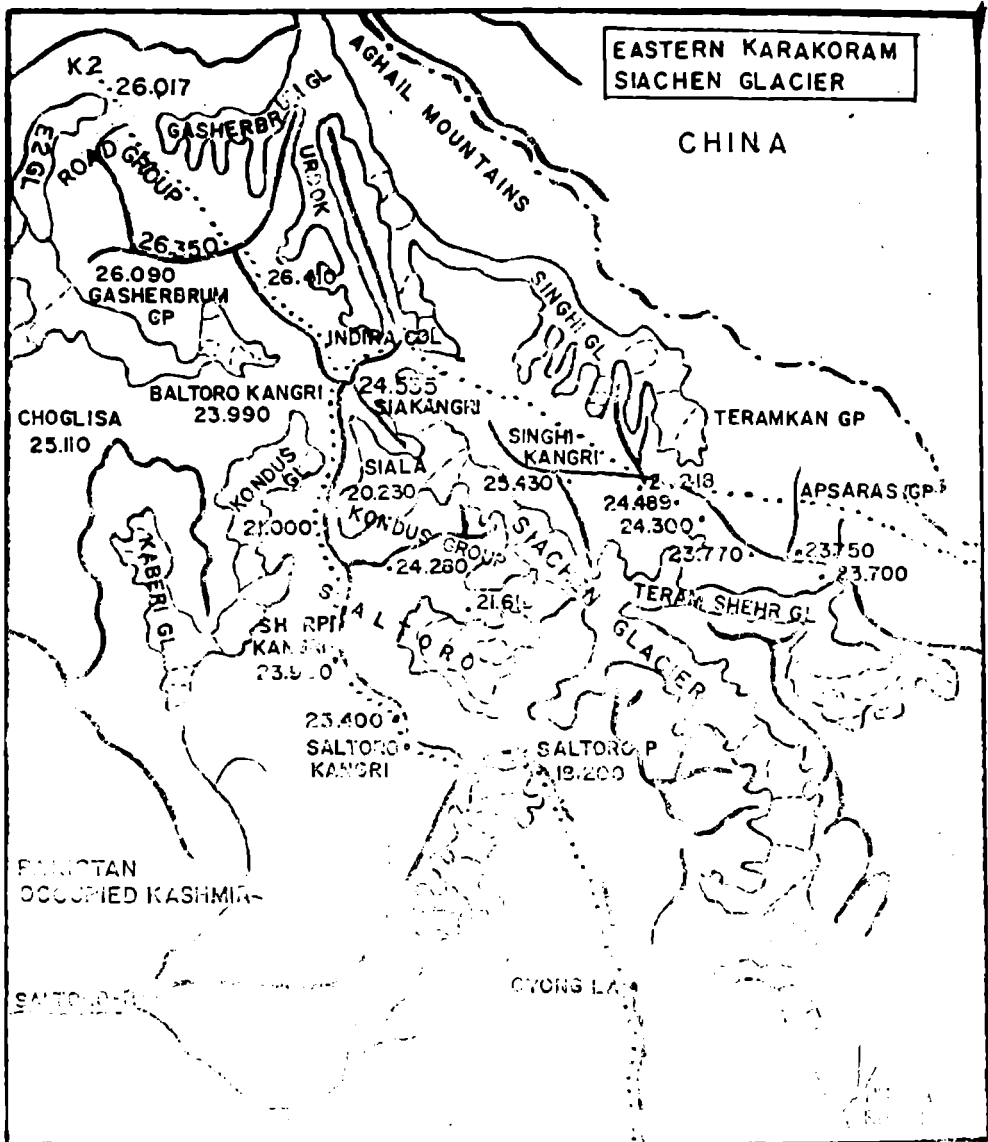
AREAS

The glacier emanates from Chogolisa and Baltoro Kangri peaks on the other side of Baltoro Glacier and runs southeast. It gestates the streams of the Nubra River, which later feed the Shyok River. The area forms a 'V' with the apex at Indira Col. The Saltoro Range running northwest to southeast forming one of its legs, and the Karakoram Range with its offshoot of Teram Kangri Group forming the other leg.

A CHALLENGE TO MOUNTAINEERS

The Great Karakorams extend about 300 miles from the Afghanistan border in the northwest to Shyok River in the east. Apart from 40 large glaciers, the longest and most important of which is the Siachen, this massive mountain range has innumerable high peaks including K 2, the highest of the Karakorams and the second highest in the world.

The Karakorams have proved to be a great challenge to mountaineers all over the world since early years. The area was considered non-negotiable even by expeditions. From known records, occasional expeditions were mounted during the summer months of June - July.



Not to scale

Eastern Karakoram Siachen Glacier

OPERATIONAL PATROLS

A long-range patrol code named 'Ibex Hunt' was launched. The patrol consisting of eight Officers, two Junior Commissioned Officers and 85 Other Ranks was led by Major MS Thapa of the Ladakh Scouts. The comments given in the

patrol's report as regards the tactical significance of the area make interesting reading. The comments read as follows:

“The area being rugged, not negotiable for approximately ten months in a year, glacial and coupled with low temperature has negligible tactical significance apart from laying one's claim to the area on the basis of physical presence”.

It was, however, decided that since the Siachen area is accessible from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir through Bilafond La, a physical presence of troops in the area during summer was operationally essential. And since the area is undemarcated, presence of own troops would also ensure that we do not lose this area. Authorisation of specialised mountaineering equipment and clothing, and special rations to our troops to operate effectively in such altitudes, as well as maintenance by air was accepted.

LAUNCHING OP MEGHDOOT

After carrying out acclimatisation and intensive training in general area Khardung La, the task force under Lieutenant Colonel Pushkar Chand moved to Sasoma by 28 March 1984. The task force subsequently concentrated at Base Camp by 3 April 1984 and commenced ice craft training. By this time the infrastructure required to assist in launching of the operation was being steadily built-up. Shelters and high altitude huts to cater for essential accommodation at Base Camp were nearing completion.

On 13 April 1984, Operation MEGHDOOT was launched. A platoon of 4 KUMAON under Captain Sanjay Kulkarni was helilifted to Bilafond La. The first pair of Cheetahs was flown by Squadron Leader Surinder S Bains and Squadron Leader Rohit Rai. Captain Kulkarni with three Other Ranks was taken in these helicopters from Base Camp (11,500 feet) to Bilafond La (18,000 feet). Since there was no proven helipad, all these personnel had to jump out from the helicopter while it hovered approximately 5-6 feet above the unknown wilderness of snow. Captain Kulkarni with his men, however, prepared an adhoc helipad for subsequent sorties to land. The National Flag was hoisted atop the pass at Bilafond La on 13 April 1984.

With the link up of ground troops with posts at Bilafond La and Sia La, the entire Siachen Glacier was secured by our troops. The Pakistanis were taken completely by surprise and an area of approximately 3,300 square kilometres, illegally shown as part of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) on the maps published by Pakistan was now under Indian control. The Pakistanis had been pre-empted. On 25 April 1984, exactly 12 days after the launch of the operation, approximately 15-20 Pakistan troops were seen in general area of Ali Brangsa.

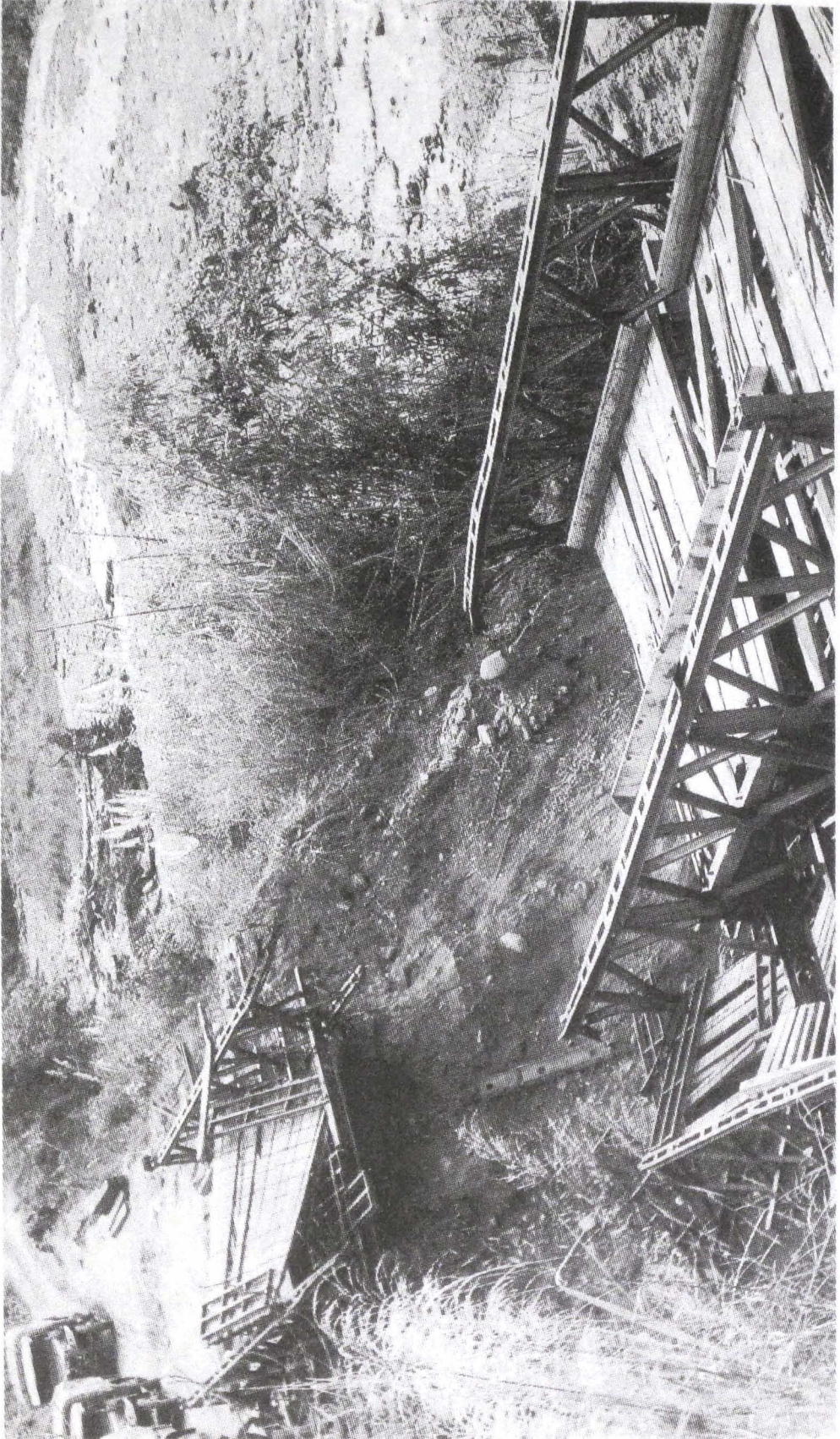
Thus continued major and minor actions and skirmishes under Operation Meghdoot.

1985 TO 1993

The highlight of the activities during 1985 was a visit by Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India.



In defensive position



Line of communication!

Many mountaineering expeditions to Siachen Glacier were launched during the year and many operational posts were established.

26 Sector was upgraded to 102 Infantry Brigade on 1 March 1985. Mechanised forces were, once again, inducted into Ladakh sector during 1986.

An exercise was conducted from 20 January to 20 February 1987 to give practice to 3 Infantry Division and all troops under command in the planning and conduct of a defensive battle in snow-bound, high-altitude, mountainous terrain during winter.

The President of India, R Venkataraman, visited the Leh Garrison on 28 September 1987. His wife accompanied him. The President was received at the airport by officiating General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Northern Command, General Officer Commanding 3 Infantry Division, and Deputy Commissioner Leh, amongst others. He addressed the troops at the Hall of Fame and received the civilian delegation at the Circuit House.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Leh again on 21 March 1988 and addressed the troops at the Trishul Lecture Hall.

On 1 July 1991 the area of operational responsibility of the Division was increased consequent upon the move of 28 Infantry Division. (28 Infantry Division assumed responsibility for western Ladakh on 1 October 1986). Thus the Division

once again assumed responsibility for the entire Ladakh region extending from Zojila in the west to the Himachal border in the east. The Division thus covered an approximate area of 1,135 kilometres along the Line of Control (LoC), Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL), International Border (IB) and Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The President of India, R Venkataraman, accompanied by his wife again visited the Divisional Sector from 23 to 26 August 1991. The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Northern Command and General Officer Commanding 15 Corps were also in station to receive the Supreme Commander. The President's entourage arrived by a special Boeing and he was given a traditional welcome during his stay. The President addressed troops at Leh and Kargil wherein he appreciated the standard of physical fitness, alertness, dedication, discipline and morale of troops and apprised them of various welfare measures that were being planned by the Government.

An operation against Anti National Elements (ANEs) was successfully concluded in Mashko Valley in Kargil Sector from 12 to 16 November 1993. A hard-slogging close quarter fight between 2/5 Gorkha Rifles with the ANEs resulted in 27 ANEs being killed against one Junior Commissioned Officer and one Non-Commissioned Officer killed on our side. A hideout established by the ANEs was completely destroyed. Three Sena Medals were awarded to the Gorkhas.

Threat perceptions to the divisional sector kept changing throughout the course of its history. In 1993, a time came when there was a need to reassess the deployment. This bold step was thus taken with two basic requirements: firstly, of retaining a viable reserve and secondly of easing logistic pressure.

EPILOGUE

THE LADAKH REGION

The Central Asian landmass is a vast high-mountain wilderness that geographically links three ancient civilisations. It is also the greatest physical obstacle in the world outside the polar ice caps. Extensive areas of it are uninhabited, barren and desolate, visited only occasionally by nomadic graziers. In such a region, space does not have a grudging quality. The nations that share it have lived as neighbours for thousands of years without being obsessed with defined borders or compelled to demarcate their territorial extent.

British opinion on the border-question was divided; one school of thought supported the watershed theory - thus accepting the Karakoram Range, and the other school was in favour of occupying Shahiduala for imperial strategic reasons - as a "forward policy". A number of Survey of India efforts were made to align the boundary. Some of these are indicated



Not to scale

Survey of India efforts to align the boundary in Ladakh region

on the map. The British response to meet the Russian threat was to establish a forward defensive line in the northern region so that a Russian threat could be halted well before the plains of Hindustan. This called for making Afghanistan and Tibet into buffer states and for the fixation of suitable and convenient borders with these states. At various times, several such lines were proposed. One of these was the 1865 Ladakh–Tibet / Xinjiang alignment proposed by WH Johnson of the Survey of India. This line was to link Demchok in the south with the 18,000 feet high Karakoram Pass in the north, but it took a circuitous route beyond the Kuen Lun Mountains and thus included the barren and cold Aksai Chin desert. The British, however, never really got around to fixing the border along this line. Nothing was done to clearly demarcate the border. No posts were established in Aksai Chin, nor were any expeditions sent there to show the flag, as is normal in such situations.

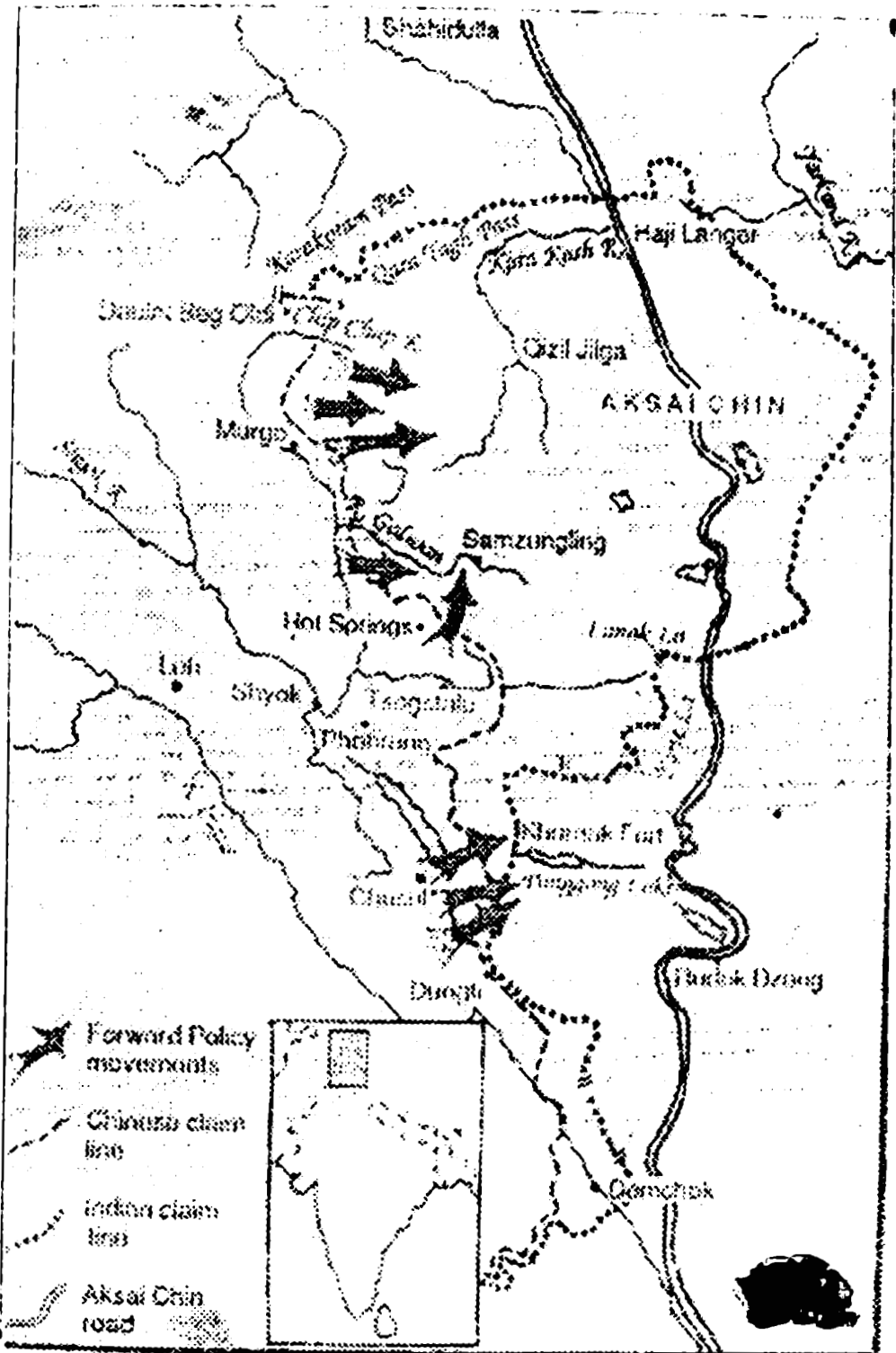
After the British finally left in 1947 we had unsettled borders in the Ladakh region. How well we looked after the territory we claimed as our own, is seen by the fact that in the early 1950s the Chinese had built a road connecting Tibet to Xinjiang across the Aksai Chin, and we did not have a clue about it for several years. The only two points accepted by both sides were that the Karakoram Pass and Demchok, the western and eastern ends of this sector, were Indian territory. Opinion on how the line traversed between the two points differed.

Thus came into existence two claim lines, one as perceived by us and the other by the Chinese. While the Chinese were in physical possession of their claimed territory because of the Xinjiang - Tibet highway, the boundary claimed by us lay beyond two high mountain ranges and was logistically impossible and militarily indefensible. Indefensible, obviously, because of the fact that legally it was not a very good case and the military price this barren uninhabited wind-swept desolation would demand did not make it a worthwhile cause. Even in 1954, the most advanced Indian Post was at Chushul and barring a couple of patrols to Lanak La, no attempt was made to show the flag. But Lanak La was far south of Aksai Chin and short of the Xinjiang - Tibet highway, which passed east of it at that point. Thus in the 1950s, these rules still seemed to prevail and the two contesting governments decided to keep a lid on the problems. On the surface it was all Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai and Panch Sheel philosophy, but underneath was the realisation that the titles to large tracts of territory under the control of both parties were under dispute. The lid blew away when in March 1959 the Dalai Lama fled to India and was given political asylum.

On 20 October 1959, an Indian patrol sent to probe the Aksai Chin, was ambushed by the Chinese at Kongka La. Nine jawans were killed and seven taken prisoner. This inflamed the situation. At that time the Indian Army was poorly equipped, short-staffed and generally in a bad way. The

Defence Minister squabbled with the Generals in public and wrought havoc with the morale of the brass. Against a surcharged backdrop, the Government came up with a Forward Policy implying establishment of small posts in the disputed areas, thus a number of small forward posts were set up with meagre resources, poor communications and extremely vulnerable supply lines. Most of these posts had to be supplied by air-drops and quite a bit of the supply would end up in Chinese hands. Often, the Chinese Army would hand these supplies over to our men to derive a psychological advantage. The Forward Policy was against all military advice. Lieutenant General Daulet Singh, then in command of operations in this region, wrote, "It is imperative that political direction is based on military means". In the decades that followed the debacle of 1962, little had changed. We in India have not yet been able to get together a non-partisan consensus on crucial issues such as this.

In perspective, visualising the basic issues of the border dispute from the Chinese perceptions, it would be seen that China would prefer to amalgamate its outlying provinces of Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia with the mainstream of Chinese politico-economic life. The Xinjiang-Tibet highway is a vital link and thus there seems absolutely no chance that the Chinese could be persuaded to cede Aksai Chin to us. There is an even remoter chance that we might be able to retrieve it from China by military means. Even if we summon



Not to scale

Forward Policy Movement

the political will, the physical costs would be enormous. China would militarily aim at dissuading India from instigating any trouble in Tibet, and would protect this highway at all costs. That is perhaps the reason for claiming Indian territory in so much depth, so that it ensures early warning of our intentions even if missiles were to be used to intercept this highway.

Logistics shall play a vital role in future operations in this region. On the one hand, we shall get a six month warning of Chinese build-up due to distances involved on their side, and on the other, our supply lines are extremely tenuous and often the only means of supply is by air, as the main highway linking Ladakh to the rest of the country remains closed in winter. There exists a Karakoram Highway linking Xinjiang / Tibet to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. This strategic highway facilitates movement of military hardware to and from China to Pakistan.

The basic issue of aligning an international border between the two countries remains unanswered. Some of the issues involved in aligning the border in this region are:

- Boundary commissions have not succeeded in the past because China was evasive when invited to discuss the issue in dispute.
- The traditional northern border with Kashmir is along the watershed of the Mustang - Karakoram Ranges. In principle this must be retained.

- The Chang Chenmo Range separates the Indus River basin from this region and thus is also a watershed.
- The other principle to define the boundary is evolved by traders who used well-beaten trade routes. This bolsters our claim to Shahiduala, but since it also includes the Aksai Chin plains, it is not likely to be acceptable to China.
- In the 1950s China constructed the Western Highway across Aksai Chin which is bounded by Kuen Lun Mountains in the west and Tibet's Changthang Plateau in the east. The high altitude plateau east of the Karakoram Range is divided by a low mountain range called Lahtsang Mountains. This range connects the Kuen Lun with the Karakoram Range and sends an offshoot southeast to Lanak La on the boundary inherited by us. This is the true watershed divide between the Indus and the Central Asian river systems.

Thus, an alignment from Karakoram Pass along the Chang Chenmo Range to the Lahtsang Mountains, Lanak La on to Demchok would offer us a boundary naturally and easily defined on the ground with crossing places that could have check posts and last but not least adequate depth would be available from populated valleys.

When push comes to shove we can be sure that 1962 will not be repeated. Our Generals are less politicised, our men better trained and equipped and our over-all military position is far better than it ever was. In a short border war we can hold our own. But longer wars call for greater resources and

resilience, and a total mobilisation of society. It needs a different attitude and thinking. A great India must necessarily be militarily powerful and a tenacious and resilient adversary if the situation so demands. We must raise our forces to match the largest of our adversaries, present and future. It is possible for us to settle our border dispute, in this region, with China on the basis of a clearly demarcated line.

The challenge now is for our national leadership to harmonise reality with sentiment, pragmatism with un-historical belief and national aspirations with imperialistic legacies. To be able to do this we first need to extricate such sensitive and critical issues from the ambit of partisan politics. The responsibility for this lies with the government of the day, which alone can orchestrate such an exercise. By doing this, we can once again bring into alignment our political objectives with military means and reality. We can then negotiate from a position of strength and give ourselves secure defensible and natural boundaries in the north. And who knows this may even lead to lasting good relations between the two great countries.

THE KARGIL REGION

Kashmir has geostrategic importance by virtue of its borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the Wakhan corridor. The Karakoram Range runs from Pamir-Knot southeast along the southern fringe of territory ceded by Pakistan to China.

Kargil assumes strategic importance as it lies on the road, Srinagar - Zoji La - Dras - Kargil - Leh. To its north along the line of control is the map co-ordinate referred to as NJ 9842. This was the furthest point along the line of control demarcated in the Simla Agreement. Beyond this, the line north along the Salto Ridge to the Karakoram Ridge was accepted in the above agreement as the line dividing Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and Kashmir.

In the military history of Kargil, the height referred to as Point 13,620 (feet above main sea level) dominates Kargil town, and some stretches of the road to Leh, by observation and fire. It is for this reason that this feature changed hands between Pakistan and India three times and was prominent in all agreements from Independence of India (creation of Pakistan). The demography of this area is divided between the Shia and Sunni Muslim sects not making it a comfortable infiltration destination for Pakistani infiltrators. The gaps in the Line of Control in our defences have, however, facilitated the move of infiltrators in 1965 and subsequent occasions through this region.

During the 1971 War, Point 13,620 was so disposed that between the Line of Control and this feature, there were other dominating ridges which put this Point out of easy reach of the Pakistanis. In fact the basic object of the 1999 Kargil War was to obtain domination by observation and fire of the road linking Srinagar to Leh from an area other than Point 13,620. This too did not succeed.

Siachen Glacier lies between the Saltoro and Rimo Ridges. In the 1970s Pakistan allowed foreign mountaineering expeditions to Siachen Glacier and peaks beyond, to stake its claim to this area. During the period 1978-81 India organised three expeditions consisting of troops in response to which Pakistan occupied important features in the Saltoro area (Bilafond La). Pakistan prepared for a major operation to occupy the Siachen Glacier in 1984. This effort was not to be as our troops beat them to it and the Pakistanis were thrown back and this sector still remains active. Pakistan's interests in the Siachen area centre around issues such as occupying additional area in Kashmir up to the Karakoram Pass, secure one more land link with China via Saser La to provide additional depth to Skardu and the Karakoram Highway, pose a threat to Partappur from the north and expose the area for international mountaineering expeditions. Indian interests are of course the opposite to this and hence this area becomes a conflict area.

The central issue and perhaps the only issue, in the strategy of Pakistan will remain Kashmir. It is not just the historical perspective of its claim but also a deep sense of revenge for our dismembering Pakistan in 1971. Terrorism is just another means to achieve its aim. In order to have a lasting peace in our sub-continent a workable solution to the Kashmir issue is essential. What form it takes and how long it takes, is an open question and debated daily in our lives.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

FOR GALLANTRY IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY

Rank & Name	Unit	Theatre/Operation	Year of Action
PARAM VIR CHAKAR			
Major Shaitan Singh	13 KUMAON	Ladakh	1962
Major Dhan Singh Thapa	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Chushul-Ladakh	- do -
Naib Subedar Bana Singh	8 Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry	Op-Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1987
MAHAVIR CHAKAR			
Jemadar C Rinchin	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Leh-J&K	1948
Havildar Fateh Singh	3 JAT	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Brigadier KL Atal	77 Parachute Brigade	- do -	- do -
Lance Havildar RP Gurung	1/5 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Jemadar Hardev Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	- do -	- do -

Sepoy Amar Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	Zojila-J&K	1948
Major Hari Chand	2/8 Gorkha Rifles	Leh-J&K	- do -
Mr. Ismail (Civilian Porter)	-	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Major Kushal Chand	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Leh-J&K (Khalsi)	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel AS Pathania	1/5 Gorkha Rifles	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel Rajindar Singh	7 Light Cavalry	- do -	- do -
Jemadar Sampooran Singh (Posthumous)	1 Patiala Infantry	- do -	- do -
Naik Pritam Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel Thakur Prithi Chand	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Leh-J&K	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel Sherjang Thapa	6 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Skardu J&K	- do -
Major Ajit Singh	5 JAT	Chushul-Ladakh	1962
Second Lieutenant SD Goswamy	13 Field Regiment	- do -	- do -
Brigadier TN Raina	114 Infantry Brigade	- do -	- do -
Major SS Randhawa	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Chip Chap River)	- do -
Havildar Stanzin Phunchok (Posthumous)	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Changla)	- do -
Subedar Sonam Stobdan (Posthumous)	- do -	Ladakh (Chandni)	- do -

Naik Rabi Lal Thapa	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Chushul-Ladakh (Sirijap)	1962
Jemadar Ishe Tundup (Posthumous)	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Changla)	- do -
Major BS Randhawa	4 RAJPUT	Kargil-J&K	1965
Subedar Mohinder Singh	18 PUNJAB	Shingo River Valley-J&K	1971
Colonel Udai Singh	Partappur Sector Commander	Ladakh J&K (Turtok)	- do -
Brigadier ML Whig	121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group	Shingo River Valley-J&K	- do -
Subedar Sansar Chand	8 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	Op-Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1987
Major KG Chatterjee	3/4 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Lance Havildar Nar Bahadur Ale (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Prem Bahadur Gurung (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Pratap Singh	75 Medium Regiment	- do -	1989
VIR CHAKRA			
Sepoy Bachan Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	Zojila-J&K (Machhoi)	1948
Naib Subedar Balwant Singh	3 PUNJAB	Zojila J&K	- do -
Jemadar Bhagwan Das	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Kargil-J&K	- do -

Subedar Bhim Chand	2 DOGRA	Leh- J&K	1948
Naik Bir Singh (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Chand Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	Zojila- J&K	- do -
Naik Chet Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Dhani Ram	5 Jammu and Kashmir Infantry	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Gajan Singh (Posthumous)	1 Patiala Infantry	- do -	- do -
Havildar Amrit Gamre	1 MAHAR	Zojila-J&K (Machhoi)	- do -
Subedar San Bahadur Gurung	2/8 Gorkha Rifles	Leh - J&K	- do -
Subedar Ranjit Puri	- do -	Ladakh-J&K	- do -
Riflemen Sher Bahadur Gurung	1/5 Gorkha Rifles	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Lance Naik Hanuman Ram	4 RAJPUT	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Chouthi Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Jagannath Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Hazura Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	Zojila-J&K (Gumri)	- do -
Sepoy Jagat Ram (Posthumous)	5 Jammu and Kashmir Infantry	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Sepoy Jaipal	3 JAT	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Nursing Orderly JD Joshi	Army Medical Corps	- do -	- do -

Jemadar Kartar Singh VrC (Bar)	7 Light Cavalry	Zojila-J&K (Gumri)	1948
Major PK Kuriyan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant NG David	- do -	- do -	- do -
Dafedar Jage Ram	- do -	- do -	- do -
Dafedar Lal Chand	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Babu Rawane	5 Maratha Light Infantry	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Captain Kartar Singh	Army Medical Corps	Ladakh-J&K (Biagdangdo)	- do -
Sepoy Mange Ram (Posthumous)	3 JAT	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Havildar Mukand Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	- do -	- do -
Major Kartick Chandra Mukerjee	Army Medical Corps	Kargil-J&K	- do -
Subedar Parwin Singh (Posthumous)	6 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Leh-J&K (Nimmu Hill)	- do -
Naib Subedar Lal Bahadur Pun	1/5 Gorkha Rifles	Kargil-J&K	- do -
Captain Risal Singh	1 Jammu and Kashmir Mountain Battery	Zojila-J&K	- do -
Lance Naik Sajjan Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	- do -	- do -
Jamedar Sant Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel Sukhdev Singh	- do -	Kargil-J&K	- do -

Sepoy Teja Singh (Posthumous)	1 Patiala Infantry	Zojila-J&K	1948
Second Lieutenant Thandi Ram	3 JAT	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Jas Bahadur Thapa	2/8 Gorkha Rifles	Leh-J&K	- do -
Lance Naik Trilok Singh Thapa	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Zila Singh	1 Patiala Infantry	Zojila-J&K (Gumri)	- do -
Naik Chhimet Dorje	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh-J&K	1962
Sepoy Nursing Assistant DPS Dahiya (Posthumous)	Army Medical Corps	Rezang La- Ladakh	- do -
Captain A Dewan	20 Lancers	Chushul-Ladakh (Gurung Hill)	- do -
Subedar Dewan Chand	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Takkar)	- do -
Lance Havildar Dharam Singh	5 Jat	Ladakh	- do -
Signalman Dharam Chand Dhilan (Posthumous)	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Fuckche)	- do -
Jemadar Rigzin Phunchok	- do -	Ladakh (Bhujang)	- do -
Sepoy Phunchok Dorje	- do -	Ladakh (Chandni)	- do -
Naik Gulab Singh (Posthumous)	13 KUMAON	Rezang La (Ladakh)	- do -

Second Lieutenant Harish Chander Gujral	5 JAT	Ladakh	1962
Gunner Gurdeep Singh (Posthumous)	13 Field Regiment	Chushul (Ladakh)	- do -
Jemadar Tej Bahadur Gurung	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Chushul Ladakh (Gurung Hill)	- do -
Jemadar Hari Ram (Posthumous)	13 KUMAON	Rezang La-Ladakh	- do -
Naik Hukum Chand (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Purshottam Lal Kher	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Chushul Ladakh (Gurung Hill)	- do -
Sepoy Lobzang Chhering (Posthumous)	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh	- do -
Naik Munshi Ram (Posthumous)	5 JAT	Ladakh (Kongna)	- do -
Subedar Nihal Singh (Posthumous)	- do -	Ladakh (Galwan)	- do -
Unpaid Lance Naik Raghavan	Madras Engineering Group	Ladakh	- do -
Captain Raja Amrithalingam	Army Medical Corps	Ladakh (Daulat Beg Oldi)	- do -
Jemadar Ram Chander	13 KUMAON	Rezang La-Ladakh	- do -
Naib Subedar Rigzin Phunchok	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Bhujang)	- do -
Unpaid Lance Naik Ram Singh (Posthumous)	13 KUMAON	Rezang La- Ladakh	- do -

Sepoy Sonam Rabges (Posthumous)	7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Fuckche)	1962
Sepoy Sonam Wangchok (Posthumous)	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Chandni)	- do -
Sepoy Sonam Angchok (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Jemadar Surja (Posthumous)	13 KUMAON	Rezang La- Ladakh	- do -
Rifleman Tulsi Ram Thapa	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Chushul-Ladakh (Sirijap)	- do -
Havildar Tulsi Ram	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Ramu)	- do -
Naik Ram Kumar Yadav	13 KUMAON	Rezang La- Ladakh	- do -
Naik Bhag Singh	9 DOGRA	Ladakh	- do -
Sepoy Budh Singh	4 RAJPUT	Kargil-J&K	1965
Havildar Girdhari Lal (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Ranbir Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major Vinod Bhanot	5/3 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	1971
Naib Subedar Chhering Wangdus	Ladakh Scouts	Turtok-J&K (Chalunka)	- do -
Major SS Ahluwalia	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Fateh Mohammed	Ladakh Scouts	Turtok-J&K (Chalunka)	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel Ram Bahadur Gurung	2/11 Gorkha Rifles	Shingo River Valley - J&K	- do -
Lieutenant Haridas Nag (Posthumous)	7 GUARDS	- do -	- do -

Naib Subedar Bhrigunath Singh	7 GUARDS	Shingo River Valley - J&K	1971
Havildar Phurba Lepcha	2/11 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Lance Havildar Phunchok Stobdan	Ladakh Scouts	Turtok-J&K (Chalunka)	- do -
Sepoy Sampooran Singh	18 PUNJAB	Shingo River Valley-J&K	- do -
Subedar Sultan Mohammed Khan (Posthumous)	9 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	- do -	- do -
Major Vetri K Nathan (Posthumous)	2/11 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Major Varinder Singh	8 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	Op-Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1987
Second Lieutenant Rajiv Pandey (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Subedar Dhan Raj Sharma	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Lekh Raj (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Balwant Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Lachaman Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Satpal	- do -	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant Ashok Kumar Sharma	3/4 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Naik Nursing Assistant RS Ojha	328 Field Ambulance	- do -	- do -
Major VK Nayar	- do -	- do -	- do -

Major S Saini	328 Field Ambulance	Op-Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1987
Naib Subedar Hom Bahadur Thapa	3/4 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Bhim Bahadur Thapa	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Hira Bahadur Thapa (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Sanjeev Gurung	- do -	- do -	- do -
Subedar Hoshiar Singh	19 RAJPUT	- do -	- do
Lieutenant Colonel Dalvir Singh	4 MAHAR	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Kanwar Singh	14 Garhwal Rifles	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant Ashok Chaudhary	Army Service Corps	- do -	- do -
Naik Nursing Assistant AC Sahu	328 Field Ambulance	- do -	- do -
Major YK Pani	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Sardar Singh	2 DOGRA	- do -	- do -
Captain Vijayant Kumar	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Prem Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Tilak Raj (Posthumous)	6 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Kargil-J&K	1992

**FOR GALLANTRY IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY
AND EXCEPTIONAL DEVOTION TO DUTY**

SENA MEDAL

Captain PL Kher	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Ladakh	1961
Rifleman Nar Bahadur Thapa	- do -	- do -	- do -

Naib Subedar Mohammed Hussain	Ladakh Scouts	Ladakh	1962
Naik Pritam (Posthumous)	13 Field Regt	Chushul-Ladakh (Gurung Hill)	- do -
Lance Naik Sarwan Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Company Havildar Major Harpal Singh (Posthumous)	13 KUMAON	Rezang La-Ladakh	- do -
Havildar Phul Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Jainarain	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major Sardul Singh Randhawa	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Chip-Chap River)	- do -
Major Chhewang Rinchen	- do -	Ladakh (Chalunka)	- do -
Subedar Mohammed Abdul Rather	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain JM Sachdev	Engineers	- do -	- do -
Jemadar Sonam Stobdan	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh (Chip-Chap River)	- do -
Jemadar Budh Singh	- do -	Ladakh (Galwan River)	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel Nihal Singh	- do -	Ladakh	- do -
Lance Naik Gulbadan Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Chhewang Dorje	- do -	Ladakh (Sumdo)	- do -
Signalman Tejwant Singh	Corps of Signals	Ladakh	- do -

Second Lieutenant SK Nanda	1 GUARDS	Kargil-J&K	1965
Second Lieutenant Rajender Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major RP Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Abdul Rehman	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh-J&K (Sultan Chusku)	1966
Lance Naik Nima Dildan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Kunga Namgial	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Namgyal Tundup	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Hardial Singh (Posthumous)	18 PUNJAB	Shingo River	1971
Major MS Kahlon	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain DS Gill	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Dilbahadur Limbu	2/11 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik KS Gurung	5/3 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Rifleman PB Thapa (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar MB Thapa	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman DB Chetri	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major MP Singh	3 Division Postal Unit	Ladakh-J&K	- do -
Captain AK Joshi	5 VIKAS	- do -	- do -
Subedar GM Ganesh	7 Engineer Regiment	- do -	- do -

Subedar VR Haridasan	7 Engineer Regiment	Ladakh-J&K	1971
Subedar A Michael	- do -	Ladakh-J&K	- do -
Naik PB Subbaiah	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Havildar Narayanan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Chhikkai	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik P Sekhar	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Sayed Kareem	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant HK Singh	74 Independent Field Company	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant Ashok Kumar	- do -	- do -	- do -
Regimental Havildar Major Nand Lal	101/15 Field Regiment	- do -	- do -
Havildar Kartar Chand	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain AV Nirkha	Headquarters 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group	Kargil-J&K	- do -
Sepoy SP Maulvi	13 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	- do -	- do -
Havildar GR Maulvi	9 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	- do -	- do -
Lance Havildar RP Pandey	7 GUARDS	- do -	- do -
Lance Havildar Kunga Stanzin	14 Jammu and Kashmir Militia	Ladakh-J&K (Chip Chap River)	- do -
Sepoy Stanzin Dorje	- do -	- do -	- do -

Lance Naik Dhan Singh	3 Infantry Division Signal Regiment	Ladakh	1977
Captain AK Bhattacharjee	Ladakh Scouts	Ladakh (Karakoram Pass)	1979
Havildar (Nursing Assistant) S Yadav	Army Medical Corps	Ladakh-J&K	1980
Naib Subedar Rizgin Namgial	14 Jammu and Kashmir - do - Militia		- do -
Sepoy Chhering Nurbu	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	1981
Major NV Raghavan	15 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Naik Mohammed Hussain	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	1983
Captain S Pathak	8 Engineer Regiments	Kargil	- do -
Major MPS Khati	4 Kumaon	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Havildar Pushkar Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Het Ram	- do -	- do -	- do -
Subedar Shiv Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Govind Singh Patni	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Paramvir Yadav	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Jagmal Singh	207 Field Regiment	- do -	1984
Lance Naik Phunchok Wangchok	Ladakh Scouts	Ladakh (Shyok River)	- do -
Sepoy Rajbeer Singh Yadav (Posthumous)	15 MAHAR	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -

Major DK Chand	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1984
Lieutenant Colonel Pushkar Chand, VSM	1 VIKAS	- do -	- do -
Company Commander Yonjyan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Tranee Thapten Legshey	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain VS Nagi	- do - (Army Medical Corps)	- do -	- do -
Major SM Khohbarkar	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major MS Balhara	5 BIHAR	- do -	- do -
Captain Ramchandran	Army Medical Corps	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel SK Datta	Army Medical Corps	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Major KJ Singh	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	1985
Major MS Bedi	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain S Ghosh	8 Medium Regiment	- do -	- do -
Captain AK Chanchal Singh	108 Medium Regiment	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant RN Vijay	15 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Subedar G Giri	19 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Major RS Mahajan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Sanjay Agarwal SM (Bar)	- do -	- do -	- do -

Lance Naik (Cook) B Singh	19 KUMAON	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1985
Havildar H Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Vidyanand	18 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Havildar Nandram	- do -	- do -	- do -
Company Havildar Major Sandi Ram	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Rajender Kumar	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Moti Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Chhering Mutup	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	- do -
Havildar Sonam Anchok	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Chhewang Nurbu	- do -	- do -	- do -
Subedar Abdul Qadir	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Chhering Angchok	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Gularan Yadav	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major TBS Bali	Engineers	- do -	- do -
Captain D Anbu	14 Sikh Light Infantry	- do -	1986
Second Lieutenant RS Dalal	- do -	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant AK Sharma	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Bhola Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Mukhtiar Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -

Sepoy Raghbir Singh	14 Sikh Light Infantry	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1986
Naib Subedar Sonam Chhering	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	- do -
Major RP Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major SS Samant	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	- do -
Captain SB Nair	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain BR Dass	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Nawang Rigzin	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Tundup Dorje	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Palden Dorje (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik RR Sonaji	8 Maratha Light Infantry	- do -	- do -
Sepoy S Hussain Sab	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Rattan Singh	8 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	- do -	1987
Havildar Romesh Lal	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Chunni Lal	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Om Raj	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Jyoti Prakash	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Palam Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Kulwant Raj	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman Stanzin Dorje	- do -	- do -	- do -

Rifleman Jigment Namgyal	8 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1987
Rifleman Phunchok Dorje	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar RK Rana	3/4 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Naik DB Gurung (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman CB Thapa	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik RB Gurung	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman SK Tamang (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Rifleman HB Gurung	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel MS Chauhan	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	1988
Captain Jaidev Singh	5 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Naik Kashmir Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major AP Singh, VSM	14 Garhwal Rifles	- do -	- do -
Major S Satpathy	- do -	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant SC Sipehiya	- do -	- do -	- do -
Subedar Sher Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Satendra Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Subedar Aditya Ram	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Soban Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Hari Singh	2 DOGRA	- do -	1989
Havildar Ravinder Nath	- do -	- do -	- do -

Sepoy K Singh	2 DOGRA	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1989
Lance Naik K Kumar	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel R Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major IK Kanwar	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	- do -
Subedar Chhering Tundup	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	1990
Naik Rinchen Langpo	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naik Chhering Angchok	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Chhering Stobdan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lance Naik Thugje Tashi	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major CE Fernandes	6 BIHAR	- do -	- do -
Captain VP Christopher	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Tonnar Momin	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Surjeet Singh (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Lalan Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Suhrit Chadah	11 GUARDS	- do -	1991
Colonel DN Verma	12 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	- do -	1992
Naib Subedar Jagdish Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Captain Sanjeev Langeh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Chatar Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -

Major DD Pandere	12 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1992
Naik Satpal Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Havildar Desraj	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major Joginder Kumar	6 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Kargil-J&K	- do -
Captain S Patole	Army Medical Corps	- do -	- do -
Subedar Sher Singh	6 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	- do -	- do -
Major Vivek Sohal	18 MAHAR	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Second Lieutenant SS Dhaliwal	15 MAHAR	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Rajbeer Singh (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major SS Yadav	121 Light Regiment	- do -	- do -
Naik C Dev Nath	3264, Light Air Defence Battery	- do -	- do -
Subedar K Norphel	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar C Dorje	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major KR Sasi Kumar	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	- do -
Major T Amarnath	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major AK Pattanaik	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major NR Mitra	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major GS Reen	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major R Menon	- do -	- do -	- do -

Lieutenant Colonel AK Singh	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1992
Lieutenant Colonel Arun Rao	- do -	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant Neel Kamal	Army Service Corps	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant R Shrivastava	96 Field Regiment	- do -	- do -
Captain Sandeep Bhal	3/1 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Rifleman RK Gurung	- do -	- do -	- do -
SHAURYA CHAKRA			
MES Labour (Civilian) Shri Ibrahni	Military Engineering Services	Kargil-J&K	1975
Shri S Tundup	Nubra Guards	Ladakh-J&K	1971
Shri C Targes	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major GIS Dhodi	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	Ladakh (Zanskar)	1980
Captain RS Dev	- do -	- do -	1983
Major GS Bajwa, VrC	- do -	- do -	1984
Major MS Dahiya	Ladakh Scouts	Op Meghdoot	- do -
Lance Havildar Chhering Angchok	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Nawang Yontan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Deputy Leader Gajjam (Posthumous)	1 VIKAS	- do -	- do -
Assistant Leader Ise Topgyal	- do -	- do -	- do -

Section Leader Tsewang Dorje	1 VIKAS	Op Meghdoot	1984
Deputy Leader Yoijan	- do -	- do -	- do -
Assistant Section Leader Zampa	- do -	- do -	- do -
Deputy Leader Dorje Jigme	5 VIKAS	- do -	- do -
Captain S Kulkarni	4 KUMAON	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Lance Naik Chanchal Singh (Posthumous)	- do -	- do -	- do -
Sepoy Chhewang Tundup (Posthumous)	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	1985
Naik Ram Meher Singh	19 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel VK Sita Ram	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	1986
Major VS Guleria	- do -	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant Rajeev Puri	14 Sikh Light Infantry	- do -	1986
Lance Lieutenant Makhan Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -

DISTINGUISHED SERVICES AWARD**PARAM VISHISHT SEVA MEDAL**

Major General SP Malhotra	3 Infantry Division	Ladakh	1971
Brigadier Jal Master	102 Infantry Brigade	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1988

ATI VISHISHT SEVA MEDAL

Lieutenant Colonel Nardip Singh	642 Corps Troops Engineers	Ladakh	1962
Captain SP Anand	742 Field Company	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar JB Gurung	1/8 Gorkha Rifles	Ladakh (Galwan)	- do -
Lieutenant HS Dhingra	13 KUMAON	Rezang La- Ladakh	- do -

VISHISHT SEVA MEDAL

Major R Ranganathan	369 Field Company	Ladakh	1962
Lieutenant Colonel Nihal Singh, SM	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	- do -
Subedar N Lal	5 JAT	- do -	- do -
Naib Subedar Bhima Kamle	1 MAHAR	Zojila (Machhoi)	- do -
Lieutenant SK Khanna	9 Field Company	Ladakh	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel PS Sandhu	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	1978
Subedar Major K Chospal	- do -	- do -	1980
Lieutenant Colonel SS Bhattal	9 PUNJAB	- do -	- do -
Brigadier SJ Rathore	70 Infantry Brigade	- do -	1983

Lieutenant Colonel SN Mahajan	8 Engineer Regiment	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1985
Lieutenant Colonel BK Patta	Army Medical Corps	Ladakh	1986
Havildar Sonam Angchok	Ladakh Scouts	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Captain PV Bhalla	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	- do -
Naik Karnail Singh	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel DK Ghosh	503 Army Service Corps Battalion	Ladakh	1987
Lieutenant Colonel Y Singh	Army Medical Corps	Leh	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel NK Bhandari	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major CM Adya	Army Medical Corps	Leh	- do -
Major VS Somana Goudar	8 Maratha Light Infantry	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Major MM Bhatt	7/8 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Major Satish Chander Kochar	14 Sikh Light Infantry	- do -	- do -
Major JS Sandhu	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel OK Verma	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major K Dharampal	18 KUMAON	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel KK Lakhanpal	Ladakh Scouts	- do -	1988
Major Narinjan Singh	- do -	Ladakh	- do -
Major Chhettan Punchok	- do -	- do -	- do -

Lance Naik Mohammed Shafi, SM	Ladakh Scouts	Ladakh	1988
Colonel GD Bakshi	6 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles	Kargil-J&K	1992
Colonel S Vashisht	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	- do -
Major IK Kanwar, SM	- do -	- do -	- do -

**DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD IN CONDUCT OF
OPERATION IN THE BATTLE ZONE**

UTTAM YUDH SEVA MEDAL

Colonel JK Sharma	102 Infantry Brigade	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1983
Colonel AP Rai	8 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry	- do -	1987
Colonel PS Gurung	3/4 Gorkha Rifles	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant Colonel CS Chaturvedi	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	1988
Brigadier CS Nugyal	102 Infantry Brigade	- do -	- do -
Major JS Hundal	314 Field Regiment	- do -	- do -
Subedar CB Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Major HS Prem Kumar	666 Air Observation Post Squadron	- do -	- do -
Major MA Pereira	- do -	- do -	1989
Captain AK Jindal	328 Field Ambulance	- do -	- do -
Second Lieutenant D Thapa	2 DOGRA	- do -	- do -

Naib Subedar Jogeshwar Singh	2 DOGRA	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1989
Lieutenant Colonel Surinder Singh	- do -	- do -	- do -
Lieutenant HS Negi, SC,	14 Garhwal Rifles	- do -	- do -
Brigadier RK Nanavaty	102 Infantry Brigade	- do -	1990
Captain SK Basu	Army Medical Corps	- do -	- do -
Brigadier AB Masih	- do -	- do -	1991
Sepoy Sonam Targes	Ladakh Scouts	Ladakh	- do -
Brigadier VK Jetly	- do -	Op Meghdoot (Siachen Glacier)	1992
Lieutenant Colonel ABS Kalra	121 Light Regiment	- do -	- do -

