

A Ridge Too Far: The Battle For Tololing

L.N.Subramanian

In the early days of May 1999, after patrols sent in the mountains disappeared indicating something was amiss, the 18th Grenadiers was pulled from the counter insurgency grid in the Valley and ordered to evict the intruders. The initial briefing by the commander of Kargil based 121 Brigade was that there were no more than 8 – 10 infiltrators on the tops. " Just go up and bring them by the scruff of the neck " was the casual order. Tololing, a naked mountain, loomed large rising to 16000 feet, overlooking the town of Drass. With no cover a single steep track led to the top zig zagging along a narrow path. There was absolutely no cover for climbing troops. From their concrete bunkers and reinforced sangars the Pakistanis could see every inch of the track. There was nothing to hide behind but the faith of God. From this vantage point, the Pakistanis brought in heavy artillery fire on the National Highway NH 1A which was closest at this point. This brought movement on the highway to a standstill. It became imperative that Tololing had to be cleared first to reduce the threat to the highway and also to provide a foothold to recover the surrounding peaks.

Initial Assaults

Three battalions from the Nagas, Garhwal and Grenadier regiments tried to make their way from 2 sides but came under effective fire. The Pakistanis were entrenched all across the ridges in bunkers fortified with iron girders and corrugated sheets. The first 3 assaults were beaten off. The soldiers crawled up inch by inch along the steep incline with the wind howling around them and temperatures between –5 and –11 degrees Centigrade. The soldiers had to climb 16,000 feet with packs upto 25 kgs. In such situations where every kilogram counted a 2 kg food pack was discarded for more ammunition. Unfortunately the trade off did not work. The Pakistanis simply mowed them down. At times they did not even waste their ammunition preferring to throw stones and roll down boulders. The Nagas were the victim of such tactics. The men with just a single parka, jungle shoes, with rifles slung were climbing up with the help of a rope when rocks were rolled down crushing some troops. With no headway being made B company of 18th Grenadiers led by 28 year old Major Rajesh Adhikari made another frantic assault. Although two previous assaults had been repulsed, Adhikari succeeded in reaching a point beyond the Hump. The brilliance of his attack carried him to 15 meters of the ridgeline. At that point he and his men found themselves surrounded and outnumbered. A bitter close combat battle raged in which Adhikari along with Subedar Randhir Singh, Lance Naik R K Yadav and grenadier Parveen Kumar were killed. The rest were pushed back. Captain Sachin Nimbalkar and his men were stuck behind large rock on a tiny ledge on a sheer cliff face for 3 days. During this time the Pakistanis taunted him to take Adhikari's body. The Grenadiers were shocked and that night the kitchen fires were not lit to mourn a dear officer.

By now company and battalion commanders had realised the gravity of the situation and were trying to convince their superiors who in turn were trying to convince Delhi. This pressure caused another attack to be mounted on June 2. Unable to convince his superiors of the need to delay till adequate firepower was provided the second in command of the 18th Grenadiers Lt. Col. Vishwanathan personally led the attack. With Regimental pride under stake the men reached the top after an arduous 6 hour climb. If they chose to recover before attacking dawn would be on them so they made the choice of an immediate attack. It was a suicidal attack and was promptly cut down. Lt. Col. Vishwanathan knew he was going to die. His last letter to his father indicated his anguish at not being able to live to his family commitments. There was shock and gloom all around. Furthermore the bodies of

Adhikari and his wireless operator were still lying in the battlefield. Any attempt to recover it was met with UMG fire. Furthermore the Pakistanis booby-trapped the bodies. One jawan who tried to drag Adhikari's body away lost his hand to a booby trap. Lt. Col. Vishwanathan's death finally jarred the senior echelons of the Indian Army. Finally the army was realizing the need to get in more firepower before any assault could be made.

Induction of Artillery

In the last few days of May, Brigadier Lakhinder Singh commander of Drass Artillery brigade moved in to the battle zone. He observed that the deployment of artillery was frugal and that the attacks were not concentrated. The tall and well built Sikh soon started things moving. In the initial phase from mid May to first week of June there were only a few batteries of 105 mm guns. By the end of the first week of June, 130 mm as well as 155 mm guns started moving in.

With the Pakistanis watching the highway from Peak 4875 in the Mushkoh Valley, Tiger Hill and Tololing Top the deployment was done after sundown. At the Gumri and Matayin bases guns from the plains were brought in, still in desert camouflage. After sundown powerful Scania trucks pulled them to predetermined gun positions. The trucks moved with their lights switched off. 2 soldiers jogged in the front flashing their torches every few minutes to show the outlines of the road and the curves so that they wouldn't run off the mountainside.

The gun sights were carved out of the mountain side. They had to be sited not only to provide accurate fire but also to avoid counter battery fire. By 7th June the guns were deployed and fired to get the range. Artillery observation officers started climbing to vantage positions to direct the fire. As the H hour to launch the attack approached soldiers worked in the bitter cold to make sure all guns were in perfect condition. Soldiers stood guard with rumors of SSG troops on artillery raiding missions. Anti aircraft guns scanned the skies for any RPV on spotting missions. Meanwhile para commandos had moved through the enemy lines and lined up on enemy artillery. Their job was to direct counter battery fire in case any Pakistani guns got in the play.

Simultaneously a fresh battalion the 2nd Rajputana Rifles was brought in for the assault. The Grenadiers consolidated at 3 points 300 metres below the Pakistani positions thus providing a foothold to launch the attack from. The 2nd Raptana Rifles meanwhile fired and tested weapons, carried on reconnaissance and mock assaults on nearby ridges. 90 volunteers led by Major Vivek Gupta were assembled for the final assault. Among them were 11 Tomars. The Tomars have a long tradition of serving the army. Their tradition does not allow them to come back from the battlefield defeated. They must do or die. The youngest among them was 23 year old Praveen Singh Tomar who was to lead one of the platoons. Havaladar Yashvir Singh Tomar said sombrely "Sahib gyarah ja rahe hain aur gyarah jeet kar lautenge(Sir, 11 Tomars are going and 11 will return victorious)". Col Ravindranath gave them a final pep talk. The men were charged and JCO Bhanwer Singh said " Sir come to Tololing Top in the morning. We will meet you there". Most of them were the battalion sportsmen and athletes. Letters were written in case they didn't make it back and by 12th June they were in position behind the boulders, 300 metres from the Pakistanis. H hour was 1830 hours on 12th June.

The Final Assault

At 1830 hours 120 artillery guns opened up on Tololing top. The Bofors 155 mm guns started first. Used in direct fire mode they targeted the bunkers. Within minutes they were

followed by the 130 mm and 105 mm guns. Shell after shell slammed into the ridges. As the expected Pakistani counter bombardment started, the 155 mm guns switched to HEER shells and started firing across the LOC at Pakistani gun positions located by the para commandos. The Pakistani guns were soon put out of action and were relegated to occasional shells. A few Pakistani mortars continued to lob shells.

Close to midnight the firing stopped. Major Vivek Gupta led his men with the battle cry "Raja Ramchandra ki Jai". There were 3 teams code names "Abhimanyu", "Bheem" and "Arjun". One went straight up. Another went around a lower ridge to cut off the enemy's retreat and a third from behind. The Grenadiers provided covering fire against the Pakistanis on the nearby ridges.

In spite of the artillery there were still strong pockets of Pakistani troops in natural caves beyond the effect of artillery. They now opened up with machine guns on the crawling Indian troops. The troops inched up using the craters caused by artillery for cover. In spite of the withering machine gun fire from the bunkers, troops had to crawl and use grenades to silence them. Back at the base the commanders were huddled around the wireless. However with the enemy at close quarters there was no time for communication. By 2.30 am desperation was setting in. Havaldar Yashvir Singh Tomar collected the grenades from the rest of the men. He then charged the last few bunkers. Getting there he tossed in 18 grenades being cut down. He was found with an assault rifle in one hand and grenade in the other. Finally the troops closed in and bitter hand to hand combat ensued. At 4.10 am the wireless crackled the news. Tololing was won. It was at a heavy cost with Major Gupta and seven others killed that night. Among the dead was JCO Bhanwer Singh. The troops now had to hold off Pakistani reinforcements. It was the first major victory and there was jubilation all along the front. Every available camera clicked the moment. The army released extra rations for mithai that morning. At the Rajputana Rifles camp the celebration was tempered by the loss they had suffered. They suffered 4 officers, 2 JCOs and 17 OR dead and 70 wounded of whom 26 were incapacitated that they would never serve again.

Meanwhile the job was still not over. Tololing was still vulnerable to a counter attack from the Hump. The task of capturing it was given to Major Joy Dasgupta of Charlie company 18th Grenadiers. At 2000 hours Major Dasgupta led the attack. Wading through the carefully sited machine gun fire it was suicidal. But once again the 155mm guns provided support. Firing and scooting to escape counter bombardment they kept a withering fire. The Grenadiers charged on till they reached the first bunker and silenced it. However the attack was stalling under heavy casualties. It was at this stage 2 extraordinary soldiers saved the day. Havaldar Dashrath Lal Dubey and Havaldar Udham Singh from two different companies joined together for an extra ordinary charge. The two charged the last few bunkers and cleared them. However Udham Singh died at the last bunker. The radio at headquarters crackled with the news that the Hump was taken. 12 men died in this do or die mission. Over the next few days a series of points all around fell to the Indian troops.

The importance of this victory cannot be underestimated. Till then the daily sight of men coming down the mountains carrying their dead comrades was a distressing sight. To the men stuck on various points in mountains the taunting of the Pakistani troops had left them feeling impotent. Now the Army had got a major victory followed by a string of successes. It meant that the Pakistanis could be beaten in spite of all the odds. Once again Indian soldiers with their fierce determination, living on so little achieved the impossible. Retaking Tololing was truly the turning point of the war.

Further Reading

1. A Soldier's Diary - Harinder Baweja
2. Dateline Kargil - Gaurav Sawant
3. India Today, 15 July 1999.
4. Kargil 99 - Blood, Guts and Firepower

The Kargil Review Committee Report: Much to Learn and Implement

Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh (Retd) AVSM

The Kargil Review Committee has done a very commendable job and equally commendable was the government's decision to table the report in the Parliament.

In the last few weeks there has been much comment in the media bringing to the attention of the nation various inadequacies, some of them of long standing, either glossed over or dealt with in a very perfunctory manner.

The two hundred and twenty eight page report of the Subrahmanyam Committee and its forty one page executive summary of the report is with me and it is necessary to quote from it both for erudition and emphasis. For example, it has been recorded that the Indian intelligence structure is flawed since there is little back up or redundancy to rectify failures and shortcomings in intelligence collection and reporting that goes to build up the external threat perception by the one agency, namely, R&AW which has a virtual monopoly in this regard, it is neither healthy nor prudent to endow that one agency alone with multifarious capabilities for human, communication, imagery and electronic intelligence. Had R&AW and DGMI spotted the additional battalions in the FCNA region that were missing from the ORBAT, there might have been requests for ARC flights in winter and these might have been undertaken, weather permitting. As it happened, the last flight was in October 1998, long before the intrusion, and the next in May 1999, after the intrusions had commenced. The intruders had by then come out into the open.

The report states elsewhere that there is a general lack of awareness of the critical importance of and the need for assessed intelligence at all levels. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) reports do not receive the attention they deserve at the political and higher bureaucratic levels. The assessment process has been downgraded in importance and consequently various agencies send very junior officials to JIC meetings. The DGMI did not send any regular input to the JIC for two years preceding the Kargil crisis. The JIC was not accorded the importance it deserved either by the Intelligence agencies or the Government. There are no checks and balances in the Indian intelligence system to ensure that the consumer gets all the intelligence that is available and is his due.

The Findings bring out many grave deficiencies in India's security management system. The framework Lord Ismay formulated and Lord Mount batten recommended was accepted by a national leadership unfamiliar with the intricacies of national security management. There has been very little change over the past 52 years despite the 1962 debacle, the 1965 stalemate and the 1971 victory, the growing nuclear threat, end of the cold war, continuance of proxy war in Kashmir for over a decade and the revolution in military affairs. The political, bureaucratic, military and intelligence establishments appear to have developed a vested interest in the status quo. National security management recedes into the background in time of peace and is

considered too delicate to be tampered with in time of war and proxy war. The Committee strongly feels that the Kargil experience, the continuing proxy war and the prevailing nuclearised security environment justify a thorough review of the national security system in its entirety.

Such a review cannot be undertaken by an over-burdened bureaucracy. An independent body of credible experts, whether a national commission or one or more task forces or otherwise as expedient, is required to conduct such studies which must be undertaken expeditiously.

The National Security Council (NSC) formally constituted in April 1999, is still evolving and its procedure will take time to mature. Whether its merits, having a National Security Adviser who also happens to be Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, can only be an interim arrangement. The Committee believes that there must be a full time National Security Adviser and it would suggest that a second line of personnel be inducted into a system as early as possible and groomed for higher responsibility.

Members of the National Security Council, the senior bureaucracy servicing it and the Service chiefs need to be continually sensitised to assess intelligence pertaining to national, regional and international issues. This can be done through periodic intelligence briefings of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) with all supporting staff in attendance.

The Committee had drawn attention to deficiencies in the present system of collection, reporting, collation and assessment of intelligence. There is no institutionalised mechanism for co-ordination or objective-oriented interaction between the agencies and consumers at different levels. Similarly, there is not mechanism for tasking the agencies, monitoring their performance and reviewing their records to evaluate their equality. Nor is there any oversight of the overall functioning of the agencies. These are all standard features elsewhere in the world. In the absence of such procedures, the Government and the nation do not know whether they are getting value for money. While taking note of recent steps to entrust the NSCS with some of these responsibilities the Committee recommends a through examination of the working of the intelligence system with a view to remedying these deficiencies.

All major countries have a mechanism at national and often at lower levels to assess the intelligence inputs received from different agencies and sources. After the 1962 debacle, the then existing JIC under the Chiefs of Staff Committee was upgraded and transferred to the Cabinet Secretariat. It was further upgraded in 1985 with the Chairman being raised to the rank of Secretary to the Government. The Committee finds that for various reasons cited in the Report, the JIC was devalued. Its efficacy has increased since it became part of the National Security Council Secretariat. However, its role and place in the national intelligence framework should be evaluated in the context of overall reform of the system.

Pakistan's action at Kargil was not rational. Its behaviour patterns require to be carefully studied in order to gain a better understanding of the psyche of its leadership. In other countries, intelligence agencies have developed large 'White Wings' of high quality analysts for in-house analysis. They also contract studies with university departments and think tanks with area specialisation. This is sadly neglect in India. The development of such country/region specialisation along with associated language skills is a time consuming process and should not

be further delayed. A generalist administration culture would appear to permeate the intelligence field. It is necessary to establish think tanks, encourage country specialisation in university departments and to organise regular exchange of personnel between them and the intelligence community.

India is perhaps the only major democracy where the Armed forces Headquarters are outside the apex governmental structure. The Chiefs of Staff have assumed the role of operational commanders of their respective forces rather than that of Chiefs of Staff to the Prime Minister and Defence Minister. They simultaneously discharge the roles of operational commanders and national security planners/managers, especially in relation to future equipment and force postures. Most of their time, is however, devoted to the operational role, as is bound to happen. This has led to a number of negative results. Future-oriented long time planning suffers. Army Headquarters had developed a command rather than a staff culture. Higher decisions on equipment, force levels and strategy are not collegiate but command-oriented. The Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of the Army Commanders and their equivalents in the Navy and Air Force so that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broadbased. The present obsolete system has perpetuated the continuation of the culture of the British Imperial theatre system of an India Command whereas what is required is a National Defence Headquarters. Most opposition to change comes from inadequate knowledge of the national security decision-making process elsewhere in the world and a reluctance to change the status quo and move away from considerations of parochial interest. The status quo is often mistakenly defended as embodying civilian ascendancy over the armed forces, which is not a real issue. In fact, locating the Services' headquarters in the Government will further enhance civilian supremacy.

Structural reforms could bring about a much closer and more constructive interaction between the Civil Government and the Services. The Committee is of the view that the present obsolete system, bequeathed to India by Lord Ismay, merits re-examination. An effective and appropriate national security planning and decision-making structure for India in the nuclear age is overdue, taking account of the revolution in military affairs and threats of proxy war and terrorism and the imperative of modernising the Armed Forces. An objective assessment of the last 52 years will show that the country is lucky to have scraped through various national security threats without too much damage, except in 1962. The country can no longer afford such ad hoc functioning. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and the structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces headquarters be comprehensively studied and reorganised.

The Committee's review brings out many lessons that the Armed Forces, Intelligence agencies, Parliament, Government, media and the nation as a whole have to learn. These should stimulate introspection and reflection, leading to purposeful action. The Committee thrusts that its recommendations will be widely discussed and acted upon expeditiously so that the sacrifices made will not have been in vain. The best tribute to the dedication of those killed and wounded will be to ensure that "Kargils" of any description are never repeated.

There is both comfort and danger in clinging to any long established status quo. There will be many who suggest the most careful deliberation on the report. Procrastination has cost nations

dear. Others will no doubt advocate incremental change. Half measures will not do; synergy will be lost. The Committee has, after very wide interaction, sign-posted directions along the path to peace, ensuring progress, development and stability of the nation. How exactly the country should proceed to refashion its Security-Intelligence-Development shield to meet the challenge of the 21st century is for the Government, Parliament and public opinion to determine. There is no turning away from that responsibility.

As a former member secretary of the apex intelligence organisation at the national level, the Joint Intelligence Committee, I was able to obtain a ringside view of much on this front. I saw not as an operator but as an assessor "fed" with so-called intelligence from the home ministry (including the Border Security Force), defence ministry, ministry of external affairs, R&AW, IB and defence headquarters. The assignment of Chairman JIC (Additional Secretary status) is not particularly sought after by any bureaucrat for it offers responsibility without power. And for this reason I also held the fort on many occasions and for many months.

Until 1967, the intelligence bureau catered to all our intelligence requirements - both internal and external. There was no shortage of resources and the legendary B N Mullick exercised complete sovereignty over the intelligence empire for decades. This very hardworking officer indeed became an institution and was the guide and mentor of Jawaharlal Nehru for decades. But occasionally, he too blundered with some markedly obtuse intelligence assessments.

After the 1965 Indo-Pak war, a separate agency for our external intelligence requirements (Research and Analysis Wing) was created. It soon developed into a very powerful organisation and resources were no constraints. The IB had to do considerable "power shedding" and it was reduced to playing second fiddle thereafter. We detached ourselves from this era temporarily after a decade or so and with the coming to power of the Janta regime in 1977, Morarji Desai effected major reductions in the power of R&AW and it was no longer the all powerful organisation which it had developed to be.

In his autobiography (*The Story of My Life*, vol. III, page 44) Morarjibhai says:

- "This agency was created in 1967-68 with my consent as finance minister, I had not then realised the real intention of Shrimati Gandhi and agreed with the proposal. I cannot forgive myself for my stupidity in not seeing the possible implications of that seemingly innocent action. This was the instrument of coercion, which Shrimati Gandhi used against all who came under her surveillance including members of her own Cabinet."

R&AW was later restored to its former all pervasive power.

Intelligence gathering can be a very difficult and arduous task. It is the result of patience, liaison, 'logical' thought and clear exposition in making the maximum use of all sources and methodically piecing together very scrap of information. That any intelligence agency or organisation anywhere will have its grey areas is indisputable; and that the intelligence experts do not have Nostradamian attributes is also an accepted fact. But there is the very relevant question of accountability. Does it exist? And if it does should it not come into play at times,

particularly when we have witnessed so many failures and serious inadequacies both on nation and regional levels?

Eventually, the paper was prepared. The JIC steering committee, which had to meet at least once in three months to provide guidelines to the JIC for effecting improvements, commended the study. The then Cabinet Secretary, BD Pande (later Governor of Punjab) chaired the meeting. But sadly, I have to also record here that during my seven-year tenure, I was not able to arrange more than four or five meetings and R&AW always presented itself as the major roadblock.

R&AW deliberately enfeebled the JIC. I quote here some observations of a former director of R&AW in a national daily: "I agree that the JIC is lightweight and moves tardily. Whether its chairman comes on transfer from the NDMC, the Army or the police in its present form it is an unwanted redundancy. The services, the foreign ministry or the home ministry have to get on with the job. So they make their own quick assessments of intelligence, which reaches them directly, and go into action. Meanwhile the JIC debates the placement of a comma on the most noncommittal phraseology suitable for its assessment. If the customer waits for the JIC's assessment, his home would have burned down". It was a game of one upmanship all the time!

On the co-ordination of civil and military intelligence agencies - a vital requirement - we have had committees in the past making suitable recommendations. B G Desmukh, a former Cabinet Secretary and principal secretary to the Prime Minister, has recorded in a national daily on 26 April 1993 that: "As there is little co-ordination among intelligence agencies, there is often duplication of work and consequent wastage of resources. Efforts to evolve a co-ordination mechanism have not succeeded in the past but its need cannot be over emphasised."

I would also like to quote here the views of one of our divisional commanders in Sri Lanka during the IPKF operations a decade ago. Says Lt. Gen. S C Sardeshpande:

- "We heard little from the representatives of R&AW. Perhaps R&AW saw us as not quite ripe to deserve sharing their findings. As events forced themselves from mid-1989 onwards, we differed with their assessment, sometimes radically, as our faculties remained glued to the ground-wave. They seemed to permit themselves the luxury of over-enthusiasm, over-optimism and the virtue of meeting other demands and compulsions better known to them. Our 'pulse' of the people proved right in the end. Intelligence inputs from agencies depend predominantly on their perceptions as well as insight and the milieu in which they operate. Contributions from R&AW, IB and the Indian High Commission were limited and seldom helped us".

On integrational weakness the divisional commander has recorded:

- "Despite four decades of independence, three decades of insurgency, five wars and a continuum of a series of security crises, integration of intelligence agencies, there optimum exploitation, harmonious functioning and complementarily have still remained a far cry, instead of making them a war cry".

A watch dog for our intelligence agencies is imperative if the Steering Committee is dysfunctional. We also have to ensure that no intelligence agency becomes alarmingly powerful and here I quote Jaswant Singh, the present Minister of External Affairs. This is what he said in a national daily on 30 December 1994: "The Intelligence Bureau has over the years acquired the unsavoury image of being an extension of the political interests of the ruling party as a specialist in surveillance over the Opposition...."

A one page report on action initiated by the Government has also been tabled in the Parliament and the last paragraph states: "After due consideration of the recommendations, a thorough review, through an appropriate body, of the national security system in its entirety, including the areas covered by the above recommendations of the Committee, is being ordered by the Government." One hopes this is undertaken with utmost expedition for delay which usually occurs in the implementation of various reports, can have a deleterious effect on the vital subject of national security.

II. THE KARGIL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

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send very junior officials to JIC meetings. The DGMI did not send any regular input to the JIC for two years preceding the Kargil crisis. The JIC was not accorded the importance it deserved either by the Intelligence agencies or the Government. There are no checks and balances in the Indian intelligence system to ensure that the consumer gets all the intelligence that is available and is his due.

The Findings bring out many grave deficiencies in India's security management system. The framework Lord Ismay formulated and Lord Mountbatten recommended was accepted by a national leadership unfamiliar with the intricacies of national security management. There has been very little change over the past 52 years despite the 1962 debacle, the 1965 stalemate and the 1971 victory, the growing nuclear threat, end of the cold war, continuance of proxy war in Kashmir for over a decade and the revolution in military affairs. The political, bureaucratic, military and intelligence establishments appear to have developed a vested interest in the status quo. National security management recedes into the background in time of peace and is considered too delicate to be tampered with in time of war and proxy war. The Committee strongly feels that the Kargil experience, the continuing proxy war and the prevailing nuclearised security environment justify a thorough review of the national security system in its entirety.

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show that the country is lucky to have scraped through various national security threats without too much damage, except in 1962. The country can no longer afford such ad hoc functioning. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and the structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces headquarters be comprehensively studied and reorganised.

The Committee's review brings out many lessons that the Armed Forces, Intelligence agencies, Parliament, Government, media and the nation as a whole have to learn. These should stimulate introspection and reflection, leading to purposeful action. The Committee thrusts that its recommendations will be widely discussed and acted upon expeditiously so that the sacrifices made will not have been in vain. The best tribute to the dedication of those killed and wounded will be to ensure that "Kargils" of any description are never repeated.

There is both comfort and danger in clinging to any long established status quo. There will be many who suggest the most careful deliberation on the report. Procrastination has cost nations dear. Others will no doubt advocate incremental change. Half measures will not do; synergy will be lost. The Committee has, after very wide interaction, sign-posted directions along the path to peace, ensuring progress, development and stability of the nation. How exactly the country should proceed to refashion its Security-Intelligence-Development shield to meet the challenge of the 21st century is for the Government, Parliament and public opinion to determine. There is no turning away from that responsibility.

As a former member secretary of the apex intelligence organisation at the national level, the Joint Intelligence Committee, I was able to obtain a ringside view of much on this front. I saw not as an operator but as an assessor "fed" with so-called intelligence from the home ministry (including the Border Security Force), defence ministry, ministry of external affairs, R&AW, IB and defence headquarters. The assignment of Chairman JIC (Additional Secretary status) is not particularly sought after by any bureaucrat for it offers responsibility without power. And for this reason I also held the fort on many occasions and for many months.

Until 1967, the intelligence bureau catered to all our intelligence requirements - both internal and external. There was no shortage of resources and the legendary B N Mullick exercised complete sovereignty over the intelligence empire for decades. This very hardworking officer indeed became an institution and was the guide and mentor of Jawaharlal Nehru for decades. But occasionally, he too blundered with some markedly obtuse intelligence assessments.

After the 1965 Indo-Pak war, a separate agency for our external intelligence requirements (Research and Analysis Wing) was created. It soon developed into a very powerful organisation and resources were no constraints. The IB had to do considerable "power shedding" and it was reduced to playing second fiddle thereafter. We detached ourselves from this era temporarily after a decade or so and with the coming to power of the Janta regime in 1977, Morarji Desai effected major reductions in the power of R&AW and it was no longer the all powerful organisation which it had developed to be.

In his autobiography (*The Story of My Life*, vol. III, page 44) Morarjibhai says:

- "This agency was created in 1967-68 with my consent as finance minister, I had not then realised the real intention of Shrimati Gandhi and agreed with the proposal. I cannot forgive myself for my stupidity in not seeing the possible implications of that seemingly innocent action. This was the instrument of coercion, which Shrimati Gandhi used against all who came under her surveillance including members of her own Cabinet."

R&AW was later restored to its former all pervasive power.

Intelligence gathering can be a very difficult and arduous task. It is the result of patience, liaison, 'logical' thought and clear exposition in making the maximum use of all sources and methodically piecing together very scrap of information. That any intelligence agency or organisation anywhere will have its grey areas is indisputable; and that the intelligence experts do not have Nostradamic attributes is also an accepted fact. But there is the very relevant question of accountability. Does it exist? And if it does should it not come into play at times, particularly when we have witnessed so many failures and serious inadequacies both on nation and regional levels?

Eventually, the paper was prepared. The JIC steering committee, which had to meet at least once in three months to provide guidelines to the JIC for effecting improvements, commended the study. The then Cabinet Secretary, BD Pande (later Governor of Punjab) chaired the meeting. But sadly, I have to also record here that during my seven-year tenure, I was not able to arrange more than four or five meetings and R&AW always presented itself as the major roadblock.

R&AW deliberately enfeebled the JIC. I quote here some observations of a former director of R&AW in a national daily: "I agree that the JIC is lightweight and moves tardily. Whether its chairman comes on transfer from the NDMC, the Army or the police in its present form it is an unwanted redundancy. The services, the foreign ministry or the home ministry have to get on with the job. So they make their own quick assessments of intelligence, which reaches them directly, and go into action. Meanwhile the JIC debates the placement of a comma on the most noncommittal phraseology suitable for its assessment. If the customer waits for the JIC's assessment, his home would have burned down". It was a game of one upmanship all the time!

On the co-ordination of civil and military intelligence agencies - a vital requirement - we have had committees in the past making suitable recommendations. B G Desmukh, a former Cabinet Secretary and principal secretary to the Prime Minister, has recorded in a national daily on 26 April 1993 that: "As there is little co-ordination among intelligence agencies, there is often duplication of work and consequent wastage of resources. Efforts to evolve a co-ordination mechanism have not succeeded in the past but its need cannot be over emphasised."

I would also like to quote here the views of one of our divisional commanders in Sri Lanka during the IPKF operations a decade ago. Says Lt. Gen. S C Sardeshpande:

- "We heard little from the representatives of R&AW. Perhaps R&AW saw us as not quite ripe to deserve sharing their findings. As events forced themselves from mid-1989 onwards, we differed with their assessment, sometimes radically, as our faculties remained glued to the ground-wave. They seemed to permit themselves the luxury of

over-enthusiasm, over-optimism and the virtue of meeting other demands and compulsions better known to them. Our 'pulse' of the people proved right in the end. Intelligence inputs from agencies depend predominantly on their perceptions as well as insight and the milieu in which they operate. Contributions from R&AW, IB and the Indian High Commission were limited and seldom helped us".

On integrational weakness the divisional commander has recorded:

- "Despite four decades of independence, three decades of insurgency, five wars and a continuum of a series of security crises, integration of intelligence agencies, their optimum exploitation, harmonious functioning and complementarity have still remained a far cry, instead of making them a war cry".

A watch dog for our intelligence agencies is imperative if the Steering Committee is dysfunctional. We also have to ensure that no intelligence agency becomes alarmingly powerful and here I quote Jaswant Singh, the present Minister of External Affairs. This is what he said in a national daily on 30 December 1994: "The Intelligence Bureau has over the years acquired the unsavoury image of being an extension of the political interests of the ruling party as a specialist in surveillance over the Opposition...."

A one page report on action initiated by the Government has also been tabled in the Parliament and the last paragraph states: "After due consideration of the recommendations, a thorough review, through an appropriate body, of the national security system in its entirety, including the areas covered by the above recommendations of the Committee, is being ordered by the Government." One hopes this is undertaken with utmost expedition for delay which usually occurs in the implementation of various reports, can have a deleterious effect on the vital subject of national security.

The Kargil Review Committee Report

A Mindset Frozen in 1962 Era

Air Marshal B. D. Jayal (Retd.) PVSM, AVSM, VM & Bar

BACKGROUND

Early May 1999 will go down in the annals of Indian military history next only to the debacle of 1962 at the hands of the Chinese Army. It was then that two shepherds brought news to the Indian Army of Pakistani intrusions into the Indian side of the LOC in Jammu and Kashmir. The armed forces were caught off guard as also the entire security establishment, judging by the three-week response time before the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) formally met, authorised the use of air power and the Indian armed forces generally adopted a posture of deterrence. By then many officers and men had already perished.

The similarities between 1962 and 1999 are significant in two major areas. First, the lack of appreciation of the value of air power as a national security asset, and second, weaknesses in the security leadership chain. The exaggerated fear of retaliation by the Chinese on cities and other infrastructure prevented the Indian security establishment from committing the IAF to battle in 1962. In 1999, lack of use of the IAF for monitoring the LOC and the three-week procrastination in its commitment, reflect that not much has changed. On the subject of leadership, whatever gloss the Kargil Review Committee may put on it, then as now, professionally the Indian security leadership was caught on the wrong foot.

THE KARGIL REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) was appointed by the Government to review events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in the Kargil District of Ladakh in J&K and to recommend such measures as are considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions.¹ This raised expectations that the KRC would finally unravel fundamental weaknesses that are known to plague the Indian security establishment across the board and recommend meaningful measures.

‘From Surprise To Reckoning’, the KRC Report as presented to Parliament makes absorbing reading notwithstanding the absence of Annexures, Appendices and deletions made by the government in the interest of national security. While the KRC has with literary finesse presented a complex subject in a form that should appeal to a wider audience, to the students of national security it leaves crucial questions either untouched or unanswered.

This article proposes to reflect mainly on the aspects earlier mentioned and present a viewpoint. While these views may suffer from limitations of non availability of classified information that stands deleted from the published report, they never-the-less assume that a report tabled in the Parliament will contain all essential ingredients!

APPROACH

The KRC did not consider it appropriate to attempt to fix responsibility on particular individuals, as that would have made it necessary to adopt inquisitional procedures.² According to the Committee, this approach enabled it to enlist the willing co-operation of all concerned. The flip side is that the KRC was denied the opportunity to get to the root cause of specific failures of individuals, institutions and systems, causes that have far deeper ramifications to overall national security management.

Without such an inquisition the KRC could hardly be expected to recommend precise and effective preventive measures. Hence its wide and generic recommendations.

With respect to its terms of reference, the KRC notes, ‘as regards the other term of reference relating to safeguarding national security against future armed intrusions, the Committee decided to confine its scope to possible threats to the country’s land borders given the fact that it was set up in the context of the Kargil intrusions’.³ It is not clear whether this is in justification of keeping the Indian Air Force out of its review. Considering the scant attention given to air power, this assumption appears to carry weight.

The KRC also did not consider it appropriate to go into the details of the actual conduct of operations as it was considered outside its mandate. It ‘limited itself to the period ending with the authorisation of air power and the Indian Armed Forces generally adopting a posture of deterrence vis-à-vis Pakistan on 26 May 99’.⁴ While this is fair, one would expect the Chiefs of Staff Committee to have conducted its own classified in-house review of the operations, lessons learnt and individual/institutional failures. Judging by the lack of inter-service integration that appears to exist, this expectation, however, may be optimistic.

The nation must now accept that no one will be held accountable for the lives of four hundred and seventy four officers and men. Only chronic optimists will believe that somehow this time the Indian security system will respond and rectify the multi faceted weaknesses that plague national security management, weaknesses that are well known and well documented.

The Henderson Brookes Report on the 1962 debacle, the IPKF experience which cost nearly twelve hundred lives and the Committee on Defence Expenditure report were all available, before one more was added to the list. For good measure this also adorns bookshops!

DISCUSSIONS ON FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

General

The KRC records that intrusions in the Kargil sector were first noticed on 3 May 99 by shepherds.⁵ The first briefing was given to Defence and External Affairs Ministers on 17 May and to the CCS on 18 May. Another briefing to the Prime Minister and Defence Minister was on 24 May and the CCS met formally only on 25 May 99.⁶ Air Power was authorised on 26 May 99 by when the Indian armed forces had adopted a deterrence posture vis-à-vis Pakistan. This monumental response time on the part of a security system that aspires to wield a credible

nuclear deterrent deserved to have been critically and minutely analysed, day by day if not hour by hour. The reader is left guessing.

The KRC findings bring out many grave deficiencies in India's security management system and conclude that the political, bureaucratic, military and intelligence establishments appear to have developed a vested interest in the status quo.⁷ It is difficult to determine what specific inputs have compelled the Committee to arrive at these far reaching conclusions, true as they are historically known to be. Without the back up of specific instances, there is danger that these far reaching observations will be labeled as alarmist or exaggerated, because it is the same 'vested interests' that will sit in judgement on the KRC Report.

Role of the IAF

Under its findings, the KRC states, 'the Air Chief further maintained that if air power was to be used, the country should be prepared for a Pakistani response. Therefore, the relevant Air Commands and units were activated. The CCS finally authorised the use of air power on 25 May'.⁸ IAF commenced operations only on 27 May⁹.

In the chapter 'Kargil Intrusion Reconstructed', the KRC notes 'that the role of the IAF in support of the Army in Kargil was a significant development with far reaching consequences for the Pakistani intruders...'¹⁰ This comment relates only to when the IAF was finally committed to action after considerable delay.

Beyond these two brief references, the IAF barely features in the 266-page report. The report mentions presentations by the CAS, AOC-in-C WAC, DCAS and AOC, J&K, Udhampur. There is also record of Annexure 5.9 (deleted for security reasons) giving Chronology of Actions by IAF in Operation Safed Sagar, upto 26 May 99. However, no details are provided about these inputs. There is no discussion on the IAF's interaction with the KRC, of its missions and roles during peacetime management of the LOC or indeed what transpired between the Army and Air Force Commanders responsible for this sector during the crucial period between 3 May and 25 May. This raises a host of uncomfortable questions, some of which have a direct bearing on the KRC's other findings and conclusions, not to mention national security as a whole.

Integrated Land/Air Operations

The IAF and Army (as indeed the IAF and Navy) have a clearly defined organisation for the conduct of integrated operations. In this case Western Air Command has two Advanced HQs under Air Vice Marshals co-located at Northern Army Command and Western Army Command HQ, respectively. These in turn have under them Tactical Air Centres co-located with the respective Corps HQ. Forward Air Controllers (IAF pilots) are designated at tactical levels to co-ordinate air activity with the ground forces when such missions are undertaken. The IAF recognises the importance of air power for the conduct of integrated operations on land and at sea and the need for timely and responsive command and control. Hence the existence of these IAF units as also joint manuals and standard operating procedures (SOPs) approved by both Army and Air Commanders.

The KRC lists presentations by the AOC-in-C WAC and AOC J&K. Yet the report fails to enlighten the reader on their content or the IAF's involvement. One is left wondering whether the AOC J&K was even brought into the picture by Northern Command as events from 3 May unfolded, and if indeed he was, whether Western Air Command shared the urgency of Northern Command. If as the events unfolded, Northern Command had requisitioned helicopter gunships on 8 May and put the J&K theatre on alert on 12 May, one would have expected Western Air Command to have reacted in harmony and the IAF itself upgrading to an appropriate state of air defence alert. There are no answers in the report.

An Annexure (deleted on security grounds) lists the actions by the IAF upto 26 May. However, the reader is left guessing as to what these actions were. It is not clear from the report as to when the IAF was finally put on alert. In fact a national daily had reported in its front page that there were serious differences between the Army and the IAF during the crucial days following the discovery of the intrusions.¹¹ One can conjecture that these were finally resolved only during the CCS meeting on 25 May when clearance for the use of the IAF was finally communicated.

The KRC has obviously chosen to avoid these crucial but sensitive issues not because of lack of awareness, but through design. Whatever be the compulsions, these omissions are unfortunate, as are their obvious negative ramifications on the lessons that should have emerged.

This brings into serious question the very basis of integrated air-land operations in the Indian security context and the need to follow a Joint Chief concept responsible for planning and conduct of operations. Significantly, while the KRC recommendations under the heading 'National Security Management and Apex Decision Making'¹² talk about the need to reorganise the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision making and the interface between the MOD and Armed Forces HQ, they make no mention of a Joint Chief concept for integrated operational planning and execution. Possibly, another deliberate though unfortunate omission.

In an age where air power is driving strategic and tactical options and without which no worthwhile security calculus can even be contemplated, ignoring the role of the Air Force in managing a hostile LOC in peacetime, and relegating it to the side lines while reviewing the post-Kargil lessons, merely indicates a national security mindset that remains frozen in the 1962 era! A mindset that still defers the use of air power to a later stage conferring on it the label of a quantum escalation of conflict.

In an era of sub-continental nuclear deterrence, the very survival of India will depend on how quickly and effectively such a mindset is reversed. By side stepping the role, missions and contributions that the IAF could have made in preventing Kargil and would make in preventing future Kargils (or indeed Hiroshimas), the KRC has diluted the impact of its review on the future of national security.

Intelligence

Failure of the Intelligence system has been well documented as also lack of inter-agency co-ordination and co-ordination between the Army and the agencies. The report also concludes that the Indian intelligence structure is flawed.¹³

While these are valid observations and indeed have been known all along, the KRC has totally ignored the role of tactical reconnaissance (Tac R). In fact 'the Committee feels that these intrusions could have been detected earlier if India had half-metre resolution satellite imagery capability, appropriate UAVs and better HUMINT'.¹⁴ Lack of recognition of the IAF's Tactical Recce role and its current capabilities make this conclusion of the KRC look hollow.

The LOC as also the northern and northeastern borders are live. This not only implies that the responsibility even in peacetime is that of the armed forces and not the BSF, but that occasional intrusions, firing and skirmishes will occur. Tactical and armed reconnaissance of the tactical area, which clearly includes the LOC, is the designated role of the IAF and it is the responsibility of the Army to involve the IAF in effective monitoring of such borders. The IAF ought to be capable of achieving results while still observing peacetime norms imposed on combat aircraft operations near the borders. This, IAF's role, finds no mention in the KRC deliberations.

On the contrary an impression is created that aerial reconnaissance was the task of Winter Air Surveillance Operations (WASO) by Army helicopters. The report quotes factors like helicopter vibrations, concealment on hearing helicopter noise and others to conclude that these 'made WASO patrols of negligible value as is also evident from the records of previous years'.¹⁵ The report also says that 'helicopters employed for air surveillance patrolling do not have sophisticated monitoring and sensing devices'¹⁶ and confirms that 'overall, WASO patrols in the last two years have not thrown up any clues worth following up'.¹⁷

Helicopter flights of border areas by the Army commanders are for airborne patrols or terrain familiarisation. They are not Tac R missions and the Army neither has this task designated to it nor has the resources to conduct such missions. Tac R is a specialised role. It needs sophisticated optical and thermal sensors that are suitably mounted and gyro stabilised to cater to vibrations and attitude changes. The lenses are heated to prevent clouding and navigational and attitude data is transposed on the pictures from on-board inertial systems of the aircraft to enable correlating sensor and location information. These special reconnaissance pods are carried on fighter aircraft for both surprise and safety from ground fire and have both vertical and oblique capability. In addition, the data obtained needs specialised processing facilities and analysis by specialist Photo Interpreters (PIs) who are highly qualified for the task. The IAF routinely exercises itself to ensure that the turn around time from a 'field request' to 'delivery of information' is the bare minimum. That the IAF is fully equipped for this role and has the requisite aircraft, equipment and PIs to perform this role is borne out by the CAS's interview to a national daily, wherein he stated 'the need was for locating the intruders and their supply lines, which we did once the task was given. After going into action on 27 May, we built a phenomenal data bank of the terrain over the next two weeks.'¹⁸

The obvious question is why the Army did not task the IAF for routine peacetime monitoring of the LOC? The truth may be somewhat bitter. For too long the Army has been involved in expanding its helicopter arm at the cost of IAF role. From a pure Air Observation Post (AOP)

role, it has armed its helicopters with light guns and now appears to be claiming the Tac R role. Desire for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is an extension of this. It is not about pooling all defence resources for optimum security returns, but pure and simple inter-service turf war that is at the root of the problem.

One wishes that the KRC had looked at the fundamental roles and missions of the two services and then determined how and why the system fails and what systemic weaknesses contribute to such a fragmented approach. Why the Army fails to task the IAF for routine Tac R missions to supplement their patrolling is a mystery that only the army commanders can unravel. Till then their officers and men will continue to pay a heavy price.

To believe, as obviously the Army does, that suddenly by procuring satellite imagery and UAVs, all will be rosy is living in a paradise of one's own making! The reasons that make the KRC endorse this view are even harder to fathom. The opportunity to get to the root of this entire issue of inter-service turf wars, where individual services by attempting to encroach into the domain of another actually harm national security, has been lost.

Was Kargil Avoidable?

The KRC notes that 'a Kargil type situation could perhaps have been avoided had the Indian Army followed a policy of Siachenisation to plug unheld gaps along the 168 km stretch from Kaobal Gali to Chorbat La. Such a dispersal of forces to hold uninhabited territory of no strategic value would have dissipated considerable military strength and effort and would not at all have been cost effective.'¹⁹

One is left to draw the conclusion that the alternative to Siachenisation was perhaps the inevitability of Kargil. This writer differs with this viewpoint as this conclusion flows out of a lack of comprehension of the roles and missions of the armed forces in peace, war and indeed the no peace - no war situation that exists along the LOC in J&K.

From the previous discussions it is evident that the Army, which must retain the lead role in managing the LOC did not involve the IAF intimately in this task. The Army mindset is evident from the fact that the 121 Brigade Commander had in August 1998 projected a requirement of satellite imagery and UAVs to the COAS during his visit.²⁰ While these were not even in the inventory or within reach of the Army, the IAF next door was sitting idle with Tac R equipment optimised for such missions, imported at great cost and which could have been made available in a few hours! What is more, none of the commanders above the Brigade level brought this elementary fact to the Brigade Commander's notice!

The obvious conclusion is that Kargil was avoidable without the so called Siachenisation, but became a victim of inter-service turf wars and the fragmented higher defence organisation prevailing in India contrary to experience in the rest of the democratic world. Blaming it on lack of any specific resources with the armed forces of India is not wholly justified.

In fact it is this writer's belief that in addition to the many likely factors that have been documented by the KRC prompting this Pakistani misadventure, an important one is the belief

by the Pakistan Armed Forces that the IAF was just not involved in the operational aspects of maintaining the sanctity of the LOC. That's how they successfully beat the Army WASOs. They perhaps gambled that even when ground operations finally began, the IAF would remain aloof. This was their Waterloo. The KRC report does hint at this thought process when it says 'Though Pakistan was aware of deployment of the IAF on 25 May 1999, before the air strikes began...(deleted for security reasons)... yet it appears to have decided to persist with its intrusion operations'.²¹ Perhaps by then the Pakistanis had become victims of their own over confidence.

Security Leadership

That the KRC chose not to follow the path of fixing responsibility on individuals has been reflected earlier. However taking a soft approach towards lack of military professionalism and ignoring institutional lapses at the higher levels of security management sends out a wrong signal to all those concerned with national security not the least those potential leaders who wait in the wings to lead our men and women in uniform. Some examples will reinforce the point being made.

In its *Prologue* the KRC says 'This was an incomparably harsher environment, enveloped in cloud, at elevations where men, arms and equipment, supplies, logistics, trajectories, ballistics, manoeuvres, flight paths, combat flight plans, surveillance and, indeed the very survival, hinged on acclimatisation of one kind or another in that rarefied, deoxygenated atmosphere. It demanded improvisation and sheer will power.'²²

Poetic and true, but not a substitute for military professionalism. The armed forces are required to train in peace such that they do not bleed in war. Neither the battleground, nor the air environment and certainly not the enemy, were surprises. Improvisation and will power is what peacetime training and dynamic operational leadership is all about. Not crying foul when shepherds come calling!

The KRC quoting former senior servicemen and various factors concludes that 'these factors, together with the nature of the terrain and weather conditions in the area generated an understandable Indian military mindset about the nature and extent of the Pakistani threat in this area.'²³ The fact that the Pakistani Army intruded against the so-called 'understandable' mindset of its foes only goes to show their tactical shrewdness. Studying their adversary's weaknesses and exploiting them with surprise. This is what tactical leadership and war fighting is all about. Not about static mindsets inherited over decades even as technology, threat and the motivations of the adversary are rapidly changing.

The IAF, despite having conducted a major exercise in this sector only a month before the crisis, lost two fighters and one helicopter before even finding its feet. This was not a professional beginning. There was also considerable media speculation about the IAF's delayed induction. In fairness to the IAF and indeed to the Indian public, this controversy needed to be laid to rest. The KRC is silent or perhaps its comments stand deleted on Government Security considerations. Either way this does not enhance confidence of a nation whose first line of defence in a nuclear environment is its Air Force.

The above examples have been cited to highlight that at the tactical military level Kargil seems to have displayed the Indian military to be a sluggish, slumbering giant - not an energetic, tactically innovative and dynamic one that is for ever ready to outwit the adversary. While this could partly be due to the prolonged use of the Army in Internal Security duties, no such alleviating factors defend the IAF. Also too many unpleasant episodes in the recent past have brought to the fore that all is not well with promotions and appointments in the forces. Added to this, inter service rivalries seem to be dissipating scarce energy.

At higher levels, the archaic higher security organisation followed by India in defiance of all security logic must carry a large share of blame. Not least the well-known politicisation, bureaucratisation, and seniority syndrome of key appointments at the expense of sheer merit – a subject that continues to draw public attention. Through decades successive administrations have played their negative part in bringing national security to this state.

Had the KRC chosen to probe these weaknesses, however unpleasant they may be, they would have been led through numerous alleys that indicate all that is wrong with the way the Indian armed forces are being managed right upto the very highest echelons. These were major areas to be critically probed to get at the causes that have resulted in such disastrous effects. Only then the KRC's conclusions of the 'grave deficiencies in India's security management system,'²⁴ would have carried weight.

CONCLUSION

Two similarities were mentioned at the beginning between 1962 and 1999. There is yet another fateful similarity. The Henderson Brookes Report has never been made public - so weaknesses never surfaced and accountability glossed over. The KRC Report, by virtue of aiming for co-operation and transparency, has chosen to avoid an inquisitorial approach. This robs it of any depth in identifying weaknesses. Accountability has again become a casualty.

The question that confronts the student of Indian national security today is stark. How much longer can India afford to carry on its national security business 'as usual', finally depending on the guts and valour of its officers and men to retrieve national honour at the cost of their lives? In this writer's view, with the nuclear shadow now hanging over the sub-continent, the answer is 'not a day longer'!

The KRC in its recommendations reflects that 'the political, bureaucratic, military and intelligence establishments appear to have developed a vested interest in the status quo.'²⁵ Ironically the KRC has passed the unpleasant buck of unraveling the why, how and who of India's structural security weaknesses and their remedies back to the same 'vested interests' that it criticises. One year on, Kargil has come a full circle.

In the *Epilogue* while paying tribute to the four hundred and seventy four who sacrificed their lives, the KRC *trusts* that 'the best tribute to their supreme dedication and example will be to ensure that "Kargils" of any description are never repeated.'²⁶ Trust in the Indian security context has historically been a one way street - only on the military man's part. The KRC had the opportunity to change this. It chose not to take up the challenge.

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COVER STORY

The final assault, and the withdrawal

As Pakistan retreats from its Kargil misadventure, India's spectacular military successes against the odds could turn into an uncertain political victory.

PRAVEEN
in Batalik

SWAMI

A MACABRE graveyard marked the summit of the majestic Jubbar heights. More than 30 bodies of Pakistani troops and irregulars had been dumped in shallow graves on the 4,924-metre peak by a retreating unit. With just a few stones to cover them, the bodies had decomposed beyond recognition. The summit was enveloped in an indescribable miasma of death. On reaching the Jubbar summit, the first thing the Indian soldiers did was to ask for disinfecting and deodorising chemicals to be sent up as fast as possible, rather than celebrate its recapture. There was no joy at the sight of rotting bodies. "While a man is firing at you, he is your enemy. A dead man is nobody's enemy," said one officer involved in the assault.

Two months into the Kargil war, its end has begun with a United States-authored withdrawal of Pakistani troops and irregulars. The withdrawal began after the capture of several important features in the Batalik sub-sector, where the intrusion by Pakistan was first detected on May 3. Progress had been made in the Mushkoh Valley, another major area of concentration of Pakistani troops, while Drass has almost been cleared.

India's spectacular military triumphs came in the face of overwhelming odds. Several people believed that the campaign to evict Pakistani positions, carried out at heights above 5,000m, was doomed to failure.

But if the Indian Army again established its military competence and resolve, the Kargil campaign's outcome could in a broader political sense prove to be an uncertain victory. The military success could be undermined in the years to come by the U.S.' emergence as a central player in the larger war over the future of Jammu and Kashmir.

Indian Army personnel with the body of Capt. Imtiaz Malik of Pakistan's 165 Mortar Regiment. The body was brought down from Tiger Hills to Srinagar on July 11.

India's progress in the Batalik area began in early July when soldiers from the Garhwal Rifles, the Bihar Regiment, the Gurkha Rifles and the Grenadiers began pushing their way along the flanks of the Batalik heights. The 5,287-m summit of Khalubar, east of Yaldor, fell on July 2 and the entire mountain was cleared within three days by the Gurkhas. West of the Urdas Langpa (stream), Peak 4,812, which the Indian soldiers call Dog Hill, followed rapidly. Holding these flanks, the troops could now begin to cut off Pakistani reinforcements making their way down from their rear base at Muntho Dalo, which had been hit by successive waves of air strikes through the previous fortnight.

Fortune played a big role in the final assault. Troops had succeeded in making their way up the Urdas Langpa to Banju, the minor peak, which guards the Jubbar ridge line. The assault up the ridge would have been murderous had a shell not hit a massive Pakistani ammunition dump near the Jubbar peak. An officer involved in the assault recalls: "It (the ammunition dump fire) was the most amazing display of fireworks I have ever seen. It was a like a hundred Diwali nights at once." The Pakistani troops were forced to retreat and the route up Jubbar to Peaks 4,924 and 4,927 was now clear.

Progress was rapid on the eastern side of the Garkhun Langpa as well. The Garkhun Langpa is flanked by Jubbar to its west and the Kukerthang and Tharu heights to its east. The push from the village of Yaldor on the Yaldor Langpa to Peak 4,821 on Kukerthang was a protracted one and claimed heavy casualties. But the mountain was taken and the 5,103-m Tharu fell next. With the heights intact, the troops could now dominate the Garkhun Langpa and the villages of Baroro and Kha Baroro. Further, Pakistani troop movement down the Gargurdu, Garkhun and Yador Langpas, the three major streams that trisect the Batalik area from west to east, is now near-impossible.

KAMAL

NARANG

Bombardment by an artillery gun in the Batalik sector. It was here that the first indications of a Pakistani intrusion became evident. Massive air and ground strikes resulted in the recapture of some important peaks held by Pakistani troops.

AMONG the most important realisation of the Batalik campaign is that the Pakistan Army has direct complicity in events in the area. The interrogation of Naik Inayat Ali of the 5 Northern Light Infantry, captured on the night of July 2, proved that the heights were occupied by his battalion and that no irregulars were present there. Inayat Ali told his captors that his entire unit of 200 had been wiped out in sustained Indian ground and air fire. One of the

soldiers involved in his capture told *Frontline* that having exhausted his ammunition, Ali continued to throw stones down the mountain at Indian soldiers. "We had to send someone around and finally pin him down," he said.

However, contrary to official claims, the battle for Batalik was not over at the time Pakistan announced on July 11 the withdrawal of its troops. The retreating Pakistan troops had been reinforcing at two heights - Peaks 5,121 and 5,327 - over a kilometre inside the Line of Control (LoC) from where their pull-out appears to have commenced. Reaching these heights would have involved a further assault, which could have proved costly. To the east of Yadlor lies Muntho Dal, the 5,065-m pyramid which has acted as Pakistan's principal supply base for the Batalik sector. Although Muntho Dalo has come under sustained air attack, and 105-millimetre field guns and multi-barrelled Pinaka rocket launchers have been pounding the position from the Silmoo Langpa, until July 9, the final physical occupation could again have taken time.

AP

Militants belonging to the Al Badr group on a snow-covered hilltop in Kargil, in a hand-out photo released by the group at a press conference in Rawalpindi on July 10.

Pakistan's movement out of the Drass area also prevented what could have been a series of small but bitter skirmishes along the Tiger Hills sector. At least one Pakistani position on the western face of Tiger Hills remained intact until the withdrawal, and there have been concerted counter-attacks on Peaks 5,100 and 4,875. Interestingly, the Tiger Hills area also appears to have received significant reinforcements of Pakistani irregulars until July 8. On that day, the bodies of three Pakistani soldiers, Major Iqbal and Captain Imtiaz Malik of the 12 Northern Light Infantry (NLI) and Captain Karnal Sher of the 165 Mortar Regiment, were recovered from the hills. But there is little doubt that the early withdrawal helped India retake positions such as the Marpo La pass. Intriguingly, Army Public Relations had claimed in a letter to *Frontline* that the area had already been recaptured.

But it is in the Mushkoh Valley and Kaksar that Pakistan's retreat is likely to have the most significant impact. The assault down the Mushkoh Valley, which began on July 7, claimed 23 soldiers the next day. More casualties were reported subsequently. Much of the fighting came along the Mun Thang, the stream that drains Peak 4,342 above the Valley. The fighting is at an air-distance of between 5 and 6 km from the LoC, but Pakistani troops were not likely to be present in strength in the region since the temperature in the glacial north of the Mushkoh Valley would rule out holding positions for any length of time. The counter-attacks on Tiger Hills and Peak 5,100 appeared designed to ease the pressure on the Pakistani positions in Mushkoh.

KAKSAR was also certain to see bitter fighting. At least three attempts to storm the Pakistan-occupied Bajrang Post and Peak 5,299, which dominates the Kaksar stream, have been beaten back since the fighting began. A major offensive that began on June 6 showed few results until the withdrawal began. While the Indian troops had been engaged in virtual hand-to-hand combat a fortnight ago, Pakistan succeeded in reinforcing its positions. Officials had been desperately petitioning New Delhi for a limited retaliatory incursion across the LoC in this area since the only local ridge line route to Peak 5,299 lies from the other side. The only option would have been a succession of near-suicidal assaults up the mountain face.

SHANKER

CHAKRAVARTY

Soldiers patrolling the Batalik sector. The Indian progress in the area began soon after the summit of Khalubar fell on July 2. The soldiers of Gurkha Rifles cleared the entire mountain within three days.

Indian field commanders and troops were preparing for these final assaults when the Pakistani withdrawal began. Despite the rhetoric emanating from terrorist groups in Islamabad, there is little doubt that the retreating forces were more than delighted to be on their way. Deserted by their officers, having lost well over half their numbers, short of food and ammunition and subjected to eight weeks of sustained air and ground bombardment, wireless intercepts made clear that what remained of Pakistan's forces on the mountains were dispirited and in disarray. An Indian military success had become inevitable as Pakistan announced its withdrawal.

There is more than a little confusion about the time that would be taken for the withdrawal and its physical manifestations. Even as officials in New Delhi announced that preliminary evidence of a pullout had been noticed, 15 Corps Brigadier (General Staff) A.K. Chopra told journalists in Srinagar that nothing of the kind had happened. It is likely that some pockets of resistance will remain for a few weeks although there has been a marked decline in cross-border fire since July 9. Informed sources told *Frontline* that the Ministry of Defence had passed on instructions to field artillery formations only to fire in defence. This would allow relatively safe movement back across the LoC, which was perhaps one of the issues discussed by the Directors-General of Military Operations of India and Pakistan on July 11.

More important, the time has now come for a transparent examination of the strategic misjudgments that led to the enormous costs inflicted on India on the Kargil heights. Despite denials by the Army that it knew of plans of an armed intrusion, sources told *Frontline* that two officers attached to the 121 Brigade in Kargil had sent up warnings in September and November 1998 to the 3 Infantry Division's headquarters at Leh, the 15 Corps Headquarters in Srinagar and the Army Headquarters in New Delhi. Major Bhupinder Singh and Major K.B.S. Khurana of the 121 Brigade's Intelligence Team and

Intelligence and Field Security Unit had warned of an intrusion in April; they filed reports similar to those issued by the Intelligence Bureau's Kargil field officer to his Leh station. The first of the Singh-Khurana reports classified the information as non-reliable and the second as highly reliable.

Pakistani soldier Naik Inayat Ali of 5 Northern Light Infantry, who was captured by the Indian forces in Batalik on July 2. His entire unit of 200 men was wiped out in sustained Indian attack.

Senior officials were presumably too busy or too taken in with the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition government's Lahore Bus diplomacy to pay attention. No cogent account of deployments through the winter has yet been offered, but some guesses are possible. The first snow in the Kargil area fell on October 16, just a day after the formal deadline for the movement of civilian winter supplies across the Zoji La pass. But after two days of snowfall, no more fell until the night of January 4; January and February saw only light snowfall, not enough to drive posts off the mountain heights; March 8 saw a sudden heavy snowfall, after which positions such as Bajrang Post in Kaksar probably moved down. With supplies running low and the threat perception being minimal, officials probably believed it would be safer to move downhill and return in June.

WHAT the Indian Army achieved at Kargil was to ensure that Pakistani intruders were evicted from large areas of occupied territory well within the 12-week time-frame senior officials had privately suggested at the beginning of the campaign. In an inversion of the conventional play of mountain war, the defenders of fortified positions, by most estimates, suffered twice as many casualties as India. Yet Pakistan's retreating forces succeeded in inflicting enormous military and economic costs on India, tying down five Indian brigades but losing only expendable and poorly paid infantry soldiers and irregulars. Secondly, even if the international reaction to its adventure did not play quite the way in which Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and General Pervez Musharraf may have expected, Pakistan has secured the U.S.' emergence as a key player in Jammu and Kashmir.

K.M.

CHOUDHARY

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AP

Indian soldiers take up position on a hill in the Mushkoh Valley region on July 10.

In the years to come, Pakistan is certain to look to these twin outcomes of the Kargil conflict and see what opportunities may be found in them. There are already disturbing signs that an escalation of violence could be imminent in Jammu and Kashmir, a development which could open the way for renewed Western intervention. Incidentally, Western backing for India was greeted with cries of delight by the Union Government. In the absence of serious

reflection by the security establishment, the victory the Indian soldiers have built at enormous cost could be subverted.

WITH an election campaign just round the corner, spurious triumphalism is almost certain to black out the disturbing possibilities that have emerged with the end of the conflict. Indian soldiers have held their ground against the most concerted attempt to transfigure Jammu and Kashmir since the war of 1965. Whether the BJP-led government will be able to do the same remains to be seen.

May 26 Tapes

The following is the Verbatim record of the full conversation between General Pervez Musharraf and Lt General Mohammed Aziz on May 26, 1999. The transcript was released during the External Affairs Minister's Press Briefing on June 11, 1999 in New Delhi.

Pak end: Lt General Mohammed Aziz, Chief of General Staff

China end: General Pervez Musharraf, Chief of Army Staff

P: How is the visit going?

C: Yes, very well, Ok. And, what else is the news on that side?

P: Ham-dul-ullah. There is no change on the ground situation. They have started rocketing and straffing. That has been upgraded a little. It has happened yesterday also and today. Today high altitude bombing has been done.

C: On their side, in those positions?

P: In those positions, but in today's bombing about three bombs landed on our side of the Line of control. No damage, Sir.

C: Is it quite a lot?

P: Sir, about 12-13 bombs were dropped, from which three fell on our side, which does not appear to be a result of inaccuracy. In my interpretation, it is a sort of giving of a message that if need be, we can do it on the other side as well. It is quite distance apart. Where the bombs have been dropped, they have tried to drop from a good position where they are in difficulty, from behind the LoC but they have fallen on our side of the LoC. So I have spoken to the Foreign Secretary and I have told him that he should make the appropriate noises about this in the Press.

C: They (Indians) should also be told.

P: That we have told, Foreign Secretary will also say and Rashid will also say. He will not, generally speaking, make any such mistake about those other bombs falling on the other side, our stand should be that all these bombs are falling on our side. We will not come into that situation. The guideline that they have given, we have stressed that we should say that this build-up and employment of air strike which has been done under the garb of....us (?), actually they are targetting our position on the LoC and our logistic build-up, these possibly they are taking under the garb having intention for operation the craft (?) Line of Control, and this need to be taken note of and we would retaliate in kind.... is what happened? So, the entire build-up we want to give this colour.

C: Absolutely OK. Yes, this is better. After that, has there been any talk with them? Any meetings etc?

P: Yesterday, again, in the evening.

C: Who all were there?

P: Actually, we insisted that a meeting should be held, because otherwise that friend of ours, the incumbent of my old chair, we thought lest he give some interpretation of his own, we should do something ourselves by going there.

C: Was he little disturbed. I heard that there was some trouble in Sialkot.

P: Yes, There was one in Daska. On this issue there was trouble. Yes, he was little disturbed about that but I told him that such small things keep happening...(?) and we can reply to such things in a better way.

C: Absolutely.

P: There is no such thing to worry.

C: So that briefing to Mian Seheb that we did, was the forum the same as where we had done previously? There, at Jamshed's place?

P: No. In Mian Saheb's office.

C: Oh I see. There. What was he saying?

P: From here we had gone -- Choudhary Zafar Saheb, Mehmood, myself & Tauqir. Because before going, Tauqir had spoken with his counterpart. We carried that tape with us.

C: So, what was he (Indian counterpart) saying?

P: That is very interesting. When you come, I will play it for you. Its focus was that these infiltrators, who are sitting here, they have your help and artillery support, without which they could not have come to J&K. This is not a very friendly act and it is against the spirit of the Lahore Declaration. Then Tauqir told him that if your boys tried to physically attack the Line of Control and go beyond it....and that the bombs were Planted on the Turtok bridge and the dead body received in the process was returned with military honours and I said, I thought that there wan good enough indication you would not enter into this type of misadventure, and all this build-up that you are doing --- one or more brigade strength & 50-60 aircraft are being collected. These are excuses for undertaking some operations against the verious spaces, so I had put him on the defensive. Then he said the same old story. He would put three points again and again that they (militants) should not be supported, and without your support they Could not be there, they have sophisticated weapons and we will flush them out, we will not let them stay there. But this is not a friendly act.

C: So, did they talk of coming out and meeting somewhere?

P: No, No, they did not.

C: Was there some other talk of putting pressure on us?

P: No. He only said that they (militants) will be given suitable reception. This term he used. He said they will be flushed out, and everytime Tauqir said that please tell us some detail, detail about how many have gone into your area, what is happening there? Then I will ask the concerned people and then we will get back to you. So whenever he asked these details, he would say, we will talk about this when we meet, then I will give details. This means, they are possibly looking forward to the next round of talks, in which the two sides could meet. This could be the next round of talks between the two PMs which they are expecting it....Sir, very good thing, no Problem...

C: So, many times we had discussed, taken your (PM's?...) blessings and yesterday also I told him that the door of discussion, dialogue must be kept open & rest, no change in ground situation.

P: So, no one was in a particularly disturbed, frame of mind.

C: Even your seat man?

P: Yes, he was disturbed. Also, Malik Saheb was disturbed, as they had been even earlier. Those two's views were that the status quo & the present Position of Gen Hassan (?) no change should be recommended in that. But he was also saying that any escalation after that should be regulated as there may be the danger of war. On this logic, we gave the suggestion that there was no such fear as the scruff (tooti) of their (militants) neck is in our hands, whenever you want, we could regulate it. Ch Zafar Saheb coped very well. He gave a very good presentation of our viewpoint. He said we had briefed the PM earlier & given an assessment. After this, we played the tape of Tauqir. Then he said that what we are seeing, that was our assessment, and those very stages of the military situation were being seen, which it would not be a problem for us to handle. Rest, it was for your guidance how to deal with the political & diplomatic aspects. We told him there is no reason of alarm & panic. Then he said that when I came to know seven days back, when Corps Commanders were told. The entire reason of the success of this operation was this total secrecy. Our experience was that our earlier efforts failed because of lack of secrecy. So the top priority is to accord Confidentiality, to ensure our success. We should respect this and the advantage we have from this would give us a handle.

C: Rest (baki), is Mian Saheb Ok?

P: Ok. He was confident just like that but for the other two. Shamshad as usual was supporting. Today, for the last two hours the BBC has been continuously reporting on the air strikes by India. Keep using this -- let them keep dropping bombs. As far as internationalisation is concerned, this is the fastest this has happened. You may have seen in the press about UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's appeal that both countries should sit & talk.

May 29 Tapes

The following is the Verbatim record of the full conversation between General Pervez Musharraf and Lt General Mohammed Aziz on May 29, 1999. The transcript was released during the External Affairs Minister's Press Briefing on June 11, 1999 in New Delhi.

Pak end: Lt General Mohammed Aziz, Chief of General Staff

China end: General Pervez Musharraf, Chief of Army Staff

P: This Is Pakistan. Give me Room No. 83315 (same room number). Hello.

C: Hello Aziz.

P: The situation on ground is OK, no change. This area but it is not brought down by attack. One of their MI-17 arms (?) was brought down. Further, the position is, we had approached to our position, it was brought down. Rest is OK. Nothing else except, there is a development. Have you listened to yesterday's news regarding Mian Saheb speaking to his counterpart. He told him that the spirit of Lahore Declaration and escalation has been done by your people. Specially wanted to speak to me thereafter. He told Indian PM that they should have waited instead of upping the ante by using Air Force & all other means. He (Nawaz) told him (Indian PM) that he suggested Sartaj Aziz could go to New Delhi to explore the possibility of defusing the tension.

C: OK.

P: Which is likely to take place, most probably tomorrow.

C: OK.

P: Our other friend (Lt Gen Ziauddin, DG ISI...?... or could be United States) might have also put pressure on. For that, today they will have a discussion at Foreign Office about 9.30 and Zafar Saheb (Lt Gen Saeeduz Zaman Zafar, GOC 11 Corps & Acting Chief) is supposed to attend.

C: OK

P: Aziz Saheb (Sartaj Aziz, Foreign, Minister) has discussed with me and my recommendation is that dialogue option is always open. But in their first meeting, they must give no understanding or no commitment on ground situation.

C: Very correct. You or Mehmood (GOC X Corps, Rawalpindi) must have to go with Zafar. Because, they don't know about the ground situation.

P: This week, we are getting together at 8'o clock because meeting will be at 9.30, so Zafar Saheb will deliberate it. We want to suggest to Zafar that they have to maintain

that they will not be talking about ground situation. All that you say. So far as the ground situation is concerned. Subsequently, DGMOs can discuss with each other and work out the modus operandi.

C: Idea on LoC

P: Yes. Hint is that, given that the LoC has many areas where the interpretation of either side is not what the other side believes. So, comprehensive deliberation is required. So, that can be worked out by DGMOs.

C: If they are assured that we are here from a long period. We have been sitting here for long. Like in the beginning, the matter is the same -- no post was attacked and no post was captured. The situation is that we are along our defensive Line of Control. If it is not in his (Sartaj Aziz's) knowledge, then discuss it altogether. Emphasise that for years, we are here only.

C: Yes, this point should be raised. We are sitting on the same LoC since a long period.

P: This is their weakness. They are not agreed on the demarcation under UN's verification, whereas we are agreed. We want to exploit it.

C: This is in Simla Agreement that we cannot go for UN intervention.

P: Our neighbour does not accept their presence or UNMOGIP arrangement for survey for the area. So, we can start from the top, from 9842 (NJ 9842). On this line, we can give them logic but in short, the recommendation for Sartaj Aziz Saheb is that he should make no commitment in the first meeting on military situation. And he should not even accept ceasefire, because if there is ceasefire, then vehicles will be moving (on Dras-Kargil highway). In this regard, they have to use their own argument that whatever is interfering with you. That we don't know but there is no justification about tension on LoC. No justification. We want to give them this type of brief so that he does not get into any specifics.

C: Alright.

P: In this connection, we want your approval and what is your programme.

C: I will come tomorrow. We are just leaving within an hour. We are going to Shenzhen. From there, by evening, we will be in Hong Kong. There will be a flight tomorrow from Hong Kong. So, we will be there at Lahore in the evening, via Bangkok flight.

P: Sunday evening, you will be at Lahore. We will also indicate that, if there is more critical situation, then it (Sartaj visit) should be deferred for another day or two. We can discuss on Monday & then do.

C: Has this MI-17 not fallen in our area?

P: No Sir. This has fallen in their area. We have not claimed it. We have got it claimed through the mujahideen.

C: Well done.

P: But topwise side, crashing straight before our eyes.

C: Very good. Now are they facing any greater difficulty in flying them? Are they scared or not? This also you should note. Are they coming any less nearer?

P : Yes. There is a lot of pressure on them. They were talking about greater air defence than they had anticipated. They can't afford to lose any more aircraft. There has been less intensity of air flying after that.

C: Very good. First class. Is there any build up on the ground?

P: Just like that but the movement is pretty sluggish and slow. One or two are coming near no.6. Till now only one call sign in which one has not reached the valley so far. Now the air people & the ground people will stay back and then the situation will be OK.

C: See you in the evening.

Siachen Glacier / Operation Meghdoot

The Siachen Glacier has no significant strategic value. Since 1984, the "snow-warriors" of India and Pakistan have been locked in supremacy for the control of Siachen glacier. Its inhospitable terrain has taken heavy toll of men and resources on both sides. The world's highest battlefield, for over a decade India and Pakistan have fought at altitudes of over 22,000 feet in minus 60°C temperatures. Siachen is the world's largest non-polar glacier, and thus is sometimes referred to as the third pole. It is 78 km long and situated at an altitude of 5,400 meters above sea level. The Siachen glacier is the great Himalayan watershed that demarcates central Asia from the Indian sub-continent, and that separates Pakistan from China in this region.

The roots of the conflict over Siachen (the place of roses) lie in the non-demarcations on the western side on the map beyond NJ9842. The 1949 Karachi agreement and the 1972 Simla agreement presumed that it was not feasible for human habitation to survive north of NJ9842. Prior to 1984 neither India nor Pakistan had any permanent presence in the area

In the 1970s and early 1980s Pakistan permitted several mountaineering expeditions to climb high peaks on this glacier. This was to reinforce their claim on the area as these expeditions arrived on the glacier with a permit obtained from the Government of Pakistan. Operation Meghdoot [named after the divine cloud messenger in a Sanskrit play] was launched on 13 April 1984 when the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force went into the Glacier. Pakistan quickly responded with troop deployments.

The 78 km long Siachen glacier lies between the Saltoro ridge line to the west and the main Karakoram range to the east. The Saltoro ridge originates from the Sia Kangri in the Karakoram range and the altitudes range from 18,000 to 24,000 ft. The major passes on this ridge are Sia La at 20,000 ft and Bila Fond La at 19,000 ft.

The Indian Army controls the heights, holding on to the tactical advantage of high ground. The Pakistanis cannot get up to the glacier, while the Indians cannot come down. Presently India holds two-thirds of glacier and commands two of the three passes. Pakistan controls Gyong La pass that overlooks the Shyok and Nubra river Valley and India's access to Leh district. The battle zone comprised an inverted triangle resting on NJ 9842 with Indira Col and the Karakoram Pass as the other two extremities.

Estimates of the current troop deployments vary. One estimate suggests that Both sides deploy about 3,000 soldiers, while another reports that a total of some 10,000 troops are deployed on

Combatants

- [India](#)
- [Pakistan](#)

References

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each side of the Line of Actual Control. According to a third estimate Pakistan maintains three battalions on the glacier, while India has seven battalions defending Siachen.

The Pakistanis can resupply most of their posts by road and pack mule. At their forward positions, some as high as 21,000 feet, the Indians must rely on helicopters.

On average, one Pakistani soldier is killed every fourth day, while one Indian soldier is killed every other day. Over 1,300 Pakistani soldiers have died on Siachen between 1984 and 1999. According to Indian estimates, this operation had cost India over Rs. 50 billion and almost 2,000 personnel casualties till 1997. Almost all of the casualties on both sides have been due to extreme weather conditions.

Strategic Analysis:

A Monthly Journal of the IDSA

January 2000 (Vol. XXIII No. 10)

Media Related Lessons From Kargil

By A.K. Sachdev *

The media is allergic to the uniform and resistant to “management”.

— Major General Arjun Ray VSM ¹ Indian Army

Introduction

Much has been written and spoken about l'affaire Kargil since the Ides of May and, without doubt, much more will be articulated about it in the months to come. It was, as Major General Ashok Mehta called it, “India’s first war on television”. ² The whole episode—a manifestation of the festering and chronic problem of Kashmir— brought to the fore several issues worthy of the media’s attention. The nation, to the last man, raised itself to lofty support for the soldier at the front. Discordant notes sired by political motives unleashed eristic debates on the parentage of the infiltration process. Claims and counter-claims by India and Pakistan played cacophonous ping pong, while watching nations pontificated on the hazards attendant upon non-NPT, non-CTBT states in possession of nuclear weapons. The military, in its proud tradition of detached professionalism, went about its business with an I-have-got-a-job-to-do demeanour, setting for itself well-defined, attainable military objectives and achieving them with consummate and courageous expertise. Difficult terrain and weather conditions, paucity of some pieces of equipment and accoutrement and high casualty figures did not deter them from doing their bidding. Military assets were used in pursuance of military aims and objectives defined by the national government in its political sagacity.

All this while, the media worked overtime to quench the insatiable public craving for news on Kargil. During the 1971 Indo-Pak War, according to senior journalist VC Natrajan “the press had access to forward areas when the war broke out. Neither the top brass of the armed forces nor the bureaucracy made any effort to hinder the media from reporting what was happening on the battlefield.” ³ Since that war, there have been great changes in the kind of TV coverage available to the common man in India—thanks to a proliferate cable TV regime and vast improvements in the field of information technology. The intervening period has also witnessed the glamorous and

copious coverage of the Gulf War by CNN—rendering the TV viewer a virtual ringside spectator of the events thereof. These two factors—the refined information flow milieu and the exemplary CNN coverage of the Gulf War—should have predicated for media coverage of the Kargil episode a seamless relationship between the media on the one hand and the political/bureaucratic/military centres of influence on the other. However, Shri Prem Shankar Jha had to write (in July) that “if New Delhi does not stop treating the media, and the foreign media in particular, as enemies, it is most certainly going to lose the information war”. ⁴ Weeks after Kargil has been ousted from front-page status, the fact continues to rankle that neither the media nor the military seem content with the manner in which each engaged the other in a love-hate relationship. Simply stated, this paper argues that several lessons emerge from Kargil in this context which merit rumination over so that in the future there may accrue a working relationship between the media and the military that is professionally satisfying to both. Full gratification of the discerning media-watcher would be an added bonus.

Mass Media—Political Actor or Force Multiplier

The mass media is quite often referred to as the “Fourth Estate”. However, it would be quite erroneous to presume that the importance it has, places it at the end of the pecking order of the other three estates—the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the Commons (some, like Shri AG Noorani, a senior journalist, list the executive, the legislature and the judiciary as the three classic estates). ⁵ Indeed, the impelling force the media holds in its mighty paws—TV, print and radio—is immeasurable; it possesses the potential to make or mar political power structures and is often discussed as a political actor. It could be argued that there is a definite and direct proportionality relationship between the health of a nation’s democracy and the degree of freedom of its national media. Attempts to curb the media have uncertain success probabilities and can rarely be set into motion without negative fallouts. In any case, modern information technology including satellite communications, real time data transfer and internet have rendered electronic media so potent and powerful that efforts to keep it on a leash are destined to flounder. Today national media is a political and a social institution—how it discharges its perceived obligations depends on its interaction with the political and social environs that immediately surround it.

Increasingly now, nation states and non-state political actors are recognising the immense power of information warfare. Whatever be the scale or scope of an ongoing war, information warfare is an essential component thereof. It was for this reason that the combined might of the NATO military machinery, frustrated in its attempts to bring the Yugoslav people, to their knees finally declared TV stations legitimate military targets and committed what K Subrahmanyam called “one of the most heinous assaults on the freedom of information”. ⁶ On the one hand the Yugoslav resolve to man TV stations even at great personal risk to the staff, and on the other, NATO’s desperate targeting of these TV stations, are both portents of the importance of the information warfare content of war. The former Chief of Army Staff, General, Shankar Roy Choudhary, in his now famous ‘Ten Commandments’ to Indian Army troops employed for Low Intensity Conflict Operations, exhorted them to use the media “as a force multiplier and not as a force degrader” (emphasis added). In the context of information warfare, media can be viewed as

a veritable ‘force multiplier’ with as much of a potential for altering the course of a war as any military force multiplier with a more tangible, more visible material existence. No doubt then that Yugoslav national TV was viewed as a force multiplier by NATO and therefore attacked.

It would appear from the foregoing that whenever nations are at war, be it a legally declared one as was the 1971 Indo-Pak war, or an undeclared one like the Pak misadventure in Kargil, national media and the military need to work synergistically in the pursuit of national aims and objectives while international media needs to be turned into an ally, or at least used to advantage. Why then has the military been accused by some of having “lost the war on the information front” ⁷ in Kargil? To be able to answer this and related questions, a brief look is felt necessary at defence journalism in India.

Defence Journalism in India

VC Natarajan and AK Chakraborty ⁸ trace the history of defence journalism in India back to 1909 when ‘Fauji Akhbar’ a journal of the British Indian Army was founded; today it continues to exist in the garb of ‘Sainik Samachar’. Indeed, the defence forces were the pioneers in the field of public relations in India. The British thought it fit to keep Indian public informed of the course of the war during the two World Wars wherein Indian soldiers’ families benefited from the information flow. This in turn kept up the morale of the soldier at the front. The whole process was facilitated by the induction of young journalists into the defence forces; they were trained and sent to the frontline to provide coverage of the war. A Directorate of Public Relations, working directly under the Commander-in-Chief, regulated the flow of the reports from the war fronts. The British made all efforts to keep Indian correspondents from interacting with the armed forces personnel within the country—a state of affairs that lasted a long time after the British had gone.

Thus when its first war was thrust upon independent India in 1962, the military and the media were not ideally placed for efficient information flow. The media could not provide to the public an accurate picture of the situation in NEFA during the war as it was not given access to the battlefield; media persons had to be content with sitting in Tezpur and receiving official handouts. As a result, rumours and facts intermingled freely in the media coverage of the war. Perhaps the right lessons were learnt from the experiences of the 1962 war and therefore, in 1965 and 1971, the situation was quite different; the media was provided access to the forward areas and every effort was made to keep up a smooth flow of communication. Consequently, in both the wars, enemy disinformation endeavours were effectively combated. However, for various reasons, 1987 saw the beginnings of constricted defence information flow. ⁹ In recent years, that trend has been somewhat reversed, with the military becoming ‘media savvy’ and acknowledging the importance of good Public Relations (PR). Ironically, the lessons in this respect seem to have been learnt more from the internal security duties the Army is increasingly being employed for, rather than from a war with an overt enemy.

Currently, the Directorate of Public Relations (Defence)—a part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD)—interacts with the media on matters related to defence forces. Through its civilian and

defence services officers spread out through-out the country, it indulges in PR exercises during peacetime. However, although its raison d'être is the defence forces, the representation of the defence forces is only at the Lieutenant Colonel/ Major and equivalent level; no specific corps/regiment/branch for these officers exists and they could be from any branch, service or arm. In contrast to their junior ranks, the Directorate is headed by an officer from the Indian Information Service who is of the rank of Director (equivalent to a Brigadier in the Army or a Director in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). However, the current incumbent is of the rank of additional Principal Information Officer (equivalent to a Major General of the Indian Army or a Joint Secretary of the IAS). Within the MOD, the Directorate comes under the Joint Secretary (P&C). In short, the bureaucracy has a complete and unquestionable hold over the organisation for handling of the media on military affairs. This was the state extant in May 1999 when the military and the media first learnt from an alert shepherd of the Kargil infiltration.

Military and the Media

If some newspaper and periodical reports are to be believed, the antiquated Officials Secret Act and adherence to its letter and spirit are very close to the heart of the defence establishment in India. It might be contextually appropriate to mention here that the Henderson Brookes Report on the 1962 war continues to be classified even today. Madhu Trehan reported the following conversation between her and an Army officer at a checkpoint en route to Kargil:

“So how long have you been here?”

“That is a military question.”

“Sorry. How long do you think it will last?”

“That is a military question.”

“Oh! Do you think the Pakistanis will withdraw?”

“That is a military question.”

“Hmm...Which was the last movie you saw?” ¹⁰

The above is a rather droll exchange which appears to have overstated a bit the case against Indian military penchant for secrecy. Nonetheless, when similar reports from other journalistic sources are read together, there does seem to be a point for the defence forces to note regarding the frequently overdone reticence. This military behaviour seems to be especially applicable to its interaction with the media, perhaps because of the media's callous handling of sensitive information and frequent adulteration of facts with feelings, wishful thinking and, even worse, irresponsible rumours. In a manner of speaking, the military seems to be obsessed with withholding information while the media seems equally determined to disclose every possible bit of information to the public.

The present COAS is philosophically quite different from the evasive image of the military man conjured up in the previous paragraph; indeed he has a reputation for propagating transparency and good communication with the media. As the Commandant of the Defence Services Staff College, he laid great stress on training the student officers—all being groomed for command and key staff appointments in the future—in the subtle skills of dealing with the media. As the COAS, he was able to convince the MOD that it would be in the interest of the services and the nation that military officers of the rank of Brigadier (or equivalent) and above be authorised to brief and interact with the media. These briefings were to be carried out at the area of operations (specifically, counter insurgency operations) by officers actually involved in operations and in the full knowledge of the ground realities. This pro-active stance in relation to the tricky business of media handling has paid dividends in terms of better information flow, enhanced morale amongst military/para military forces employed on internal security duties and a better image of the military as a whole.

However, it is pertinent to point out at this stage the nuclear role the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) plays in the projection of government policy whenever an affair with another country transpires. The Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka was steered through its not so happy stay in that country by the MEA even intruding at times into the operational realm. The media had negligible access to the area of operations and relied heavily on information provided by an MEA spokesman in New Delhi. The result was that the media at large believed what it was told—that the Army had failed in its mission. The fact that rapidly changing policies and circumstances had the Army shackled was never appreciated by the media. More than a decade later, the MEA continues to hold sway over not only the policies in relation to foreign countries, but also over what the media needs to be told.

When operations began in Kargil, the media would have liked to be kept in the picture about the military aspects by knowledgeable, operational personnel from the defence forces and the military would have liked to project non-sensitive details of operations to the media through authoritative spokesmen. Indeed, the daily media briefings were, in the initial days, conducted by senior officers from the Army and the Air Force—officers who were at the decision making level in their respective Headquarters (HQ). The Director of Offensive Operations at Air HQ (an Air Commodore), during a media briefing referred (quite rightly) to the situation in Kargil as “war”. By coincidence or otherwise, his place was taken by the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operations), an Air Vice Marshal, for the next day’s briefing. Incidentally, the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, himself was to refer to the “war-like situation” in Kargil just a few days later (on 30 May 1999) ¹¹ while the Defence Minister, Shri George Fernandes, stated on 06 June 1999 that a “war-like situation prevails along the Line of Control”. ¹² To return to the main point of discussion, it was not long before the daily media briefing was commandeered by the MEA with a Joint Secretary from that ministry taking the cardinal position at the daily sessions with the media. The service representation thereafter at the daily media briefings was trimmed down to the Colonel/Group Captain level. The author hastens to add that the service representatives handled the media briefings admirably and their statements were not any the less consequential than if they had been made by field/air rank officers. However, an interrogatory look is warranted at the fact that media briefings on a purely military operation were in fact presided over by the MEA. That is not to say that MEA briefings were expendable; on the contrary, the war on the diplomatic front was as important, if not more so, than the military one

being waged at the LoC. The point to ponder over, however, is whether two separate briefings could have been conducted—one by the MEA and the other by the MOD. One reason for the combined briefing could be that the media persons would be saved the rush from one venue to another; this problem is easily solved by having the two briefings at the same venue and in quick succession to each other. In the view of this author, irrespective of the manner in which the daily briefings were conducted, some episodes out of the Kargil story could have been handled better; the assistance provided by the benefit of hindsight in arriving at this conclusion is acknowledged before the beginning of the next section.

Could We Have Done It Otherwise?

One feature of the media coverage during the initial part of the Kargil conflict was the rather scanty and feeble effort to highlight the fact that Kashmir was not “a long-disputed territory”¹³ and that the LoC was the subject of a bilateral treaty between India and Pakistan. One such endeavour by the press was an editorial page comment in *The Times of India*, which pointed out that “the Shimla agreement has been acknowledged by the UN and the international community”.¹⁴ Eventually though, the MEA did warm up to the theme and diplomatic mileage was drawn out of this morsel of fact. The result was a perceptible shift in the US State Department stance towards India and Pakistan. In end-May, *The New York Times* had, in its first editorial on the subject of Kargil, sternly admonished India and Pakistan for the hostilities. By end-June the same paper had turned sympathetic towards India and had appreciated its restraint. After Nawaz Sharif’s visit to the US, the paper was talking of Pakistan’s bad miscalculation and chastising Islamabad.¹⁵

Then there was the matter of reports in almost all sections of the press and TV about how, during the winter months, the Army had vacated several posts that had been occupied by the infiltrators. The reports were, however, inaccurate. The areas infiltrated into were only covered by regular patrols and did not have posts that had been vacated by the Army. In subsequent statements, the Defence Minister and the COAS were at great pains to stress this point. However, the ponderable point is why the media should have made such reports in the first place.

An unnecessary controversy was raked up by some media reports that the Chief of Air Staff (CAS) had not been agreeable to the idea of carrying out air strikes during the initial days of the conflict and that the Prime Minister had had to intervene to order air strikes. It is quite unlikely that the CAS had the ultimate authority to say yes or no to the use of the air force (as implied by the media reports) even if he may have had reservations on that matter—an opinion that he would be fully entitled to as a seasoned professional. Any qualms that were existent had been about the use of Mi 35 helicopters, which were not suitable for the elevation of almost the entire area of operations. The use of fighter aircraft in anger, a decidedly escalatory course of action, would have necessitated government approval. The air option was indeed exercised after a joint briefing in the Operations Room of the Military Operations Directorate in Army HQ where the COAS and the CAS decided to present a case for doing so to the Cabinet Committee on Security.¹⁶ However, the point being made is that, following the speculative reports in some sections of

the press, there was no immediate clarification issued on the subject so that irresponsible conjecture could be nipped in the bud.

The loss of two Indian fighter aircraft on May 27, 1999 was one information battle India lost in the Kargil war. A MiG 27 was lost due to an engine failure and a MiG 21 was shot down by Pakistani SAMs while its pilot was trying to locate the wreckage of the crashed MiG 27. The two aircraft were lost in the morning hours on May 27 but there was considerable delay in the issuance of an authenticated version of what had actually transpired. Meanwhile, the Pakistani PR machinery went into overdrive and splashed international media with reports that Indian fighter aircraft had intruded 15 kms into Pakistani airspace ¹⁷ and had been shot down by Pakistani SAMs inside Pakistani territory. The first Indian communication to the media was made at around 16:30 hours. All refutations thereafter by Indian sources and insistence by the air force spokesman, Air Vice Marshal SK Malik, that both aircraft had been flying on the Indian side of the LoC ¹⁸ served only as rearguard action. Had a pro-active stand been taken promptly the damage could have been minimised. In defence of the air force media strategy it would be worthwhile to mention the fact that throughout the period of operations, the air force gave out measured, well contemplated statements, devoid of hyperbole and painstakingly accurate in detail. As a result no statement from air force sources ever needed to be amended, modified or retracted.

Speculative reports in the press about the use of Mirage aircraft for offensive roles against targets near the LoC ¹⁹ continued to appear for days without any denial or confirmation during the daily briefings or through official statements. It was only at the fag end of the whole period of air action that the Mirage employment was confirmed by air force sources. ²⁰ The only explanation is the military mind-set of divulging operational matters on a strictly need-to-know basis. It would have been understandable if the details of deployment, numbers and flying effort had been kept from the media. However, to reserve comment on the use of a particular type of aircraft was not a media friendly action, especially when the 'enemy' against whom the attacks were being carried out would have recognised the type of aircraft visually. The question then is who was the information being kept from? A similar confusion prevailed on the use of the Mirage as a platform for precision guided munitions (namely Laser Guided Bombs). Some sections of the under-informed public clamoured therefore for the use of these munitions while others lamented the use of such expensive weapon systems; neither could be reproached for their views in the absence of a clear cut official line on the matter.

An opportunity on the media front was squandered when the grossly mutilated bodies of six Indian soldiers were handed over by the Pakistanis on June 9, 1999. Earlier, the body of Squadron Leader Ajay Ahuja had been handed over; there was unquestionable evidence of his having been shot dead after he had ejected from his aircraft. That barbaric act should have prepared us for fresh gruesome acts and we should have lost no time in storming the international media by providing a first hand view of the bodies and splashing explosive pictures on all newspapers and TV screens. Instead, even a full day later the bodies had been taken over, MEA and Army spokesmen could not even confirm whether organisations like the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Commission for Human Rights would be present during the post mortem. ²¹ The effect of international media exposing the brutal Pakistani

cruelty to the world in contrast to the Indian restraint (including the humane act of burying the enemy's dead at 18,000 feet) would have done the Indian cause an immense amount of good.

It may also be mentioned here that international media was, in a manner of speaking, discriminated against during the entire period of operations for “security” reasons. As one illustration of the consequent opportunity costs, India paid in terms of diplomatic footage, the BBC—often cited for its impartial coverage—showed a definite leaning away from the Indian point of view. Whatever BBC covered in Kargil, the Pakistani angle was presented to its viewers as factual statements while the Indian side was deliberately cloaked in contentious terms. Typically, whenever referring to the Pakistani occupants of positions on the Indian side of the LoC, BBC termed them as “what the Indian government is calling the infiltrators”. ²²

Similarly, when the first dead body of a Pakistani soldier was recovered with his identification papers intact, the media reported it only in one-line statements. ²³ The import of the discovery was enormous but the media could not or did not give it its due importance; perhaps the absence of any conclusive evidence (a picture, or better still, the identification papers themselves) detracted from the credibility of the report. It is understood that this could not be done because of procedural delays in the authentication/inspection of the relevant documents at the appropriate level. By the time the documents could have been made available, their value to the media would have been negligible.

The debate on a possible crossing of the LoC by India into Pakistan held territory which tickled the nation's imagination for many a day was also kindled by the media, but failed to ignite into a meaningful blaze because it lacked the fuel of military inputs on the mechanics of launching attacks across the LoC.

A minor debate was also kept alive throughout the period of the operation about the daily cost of operations on the LoC. In the absence of any authoritative figure being available, the media kept up its kite flying exercises in guessing the right figure. Understandably, the estimates varied enormously from each other.

Conclusion

On June 7, 1999, the New Delhi Commissioner of Police ordered cable operators to stop relaying Pakistan Television programmes on their respective networks in view of the anti-India propaganda being carried out by that channel. ²⁴ The Central Government also gave similar orders effective from June 8 1999. The orders went unheeded in areas bordering Pakistan where TV sets could pick up PTV signals directly without the aid of cable network dish antennas. However, the implication of these orders is unequivocal—information warfare matters.

While the PTV ban highlighted the exaggerated propaganda content of that channel, Indian media was, in contrast, characterised by restraint and balance. Even Pakistani pressmen have privately acknowledged this fact. The fact that Pakistani media was effectively muzzled under the Nawaz Sharif regime had a lot to do with the matter.

These concluding remarks are not intended to summarise the various issues discussed earlier; instead it is pointed out that on matters concerned with national security and more specifically, defence related subjects, there is a need for introspection. We need to take a pragmatic look at our attitude towards considering some inconsequential pieces of information as “official secrets” and safeguarding them; perhaps regulated flow of that information would serve the national interest better. Similarly, the good old system of defence journalism—based on young, physically tough and mentally alert reporters in uniform—needs to be given a thought; the fear therein is that continuity may be achieved at the cost of objectivity. It may be pertinent to mention here that the leading national dailies had their correspondents/reporters on or very near the LoC almost throughout the duration of reportable military operations; their datelines reveal this open secret. The trend of growing importance the military attaches to relations with the media is an encouraging and healthy one that needs to be nurtured. Finally, if in future we wish to avoid the mutual dissatisfaction that was manifest during the Kargil episode, a questioning look is warranted at the organisation and functioning of the defence PR machinery. The foreseeable criticality of Information Warfare in future Kargil-like situations absolutely ordains it.

The Northern Light Infantry in the Kargil Operations, 1999

Ravi Rikhye

Because of the exceptional harsh winter weather conditions in the North Kashmir region, prior to the Kargil operations Indian piquets were customarily withdrawn with the onset of winter. They returned in the late spring. In 1998 Pakistan infiltrated approximately 1000 troops during the winter and spring of 1998/1999, presenting India with a de facto change in the Line of Control.

India reacted by moving 8 Mountain Division from the Kashmir Valley to Dras, and forced the intruders out after several weeks of heavy fighting in June and July 1999. Approximately six brigades and 30,000 troops were required to complete the job.

The Northern Light Infantry conducted the infiltration and subsequent fighting. Initially four battalions – 3, 4, 5, and 6 NLI – were deployed; later, at least three other battalions – 7, 11, and 12 – were engaged.

Because officers from several other regiments were identified – 24 Sind, 13 Azad Kashmir, 1 and 63 Frontier Force, 60 Baluch – there exists a temptation to assume other battalions were involved. As far as is known, however, these officers probably were on deputation to the NLI. Regular battalions assigned to Force Command Northern Areas, for example, 69 Baluch at Olithingthang, did not enter the fighting. The confirmed exceptions were from the Pakistan Special Services Group, which normally rotates two companies through the Skardu sector. Officers from 1 and 3 Special Services Group were also killed, and the SSG was an essential part of Pakistani plans.

Two Frontier Scouts battalions (wings in Frontier Corps terminology) – 2 Chitral Scouts and a battalion of the Bajaur Scouts – joined the fighting to reinforce NLI battalions.

One reason Pakistan may have been constrained in escalating the fighting once the Indians began pushing the NLI off the mountain posts was that Pakistan could not shift Kashmir-committed battalions to the north in case the fighting escalated, and outside battalions would have required an extensive period of acclimatization. India could shift six brigades without affecting its Kashmir defenses because these troops were on counterinsurgency duty, and sure enough, the rest of 1999 saw an increase in militant activity.

The NLI suffered very heavy casualties in the fighting: the Indian Army buried 244 killed and Pakistan accepted the bodies of five additional killed. The Herald, a Pakistani publication, indicates that more than 500 soldiers were killed and buried in the Northern Areas. It is probable that some additional men were also killed but are buried outside the Northern Areas. For example, the two Scouts wings belong to the North West Frontier Province, not to the Northern Areas. This adds up to upwards of 750 men killed. It appears that 6 NLI suffered particularly heavy losses.

The impact of such a high casualty rate on the tiny communities of the thinly populated Northern Areas must have been disastrous, and the Herald article indicates this was the case. See www.vijayinkargil.org/herald.htm . The fighting was followed by unrest in the Northern Areas. The Pakistan Government dealt with the unrest by:

- Suppression – the Northern Areas in any case do not have the right to vote even when Pakistan is under democratic rule.
- Cash payments – Payments ranging from Rs 900,000 to Rs 1,200,000 were made to the families of men killed. In the South Asia context, particularly so in the poor and backward Northern Areas, these are enormous sums of money.
- Recognition – the NLI was regularized and over 40 gallantry awards given

The NLI suffered heavier losses than the Indian attackers even though the latter were fighting upmountain because:

- NLI posts were isolated and not cross-supported due to the need to grab the maximum territory. Indian forces were able to concentrate against each in turn and overwhelm them. The analogy with the Sino-India War 1962 is obvious.
- To avoid alerting the Indians, Pakistan did not improve its communications in this remote area. Consequently, it was unable to adequately resupply its posts. In the absence of proper roads, a large number of porters are required, but because the area is so thinly populated, and because Pakistan did not expect India to retaliate, few porters would have been available.
- To avoid escalating the war, Pakistan did not reinforce NLI posts to the extent it could have, either with NLI battalions or regular army battalions.
- Most important, India used firepower to an extent unprecedented in South Asia. In just one operation to seize three posts in the Dras area, for example, Indian guns fired over 4000 rounds. This may be quite routine in western armies, but is an unheard of ammunition expenditure in South Asia. Pakistan artillery, which works to a high standard and was a big reason the Indians did not do better in 1965, could not operate effectively once the NLI was pushed off the high piquets and it lost its forward observers.

The NLI appears to have fought with exceptional bravery, despite lack of support from higher headquarters and grave disquiet among its ranks at Pakistan's actions. For example, the Indian Army website listed above has posted pages from the diary of a company commander of 5 NLI. This company had only 71 men at the start of its operation instead of the 113 authorized, which indicates serious trouble even before the onset of the fighting. Twenty-five men were evacuated due to sickness, and a number of others asked for permission to leave the service. The latter were, of course, not allowed to do so. Though the photographed pages are hard to read, it appears at one stage the company was down to just 37 or 38 men.

Despite these conditions, India took only eight prisoners. One, having run out of ammunition, resorted to throwing rocks at the attackers. Some of the prisoners was severely wounded and were possibly left behind by withdrawing troops. One must, of course, take into account the possibility that the Indians refused to take prisoners, in part because of the earlier torture, mutilation, and execution of four Indian soldiers. At the same time, one should possibly avoid pinning the blame of the NLI. For one thing, a Pakistan Army officer saved two of the six men who fell into Pakistani hands. For another, that the bodies were returned despite their obvious condition may show that someone in authority wanted to do the decent thing even though the Pakistan Army would be blamed. It is possible that the Pakistan Special Services Group, not the NLI or other elements of the Pakistan Army, were responsible. The SSG routinely executes prisoners after unspeakable treatment. Its battalion in East Pakistan in 1971 was guilty of the most serious war crimes against civilians; another battalion left ample evidence of its handiwork in the hotly disputed Chaamb sector in the western front. Though one should avoid making political comments,

one must wonder if the ongoing cooperation between the US military and the SSG is perhaps the wisest course for the United States military when it is trying its best to avoid involvement with foreign forces that might be guilty of war crimes.

The saddest aspect of the Kargil fighting is that the Pakistan Government refused to accept back the bodies of all except 5 killed. One finds incredible and unbelievable that a government can be so devoid of honor as to first tell its soldiers to discard their uniforms, destroy their ID, infiltrate enemy-held terrain, fight without adequate support, refuse to reinforce them, in effect leaving them to be killed, and on top of this, refuse to take the bodies back, all because of a failed fiction that these men were Kashmiri freedom fighters not under its control. This is not the place to get into a political discussion, but the general reader should know there are no Kashmiri freedom fighters in Ladakh and never will be because the Ladakh Muslims are of the "wrong" sect and completely support India.

So not only this fiction not particularly intelligent, by requiring its men to fight out of uniform, the Pakistan Government stripped them of the protections of the Geneva Convention. If India did indeed execute any POWs, it was completely within its lawful right to do so, as it was dealing with an invasion of its territory by armed civilians. The Pakistan Government seems to have forgotten that in South Asia, at least, soldiering is an honorable profession. A government can ask for volunteers who will be expected to fight out of uniform. It cannot require its soldiers to do so. This is an absolute abuse of its soldiers, and what makes it worse is that the Northern Areas have no political voice.

One is horrified to learn of even worse happenings from the Herald story. Bodies of NLI soldiers killed in the fighting were taken back to their villages during the night, usually with just one soldier accompanying the body, and dumped outside their family's house at all hours. Sometimes the soldiers were out of uniform. The bodies were not even washed and properly dressed in uniform. The Herald speaks of two cousins who lay in their coffins dressed in tracksuits. A soldier who served in the same unit as another whose body was returned told the family that at their post only some kilograms of sugar was left by way of food. The dead soldier's father told the Herald that the youngster still had sugar on his mouth. So now one not only has a violation of military honor, one has a complete disregard for religion and human decency.

A last point. If callous civilians had treated the military in this manner, perhaps there could be some excuse. The Kargil intrusion, however, was conceived, planned, and executed in secrecy by the highest echelons of the Pakistan General Staff, including their divisional commander, the Force Commander Northern Areas. The now-deposed civilian government had little to do with it except to retroactively give its stamp of approval. The guiding spirit behind the operation was the head of the Pakistan Army himself, now the head of the country.

A version of this article was originally published on Ravi's excellent site at Orbat.com

Siachen: A Viewpoint

Brig. (r) S. K. Raychaudhuri VSM

The Siachen area is awe inspiring and beautiful....till the first few steps are taken! The challenges to human endurance that this beautiful and inspiring scenario imposes adequately negate the initial impression caused by its stark beauty.

The Siachen Glacier is awesome and it embodies one of the most inhospitable and glaciated environs in the world. The glacier runs down the valley in the Karakoram Range and is 76 kilometers long and varies in width between 2 to 8 kilometers. The mountains alongside the Siachen, range between 15,000 to 25,000 feet. The ridges are sharp, rugged and barren. Local resources are absent. The gradients are steep and precludes cross country movement and the glacier is highly crevassed.

Compounding the arduousness are the snow and blizzards. It receives 6 to 7 meters of the annual total of 10 meters of snow in winter alone. Blizzards can reach speeds up to 150 knots (nearly 300 kilometers per hour). The temperature drops routinely to 45 degrees C below zero, and the wind chill factor makes the temperature dip further with increase in wind velocity. The weather is fickle and can change without notice. It does not require imagination to realize the isolation and forbiddances of this place.

Such an environment makes conducting a war in this area an expensive proposition. An unending, undeclared war is worse still. Siachen, thus, is mind boggling, not only in since a solution is elusive, but also in financial terms and in human lives.

The origin of the Siachen imbroglio can be traced to Karachi Agreement (27 July 1949) consequent to the first war over Kashmir after Partition. The terminology in the delineation beyond NJ 9842 was couched in the vague phrase 'thence moving northwards'. This 'northward moving line' was never physically demarcated or verified on ground. The Pakistani contention that Siachen is a part of Baltistan in the Northern Areas of Pakistan is faulty if viewed in the light of the Karachi Agreement. Every area would then be a part of the Northern Area of Pakistan so to say given this astounding logic. Therefore, the ground reality and the geopolitical situation demanded physical occupation and administrative control which India undertook in 1984. This gave concrete body to the vagueness of the delineation terminology of the Karachi Agreement and its successor Agreement at Suchetgarh (11 December 1972). The question of interpretation and exercising of this prerogative physically and administratively was thus resolved.

The question of the line 'thence moving northward' going North West or North East is of pertinence. Currently, the line moves from NJ 9842 through Bilafond, Saltoro Kangri, Sia La, Baltoro. It thus joins at the central segment of the Shaksgam area of Jammu-Kashmir which Pakistan illegally ceded to China.

A North Eastern demarcation of the line would join it to the Sino – Indian boundary between the eastern corner of Pakistani-ceded Shaksgam and the western corner of Chinese-occupied Aksai China. This is where the strategic Karakoram Pass is situated (a distance of 91.3 kilometres). The occupation of Siachen effectively separates Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) from Aksai Chin, the part of Kashmir claimed and Occupied by China and hence precludes any outflanking moves to isolate Leh or even Kargil sectors. It also

empowers India to keep a check on the Khunjarab Pass; as also is a positive factor to any negotiation with China on the border question.

Thus, the view that Siachen is an exercise in futility and too expensive an all encompassing burden is not valid given the geopolitical realities then and even now.

There is a view that India could withdraw from the Glacier. Unless there is an international assurance, which in any case, is not the worth in paper it is written on, there is no guarantee that Pakistan would not occupy the Glacier. In such a case advantages that India currently has would be negated. To imagine that holding a few major passes would suffice would also not be valid since moving troops in a High Altitude Area to an impending threat is laborious, time consuming, physically impossible given human adaptability limits and thus merely theoretical.

Pakistan occupies the southern slopes of the Saltoro Watershed, most of which is between 9000 to 10,000 feet at most places, whereas India occupies the northern slopes which are higher and reach 25000 feet. This makes operating in high altitudes compared to Pakistan more complex and difficult.

It is in Pakistan's advantage that lower heights given them a positive inherent logistic supply continuum and less dependant on air supply. As Pakistan occupies lower heights there logistic can be land based routes while the same is not the case with India. This also ensures that the cost of operations is much lower for Pakistan, especially in financial terms.

Occupation of commanding heights and passes is the crux to the defense of Siachen. Therefore, the flip side of the altitudinal disadvantage is that it provides tactical advantage. Given the altitude and the steep terrain it is immensely difficult to dislodge the defender as Pakistan has learnt at a high cost.

Pakistan however occupies certain areas which give them the advantage over the logistic routes.

The Base Camp for Indian forces is 12,000 feet above sea level. The altitude of some Indian forward bases on the Saltoro Ridge ranges from Kumar (16,000 feet) and Bila Top (18,600 feet) to Pahalwan (20,000 feet) and Indira Col (22,000 feet). Because of the steep gradient of the Saltoro Range, the area is also prone to avalanches. It is may be pertinent to mention that only 3 per cent of the Indian casualties were caused by hostile firing. The remaining 97 per cent have fallen prey to the altitude, weather, and terrain.

The greatest challenge is logistics. The maintenance chain is by fixed wing air drops, helicopters, porters, army mules or small donkeys. This is not only financially costly but also costly in terms of effort. As per an estimate, it costs between Rs 1,00,000 to Rs 1,50,000 per ton depending upon the aircraft/ helicopter employed.

The interesting fact is that Kerosene Oil required for heating and drying purpose constitutes about 40% of the tonnage lifted. As Kerosene freezes at -50 C, it is possible to use a pipeline to pump Kerosene. Much that it may astound those who have not operated at such attitudes and adverse weather conditions that Kerosene oil is more welcomed than foodstuff.

As is well known, food is not a problem since these altitudes influence an aversion to food. The appetite is reduced. Tinned stuff is most unpalatable and this low intake in food seriously affects the operational efficiency, even though it is not apparent if one goes by the enthusiasm of all ranks in executing their tasks. 6000 calories are essential at these altitudes compared to 3000 to 4000 calories at lower heights.

There is a continuous effort to reduce costs. To offset the cost in the supply chain, which is airlifted from Chandigarh or brought from Srinagar since the food habits are different from the locals, the DRDO has done commendable work. They are greening Partapur, the Siachen brigade headquarters at an altitude of around 11,000 feet. A serious attempt is to grow fresh vegetables for troops stationed at an altitude of 12,000 feet and above (up to 20,000 feet) on the glacier and beyond on the Soltoro ridge. A pilot project is already underway to grow cabbage, capsicum, onions, tomatoes, cauliflower and brinjals. It is to their credit that when the temperatures are minus 25 degrees Celsius and snow omnipresent they succeeded in harvesting crop through solar green house cultivation. It is of interest to note that not only they are army specific, they are actively assisting the local populace. However, the sizes of the vegetable are so large that they defy imagination!

My unit in Kargil, though not in the glacier, had a full fledged poultry organized in a shed with *bukharis* so that my men had fresh chicken when they so desired.

There is a dairy is already functioning in Partapur on an experimental basis and approximately 200 liters of milk are sent up to different posts on the glacier every day.

Health remains a problem. Pulmonary edema is a killer. Acclimatization is the only way to ensure unnecessary deaths. At times, owing to operational imperatives, this is forgotten, but then the costs are high.

The challenges to human endurance make the conduct of operations as challenge not only in military terms but also in human ingenuity. This is the sole factor that makes Siachen Glacier operations a keynote issue in the art or science of conducting warfare and thereby keeping it at the center of everyone's attention.

The author is a retired Infantry officer of the Indian Army

KARGIL REVIEW COMMITTEE: A COMMENTARY

D RAMANA

The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) was constituted by the Government of India to review the events leading to the Pakistani aggression in Kargil sector of Jammu and Kashmir in May 1998 [1]. A further brief was to recommend necessary measures to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions. The KRC panel had wide ranging access to data and personnel in performing its charter. It accomplished its task by interviewing slew of former and serving officials. The voluminous report and its annexes constituted 15 volumes.

The KRC report is remarkable in India for being an inquiry commission that analyzed causes of the events rather than fixing blame for them. In addition, it is a mini strategic review, which flowed from its second charter. It is detailed, and addresses many popular myths propagated at the time of the crises. It has commented on a wide range of matters, from inadequacy of intelligence to lacuna in the national security apparatus. Thus, it is a far-reaching report that deserves to be read and understood. Its findings are especially important in light of the nuclearization of the sub-continent, as early detection has to be part of the minimum deterrent posture. It also represents a first for India as it has been published and commented on by various experts. The present article is based entirely on the on-line version [1]. The full text might have more details which may add to the picture.

The main section is divided into findings and a recommendation section. Previously the Bharat Rakshak Monitor gave a preliminary account of the factors for surprise at Kargil [2] and these are updated.

Developments leading to the Pakistani aggression at Kargil

The KRC found that the entire aggression was a complete and total surprise to the Indian government. This is its primary conclusion and all others stem from it. What was expected was an infiltration by armed irregulars but not an intrusion and occupation of territory by Pakistani troops. Numerous former Indian Army officers were unanimous that such an operation was unsustainable. Coupled with the Indian Army's domination in previous instances and the hostile terrain a mindset was created that this scenario was unlikely. Expecting the enemy to do what you would do is known as "mirroring" and leads to surprise.

The report concluded that Pakistan has repeatedly miscalculated the Indian response to its aggression. The KRC does not examine why Pakistan prone to making such erroneous conclusions and whether there is any India based characteristics involved. It is possible that the lack of a coherent policy by previous Indian governments contributed to the Pakistani judgment of a feeble response.

The report examines the role of deterrence in the calculus of aggression and concludes that Pakistan is convinced that its various nuclear threats have deterred India from reacting to its covert war. However, essential players have noted that the Indian Armed Forces were overextended in the last decade and hence could not be brought to bear on aggressive Pakistani overtures. This indicates that the lack of resolve and overextended resources are more likely to have deterred India rather than nuclear threats from Pakistan.

The report also examines whether Nawaz Sharif was in the loop in planning the Kargil aggression and concludes that the balance of probability suggests that he was in the loop. This conclusion has grave portends for prospects of peace in the sub-continent. It is this perfidious behavior of the Pakistani elite that has to be guarded against, and explains the reluctance of India to resume dialog with the military regime in Pakistan until terrorist support is halted. On a positive note, this exonerates the Pakistani Army from rogue behavior. The report states that Lahore process did not lead to a lowering of the guard in the Indian government despite the euphoria in some segments of the political spectrum. This is an important conclusion and demolishes the charges of the Opposition during the crises.

The report reconstructed the modus operandi of the Pakistani aggression and concluded that it was based on creeping intrusion. Early parties entered Indian Territory in late January and early February 1999. These were followed by reinforcements in late April. They used cover and deception to avoid detection by WASO patrols from air. In addition, due to risks from terrain and climate, the Indian forces did not take aggressive ground patrols. From a study of the intruder deployments, the committee concluded that the plan was to occupy Indian Territory and provide a fait accompli to India as it would suffer large casualties in recovering the territory and lose time. In the meantime, the goal was to arrange an international cease-fire leaving them in occupation of Indian Territory.

A minor point is to be noted here. The report identifies the shepherds who reported the intrusion as being in the pay of the Brigade Intelligence Team (BIT). The committee should have excised this, as there is no need to confirm information that could lead to harm to such informants. Similar comments can be made of the wealth of data provided as illustrations to show lack of proper assessments. These revelations can be faulted for revealing the systematic collection capabilities of the Indian agencies and need not have been published.

The force deployments of the Fifteen Corps commander succeeded in localizing the conflict. Action was taken before a complete analysis of the magnitude of the intrusion could be obtained. The speed of reaction was critical to localizing the conflict. The report also studied the rate of casualties to determine if there were avoidable casualties and determined that this was not so. It also examined the state of equipment of the soldiers and pointed out the deficiencies. Once the decision to use the Air Force was taken, the armed forces moved to proactive positions to deter any escalation by Pakistan. In conclusion, the report characterizes this as 'not a minor skirmish but a short sharp war'. This is important as Indian leaders were calling it a limited war, or even "war-like," at the time of the conflict.

Intelligence

In this section, the report gathers its findings of lapses in the Intelligence field that led to the surprise. As noted elsewhere [2], the methodology of Uri Bar and Zachary Sheaffer is more useful than that adopted in this report. The power of the Bar-Sheaffer method is such that it gives an X-ray picture of what went wrong as opposed to the snapshot provided in the KRC report. A list of tables is added which summarizes the report findings in the Bar-Sheaffer methodology [4].

The report identifies the roles and missions of the two principal intelligence agencies of the Indian government – the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB). It also clarifies the limited role of the Director General of Military Intelligence (DGMI). Although RAW was tasked with collecting military intelligence, the facility in Kargil sector,

though under the Srinagar command, was reporting to Leh. The Kargil facility, at the time, was operating under other priorities. This illustrates the need to appropriately allocate and task resources. The Leh office based its priorities on threat perception, which was that no intrusion could be sustained in Kargil. It therefore concentrated its resources on more immediate threats. The report does not identify this, but press reports suggest it was concentrated on Tibet. It would be interesting to see if there were indicators in that area, which distracted it from picking up signals from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).

The IB picked up signals of activity, in the FCNA region of POK. However, it did not forward them to the proper agencies that it knew could provide follow-up. This is an obvious instance politicking and bureaucratic power struggles. The report documents other instances of systematic failure and lack of inter-agency coordination.

It also reports that there were many indicators but few of actionable quality, with the nebulous and noisy signals. It is possible that the increase of noise indicated a masking of signals. Another point noted was the failure to communicate the intensity of counter-action by the Indian Army led RAW to make incorrect assessments as to the nature of the activity going on across the Line of Control (LoC). Surprisingly, battle damage reports in the forward areas was not intimated to RAW. These illustrate a lack coordination and interaction. The problem could be due to over-emphasis on the "need to know" principle, which denies a second look at the data.

The report highlights the deficiencies in the Order of Battle (ORBAT), which did not include two battalions. Here the report blames RAW for the lack of information of their presence and forward deployment as likely indicators of potential intrusion. However, this begs the question as to the responsibilities of the local area commanders. They should have been alert as to the threat coming from the existing thirteen battalions. This raises the question of whether there is a need to see the complete picture before deciding if the data is interesting or not. The local commanders should have sent patrols and asked for more air surveillance near the LoC to confirm the pattern of deployment of the thirteen battalions.

The report goes on to identify the shortcomings of the Indian system of intelligence gathering. The lack of inter-agency coordination, the single source of threat assessment and collection and lack of war game scenarios including civilian participation are all identified. All these lead to overload and missed assessments. It does not identify what prevents the constitution of a secondary review of the primary data from RAW by the receivers. All these point to hierarchical nature of the organizations involved. The more top heavy they are the more they are prone to failure.

The report also highlights the political factors affecting the process- lacks of importance of and need for assessed intelligence at all levels. Shortcomings in the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) are reported. Here the factors are primarily bureaucratic shortcomings. The head of RAW doubling as JIC chairman for over eighteen months is not optimal. The responsibility is definitely political, as timely appointments of vacancies, is a political function. The report does not highlight if the agency as a whole was preoccupied after Chagai tests.

A point to consider is the lack of assessments based on a totality of inputs. The constant factor of one agency not knowing the data unearthed by another agency is interesting. Smith [3] examines the difficulties in preparing national estimates even when the best resources were available during the early years of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The need to have inter-agency review of the estimates before they are presented to

the political authorities for action is also detailed. This demonstrates the difficulty of the task ahead. It is not that other nations did not face surprises. It is important to examine how they learned from them and recovered. Pearl Harbor, Yom Kippur, and the collapse of Baring Bank are all surprises. Nearer home the 1962 NEFA debacle, the indefinite extension of NPT, the firing of Ghauri missile are all surprises. In India, none of these events led to a systematic examination of the factors leading to the surprise. The KRC report is a pioneering effort, authorized by the government in order to get to the root of the matter.

Wilensky [5] examines intelligence organizations and concludes that the intelligence failures are built into complex organizations. On one hand, easily accomplished re-structuring, might end up being just tinkering with the organization and will not eliminate the ills. On the other hand, sources of distortion will persist in some measure due to the nature of the organization. Proper mastery of the task requires specialization leading to compartmentalization; the need to control and motivate individuals requires hierarchy leading to blocking communications; coordination demands centralization leading to top heavy overloaded systems; and exigencies of decision demand direct answers, if not short term estimates leading to diversion of resources. In fact failures are natural for an organization based on its state of development and are often not in its control. All this places importance on the leadership, which has to educate itself of the organizational pitfalls and be aware of them while formulating policy.

The Nuclear factor

This finding is the most important contribution to the nuclear issue in India in recent times. While examining the reasons for Pakistan choosing intrusion as a way to change the LoC, the KRC panel examined the history of the nuclear question in South Asia. In doing so, it lays to rest many popular myths. The KRC report is an important contribution to the history of Indian nuclear development, and with the recent efforts from Perkovich [6] and Chengappa [7], one may form a more complete picture of the Nuclear Option in Asia.

Pakistan embarked on its quest for nuclear weapons under President Bhutto in January 1972 after the defeat in the Bangladesh war. The main driver was deterrence of India's conventional superiority. Thus, it predates the Indian nuclear test of 1974. In addition, since its main aim is to deter India's conventional weaponry, Pakistani denuclearization is not predicated on Indian denuclearization. This is a very important finding and has bearing on the whole gamut of relations between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan had been assessed to have the capability by 1981-82 and this prompted Mrs. Gandhi to authorize a test 1983, which were called off due to external pressure. This explains the reports of test preparations in the early eighties. The report details the Chinese proliferation to Pakistan from the early eighties. It is surprising that India waited until the May '98 tests to publicly take China to task. China has been behaving in an inimical manner since the early eighties.

Pakistan had conveyed a nuclear threat on three different instances in a short period of three years - 1987 to 1990. Two of them were in one year - January and August 1990. The US imposed sanctions on Pakistan under the Pressler amendment soon after these threats.

The report details the continuity in the Indian program under the Prime Ministers from Mrs. Gandhi to Mr. Vajpayee. This aspect is important as the tests in May 1998 were misconstrued as an act of aberration by the BJP government. However, while successive Prime Ministers implemented the program, they kept it under wraps. On the other hand,

Pakistani leadership was very vocal about their possession. The panel here does not take into account the various ambiguous statements made by Indian leadership – "befitting response" etc. The picture is rather incomplete on this account.

The Pakistani leadership is deduced as having concluded that they were able to deter India with their nuclear threats and were emboldened to pursue proxy war through encouragement of terrorists and eventual intrusion. However, Indian officials told the committee that due to various reasons the Indian conventional superiority was unusable. This shows a serious disconnect and lack of understanding of the reality of Pakistan's nuclearization. Had resources been available, the possibility of hot pursuit operations escalating is a definite possibility. It is here that the excessive secrecy could have led to major problems. As the report states the circle of knowledge of Indian capabilities and threat perception was very small and excluded essential functionaries responsible for execution of state policy.

Successive Indian Chiefs of army expressed unhappiness about being kept out of the loop. However, the Pokhran test range is under Army control. The shafts were dug and maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers. Hence, it is unclear why the Military should express ignorance about Indian plans and prospects. Moreover, Chengappa indicates that Gen. Sundarji was taken to see the storage areas at BARC in the mid-eighties [7]. It can be concluded that there was a strict "need to know" policy in place about the nuclear issue in India. This secrecy managed to preserve the reality of the option from those whose business it is to know. However, it is for the public to decide whether the nation had paid an excessive price by way of being the victim of proxy war brought upon by an unfriendly neighbor.

In retrospect, secrecy was acceptable; however, the inability to unambiguously convey the threat of assured retaliation has been a major handicap. This is definitely a leadership issue. The panel alludes to this while outlining the Pakistani strategy to grab Kashmir in bold move when the Indian leadership appeared weak and indecisive.

The report outlines the indirect role of well meaning efforts of the US in emboldening the Pakistani posture and hopes that the Singh-Talbott talks will lead to gradual devaluation of their nuclear card.

In the end the panel points out the fact that if Kargil gamble was planned in 1997, then the tests of May 1998 by India may not be that significant since nuclear deterrence was in place since 1990. In other words, the tests were an affirmation of the facts on the ground since the mid-eighties. As stated before the KRC report on this issue is an important contribution to the history of the Indian nuclear program. However, it still does not clarify who was authorized and what was the process behind the program. The recommendation to publish a white paper on this topic is critical.

Counter Insurgency Operations, Kargil and Integrated Manpower Policy, and the Technological dimensions

These are findings that had bearing on the Kargil crisis and are combined herein for brevity. The report goes into the impact on fighting terrorism and counter-insurgency due to the withdrawal of the regular troops. The reduction in manpower due to this shows the high reliance on Army troops in this role. This demonstrates the claim that the Indian army could not undertake offensive operations due to being over extended in counter insurgency role. The report also details how the paramilitary forces are not up to the task in combating state

sponsored terrorism and need augmenting. The panel recommends a comprehensive strategy involving manpower, technical resources, and political initiatives to combat this menace. Again various schemes to restructure the operations are proposed and should be studied in depth before implementation.

The panel studied the effect of equipment lacunae in the armed forces and their impact on the performance of the troops. They found there was no integrated equipment policy, which hinders combat effectiveness. The panel has special words for the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and its shortcomings in equipment development and time overruns. It makes note of the progress achieved and the constraints it faces but is critical of its shortcomings. Ultimately, the Indian forces had to make do without critical equipment while the adversaries do not. It regrets that many recommendations by previous bodies await implementation.

Was Kargil avoidable?

The panel examines if the situation at Kargil was avoidable. It concludes that had the Indian Army taken up a deployment posture akin to Siachen it could perhaps have been able to prevent this. Such a policy would be expensive in resources - human and material and would further degrade Indian military capability. The panel recommends a declaratory policy of swiftly punishing wanton and violations of the Line of Control. The reviewer believes that a more proactive policy of assessments and monitoring by the relevant bodies could have detected the intrusion and reduced the cost of vacating it. However it would not have deterred the aggressive intent of the neighbor and have to second the panel in its recommendation. The need of the hour is to have in place a deterrent policy and provide it with the means to implement it.

Tables and Charts

1. Political Factors
2. Strategic Factors
3. Psychological Factors
4. Organizational Factors

Select Bibliography

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8. The reason is due to reluctance to put the facts on the table; the record is what anyone else publishes. For instance the Ref.6 is vocal in saying that scientists drove the decisions to test. This might suit the Indian leadership but the West has a fixation with Stranglovia syndrome – out of control scientists. This detracts from the image of the Indian scientists who worked hard with limited resources to provide the means to deter WMD threats.

PAKISTAN'S LESSONS FROM ITS KARGIL WAR (1999): *An Analysis*

by Dr. Subhash Kapila

Introductory Background:

The Kargil War (1999) against India was a military misadventure of the Pakistan Army master-minded and executed by Pakistan Army's Chief of Staff, General Pervez Musharraf and now the self-anointed President of Pakistan.

The Pakistan Army under General Musharraf, despite some initial gains, ultimately suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Indian Army. With the possibility of India escalating the war from a "limited war" in Kargil and extending it to Pakistan proper, General Musharraf seemingly goaded the hapless Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to rush to Washington and enlist United States aid to pressurize India for a three-day ceasefire to enable Pakistani troops to withdraw to their side of the LOC.

The Pakistani Army under General Musharraf had kept the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the dark about the Kargil military misadventure. Later, the Pakistan Army and General Musharraf, after the Kargil defeat, kept secret this fact from the Pakistani nation. To deflect domestic and international attention from his own personal culpability in this misadventure, General Musharraf, unscrupulous as his wont, blamed PM Nawaz Sharif for Pakistan's military humiliation and used this as a pretext for launching his military coup against a democratically elected Government. Incidentally PM Nawaz Sharif was elected by an overwhelming majority and that too on an election plank of peace with India.

Its only five years later after the Kargil war that analyses have now started appearing analyzing this war from the Pakistani perspective and drawing lessons from it. One such work that is now available on the Kargil War is by Shireen Mazari a Pakistani strategic analyst, with hawkish anti-Indian stances. Shireen Mazari's research stands published by the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan.

The aim of this paper is to dwell on the "Lessons Learnt From Kargil" as brought out by Shireen Mazari in her publication and give a deductive analysis on each of her major points as a commentary. Her conclusions are quoted verbatim in bold print and this author's commentary follows each excerpt quoted.

It is also the aim of this paper to draw some brief lessons for the United States and India, as emanating after this authors analysis.

"Lessons learnt From Kargil" as Projected by Pakistani Strategist Shireen Mazari:

The short preamble to this portion of the publication praises the Pakistan Army showing "tactical ingenuity and boldness in its execution" and the very next sentences then adds: " However what the

whole event revealed were critical shortcomings in the decision-making process". The observations then follow and to begin with:

Confusion and Dysfunction in Decision Making:

"And as the operation incrementally moved up on the escalation ladder, Pakistan's decision-making system betrayed signs of confusion and dysfunction. In fact, the short-coming of Pakistan's national security decision-making were revealed by the Kargil Conflict were not episodic but systemic."

Commentary: It needs to be remembered that "confusion and dysfunction" in Pakistan's higher elections during the Kargil War occurred due to the following factors:

- Kargil War was master-minded and launched by General Musharraf on his own personal decision and initiative, without taking PM Nawaz Sharif into confidence or bringing him into the picture at the outset.
- Confusion and dysfunction occurred due to this "dis-connect" between the Pakistani Army Chief and his political master i.e. the Prime Minister.
- General Musharraf and the Pakistani military hierarchy were in a "state of denial" till such time India's military superiorities started coming into play.
- The growing Indian and international media over-publicisation of the Kargil War added to Pakistan Army's perplexities as by now plausible deniability exists stood sealed.
- Pakistan's national security decision making is centered on the Pakistan Army Chief and its collegium of Generals. This phenomenon, despite an NSC in existence will continue.

Lack of Strategic Policy Coordination Between the Military and Political Leadership:

Shireen Mazari observes:

"To begin with the lack of strategic policy coordination between the military and political leadership was so apparent that no serious attempt was made to cover it up. The political leadership did not make any serious efforts to think-through the unfolding military situation on a strategic plan, and until late in the day June 3, 1999 this leadership did not feel the need and made no attempt to try and discuss the issue in the federal cabinet. Hence the utter confusion and lack of coordination once the diplomatic and political stakes rose".

Commentary:

- This is a motivated observation by Shireen Mazari aimed as a posterior protection measure for the Pakistan Army and General Musharraf. How could Pakistan's political leadership exert when the entire operation was kept away from the political domain by General Musharraf. As would be recalled from Bruce Reidel's records of the Clinton-Nawaz Sharif meeting of July 4, 1999 the Pakistani Prime Minister appeared to be terrorized by the prospects of General Musharraf's coup and had come prepared with his family not to go back to Pakistan.
- Shireen Mazari's very choice of sequence of words "lack of strategic policy coordination between the military and political leadership" betrays who was calling the shots in Pakistan,

namely General Musharraf and the Pakistan Army. So therefore, the blame falls squarely on their shoulders.”

Lack of Strong Civilian Institutions/Bureaucracies:

Shireen mazari states”

“To put it simply, Pakistan utterly lacks strong civilian institutions/bureaucracies, inclusive of any national security apparatus, that can integrate various inputs at the upper echelons of the government and then render appropriate advice to the Chief Executive of the country, or set out policy options for him.”

Commentary:

- This malaise will continue in Pakistan till such time the Pakistani masses mobilize themselves politically and force the Pakistan Army back to the barracks.
- The Pakistan Army voluntarily would not permit emergence of viable strong civilian institutions.

Pakistan Military Cannot Fully Fill Civilian-Decision Making Gaps:

The following observation is a telling comment on the Pakistan military:

“Apparently, the conflict, at its various stages was broadly discussed verbally, in official circles, and some quick conclusions drawn. These were then disseminated through ad-hoc chains of communication between various organs. The negative manner in which competing bureaucracies, including military, absorbed and disseminated or refused to disseminate information further aggravated the issue at the national level. To give political context to military decisions, there have to be strong civilian institutions in defence policy making,----- . Military institutions and organizations, no matter how efficient cannot fully fill these civilian decision-making gaps and inputs in an adequate fashion. This is exactly what happed during the Kargil conflict also.”

Comments:

- This is the most valuable lesson brought out as it puts in proper perspective, all that is wrong with the Pakistani nation state.
- The Pakistan Army has consistently subverted the Pakistani nation state to firm its grip and control on Pakistan's politics.
- The Pakistan Army and its Generals are not competent to act rationally and give mature strategic directions to the nation state of Pakistan. The Kargil War defeat and the previous defeats of the Pakistan Army in earlier wars with India are eloquent testimony to this fact.
- Even under civilian regimes, foreign and defence policies are dictated by Pakistan Army. Notably, even under civilian regimes the control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is in the hands of the Pakistan Army.

- The world and particularly the United States needs to take a significant note of this aspect in relation to Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is not under civilian political control but in the hands of military adventurist rulers like General Musharraf.

Absence of Written Records of Security-Related Issues:

It has been brought out, that:

“ A lack of serious thinking and critical assessment of the evolving situation during the conflict is borne out by the near total absence of written records at all levels of government. This aspect, perhaps, reflects a much deeper erosion of professionalism within the government that needs to be reformed. Prior to 1971, official records of defence and security-related meetings, show detailed minutes of government proceedings.”

Commentary:

- The absence of written records on security related issues reflects two serious infirmities of the Pakistan state machinery.
- First, that all records, that may have been maintained within the Pakistan Army itself were either not made accessible to Shireen Mazari, or worse, fearing exposure of the sordid details of General Musharraf's misadventure, they stand destroyed, on the orders of General Musharraf who still continues in power.
- Second, with a virtually continuous military rule in Pakistan post-1971, the Army has made sure that the civilian political executive has no access to the discussions of the Pakistan Army Corps Commanders Conference where all foreign policy, defence and nuclear weapons issues are discussed.
- In such an environment where military decisions are verbally taken and no records of security issues maintained it is self evident that no accountability exists on critical issues of state policy like foreign affairs and defence. Pakistan's credibility therefore in international affairs is pitifully low.

Pakistan Army's Bungled Military Planning in Kargil and Under-estimating Indian Army's Response:

The Pakistan Army and General Musharraf in particular stand significantly indicted by the following observations:

“ For the Pakistani military it was essential to evaluate the various anticipated Indian politico-military responses-including the raising of the military ante and worse case scenarios. The military, in planning a division-sized defensive engagement, failed to foresee how the demands of military operational strategy would cross with the exigencies of grand strategy and international diplomacy. It also did not anticipate the degree to which the enemy would vertically escalate the military situation. A major failing of Kargil was to under-estimate the Indian response militarily. Therefore it is vital that the planning and operational conduct of this conflict (Kargil) is allowed to be critically discussed in military training institutions at all levels.”

Commentary:

- Pakistani Army's military planning failures need to be solely shouldered by General Musharraf. He was the mastermind as Pakistan's Army Chief in terms of planning and conduct of the Kargil mis-adventure. He is therefore responsible for Pakistan's defeat in the Kargil War as accountability is vertical.
- General Musharraf, used as he is to military swagger, severely under-estimated the Indian military response. It is the same trait that is in play today in the on-going peace dialogue with India.
- General Musharraf seems to have been misled into militarily challenging India, fortified by the newly acquired nuclear weapons arsenal of Pakistan Army in 1998.
- Regrettably any such future miscalculation by General Musharraf on the use of nuclear weapons could surely lead to the extinction of the Pakistani State.
- The Pakistan Army has always shied away from discussions of its military reverses against India. It would therefore be unimaginable that General Musharraf would allow his military fiasco to be discussed in Pakistan Army training establishments.

Pakistan Army's Military Confusion and Disconnect with the Political Government:

It is stated that:

“By the end of May 1999, there was a total disconnect between the political government and the strategic planners, as a result of which no offensive formations were moved to the front which sent a clear signal to the Indians that Pakistan was in no mood to fight a war. Once ambivalence and confusion were not maintained at the military level by Pakistan for the enemy, India gained an assured level of focus.”

Commentary:

- The culprit for the “disconnect” stated above was essentially General Musharraf’.
- If no offensive formations were moved by the Pakistan Army, than the responsibility once again lies with General Musharraf.
- This may yet be another reflection of General Musharraf’s personal trait of resorting to brinkmanship, but shying away from hard choices when actually facing the brink..
- It reflects poorly on General Musharraf’s qualities as a military leader and his professionally poor appreciation of the enemies capabilities ie. India.

Pakistan Lost the Information War:

Shiren Mazari states:

“ The information war was lost from the start because of the decision not to inform the public at home and an equally half-hearted approach regarding what to give out to the international community. There is no clear cut evidence to pinpoint who actually made the decision not to

inform the domestic polity, but clearly the lack of coordination at the highest level of decision making was the major factor.”

Commentary:

- It is surprising for an astute strategic analyst like Shireen Mazari to state that no clear cut evidence exists as to who decided not to inform the Pakistani public about the Kargil misadventure.
- Obviously, it was General Musharraf and the Pakistan Army which all along had kept PM Nawaz Sharif out of the decision- making loop of the Kargil War and the Pakistani defeat.
- This phenomena of the Pak Army and its Generals has been noticeable in all the conflicts with India. The Pakistani masses are never taken into the picture by the Pakistan Army, which calls all the shots in Pakistan and in the process fudges its military reverses against India.
- Why go further, published reports in Pakistan indicate that even the Pakistan Air Force Chief and Pakistan Navy Chief were not taken into picture on Kargil by General Musharraf till a late stage in the conflict.

Wrong Military Lesson Drawn By Shireen Mazari in Terms of Indian Responses

As if to soften the indictment blows on the Pakistan Army in terms of her preceding comments, Shireen Mazari in the concluding para comes to this final conclusion:

“ However, one positive lesson from Kargil was that Pakistan could sustain limited military encounter in conventional terms in the face of India raising the conventional ante, and still prevent India from opening an all-out war front along the international border.”

Commentary

- This is a singularly erroneous misconception in terms of a conclusion.
- It was the military restraint imposed by India’s political leadership on the Indian Army not to cross the LOC which permitted the Pakistan Army to sustain its military misadventure in Kargil. The outcome would have been otherwise had the Indian Army not been politically restrained.
- It would also be erroneous for Pakistan to believe that India would not cross the international border in future. India did it in 1965 when its military resources were limited. With increased military might, India may not be all that restrained in the future notwithstanding Pakistan's nuclear weapons.
- Whether in conventional war or into nuclear escalation by Pakistan in the future, Pakistan’s capacity to withstand both conventional and nuclear attrition is limited and therefore Pakistan's Generals need to exercise abundant caution before stepping on India's toes.

United States Needs to Re-evaluate its Strategic Ally in South Asia

The major lessons/deductions arising from an analysis of Shireen Mazari’s publication are that:

- Pakistan is a highly militarised and militant state under the iron grip of the Pakistan Army.

- The Pakistan Army is not inclined to let go its vice-like grip on Pakistan's foreign policy and politics.
- Pakistan Army would not permit the emergence of strong civilian bureaucratic institutions.
- Pakistan Army is a reckless body led by military adventurists generals like General Musharraf.

If these be the hallmarks of the Pakistani nation-state run by military dictatorships, the United States needs to decide whether:

- Can United States national security interests be served by Pakistan under a military dictatorship devoid of civilian political support from the Pakistani public and its polity?
- Can United States feel safe with nuclear weapons being under the control of an irresponsible and strategically blind Pakistan Army?
- Can the United States afford a nuclear conflict in South Asia initiated by a Pakistan Army Chief under whose sole control exists the Pakistan nuclear arsenal. United States needs to remember that India has declared a "No First Use" nuclear policy whereas Pakistan has not done likewise.

United States seems to be unwisely forgetting that the bigger danger is not of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling in the hands of Islamic Jihadis, but that Pakistan Army itself handing over nuclear weapons to Islamic Jihadis for proxy war against the hated enemy of Islam, that is the United States.

United States must recognise that if ever a nuclear conflict takes place in South Asia it would be directly of Pakistan's making and indirectly that of the United States.

Lessons for India

India needs to take sharp notice of the following factors and devise appropriate responses:

- The Pakistan Army is a military adventurist Army and has the propensity to repeatedly initiate new conflicts with India notwithstanding any episodic peace rhetoric.
- In this it is buoyed by United States permissiveness of Pakistan Army's military control over Pakistan, denial of democracy and emergence of strong civil institutions.
- India should not mistake the 'peace with India' yearnings of the Pakistan masses as the aspiration of Pakistan's Generals, including General Musharraf .
- Pakistan Army under military pressure could initiate a nuclear exchange with India. India needs to be politically and militarily prepared for swift appropriate responses.
- India militarily and in terms of civil defence measures should prepare itself for an irresponsibly initiated nuclear conflict launched by Pakistan.
- No amount of US guarantees or interceding on General Musharraf's behalf be considered or accepted by India.

Concluding Observations:

With the benefit of hindsight, Shireen Mazari at many places elsewhere in her published work, tries to cover up the Pakistan Army and General Musharraf. Some of those observations need quoting and these are:

- **“In fact the international attention focused on the Kargil conflict took Pakistan by surprise especially since Pakistan saw it as yet another tactical operational exchange similar to others along the LOC, but which incrementally escalated as a result of India raising the military, political and diplomatic ante.”**
- **“another damaging result of Kargil has been the use of the Pakistan military as a scapegoat not only by the Indian and American analysts but also by elements within Pakistan’s political elite and civil society. There is an increasing attempt to undermine the institution of the military and place it at odds with civil society”**

Many questions get raised and many factors come to the fore from these assertions and these are:

- If Kargil was not planned as a deliberate well planned military operation by General Musharaaf, then what was the necessity of keeping the Kargil developments a secret from the Pakistani public. Tactical operational exchanges along the LOC are regularly reported in the Pakistani media, than why not the Kargil Conflict developments.
- President Clinton and his Administration would have not come out so heavily on Pakistan and General Musharraf , had the Kargil misadventure been just “ another tactical operational exchange similar to others along the LOC.” Obviously the United States also held evidence of Pakistan’s more wider and strategic grandiose designs in the illusionary mind of the military adventurist Pakistan Army Chief, General Musharraf.
- Unlike the present President Bush and his Administration, President Clinton had not much respect for General Musharraf and his credibility, it seems.

Concluding finally, one could offer Pakistan and Shireen Mazari, the following advice which could be added to her “Lessons Learnt From Kargil”:

- In any future military misadventure by Pakistan’s head-strong Generals, India may go in for a military sledge-hammer rather than an “incremental escalation” in response to what Pakistan would like to call “as another tactical operational exchange along the LOC”.
- The Pakistan Army was not made a scapegoat in the Kargil War. It was the Pakistan Army and General Musharraf who made PM Nawaz Sharif as the scapegoat as a cover-up for their military follies. It was General Musharraf who kept the Pakistan nation, his Prime Minister and the other Chiefs in the dark about Kargil.

The Pakistan Army is a state within a state and a law unto itself. It is high time that Pakistanis, especially strategic analysts like Shireen Mazari joined hands with other Pakistani intellectuals to politically mobilize the Pakistani masses to rein in the Pakistani Army. The Pakistan Army was responsible for disintegration of Pakistan in 1971 (civil war leading to creation of Bangladesh) and it may now be leading towards another disintegration of Pakistan in Balochistan and Balwaristan.

(The author is an International Relations and Strategic Affairs analyst. He is the Consultant, Strategic Affairs with South Asia Analysis Group. Email drsubhashkapila@yahoo.com)

2002 - Kashmir Crisis

The current deployment, which includes troops in the states of Rajasthan, Punjab and Gujarat, is the largest since the 1971 conflict between the two rivals. By early Jaunary 2002 India had reportedly mobilised over 500,000 troops and its three armored divisions along the 3,000 km frontier with Pakistan. India also placed its navy and air force on "high alert" and deployed its nuclear-capable missiles. Pakistan reacted in kind, concentrating forces along the line of control that divides Kashmir.

According to some reports, by late May 2002 as many as 700,000 Indian Army and paramilitary forces have deployed along the Indo-Pakistani border and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan has reportedly deployed as many as 300,000 troops, and perhaps as much as three-fourths of the army [which would be nearly 400,000 troops], at or near the Indian border. Both Pakistan and India have placed their forces in the disputed border area on alert. India's paramilitary contingent comprises several hundred of thousand combat-ready troops, a major portion of whom were already deployed on the Line of Control.

India has made a troop pull-back conditional on Islamabad halting the flow of militants into Kashmir, but this may not be evident until the summer when the snows melt and infiltration normally starts.

When India did not act by the end of June, when the monsoons began, military action became more complicated through the summer. India's primary security objective is to curtail the cross-border intervention by Pakistan and Kashmiri militants. India's expected option, to avoid a wider war, consisted of limited strikes against militant camps in Kashmir. The four major militant centers which have been identified in PoK are in Zaffarwal, Samani, Kotli and Kahuta areas and are within two kilometres of the LoC. The center in Zaffarwal is run by the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) ultras and the Samani center is manned by Mujahideens of almost all outfits. The Kotli center is operated by the Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami (HUJI), and the Kahuta centre jointly by the Lashkar and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militants.

India would probably prefer opening a limited front along the LoC, rather than a wider war. Even in event of a larger war on the international boundary, India would probably seek to break through Pakistan's defenses along the LoC to capture some additional territory in Kashmir. Although India could also seek to punish Pakistan, and holding Pakistani territory would probably not be the aim of India's offensive military operations.

Combatants

- [India](#)
- [Pakistan](#)

References

- [India's War Plan](#) From Ikram Sehgal
- [To the brink in South Asia — again](#) by Robert Windrem, [MSNBC.com](#) May 31, 2002

In the event of war, India's Air Force was postured to initially conduct air strikes at 50 to 75 militant bases and a few other targets in Kashmir. Targets could also include a bridge across the Karakoram highway connecting China to the region, and at least three others linking Pakistani Kashmir to the rest of the country. The destruction of these bridges would prevent China from replenishing Pakistan, and would also cut off supply routes from Pakistan to front-line units.

India could also send troops across the high mountain passes in helicopters, though this would risk casualties as the helicopters crossed Pakistani air defenses.

India's broad strategy of air strikes could induce Pakistan into extending the conflict by opening a wider front along the International Border. Pakistan indicated that even if India's actions were limited to air strikes in Kashmir border, Pakistan might not restrict actions to this sector. The possibility that Pakistan might open other fronts in Punjab or Rajasthan essentially meant that Pakistan was ready for a full-scale conventional war.

India's army lacks the logistics infrastructure to support a massive and sustained ground movement to take and hold all of Kashmir. Although India has a numerical superiority on almost all fronts, some of their military equipment is not in servicable condition. Despite having a numerical disadvantage, Pakistan has a qualitative edge in many equipment holdings, notably tanks and anti-tank missiles.

India's Air Force would face serious challenges from Pakistan. Many of India's combat aircraft are poorly maintained, and trained pilots are in short supply. Pakistan's air force is widely regarded as being better trained and equipped.

The Indian Navy had a wide range of Indian navy fleet in the region, including frigates and destroyers. India reportedly deployed seven Kilo Class submarines in an offshore picket-line formation in the Arabian Sea.

Chronology

For India, the 13 December 2001 attack on Parliament by the suicide squad of Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed was the last straw in a series of attacks over the previous two years. The attack, which according to Home Minister L.K. Advani was aimed at wiping out the Indian political leadership, was a declaration of war against this country.

The troops deployments were massive, extending from Gujarat to Kashmir. The Indian Army received reinforcements from central and northern India to counter the Pakistani build-up which had not ebbed since their winter exercise codenamed Operation Khabardar. It commenced in October 2001, with troops from the strike corps, Mangla-based 1 corps, Karachi-based 5 corps and Bahawalpur-based 31 corps, an armoured brigade and infantry divisions, in the sensitive Jhelum-Chenab and Chenab-Ravi corridors close to the LoC.

There were reports of massive Indian troop movements along the border in the Sindh-Rajasthan sector, as well as in the Chenab-Ravi corridor and along the Line of Control which divides Indian and Pakistani-ruled Kashmir. On 27 December 2001, Indian Defence Minister George

Fernandes called the border situation "grave", and said that the Indian forces deployment on the forward areas would be completed within two to three days. By 01 January 2002 the Indian Defence Ministry denied on Tuesday allegations by Pakistan that it was continuing its military buildup along their tense borders, saying that "the mobilisation is more or less complete."

India recalled its envoy to Pakistan for the first time in 30 years. India had previously withdrawn its ambassador prior to conflict breaking out in the 1965 war over Kashmir and the 1971 war over independence for Bangladesh (previously East Pakistan). India also ended bus and train service between the two nations, as part of the strategy to increase pressure against Pakistan.

Pakistan moved 7 to 9 divisions of its army towards the Indian border. With the Pakistani Army having to cover shorter distances from its cantonments to its borders, it has the advantage of mobilising much faster than India. On 25 December 2001 Pakistan's Army canceled all leaves for its troops and told them to report for duty immediately. India was moving troops by the trainload from south and central India to the northwestern border with Pakistan. The buildup was not just in Kashmir, but also along the International Bborder [IB] dividing the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab from the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sind.

In 2000 Pakistan had unilaterally withdrawn its troops from the Line of Control under a "maximum restraint" policy that sought to normalize relations with India. Up to 20,000 Pakistani troops, who should have withdrawn from the area following winter exercises, remained stationed near the line. Two corps of the Pakistani army were supposed withdraw from near the International Borders in Rajasthan and Punjab and the Line of Control following exercises, but they had not done so.

Pakistan pushed its own troops forward, and moved the 10, 11 and 12 Corps from their Afghan frontier locations near Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta to its eastern frontier. By early January 2002 the build-up of Pakistani forces near border areas raised concerns among Indian analysts. Pakistan had stationed 150,000 troops in the Jammu-Punch belt - from Chicken Neck on the International Border [IB] to Rajauri on the Line of Control [LOC]. The Indian army is regarded as being weak in the Chicken Neck and Pallanwala sectors. This suggested that, if war broke out, Pakistan's major thrust would be from Jammu. Pakistan's 1 Corps, in Khariyan-Mangla, Gujranwala's 30 Corps and Rawalpindi's 10 Corps had also prepared to move at short notice. The troop build-up was taken as an indication that, if there were an outbreak of hostilities, Pakistan would attack and capture the Akhnoor-Pallanwala sector. In 1965, Pakistan had captured Chhamb. In 1971 Pakistan had made advances in Jayorian, but retreated after a counter-attack by Indian forces. The Pakistani build-up along Jammu indicated that Pakistan might seek to capture Akhnoor-Pallanwalla and Jayorian, cutting off the Rajauri-Punch Highway. The 10-km stretch of the Srinagar-Kargil Highway, which is within range of Pakistani artillery, has been shelled continuously. The recent build-up may indicate that Pakistan was also considering moves against the Jammu-Punch Highway.

As part of New Delhi's efforts to maintain pressure on Islamabad, on 11 January 2002 Army Chief Gen. S. Padmanabhan warned in a rare press conference that Pakistan would be severely punished if it launch ed a nuclear attack on India. "Let me assure you of one thing as surely as I'm alive. Should a nuclear weapon be used against India, Indian forces, our assets at sea,

economic, human or other targets, the perpetrators of that outrage shall be punished so severely that their continuation thereafter in any form or fray will be doubtful," the general said.

In mid-January 2002 Pakistani police arrested over 200 militants, bringing the total number of detentions to over 1,100. This was part of the crackdown against five groups banned by President Pervez Musharraf. Two of the banned groups -- the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad -- are among the most hardline Islamic militant groups fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir.

On 30 January 2002 Pakistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar termed the deployment of about half a million Indian troops along the border with Pakistan as "coercive and intimidating". Sattar said de-escalation was possible through dialogue as was done in 1987.

By early April 2002 it had become apparent that India's troop deployment along the Indo-Pakistan border would be prolonged until at least the autumn of 2002. The Indian Government had considered pulling back elements of some of its strike corps from the border by May end or early June, given an anticipation that by that time, trends in cross-border infiltration would become clear.

On 26 April 2002, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf accused India of "offensive deployment" of troops, and ruled out the possibility of unilateral withdrawal of troops from Indo-Pak border.

The tension between the two countries heightened after militant attack on an army family accommodation camp in Kalu Chak [Kaluchak] on 14 May 2002. Three militants arrived by bus, and after opening fire on the bus passengers, they entered the lightly-guarded camp. The militants turned their guns on the family quarters of soldiers. The terrorists systematically fired at the families of Army personnel. Eight women and 11 children died of gunshot wounds. Most of the 25 injured persons were women and children. The gunmen were killed in an intense battle with soldiers that followed. The attack was the worst in Kashmir in the previous eight months.

On 19 May 2002 the Indian Army centralized command of the paramilitary forces, including the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). These paramilitary forces, especially the BSF, are deployed along the International Border (IB), including parts of the Jammu sector, close to the Chenab river. The Army and not the paramilitary forces, in most cases, face Pakistani forces along the Line of Control (LOC) which stretches along most of the rest of Jammu and Kashmir.

On 19 May 2002 the Coast Guard was placed under the operational control of the Indian Navy. In consequence of rising tensions between India and Pakistan, Indian merchant ships were placed "on alert" and directed to file daily location reports as well as to file voyage plans with the Mumbai based Maritime Administration for passing to the Navy. By taking command of the Coast Guard, the Navy sought to safeguard the coastal areas that straddle high value industrial complexes along the west coast.

On 21 May 2002 India redeployed troops from Gujarat state, the site of prolonged sectarian violence, to the India-Pakistan border, where the two nations traded artillery fire for a fifth consecutive day.

On 22 May 2002 the Indian Prime Minister said that India needed to be ready for sacrifices, but this will be a fight to victory. He said that the time for a "decisive fight" had come.

By 26 May India had detached additional naval warships from its eastern fleet home base in Vishakapatnam, into the Arabian Sea closer to Pakistan. Among the warships of India's Western Fleet which deployed in the Arabian Sea was the aircraft carrier "INS Viraat" with Sea Harrier jets. The Indian Navy moved five front-line warships of the Eastern Naval Command to join the Western Naval Fleet. The warships moved to the western coast include a "Kashin" class missile destroyer, a Leander class multi-purpose frigate and three missile corvettes. The Indian objective was to have total control of the sea and deny movement to Pakistani ships and submarines.

As of late May 2002 it appeared that eight out of nine strike divisions of the Indian Army had moved to "jumping off points" near the border. The 21st Strike Force (mainly comprised the 33rd Armored Division) had advanced towards Akhnur in the Jammu region, assuming a forward command post. This strike force was supplemented by two more mechanized infantry brigades and self-propelled artillery units from Meerut and Mathra. The three Corps in Kashmir were augmented with additional armoured and infantry brigades to enable the Indian troops in the region to move forward from a defensive posture to major offensive. These forces include 16th Corps at Nagrauta, Jammu, 15th Corps at Badami Bagh, Srinagar and 14th Corps at Nimmud, Leh.

In response to India deployment, Pakistan, in addition to engaging nine divisions in a holding formation, moved an attack-force of armored and motorized infantry divisions into combat readiness positions. The two infantry divisions based in Baluchistan and the NWFP North-West Frontier Province also moved towards the eastern borders. Pakistan reinforced the Uri Sector by deploying two brigades of 10-Corps (Rawalpindi). Four brigades of the 31-Corps (Bahawalpur) moved into forward positions along the Bahawalpur-Fort Abbas stretch in Punjab and Rajasthan sectors. An independent Armoured Brigade moved forward to support the local infantry in the Old Beas Area. Further south, five brigades of 5-Corps (Karachi) moved up to the border stretch south of Fort Abbas to Gadra Road and Darwaza and in the border region adjacent to Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Barnar forward areas. Pakistan's formations include North and South Army Reserves, including 1-Corps (Mangla) with significant armored element.

On 05 June 2002 the United States and Britain upgraded official warnings to their citizens in India and Pakistan, telling people to leave now. The raising of the status of travel alerts came after Pakistan rejected an offer from India for joint border patrols in the disputed territory of Kashmir. The US State Department issued new advice to the 60,000 Americans in India and several thousand in Pakistan, saying: "Tensions have risen to serious levels and the risk of intensified military hostilities between India and Pakistan cannot be ruled out." The updated travel warning said it "strongly urges that American citizens in India depart the country". Previous advice to Americans merely "urged" them to leave.

By 05 June 2002, despite the stand-off between India and Pakistan at Almaty and Defence Minister George Fernandes' assertion of non-withdrawal of forces from borders, there were indications that India may start the process of de-escalation at the international border any day

after June 15 in the wake of “positive signals” from Pakistan. The de-escalation may begin from Kutch, Rajasthan and Punjab but army deployment would continue along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Islamabad was believed to have taken steps to close down some militant training camps in Kashmir. Intercepts by Indian intelligence agencies reportedly indicated that Pakistan instructed its Tenth Corps to stop infiltration across the LoC.

On June 26, 2002, the US State Department noted that the very high level of tension between India and Pakistan that had existed at the end of May and the beginning of June had subsided somewhat. This condition followed intense diplomatic activity and important steps taken by both India and Pakistan to reduce tension. Nonetheless, military mobilization by the two countries remained in place along the Line of Control and the international boundary with the risk of renewed high levels of tension impossible to rule out.

The six-month standoff between India and Pakistan, which brought the two nuclear neighbours to the brink of war, had eased. But the return of peace was months away, pending Pakistan's putting an end to sponsoring cross-border terrorism, and the October polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

As of late August 2002 Indian officials insisted that infiltration by Pakistani-backed militants had declined but not ended. India will not engage in a dialogue with Pakistan over the future of Kashmir until cross-border terrorism stops.

Tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir continue to oscillate. As of May 2003 both governments expressed willingness to talk, and both re-established formal diplomatic relations. No time-line for the talks was established, the conciliatory moves from both countries was due to pressure from the international community. Specifically, pressure exerted by the US, Britain, and Russia.