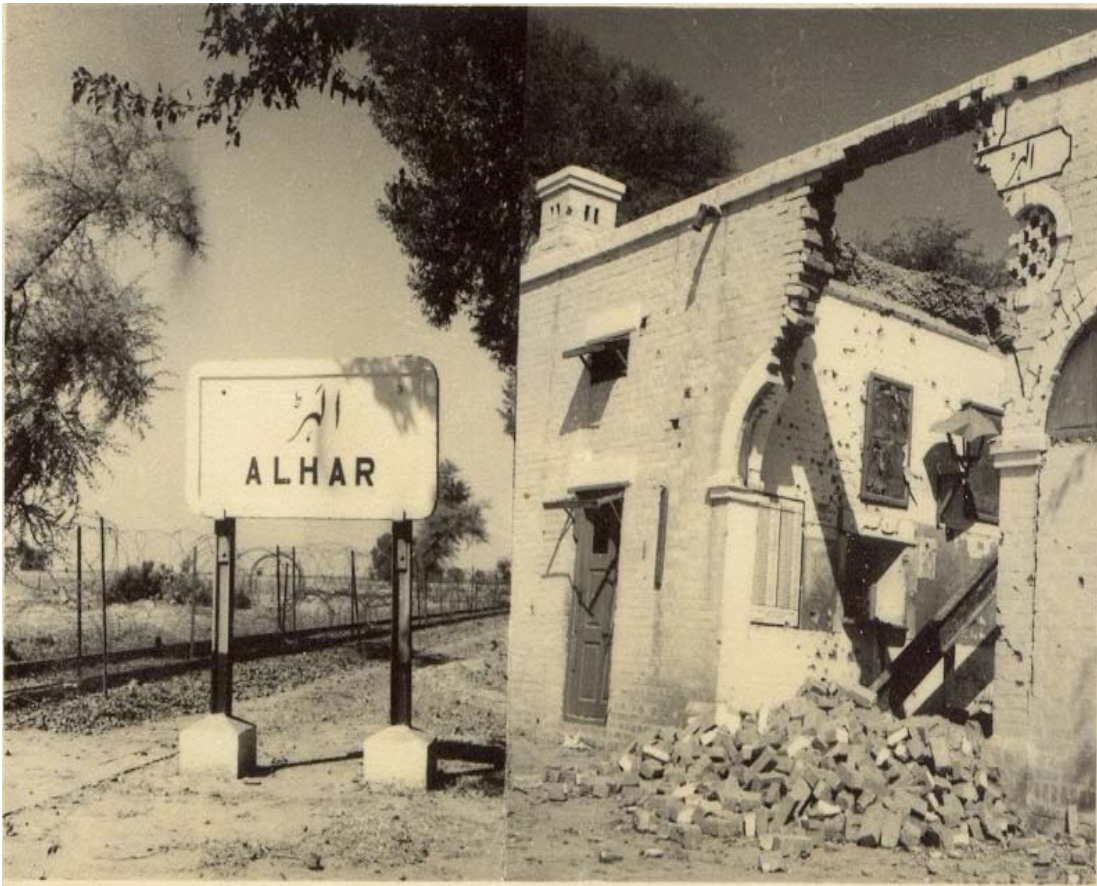


THE SAGA OF GRIT AND COLD COURAGE

TRIBUTE TO THE FIGHTERS OF 35 INFANTRY BRIGADE IN 1965 WAR: FIRST HAND ACCOUNT

Maj Gen Yashwant Deva, AVSM (Retd)



DEDICATED TO

**The forgotten martyrs of 35 Infantry Brigade, who sacrificed their
sarvasva (the entire) — existence, even remembrance**

At Lord's Beckoning

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥ ३७

**Slain, thou shall achieve heaven; victorious, thou shall enjoy the earth.
Therefore rouse O son of Kunti, resolve to fight.**

Bhaagvad Gita, Shalok 37, Discourse II



Lt Gen S K Sinha, PVSM (Retd)
Mob No 9958096816



C-4/4089 Vasant Kunj
New Delhi-110070
Ph.: 26125877

FOREWORD



I recall Gen Deva, the author of this book when he was attending the Staff College. Posting as a Brigade Major after the course was indicative of the fact that the officer had done very well at the course. It was more so for a Signals officer, as normally officers from combat arms and not combat support arms got posted to this most important staff appointment for a Major. Nowadays with a Deputy Commander in the rank of Colonel and the Brigade Major upgraded to Lt Col, this has changed.

After reading this book, I feel that the author has more than justified his selection as Brigade Major. He was blooded in battle like an infantry soldier and showed valour. He shouldered much responsibility in the operation of his Brigade in all the confusion connected with 1 Corps offensive in the Samba sector of Jammu and Kashmir. Tasks for his Brigade were changing at the drop of the hat and so was its grouping with formations. Yet the Brigade's performance was creditable. 93 officers and soldiers of the Brigade got martyred in this war. It has been said that no plan of battle survives in its entirety after contact with the enemy. Hence Flexibility is one of the principles of war. In the operations described by the author, Confusion more than Flexibility was their hallmark. No wonder Lt Gen E A Vas known to be a thinking General who had commanded a Brigade in this Sector wrote, "There was 80 percent confusion on our side. Thank God! There was 160 percent confusion in Pak side." We may not have achieved the full potential of our resources but at the end of the day, we kept our flag flying high. The author has given a detailed account of the operations of his Brigade. He has quoted extensively from the account given in Western Army Commander, Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh's War Despatches. He has also quoted from books by Pakistan authors giving the Pakistan version, notably from *The Men of Steel: War Despatches* by Abrar Hussain. Besides, there are some relevant quotes from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. After Cease Fire, the author played creditable role at Flag Meetings with Pakistan representatives. All this is well recorded in this book.

The 22 days Indo-Pak War was fought in three phases. The first phase was Operation Gibraltar in which several thousand infiltrators were sent by Pakistan to generate an uprising of the local people against the Indian Army. Pakistan hoped that this would enable it to grab Kashmir. The people of Kashmir did not respond and instead co-operated with Indian Forces to locate the infiltrators and guide the former. The Indian

Army crossed the LoC capturing Haji Pir Pass on the main route of the infiltrators. General Musa Khan, the then Chief of Pakistan Army wrote in his book *My Version* that Operation Gibraltar failed because the people did not co-operate with the infiltrators. Thereafter, Pakistan Army launched Operation Grand Slam. It was a conventional offensive aimed at Akhnur and Jammu, to cut off our line of communication to the Kashmir Valley. Pakistan advanced deep into our territory to Jaurian, close to Akhnur. The situation was critical. We retaliated by crossing our Western International Border from Kashmir to Gujrat. Whereas troops for offensive were *in situ* in other sectors, troops required for offensive in Samba Sector were concentrated at short notice from all over the country. This contributed to confusion during operations in Samba Sector.

Pakistan was surprised when India responded to their Grand Slam by crossing the International Border. India had been saying that in case Pakistan launched an offensive across LOC in Kashmir, she would respond by attacking at a place of its choice. It seems that Pakistan had assumed that after the passing away of Jawaharlal Nehru, his successor was weak who would not take such a decision. Moreover, with its superiority with modern weapons over India, Pakistan would be able to dictate terms in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lal Bahadur Shastri proved to be a great leader in deciding on retaliatory action. Initially, Pakistan was taken completely by surprise. Our troops advanced from Amritsar to the outskirts of Lahore. Pakistan immediately withdrew its forces from Akhnur to meet this threat and unleashed heavy air attacks for which we were not fully prepared. This resulted in our having to withdraw from near Lahore to Ichhogil Canal. Pakistan launched its major offensive through Taran Taran towards Beas. Field Marshal Ayub declared that he would soon have his tanks rolling down the plains of Panipat to Delhi. Pakistan armour was decimated in the sugar cane fields at Asal Uttar. The Pakistan major offensive fizzled out. Both India and Pakistan accepted Cease Fire at the instance of the two Super Powers.

India and Pakistan both claim victory in this War, India for saving Jammu and Kashmir and defeating Pakistan offensive at Asal Uttar. She also captured more square miles of Pakistan territory. This was all cultivable territory. Pakistan on the other hand secured less Indian territory and that too mostly in the desert. Pakistan's claim to victory rests on saving Lahore and not allowing our armour to break out of the extensive mines, it had laid in the Sialkot sector. There is no doubt that the scales of victory were tripped in favour of India.

There is also a historical angle to Indo-Pak war that we have fought since Independence. Pakistan had misinterpreted history by imagining that they are descendents of Central Asian invaders who had come to India during the medieval period and conquered repeatedly. They also felt that they had martial superiority over Indians. No wonder at the time of partition their slogan was "*Hans Ke Iiya hal Pakistan, Lad ke lenge Hidustan*" All this received a jolt in the first Indo-Pak war of 1947-48, a setback in

the Second Indo-Pak war of 1965 and got totally shattered in India's decisive victory in 1971

I have tried to give the overall political and strategic background of the Indo-Pak war of 1965 to highlight its importance. This book gives details of battles fought at Brigade and Battalion level. It is useful for study by young Army officers. I commend the author for his hard work and devotion to the memory of the martyrs of his Brigade in that war.



Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha
Former Governor of Assam and of J&K

New Delhi
6 August, 2015

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I express gratitude to Lt Gen SK Sinha, PVSM (Retd) who has been my guide, mentor, and guru in the formative years of my career at Defence Services Staff College and later when I served under him as Military Attaché in Afghanistan, for writing the foreword to this monograph. I thank Lt Gen PK Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd) Director USI for his appreciation of this work, help and consideration in its publication during Golden Jubilee year. Penning this venerable *Gatha* (Saga) has been an honour, which I owe to *Veer Gati Prapt* comrades in arms, who laid down their lives half a century back — little knowing that even their names would be forgotten by history, what to talk of their daring and devotion to duty — call to *Naam, Namak aur Nishan*. Seeking to redress that historical, yet reprehensible wrong and instead initiate grateful remembrance of their sacrifices, as I do, I decline, with all deference, any honorarium or royalty, and instead express motivation to reach out through this work, to the survivors and the kith and kin of the martyrs, and budding generations of the Armed Forces while India commemorates the almost forgotten war.

I am grateful to Lt Gen Satish Nambiar, PVSM, AVSM, VrC (Retd) for his help in perusing relevant books and for sharing his views on this important subject. I acknowledge obligation of Lt Gen Ravi Eipe PVSM, AVSM (Retd), former Army Commander for his indulgence in refreshing my memory and accessing material, Lt Gen RP Singh, PVSM (Retd) and Lt Gen Harbhajan Singh, PVSM (Retd), both former SO-in-Cs, for identifying personalities in photographs and their progressive observations, likewise grateful to Maj Gen PJS Sandhu (Retd) for identifying Pakistan's "A" vehicles in photographs and as an editor of USI publications, giving an unsullied and realistic view to historical account of battles we fought. It would be remiss of me if I do not refer to his contribution to meticulously revising and tidying up this work. I record my fond appreciation for Signalman Tomar and Signalman Manish Singh of 21 Signal Group, the former for making excellent set of sketches and the latter for his help in making photographs printable and colour-modification of Pakistani maps in *The Men of Steel* that show their dispositions. I thank Brig Chandra Shekhar (Retd) erstwhile incharge War Memorial at Bangalore for sending me the venerated roll of honour of martyrs.

I thank Infantry School for according me the honor of addressing the YO's course on morale and motivation in the context of my experiences in Operation Nepal, likewise College of Combat for Junior Command and Senior Command courses, Military College of Telecommunication Engineering for teaching Infantry and Signal tactics to various courses, and field formations that were later deployed in the vicinity of the battlefield on the factual history of 1965 War in Sialkot Sector. Finally, I express my gratitude to Brig TK Aich erstwhile Commander 35 Infantry Brigade for conferring a singular appreciation for recounting the history and presentation of photographs of 1965 War at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Brigade Raising day on 15 August 1963.

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PREAMBLE

You cannot prevent and prepare for war at the same time.

— Albert Einstein

This is the legendary account of 35 Infantry Brigade, fractured in entity, run down in history, yet momentous frontrunner in 1965 War. The dateline is packed with heroism of the martyrs as listed in Appendix “A”, and unparallel deeds of daring, both by the living and the departed — alas! It is undocumented, even unrecognised by the so-called official history and other books including *War Despatches* by Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, VrC and *Missed Opportunities* by Maj Gen Lachhman Singh PVSM, VrC.

There is another glitch qualifying as exceptionality and that is about command and control. Nowhere in history, had a brigade changed affiliation to different types of divisions, vis. Infantry, Mountain and Armoured; and that too, four to six times during a span of 18 days without conveyance of timely and proper written orders of doing so, more often without our knowledge — at odds with, even defiance of traditional norms, staff duties teaching standards, and training practices; instead creating confusion with regard to passing orders and delivery of situational awareness. It entailed denial of intelligence, and unfair treatment, both, in narrative and recognition of exceptional valour. Greater irony was that much touted all arms’ warfare precepts e.g. dedicated firepower, chain of command communications from higher HQ to lower HQ, organisational cohesiveness, morale and bonhomie were a fatality. Throughout the operations left hand did not know what right hand was doing. Yet, at no stage in battle, 35 Infantry Brigade lost its verve, balance, zeal and, above all, mettle in the face of the enemy.

The brigade was a new raising that celebrated its Golden Jubilee existence, on 15 August 2013. During Operation Ablaze against Pakistan, it relieved a brigade of 6 Mountain Division and was deployed in Operation Hornet in mountains against China. On termination of Operations Ablaze, it was ordered to shed all the three battalions *in situ* and move back to its peace station, Saugar. For a good three weeks or so the Brigade Headquarters and the Signal Company cooled their heels at Bareilly, awaiting the rolling-stock. What a travesty! The railways got a pat and the hierarchy of Army and the Air Force flak from the Official History.

Not even a fortnight had elapsed at Saugar, when the Brigade headed for yet another operational assignment, that too, with all three new battalions — two at Saugar and one at Babina. The Brigade having undergone no training — individual or collective, no familiarisation with the terrain because of a shift from mountains to plains, no time to settle and resettle the families or recall personnel from leave, temporary duty, or courses of instruction, no clues about the enemy — strength, organisation, deployment, or tactics; no experience to operate alongside Armour, Artillery, Engineers and Signals, no logistic support, and above all having had no professional or social interaction with would-be battle comrades — was all green as green could be.

Here is the narrative by erstwhile Brigade Major who had the rarest of rare opportunity of beholding, witnessing and partnering the brave deeds of officers and men of the Brigade; who was the first information recipient of actions that should have shaped the military's authentic history; who wrote situation reports, prisoners' interrogation reports and the war diary with maps, sketches, photographs, and extensive coverage of battles, which none read or quoted; who carried the onerous responsibility of representing I Corps at flag meetings after the ceasefire and taking on-the-spot, often out-of-box, decisions when the enemy violated the line of control (LoC) and who is by now the only survivor amongst the brigade hierarchy to tell the poignant, edifying account of factual happenings. This write-up is supported by some pertinent photographs from author's album; Pakistani troops disposition maps copied from *The Men of Steel* — a book on War Despatches authored by Abrar Hussain General Officer Commanding (GOC) 6 Armoured Division of Pakistan, and illustrative sketches that belie the subjectivity and factual contradictions of the official narrative as to where the 35 Infantry Brigade was, under which division — more so, adverse relative strength and deployment of the enemy it faced in the bloodiest battle of Chawinda.

Before describing my narrative, it would be relevant to give a broad overview of Indian 1 Corps operations in order to familiarise the reader as to where 35 Infantry Brigade fitted into the overall strategic setting. The mission assigned to I Corps was to secure Pagowal, Phillora, Chawinda and Cross Roads with a view to advancing towards the Marala-Ravi Link Canal and eventually to the line of Dhallewali, Wuhilam, Daskasb, Mandhali. The operation was given codeword 'NEPAL'.

There were three vital considerations in the formulation of I Corps Plan vis, firstly, security of the Road Pathankot – Jammu particularly Madhopur Bridge; secondly, achievement of surprise during concentration and break out; and thirdly, inadvisability of fixing intermediate objectives in view of the limited information available regarding enemy dispositions and activities.

Indian 1 Corps constituted 1 Armoured Division (I Armoured and 43 Lorried Brigades); 6 Mountain Division (69 and 99 Mountain Brigades); 14 Infantry Division (35, 58 and 116 Infantry Brigades), and 26 Infantry Division (19, 162 and 168 Infantry Brigades) later beefed up by 52 Mountain Brigade. On induction 35 Infantry Brigade was part of 14 Infantry Division only for defence of Madhopur Bridge Thereafter it was placed under command 6 Mountain Division along with 166 Field Regiment and three tentacles.

The broad plan of I Corps was as under:-

- (a) Establishment of "Bridgehead" across the International Border at Charwa and Maharajke by 99 and 69 Mountain Brigades with 35 Infantry Brigade as reserve.
- (b) Breakout by Armoured Division for capture of Phillora and advance to Pagowal on two axes:-

- (i) **Red Route on Left.** I Armoured Brigade Group designated for capturing Phillora
- (ii) **Green Route on Right.** 43 Lorried Brigade Group designated for advancing to Pagowal.

Though not spelt out in any book or official history the infantry advance into Pakistan was led by 35 Infantry Brigade, following the Red Route. We were under command 6 Mountain Division and paradoxically, were planned to “explore” right up to Pagowal — the same objective as that of 43 Lorried Brigade.

Written in the context of the above background, and in first person idiom, this monograph is a potent motivator with a view to retrieving pride of belonging to a brigade whose performance in battle against enemy superior in numbers, entrenched in pillboxes, extensively mined and supported by armour, artillery guns and weapons of better-quality and potency was indeed exceptional and worthy of esteem and honour.

I quote an Urdu couplet that I once read in M J Amber’s column that fits apt with our history writers, who have never seen a drop of blood being shed:

*Waqt ne dekhe hain bahut, tairaqi mein mahir;
Jo doob gaye, darya mein koodne se pahle.*

The “Times” have seen many expert swimmers
Who drowned, before they jumped into the river.

Chapter 1

INDUCTION INTO THE BATTLEFIELD

“The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Move from Peace Location

The first train carrying Brigade HQ, the Signal Company and 5 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (JAK RIF) pulled in at the Pathankot Railway Station an hour after the first light on 6 September. 1965.¹ We were met by an officer from the Area HQ, who confirmed the radio news of previous night that war had been declared. He also told us that civil transport had been arranged for the battalion to take it to the concentration area close to the Madhopur Bridge and that I was required to meet the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 14 Infantry Division Maj Gen RK Ranjeet Singh at the Madhopur Bridge at 1400 hours.

The Brigade Commander, Brig AC Cariappa had left Saugur seven days earlier to participate in briefings on planning of Operation Nepal. He gave me a quarter inch map to study the Sialkot-Shakargarh terrain, but not to reveal the location where we were headed to any one. It was only when the war was declared and we heard the announcement on BBC, that I shared with Lt Col Sukhdev Singh Commanding Officer (CO) of 5 JAK RIF every bit of information that was told to me. It helped. The Subedar Major passed instructions to jawans to shed every non-essential item at the concentration area and carry only weapons, ammunition, small pack and big pack. He also gave me a wise counsel, *“Sahib Ji! Pathankot mein do char bori channa aur gur lekar gadiyon mein rakh lena, Larai men koi pata nahin ‘B’ Echelon main bana khana kaisa ho aur voh pahunche ya na pahunche* (Sir! buy a few bags of gram and jiggery and keep them in the vehicles with you. You never know whether the meal cooked in ‘B’ Echelon would come and in what state),” How right he was. We survived on *chana* and *Gur*. I wish I could have interacted with the Signal Company and other battalion commanders too. The pressure of uncertainty of events, the severity of battlefield, chaos and perplexity coupled with lack of training, and *babuism* even in an emergency, took over.

At the concentration area, the first chaos that I faced was when told that Signal Company was still at the railway platform trying to refit wireless equipment in command vehicles. This ruckus was a creation of the railway *babu* at Saugar who insisted that he would not issue the “Overhead Clearance” certificate and allow the train to move unless all equipment was removed from the vehicles and separately loaded. This was height of hostility, if not downright subversion. No Major was posted — the Company was being commanded by a short service commissioned officer of one and half year service, who complied. I was not informed and the end-result was that we went into battle without

checking communications, charging batteries and grouping radio detachments with battalions. .

I met the GOC at Madhopur Bridge as scheduled. Without preliminaries, he pronounced, “In the absence of your Brigade Commander, ORDERS. The brigade will defend Madhopur Bridge tonight. A battalion is here with you and the second one has just arrived at the railway station. You will deploy one battalion on the heights that you see to the North of bridge and the other battalion to the South.” I ventured to ask him who the likely enemy was and in what strength? The GOC was candid, “There is Intelligence Bureau (IB) report that “one lakh Razakars” have gathered on the other side of the border, some had infiltrated and tried to target the bridges in J&K and some may possibly head for Madhopur Bridge too. Although the number appears to be all bunkum, we cannot take chances. However, there is a possibility of attack by enemy Para-commandoes to be followed by a major offensive. The likely targets of Pakistan Para-commandoes could be the Pathankot air base and Madhopur Bridge.” He proved right, although no Pak offensive came; an attempt was made by Para-commandoes

After the GOC left, I was still at the Bridge, looking at the features, the vulnerable parts of the bridge and planning for the protection of the bridge, when the brigade commander’s jeep appeared. As the Brigade Commander alighted, his first question to me was, “What are you doing here? You should be in the assembly area with the battalions to be reserve for an attack at Charwa and Maharajke by 6 Mountain Division. I explained to him that the orders issued by the GOC 14 Infantry Division were to defend Madhopur Bridge, and posed a counter question, “Has the Corps Headquarters (HQ) issued any orders as to when and where we were to be detached from 14 Infantry Division and attached to 6 Mountain Division — in staff duties they call it, “*atts and dets*”² He appreciated the predicament that we had landed in.

So the two of us made a beeline for the Upper Bari Doab Canal Rest House, rang up from a civil number, got military exchange at Pathankot, thence to Corps exchange and the Brigadier General Staff (BGS). After the Commander briefed him, BGS response was, “Tonight you defend Madhopur Bridge, tomorrow move to assembly area and be reserve for attack, and day-after, lead the infantry advance into Pakistan.” That implied three types of operations without perception of the ground, strength and whereabouts of the enemy, and still worse, not knowing own troops along-side whom we were required to operate — not even aware or known the “GOC and staff” under whom the Brigade would be placed. We did not discern that this would be our fate right till the ceasefire.

Defence of Madhopur Bridge

Madhopur Bridge lies on the [Pathankot-Jammu](#) national highway, NH-1A - the only road link that Jammu and Kashmir had at that time with the rest of the country. The bridge is about 9.5 km from the Pathankot Railway Station and near the airport. Due to its vital and critical location, Madhopur Bridge is a strategic focal point and its sabotage or take-over even for a couple of hours could be disastrous for build up of troops for an offensive by the newly raised corps, besides disruption of regular convoys of troops and logistic

support for 15 Corps. So we took the situation seriously. Leaving the brigade commander at the Canal Rest House, I headed back for the Bridge.

As I came to the police check-post, there was an urgent message for me to contact HQ Sub Area. I was put through to the Staff Officer. He told me that the enemy air force had launched an attack on Pathankot airbase and some aircraft had been destroyed. I was told to be vigilant and ensure safety of the bridge.

At the bridge, the two battalion commanders, Lt Col Sukhdev Singh, CO 5 JAK RIF and Lt Col Saranjit Singh Kanwar, CO 20 RAJPUT were waiting for me. I conveyed the orders. Together, we planned the defence of the Bridge, essentially against Para-drop and subversion. We put a section each at the northern and southern end barriers, relieving the police, who were too glad to oblige. I and two dispatch riders located ourselves at the police check-post and virtually became the brigade HQ under the Area. I visited the battalions after stand to. They were well deployed — each had sent out a protective patrol.

Pakistan's Terror Assets

This is what the official history has to say about the Para-drop, “In Pathankot area, the paratroopers were dropped at about 0230 hrs on 7 September, which meant that they had a margin of about three hours before daylight to complete their task. However, by mistake they landed on a marshy piece of ground, leading to great confusion. By the time the various ‘Sticks’ were collected, it was too late to fulfil their mission. The first warning about this drop was conveyed to Pathankot Sub-Area HQ by a villager. Hurriedly, approximately 200 men were collected from transients in the early hours of the morning. By about 1000 hrs, the intruders were completely surrounded and they began to give themselves up in groups. The last group, which included their commander surrendered in the afternoon.”³ Amongst the transients were 6 MARATHA Light Infantry (6 MARATHA LI) officers and jawans. I have a formation sign of *Ekwanja* FF (Fifty One Para Battalion of Frontier Force) captured by them.



In context of the so-called Razakars or Mujahideen, Pakistan is notorious in spreading canards with regard to their strength, readiness to volunteer and motivation. History is replete with examples of hordes of barbarians descending on India down the

ages. There are plenty in Pakistani political establishment, Army and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), who extol savagery — their pretended superficial suavity notwithstanding. The Special Services Group (SSG), a Division sized group, is headed by a Major-General and divided into ten battalions. Of them, the acknowledged ones, comprising SSG Commando Force⁴, deployed in Kashmir were:

- (a) “Salahuddin Force” operating in SrinagarValley
- (b) “Ghaznavi Force “ in Mendhar-Rajauri area
- (c) “Tariq Force” in Dras-Kargil area
- (d) “Babar Force “in Nowshera-Sundarbani area
- (e) “Qasim Force” in Bandipura-Sonarwain area
- (f) “Khalid Force” in Qazinag-Naugam area
- (g) “Nusrat Force” in Tithwal-Tangdhar area
- (h) “Sikandar Force” in Gurais area
- (i) “Khilji Force” in Kel-Minimarg area.

Besides those deployed in Kashmir, a sizable numbers were located at border posts and even in the interior. There were 12 Mujahid Companies and rangers all along the border subdivided into small posts for observation and local defence. In addition to those deployed in border posts, there were a total of 24 Rangers/Mujahid Companies in Pak 15 Division area operating against us. Although the Official History has recorded Mujahid prisoners captured at Charwa, it has ignored those captured by 5 JAK RIF at Chobara.

S G Mehdi of Pakistan Army who commanded SSG till just before the commencement of 1965 operations is highly critical of Pakistan Army leadership He states, “Broadly the plan envisaged, on a short-term basis, sabotage of military targets, disruptions of communications, etc. and, as a long-term measure, distribution of arms to the people and initiation of a guerrilla movement there with a view to starting an uprising in the valley eventually.”⁵

Pakistan has used raiders and terrorists throughout its existence right up to 26/11. They failed to raise a revolt, but succeeded in creating a great deal of confusion and mayhem by acts of sabotage, violence and murder. Even today, the formal or informal terrorist forces might have been disbanded, neither their ulterior mission has been discarded, nor the vicious mindset changed. What was relevant to Pak strategy in 1947 is still pertinent. Razakars, Mujahideen and terrorists continue to be active on Pak Order of Battle (ORBAT) ever since, and will be a strong feature of Pak capability and their proclivity to subvert India’s sovereignty, in future too. Only change one discerns is in their *modus operandi*, which is overly getting biased to cyber terrorism and digital-jihad. We have to be consistently beware of them — hunt down the track they follow, and trail the footprints they leave.

A word about the Pakistan Rangers — the one that operated against us in 1965. Unlike our Border Security Force (BSF), it was a force designed and tasked to function under the Army. The Rangers had fought together with the Pakistan Army in several

conflicts, right up to Kargil War in 1992. The top command hierarchy of the force was seconded from the Pak Army. An officer of Major rank from the Ranger Force was part of Flag Meetings that I attended on behalf of 1 Corps — more about it in Chapter 7.

Move to Arnia on 7 September 1965

At first light on 7 September 1965 the civil transport reported for taking our battalions to Arnia — what was being termed as divisional Concentration Area, but for us it was an Assembly Area. As we left Madhopur, we came under command 6 Mountain Division — so I supposed. While I headed for the Division HQ, the first-line vehicles of the Brigade HQ, the Signal Company and the two battalions were directed to the Dispersal Area. The men marched from the check post on the Jammu-Pathankot Highway, carting their big packs.

At the Division HQ, I was received by a duty officer. He gave me 17 one inch maps for the entire brigade. To my query as to what is the distribution; his response was, “five for each battalion and two for brigade HQ.” With seventeen one inch maps for the entire brigade, imagine the state of interaction at the level below company— the platoon commanders, dispatch riders, line parties, liaison officers, *khana garis* were clueless about their own position, let alone how and where to reach the next destination or the objective, illusive as they were. It was soon after we learnt that whereas the Armoured Division was given the latest metric naps, we the have-nots in the elite order were dished the outdated ones. This kind of denial was the effect of shortages imposed by bureaucrats in the Government, who did not learn from the 1962 debacle. I am told the same state prevails today in changing to digital maps.

When I asked for a copy of the Operation Order, I was told that there was none for my brigade and that the Brigade Commander had been briefed about what is required to be done. At that time, I was not aware of the fiasco of the loss of Armoured Division Operation Order and the enemy being unintentionally fooled that the loss was an intentional ploy.⁶ The Brigade was information-deprived, clueless about plans, unfamiliar with terrain, and excluded from sharing information i.e., no written orders to peruse, no signal instructions to know nicknames and code-words in radio conversations, and worse no netting of communications. We paid heavily, that too with lives, for lack of intelligence be it perceived on ground, or be it reflected in psyche.

We were only two battalion strength and remained ignorant for days ahead as to how long we would be deprived of 6 MARATHA LI — the third battalion; and worse, known its whereabouts. Nonetheless we were reserve for attack on Charwa or Maharajke and could not behave or conduct ourselves as “wanting” should the situation so demand. So we kept ready for either eventuality. The night 7/8 September was spent in mentally preparing ourselves for the fog-of-war, and motivating the *jawans* for the ensuing battle. .

Chapter 2

ADVANCE INTO PAKISTAN AND CAPTURE OF CHOBARA

In no other profession are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or so irrevocable as in the military.

— General Macarthur

Advance on Axis Charwa - Chobara - Chawinda

For locations and battles fought by the battalions of 35 Infantry Brigade see Appendix “B”

6 MARATHA LI on arrival at Pathankot was detached from the Brigade and deployed for the defence of Madhopur Bridge, when we moved forward. It rejoined the Brigade two days before the battle of Chawinda on night 18/19 September. Yet in all reckoning in war and its history, we were a brigade with three battalions, notwithstanding that one third of the force was separated from us. The quirk of fate is that I met the battalion commander Lt Col AM Manohar just for 15 minutes on the 17th evening for the first and last time, when I handed over the Brigade Operation Order in signal format to him.

35 Infantry Brigade less one battalion started from Arnia at 0500 hours, crossed International Border at 0700 hours just behind 1 Armoured Brigade, and were headed for Chawinda on a momentous mission, which history fails to acknowledge. We moved in the classic advance formation with 5 JAK RIF on left of the road, 20 RAJPUT on the right and the vehicle column led by me on the road.

As we crossed Charwa and were at its outskirts, I heard the sound of enemy aircraft. They dipped, presumably at the sight of tanks of the Armoured Brigade ahead but pulled up to reform. That gave me enough time to react. I was driving the jeep and had positioned two DRs behind the jeep. I shouted, “*Dushman ke jahaz*; (enemy aircraft), *titter bitter ho jao* (disperse) *gariyan chhor do* (get down from vehicles). The DRs turned back and relayed the orders to “look out” men with tremendous speed. Meanwhile I sharply turned to a side-lane; a few vehicles followed my jeep and merged with mud-houses. The enemy four sorties one after another dipped and sprayed bullets. Only two vehicles were damaged of the entire column, but they too were runners. This was an upshot of my briefing before we started.

I was reminded of strenuous and meticulous training under my mentor Maj Gen S N Antia, PVSM who was Chief Instructor at IMA when I was a cadet and later my first Commanding Officer. He conducted extensive exercises every month that too more often at night. The only difference was that the DRs used to be young officers (YOs), I amongst them; and the seat next to the driver was not for an officer or JCO but for the

look-out man to stand through the cupola. This ensured vehicles maintained correct distance between them and passage of orders of the commander, convoy discipline, and conveyance of air strike warnings while on the move.

As I reached the Cross Roads, I found my Brigade Commander and commanding officers of armour regiments standing together and conversing; where I learnt that extensive damage had been done by the enemy air raids to the A2 and B echelon vehicles of armoured regiments and some smash-up to ours too,. It was for this reason that further advance could not continue. The following orders were communicated to me:

- (a) 5 JAK RIF to capture Chobara.
- (b) 20 RAJPUT to deploy in general area two miles from the Cross Road on road to Maharajke.
- (c) HQ 35 Infantry Brigade to locate in Area Sabzpir (In Urdu, Sabz Peer means Green Saint) - Cross Roads.

From that time onwards the Brigade was virtually placed under command 1 Armoured Division, although we were neither in communication with any Division HQ, nor known to them as to where we were, and what we were doing. The official history narrators write, “The 35 Infantry Brigade which joined the 6 Mountain Division on 7 September, was *asked to explore* further towards Pagowal in Phase II of the operation.”⁷ This was news to me when I read it. Further, this is vague, as vague and confusing could be in military parlance in assignment of a mission, that too to an infantry brigade to out step armour formation that it follows. Another disconcert was that according to the Corps HQ, we were still at Arnia in India, cooling our heels and only moved across the International Boundary on 9 September.⁸

After citing the Brigade HQ, I went to see the Commander. As I approached him, we heard the sound of Pak Patton tanks, later recognised as those of 25 Cavalry — integral to Pak 24 Brigade. These were promptly intercepted by our Centurions. Commander and I climbed the outer parapet wall of the mosque to watch the tank battle; more so to show our calmness and composure to the men. Occasional shell came our way, making us duck. It was an extremely scenic show no doubt, but it would be justly wrong to be frivolous or perky about it. Our tanks got the better of the enemy, chasing them away within half an hour or so. But our side faltered in assessing the quantum of armour opposition, and unwisely overestimated it.⁹

Capture of Chobara

According to, Khalid Mohammad Arif., enemy’s B company 13 FF Reconnaissance and Support Battalion was holding Charwa backed up by elements of 3 FF, both under 24 Brigade of 15 Division.¹⁰ The Brigade was deployed in area Chobara but was pulled out on night 7/8 September to Jassar, leaving behind 3 FF.¹¹

Earlier our 1 Armoured Brigade had gone past Chobara but Pakistan's 3 FF with bulk of the battalion were still holding it. 5 JAK RIF secured Chobara after a brief encounter, but kept mopping up till daylight. The enemy did not put up much of a fight and withdrew. That day 5 JAK RIF suffered 4 killed and about twelve or so wounded in action, bulk of them due to enemy shelling and air strikes. The battalion captured nine Pakistani soldiers, Rangers, policemen or Mujahideen — one in uniform and eight in civilian clothes with distinct soldierly demeanor, widely different from that of the villagers. They were produced before me in the morning. I segregated the man in uniform and interrogated him strictly according to the Geneva Convention. He disclosed that he was from 3 FF.

Late in the evening the commander came to the command post to pass orders to the CO 5 JAK RIF. The lines to the battalions were being laid and were not yet through. Command net was functional. I got the CO on the wireless net. The Brigade commander asked him to keep a company ready to go with a squadron of armour to Gadgor. The CO reacted edgy and started conveying his apprehensions. I pressed the switch .to cut off the conversation. To commander's query as to why I did that, my reply was, "The enemy is listening."

"Then what do I do?" he asked. My response was, "I will go and convey your orders, but as Staff College teaches, I do feel that a company should not be detached from its battalion and a brigade from its parent division. Besides, there would be no radio communication between the squadron and the company." Having expressed my views, I took the jeep and drove in dark without lights. As I came close to Chobara, a couple of rounds of fire came from the built-up area on the right of the road. This was repeated during my return trip too. It showed that the enemy had left stay-behind parties — either Mujahideen or soldiers in civilian clothes. They were a serious cause of concern.

Some distance ahead, a one ton vehicle was standing. It was of Signals laying lines. A Sikh NCO was in charge. When I enquired, "*Sab theek hai?* (Whether all is well?)." He told me that the line was frequently being cut by an enemy — "*Tusi fiqar na karo Sir, main ida bandobast karoon* (Do not be concerned Sir I will sort out the scoundrel)" He lived up to his pride and promise. Next morning, a prisoner was brought before me. The line party had laid an ambush and nabbed him while sabotaging cable route. I questioned him. He told me that he worked for Pakistan's Telegraph Department and maintained the Permanent Line (PL) route. On my persistent questioning, he disclosed that the *sepoys* who gave him money to cut the lines were linemen like him — and to my question, "*keri paltan?* (which Battalion?)" he revealed "*pandra aur chobees* (fifteen and twenty four). Presence of Pak 15 Division, 24 Brigade and 3 FF were known to us on 9 September itself and passed on to HQ I Armoured Division

A Signaller of the line party guided me to Battalion HQ of 5 JAK RIF. I met the CO, re-conveyed the orders and my reservations. Yet I was firm saying "orders are orders." Before I left, I could feel the disappointment in his demeanour. When I returned to the Brigade HQ, the Commander told me that the mission was off. The telephone

communications were established at 11 PM. And I rang up Col Sukhdev Singh to give the news. He was much relieved and profusely thanked me.

In the official history, there is not even a line about the capture of Chobara. Another irony is that according to the Corps HQ we were still at Arnia in India.¹²

Chapter 3

FIRM BASE AT SABZPIR-CROSS ROAD

No good decision was ever made in a swivel chair.

— George S Patton

It was 9th of September when we officially came under command 6 Armoured Division and were given a clear operational task to form a firm base at area Sabzpir – Cross Road.



Well camouflaged vehicles of Brigade HQ at Sabzpir – Cross Roads — three in this photograph

I had spent the night in a 6 by 2 by 4 feet trench sharing it with signal operator taking radio-calls. The dawn started with a bang from the sky – Pak four missions of three to four sorties strafed us that day. They riddled bullets in the vehicle modified as CVLP (Command Vehicle Low Power) but only bullet holes were in the body of the vehicle, besides a set of one inch maps fixed on a hardboard and a radio set were damaged. The vehicle was a runner. A look at the photograph would show how ingeniously the vehicles were camouflaged to avoid spotting.

A disturbing report was that as our tanks moved out, they trampled on the telephone cable laid to 5 JAK RIF. We, however, refrained from passing messages on radio. The CO promptly sent a young Second Lieutenant as Liaison Officer (LO). On my prompting CO 20 RAJPUT too obliged likewise. These young officers (YOs), fresh from training at the Infantry School, were a valuable asset, ever ready to lend a hand at manning command post, relieving me and the General Staff Officer Grade Three Intelligence (GSO3(Int)), carrying operational orders to the battalion, even, undertaking tough errands. The LO from 5 JAK brought with him handwritten morning situation report (SITREP), describing the operations in Chobara, the number of prisoners captured, and some useful information about the enemy. All this along with my assessment of the enemy forces from interrogation were sent to HQ I Armoured Division. There was no acknowledgement; more so, even action at Chobara is a casualty of exclusion in history.

With the official cognisance of our coming under command of the Armoured Division, there was a welcome call from Lt Col (later Lt Gen of Vice Chief ranking) K Balam, CO Signal Regiment; he thought that I was officer commanding (OC) of the Signal Company. This wrong impression continued to prevail even when he was a

speaker at the release of my book *Sky is the Limit* by Lt Gen Depinder Singh PVSM in 2007. Lt Col Balaram sent a full-fledged Delta-One detachment (for radio communications from division HQ to subordinate formations), well-netted on 1 Armoured Division command net and equipped with classified instructions, code-words and codenames — indeed a solicitous act as earlier there was no communication with any higher HQ and we did not have compatible wireless sets.

Lt Col Rajeshwar Singh, CO 166 Field Regiment, came with the pleasing news that his unit was placed in direct support. Nonetheless, he was not sure whether the affiliation would abide as his unit was under command 6 Mountain Division and we were no more under that formation. Thenceforth, as we frequently changed divisions, this uncertainty nagged us persistently throughout the war.

Another good tidings was arrival of a defence platoon ex 13 GRENADIERS — a composite of 19 Muslims and 11 Hindus whose loyalty, discipline, fearlessness and hard-work, I affirm by. They were an asset to project a sterling example of plurality of army and its common ideals and convictions. I was placed in an un-envious position of virtual command of Brigade Signal Company; the defence platoon; headquarter personnel connected with operations and intelligence and a newly raised Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) with a newly commissioned Army Medical Corps (AMC) Officer who joined us that day.

At about 0930 hours, the three of us, Commander, DAA&QMG and I were sitting on ground under a tree next to a trench — reviewing situation and appreciating for likely future. There was a loud earth-shaking gun fire. As the shell whizzed overhead, its sound was more shrieking than that of the field gun fire, of which we had got used to having been subjected to it throughout the previous night. All three of us jumped into the trench. The commander shouted, “I got it” A hand-sized splinter got stuck at the back of his trouser. I promptly took out my pistol and with its butt shook the splinter off the pants. It had singed the flesh but there was no wound. A wrap-up by field dressing was all that was needed.

The enemy had zeroed on Cross Roads. A couple of more rounds came that way but did no damage. At that time we thought that medium guns were targeting us. Later — much later, it dawned that Pakistan had a couple of Heavy Regiments on the establishment of Pak 4 Artillery Brigade. I went round to see if there was any damage because of this shelling and what was jawans morale like. I was impressed to see *unke mathe pe shiken tak nahin thi* (there was not even a crease of fear or fret on their brows). A jawan asked me, “*Hamari guns unko bhi thok rahi hain na?* (Are our guns hitting at them too?) I assured him and pointed at the sound of counter bombardment from our mediums deployed west of our location.

There was a renewed drive to dig — dig hard and create command post bunker and weapon pits all with locally scattered materials. I marvel at the ingenuity of our jawans — if that could be the spirit in the motley of arms and services represented in a brigade HQ, I could imagine the exuberance in battalions imbued by homogeneity and team

spirit. The test of victory or defeat is not in number of tanks or aircraft destroyed of either side, but in morale gained or morale lost — lest the writers of history fail to reflect.

Grouping for Capture of Phillora

The GOC 1 Corps issued the Operation Instruction No 2/65 on 10 September for the capture of Phillora and exploitation towards Chawinda¹³ the salient points of which were as under:-

- (a) 35 Infantry and one battalion from 116 Infantry Brigade were grouped with I Armoured Division for this battle;
- (b) 6 Mountain Artillery Brigade and 1 Corps Artillery Brigade (24 Medium Regiment only) were placed in support.
- (c) 58 Infantry Brigade less one battalion, with one battalion from 99 Mountain Brigade was to defend Charwa.
- (d) 99 Mountain Brigade less one battalion was to concentrate to the West and adjacent to 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade. The Formation was to come under command. 1 Armoured Division at 0530 hours, 11th September 1965.

35 Infantry Brigade, supported by 2 LANCERS less one squadron, was to continue to hold the firm base in Area Sabzpir-Cross Roads¹⁴. These instructions and elaborations left lot of ambiguities:-

- (a) Where was the third battalion vis., 6 MARATHA LI and under whom?
- (b) Why was 35 Infantry Brigade not shown as brigade less one battalion, which it actually was?
- (c) What precisely was the status of 2 LANCERS — under command or in locality? The Regiment neither came as outstation on our command net, nor exchanged any tactical information with us — least, pertaining to their precise mission.

Untold Deception

In the late afternoon of 10 September, the Commander rang me up to say that we were moving forward at last light, and to be ready for move, but not to dismantle bunkers or fill up trenches. I rang up Lt Col Balaram so that we could remain in touch on radio. I was pleasantly surprised when he said, “Relax; you will get back. It is only a ruse meant for the other side. Keep your radio communications with me and the battalions on frequencies that I have already conveyed. Do not reel up any cable” I ventured, “Can I convey this to the Commander?” “Oh No, he will get orders from the GOC or staff. This is Signals to Signals,” was the advice.

We, i.e. the Brigade HQ “G” staff and the Signals, hit the road at the sunset as scheduled. Earlier, the Brigade “O” group — the Commander and the two COs had gone forward independently. As I crossed Chobara, I wondered whether we would be asked to turn to Gadgor or go on track towards Gillanwala. Suddenly, the quiet night turned abrasively shattering. A couple of artillery shells landed close by and there was sound of movement of tanks and their fire. We heard our gunners’ counter-fire. The deception had been conveyed. The orders came to turn back.

We were back after a three hour mock outing. Late at night, Lt Col Balaram rang me up to say that he was listening on the intercept station and the enemy had been fooled effectively. This move was part of our surprise to attack Phillora from an unexpected direction. However, as per the official history the task was assigned to 1 Armoured Brigade to put in a realistic demonstration to entice the enemy armour towards Sabzpir and to create the impression that the attack was being launched from that direction. It was subsequently confirmed that these efforts did achieve a measure of surprise.¹⁵

Obviously, 1 Armoured Brigade could not have been at two widely separated axes at the same time — one real and the other fake. It was the move of 35 Infantry Brigade and contribution of its battalions that paid handsome dividends in collaboration of attack at Phillora from an unexpected direction by 1 Armoured Brigade which was a grand triumph. There is another angle to it. While the Brigade HQ returned to Cross Roads-Sabzpir, the two battalions 20 RAJPUT and 5 JAK RIF boosted Armoured Division's success at Gadgor, likewise 6 MARATHA LI at Phillora. They brought laurels to formations and units they fought alongside, in the meritorious tradition of the unknown soldiers and their unappreciated and unrewarded acts.

Besides, they brought a bounty of captured stuff, which on the face of it, appeared to be trash, but it had valuable intelligence bits and pieces. There were formation signs of Pak 6 Armoured Division, 15 Division and unexpectedly that of 7 Division captured at the officers mess location at Gadgor.¹⁶ Our units also brought a bagful of newspapers and letters addressed to Pak soldiers in Urdu and Pashto. Knowing Urdu and Persian languages and their script, as I do, I recognised the units as 14 BALUCH, 8 Engineer Regiment and 87 EME Battalion

Regrouping and Future Plans

On 11th September, GOC I Corps ordered the regrouping to be completed by 12 September, in preparation for the next phase of the operation. In this regrouping 58 Infantry Brigade was shown as under command 1 Armoured Division and located at Charwa. 35 Infantry Brigade came under command 6 Mountain Division and shown as located in Sabzpir. 99 Mountain Brigade was shown as reverted to 6 Mountain Division and to move to Phillora.¹⁷ Significantly there was no mention of our third battalion 6 MARATHA LI; whether it would be returned to us or still under command 99 Infantry Brigade or placed under command any of the brigades of 1 Armoured Division.



Picture taken at Gadgor ont afternoon of 11 September 1965, Author at left, Maj Gen Korla without headgear with back to camera and Maj Gen MB Menon DDMS Western Command facing the camera being briefed

In the Afternoon of 11 September I received a message from Lt Col Balaram that he was withdrawing Delta-One detachment as we were no more under command of Armoured Division and the detachment was required to be positioned with 58 Infantry Brigade. I checked with the Commander who had gone forward for a reconnaissance after the fall of Phillora-Gadgor I was instructed to come forward to carry out reconnaissance to site the brigade HQ. On the roadside I saw Maj Gen S K Korla in conversation with another General who was later identified as Maj Gen M B Menon, Deputy Director General Medical Services (DDMS), Western Command. The former waved me to

stop.

After this briefing was over Maj Gen Korla enquired from me the dispositions of the brigade. I told him that I was only in radio communications on Bravo-One with two battalions who were under 35 Infantry Brigade vis. 20 RAJPUT and 5 JAK RIF, both at Gadgor. About the third Battalion.6 MARATHA LI, I frankly told him, "I do not know under whose command it is at present, what to talk of its frequent location-changing .The latest I hear is that it is at Phillora." I also told him that we were not in communication with any divisional HQ ever since withdrawal of the Delta-One detachment from I Armoured Division and that even the staff did not give me a copy of the 6 Mountain Division orders.

Maj Gen Korla appeared to be much concerned. He gave me the following orders:-

- (a) "Your brigade has been again placed under command 6 Mountain Division."
- (b) "Your Commander is waiting for you at the Alhar Railway Station."
- (c) "I have briefed your Commander. He will give you further orders."
- (d) "I appreciate your problems of command, control and communications. I too have apprehensions on that account. I will sort out to the degree what is in my power."

The Shape of Enemy Defences at Gadgor

I visited Gadgor on 13 September along with CO 20 RAJPUT, Lt Col Kanwar who wanted me to have a look at the kind of defence layout made by 24 Infantry Brigade, which our battalion had captured after our own armour had run over the positions on 11 September. I was impressed by the type of bunkers and tunneling enemy's 8 Engineer Battalion had made. I clicked two photographs. The one on the left is that of Pak officers mess. In the background is a school building on the road Gadgor – Phillora. Presumably, it must have been vacated for the troops on 7 September when 24 Brigade moved from Chobara to Gadgor. On the right

is a view of the dug-in path-way to a set of bunkers. I did not have time to explore the inside of the bunkers. Both the battalions had done a good job in collecting worthwhile intelligence material – training pamphlets, uniforms, headgears, pass books, weapons, ammunitions, radio sets, telephones and countless nick knacks that betray the unit name and the ORBAT of the formation. All this stuff was sent to HQ 1 Armoured Division, who neither acknowledged it, nor got it analysed to derive tactical intelligence, the passage of which, both latterly and down the chain would have been invaluable, particularly so to those who assaulted the enemy positions in the battle of Chawinda.



Hard Kill of Pak Tanks and “B” Vehicles in Battle of Phillora



Gen Korla inspecting Patton M 47



Author atop Patton M 48



Patton M48



Patton M 47



Pak armour recovery vehicle



Pak B vehicles

Chapter 4

MOVE TO MANGA: REGROUPING, COMMAND AND CONTROL FIASCOS

*There was 80 percent confusion on our side.
Thank God! There was 160 percent confusion in Pak side*

— Brig EA Vas, (later Lt Gen) erstwhile
Commander 69 Mountain Brigade

After a chance meeting with the GOC 6 Mountain Division near Gadgor, elements of Signal Company and I headed for Alhar Railway Station. The photograph on the cover is illustrative of what I saw — I clicked quite a few. The one which attracted the Signals jawans is reproduced here. It invited an apt and perceptible comment,



“Saabji, in xxxx ko keh do ki ham Abbottabad zaroor visit Karenge” The place had a semblance of intense destruction due to a battle fought a couple of hours earlier by B Squadron of the Poona Horse. There were contents of an Indian vehicle spilled all over — some law books and files. I got them

collected and put to fire lest they fall in wrong hands. Meanwhile a DR came with a message from the Commander that he was waiting for me at Manga and that he proposed to locate 5 JAK RIF at Chak Dea Singh, 20 RAJPUT at Alhar and the Brigade HQ at Manga. I did a quick reconnaissance of the first two places and found them totally deserted.

I chose a hideout for the Signals from where they could install a ten-line exchange and keep a watch over the Railway station and the cart-tracks to Manga and Wazirwali. The Signals Observation Post was manned by a couple of jawans who were frequently turned over. I gave instructions to the Signals to lay a line to Manga ensuring that the cable was well buried in the ground and would not be damaged even when tanks pass over it. The post remained active and the cable survived even after the ceasefire.

After expression of uncertainties to Maj Gen Korla, both the command nets were established and I passed our encoded locations on Delta-2 net to HQ 6 Mountain Division late at night on 11/12 September. The staff at the Division HQ sent a DR with an officer on 12 September, who could not find Manga in day light and returned to the Division HQ without delivering orders and instructions. So on the next day a rebuke came from the GOC addressed to the Commander as to where we were, and why his orders were not obeyed. The reply was sent giving our precise deployment. Later on 13 September,

another order came, this time from HQ 1 Armoured Division, placing our brigade in support of 1 Armoured Brigade for attack on Chawinda on 14 September.

Confusion Confounded

Where were we; under whose command; and what mission? Neither the official history nor the other writers had a clue. They had been, obviously, fed wrong information and had not checked up the war diary submitted by me. According to the Corps Instruction we were required to move forward and be poised for an attack on Chawinda, to be in position by last Light 12 September. Accordingly, we moved up, established Brigade HQ at Manga, shifted 5 JAK RIF to Chak Dea Singh, and 20 RAJPUT to Alhar.. See Appendix "B" Now see the contradictions. According to Maj Gen Lachhman Singh Lehl on the evening of 11 September, I Corps Commander ordered regrouping for the next phase of operation according to which we were to be under command 1 Armoured Division in Gadgor area.¹⁸

Unknown to us the enemy had captured Operation Order No. 3, issued by our 1 Armoured Brigade on 17 September from martyred Tarapore's tank.¹⁹ It showed our attack plan. 69 Mountain Brigade with 62 Cavalry under command, and 99 Infantry Brigade with 2 LANCERS less one squadron under command, were to hold firm bases at Bhagowal (Pagowal) and Phillora respectively. 1 Armoured Division supported by 35 Infantry Brigade was to capture Chawinda and in the process destroy Pak 6 Armoured Division. The operation was to commence on 14 September. Now the contraries on the ground:-

- (a) On 13 September, our Brigade less 6 MARATHA LI was under command 6 Mountain Division and not I Armoured Division. 6 MARATHA LI too was under command 99 Mountain Brigade, a formation of 6 Mountain Division though the brigade was placed under command I Armoured Division.
- (b) We were holding a firm base at strategically vital Alhar and Chak Dea Singh with Brigade HQ at Manga, which is at stone's throw from the Railway Station. This compact complex is closer to the enemy than the much hyped, indispensability-hogged, firm-base at Phillora, It is central to both the Northern and Southern axes and ideally poised for attack at Chawinda. This was the locale from where brigade commander gave his orders; the base to which troops fell back after withdrawal from Chawinda and Jassoran on 19 September; the site from where gunners and infantry frustrated the last-ditch attempt to seize the Alhar Railway Station by the enemy; the locale where formal and informal flag meetings took place; and which became the show-piece for own pride and publicity and a thorn in the vitals of the enemy.
- (c) After our armour action on 11 September 1965 by B Squadron Poona Horse, a day later 35 infantry Brigade through 20 RAJPUT was in full control of Alhar Railway Station right up to the ceasefire, even months beyond. It is true that 4 HORSE came up to the Railway Line and was stopped from crossing it by Commander 1 Armoured Brigade but the contention that 4 RAJ RIF of 99

Infantry Brigade were located at Alhar²⁰ is a myth. Even if that be so, then why did they not release our battalion 6 MARATHA LI, which continued to be at Phillora?

- (d) If we were to capture Chawinda on 14 or 15 September as given in Operation Order *ibid*, surely we couldn't have been incorrectly shown to have been moved to Charwa on 15 September²¹ as contended by both the official history and Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh.

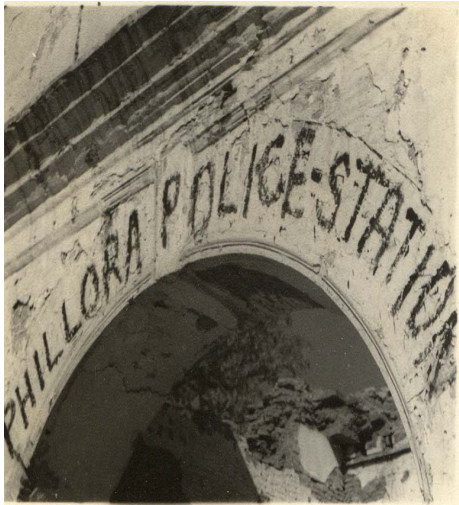
The official history collaborating the Army Commander's narrative insinuates that we were hurled back to Charwa at the International Border and were out of action. Here we were closest to the enemy at Alhar-Manga complex wondering as to whether it was an understandable staff goof up or an intentionally inserted historical fib to support the misconception that we were merely protecting HQ Armoured Division and not committed to holding worthwhile firm base, besides a deliberate pretext to justify "availability", .

The situation was reviewed on 16 September at a conference chaired by the GOC Corps and attended by the GOC 1 Armoured Division and GOC 6 Mountain Division at Maharajke. The plan in outline was as under:-²²

- (a) 6 Mountain Division with under command 35 and 58 Infantry Brigade and 99 Mountain Brigade, was to capture and hold Chawinda on night 17/18 September 1965. Thereafter, it was to exploit towards Pasrur and Dugri Cross Roads.
- (b) On capture of Chawinda and after leaving sufficient armour under command 6 Mountain Division for the security of the area, 1 Armoured Division was to capture and hold Badiana. One infantry brigade from 6 Mountain Division was to be made available to 1 Armoured Division after the capture of Badiana.
- (c) 14 Infantry Division was to be prepared to capture Zafarwal as soon as Badiana was secured. One squadron of armour was to be made available to this formation by 1 Armoured Division for this task.

Significantly, neither GOC 14 Infantry Division was present, nor heads of supporting arms vis. Artillery, Engineers and Signals were in attendance. However, a Corps plan, on the blink, was made to capture Chawinda, Badiana and Zafarwal — three built-up areas of unsure enemy potential, each a difficult nut to crack. 6 Mountain Division with two borrowed brigades was given the task of attacking Chawinda. The responsibility of capturing Badiana and Zafarwal was delegated to 1 Armoured Division and 14 Infantry Division respectively — the latter minus two brigades i.e. just a brigade worth. There was not even wee bit of intelligence about enemy and no coordination whatsoever with the Gunners, Engineers and Signals what to talk of the crucial Indian Air Force (IAF) for close support and to counter the Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

35 Infantry Brigade went to battle with uncertain fate and yet delivered what our Nation ought to be proud of.



Phillora Police Station and adjoining building used as a mess for the Pak Police, Rangers and Mujahideen both photographed after the ceasefire. The original name board in Urdu, at the police station, was removed and carried away by Poona Horse to adorn their Quarter Guard. The name board as seen in the photograph is a fake replica.

Chapter 5

BATTLE OF CHAWINDA

*The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him,
but because he loves what is behind him."*

— GK Chesterton

From the division no operation order was received. Some operational briefing was given to the Commander based on which he called the battalion commanding officers at 1600 hours on 16 September at Alhar Railway Station. Before leaving, he told me the broad outline of the plan that was issued to him, vis.:-

- (a) The divisional attack will be launched on the night 17/18 September under 6 Mountain Division by 58 Infantry Brigade on our East and our brigade on the West of the Railway Line as boundary between the two.
- (b) 99 Mountain Brigade is slated to be in reserve
- (c) I Armoured Brigade is in contact with the enemy West of the Railway Line and North of Chawinda. Firm base will be in Jassoran under arrangements of the Armoured Brigade.
- (d) The attack will be in two phases. In Phase 1, 35 Infantry Brigade was required to capture Area Road Junction 8803 to Railway Track Junction 8802; and in Phase II, to mop up Chawinda.

I had a spate of questions to ask the Commander, to which he had no answers because none had been given to him. He asked me to get them clarified from the divisional staff. Let me put them down — even if, it may be in un-chronological and un-appreciation like factorial order:

- (a) The railway line takes a near-ninety degree turn at Chawinda outskirts. The boundary does not extend southwards where the objectives were planned to be. The objectives need to be well-defined and discernable at night, which they are not without looking at the map.
- (b) This being a divisional attack, I hope the division HQ would issue a formal operation order. This may be done forthwith as we have very little time to pass orders down the chain; battalions to conduct daylight reconnaissance and the Brigade HQ to liaise with the Gunners, the Sappers and the Signals.
- (c) What is the known strength and dispositions of enemy in Chawinda town? The gunners would have precise knowledge of the location of at least gun

areas. We believe that the heavy and medium guns are immediately South of Chawinda precincts.

- (d) Where are the Forming Up Place (FUP) and the Start Line (SL)? Who will secure them? I hope we do not run into our own armour. Would 6 Mountain Division HQ do the liaison with 1 Armoured Division? In the immediate past we have been receiving mutually contradictory orders from both the divisions.
- (e) What is the “H” hour? I hope 166 Field regiment is in direct support and the CO and battery commanders will join us to plan and coordinate fire power.
- (f) No mopping up can be done at night. During daytime, too, it is not an easy task as we know from action at Charwa and our own experience at Chobara. I wondered why this job couldn’t be given to the reserve brigade.
- (g) In Phase 2, we should establish a defended position as a blockade in conjunction with armour to cut off withdrawal of enemy infantry and artillery from Chawinda to Pasrur. Does that have the Division HQ approval?
- (h) What if enemy has laid mines? Are any Assault Engineers being grouped with us? The apprehension that “enemy had probably mined the approach to Chawinda astride Road Phillora - Chawinda”²³ was later proved right.

When I posed these questions to the divisional staff, the response was either negative, “you decide” or “we will let you know”. Apparently, they too were as un-informed and clueless as we were in the Brigade HQ. Even the GOC was in the dark. However, having gone through rigorous assessments on writing appreciations and operational orders at promotion examinations, Staff College entrance examination and more so, mass of tactical exercises without troops at the Staff Course under the tutelage of highly distinguished soldiers like Lt Gen Sinha, I did a mental appreciation, modified the plan and justified it at a post operations sand model conducted by the Corps after the ceasefire. It helped in retrieving the morale and dignity of the brigade, more so that of the infantry, supporting arms and profession of soldiering.

Brigade Operation Order in Signal Format

I took the initiative to write a Brigade Operational Order in Signal format, Its salient points, as I recollect, were:

- (a) **Enemy.** As earlier identified; Pak 24 Brigade or part thereof; exact dispositions not known, well dug in and tunneled; maybe protected by minefield astride roads and railway track. Gun area in Chawinda outskirts, may be further South near mile stone 5 Road Chawinda-Pasrur. Enemy artillery is laced with heavy and medium guns. There are reconnaissance reports of extensive diggings in and around Chawinda.

(b) Phases and Objectives

- (j) **Phase 1.** 5 JAK RIF to capture area Civil Rest House and Post and Telegraph Office (PTO); 6 MARATHA LI to capture area Chawinda Railway Station.
- (ii) **Phase 2.** 20 RAJPUT to capture area Mile Stone 5 on Road Chawinda-Pasrur extending to Railway Line to cut off rail and road communications, establish a support base, and conduct mopping up operations in conjunction with 6 MARATHA LI and assistance of I Armoured Brigade.

(c) Boundaries

- (i) **Inter Brigade.** Railway Line inclusive to 5 JAK RIF to coordinate with 4 JAK RIF of 58 Infantry Brigade.
- (ii) **Intra Brigade.** Between 5 JAK RIF and 6 MARATHA LI, Track Butur-Dograndi-Railway Station inclusive to 6 MARATHA LI.
- (d) **Assembly Area.** Jassoran; already secured by 1 Armoured Brigade.
- (e) **FUP.** East of Butur Dograndi for Phase 1; West of Butur Dograndi for Phase 2; already secured by 1 Armoured Brigade.
- (f) **'H' Hour.** 0100 18 September.
- (g) **Fire Support.** 2359 hours 17 September to 0101 18 September; assured. Direct support by 166 Field regiment sought till completion of Phase 2.
- (h) **Radio Silence.** Last light till 2359 hours 17 September.
- (j) **Location Brigade HQ and Communications**

- (i) **In Phase 1,** present location. OC Signal Company with GSO3(Int) Brigade HQ, a section from Defence Platoon, a Forward Observation Officer (FOO) from 166 Field Regiment, if allotted, and part of Signal company to move to FUP at Butur Dograndi to set up advance HQ of Brigade with line communications extending from Alhar Railway station to FUP and be an outstation on Bravo-one (Command radio net of the Brigade).

- (ii) **In Phase 2,** move to Butur Dograndi for subsequent operations.

I took the draft operational order for Commander's approval after his return from Alhar Railway Station. He was reluctant to issue it in the absence of divisional operation order, and because of its many ifs and buts, the main being presence and support of 1. Armoured Division at vital location and critical time. I told him about my discussion with

the Divisional Staff and their evasive response. His worry was non-release of 6 MARATHA LI by 1 Armoured Division. After speaking to the GOC, he let me issue the operational order. Little did we realise then that there would be grave shocks of our own making and lack of rapport at the divisional commanders' level, await us. Sure enough this prudent plan was put to naught and the entire operation to jeopardy. It was sheer absurdity to deprive us of 20 RAJPUT who would have hit out at enemy gun areas and put the entire 4 Artillery Brigade and two self propelled regiments out of action.

Enemy Account of Strength and Layout of Chawinda Defences

See Appendix "C" for enemy dispositions as on 16 September 1965 This is what Abrar Hussain writes about enemy dispositions, "24 Brigade Group with 2 Punjab, 3 FF, 14 BALUCH, B Coy 13 FF and 25 Cavalry under its command had established a strong defensive position in the general area of Chawinda, in an area principally covering 5500 to 6600 yards from Jassoran in the West to the general area Dogranwali in the East. The affiliated 31 Field Regiment less Battery, 1 (SP) Field Regiment and Battery 8 Medium Regiment were close at hand, well forward in direct support. Thus, the Brigade had a compact position — 14 BALUCH in the centre and front, 3 FF and 2 Punjab on the two flanks, and 25 Cavalry in the middle to manoeuvre on interior lines mostly within an infantry defended box."²⁴

Chawinda was protected on both the flanks. On its left i.e. "West of Pak 24 Infantry Brigade was the special Task Force formed on 13 September with Guides Cavalry FF, 22 Cavalry, and 14 FF under its command"²⁵ On the right i.e. East of Chawinda initially defences were taken over by Pak 14 Para Brigade and later on its arrival by 10 Brigade of which 9 FF Battalion was located near Mile stone 5 on Chawinda Pasrur road²⁶ — our second phase objective. Pak 4 Corps Artillery, with fifty-four guns of all calibres, was deployed echeloned between Chawinda and Pasrur with one field battery away in Zafarwal. Later, on 15/16 September, thirty-six more field guns of 15 and 16 (SP) Field Regiments ex-1 Armoured Division were made available and deployed on the Badiana axis.²⁷

The Pakistanis had given high importance to entrenching and strengthening their defence pivots. Top priority was accorded to Chawinda. Abrar Hussain writes, "The idea of an armoured division in a defensive role asking for mines and other defence stores was, at last no longer considered unorthodox. In fact mines were being offered to us faster than we could lay them."²⁸ Some enemy tanks of Pak 25 Cavalry were in pill boxes .on Northern flank of Chawinda and some along the railway line, west of it.

Before our attack on Chawinda, enemy had brought fresh troops from Pak 1 Armoured Division and shifted another brigade ex Pak 8 Division to augment Pak 6 Armoured Division, Pak 15 Division and elements of Pak 8 Division, already in situ. Significantly, Pak 24 Brigade Group came under command Pak 8 Division. We were not privy to this vital intelligence — even post-event.

Our Armoured Brigade's Incorrect Assessment of Enemy Strength and Dispositions

The official history writes the flawed and biased version of our 1 Armoured Brigade, which claimed that favourable conditions had been created by their group for an infantry assault on Chawinda on 14, 15, 16 and 17 September.³⁰ Their view was, "As both Chawinda and Badiana had been isolated and cut off from three sides and as both had also been invested from the rear by 1 Armoured Brigade, particularly on 16 and 17 September, it was possible to capture easily both these objectives by an infantry assault. These objectives were thinly held by enemy infantry, *possibly not more than two companies in each place*³¹. The armoured brigade was precluded from assaulting these objectives, as both were built up areas."

Comparative Force Levels and Enemy Dispositions

The comparative table of opposing forces on night 18/19 September given at Appendix "D" lucidly describes the enemy vs. our strength. Pak defences at Chawinda were substantially strengthened with defensive minefields, bunkers, pill boxes and extensive tunneling, when we attacked them on the night of 18/19 September. According to Abrar Hussain, "The (Pak) Sappers did a good job, laying mines under the very nose of the enemy, around the Chawinda defences, which were given top priority. Work continued apace on the other positions also. It was clear that the sooner these pivots were developed into strong infantry—anti-tank localities, the quicker we would be able to relieve the armoured regiments from their involvement in positional engagements and use them more freely and aggressively in their correct role."³²

Five assaulting units of infantry, with indifferent support of other arms, faced enemy's four plus infantry units, one dug in armour unit with 56 artillery guns of various calibers *in situ*, and 36 guns of 15 and 16 (SP) Field Regiments of Pakistan's 1 Armoured Division in range.

Happenings that Cast Shadows on Brigade Plan to Attack Chawinda

The enemy had got hang of our positions at Manga and Alhar. At daybreak on 17 September, enemy aircraft struck at our positions. The Brigade HQ at Manga and 20 RAJPUT at Alhar were subjected to sorties after sorties from air and incessant artillery fire. In the afternoon, we learnt about the confusion regarding under whose command we were. In the evening, sad news came that CO 5 JAK RIF, Lt Col Sukhdev Singh was wounded while on reconnaissance of the objective, and had since been evacuated. I rang up the second-in command Maj Suraj Singh and assured him of our full support through thick and thin.

Later, we learnt that the attack at Chawinda on night 17/18 September had been postponed to night 18/19 September. We were not informed about the logic to do so. The Official History writes, "*Unfortunately*, at this stage, certain factors intervened to jeopardise the success of the operation. According to plans made at the conference at Maharajke, orders were issued by HQ I Corps placing 35 Infantry Brigade under command 6 Mountain Division from 1 Armoured Division, but the Brigade through a

misunderstanding was moved forward from its location in Gadgor to area Phillora by HQ 1 Armoured Division on night 16/17 September. This had apparently been done to support an attack on Chawinda planned earlier by 1 Armoured Division and scheduled to go in night 16/17 September 1965. The Brigade was later moved back to its original location, but valuable time was lost in the process. In view of this development, the attack on Chawinda by 6 Mountain Division on night 17/18 September was again postponed by 24 hours on representation from GOC 6 Mountain Division.”³³

This argument, flawed and inconsistent with facts as it was, and still is, further accentuated the prevailing crises as to who was in command of 35 Infantry Brigade and whose orders had to be obeyed — easy said, dangerous and destructive it proved:

- (a) 35 Infantry Brigade was never located at Gadgor. Therefore, in no way, it ever moved to Phillora and back throughout the eighteen-day war.
- (b) As earlier stated, Brigade HQ was at Manga and two battalions vis. 20 RAJPUT and 5 JAK RIF were at Alhar and Chak Dea Singh respectively ever since 12 September. We had developed Alhar-Manga complex as a firm base for further operations. It was the third battalion vis. 6 MARATHA LI located at Phillora, which was not being released to us. We were not sure whether it was still under command 99 Mountain Brigade or placed under another formation.
- (c) We had neither been on the command nets of the Armoured Division since 11 September, nor in communication with them on line. Whereas, consequent to my briefing GOC 6 Mountain Division on 11 September, reasonable communications were established with us particularly on Delta-2 for passage of classified information.
- (d) On 16th evening, Brigade Commander was giving orders to the three battalion commanders at Alhar Railway Station for attack on Chawinda and I was busy taking stock of the situation to attack Chawinda that appeared far from viable; searching for nuts and bolts to firm up the plan, seeking help and coordination from the divisional staff with a view to writing Brigade Operation Order. It would facilitate the battalions to carry out, what apparently was the toughest mission of the war. The DAA&QMG was running around from pillar to post trying to assess and make up vital deficiencies in weapons and equipment, besides arranging casualty evacuation. One wonders how we could be on the move and busy, though fallaciously, in shifting the brigade, back and forth between Gadgor and Phillora.
- (e) What historians write did not happen. The operation was postponed to night 18/19 September — neither on our plea, nor to our advantage. It gave enemy another 24 hours to induct more troops and strengthen defences at Chawinda; worse, it gave our armour a justification to vacate Butur Dograndi, Fatehpur and Jassoran.

Another Bombshell

GOC 1 Armoured Division, on the reasoning that his troops had been holding Butur Dograndi, Fatehpur and Jassoran against heavy enemy opposition, and that it would be difficult to stick on to these positions for another 24 hours, decided to withdraw from the first two but assured that the position at Jassoran would be held at all costs in view of its vital importance of being a firm base for the operations of 35 Infantry Brigade. He assured that enemy armour would not be allowed to interfere with the operations at Chawinda.³⁴ But due to *some more misunderstanding*, 1 Armoured Brigade withdrew its troops from Jassoran also on 18 September 1965, along with the vacation of the other pivots,³⁵ before 6 Mountain Division could mount the attack. GOC 1 Armoured Division, therefore, ordered ...Commander 1 Armoured Brigade to reoccupy Jassoran and establish a firm base for the attack of 35 Infantry Brigade. "Commander 1 Armoured Brigade, however, *did not comply with this order* as he thought that it would not be possible to recapture this position at such a short notice."³⁶ He, however, promised to position his tanks at Jassoran by first light 19 September, which too did not happen.

As if this fiasco was not appalling enough, 6 Mountain Division assigned capture of Jassoran to 20 RAJPUT creating a serious void and a setback in the scheduled plan of our operation. By no stretch of imagination, 20 RAJPUT was a reserve battalion. In Phase 2 of the attack, it had a vital task of capturing area MS 5 on Road Chawinda-Pasrur stretching up to the railway line, and mopping up Chawinda town on the premise that its flanks would be secure because of presence of armour. Our entire plan went for a six, that too, at the eleventh hour. Why, indeed why, the reserve 99 Mountain brigade could not be asked to spare a battalion or two for this task as on that fateful day they were neither holding Alhar, nor Wazirwali. However, "Ours is not to question why!" So we obeyed the orders and perforce gave onerous task of Phase 2 operations also to 6 MARATHA LI — with deleterious results to follow.

Phase 1 of Attack on Chawinda Night 18/19 September 1965

See Appendix "E". In phase 1, both, 5 JAK RIF and 6 MARATHA LI faced 3 FF. Let us have a look at what Abrar Hussain writes, "At 0100 hours they (that means we) launched a strong attack from the direction of Jassoran. In the fighting that ensued, 3 FF again left their positions and fled in disorder towards the gun areas where some of them were stopped by the gunners but not before they had created considerable alarm and confusion."³⁷ Abrar Hussain is candid about the performance of 3 FF, while it was under the command of Pak 15 Division, and had suffered considerably in the early stages of our offensive i.e., at Chobara and Gadgor. Interestingly, it was 5 JAK RIF that had faced 3 FF on both the occasions and had created the fear complex in enemy's psyche³⁸. Abrar Hussain writes, "3 FF had obviously not overcome their initial shock. Their performance throughout the battle had therefore remained uncertain and erratic."³⁹

At the unsecured FUP, both the assaulting and follow up companies of 5 JAK RIF as well as 6 MARATHA LI came under intense artillery fire. 2/Lt Ravinder Singh

Samiyal led Alfa Company in the first wave of assault. He encountered an enemy dug out with medium machine gun (MMG). As he jumped in, the enemy ran away, he turned the MMG on the enemy and presumably shot one of them. He earned Vir Chakra for bravery.

Lt Col AM Manohar led the first wave of two companies of 6 MARATHA LI and gallantly captured Chawinda Railway Station. In the Operation Order that I had issued, it was the objective of the first phase. So both the battalions, in the first wave of two companies each, had crushed enemy 3 FF positions, and secured the Railway Line. Virtually it implies four companies assaulting and overpowering four enemy companies that occupied well dug in positions and was supported by massive fire power. The enemy calls these attacks as “the most determined infantry charges” made by us. Contrary to hearsay, both official and unofficial, our infantry’s performance had no parallel in history.

Codeword “*Abhimanyu*” for securing Phase I objective and heading for the Phase 2 objective was the last we heard. The VHF radio set carried by the intelligence officer 2/Lt LK Nadgir went dead and a dynamic leader Lt Col Manohar and a promising youngster were martyred on their way to Phase 2 of the objective. Lt Col Manohar’s son, who was commissioned in the same unit, regrets that his father had been denied a place in the annals of history. I, too, feel the same — Lt Col Manohar and two companies of 6 MARATHA LI had entered the enemy defended box as the Veer Abhimanyu had penetrated the *chakra-viyuha* in *Mahabharata*. They sacrificed themselves in the finest traditions of the profession of soldiering.

Phase 2 of Attack on Chawinda: Night 18/19 September 1965

The enemy went totally haywire as Marathas moved southward from Chawinda Railway Station along the railway line towards Phase 2 objective. Abrar Hussain writes, “The reports now coming in were confusing and the battle picture remained obscure for a considerable time. Darkness, fear of the exaggerated and highly distorted accounts by the withdrawing troops of 3 FF, and the serious threat that was developing to the gun areas, all combined into a fairly grim picture.”⁴⁰ It caused tremendous worry amongst the enemy about the safety of the gun areas as we came “within 1500 yards of enemy’s leading gun positions”.⁴¹

“Just before the dawn Marathas were steadily working their way towards the Chawinda— Pasrur road. “As the first rays of light pierced the darkness, Pak C squadron of 25 Cavalry, deployed in crescent shape “opened up with everything they had — .30s, .50s, the HE of the main tank guns, the weapons of the infantry in their dug-in positions, and all the guns of the artillery within reach.”⁴² See Appendix “F” enemy’s dispositions that faced 6 MARATHA LI in Phase 2 at dawn on 19 September

The follow-up companies of both the battalions had come under intense fire and suffered heavy casualties. They could not make it to their assigned objectives even marry up with the assaulting companies of the first wave. They fell back — 5 JAK to Chak Dea

Singh and two companies and battalion HQ of 6 MARATHA LI to South East of Alhar village. .

Loss of Communication Control

The netting of Signal Communication was done by the Brigade HQ team led by temporally appointed OC Brigade Signal Company and GSO3(Int) at Alhar Railway Station before the two assaulting battalions left for the so-called firm base at Jassoran. They had a relay station on HF with control at Brigade HQ and two VHF sets for communications with forward nets of the assaulting battalions. Till 0100 hours at night there was radio silence. It was lifted prompt at that time. The first news I received was that Butur Dograndi was under intense artillery fire and both the battalions had abandoned it as FUP. The advance HQ team took the initiative of staying put near Jassoran. The voice Command Net with the Division HQ was not responding.

Close to 0400 hours or so, Codeword *Abhimanyu* was received from Lt Col Manohar. It bucked up my morale but it was momentary and then all communications went dead. A splinter had pierced the relay radio-set. It was abandoned. I lost communication control with the assaulting battalions. The troops started withdrawing. I informed the Brigade Commander on telephone at Alhar Railway Station. He rushed back and tried to speak to the GOC, but there was no response. Their concerns had shifted to 58 infantry Brigade, riddled with more serious setback.

What Went Wrong?

The plan required a high degree of battlefield management, staff work, coordination, co-operation and liaison between the formations. Until then GOC 1 Armoured Division had exercised *de facto* command and control of the offensive whereas 6 and 14 Division's roles were secondary and limited to playing paltry contrivance of flank and firm-base protection of the main offensive. The new plan allotted the primary role to 6 Mountain Division; with 1 Armoured Division playing a supportive role.⁴³ Regrettably, in this case, personalities mattered — not the intactness of formations and cohesive support of all arms. The concept of grouping and regrouping without the knowledge of role, organisation, strength, weakness and training of constituents was flawed to the marrows. There was no team spirit, camaraderie and togetherness; let alone knowledge of neighbouring units and subunits — which was which, with what mission and where located.

The Corps HQ was conspicuous by its absence and non-commitment to execution from the word "Go". Little thought was given to keeping the formations' cohesion unbroken and to assigning a distinct mission; instead passing on conduct of mutually divergent operations of war e.g. in our case — one battalion was given defensive role i.e. holding a firm base, and the other two were committed on the most challenging offensive role i.e. assaulting a well defended town and mopping up the built-up area. 1 Armoured Division, at one stage had five brigades under command — two were employed for

offensive operations and three for holding ground. Likewise 6 Mountain Division had four brigades i.e. 12 battalions of which five battalions were employed for attack at Chawinda and seven for holding ground. As to the Artillery, Engineers and Signals support for offensive operations, there was a total vacuum and a telling shortcoming, both in holdings and employment.



*The three Generals, who held significant responsibilities
but bore little space and credit in official history.*

*Right to Left, S K Korla, Ranjit Singh and
MB Menon (DDMS)*

Chapter 6

WITHDRAWAL FROM JASSORAN AND BATTLE OF ALHAR

*Armour does not capture ground, it overruns it:
It is Infantry that secures and holds ground.*

— Lt Gen S K Sinha

Aftermath of Chawinda Battle

Enemy tanks broke out from Chawinda outskirts heading northward towards Jassoran and Alhar Railway Station. Firing by enemy 4 Artillery Brigade intensified. Pakistan had gained almost double the strength from supplement troops vis, Pak 4 Armoured Brigade with 19 LANCERS, 22 Cavalry and 19 FF; Pak 14 (Para) Brigade with 1 Punjab and 20 BALUCH, and Pak 10 Brigade deployed in Pasrur-Fazilka areas with 9 FF moved to Chawinda. On 19th morning Pak Air OP of Army Aviation were conspicuously active and showed a great deal of precision in guiding fire at our troops. and Refer to Appendix “F”

Enemy Attack on Jassoran on 19 September

A counter attack force of Pak 4 Armoured Brigade and 14 (Para) Brigade were ordered to clear the Northern edge of Rakh Baba Bhure Shah which was still in our hands and then be prepared to destroy the enemy in Alhar, Fatehpur and Bheloke. We were holding these positions against all odds. Pak plan was to secure the whole of Rakh and attack us from the West.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the pressure was building up against Jassoran. Luckily communications with 20 RAJPUT were through. The Second-in-Command was often on the set himself apprising me that the position was getting highly untenable. Own armour had been intercepted. The division HQ, although through, continued to be unresponsive. I wanted them to give orders to withdraw from Jassoran and hold Alhar's well dug-in, well-prepared position that I had personally reconnoitred and 20 RAJPUT were holding prior to moving to Jassoran. Alhar-Chak Dea Singh complex was a firm Base as a firm base ought to be. Jassoran, which I saw later while on the way to the first Flag Meeting, was a pathetic pretence and a poor substitute for a firm base.

Our 1 Armoured Brigade was all frittered away with the highly convoluted and pushy plan of tackling simultaneously, vis.: (a) Protection of flanks of two infantry brigades in launching attack at Chawinda; (b) Assistance to 116 Infantry Brigade in securing Zafarwal, and of greater significance, (c) capture Badiana on its own. It was a tall order that, too, not knowing and planning for the enemy reinforcement, which had almost doubled their strength. Presumably, 62 Cavalry was designated for securing Jassoran at first light and reassuring us the bequest of firm base. However, even that late hour the unit had to be diverted southward — thus further compounding our hurt.

CO 20 RAJPUT Lt Col SS Kanwar was wounded by shell-splinter and evacuated. Second in Command Maj JC Verma showed immense pluck and held on to the position at Jassoran in the face of concerted armour, artillery and air strikes of the enemy. The counter-attack came at 1500 hours or so. J C Verma was killed in action, minutes before the Division HQ allowed withdrawal of the battalion to east of Railway Line on my persistent requests. Verma sacrificed his life to save the honour of his Battalion, the Brigade, and the Country. If this is not bravery, what else is?

The enemy armour came right up to the railway line. Bulk of the brigade withdrew to East of the railway Line. **Twenty nine brave officers and jawans were martyred on 19 September.** I do not know the names of Jawans who were wounded, and later died/incapacitated for life, but I do lament that I failed in my efforts to get the withdrawal orders to coincide with pull-out of own armour. It would have saved the assorted infantry troops gathered at Jassoran, particularly the Second-in-Command of 20 RAJPUT. In view of heavy casualties and all battalions bereft of commanding officers, a leadership-void surfaced. This further led to unprecedented challenges. There was a worried look all around — a mood of concern, uncertainty and lack of information about comrades who were left in Pak held territory — killed or missing in action.

Regaining Control and Balance

Withdrawal is a rough and tough operation of war. I was at the Command Post when a runner came on the run saying that the Brigade Commander was standing hatless and without a weapon and protection at the Alhar Railway Station, trying to restore order in withdrawing troops. I grabbed a stengun and ran at a sprint reminiscent of the dash at the conclusion of Camp Chindits at the Academy. I stood by Commander's side. We restored order within minutes and guided troops to well-prepared trenches and bunkers.

No history book has ever written eulogising contribution of Army Medical Corps (AMC) to the war effort. But for their dedication and presence in the thick of enemy shelling, our losses in lives would have been high and morale of the living heavily shattered. The Assistant Director Medical Sciences (ADMS) of 6 Mountain Division went from trench to trench with his team, looking for the wounded and getting them evacuated. No measure of appreciation and gratitude can suffice for their devotion and professionalism.

Defence of Alhar Railway Station

Night 19/20 September was a critical night. Our immediate concern was to prepare ourselves for the defence of Alhar Railway Station and ensure its continued holding by 20 RAJPUT under Maj Vijay Verma. It construed a grave strategic loss for the enemy and a thorn in their vitals.

On either side of the Railway Station, there was an embankment, which is not easily negotiated by the armour. But, up-North, the enemy armour had made inroads and had reoccupied Rakh Baba Bhure Shah, part of it across the Railway Line on our side.

Here 4 HORSE had dismounted the remnants of two companies of 6 MARATHA LI, whom they rescued from counterattack by enemy armour at Chawinda.

Battalion support weapons i.e. Recoil Less (RCL) guns and MMGs were appropriately positioned with bias to covering enemy attack from Northern approach. That night as on later, 4 Rajputana Rifles (4 RAJ RIF) of 99 Mountain Brigade was located South of Libbe. It had, probably, positioned a company plus near Khananwali. On 20th September morning, the battalion was placed under command our brigade. The greatest irony and fallacy is that the Corps Commander, reportedly, held a coordinating conference at 1600 hours on 20th September, according to which the entire 35 Infantry Brigade was packed up to be sent to Changarian and paradoxically just one battalion, i.e. 4 RAJ RIF was designated to take over the defence of Alhar,⁴⁵

Mercifully these orders were not implemented. Although the official history does



not say so, the Brigade HQ stayed at Manga with infantry disposition as shown in the sketch at Appendix "G". Contrary to the thinking at the Corps HQ, the views at the Command HQ were largely realistic. "It was appreciated that despite the apparent desire for peace, enemy forces might put in a series of strong offensive actions in a last minute bid to save face and strengthen their subsequent bargaining capability. In the event, this proved to be a correct surmise. The Pak Army made frantic efforts to recapture lost areas in the period intervening up to the deadline for the Ceasefire. The most desperate of these attempts was an assault on village Alhar. This was repulsed with heavy casualties to the enemy."⁴⁶ This is precisely what happened. The enemy started preparing for a major counter

offensive. Meanwhile, they incessantly mounted heavy artillery shelling followed by probing attacks by their infantry during 72 hours preceding the ceasefire. Unfettered control over the entire railway line was their aim and obsession; whereas defence of Alhar became a crucial and decisive obligation for us. On the Ceasefire night of 22/23 September 1965, the credit of winning the artillery duel goes to Lt Col Rajeshwar Singh, CO 166 Field Regiment who sat next to me at the Brigade Command Post to seek support of every gun in the Corps Zone. He and his battery commanders did a marvellous job in precision targeting and counter-bombardment.

An equally pertinent performance was by the Signals. Cable was laid knitting vertical and lateral communications right down to company level. They managed to get hold of a medium power HF set and used it to monitor and jam Pak Para Brigade's frequency. The observation post earlier established at Alhar was rejuvenated. Although under incessant artillery fire, it remained active and gave me minute to minute report regarding what was taking place on Pak side.

That night we hogged the limelight. There were persistent calls from the Division HQ enquiring whether we continued to hold the Alhar Railway Station. "At 0330 hours on 23rd September 1965, the last of the guns was fired and all became quiet on the Western Front. A strange silence enveloped the bloody battlefield where men were locked in a life and death struggle only a few minutes ago. The 18 hectic days of war were over."⁴⁷ 35 Infantry Brigade had won the battle of Alhar. The Infantry, supported by Artillery and Signals, had redeemed itself

At 0500 hours on 23rd September, Maj Vijay Verma rang me up to inform that a team of three Pak officers had come to the railway station skirting the concertina wire laid by us. They wanted to have a meeting with us. Lt Col Rajeshwar Singh and I decided to go and meet them. After shaking hands, I could sense a feel of defeated army in their demeanour. They perhaps belonged to 20 BALUCH, the unit which along with Pak 1 Punjab of 14 Para Brigade had attempted to capture Alhar Railway Station. The attempt failed. Three bodies of Pak soldiers were carried in our presence. Later, estimates showed the number killed and wounded by own fire to be in the vicinity of fifty to sixty. .

In the meeting with Pakistanis, the following decisions were taken:

- (a) Railway Line will be the Line of Control (LoC)
- (b) Each side will be allowed to lift their dead from areas in other's occupation.

As later dealings proved, while we performed fairly, they played deviously on either accord. We let them lift bodies with due decorum. In return we demanded that bodies of our *shaheed* at Chawinda and Jassoran be restored to us. They promised to refer this to formations that control the two places, but later rescinded. Abrar Hussain, roguishly, suggests that we sought "permission" to recover our dead from Jassoran area, where we seemed to have lost some senior officers, but "permission" could not be granted.⁴⁸ Another glaring mischief is the map at Annexure 13 of their book *The Men of Steel* which shows their dispositions and audacity to include Alhar Railway Station in their possession.

Alhar Railway Station became an attraction of visit, sight-seeing and show off by media, local bigwigs and senior civil and military officers. This rattled the enemy, psychologically. They invariably responded with fire. Not a day passed, when a visitor or a group of them did not appear and enemy did not open fire. One evening, a correspondent of a local daily flashed pointing camera at a lookout-man with binoculars perched on a tree. The enemy spotted him and fired a volley. Our jawan was hit and fell

down. He was rushed to the Pathankot Military Hospital. Mercifully, he was saved. The media group made beeline rearwards. That was the last I let any civilian come near the LoC.



Photograph taken at Alhar Railway Station during visit of Maj Gen S K Korla sitting at centre, presumably flanked by CO 20 RAJPUT and ADMS 6 Mtn Div .The Author is standing fourth from the left

Chapter 7

FLAG MEETINGS

I believe that a man is the strongest soldier for daring to die unarmed

— Mahatma Gandhi

From Ceasefire to Implementation of Tashkent Agreement

I was present at all the flag meetings with the Pakistanis — earlier, without the UN representative; later, in their attendance. The relevance of this narrative is as pertinent to today's environment as it was then. LoC is in news again and controversies raised and debated *ad nauseam*. That, too, by media anchors, spokespersons, political and social bigwigs, who have never faced the enemy, known ABC of warfare, or worst — fathomed or felt agonies of those who the martyrs leave behind.

I return to the post-Ceasefire events. The capture of Sialkot-Narowal Branch railway line was the acme of our victory, glorified by wide publicity conferred by the vernacular press amongst the local population — a matter of pride and praise for the armed forces. It was a thorn in the belly and it dealt a severe blow to the bellicosity by the enemy. How else could they explain to locals in Chawinda that they could not travel to Sialkot by train? The area that we had captured up to the railway line was a real-estate as compared to small infertile areas that Pakistanis had captured in the Valley, Rajasthan and Kutch and could brag about. So they made attempt after attempt to secure it, progressively becoming more provocative. A day after the Ceasefire, they brought a railway engine from Chawinda to shunt towards Alhar RS. A message to that effect was received from 5 JAK RIF. I told them to red-flag it right at the railway flag waving “hut” and not to allow it to proceed towards the station but under no circumstances fall in the trap of shooting the driver — a civilian. The engine driver chose to heed the warning.

On the day the UN observers arrived, Pakistan Army made a cunning move. They called for a flag meeting at Alhar RS. When CO 166 Field Regiment and I arrived at the station, a couple of Pak army officers were in conversation with company commander Maj Vijay Verma from 20 RAJPUT. They wanted us to let a train carrying civilians pass through on humanitarian grounds. The plea came with a bagful of sob stories of hardships of local villagers. We firmly declined and they dispersed.

As we were leaving, Lt Col Rajeshwar Singh told me that there was something remiss; “Let's follow the un-metal track alongside railway line.” A few yards away, his apprehensions came true. We were accosted by about a platoon worth of Pak soldiers, both sides of the railway track, in ready to fire positions. But none dared. Another 200 yards or so, a pose of Pak officers were in heated argument with the Company Commander Maj Puran Chand about control of the Railway Line. The UN observer was present. We were unaware of his arrival and his appearance from the Pak side was a surprise. So was our emergence to the UN observer at his back — from the railway line.

Perceiving our jawan's mood, I told the Pakistanis in chaste Punjabi to get back to the other side of the LoC, otherwise the shooting match restarts. I then told the U.N. observer in English what I had meant. He started walking back, Pakistanis followed.

CO 166 Field Regiment and I decided to go further along the track to Wazirwali, but turned back after taking a few pictures. The track is parallel to the railway line. One was not sure how far the area between the track and the railway line was mined, and when was the minefield laid. The only prominent feature that I could see was the Railway Officers' lodgings. The photograph shows not much of damage to the buildings. Presumably, this was one of the objectives, designated for 58 Infantry Brigade. When we saw it, there was broad daylight, imagine troops' charging at it at night, when they do not know where own troops are, let alone those of the enemy.



The Third Violation of the Cease Fire

The third violation of the LOC was the gravest and happened opposite Chak Dea Singh — almost at the same place as the second one. On that fateful day, I was rung up by Maj Suraj Singh officiating CO of 5 JAK RIF at five in the morning. After he informed me, his job was over and my responsibility started. The Brigade Commander was on a well-earned, seven-day leave and the three COs were casualties — one martyred and two wounded in action. There was none to report to, seek advice from, even discuss with; and no time to reflect. I rushed to the locale, was apprised of the situation. I could see the enemy shuffling about, getting ready for a show down. Our Jawans looked at me expectantly. Their morale went up when I told Maj Suraj Singh, “I am going forward



through the minefield to create a lane with a view to subsequent breaching the minefield. I want three volunteers to go with me.” Up went many hands. I picked that of Lt Ravinder Singh Samiyal and two jawans — a havildar and a lance naik. After deploying all the MMGs of the battalion well forward and directing them to shoot to kill, if enemy opened fire, we walked across the minefield in broad daylight, keeping appropriate distance. We avoided the mines, and laid a cable to mark the lane. As we reached the other end, I asked the jawan to pick out the picket of the parametric barbed wire and throw it on the ground. As he did that, we were encountered by a volley of bullets directed at us. All four of us were

standing upright at *chandmari* range, but Pakistani bullets, though grazed past, failed to strike. We all hit the ground. The two of us who were outside the minefield started crawling towards the railway signaling hut (See photograph above). The other two, who were amidst the minefield, also took lying positions avoiding the mines.

The entire LoC from J&K to Khem Karan, maybe even beyond South, livened up with firing, which lasted for over twenty minutes. Then the white flags went up on either side, signaling that the UN observers had arrived. Still crawling on the way back, I asked Samiyal to defuse mines. I picked two anti tank mines; Samiyal four or five. That way the mine-breaching lane was created. Meanwhile, there were shouts that I was urgently wanted by the GOC.

Out of the minefield, I first confronted the UN Observer. He fired a spate of questions, “what happened?”, “why did you not wait for me?”, “did you carry a white flag?”, and after inspecting the minefield. “What is this cable for?” I replied with a straight face, “Pakistanis laid this minefield last night. This is a violation of ceasefire and infringement of railway line being the LoC as decided at the flag meeting at Alhar Railway Station after two hours of cessation of hostilities. When you were not there, they dared not fire at us. I intended to have a talk with them to resolve the issue. And they opened fire. We retaliated. As to white flag, we do not have one. We, the uniformed, carry our regimental flag-posts to plant at the territory we conquer, not white flags of surrender and defeat. In any case I was waving this handkerchief.” I took out a white hankie and waved it. As to the cable laid across the minefield, my response was that we had a listening post at the Railway Signaling Hut and that is where this cable had been laid long time back.

He was fully satisfied. The outcome was that the Pakistanis were censored for LoC violations. According to the UN observer, Pakistanis had suffered eight killed or wounded while we had no casualty. Over the next few nights the Engineers with the help of Samiyal and battalion personnel cleared a sizeable part of the minefield and lifted a sizable number of mines. Most important — crossing the enemy-laid minefield along with the only decorated Vir Chakra *vijeta* of the Brigade, 2/Lt Ravinder Singh Samiyal and two other ranks (ORs) of 5 JAK RIF, crawling under intense fire at close range, had raised the morale of the unit and the four of us earned accolades and delight of the battalion’s officers and men.

A couple of days later, GOC Maj Gen Korla decided to visit 5 JAK RIF. In the absence of the Brigade Commander, I met him at the Check Post. After shaking hands with me, he said, “I was very annoyed at your leaving the Brigade HQ.” Then he put his hand on my shoulder and added, “Well done my boy! You showed tremendous daring. I am proud of you. I believe they suffered eight casualties. Did they?” I nodded and he responded, “That would teach them a lesson.” When we reached the Battalion HQ at Chak Dea Singh, the GOC was taken to a place where a booty of Pak mines was displayed. These were a labour of breaching the minefield by the battalion in collaboration and under expert guidance of the divisional Sappers. The GOC was highly

impressed. Days later when the count was taken, there were 260 mines or near about number.

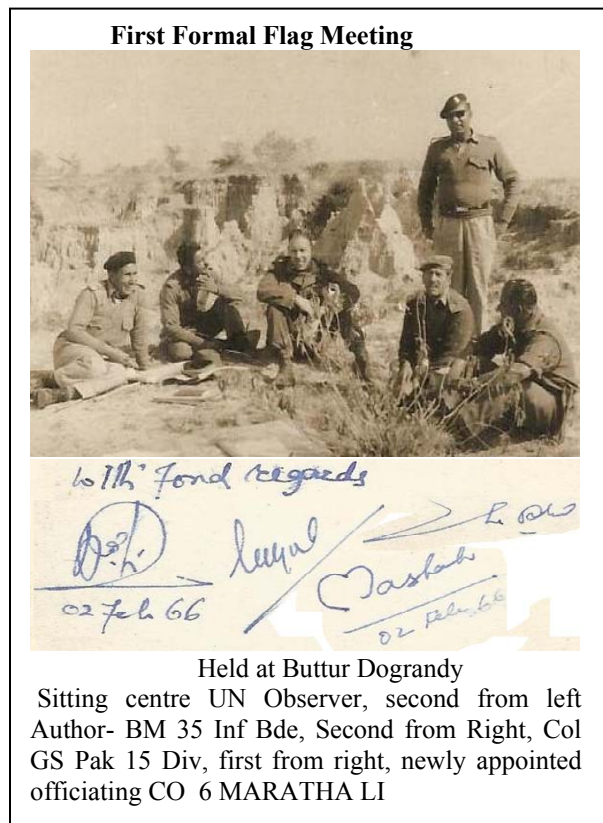
There is a sad follow up of this episode too. I was on leave when a similar incident of crossing the minefield happened. In my absence as Brigade Patrol Master, eething to prove himself, Maj Puran Singh took the initiative and crossed the gap in the minefield at night along with two jawans for reconnaissance. Unfortunately for him, the enemy was waiting with an LMG precisely at the aforesaid Railway Signaling hut and opened fire. He was killed by the first burst. The two jawans ran southward and returned safe after crossing two sets of mines, one laid by the enemy and the other by us. The entire LoC went turbulent. In the eyes of psychoanalysis experts Puran's act may appear as foolhardy and petulant, but bravery is qurbani (sacrifice), it is unique and can neither be qualified, nor emulated.



Martyr Maj Puran Chand
Photograph taken by
UN Observer

First Formal Flag Meeting

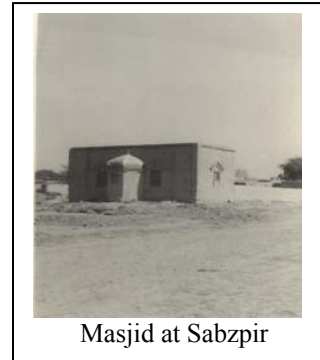
There were three formal flag meetings interspersed with numerous informal visits by the UN representatives for investigations of complaints mostly filed by the Pakistanis. The first formal meeting took place at Butur Dograndi, the locale of the fiercest tank battle after world War II and where Col Tarapore received Veer Gati. It was our proposed FUP for attack on Chawinda, but had to be abandoned midway by the assaulting battalions because of massive shelling by the Pakistanis. The devastation wrought by them is noticeable in the background in the photograph. This photograph was taken by an officer of the Pak delegation and a copy with their signatures at the back of the photograph was presented to me at the second flag meeting. While only two of us, the officiating stop-gap CO of 6 MARATHA LI and I represented India, theirs was a powerful lot headed by Colonel General Staff (Col GS) 15 Division and included a Major from Rangers and presumably an officer from Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) and Pak 24 Brigade. The points were a mere



reiteration of Ceasefire Agreement's non-violation, I wrote the minutes as mutually decided in non contentious language.

PAK Allegation about Burning of Mosques

One day the UN observer came with a complaint that Indians were burning mosques. I took him to the Commander and in his presence requested the UN representative to come next day at five in the evening. Then I guided him to see the mosque at Manga. He witnessed not a scratch on it. I gave him a copy of the photograph of mosque at Sabzpir (See insert). He was impressed. Next day he came dot at five I took him around to see the parameter defences of the brigade HQ, Five thirty was the time for evening stand to. My instructions were that before getting into trenches everyone should say a Prayer, or do Sajda, render Ardas or Cross the heart according to their religion and belief before getting into the trench. The U.N. Representative saw a number of Defence Platoon boys kneeling and bowing towards the West. Bewildered as he was, he asked me, "Are they Muslims?" I chuckled, "Of course, they are not bowing to Pakistan. Ours is a secular country with secular Army. Every religious place is sacred to us."



Masjid at Sabzpir

Second Formal Flag Meeting

The Second Formal Meeting took place at Alhar Railway Station. It was hosted by us.



Photograph taken by the author at Alhar Railway Station

Left to right: UN Representative, Pak Col GS 15 Div, Offg CO 6 MARATHA LI, Officers from ISI and Rangers

The Pakistanis came in good strength, same as in the First Formal Flag Meeting. On the Indian side, the two of us, officiating CO of 6 MARATHA LI and I represented the Indian side. When the minutes of the first meeting were read by me, the Pakistanis raised an issue of rancour — presumably, the delegation was so instructed by their superiors. They objected to International Border being called "International Border" and wanted it to be changed to "Border" which I declined. Their plea was UN Resolutions that accepted the controversial nature of accession of J&K; my argument was based on Redcliff Award, bizarre as it was, yet, the very basis of creation and reality of Pakistan, and its acceptance internationally. The discussion was switching from matters military to political, which we regretted. A compromise was to specify what we call "International Border" and Pakistanis refer as "Border". The minutes were so worded.

Third Flag Meeting

The third Flag Meeting was held again at Alhar post Tashkent. The Brigade had withdrawn from the Pak territory, which we had won and occupied, to our side of the International Border. A team from Delhi had come to arrange return of Pak land. I was detailed to represent 1 Corps because of presence at the earlier meetings and knowledge of the contentious issues. At the third meeting the only matter of concern to us was return of the 260 odd mines that we had lifted by breaching the minefield that was laid by Pakistanis. At the meeting, I learnt that any minefield, which either side had positioned, was to be cleared by that very side. The Pakistanis were in trouble as they couldn't account for the mines, which were in our possession. The very code of laying a minefield is the ability and knack to guard it — for contravention of which the Pak unit opposite 5 JAK RIF was taken to task. I was in no mood to help them as these mines were laid in infringement of the ceasefire and we couldn't surrender the booty, which is a paltry avenger of the sacrifice of Maj Puran Chand. It was my view that these mines should be analysed by our R&D and placed in museums of regimental centres for posterity's pride and remembrance.

I left having conveyed feelings and expressed views of all ranks of the Brigade. But later I learnt that orders came to comply and 5 JAK RIF returned the entire lot of mines.

Chapter 8

ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNT

The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice.

— Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*

Subjective Military History

In India the official military history suffers from knowledge inconsistency and biased slant of the writers. As an applied field the pursuit of contemporary military history has two aims vis. an investigative research at the military academies, colleges and schools; and a subject of study at promotion and competitive examinations with a view to preparing future commanders and staff officers by instilling in them the ability to perceive historical parallels and learn lessons from the past. Part of military history is also regimental history that glorifies the deeds of valour, camaraderie, leadership, and exceptional display of tactical and technical acumen in the face of odds and adversaries.

As an agenda of international studies, there is a tendency to treat military history as an aberration of political and economic development processes of a state, therefore of trivial consequence and significance. Even the value system of soldiering is pooh-pooed. The military history, as discipline for the development of strategy, tactics, and technology, is marginalised. It is often treated as a device for aggrandisement of powers that be — in our case, a device for mouthing the precept “*jai jawan, jai kisan,*” yet, taking for granted, often leading to disparagement of either or both. The conceptual scrutiny is over and over sacrificed at the altar of “intelligence clearance” — a ploy of killing impartial views and equitable writings

The official history of 1965 Indo-Pak war, error hyped, bureaucratic tainted and unscrutinised as it is, should be put through a sieve of analytical processing to sift the grain of objectivity from the murky chaff of subjectivity. History that demoralises young officers and jawans fancies the “*jus ad bellum*” i.e., the “just war doctrine” and the over-played aphorism of Alfred Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* — “Theirs is not to question why, Theirs is to do and die” are not only an embarrassment to taking out-of-box initiative, but also an encouragement to the enemy bereft of scruples whatsoever. Marked “Restricted” as it is on the Web, the foresaid history describes the performance of Armed Forces of India, bracketing it with that of Pakistan, as “poor”. It states that our “armour advanced at infantry pace” not knowing that armour without infantry cannot hold ground and is a sitting duck at night. We neither had night vision devices nor mechanised infantry in 1965.

How statements are made and detracted, how coloured opinions of historians are prompted, sources connived, and how so-called historical accounts, designed on falsehood, are made public to the entire world, is immaterial, the loss is always that of

honour of our country, and morale of the men in uniform, for whom the bell tolls. We called 1965 War a stalemate — a drawn match — while Pakistanis celebrate it as victory. So Kargil ensued. Even today, Pakistanis play mischievously crafted make-believe card of one to ten ratio disparity — legitimising the credo of Mujahideen and insiders with a view to propping up recrudescence of violence across the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K. Witness Pak flags in the Valley.

Command and Control

Unity of command is a principle of war in the case of the US, though not in India and other Commonwealth countries. It requires a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces in pursuit of a unified purpose. Military operations are joint enterprises involving co-operation between Defence Services i.e. in the instant case Army and Air Force and all arms within the Army. It entails the co-ordination of all activities to achieve the optimum combined effort. Ideally one commander should be made responsible for the conduct of operations, but that may not be practicable, organised as we are to-day.

India is the only major power in the world where the civilian Defence Secretary and not the military leadership is legally and constitutionally responsible for the country's defence. So, civil-military relations, instead of being between the political and military entities, have been relegated to between the powerful civilian bureaucracy and the responsibility laden military. The bureaucracy has authority, but no accountability; whereas the military has absolute responsibility but carry no clout.

In the battlefield under discussion, operations suffered from off-the-cuff, scrappy and knee-jerk decision-making at the Corps level. Its impact infested right down the ranking ladder of the tactical level. Orally conveyed orders and so-called instructions, were altered frequently — almost daily, before they could be complied with. They ranged from terse, banal and absurd to sheer impracticable in implementation. The paradigm is reflected in the accounts of history writers at the Defence Ministry, who posed as crusaders of righteousness, playing referees. Witness the expressions, “unfortunate”, “misunderstanding”, and “bias” — surely not communicated by the Divine, but an ominous mark of poor command and indifferent control. During the operations the Corps showed a nadir of dysfunction and lack of coordination, which reflected in adverse command, control, communications and intelligence.

Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh writes, “The campaign illustrates a classic command failure at Corps level. Command and control functions were consistently sluggish and during a critical stage in the offensive, when we were battling for the vital Chawinda - Badiana - Zafarwal Area, virtually ineffective.”⁴⁸

Communications

The state of communications, throughout the operations, was under tremendous strain at its best, and perceptibly abysmal at its worst. This, by no stretch of imagination, it was

because of the Corps of Signals, but an adnominal result of frequent personality-oriented decision-making, ill-planned grouping and regrouping, and recurrent violation of chain of command. It was further aggravated by taking Signals for granted, wastage of communication resources in 14 Infantry Division Sector, whereas unacceptability of infantry brigades by the staff of Armoured Division as outstations on the voice command net on the plea of cluttering. There was absence of lateral communications leading to disinformation about location of own troops, which led to tragedies like 14 RAJPUT of 58 Infantry Brigade barging into own position at Wazirwali held by a company of 5 JAT and 2 LANCERS.

There was a perceptible chaos and total disorder due to the frequently changed decisions and their non-transmission through staff channels right from Corps level, what to talk of down the chain. This played havoc in violation of the acceptable norms and teaching about passing orders and intelligence, be they classified or unclassified. Situational awareness, information sharing and data exchange amongst tactical force are the acme of command and control. Today, we refer to them as information warfare, network-centric warfare, cyber warfare, cognitive warfare, data warfare, and many similar ilk, each hinging on peer-to-peer (P2P) communications, and power to the edges. The factorial considerations of these are operational mobility, terrain, media resources and network characteristics. To facilitate interaction and interoperability at different tactical levels, suitable adaptation at application level and network configurations need to be considered for deployment depending on the operational environment and resources available. While current research and investigative work focus primarily on routing and transport protocol as well as wideband radio waveforms, there is still scope for a mobile ad-hoc network over legacy radio network. This is because our armed forces still have a sizeable number of narrowband radios operating at Very High Frequency (VHF) or Ultra High Frequency (UHF) in operational use.

Operating with armoured and mountain division we in the infantry brigade had little commonality of wireless sets, which was the single most important means of communications. At corps, division and brigade level, high frequency (HF) wireless was in use. Forward of battalion, VHF sets were authorised. The wireless sets in the HF range were medium power sets SCR 399 and RS 53, both of World War II vintage. Wireless sets C11/R210 and 62 were the low power sets in use. Mountain divisions were equipped with the AN/GRC 9, and VHF sets AN/PRC 25 and AN/PRC 10. The VHF set C42 was in use in some armoured units, whereas, vintage radio sets 31 and 88 were authorized to our infantry battalions. Generally, the wireless equipment was dated, bulky and heavy. We went to war with this motley of mutually uncompetitive holdings. Wireless communications lacked security, cable lines were trampled upon by tanks, own or enemy, more often the former. So only means of communication was verbal and scribbled notes sent through DRs and LOs.

Intelligence

In April 2015 an article was published by V Balachandran in the *Times of India* insinuating that “Intelligence Bureau (IB) played junior partner to MI5 well after 1947.”

The subtle rub of this Article was that before 1947, IB was controlled by MI5, Britain's domestic intelligence service and a department called "Indian Political Intelligence (IPI)", run by India Office, Scotland Yard and India government. --- After 1947, this MI5-IB liaison continued. An unwritten agreement during the transfer of power in 1947 was the secret positioning of a security liaison officer (SLO) in New Delhi as MI5's representative. Normally, any intelligence liaison with an independent country should've been maintained by Britain's foreign intelligence service — MI6. But MI5 resisted such attempts till 1971.

Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh writes in the Lessons Learnt, "Intelligence about the enemy's activities and intentions often proved to be inaccurate and misleading. There was no concrete evidence of the impending massive infiltration campaign even on the eve of Pak aggression."⁴⁹ Having said that he becomes somewhat apathetic even apologetic and writes, "While making these comments it is not my intention to undermine the standing and prestige of the IB for, I am sure, the organisation fell short of expectations not for want of effort but on account of inherent weaknesses in the set-up. My aim in highlighting the lapses is to focus attention on this organisation so that its basic structure could be re-examined and overhauled for a more efficient functioning. The IB, as we know, is our main agency for keeping our finger on the pulse of a belligerent neighbour during peace. In war, it is an invaluable source of information for planning in the field. A streamlined IB is a vital national requirement"⁵⁰

Of equal, if not greater significance than the strategic intelligence, is the tactical intelligence, the conveyance of which, both down and up the chain, was pathetic. I did not receive a single SITREP from any divisional HQ. On the contrary, I regularly received situation reports (SITREP) from the two battalions that were under-command, meticulously compiled them, and sent Brigade SITREP, both, up and down the chain. Regrettably, no body, other than the battalions, read them. In Chapter

Although Intelligence about the enemy's intention and capability is never fool-proof in any war; in the war with Pakistan it proved to be extremely wanting. Further, what was available was not passed down the chain. After the regular campaign had commenced, the IB virtually shut down as intelligence supplier. General Harbaksh Singh writes, "During the war, as sources of the IB dried up, the most important source of information on the enemy was air photography. But this was centralised at Army HQ and Air HQ. This caused unnecessary delays in its availability at the lower levels. The developed copies of air photographs mostly arrived too late to be of any tactical use. A definite need was felt of decentralising the facilities for air photo cover."⁵¹ Undoubtedly, his observations have merit, but there are other sources like reconnaissance patrols, interrogations of prisoners of war, tactical signal intelligence and analysis of captured documents, letters, newspapers, cap badges and formation signs, which yield valuable and helpful intelligence. These sources were woefully neglected. Wherever and whenever patchily exploited, these were hoarded — neither shared with other divisions, nor passed down the chain. For instance formation signs that we captured at Gadgor, as shown in Appendix "H", were analysed after the war. It shows Pak 7 Division Sign, which as a formation was never deployed in Sialkot Sector. The formation sign either belonged to an officer of 22 Cavalry or 1 (SP) Field Regiment, the units that were hurriedly switched

from Chhamb. The formation signs of Pak 1 Armoured Division and 8 Division were never captured. Their presence could have been easily discerned, if we had trained tactical signal intelligence unit on our Corps ORBAT.

Know Thy Enemy and Thyself Too

Sun Tzu said, “Therefore, regarding forces, by perceiving the enemy and perceiving ourselves, there will be no unforeseen risk in any battle.” He further elaborated, “It is the rule in war, if ten times the enemy's strength, surround them; if five times, attack them; if double, be able to divide them; if equal, engage them; if fewer, be able to evade them; if weaker, be able to avoid them.”⁵² Pity no one paid any attention to this adage. Our higher headquarters did not know where our own troops were, what to talk of enemy.

I suggest the readers to have a re-look at the table of Relative Strength in Appendix “D” on what the two assaulting battalions of ours were made to face in the battle of Chawinda. Yet we engaged the enemy 3 FF and made them turn their back and run for hell. If that is not gallantry, what else is!

Limited Objectives; Unlimited Measures

The greatest tragedy that we faced in Sialkot Sector war zone was absence of a viable Corps Plan based on the prudent principle of war enunciated by Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, in *Unrestricted Warfare*⁵³ vis., “limited objectives in relation to measures available that ought to be unlimited.” When setting the objectives, no appreciation was carried out and no consideration given to feasibility of accomplishing them. Right from the word go, objectives were sought and chased in utter disregard of the available fire power, inter and intra communication facilities, which were heavily constrained both in terms of relative strength and time and space. If the principle had been prudently followed, after accomplishing one objective, there would have been ample resources and resilience to pursue the next — and the next. When setting objectives, one must overcome the urge and proclivity for Napoleonic successes. No matter whatever be the reason, setting objectives, which exceed available measures, lead to disastrous consequences — failure on the verge of success. This is, precisely, what happened.

All Arms Synchrony and Harmony

I quote General George S. Patton, “If the band played a piece first with the piccolo then with the brass horn, then with the clarinet, and then with the trumpet, there would be a hell of a lot of noise but no music. To get harmony in the music, each instrument must support the others, to get harmony in battle; each weapon (read arm) must support the others. Team play wins.”⁵⁴ In *Operation Nepal*, there was no synchrony, there was no harmony. We first attacked Chawinda with armour, then with infantry, intermittently employing artillery of which we were a brigade short. There was no coordination with the Air Force; Engineers whose potential of holding ground when not employed on laying or breaching minefields was never exploited — less said about the adequacy and efficacy of staff duties, communications and logistic support.

Flouting ORBAT of divisions and brigades frequently, on the specious plea, of grouping and regrouping of non-integral brigades and battalions, is highly reprehensible. It undermines the dedicated fire support, staff duties and obligations, and the chain of command, which Signals follow. We, in 35 Infantry Brigade, were consistently and uncaringly deprived of third battalion leading to error of each other's capabilities and limitations in holdings of weapons and radio equipment. Throughout the duration of active operations 14 Infantry Division had only one brigade under command that too less one battalion at one stage. It was still called a division. 6 Mountain Division, too, had shed 99 Mountain Brigade to I Armoured Division. Going by the official history, I Armoured Division had the unique distinction of boasting an armoured, and a lorried brigade of its own with two infantry brigades and a mountain brigade under its command. Over burdened as the division was, none of the borrowed brigades were privy to dedicated fire support, assault engineer support or viable communication support — let alone air support or logistic support.

If one goes by the Official History and account of Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh we were at Arnia on 8 September under command 6 Mountain Division; at Sabzpir on 11 September, under command 1 Armoured Division; on 12 September at Subzpir under command 6 Mountain Division; on 14 September assigned to capture Chawinda as per 1 Armoured Brigade Operation Order; on 15 September shoved back to Charwa under I Armoured Division, on 16 September at Gadgor under 6 Mountain Division, on 17 September at Phillora under 1 Armoured Division, then back at Gadgor under 6 Mountain Division; on 18 September slated to attack at Chawinda and Jassoran; and the sardonic of all, is that on 20 September we were sent to Changarian to lick our wounds, a place I had never known and even today cannot locate on the map. All this is not a wee bit true — firstly location wise, we were at Sabzpir and Manga as shown in map at Appendix B, secondly command wise, we were under command HQ 1 Armoured Division from 8-11 September and HQ 6 Mountain Division from 12 September till just before Tashkent Agreement; thirdly, most important, our self-assigned missions were to capture Chobara on 8 September, assist in securing Gadgor on night 10/11 September, and hold ground at the strategic location of Alhar Railway Station against all attacks from 12 September till Ceasefire, and all postwar violations by Pakistan to recapture it.

It is ironical that while Pakistan was beset more in intra feuds borne of personality chauvinism, ours was no less. Where they substantially scored over us was progressive organisational assets like Army Aviation, mechanised infantry, Para brigade, tactical signal intelligence and their deployment right where the action was at the battlefield. There was greater harmony amongst them reflected in after-battle admiration of their performance by the hierarchy. The *Men of Steel* is full of praise for performance of Electronic Warfare, Artillery, Army Aviation; and Close Air Support and Logistics. We, on the other hand are somewhat circumspect and critical.

Our writers talk of expressions like “loss of opportunity”, “unfortunately” and “misunderstanding” — unbecoming to military parlance. Contrarily not a word is said about the price we paid in lives, professional pride and morale. It was an all arms battle that should have been fought on the night of 14/15 September when the enemy was bereft

of boost-up troops from Pak 1 Armoured Division from Lahore Sector and Pak 8 Division from Chhamb Sector. There ought to have been full involvement of the Corps HQ with the support of the Air Force and pursuance of the worthy Chinese adage from *Unrestricted Warfare* “limited objectives and unlimited means.” Here we planned for capturing three boundless objectives Chawinda, Badiana and Zafarwal, whereas we could muster paltry fire power, assault engineers and communications to take on even one of them.

Tactical Signal Intelligence

Signal intelligence, or better call it by its subset, communication intelligence, involves covert interception of hostile voice, telegraph and data systems. It is a highly lucrative source of intelligence, which has been promoted by almost every technologically advanced nation — drastically, adopted by terrorist and militant groups, too. It is distinct from electronic warfare. Whereas interception and direction finding are common, both, to the electronic warfare and signal intelligence; in the case of the former, it is merely a support function⁵⁵

For electronic warfare support, the receivers and direction finders after acquiring the target, pass on the target for kill, deception or discard, while they move on in search of other preys. While, in the case of the signal intelligence, they dwell, lock on and persist for content lucidity or spectrum intelligence till it is rewarding. A receiver obviously cannot do both the jobs, i.e. roam and dwell simultaneously. Further, whereas a “system combining interception, direction finding and jamming is valid for the electronic warfare, the merit of tactical signal intelligence lies in discrete receivers.⁵⁶

Very high and ultra high frequency communications are difficult to intercept, as the receiver too has to be in the line-of-sight. If surreptitiously done by getting closer to the target, the pay-offs are indeed high, and the source lucrative. Tactical signal intelligence, as the name implies, is for the tactical commander. He alone is competent to task the effort and after it is gathered, he alone is competent to authenticate its source, validate its content and evaluate its effect on his mission and plans. This cannot be done at the higher echelons of hierarchy. High rewards can be reaped from tactical signal intelligence if data is properly collected, analysed and logged.⁵⁷ In 1965, whereas Pakistan employed an electronic warfare unit, we managed local resources that too only in 1 Armoured Division Signal Regiment. The effort was random and of nuisance value only.

Mobilisation

In order to keep surprise at strategic level we totally ignored mobilisation at tactical level. We were rushed into battle. Units were one third their strength, Officers and men were not recalled from leave, courses of instruction, temporary duties and store collection parties. After the operations, As units moved out from peace stations they carried a mass of unnecessary stores. I made a voluminous set of instructions called “Mobilisation Scheme” and carried out a drill every month.

Air Chief Marshal Lal writes, “In 1965, the higher defence organisation was functioning and the Chiefs of Staff Committee met regularly under the chairmanship of General Chaudhuri. Officers in positions of authority had read and studied, and taught the procedures for inter-service cooperation. It was not realised, however, that even when the general drill is known, each particular task still requires a great deal of preparatory work, that the persons taking part need to be trained for it, that supporting facilities have to be arranged for in advance, and this has to be done for every contingency that can be envisaged. Flexibility in battle is gained only through long and arduous preparation.”⁵⁸

Warfare in Built-up Area

The most fundamental lesson learned from battle of Chawinda is that warfare in towns, with close streets of built-up areas is a high value target best tackled by a fully integrated combined-arms team. There is no denying the value of infantry, armour, and anti-armour forces during urban combat. Urban operations should never be considered a purely infantry errand and initiation response. This is precisely what happened at Chawinda. Both the battalions 5 JAK RIF and 6 MARATHA LI suffered from critical limitations that could have been thought of at Corps level and overcome by proper grouping. They needed appropriately tasked organisational capability to achieve a combined-arms effect. These forces needed to be supported by closely integrated indirect fire support, communications, and logistical prop up across the spectrum of operations. In urban areas, the combined-arms teams produce the best results. The Israel’s operations in Gaza Strip are a case in point.

Tactical Handling

Armour having swarmed moves on, it is the lot of the steadfast and resolute infantry to trounce the enemy and to hold and secure the ground against a counter-attack. The Infantry soldiers fight during the hours of darkness, and on capturing ground, dig and dig hard to protect themselves. In 1965, tanks on our side were night blind and totally dependent on the infantry. We neither had night vision devices nor mechanised infantry vehicles. The Official History wisely states, “The bulk of both armies consisted of infantry formations. However, compared to Pak infantry, Indian infantry was deployed more extensively, and in some cases their defensive positions slowed down Pak armour drives, inflicting considerable losses.”⁵⁹

The Official History’s naïveté on tactical deployment is classic – sample this one on linearity vs. depth, “Following old British patterns, both the armies were deployed with two companies up in front and two in reserve; two battalions up in front, and one in reserve; and two brigades up in front and one in reserve, thus rendering the bulk of a Division, i.e. 28 reserve rifle companies, idle, while only 8 rifle companies had to bear the brunt of the enemy’s attacks.”⁶⁰ This reflection is a bizarre one — an arithmetic gauge is never a tactical approach. Every military situation is unique. That is why we are rigorously taught to carry out an appreciation of situation — mental on the spur, written if time permits and put it for peer review.

Artillery Fire Support

In Chapter on Pakistan Tactical Concept Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh writes that artillery was Pakistan's most decisive weapon; that it was extensively used with devastating effect; that Pakistan had prepared the gun areas in elaborate detail, during peacetime; and that not only had survey been done, but target records from various gun positions had been prepared and kept ready for prompt engagements.⁶¹ He further observes that they placed greater reliance on moving to alternate positions to escape counter-bombardment or air action. Very often, for harassing roles, guns and mortars were invariably deployed in temporary gun positions.⁶² More casualties were caused by artillery and air attack than in actual tank to tank battles.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan artillery was substantially superior to ours, both in quality and quantity by virtue of imported American guns and presence of highly advanced 4 Corps Artillery Brigade. We were short of an Artillery Brigade on the ORBAT of 12 Division. What was earlier termed as 1 Corps Artillery Brigade of two field and one medium regiment, was shown as part of 14 Infantry Division post hostilities.⁶³ These handicaps notwithstanding, the gunners' feat was admirable. I do not know how they resolved the problem of direct support, but all the three battalions of our brigade were full of praise of the affiliated battery commanders during the crucial battles of Chawinda and Alhar.

Para Military Forces

That Indian para-military forces stood their ground well in Kutch, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Jammu and Kashmir, and provided worthwhile support to the regular forces maybe true of these areas, but in our battle zone, these forces were no where visible. If they had taken over the defence of Madhopur Bridge, we would not have missed opportunities and the state of readiness for active combat would not have been affected adversely. War is far from a middle-of-the-road venture. There are many who exploit it to vicious ends, whereas for a soldier it is a spin off between life and death.

Collective Training

Since its inception, 35 Infantry Brigade had never been trained as an integrated formation *per se*, what to talk of being collectively exercised as part of a division or a corps. When I joined the Brigade HQ, we were in the mountains under an Area HQ. Although a field area, the only tactical activity was monthly long-range patrol right up to the China border. I accompanied one — not as a leader, but just to get the feel of the ground, and hang of what an infantryman goes through. It was tough, indeed very tough — nonetheless, a rewarding experience in companionship and soldiering.

The very concept of collective training is to create and cultivate team spirit, camaraderie, an understanding of operational capability of arms and logistic services other than ones own, an innovative and responsive milieu between the three Defence

Services to overcome critical situations. It aims to promote leadership, intelligence-nurtured "war rooms"; and encourages informal relationships that crisscross organisational boundaries. This is what we achieved in Exercise Betwa after the 1965 War and extensive preparatory training as a run-up to it. Regrettably, the hierarchy in the brigade and its battalions had changed. I portrayed the only continuity ever since the pre war days.

Morale and Motivation

Notwithstanding the admirable resilience and tenacity of the Indian soldier, who is ever inspired by the triumvirate of *naam, namak and nishaan* (loosely transliterated as honour, loyalty and integrity), it is the respect, recognition and reward (loosely transliterated in Urdu as *Izzat, Iqbal aur Inam*) that he longs for, fights for and voluntarily gives his life for. There were innumerable instances of valour and pluck, which I am privy to and which even the enemy recognises though deplorably. Many citations were sent, but not a single one honoured — justice was not done to our Brigade.

In Indian history after Independence ours has never, emphatically never, been a profession of peace-time soldiering. Bharat Mata has been losing her bravest sons during wars after wars, crises after crises, both internal and external. It hurts when a leader says that we are denied respect because we did not fight a war for forty to fifty years. Our soldiers have been in Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka, in Operation Vijay in Kargil, serving in inhospitable Siachin, a series of operations in the North-east, at LoC in J&K and Line of Actual Control (LAC) against China, and on peace-keeping missions abroad. They are battle-hardy not battle-weary and they are much more than a fighting outfit — they represent an organisation of highly spirited and vibrant citizenry endowed with unity, discipline and oomph. It is probably the only organisation that has continued to utilise its capacities to achieve professional objectives, resisting all attempts to compromise its ideals or to deliver below its potential.

Concluding Thoughts

I quote Pamela Bhagat, wife of a highly distinguished and decorated General, from a piece entitled *Brand Equity of War*, "Dying in action is a fact of life for our men in uniform. As the last post is sounded for yet another military funeral, we can't help but marvel at the brand equity of war." This was aftermath of Operation Vijay. Alas! In Operation Nepal no bugle was sounded for martyrs of 35 Infantry Brigade, as for many other jawans of other formations. None remembers their *qurbani*, no tears were shed (*zara aankh mein bhar lo paani*). No *shaheed* in his *shahadat* is venerated even today. He is just a political trademark, an electoral word of empty promises, and brand equity of war.

Service in the Armed Forces is not merely a job; its a way of life, an all encompassing commitment to oneself, to family, to fellow compatriots in arms, to Nation, even humanity at large It upholds the will to "keep up" and "carry on" even when the going is rough and tough during combat. At Chawinda and Jassoran, the Brigade faced enemy superior in numbers and firepower; the casualties were heavy; but there

were no let downs. The fighting spirit did not wane even under pressure, tension and uncertainties. We proved it at the final battle of Alhar.

This then is **The Saga of Grit and Courage** that I have the privilege to write about. This is our culture; this is our heritage; this is our victory. Let us not forget that *Deepawali* comes after *Dussehra* and *Eid* comes after *Ramzan*.

Martyrs OF INFANTRY BATTALIONS OF 35 INFANTRY BRIGADE

"Jadon Dullda Khoon Shaheedan da, Taqdeer Badaldi Quoman Di"

(A Punjabi saying: "When martyrs' blood is spilled, destiny of nations is transformed)

- Quoted by Maj Gen Satbir Singh,
Chairman Indian Ex Servicemen Movement (IESM)

20 RAJPUT

1.	IC-3088	Maj JC Verma	19 Sep 65
2.	2942858	Hav Sunder Singh	16 Sep 65
3.	291594	Nk Beek Singh	17 Sep 65
4.	2943777	Nk Har Bilash	21 Sep 65
5.	2944864	L/Nk Matapher Singh	16 Sep 65
6.	2944963	Nk Laloo Singh	22 Sep 65
7.	2947905	Nk Malkhan Singh	15 Sep 65
8.	2950172	Sep Dhan Singh	08 Sep 65
9.	2952382	Sep Bhanwar Singh	18 Sep 65
10.	2954693	Sep Chukhe Singh	15 Sep 65
11.	2954995	Sep Gokal	15 Sep 65
12.	2955160	Sep Nar Singh	05 Sep 65
13.	2955447	Sep Gokal Ram	15 Sep 65
14.	2955878	Sep Ram Swaroop	16 Sep 65
15.	2956042	Sep Hemraj Singh	15 Sep 65
16.	2956044	Sep Soba Ran Singh	15 Sep 65
17.	2956813	Sep Rameshwer Singh	15 Sep 65
18.	1360171	Sep Bal Singh	19 Sep 65
19.	1360178	Sep Kanhiya Lal	21 Sep 65
20.	JC 27559	Nb Sub Arjun Singh	08 Sep 65

6 MARATHA Light Infantry

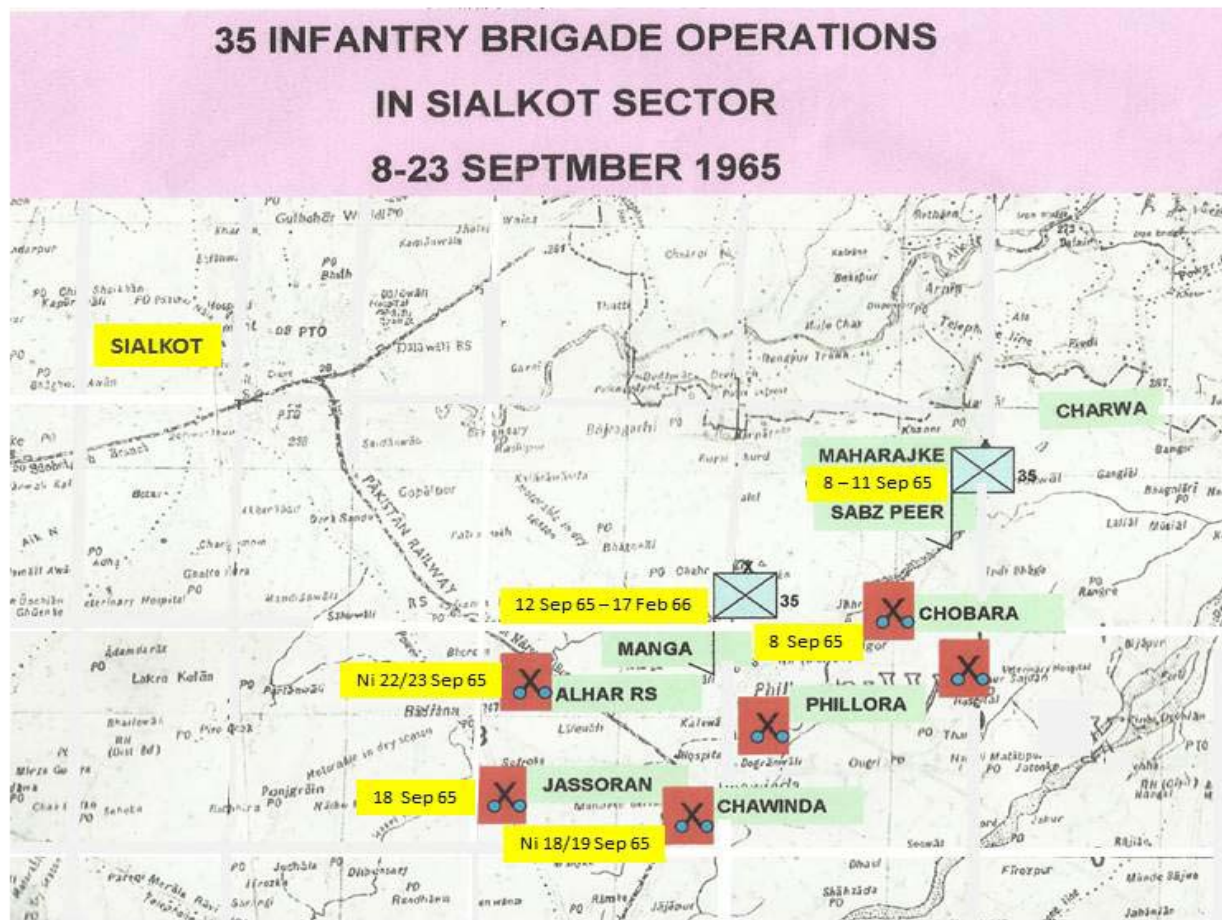
1.	IC 2644	Lt Col AM Manohar, CO	19 Sep 65
2.	EC 56547	2Lt LK Nadgir, IO	19 Sep 65
3.	2748015	Sep Shivraj Patil	13 Sep 65
4.	2747662	Sep Krishna Sawant	10 Sep 65
5.	2749263	Sep Mahadeo Samar	10 Sep 65
6.	2749259	Sep Bhimanna Sutar	10 Sep 65
7.	4142607	L/Hav Bhimrao Patil	10 Sep 65

8.	2763283	Sep Dattatraya Kadam	11 Sep 65
9.	2749033	Sep/EBR Maruti Kamble	11 Sep 65
10.	2746050	L/Nk Shivaji Bhonsle	13 Sep 65
11.	2747021	Sep Eknath Shelke	13 Sep 65
12.	2747243	Sep Abhinav Powar	13 Sep 65
13.	2747491	Sep Mahadeo Salunke	13 Sep 65
14.	4144621	Sep Ramdas Gogawale	17 Sep 65
15.	2740698	Nk Sambhaji Shinde	19 Sep 65
16.	2743095	LNk Bhagwan Gaikwad	19 Sep 65
17.	2744348	Nk Vishwanath Gangaputra	19 Sep 65
18.	2747174	Sep Bhimrao Mhapre	19 Sep 65
19.	4145546	LNk Shankar Erande	19 Sep 65
20.	2747461	Sep Bhagwan Powar	19 Sep 65
21.	4142681	Sep Tukaram Powar	19 Sep 65
22.	2748885	Sep Kashinath Ahire	19 Sep 65
23.	4141085	LNk Balaram Chavan	19 Sep 65
24.	2748889	Sep Tukaram Gaikwad	19 Sep 65
25.	2749271	Sep Chander Narwade	19 Sep 65
26.	2749305	Sep Dadu Sawant	19 Sep 65
27.	2750274	Sep Shankar Patil	19 Sep 65
28.	2750563	Sep Dnyanoba Wanjale	19 Sep 65
29.	2752986	Sep Ashok Dingale	19 Sep 65
30.	4143980	Sep Sadashiv Gawade	19 Sep 65
31.	4144618	Sep Anaji More	19 Sep 65
32.	4145029	Sep Balkrishna Pharande	19 Sep 65
33.	JC 26577	Nb Sub Narainrao	19 Sep 65
34.	JC 8278W	Sub Madhukar Rao	19 Sep 65
35.	2740738	Sep Parresh Kadu	21 Sep 65
36.	2750591	Sep Maruti Bhumakar	21 Sep 65
37.	2731018	Hav Tukaram Mahadik	21 Sep 65
38.	2749846	Sep Tukaram Karde	22 Sep 65
39.	2749899	Sep Anandrao Shinde	22 Sep 65
40.	2751625	Sep Shripati Kalgunde	22 Sep 65
41.	4146205	Sep Waman Kanse	22 Sep 65
42.	2741738	Nk Ramchandra Patil	22 Sep 65

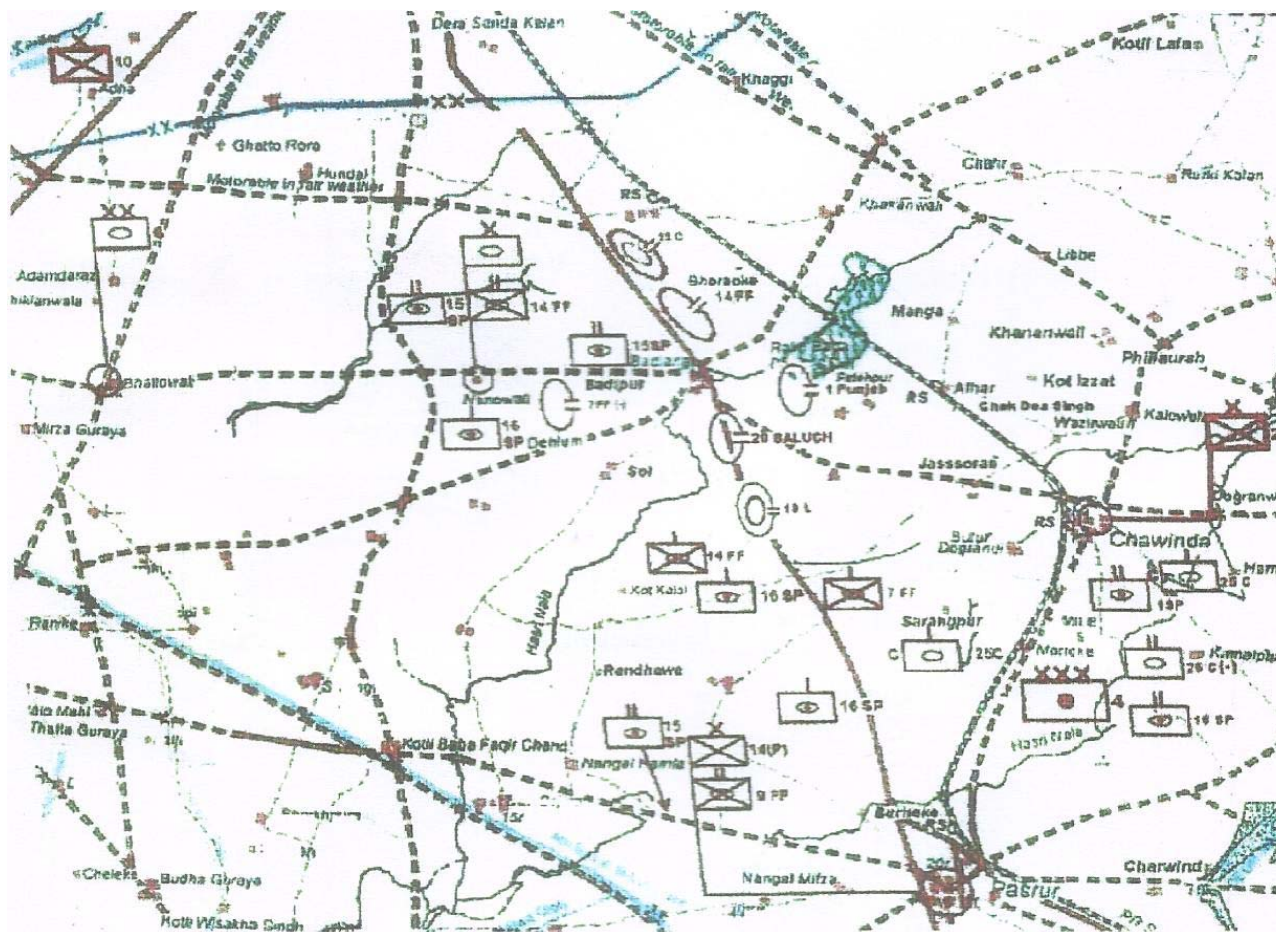
5 JAK RIFLES

1.		2Lt LS Chauhan	
2.	1C 12508	Maj DB Subba	
3.	IC 11702	Maj Puran Chander	
4.		2Lt MK Dua	
5.	13712395	Hav Munshi Ram	08 Sep 65
6.	13712664	Nk Melaram	19 Sep 65
7.	13712737	Hav Shamsheer Singh	20 Sep 65

8.	13713847	Hav Balbir Singh	08 Sep 65
9.	13716510	Hav Nepal Singh	19 Sep 65
10.	13716606	Rfn Krishna Datt	23 Nov 65
11.	13517070	Hav Lal Chand	23 Nov 65
12.	13717603	Rfn Sadhu Ram	20 Sep 65
13.	13719161	Nk Balwant Singh	19 Sep 65
14.	13719350	Rfn Janem Singh	19 Sep 65
15.	13719530	Nk Vishwa Mitter	14 Sep 65
16.	13719551	Nk Jagdev Singh	14 Sep 65
17.	13719782	Rfn Pathi Ram	22 Sep 65
18.	13719816	Rfn Behari Lal	19 Sep 65
19.	13720119	Rfn Behari Lal	19 Sep 65
20.	13720134	Rfn Balbir Singh	23 Sep 65
21.	13720163	Nk Jagan Nath Dogra	19 Sep 65
22.	13720289	Nk Bishamber Singh	08 Sep 65
23.	13721066	Rfn Rikhi Ram	19 Sep 65
24.	13721211	Rfn Chaman Lal	19 Sep 65
25.	13721248	Rfn Amar Singh	22 Sep 65
26.	13721301	Rfn Shanak Ram	20 Sep 65
27.	13722667	Rfn Amrit Lal	09 Sep 65
28.	13723075	LNk Amar Nath Vimal	19 Sep 65
29.	JC 13626	Sub Krishna Singh	10 Sep 65
30.	JC 32951	Nb Sub Krishan Chand	22 Sep 65
31.	JC 33954	Sub Bal Krishan	08 Sep 65



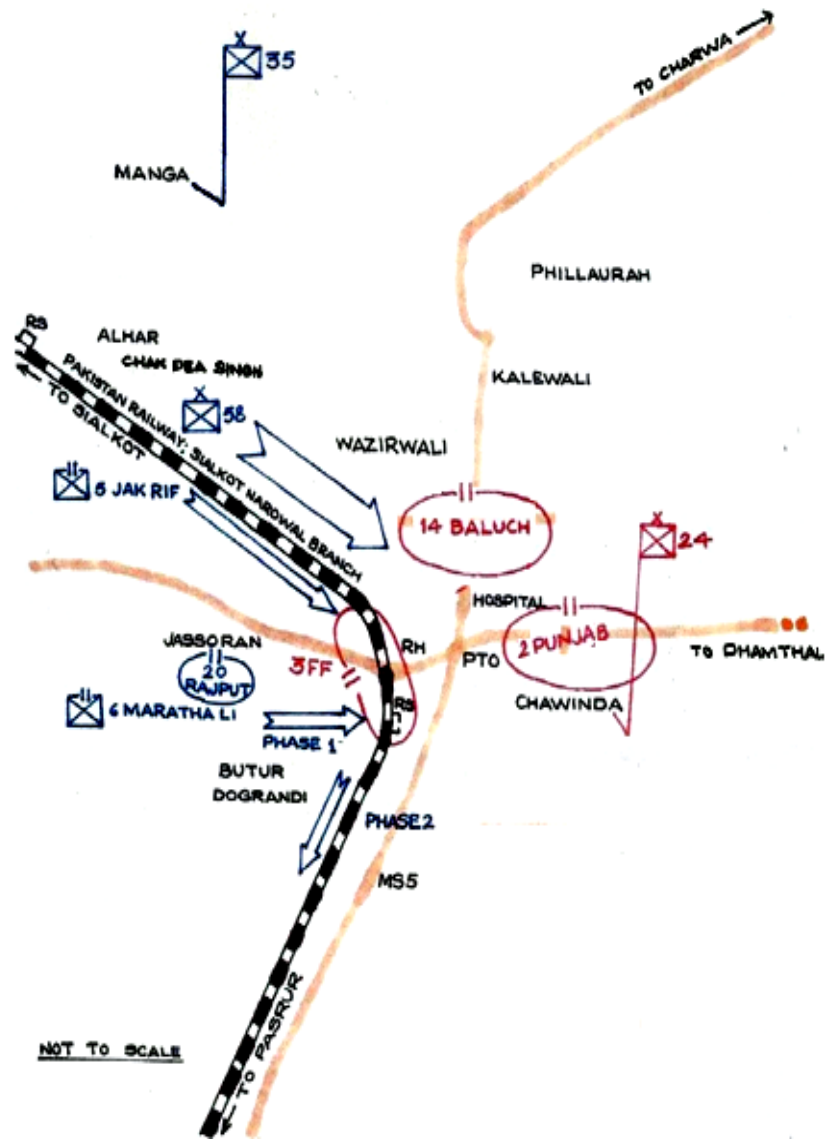
PAK DISPOSITIONS ON 16 SEPTEMBER 1965



OPPOSING FORCES AT CHAWINDA ON 18 /19 SEPTEMBER 1965

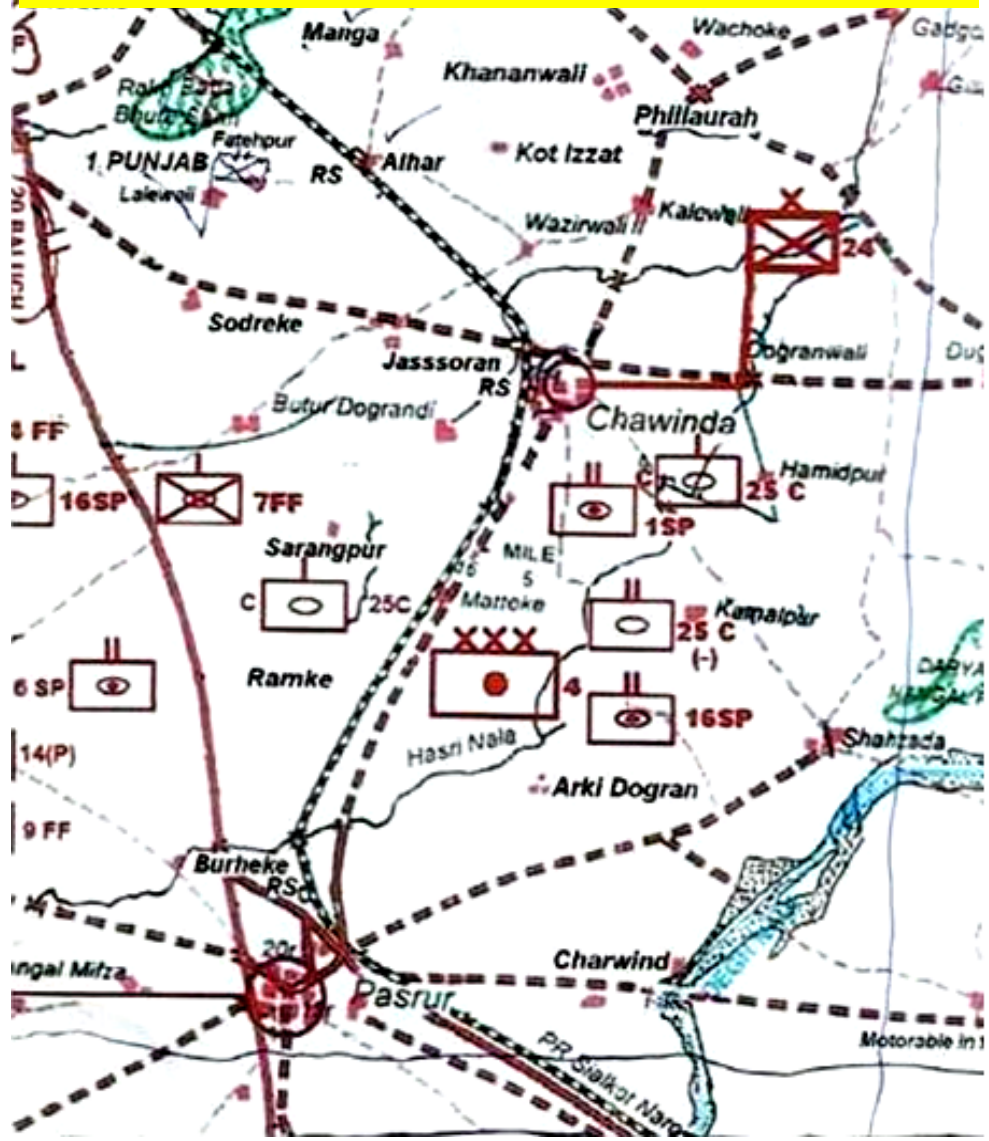
Own Troops	Enemy Troops
<p>35 Infantry Brigade under command 6 Mountain Division</p> <p>6 MARATHA LI 5 JAK RIF</p> <p>58 Infantry Brigade 4 JAK RIF 14 Rajput 3/1 GR</p> <p>Artillery in Direct Support of 35 and 58 Infantry Brigades</p> <p>No firm orders 166 Field Regiment in Direct support of 35 Brigade presumed</p> <p>Artillery In Support</p> <p>1 Corps Artillery Brigade of one Medium and two Field Regiments Two Mountain Composite Regiments</p> <p>Engineer Support</p> <p>No support to assaulting brigades</p> <p>Air Support</p> <p>No formal request, but enemy acknowledged IAF ground attacks</p>	<p>24 Brigade Group under command 8 Division</p> <p>3 FF 14 Balluch 2 Punjab B Company 13 FF 25 Cav (dug-in as pill boxes)</p> <p>From Other Formations</p> <p>19 FF ex 10 Brigade</p> <p>Artillery in Direct Support to 24 Brigade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I (SP) Field Regiment less battery 31 Field Regiment Battery 8 Medium Regiment <p>Artillery In Support</p> <p>3 Heavy Regiment and 8 Medium Regiment of 4 Corps Artillery Brigade 15 (SP) and 16 (SP) Field Regiments</p> <p>Engineer Support</p> <p>8 Engineer Battalion</p> <p>Air Support</p> <p>ACT with Tentacle</p>

**ATTACK ON CHAWINDA: PHASE 1
NIGHT 18/19 SEPTEMBER 1965**



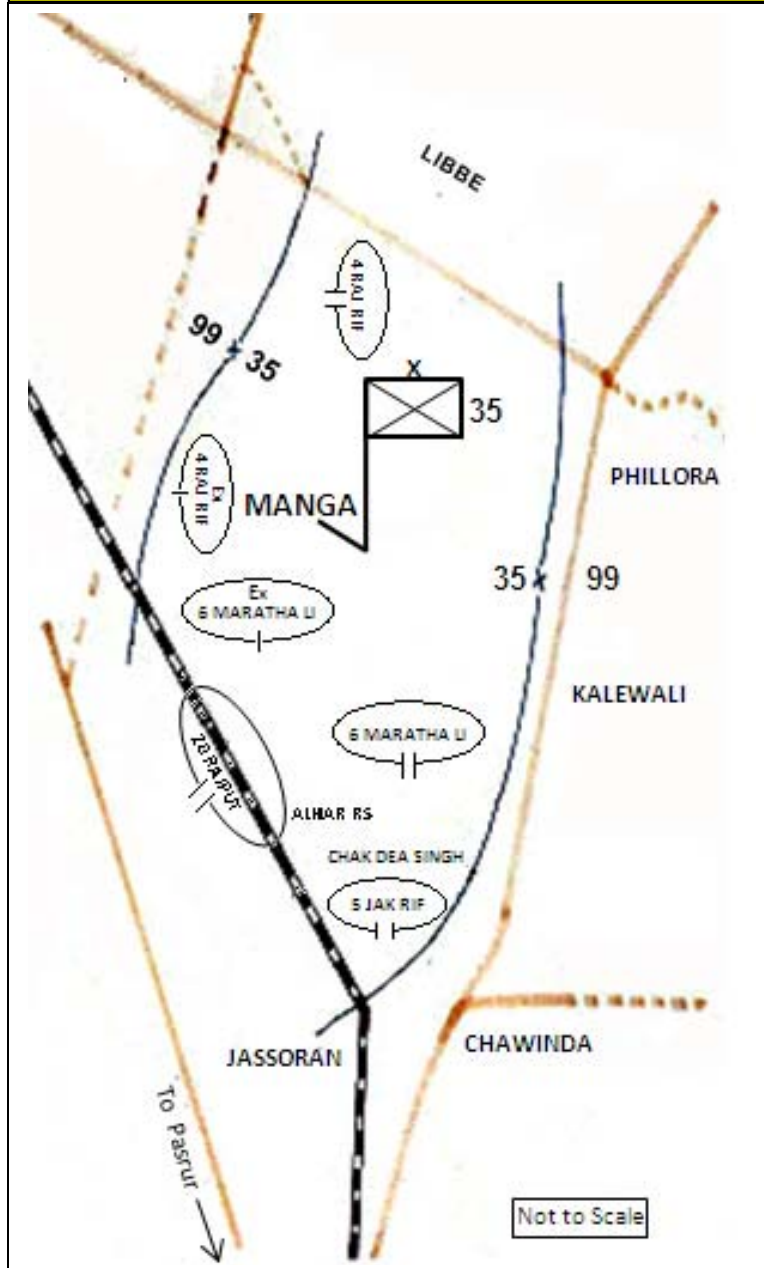
Appendix "F"

PAKISTANI ARMOUR, ARTILLERY AND MECHANISED INFANTRY FACING 6 MARATHA LIGHT INFANTRY AT CHAWINDA AND 20 RAPUT AT JASSORAN ON 19 SEPTEMBER 1965



APPENDIX "G"

**35 INFANTRY BRIGADE
DEFENDED SECTOR
20-23 SEPTEMBER 1965**



APPENDIX "H"

PAKISTANI FORMATION SIGNS CAPTURED FROM OFFICERS MESS AT GADGOR/PHILLORA



7 Inf Div



15 Inf Div



6 Armd Div

NOTES

1. According to the Army Commander Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, we arrived at Pathankot on 5th September 1965 and were placed under command 6 Mountain Division at Nokia, See Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, *War Despatches, Indo-Pak Conflict 1965* (Lancer International, New Delhi, 1991) p. 135.
2. The correct format is detached from (name of formation) at (place) at ---- hours on (date); and placed under command (name of formation) at (place) at --- hours on (date). Non compliance of this axiom of staff duties, led to fiasco after fiascos. There were innumerable occasions of grouping and regrouping, — frequent as they were, going awry and leading to absence of inter and intra communications, even dual and dubious control on location and mission of infantry brigade formations, units and direct support artillery.
3. BC Chakravorty, *History of War 1965* (History Division, Government of India) <<http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/Army/History/1965War/PDF/1965Chapter09.pdf>> p 253.
4. Agha Humayun Amin, Washington, “A Battle of Lost Opportunities,” <<http://www.defencejournal.com/2000/sept/grand-slam.htm>> Also see Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n.1, pp. 74-79. The latter has omitted Khilji Force.
5. SG Medic, of Pakistan “1965 War Operation Gibraltar: Role of SSG Para Commandos,” <<http://www.defencejournal.com/july98/1965war.htm>>
6. *The Men of Steel: War Despatches of Abrar Hussain*. (Army Publishing House, Rawalpindi, 2005) Para 34, p. 10. On 5 September Pakistan had shot a despatch Rider (DR) of 17 Horse and captured a set of documents which indicated presence of Our I Armoured Division in general Area Samba, but considered it as “ possibility of deliberate planting,” not to be ruled out.
7. See BC Chakravorty, n. 3, p. 196.
8. See Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n.1, Para 67, p. 144.
9. *The Men of Steel*, n. 6, Para 62, p-17 According to the enemy, Pak 25 Cavalry had attacked on a wide front with three squadrons abreast. This confused us about the nature and strength of counter attack.
10. Ibid. See Preface on Page xvii by Khalid Mohammad Arif.
11. Ibid. Para 61, p. 17.
12. Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n. 1, Para 55, p. 141 and Para 67, p. 144.
13. Ibid. Para 72, p.144

14. Ibid. Para 76, p.145
15. BC Chakravorti, n. 3, p. 20516. Later, it was recognised as that of Pak 22 Cavalry, which perhaps belonged to their 7 Division deployed at Chhamb and came under command 6 Armoured Division before the battle in Sialkot sector.
16. See photograph at Appendix “H” and analysis in Para “Intelligence” in Chapter 8.
17. Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n. 1, p. 148, and BC Chakravorti, n. 3, p. 209.
18. See Maj Gen Lachhman Singh Lehal, *Missed Opportunities: Indo-Pak War 1965*, (Natraj Publishers Dehradun) pp. 312-313.
19. *Men of Steel*, n.6, Annexure 9 and 10.
20. B C Chakravarti n.3, p. 214.
21. Ibid, p 213 and Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n.1, Para 104, p. 152.
22. See Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n.1, Para 106, p.153.
23. See I Armoured Brigade Operation Order No 3 reproduced as captured document in *The Men of Steel* n. 6, Annexure 9, p. 95.
24. Ibid, Para 135, p. 37. Also see map at Annexure 11 ibid.
25. Ibid, Para 135, pp, 37-38.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid, Para 131, p. 36.
29. Ibid³⁰, See BC Chakravorty, n. 3, p. 217.
31. Ibid.
32. *The Men of Steel*, n. 6. Para 131, p. 36.
33. BC Chakravorty, n. 3, p.216.
34. Ibid.

35. Ibid. Mark the word *misunderstanding* —a highly disparate and unbecoming expression of military situation.
36. Ibid. pp. 216-217,
37. *The Men of Steel*, n. 6, Para 183 p. 53.
38. That is what happened at Chobara on 8 September 1965, a battle which our history writers have uncharitably and ignobly ignored.
39. *The Men of steel*; n.6, Para 184, p. 53.
40. Ibid, Para 185, p. 52.
41. Ibid, Para 186, p. 52.
42. Ibid, Para 187. p.52.
43. See Maj Gen Lachhman Singh Lehal, n. 18, p.343.
- 44 *Men of Steel*, n. 6. Para 193, p. 53.
45. Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n. 1, Pare 124, pp. 157-158.
46. Ibid, Para 127, p. 159.
47. Ibid, Para 128, p. 159.
48. Ibid, Para 137, p. 160.
49. Ibid. Lessons Learnt, Para 14, p.195.
- 50 Ibid. Para 15, p.195.
51. Ibid. Para 16, pp. 195-196.
52. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. r
53. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999) Reproduced Website as given below: <<http://www.cryptome.org/cuw.htm>>.
54. See quotes of Gen George S Patton on the Web.
55. There is a Chapter called “Battle Winner: Tactical Signal Intelligence” in *Sky is the Limit: Signals in Operation Pawan*, which are the upshot of experiences in Op Nepal amongst many other operations in India and abroad. The views expressed herein are

extracted from that Chapter. See Yashwant Deva, *Sky is the Limit: Signals in Operation Pawan* (New Delhi, Operation Pawan Veterans, 2007} pp.184-186.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Air Chief Marshal P C Lal, at the USI, *Some Problems of Defence*, USI National Security Lecture 1977, pp. 74-75.

59. BC Chakravorty, n. 3, p. 332.

60. Ibid. p.24 quoting Leo Heiman, *Military Review*, Feb 1966.

61. Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, n. 6, Para 24, p. 190.

62. Ibid, Para 25, p. 190.

63. Ibid. Appendix "A" p. 164.

Profile of the Author

A scholar, writer and defence analyst of repute, Maj. Gen. Yashwant Deva, AVSM (Retd) is *psc* and *ndc* from Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, and MS and MPhil from Faculty of Science Madras University. He was a senior scholar with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) from 1989 to 1993. Currently, he is a Fellow and a member of the Governing Council of Institute of Communication Engineers and Information Technologists (ICEIT). He was President of the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers (IETE) for the years 2000-2002 and has been honoured with Distinguished Fellowship of the Institution. During his service career, he held various appointments in India and abroad. The latter included on the staff of International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Vietnam, Military Attaché in Afghanistan and Chief Signal Officer of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka. He is a veteran of 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan, Operation Savage in Sikkim, Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka and internal hostilities and armed conflicts in J&K, Nagaland and Manipur. He is a recipient of *Ati Vishisht Seva Medal* for engineering a wide-ranging and integrated network of highly responsive communications over diverse media during Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka spanning the mainland to the island and the operational areas of IPKF; providing tactical signal intelligence and electronic warfare support to the force; and for restoring war-ravaged telecommunication services in Jaffna Peninsular, as part of the civic action.



He regularly writes in the periodicals, service journals, and on the Web on technology and security related issues of topical interest. He is widely quoted in India and abroad as an authority on various facets of electro-technology, e-intelligence, cyber-security and infowar. His written works include, *Sky is the Limit: Signals in Operation Pawan* (2007), *Secure or Perish* (2001) based on a project titled *Emerging Global and National Information Infrastructures and their Security Implications: An Analysis* conducted under the USI of India at Prof D S Kothari DRDO Chair, *Dual Use Information Technology: An Indocentric Perspective* (1997) published by the IDSA an edited compilation *Multimedia'98: Shaping the Future* (1998), e-monographs, *Internet: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects* (2002), *ICT (Information Communication Technology) for All: Empowering People to Cross the Digital Divide* (2003), and Special Issue of Technical Review on *Information Security* (2002), published by the IETE. His works have been placed in the national libraries of the various countries including those of the US Congress and parliaments of Commonwealth.