

THE PUNJAB AND RAJASTHAN FRONTTHE BATTLE OF SHAKARGARHTopography

The Shakargarh Bulge is located between the Chenab and Ravi rivers. In the north this projection runs parallel to the Shivalik Range. The tip of this Bulge points towards Madhopur Headworks and the Pathankot military base on the farther side. The southern portion rests on the Ravi, across which lie the sensitive areas of Amritsar, Batala and Gurdaspur.

The terrain in the Bulge is generally flat and is criss-crossed with numerous nullahs generally running north to south. The notable ones are Aik, Degh, Basantar, Bein and Ujh. As in the plains of Chhamb-Jaurian, so in the Shakargarh Bulge Pakistan could easily exploit the strength of her armour. But while in Chhamb the terrain imposed a disadvantage on Indian armour, it could be used effectively in Shakargarh.

From Sialkot, Gujranwala and Lahore there stemmed a network of roads and rail tracks, the roads running west to east towards Shakargarh and traversing the important communications centres of Pasrur, Chawinda, Zafarwal, Dhamthal and Narowal.

Indian Deployment

The Indian planning team was headed by Maj Gen K.K. Singh, Director of Military Operations, and General Officer Commanding designate of 1 Corps, which was operationally responsible for the Shakargarh Bulge. The Corps was poised by the third week of October and had assigned the following defended sectors to its formations:- (1)

a) 36 Ind Div, under Maj Gen Balwant Singh Ahluwalia to cover the approaches in the general area of Thakurpur-Gurdaspur-Dinanagar-Sherpur, south of the Ravi river with Brigades deployed as follows:- (2)

- i) 18 Inf Bde, including 14 Horse, less a squadron - Thakurpur.
- ii) 72 Inf Bde - Malakpur - Sherpur (SC 7500)(3)
- iii) 115 Inf Bde, including Squadron 14 Horse - Dinanagar - Gurdaspur (SC 6370).

b) 39 Inf Div, under Maj Gen B.R. Prabhu, in the general area of Madhopur-Kathua-Parol-Ujh River-Dayala Chak, to cover the approaches to Madhopur. The dispositions of its brigades were as follows:- (4)

i) 33 Inf Bde in area Dayala Chak.

ii) 323 Inf Bde in area Padal.

iii) 87 Inf Bde in area Parol-Bamial-Madhapur.

c) 54 Inf Div, under Maj Gen W.A.G. Pinto, in the general area of Samba between the Bein River and the Degh Nadi(5). This Division was deployed thus:-

i) 74 Inf Bde - in area Raiyan - Mawa.

ii) 91 Inf Bde - in area Rajpura Londi - Bein based on Ujh Canal.

iii) 47 Inf Bde - area Gujwal on the main Pathankot Road.

d) Sector Ramgarh-Nandpur: The general area of Ramgarh-Nandpur-Samba between Aik Nala-Degh Nadi was held by about two brigades under an ad hoc Headquarters(6).

Pakistani Deployment

Pakistani 1 Corps was operationally responsible for the defence of the Shakargarh Bulge. Pakistan had planned to mount her main offensive in the Ganganagar-Suratgarh area, far to the South. The task assigned to 1 Corps was to get rid of the Indian enclaves on the Pakistani side of the Ravi in the general area of Narowal. It was then to feign offensive actions in order to draw the Indian reserve force into the Bulge and prevent it from extricating itself from there to meet the Pakistan offensive in the Ganganagar-Suratgarh area(7).

To implement this scheme Lt Gen Irshad Ahmad Khan had deployed Pakistan 15 Inf Div and 8 Inf Div (four brigades) supported by 8 Indep Armd Bde in a holding role for the defensive phase in the following manner:-

a) 15 Inf Div located a brigade each in the general areas of Chharprar - Gondal - Marala Headworks and Maharajke-Phillora with aim of defending Sialkot by covering its approaches between the Chenab and Degh Nadi. There was one brigade opposite Ramgarh and Nandpur between the Aik and the Degh Nadis.

b) 8 Inf Div held the Zafarwal - Dhamthal and Narowal fortress line with two brigade groups, and one brigade group was in depth in the general area of Qila Sobha Singh and Pasrur. The fourth brigade (14 Inf Bde) was kept in reserve.

c) The Bulge east of the Zafarwal and Narowal fortress line, including Shakargarh town, was to be defended by para military forces, supported by covering troops comprising 20 Lancers with elements of reconnaissance and support battalion operating in the area(8).

For the offensive, the Pakistani strike force consisted of 6 Armd Div and 17 Inf Div. It was known to be located somewhere west of Pasrur in the general area of Daska-Pasrur so that it could be launched in any direction required(9).

Pakistan seems to have calculated that India would put in the main attack in the salient from Samba area with subsidiary attacks from Shakargarh and Dera Baba Nanak area. Considering their resources, the Pakistanis also seem to have predisposed themselves to yielding area up to the east bank of the Bein river though they would hold the advancing Indian troops as long as possible. But they seem to have been determined to hold ground on the broad fronts between the Degh Nadi and Basantar river. With this end in view, they had prepared defences and laid three extensive minefields in the area bounded by these two rivers in the west and the Bein river in the east. These lateral minefields ran east to west parallel to the international border. The first of these, which ran along the Nainakot-Ikhlaspur-Masrur-Chak Amru line was about 550 metres in depth, the second along the banks of the Bein river about 730 metres, and the third along the Degh Nadi and just north of the Shakargarh-Zafarwal lateral about 1000 metres. Pakistan also assessed that the Indian axis of advance might be the track Sukhowal-Chak Amru-Chakra-Dustri, and so held it strongly and in depth(10).

The Indian Offensive for Shakargarh

The expected Pakistani pre-emptive attack did not come off in this area. It was, therefore, decided to mount the offensive at dusk on 5 Dec. There was, however, obsessive fear of a Pakistani riposte in the direction of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. This tied up substantial troops in defensive tasks.

For the advance into the Shakargarh Bulge, Lt Gen K.K. Singh, MVC, GOC 1 Corps, laid down certain operational imperatives. The various thrusts were to

be geared that they could inter-work in terms of time and space, and their speed of advance was to synchronise. Flank protection was to be ensured and firm bases retained in the rear until new pivots could be set ahead. This excessive caution inevitably had the effect of slowing down the progress of operations(11).

The offensive started off at 1830 hrs on 5 Dec with an advance on the broad front between the Degh Nadi and Basantar river as follows:- (12)

a) 54 Inf Div supported by 16 Armd Bde (less one armoured regiment) from the general area Mawa - Galar.

b) 39 Inf Div and 72 Inf Bde (four battalions) of 36 Inf Div supported by 2 Armd Bde (less one armoured regiment) from the general area Londi - Chak Dolna - Mangu Chak.

c) The remainder of the Corps Sector was to remain on the defensive as follows:-

i) The area of Ramgarh-Bajpur-Samba was organised as X-ray Sector, and was held by 323 Inf Bde of 39 Inf Div and 168 Inf Bde of 26 Inf Div.

ii) 87 Inf Bde of 39 Inf Div held a firm base in the area Bamial-Narot-Parol.

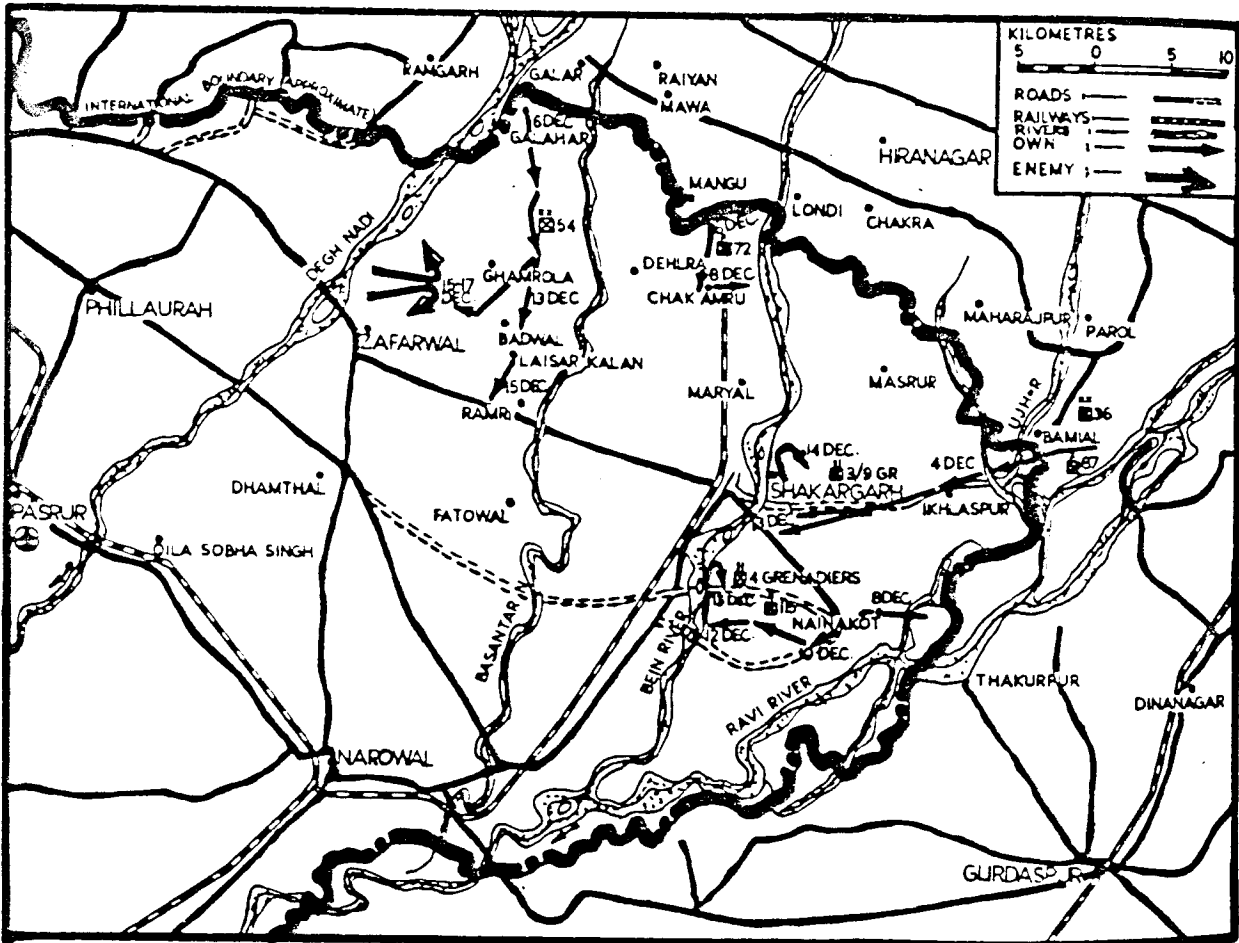
iii) 36 Inf Div (two brigades) and one armoured regiment defended the general area Thakurpur ferry.

39 Inf Div Operations

39 Inf Div was ordered on 4 Dec to capture Shakargarh by advancing along the axis Khaur Post (NX 327141) - Khaira (NX 3311) - Harar Khurd (NX 3209) - Gaddo Pindi (NX 3006) - Shakargarh with 72 Inf Bde Gp and 2 Indep Armd Bde less one regiment. Concurrently 54 Inf Div was to mount an offensive across the International Border from the general area Mawa (NX 3122) - Galar (NX 2423). The boundary between 39 and 54 Inf Divs was the line Mawa (NX 3122) - Dehla (NX 2810) - Karir Nadi.

Originally, operations in the Londi Sector were to be conducted by 36 Inf Div with two infantry brigades - 72 and 115 - and 2 Indep Armd Bde less one regiment. Since, however, it was apprehended that the enemy might break out towards the Thakurpur Gurdaspur Sector, the plan was modified, and 36 Inf Div was made responsible for defending this Sector.

THE SHAKARGARH SECTOR



with 18 Inf Bde, 115 Inf Bde and one regiment of armour ex-2 Indep Armd Bde. The operations in the Londi Sector were entrusted to 39 Inf Div and it was allotted 72 Inf Bde ex-36 Inf Div, 323 Inf Bde and 2 Indep Armd Bde less a regiment, for the task. But 323 Bde was not released, as a large-scale threat was expected in the Ramgarh Sector. And as 33 Inf Bde Gp had been ordered on 25 Nov 1971 to move to Punch, as a substantial enemy build up was reported against that Sector, (13) offensive potential of 39 Inf Div was weakened, more as no reserve was left in the hands of its Commander, Maj Gen Prabhu.

The 72 Inf Bde crossed the International Border on the evening of 5 Dec and captured some border observation posts. The 3 Sikh Lt Inf, supported by A Squadron 7 Cavalry, crossed the border at 2200 hrs and advanced towards Harar Khurd. But the advance soon ran into trouble. On 7 Dec, elements of 7 Cavalry hit a minefield in area Thakurpur - Parni (NX 3011). This, coupled with heavy artillery fire and air attacks, frustrated the attempts of 15 Grenadiers and 1 Horse and 1 Dogra to make headway(14). It was then decided to switch this force and try to break through in the area Harar Khurd from the north.

1 Dogra and A Squadron 1 Horse attacked Harar Khurd (NX 3209) at 0150 hrs on 8 Dec. But when the troops were within 180 metres of the objective, the Pakistanis brought down aimed artillery and tank fire(15). The attack failed with heavy casualties to the Dogras - 24 Killed and 65 wounded. In the words of K.K. Singh, it was a "singularly ill-conceived action, sadly wanting in recce, coordination and fire planning"(16).

In contrast, operations by some other battalions, launched into the assault after adequate patrolling and planning, were successful(17). In the afternoon of 8 Dec, 22 Punjab attacked and captured Chak Amru, 3 Sikh LI evicted the enemy from Parni, and 15 Grenadiers secured Khaira (MX 3311)(18).

But at Harar Kalan-Munan Complex the same dismal story of abortive attempts was repeated. On 8 Dec, 1 Horse Gp was ordered to turn the enemy position at Harar Kalan-Harar Khurd from the east. The going proved difficult. The Indian troops encountered here not only the second minefield west of Shahbazpur (NX 3409), which they had failed to detect earlier, but also the strong points of Dehla and Chakra. The trawls breached the minefield under cover of artillery fire. Two tanks were moved across but a third blew its track while trying to cross the lane. As it was getting dark, and a threat from Pakistani tank hunting

parties was feared, the tanks were abandoned and the trawls ordered to pull out, but these, too, had to be left behind due to failing light(19). The fundamental symmetry in perception (or more aptly misconception) is sharply brought out by the Pakistani version. Brig Nisar Ahmed Khan SJ (Retd) writes, "Unfortunately the sight of enemy trawls advancing through the minefield unnerved the infantry deployed in area Shahbazpur...Soon the squadron began pulling out"(20). The 72 Inf Bde was now to launch an infantry attack on the Harar Kalan-Munan Complex during the night 8/9 Dec. But since the Brigade could not complete recce and fire planning, the attack was postponed to 10/11 Dec. The patrolling proved fruitful; Harar Khurd was found unoccupied and was captured by 15 Grenadiers at 0500 hrs on 10 Dec(21). The Brigade attacked Harar Kalan and Munan at 2100 hrs on 10 Dec. Harar Kalan was captured by 1 Mahar by 2230 hrs at the cost of about 40 killed/wounded. That Harar Kalan was bitterly contested is borne out by the fact that the only Nishan-e-Haider the highest decoration for bravery was won by Sowar Mohammad Hussain on 10 Dec. Meanwhile, the Pakistanis abandoned Munan and 3 Sikh LI secured it without a fight by 0400 hrs on 11 Dec(22). A Company of 22 Punjab captured Shahbazpur at 0320 hrs. The Mahars, however, could not exploit their success, and further advance was halted when another minefield was encountered to the south of Harar Kalan. Meanwhile, 6 Madras which was under the direct command of 39 Inf Div, had occupied village Thakurpur (NX 4907) on 10 Dec, and two days later, supported by 90 Indep Recce Squad, it captured Masrur, which was found strongly fortified.

The Corps Commander decided to attack Shakargarh from yet another direction. It was discovered that the area Ikhlaspur was lightly held by the enemy. The 87 Inf Bde Gp was ordered to secure area Road Junction (SC 4595). The 14 Rajputana Rifles of this Brigade advanced and captured Garota (SC 5498) and Ikhlaspur early in the morning of 11 Dec, and by 1100 hrs the Battalion was at Road Junction (SC 4595)(23). On 12 Dec, the Brigade was placed under command 36 Inf Div for operations against Shakargarh(24).

Much time had, however, been lost and the investing of Shakargarh delayed. The failure of 1 Horse and 1 Dogra to capture Harar Kalan on night 7/8 Dec when they suffered heavy casualties, and the unsuccessful attempt made by 2 Indep Armd Bde to breach the enemy's second minefield around Harar Kalan-Munan Complex, on 8 Dec, had had a demoralising affect on the troops of these units. In view of the Corps Commander, Lt Gen K.K. Singh, if Commander 2 Indep Armd Bde had established a small infantry

bridgehead across the minefield, much of the time and casualties would have been saved. Considering all these factors, the Corps Commander had formed the opinion that the "standard of the stage management for the battle so far displayed was uninspiring and weak." Now the advance of Mahars had also come to a halt. He did not think that at this rate 39 Inf Div would be able to invest Shakargarh in the immediate future, even though they had not far to go. He, therefore, decided to redeploy his forces. On 12 Dec, HQ 39 Inf Div moved to the Ramgarh Sector and took over the operational responsibility of that Sector.

54 Inf Div Operations

The 54 Inf Div (Bison Div) occupied a divisional defended sector in area Samba (NX 3032). The Division did well west of the Karir Nadi. It was supported by 16 Indep Armd Bde, (25) 41 Indep Arty Bde (26) and 9 Engineer Regt (27).

The Division's plan envisaged operations against Zafarwal (NX 0904) - Rajian (NX 0700) - Dhamthal (SC 0895) from area Galar (NX 2432) establishing a bridgehead across the Basantar river and capturing the Supwal Ditch. The Division had three brigades under Command: (28) 47 Inf Bde with 16 Madras, 3 Grenadiers and 16 Dogra; 91 Inf Bde with 3 Garh Rif and 3/1 GR; and 74 Inf Bde with 8 Grenadiers, 6 Kumaon and 9 Marathas (29).

Assault troops of 74 and 91 Inf Bdes crossed the border at 2000 hrs on 5 Dec 1971 and captured some forward posts (30). The 74 Inf Bde had to encounter stiff resistance before it captured Chamana Khurd. The same day 91 Inf Bde captured Mukhwal, Dhandhar and Chak Bhuru, where the Pakistanis had well-developed defences but did not offer determined resistance (31). The 74 Infantry Brigade eliminated Galahar Tanda and Chak Jangu (NX 2120) by 0230 hrs on 6 Dec. At this juncture 47 Inf Bde was launched across the international border, supported by 4 Horse. This Brigade captured Chamana Kalan (NX 2520) without opposition. But its further advance was stoutly opposed. It then probed forward to the flanks of the Thakurdwara - Nagwal minefield on 6 Dec and trawled it under cover of a dust haze, and extended the bridgehead up to north of Bari. The 4 Horse bypassed west and south-west and captured Bari and Darman on 7 Dec (32). The 16 Madras captured Dodwan Kalan (NX 2611) on the night of 7/8 Dec, while 18 Raj Rif took possession of Ghamrola (NX 1911) on 8 Dec (33). However, as both the flanks of the Division were exposed, it was decided not to advance any further until the east flank was secured (34).

As it was appreciated that Chakra position, which lay south of the second minefield, was the pivot on which enemy defences east of Karir Nadi were based, it was considered a vital tactical necessity to reduce Chakra and Dehlra. The Division therefore deviated from its plan of operations and ordered 74 Inf Bde to capture these positions and subsequently exploit south and east(35).

Capture of Chakra and Dehlra

The flanks of both 39 and 54 Inf Divs were seriously threatened by two Pak positions - Chakra and Dehlra. Chakra was a well-developed strong point, held by a squadron of Patton tanks and about a company of infantry with MMGs in bunkers and RCLs in dug-in positions(36). It had a deep minefield with a nullah in between, covering it on three sides, which served as a partial anti-tank obstacle. By virtue of this intrinsic natural strength, Chakra dominated the surrounding area. Dehlra occupied a vitally important position as various tracks converged on to it. It derived its strength from the fortified position around the Chakra village.

As already stated, 39 Inf Div had failed to reach the second minefield west of Harar Khurd. In order to facilitate progress by this Division and enable it to come in line with the advance of 54 Inf Div, the latter was ordered to capture Dehlra. But as it was appreciated that the Chakra position, which lay south of the second minefield, was the axis of enemy defences east of Karir, orders were issued first for the capture of Chakra from the west or north-west across the Karir. This was to be followed by the capture of Dehlra and subsequent exploitation to south and east. The task was to be carried out by 74 Inf Bde. H hour for the attack was fixed for 2100 hrs on 10 Dec. 8 Grenadiers and 4 Horse distinguished themselves in this action.

The Grenadiers mounted a well-planned attack from the rear. The defenders offered stout resistance and there was hand-to-hand fighting for some time, but Chakra was captured by 0100 hrs on 11 Dec. In the meantime, the trawlers started breaching the minefield. But as the leading trawl tank and the one behind it were damaged half-way across the minefield, the rest of the minefield was breached by the engineers by hand, and a bridgehead was established by 0300 hrs on 11 Dec. The enemy made two abortive counter-attacks with his armoured squadron and infantry company. The battle was strongly contested(37). The Division deserved credit for stage

managing the battle well and breaching the minefield(38). The loss of Chakra so upset the Pak commander and threw him off-balance, that 6 Kumaon were able to capture Dehlra without opposition in a matter of 2½ hours - by 0500 hrs on 11 Dec(39). The 8 Grenadiers further exploited southward and captured some more posts, thereby turning partially the next mine and obstacle belt extending from the Supwal Ditch in the west to Laisar Kalan in the east and unhinging the defences east of Karir Nadi. The capture of these places secured the flanks of 39 and 54 Inf Div and sealed off the Pak infiltration route astride Dehlra - Jhangi (NX 3214) - Behr (NX 2713).

Crossing of the Second Minefield

While 74 Inf Bde was engaged in the capture of Chakra and Dehlra, 91 Inf Bde prepared for crossing the second minefield located north of Lagwal - Hamral - Lohara - Barkhaniyan - Jatwal Maihla (NX 2609) - Chakra(40). Commencing the assault on 13 Dec, it made considerable advance towards the south till 15 Dec, capturing Lohara, Laisar Kalan, Mehlwan and Lagwal. But it came across another minefield covering Chakra and Badwal(41). The Division now decided to establish a bridgehead south-west of Basantar Nadi.

36 Infantry Division Operations

The 36 Inf Div(42) held the defended sector in area Thakurpur-Gurdaspur with 18 Inf Bde Gp. With some tanks and infantry this Brigade did a good job in crossing the Ravi river in the Lasian enclave and establishing a bridgehead across the river to a depth of some 1800 to 2750 metres. The 115 Inf Bde and 14 Horse used the Bridgehead to advantage for breaking out towards Nurkot-Shakargarh at 2200 hrs on 8 Dec(43).

The Pakistanis had prepared strong delaying positions, augmented by minefields, at Nainakot, Tanda (SC 4389) - Lallu Chak and Malakpur(44). In the territory east of the Bein river, their policy was to play for time and retard the advance of the Indian troops for as long as possible, and in the process inflict maximum attrition. They achieved this objective through the border observation posts which poured down heavy automatic and artillery fire before withdrawing. The defenders had also established strong platoons on the bunds and villages, and made maximum tactical use of such built-up areas. To boost fire power, these posts had elements of recce and support battalion, which were so deployed as to present a large frontage. MMG and RCL teams at these posts, which were sited in the flanks, augmented fire

power and opened up on Indian advancing troops. The Pak Commander used his artillery boldly and accurately, and also used roving positions to prevent detection of the main gun positions. He withstood two frontal attacks of the Indian troops and did succeed in causing considerable delay. He was also swift in launching counter-attacks to retrieve lost ground.

The 115 Inf Bde secured a bridgehead across the border by capturing Kotli Sainian (SC 5189) - Bakarwal (SC 5190) on 9 Dec(45). It then made an outflanking move and drove the defenders out of Nainkot - a tactically important village - and captured it at 1330 hrs on 10 Dec. The 14 Horse also made a deep outflanking manoeuvre from the south, trapped the Pak armoured squadron and destroyed 7 Patton tanks, and also forced the Pakistanis to withdraw from Lallu Chak and Malakpur (SC 4089) positions which were further in depth(46).

The 87 Infantry Brigade, which had advanced along Ikhlaspur-Shakargarh, was replaced under command of 36 Inf Div on 12 Dec. Helped by the success of the operations of 115 Inf Bde, this Brigade advanced to Badwal (SC 4195) on the eastern flank of the Bein river and secured it by 0300 hrs on 13 Dec(47). On the night of 13/14 Dec, it captured Bhatti and Shahpur Chinjora on the east bank of the Bein.

By now the Division had secured the entire east bank of the Bein river with tanks and cleared the area behind with infantry. A conflict in the assessment of the enemy dispositions across the Bein between the GOC and Commander 115 Inf Bde led to a set back(48). The GOC appreciated that Shakargarh had been vacated by the enemy, and so an assault could be launched to capture it. The Commander 115 Inf Bde, however, disagreed and thought that Shakargarh had deliberate defences and minefields and also tanks and missiles(49). In the meantime, Maj S.S. Choudhary, Commander B Company 4 Grenadiers, assaulted and captured Dinapur Khurd across the Bein immediately south of Shakargarh at 0400 hrs on 14 Dec(50). When the CO 4 Grenadiers told the Commander 115 Inf Bde that the engineers had checked for mines and found none, the whole Battalion was put into the assault(51). The CO 4 Grenadiers was proved wrong. The leading tank of A Squadron 14 Horse, hit a mine and was immobilised when it was attempting to get across the Bein. The B Company in area Dinapur Khurd was encircled by the enemy, and Major Choudhary, 3 JCOs and 75 ORs were reported missing. The attack had to be called off(52).

The Pak Commander was now seized with the need

of defending the west bank of the Bein river and therefore rushed troops from Narowal (SC 0874) and other sectors to build up the area Nurkot-Shakargarh, which was already well prepared with deep minefields covering all likely approaches.

Maj Gen Ahluwalia planned an attack on Shakargarh by 115 and 87 Inf Bdes for the night of 14/15 Dec. The 4 Grenadiers of 115 Bde launched the attack. From what followed it is clear that it was a hasty and not well prepared operation and the Division was thrown off balance(53). Recce was not complete and there was hardly any information about the enemy. His shelling caught one of the companies in the open and caused some casualties, making the sub-units scatter. 4 Grenadiers got demoralised and there was confusion. It was hardly prudent to use this battalion in this operation when it had suffered a set back only the previous night. The attack by 87 Inf Bde also fizzled out. The 3/9 GR mounted a spirited attack and secured part of its objective, namely, Chatrana. But the tanks got bogged down in the Bein and the Gorkhas did not get tank support. The enemy got wise to the move and inflicted heavy casualties on the Battalion, taking a number of its men prisoner. Thus, this attack too failed(54).

At this stage, it was decided to lift 18 Inf Bde from Thakurpur area and, in conjunction with 115 Inf Bde, launch another attack on the night 17/18 Dec(55). The cease fire on 17 Dec, however, precluded the attempt.

Thus the Division could neither capture Shakargarh nor Nurkot, but suffered the following casualties during the operations:-

(a) Killed	- 94
(b) Wounded	- 307
(c) Missing	- 173

(taken PsOW)

The failure was due partly to the stage management of the battle by Maj Gen Ahluwalia and partly to the fact that he was not provided full resources(56). For instance, it conducted most of its operations only with 14 Horse less a squadron and 115 Inf Bde. The 87 Inf Bde was replaced under its command only on 12 Dec. The 2 Indep Armd Bde was deployed from 39 Inf Div Sector into 36 Inf Div Sector on the night 11/12 Dec. It could close in with 1 Horse and 1 Dogra only by night 13/14 Dec. During that night 1 Horse changed command thrice between 115 Inf Bde and 2 Indep Armd Bde.

The Battle of Basantar River

The task allotted to 54 Inf Div was to destroy the Pak 8 Indep Armd Bde and capture Zafarwal(57). It had already captured Lohara - Laisar Kalan - Mehlwan - Lagwal and decided to establish a bridgehead south-west of Basantar Nadi. The 47 Inf Bde was ordered to establish the bridgehead, which was to include Barapind - Sikandarpur - Lalial and south-west shoulder of the Supwal Ditch. The 74 Inf Bde was ordered to capture the remaining position of the Supwal Ditch(58). The Pak troops had predictably concentrated the bulk of their armour west of the Basantar river in the area of Supwal Ditch and Zafarwal. This battle fought from 15 to 17 December turned out to be most significant and decisive, as it was not only eminently well fought, but was also marked by successive counter-attacks by the Pak troops to eliminate the bridgehead 54 Inf Div established across the Basantar River(59).

The terrain was devoid of roads and abounded in streams. The defenders had sited obstacle belts in considerable depth, and to boot, had covered them by infantry, RCLs and tanks(60). Medium machine gun and infantry "Nests" were positioned in between the minefields. The positions were fortified with bunkers, connected by a network of communication trenches and alternate positions. Gaps in platoon localities and flanks were covered by elements of Reconnaissance and Support Battalion.

The Corps Commander, Lt Gen K.K. Singh, later lauded Maj Gen WAG Pinto, GOC 54 Inf Div for his "Exceptional and skilful leadership and praiseworthy stage management of the battle throughout the ops." The mine barriers encountered were formidable, approximately 1460 metres deep. The engineers breached them with considerable skill and resourcefulness. They also forged operational tracks in this dusty terrain and surfaced the roadways with elephant grass and 'Chari'. Other arms too were well integrated. The 54 Arty Bde and 41 Indep Arty Bde shot accurately and were primarily responsible for breaking Pak infantry assaults. Excellent tank gunnery and manoeuvre by armoured squadrons wore down repeated Pak assaults made with superior forces. The Pak formations - 24 Inf Bde, 124 Inf Bde and 8 Armd Bde - suffered crippling losses in personnel and tanks(61) at the hands of 16 Madras, 3 Grenadiers, 6 Madras, 17 Horse and 4 Horse, and they all distinguished themselves in this fiercely contested battle.

The 54 Inf Div chose the area Sarajchak - Lalial

RF - Jarpal - Lohal for bursting through the Basantar River, while the enemy had expected it around Badwal(62).

In phase I of the task assigned to 47 Inf Bde, 16 Madras started the attack on Lalial and Sarajchak at 1930 hrs on 15 Dec(63). The positions were captured after a violent hand-to-hand struggle. The depth positions were also captured by 2330 hrs at the cost of the heavy casualties on both sides.

The Pak Commander was not reconciled to the loss of these positions and was bent upon eliminating the bridgehead. The bulk of his 8 Indep Armd Bde and 124 Inf Bde made a series of fierce counter-attacks with armour and infantry, preceded by heavy artillery shelling. The battalion had to fight one long action continuously for three nights and two days, repelling counter-attack after counter-attack. Casualties piled up on both sides in this grimly fought battle. Nevertheless, the Madrasis held on to the hard-won ground.

In Phase II, 3 Grenadiers of 74 Inf Bde were to capture Jarpal and Lohal(64). When it became apparent that 16 Madras were involved in a bitter fight with the enemy, 3 Grenadiers were launched at 2230 hrs on 15 Dec. This move had the effect of dividing the enemy's attention who perceived a threat developing towards Zafarwal. In a fierce battle at Jarpal, most of the Pak bunkers were cleared in hand-to-hand fighting. The Battalion mopped up the remnants still hiding in bunkers and sugarcane fields in Lohal and captured its objectives by the dawn of 16 Dec. The Pakistanis counter-attacked with armour and infantry five times during the day of 16 Dec. The Grenadiers, supported by 17 Horse, and with effective use of artillery and mortars, beat off the attacks with heavy losses to the attackers in tanks and men. In one of the tank battles, 2/Lt Arun Khetrapal of 17 Horse (Poona) destroyed five Pak tanks before making the supreme sacrifice, for which he was posthumously decorated with the country's highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra. The Pakistanis were now desperate and put in a most determined effort at 0430 hrs on 17 Dec to dislodge the Grenadiers, charging them in wave after wave. The Grenadiers fought gallantly and beat back all the attacks. Their last counter-attack was made at Jarpal, where Maj Hoshiar Singh, Company Commander, C Company, won the coveted Param Vir Chakra. The enemy was now completely demoralised and called it a day at dusk on 17 Dec, after losing 87 men, among whom was the Commanding Officer Lt Col Mohammad Akram Raja(65). The scale and

severity of the debacle have been brought out by Brig Jahangir Karamat of the Pak Army in the following words. "One cannot, however, help comparing this attack to the controversial change of the Light Brigade.... The armoured brigade lost almost fifty tanks and failed to restore the defences on the Basantar Nullah. The enemy was not destroyed, in fact his losses were less than one third of the armoured brigade's losses"(66).

The Indian troops thus succeeded in destroying a major portion of the enemy's 8 Indep Armd Bde and 24 and 124 Inf Bdes and turned the defences at Supwal Ditch and posed a threat to Zafarwal. Had the war gone on for some more days, Zafarwal would have been almost certainly taken followed by the capture of Shakargarh. However, Pakistan's strongly held fortress chain of Zafarwal-Dhamthal-Narowal remained largely intact, and behind it the 6 Armd Div was still unbeaten.

The Indian chances of full success were perhaps vitiated when it was decided to move 36 Inf Div around to the left flank for a thrust through the Thakurpur ferry. Along with the Division had to be switched away the accompanying armour also, causing disorganisation of movement and unnecessary delay. If all the three divisions had been launched on parallel axes from the Samba area southwards, they would have afforded mutual support and covered one another's flanks. The advance would have been with the grain of the land and parallel to the general direction of the river courses. Besides, when the Indian troops crossed the minefields the Pakistan 6 Armd Div had to be taken into account. But it was not known where it was located, as groves of mango trees abounded in the area and camouflaged armour. The Indian air force also could not be very helpful as all its effort was directed towards Chhamb. These, and above all the overcautious approach to the offensive, were some of the reasons why the Indian forces could not achieve greater success in the Shakargarh Bulge(67).

THE PUNJAB SECTOR

The Topography and Deployment

Having dealt with the operations in the Partapur, Kargil, Jammu and Kashmir and Shakargarh Sectors, we now come to the area which, for some part, was the joint responsibility of 1 and 11 Corps, and for the remaining major part, the responsibility of 11 Corps, under the overall command of Lt Gen K.P. Candeth, GOC-in-C Western Command. The 1 Corps was to defend mainly the approaches to the Pathankot base.

The remaining axes were the responsibility of 11 Corps, which was assigned the task of defending the Punjab and Haryana and Ganganagar district of Rajasthan. Its area of responsibility extended approximately 640 km along the international border. The Corps had its main HQ at Amritsar from where it controlled the northern half of this sector. The skeleton advance HQ at Kot Kapura looked after the area south of the Satluj. Lt Gen N.C. Rawley, PVSM, was the GOC-in-C, 11 Corps.

The 11 Corps consisted of three Divisions and an independent Sector. The Corps had assigned the following defended sectors to its formations:-

(a) 15 Inf Div under Maj Gen B.M. Bhattacharjea, to defend Amritsar Sector including the prominent towns of Amritsar, Dera Baba Nanak and Ajnala, with Brigades deployed as follows:-

- i) 86 Inf Bde in area Dera Baba Nanak
- ii) 58 Inf Bde in area Ajnala
- iii) 96 Inf Bde in area Fatehpur-Burj
- iv) 54 Inf Bde in area Atari-Ranian
- v) 38 Inf Bde in area Neshta-Rajatal

(b) 7 Inf Div under Maj Gen Freemantle to defend all territory south of Bhuchar Headworks including Firozpur. The disposition of its Brigades was as follows:-

- i) 65 Inf Bde in area Khalra
- ii) 48 Inf Bde in Khemkaran axis
- iii) 35 Inf Bde in Firozpur sector (Also under 14 Div from 5 Dec)

(c) 14 Inf Div under Maj Gen Onkar Singh Kalkat (who took command of the Division when Maj Gen H. Bakshi got injured on 7 Dec) to defend the area between Firozpur and Fazilka. The Brigades were deployed as under:-

- i) 116 Inf Bde in area Jalalabad
- ii) 35 Inf Bde (from 5 Dec) in the Mamdot-Firozpur sector
- iii) 29 Inf Bde in Firozpur sub sector.

(d) HQ 'F' Sector under Maj Gen Ram Singh to defend areas Fazilka, Abohar and Ganganagar with its Brigades disposition as under:-

- i) 67 Indep Inf Bde Gp in area Fazilka
- ii) 51 Indep Para Bde at Ganganagar
- iii) 163 Inf Bde (two Bns) at Suratgarh.

Facing India's 11 Corps, Pakistan had deployed its 4 Corps commanded by Lt Gen Bahadur Sher, which was operationally responsible for the area extending from Maqbool Pura, about 37 km northwest of Lahore, to a point on the border southeast of Bahawalpur.

The area opposite 15 Inf Div was held by Pakistan's 10 Inf Div under Maj Gen S.A.Z. Naqvi, with 88 Inf Bde, 114 Inf Bde and 103 Inf Bde, broadly deployed along the forward line parallel to the international border, and 22 Inf Bde deployed in depth in area Harbanspura as a reserve.

Opposite India's 7 Inf Div Pakistan had deployed its 11 Inf Div under Maj Gen Abdul Majid, with one brigade in area Lahore-Khalra-Bhikiwind, the second brigade in the general area Khemkaran and the third in Kasur area in and around Hussainiwala(68). Further down, south of Ferozpur opposite Foxtrot Sector, Pakistan had deployed 105 Bde Gp covering Sulaimanke area and 25 Inf Bde covering area upto Bahawalnagar(69).

Pakistan had concentrated its strike force, 2 Corps, consisting of 1 Armd Div and 33 Inf Div in the general area of Montgomery-Okara-Bahawalpur, which posed a potential threat to Ganganagar-Suratgarh-Bhatinda-Kot Kapura area.

In the northern Punjab Sector, the Indo-Pak border ran from Pathankot, through Gurdaspur towards the Hussainiwala headworks. In this Sector, the strategic bulge between the international border and the Beas and Satluj rivers was of military, political and economic importance. Consisting of the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur, this area might be called the Amritsar Sector. It was a major granary of India. In the war plans of both India and Pakistan, this region figured prominently, as the Pathankot base and its L of C provided logistic support to the whole of the Jammu and Kashmir theatre including Ladakh. India could make deep air raids into the territory from the air force base at Pathankot and the airfield at Amritsar. Amritsar was also the centre of communications and connected by various rail and road routes to Pakistan. In this region, the important highways were: the Grand Trunk Road, the Lahore-Amritsar road, the Kasur-Khemkaran-Amritsar road in the south; and the Quila Sobha Singh-Ajnala Road across the Gil Ferry and the Narowal-Dera Baba Nanak Road over the Ravi in the north. The terrain was level and dry most of the year and thereafter, ideal for armour manoeuvre.

In this area lay the small town of Dera Baba Nanak. Near it were two strategically important enclaves - the Indian enclave north of Ravi called Kasowal, and the Pakistani enclave south of Ravi called Jassar or Dera Baba Nanak. The latter included the Ravi rail-road bridge connecting the Indian communications in the Punjab with those of Pakistan in the Pasrur-Narowal area. The Dera Baba Nanak bridge gave Pakistan the potential of outflanking the defences of Amritsar and Pathankot base.

South of Satluj was the Ferozpur Sector, which included the headworks across the River Satluj at Hussainiwala. South and West of Ferozpur, the Indian defences were based on the Eastern and Gang Canals and the Ferozpur Feeder. The Indian enclave of Hussainiwala was situated west of the Satluj river along the Ferozpur-Lahore highway. The terrain was low lying and flooded by the Satluj during the monsoon. The area was interlaced with numerous criss-crossing flood-cum-check bunds. The more prominent amongst them were the Finger, Kunde Bund, Samadhi Bund, Guide Bund and Perimeter. The road Kasur-Ferozpur passed over the Hussainiwala Headworks, and being the only international land route open then between India and Pakistan, it had a joint Indo-Pak Checkpost (JCP). The Hussainiwala enclave was important for defending the headworks and the rail-road bridge. From this bridgehead across the Satluj, India could develop a thrust towards Kasur and Lahore. The Indian defence in this Sector was to be based on the main obstacle belt made up of Mari Megha and Valtoha Drains north of River Satluj, and the Eastern and Bikaner Canals south of the River Satluj.

About 24 km south-west of Ferozpur was the Pakistani salient of Mamdot across the river Satluj. This bulge had an area of 56 sq km and was full of 'Sarkanda' which provided excellent natural cover to the Pakistanis but posed navigational problems to the Indian troops. The area was generally tankable, except at a few creeks, and posed a threat to the Indian defences in the Ferozpur Sector.

In the Foxtrot Sector of 11 Corps, Fazilka was a prominent border town. It was a vital communication centre. Road and rail arteries ran from it to Ferozpur, Malout and Abohar. The Pakistani headworks of Sulaimanke were in close proximity to the Indian border - 1.5 km or so. This made the area vulnerable from the point of view of Pakistan, and she naturally wished to gain some cushion of depth inside Indian territory as early as possible after the start of the hostilities. For the Indian military planners, Fazilka was particularly important as the Pakistan

strike force, 2 Corps, was positioned in the general area of Montgomery - Okara - Bahawalpur. This force consisted of 1 Armd Div and 33 Inf Div. Pakistan could employ this force for ingress across the Satluj between the Hussainiwala and Sulaimanke headworks and thence into the sensitive areas of Faridkot - Bhatinda or in the north-east in the general areas of Mamdot and Jalalabad. Pakistan could also develop a thrust along the open southern flank of Fazilka in the Ganganagar - Sarupsar area(70).

In the Northern Sector of the area of responsibility of 11 Corps, the defences were based on brigade defended sectors in the general area of Dera Baba Nanak and Ajnala, south of river Ravi. Between the rivers Ravi and Satluj, covering troops were positioned in the Khalra - Khemkaran areas. The Bikaner Gang Canal was considered the limit of permissible enemy penetration between Fazilka and Ferozpur. In the Southern Sector where a major thrust by Pak infantry and armour was considered most likely, it was decided to hold Fazilka, Abohar and Ganganagar. In case of counter-offensive operations in this area, 14 Inf Div and 1 Armd Div were to be employed.

The Amritsar Sector

The area of responsibility of 15 Inf Div included the prominent towns of Amritsar, Dera Baba Nanak and Ajnala. The area was large and after covering the important approaches with the five brigades it had (viz. 38, 54, 58, 86 and 96), the Division had no reserve available.

In this Sector the enemy's main thrust was likely to come across the Ravi. The paucity of troops left large gaps to be covered in the defences. As there was danger of the enemy breaking out with armour, particularly through the area between Ranian and Dera Baba Nanak, three armoured regiments were located north of Amritsar. And as there was inadequate artillery support in this threatened Sector, 21 Indep Arty Bde (71) was moved north.

In these operations, the Indian artillery played a notable part both in support of the infantry and to beat back Pak counter-attacks. "Where possible shock action tac was adopted to recapture lost ground"(72). The Division eliminated the Pakistani bridgehead of Dera Baba Nanak after fighting a grim battle and inflicting heavy casualties on the defenders. It repulsed all the Pakistani attacks in the Ajnala Sector, removed enemy threat to Amritsar by capturing Pakistani posts of Burj and Fatehpur after fierce fighting and frustrating enemy designs in the Attari -

Ranian Sector and improved its defensive posture by occupying certain Pakistani posts in the Neshta-Rajatal Sector. The overall direction of the operations was satisfactory. All ranks displayed courage and proved the cohesiveness of the formation.

Battle for Dera Baba Nanak

Dera Baba Nanak was a small town situated on the south bank of the river Ravi near the Indo-Pakistan border. Near the town were two important enclaves. To the north of Ravi was the Indian enclave called Kasowal, and to the south was the Pakistani enclave of Jassar or Dera Baba Nanak. The bridge over the Ravi near Dera Baba Nanak lay within the Pakistan territory and the Pakistani enclave was situated south of that bridge. Dera Baba Nanak town was important as a gate-way to other major towns of the Punjab, such as Gurdaspur, Batala, Beas and Amritsar. Should the enemy capture the town of Dera Bana Nanak, it would afford him a cluster of objectives and would consequently unbalance the Indian defences(73).

After the pre-emptive attack by Pakistan on 3 December, it became imperative that this Pakistani bridgehead be eliminated. As the area was marshy and covered by thick growth of elephant grass, kikar and shisham trees, the strength and disposition of Pak forces could only be surmised, and it was estimated that there were 3 Ranger posts in addition to a network of defences occupied by units of the regular army.

In order to understand the progress of military operations in this area (named OP AKAL) it is necessary to explain the layout of the various features:- (74)

The Eastern End: It consisted of four bunds radiating from the eastern end of the Dera Baba Nanak bridge. In clockwise sequence these were called the Depth Bund, the Rail Bund, the Road Bund and the River Bund. It was the most dominating feature and was considered a ground of tactical importance. The Pakistanis had deployed here one company with battalion headquarters supported by MMGs and RCLs.

The Dhussi Bund (River Embankment) : Branching off from the Rail Bund, it ran eastward up to the Ranger post of Mardana. It was known to have a number of emplacements from 'T' Junction (the junction of Rail Bund and Dhussi Bund) up to and including a feature called '7r'. A small building known as the Colonel's Hut on the south side of this Bund had concrete emplacements and defences. The Pak Commander defended

this Bund and the Ring Bund with one company supported by MMGs and RCLs from the Recce and Support Battalion.

The Ring Bund : To the south of the Dhussi Bund lay seven Ring Bunds in the form of small mounds covered with scrub. The company deployed at Dhussi defended this Bund too. The Western End and Dry Tree End lying to the west of Ravi this area had a strong system of concrete defences all along the river line, and two embankments astride the bridge. The old railway crossing had also been made into a formidable fortress. Here the defenders had 2 companies of the regular army.

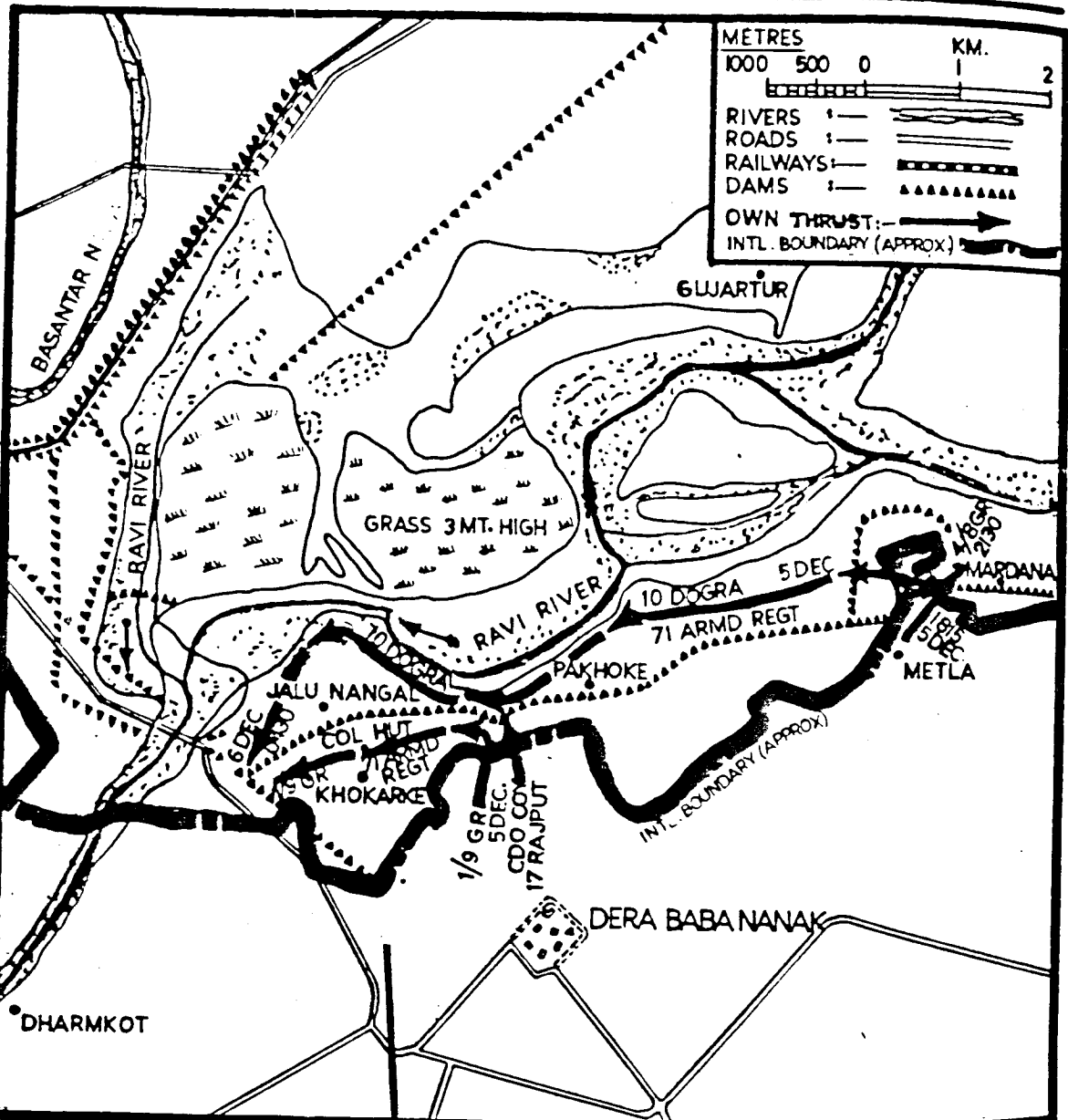
The plan for the elimination of Dera Baba Nanak enclave was drawn up and rehearsed by 15 Inf Div. The task was allotted to 86 Inf Bde. The plan aimed at hitting the enemy from the rear with infantry and armour. It involved a long march through unknown area covered by Sarkanda grass and crossing of the river. The plan was put into action at 1700 hrs on 5 December when a company 4/8 GR moved towards the Metla enclave, and at 1815 hrs secured it against Pakistani interference from Gujartur (2674) and Mardana(75).

The 17 Rajput, with a Brigade Commando Company under command captured area '7r' by 1840 hrs and then, pressing on towards Colonel's Hut, they cleared the area Copse by 2230 hrs on 5 Dec, (76) and secured the crossing site for armoured and infantry columns on the river Ravi in the early hours of the morning.

Phase I of the attack launched at 1700 hrs on 5 Dec embraced the securing of Forming Up Place about 180 metres north-east of Colonel's Hut and Ring Bund No.7, by 0300 hrs on 6 Dec. But 10 Dogra and 71 Armd Regt, which were to execute it, could not advance swiftly enough due to marshy ground and mist, and reached crossing site No.1 behind schedule (2135 hrs)(77). When they found the site unsuitable, they moved towards '7r' to attempt a crossing. They reached it by 2345 hrs. As 10 Dogra would have taken two hours more to reach their Forming Up Place, 1/9 GR was ordered to launch Phase II of the attack, which postulated the capture of Colonel's Hut and Ring Bund No.6. The Gorkhas launched a swift attack on Dhussi Bund in spite of constant firing from MMGs and other arms by defenders entrenched in concrete pill boxes, bunkers and trenches. After hand-to-hand fighting, the Gorkhas captured the Colonel's Hut by 0230 hrs and cleared 'T' Junction by 0600 hrs on 6 Dec, reaching up to the Eastern End(78).

The capture of Colonel's Hut by the Gorkhas went a long way in helping the 10 Dogra attack, who had in

THE DERA BABA NANAK SECTOR



the mean time reached their Forming Up Place at 0315 hrs. The Battalion attacked the Eastern Bund at 0325 hrs. The defences were well-planned and coordinated and included concrete pill boxes. The attack from the rear came as a surprise, but the defenders gave a tough fight and at some places had to be silenced by lobbing hand-grenades into the pill boxes. The Eastern Bund was captured by 0430 hrs on 6 Dec with intimate fire support by 71 Armd Regt and 42 Fd Regt(79). This completed Phase III, that is the final phase, of the operations. The 17 Rajput, who had provided the firm base for the operation, finally cleared Khokarke and Sandhowan posts(80).

The Pakistanis counter-attacked on the night of 6/7 Dec. But the Indian troops foiled it with the help of concentrated artillery fire, and held on to their hard-earned positions. Another attempt on the night of 7/8 Dec to dislodge the Indian troops also failed. In desperation the Pakistanis destroyed the first pier of the Dera Baba Nanak bridge(81). In this operation, Pak casualties were 34 killed and 26 taken prisoners-of-war. The Indian losses were 10 killed, 32 wounded and 3 missing(82).

Ajnala Sector

The Gil Ferry opposite Ajnala offered Pakistan a route of ingress around the northern end of 15 Inf Div's defences. The defence of this sub-sector was entrusted to 58 Inf Bde. As Pakistan on its part, also was sensitive to a threat from this direction, it attacked all the Indian border outposts on the night of 3/4 Dec, with the intent of removing this threat. However, the Indian troops withstood and repulsed all the attacks.

The Brigade Commander, Brigadier Narinder Singh, then set about eliminating the Pakistani posts. By 17 Dec, he had captured Budai Channa Kalan, Darya Mansur, Dhian Singh Pura, Sundergarh and Sherpur in a series of minor actions(83). This Sector saw no major operations.

Fatehpur-Burj Sector

The 96 Inf Bde was given the responsibility of defending the area between Chann Malla(SB 7830)(84) and Bhindi Aulakh (SB 8139). Towards the north-west of Amritsar, across the Ravi, Pakistan had a sizeable enclave at Fatehpur and Bhago-Kamo (SB 7631). Pakistan could establish a bridgehead there and pose a threat to Amritsar. It was, therefore, decided to

to capture these enclaves(85).

On the night of 3/4 Dec, Pakistan inducted the bulk of its 88 Inf Bde, belonging to 17 Inf Div, into this enclave. BSF personnel were forced to vacate Ghoga (SB 7941), Behlol (SB 8142), Gulgarh (SB 8144), Burj (SB 7937) and Fatehpur (SB 7834)(86). The BSF men redeployed at Dag (SB 8034) and Dhindi Aulakh, and the defences were stiffened by a platoon each from 15 Maratha, supported by one troop of 66 Armd Regt(87). As there was no activity on 5 Dec, it was taken to signify that Pakistan had no offensive design in this sub-sector. The decision was, therefore, taken to clear the Pakistanis from the area, and two companies from 15 Maratha and one sub unit from 66 Armd Regt were ordered to attack Tur and Burj. But a company of 43 Baluch pre-empted this move and attacked Bhindi Aulakh at about 1230 hrs on 6 Dec(88). The attack was thrown back by accurate artillery fire and the armoured troops, the attackers leaving behind a number of dead and large quantities of arms and ammunition(89). The Indian troops then pressed their own attack and, fighting from bunker to bunker along the Dhussi Bund, cleared the Pakistanis from Burj and Tur. The two companies of 43 Baluch were badly mauled and lost 52 killed(90). The Pakistanis suffered again at the hands of the Marathas when a series of counter-attacks launched in the afternoon of 9 Dec in a bid to recapture the lost positions, were thrown back. They left behind 32 dead and took away a number of wounded. The 43 Baluch were severely battered in these operations(91).

This action was followed by a fierce battle on the night of 11/12 Dec, in which the jawans of 8 Sikh LI proved their mettle(92). This Pakistani post (Fatehpur) was fortified on all the four sides with high Bunds carrying numerous automatic and anti-tank weapons. Its diamond like shape made it difficult to tackle it from any side(93). The Sikhs rushed forward to capture this objective regardless of heavy casualties(94) caused by small arms fire and artillery shelling, and captured the objective by the morning. The Pakistanis staged quick counter-attacks, but they were beaten back and the diamond-shaped bunds of Fatehpur remained firmly in the hands of Sikhs(95).

Atari-Ranian Sector

Lahore was about 15 km from Atari on the border. Pakistani's Ichhogil Canal, which ran parallel to the border, was a formidable military obstacle(96). From its western bank, raised higher than the eastern bank, Pakistan commanded an excellent observation of any approach from the east. As no military initiative

could be productive in this area, India had decided to remain on the defensive in this Sector. The 54 Inf Bde carried out this task. The Brigade was charged with the responsibility of defending the Amritsar area against an attack along the Grand Trunk Road. Deployed astride this road, the Brigade linked up with 96 Inf Bde at Channa Malla in the north and 38 Inf Bde in the south.

The Pak Commander was keen to capture Ranian because it dominated the western and northern axes and could facilitate his advance to Amritsar. He could cross the Ravi with armour without any hindrance in his own territory in the Bhago Kamo enclave and then make a dash for Amritsar, but the manoeuvre could not succeed without artillery support. And the guns could not be moved on this axis unless Ranian was captured. As long as it remained in Indian hands, Pak artillery could not support the northern axis(97).

The 18 Frontier Force (18 FF) of the Pak Army attacked the Ranian post (SB 7425) on 3 Dec at 2051 hrs(98). The 2 Sikh beat off the attack. The post was, however, attacked again and again on the nights of 4/5, 5/6 and 6/7 Dec, on 9 Dec and lastly on 17 Dec(99). Well coordinated artillery and small arms fire by Indian troops beat back all these attacks with heavy casualties to the attackers.

The Pakistanis also tried to capture Shamsheer post nearby "using as their base an area known as 'General's Tube Well'." But their design was frustrated. Brig G.N. Sinha, the Brigade Commander decided to remove this thorn in the Indian side and, just before ceasefire, mounted an attack on 'General's Tube Well' and seized it.

On 17 Dec, 2 Sikh also recaptured Pulkanjri village after getting through a protective minefield and surprising a company of 43 Punjab who were defending it. The Pakistanis tried many times on 17 and 18 December to wrest it back from the Sikhs but the latter did not yield ground, and the village remained in Indian hands when Cease Fire took effect(100).

Neshta-Rajatal Sub-Sector

The area south of the G.T. Road was held by 38 Inf Bde, which was deployed from the G.T. Road to Bhuchar Headworks (SG 9496). There was no intrusion in this Sector and Indian border observation posts remained intact(101). The Brigade, however, improved its defensive posture by occupying the Pakistani villages/posts of Kharak (SB 8308), Thehpura (SB 8506)

and Ghurki (SG 8499). The plan to capture the Kharak village and the Ranger posts was executed by 4 Assam on the night 4/5 Dec. The garrison, about a platoon at this location, abandoned the post after some resistance. The commando platoon of 4 Assam also captured area Sahnke (SB 8208) on the night 6/7 Dec(102). However, with the help of five tanks and several jeeps mounted with RCLs and MMGs, the Pakistanis snatched back the post through a counter-attack at 0400 hrs on 7 Dec and compelled the Indian troops to withdraw(103).

The 16 Grenadiers was assigned the task of capturing Thehpura. The assaulting company left the FUP at 0255 hrs on 5 Dec. When it was within 275 metres of the objective, the enemy opened up with LMGs and MMGs. The commanding officer ordered the company to charge the objective. The defenders abandoned the post and the village, but soon launched a counter-attack which, however, was repulsed by accurate automatic fire and artillery shelling by the Indian troops(104).

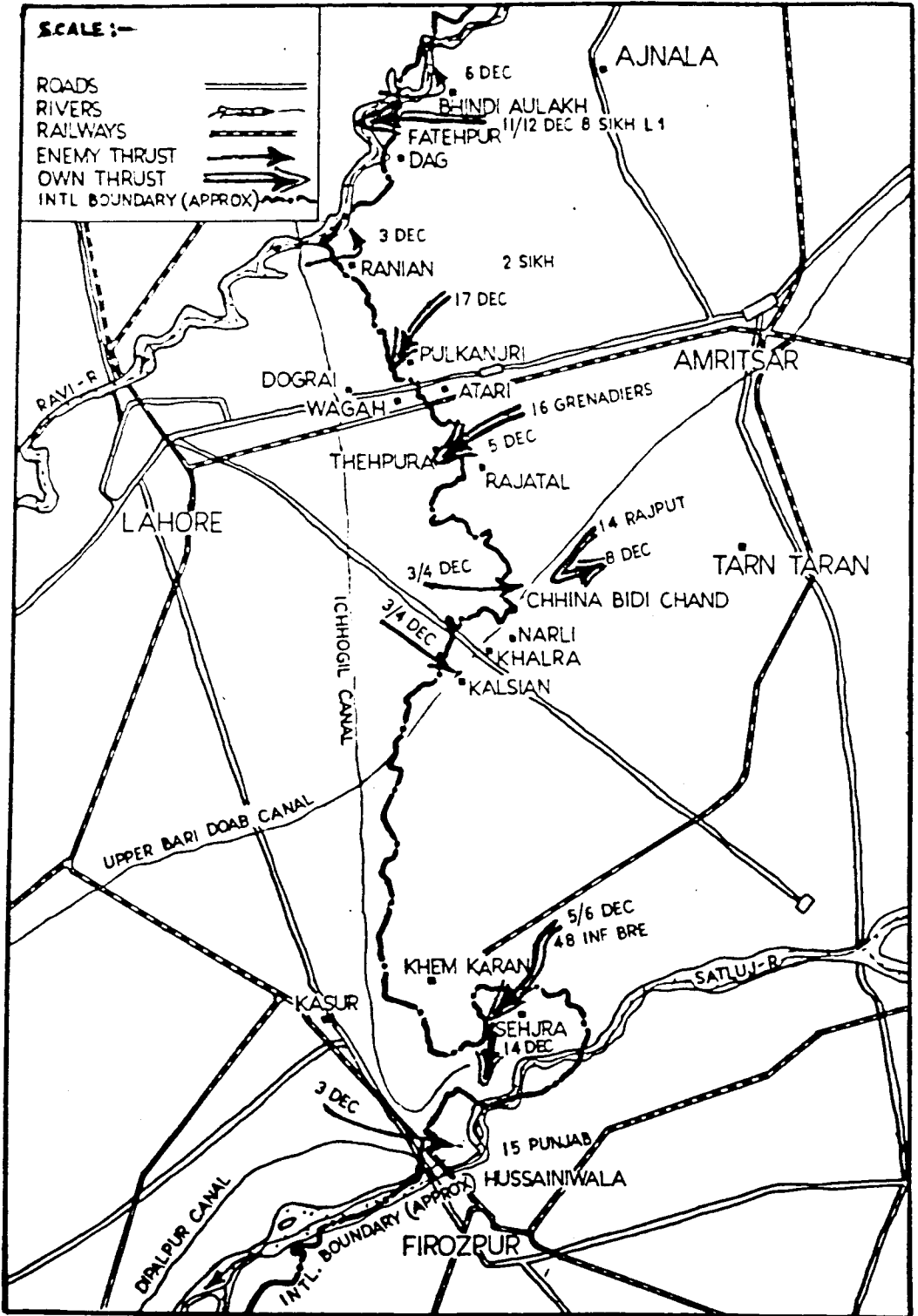
The 8 Garh Rif captured Ghurki village and the Ranger Post at 0330 hrs on 5 Dec. The garrisons had given up the positions before the assaulting troops were on their objectives. However, the Pakistanis continued shelling the village and the Post after their capture in order to prevent the re-organisation of the Indian troops. At 2110 hrs on 7 Dec, they tried to recapture the post but the attempt was foiled(105)

7 Inf Div : Khalra, Khemkaran and Firozpur Sector

The defence of the territory south of Bhuchar Headworks including Firozpur, that is, the area comprising the southern half of the Bari Doab between the Ravi, Beas and Satluj, was the responsibility of Maj Gen Freemantle, GOC 7 Inf Div. The main routes of ingress in this area were through Khalra, Khemkaran and Hussainiwala. Through these approaches Pakistan could threaten the sensitive areas of the Harike Headworks and the Firozpur town. The covering troops were deployed between the international border and the anti-tank obstacle belt of Mari Megha drain which ran 8 to 9 km from the international border, and the main defences were based along this drain. There was also a contingency plan which visualised the capture of the Sehjra Bulge.

The 65 Inf Bde held defences along the Mari Megha drain from Bhuchar Headworks (SG 9496) to Bherowal (SG 8672). The Mari Megha drain - the main obstacle - was held by two battalions - 14 Rajput and

THE LAHORE - FIROZPUR SECTOR



3 Madras, who were extended over a frontage of approximately 26 km. The third battalion, 14 J and K Rifles, was deployed as the covering force in the Khalra area along the southern bank of the disused Upper Bari Doab Canal.

On 3 Dec, at approximately 1830 hrs, the enemy started exerting pressure against the Border Observation Posts west of the Upper Bari Doab Canal. As the Sector was extended and there was paucity of troops, the Border Security Force personnel manning the BOPs were pulled back to the main defences. By mid-night of 3/4 Dec, the Pak troops contacted the Upper Bari Doab Canal opposite Khalra and intruded into the villages of Narli (SG 8989), Dode (SG 8686) and Kalsian (SG 8585) and occupied the village of Chhina Bidi Chand (SG 9093)(106).

On 4 Dec Pakistan continued to build pressure on both the flanks of Khalra and tried to capture the place with the support of armour. Indian artillery fire foiled the bid(107).

As a defensive measure, the following bridges over the Upper Bari Doab Canal were demolished - prematurely, it seems - to prevent the enemy break-through to Khalra:- (108)

- a) Chhina Bidi Chand
- b) Narli
- c) Main Khalra
- d) Kalsian
- e) Baba Pir

Nevertheless, the Pak troops succeeded in crossing the Upper Bari Doab Canal about 275 metres north of Khalra. About a company of them was seen forming up on the southern side of the Indian minefield. But Indian artillery and infantry effectively engaged them and finally beat them back. On 6 Dec, Kalsian village was re-occupied by the Indian troops(109). In order to clear the enemy from the area and to relieve pressure from opposite Khalra, it was imperative to recapture Chhina Bidi Chand also(110). The 14 Rajput captured the village by 0200 hrs on 8 Dec. But at 07715 hrs the Pakistanis counter attacked with approximately two companies of infantry, supported by some tanks. Intense and effective shelling of the route by the enemy precluded the supply of stores, particularly ammunition, to the forward companies. Nor could Indian tanks, which were south of the Upper Bari Doab Canal, cross it and link up with the infantry as planned. The two companies of 14 Rajput had, therefore, to be withdrawn from Chhina Bidi Chand by 1430 hrs on 8 Dec,(111) evidently due to

indifferent liaison between armour and infantry.

The Pakistanis tried to assault the Border Observation Posts at the Khemkaran Barrier, but could not press home the attack due to Indian artillery fire. There was no further serious attack in this Sector, and only shelling and minor skirmishes continued. This made it possible for 48 Inf Bde to proceed and capture the Sehjra Bulge and dispose of the threat from that direction.

The Battle for the Sehjra Bulge

This Pakistani salient of about 55 sq km protruded into the Indian territory south-east of Khemkaran and north of Firozpur, and was held by about a battalion strength of Pak troops(112). They had developed the village of Sehjra into a virtual fortress(113). Situated on an escarpment, the village dominates the area. On the north of the village, Pakistan had built a bund, 2 to 2.5 metres high, which linked up with the escarpment on both sides.

The Bulge was garrisoned by one company of 25 Baluch, one company of Sutlej Rangers, two to three companies of Mujahids, a 3" Mortar Platoon and elements of the Divisional Recce and Support Battalion(114).

Unlike at Chhina Bidi Chand and Hussainiwala, this battle was well planned, with GOC-in-C 11 Corps, GOC 7 Inf Div and Commander 48 Inf Bde taking care to carry out detailed recce. The 1/5 GR made a wide encircling move from the south along the enemy's route of maintenance. The unexpected direction of the attack surprised the Pakistanis completely(115). Again, unlike at those places, the Commanding Officer in this case was well forward. Under his personal command, the Gorkhas fought bravely and captured all the objectives. The operation nicknamed 'Lightning' was started at 0030 hrs on 6 Dec and was completed at 0630 hrs, the same day with immaculate precision(116). The 6 Mahar had meanwhile blocked the escape routes from Sehjra by occupying the village of Mahiwal(117). The Pakistanis ran into the trap and suffered heavy casualties - 30 killed and 65 Prisoners of War(118) and left behind a large quantity of equipment and arms and ammunition. Simultaneously, 9 Sikh LI captured the Pakistani Border Observation Posts of Mabbuke, Bhukkiwala and Nagar Aminpur(119).

To consolidate the position in the Sehjra pocket, the Indian troops launched attacks on Mahiwala and Fattiwala posts and captured them by 1400 hrs on 6 Dec. In the night of 8 Dec, the Pakistanis shelled

the Khemkaran barrier area and attacked the barrier post in company strength. At about midnight, they were reported to be simultaneously moving from the Kasur and Roriwala directions. Indian artillery kept shelling the advancing enemy troops and the Indian troops eventually repulsed the attack at 0415 hrs on 9 Dec(120). Next day the Pakistanis made another move to attack the Khemkaran barrier post which, however, was again foiled(121) by Indian artillery fire and infantry. On the night of 12/13 Dec, a company of 41 Baluch infiltrated across the minefield and established a base in area '12r' (SG 9150). On 14 Dec, the Gorkhas and the Mahars, and the Border Security Force personnel, supported by a troop of tanks and 174 Fd Regt, surrounded the Baluchis from all sides and overwhelmed them, inflicting casualties of 30 dead and 15 wounded(122).

Thus 48 Inf Bde captured the Sehjra Bulge and succeeded in eliminating the possibility of Pakistan raiding the Harike Bridge or trying to outflank the defences in the Khemkaran Sector.

The Firozpur-Hussainiwala Sub-Sector

The 35 Inf Bde placed under the operational command of 7 Inf Div, was deployed for the defence of Firozpur Sector, with 25 BSF Bn being responsible for the general area Firozpur and 31 BSF Bn for the general area Mamdot(123). The Hussainiwala enclave of about 47 sq km was a vital area for India, containing as it did the Hussainiwala Canal Headworks of the Satluj and the road and rail bridges. One company of 15 Punjab had always been deployed even in peace time at the Hussainiwala Bridge. In view of the impending war, it was built up to two battalion strength. In addition, one troop of 'A' squadron, 3 Cavalry was allotted for deployment across the Satluj, to afford protection and support against Pak armour(124). For fire support, a medium regiment, a medium battery, a field regiment, a light battery and an ad hoc light battery were available. A troop of 49 AD Regt was also deployed for the protection of the area. Mines were laid all around(125).

The Hussainiwala Bridge constituted one of the main routes between Pakistan and India, the other being Atari near Amritsar. International traffic remained open from the Hussainiwala Joint Check Post till 1815 hrs on 3 Dec. Due to constant traffic on this route, the dispositions of our troops could not remain concealed from public view. Besides, the movement of cattle and villagers on the Indian side of the international border gave out the layout of the Indian minefields.

As Fazal Muqem Khan says in his book "Pakistan's crisis in Leadership" this battle, like the Sulaimanke battle "was a very good example of careful and skilful planning and determined execution" by the Pakistan Army. On 3 Dec, at about 1830 hrs, Pakistan's 106 Inf Bde brought down such a devastating barrage of artillery fire that all lines of communication were disrupted. Simultaneously, Pakistan attacked 'C' and 'D' Companies of 15 Punjab. Pakistan attacked the 'C' Company locality from the Dipalpur Canal Bund to Samadhi with approximately a battalion supported by a troop of tanks at 1845 hrs. Immediately afterward, 'D' Company locality on Perimeter and Limb were assaulted(126). These initial attacks indicated that Pakistan had employed a minimum of two battalions, supported by armour. It was now obvious that the enemy planned to smash through by a violent and sledge hammer attack and capture Hussainiwala Bridge intact and then get his armour across with a view to capturing Ferozpur(127). 15 Punjab was taken completely by surprise when the attack took place. 'C' Company was astride the main road axis and 'D' Company on the Perimeter defended position, and the Commanding Officer was on the southern bank attending a farewell party for the retiring Subedar Major(128).

The Pakistanis overran 'C' Company(129). 'D' Company on Perimeter Bund, however, offered stiff resistance and held out against a number of attacks throughout the night, inflicting heavy casualties on the attackers(130). But its valiant resistance did not avail much and it had to vacate its positions in the morning of 4 Dec. The remaining battalion offered little resistance. Since the night of 3/4 Dec, the Pakistanis had been attacking 'A' Company at Kunde Bund, and by the following morning had established a foothold there. They then advanced from the Perimeter Bund and occupied the western end of the Guide Bund(131). Indian artillery and the Indian Air Force extended magnificent support and caused very heavy casualties on the Pakistani forces. During the day (4 Dec), they could be seen preparing to launch infantry armour attacks against 'A' and 'B' Companies, holding out on Kunde and Guide Bunds. But timely and extremely effective air strikes kept them at bay. However, as soon as the aircraft went back, Pak armour and infantry would move up and attempt to nibble at the Indian positions. This struggle went on throughout the day. In the meanwhile, a great misfortune had befallen the defending Indian forces(132). Soon after the commencement of the artillery fire on the night of 3 Dec, the Commanding Officer 15 Punjab issued orders to arm the demolitions

on the Hussainiwala Bridge. These were prepared and armed by about 2300 hrs that night(133). At about 0030 hrs, intense enemy shelling, it is claimed, caused a sympathetic detonation to set off the demolition. Approximately 3 spans of the bridge were destroyed. This caused consternation among the defenders. As the company positions were vacated one after another, several men jumped into the water to cross the river, while others tried to make improvised rafts to cross the river even as the battle was in progress(134). While the Battalion was being so mauled, the Commanding Officer remained in his Battalion Headquarters on the southern bank of the river and made no serious attempt to go to his forward Headquarters to control the battle personally(135). Instead of going forward to his advance Command Post, the Commanding Officer painted an exaggerated picture of the plight of the Battalion, infected the Commander 35 Inf Bde also with his pessimism and both, in turn, pressured the GOC 7 Inf Div for permission to withdraw from Hussainiwala. At 1830 hrs on 4 Dec, Commander 35 Inf Bde received permission of the Divisional Commander to pull back his troops from the bridgehead,(136) and the withdrawal to the south bank was completed by 2200 hrs(137). However, Fazal Muqem concedes in his book; "The Indian 15 Punjab fought extremely well....They were fully supported by extensive fire from the other side of the River."

The severity of the fighting is indicated by the casualties suffered on both sides. The losses of 15 Punjab were 19 ORs killed, 3 JCOs and 31 ORs wounded and 2 Officers, 2 JCOs, 67 ORs and 2 NCsE missing.

14 Inf Div Operations

The task of defending the area between Firozpur and Fazilka devolved on 14 Inf Div less 58 Inf Bde. This area contained a number of Pak enclaves which were large enough to be exploited and turned into bridgeheads for launching offensive operations towards Firozpur, Jalalabad, Muktsar or Fazilka. In order to rule out this possibility, it was decided to liquidate the Pakistani enclaves on the Indian side of the Satluj(138).

Accordingly, the formation under its GOC, Maj Gen Onkar Singh Kalkat,(139) made a haul of thirteen Pakistani border posts and recaptured Raja Mahatam. All the attacks were meticulously planned and carried out boldly and efficiently. Barring the Rangewala Post, at all other posts the Indians suffered negligible casualties. All the officers down to unit Commanders and junior leaders, displayed high qualities of leadership. The troops were also blooded

and properly inoculated in the battle. Nowhere did the formation suffer a reverse. At the time of ceasefire, the formation completely dominated the area between Firozpur and Fazilka right upto the River Satluj and the possibility of a Pakistani offensive in this area was completely ruled out(140).

The Jalalabad Sector

The 116 Inf Bde was deployed in this Sector. The Pak battalions identified opposite it were 30 AK, 31 AK and 50 Baluch. The 116 Bde launched bold and meticulously planned attacks on several Pakistani positions and captured them. The mode of attack was to engage the enemy frontally by a small force, while some troops were positioned to cut off the enemy routes of withdrawal. The actual attacks were made from the rear by advancing along the enemy's routes of maintenance(141). The Brigade captured five Pak posts, and it is a measure of the planning that went into the launching of these operations, and the tactical skill in their execution that in the capture of these posts of Peeroke, Kali Sahu, Gatti Bharola, Churka and Amin Bhaini,(142) the Indian troops suffered only one NCO killed while the Pakistanis lost 29 killed and 17 captured(143).

As if in revenge, the Pakistanis showed considerable activity after the Cease Fire and attacked Kali Sahu with approximately one company on 3 Jan 1972, and the company position in area SG 5306 on 4 Jan. Both the attacks were beaten back, and 24 dead bodies of the attackers were recovered, while 12 personnel of 31 AK Bn were captured(144).

Mamdot-Firozpur Sector

This Sector was the responsibility of 35 Inf Bde from 5 Dec 1971, under the operational command of 14 Inf Div. The Sector saw only some minor action. The 15 Dogra first secured the area north of Firozpur upto the Satluj river by capturing Pakistani Border Observation Posts of Basti Anoke and New Kasoke (SG 9346) by 0300 hrs on 7 Dec(145). It then turned its attention to the Pakistani enclave south of the river opposite Mamdot, as this place could be a potential lodgement area for an enemy threat towards Firozpur. The Dogras first attacked the Pakistani Border Observation Post at Rangewala (SG 692283). But as it had halted too near the objective inviting upon itself automatic and artillery fire, it suffered heavy casualties - two officers and 20 ORs killed and one officer, two JCOs and 53 ORs wounded. The Battalion, however, regained control and assaulted the objective again, and occupied it. The Pakistanis left behind

two dead and a large quantity of arms and ammunition. Supported by artillery and A Squadron 3 Cavalry, the Battalion captured the Pakistani Border Observation Posts Jaluke Dhuan (SG 656259) during the night 14/15 Dec and Amrud Wali (SG 656280) on 15 Dec(146).

Another battalion, 13 Punjab, captured Dona Betu (SG 640220) without encountering much resistance. The remaining two posts of Pora Kana (SG 6321) and Jalloke Hittar (SG 6423) were vacated by the Pakistanis on 16 Dec. When on night 17/18 Dec, the enemy infiltrated a strong platoon of 9 Baluch in an attempt to secure a foothold on the eastern bank of the Satluj river, Maj H.C. Sharma of 13 Punjab captured the whole platoon(147).

The Foxtrot Sector

The 'Foxtrot Sector', under Maj Gen Ram Singh, was assigned the task of defending Fazilka, Abohar and Ganganagar at all costs. Close defence of Fazilka was prepared, particularly against an attack from the north in dry weather, because the river Satluj had very little water then(148). The Sector was given the responsibility of defending Suratgarh also and containing, if possible, the Pakistani bridgehead at Sulaimanke. Further, it was allotted the task of holding certain covering positions : one post on the Gang Canal in area Hindumalkot and others along the general line Prithvirajpur Distributary, Karanpur (SQ 7793) and Gajsinghpur (SQ 7571). It was also to block the following main approaches by deploying covering troops :-

- i) Sulaimanke - Fazilka
- ii) Minchinabad - Mandi Sadiq Ganj - Hindumalkot
- Abohar and
- iii) Bahawalnagar - Ganganagar.

For carrying out these tasks, the following formations were deployed in the Foxtrot Sector by the end of November 1971: (149)

- a) HQ Foxtrot Sector at Abohar.
- b) 67 Indep Inf Bde at Fazilka
- c) 51 Indep Para Bde at Ganganagar
- d) 163 Inf Bde (two battalions) at Suratgarh.
- e) Juliet Sector at Abohar.

Foxtrot Sector was thus equivalent to more than an Infantry Division in strength. But it did not have the normal Div HQ or supporting services, and Maj Gen Ram Singh felt handicapped in attending to the administrative chores(150).

No definite information was available about Pakistan deployment opposite Foxtrot Sector. The available information suggested the presence of the following formations/units in the area of Sulaimanke-Fort Abbas:- (151)

- a) 33 Inf Div
- b) 25 Indep Inf Bde
- c) 105 Indep Inf Bde
- d) 20, 12 and 22 Wings of Desert Rangers
- e) 32 Mujahids

In addition, Pakistan could also bring up some of the following formations for operations in the southern sector, though it was unlikely that she would denude the more important North Punjab to any great extent: (152)

- a) 1 Armd Div
- b) One brigade from 11 Inf Div
- c) Elements of 6 Armd Div in case there was no threat to Pakistan's northern Punjab sector.
- d) 7 Inf Div in case of a major thrust in the southern sector (153).

The Fazilka Sub-Sector

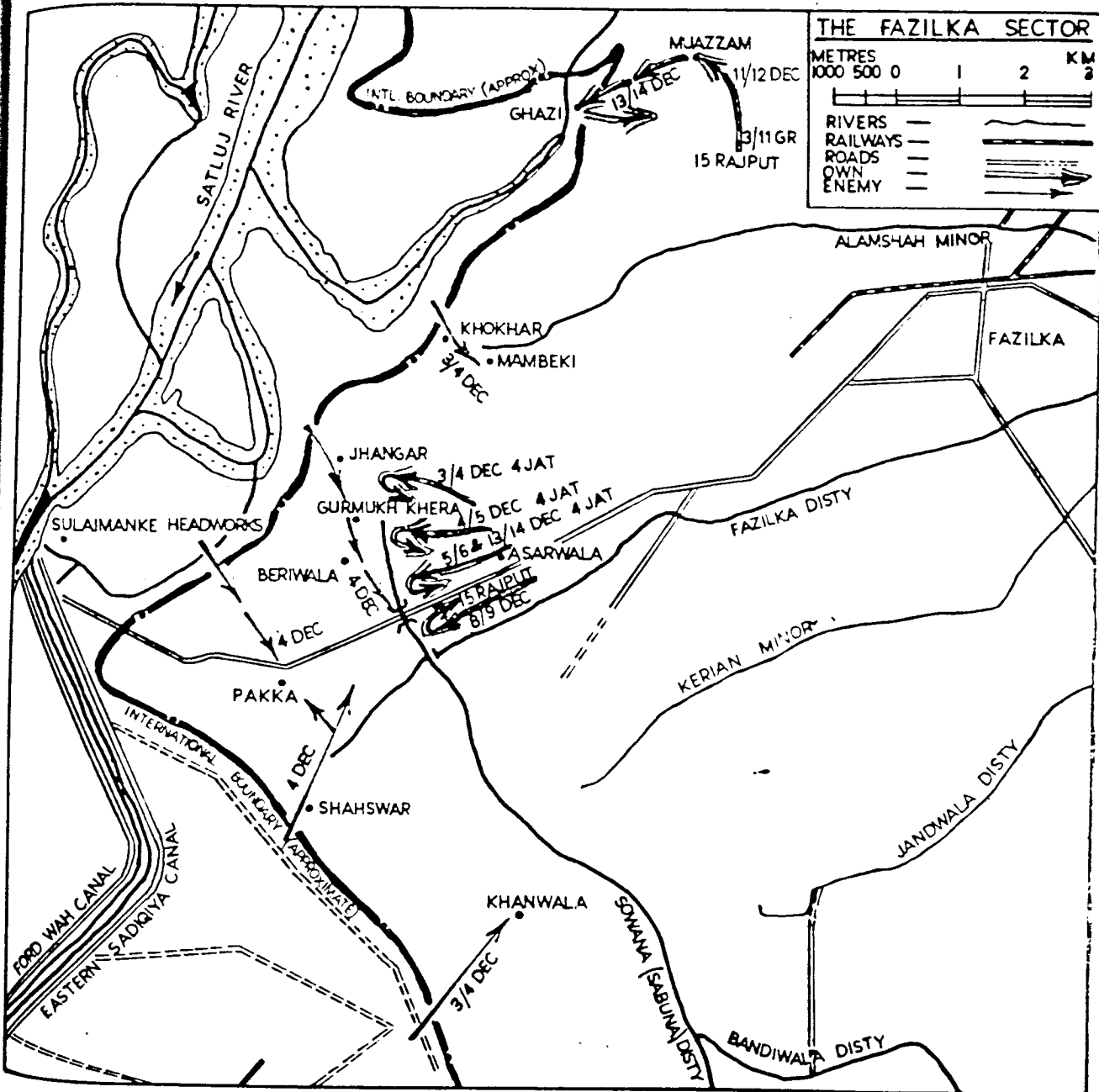
There was a looming shadow of Pakistani aggression in the Foxtrot Sector, as it was a strategic area located on the western flank of 11 Corps(154). As it turned out, the operations did not develop into a major offensive by the enemy but were confined to action only in the Fazilka Sub-sector.

It was appreciated that Pakistan could attack Fazilka through the several enclaves it had south of river Satluj. The attack could come from the north through Jalalabad or from the Sulaimanke bridgehead in the west. It was also appreciated that Pakistan would try to lean against the defences on the Sabuna Distributary(155). It was imperative for the Indian military planners to ensure the security of the bridge over the Satluj and of the Sulaimanke Headworks. Learning from the experience of 1965, India had constructed an anti-tank obstacle in the shape of the Sabuna Distributary which covered all the approaches. It was about 10 to 13 km from the town of Fazilka. The alignment of the distributary was parallel to the international boundary. The Distributary, fourteen miles (22 km) in length, ran from the Gang Canal to the Fazilka Creek, and had many fortifications. The Salem Shah Nala constituted a partial hurdle just north of the Fazilka town, while the Chandbhan Drain formed a good obstacle eight miles (13 km) north of Fazilka(156).

THE FAZILKA SECTOR

METRES
1000 500 0 1 2 KM

RIVERS ————
RAILWAYS ————
ROADS ————
OWN ENEMY ————
ENEMY ————



The 67 Indep Inf Bde deployed for the defence of Fazilka comprised three infantry battalions (15 Rajput, 3 Assam, 4 Jat) 4 Indep Armd Sqn, Sqn 18 Cavalry and 2 troops of 70 Armd Regt. These were supported by one field regiment and one medium battery (157). Two BSF battalions were also provided.

The focus of planning and preparations for the main defensive battle was on Fazilka, which had to be held at any cost. The line of the Sabuna Distributary - Qadir Bakhsh - Muazzam was to be held as a strong covering fence. However, as the area of ground under the operational responsibility of 67 Indep Inf Bde was extensive and there was shortage of troops, the battalions of this Brigade were so deployed that troops could be built up either on the Sabuna Distributary or on Fazilka, depending on the direction of the threat. At the commencement of hostilities, the Brigade was deployed as follows:

- a) Area Shatirwala (SM 3147) on Sabuna Distributary
 - i) 15 Rajputs less two companies.
 - ii) Three companies of 28 BSF Bn.
 - iii) Two companies of 22 BSF Bn.

- b) Area Chananwala (SM 2557) - Choriwala Chisti (SM 2355) - Qadir Bakhsh (SM 2262) - Khokhar (SM 2363) and along the Sabuna Distributary
 - i) 3 Assam with one company plus two platoons of 22 BSF Bn.
 - ii) Two troops of 'B' Squadron 18 Cavalry.

- c) Area Muazzam (SM 2768) - Fazilka, North of Railway Line Fazilka - Muktsar
 - i) Two companies of 15 Rajputs
 - ii) Two companies of 22 BSF Bn

- d) Area Fazilka - South of Railway Line Fazilka - Muktsar
 - i) 4 Jat
 - ii) 4 Indep Armd Sqn
 - iii) B Sqn 18 Cavalry less 2 troops

On 3 Dec, at about 1830 hrs, Pakistan commenced shelling and under cover of fierce artillery fire and supported by some armour, charged through the forward posts held by the Border Security Force, who were so unnerved that they sent highly coloured reports about the strength of the attacking enemy, putting it down

at two infantry brigades and two armoured regiments(158). The 3 Assam deployed in the defence of and on the Sabuna Distributary were taken in by these reports. The Pak Commander caught the Assamese off guard and attacked the company deployed at Pakka with one infantry battalion of his 105 Inf Bde, and approximately two troops of armour. Unfortunately, the 3 Assam Company Commander was killed. This proved to be a signal for a general pandemonium and the confusion was worse confounded when the Commanding Officer issued orders for the withdrawal of the covering troops. In bewilderment, the demoralised troops blasted the bridges on the Sabuna Distributary, except the Beriwala Bridge. The attackers took advantage of the chaos and crossed the Beriwala Bridge and established a foothold on the Sabuna Distributary at about 1930 hrs on 3 Dec.

The hasty and imprudent demolition of 22 bridges over the Sabuna Distributary, excluding the Beriwala Bridge, which was under enemy occupation, foreclosed any chance of success of counter-attacks from any direction except from the limited area bounded by the Sabuna Drain to the east and the Bund connecting the Sabuna Drain and the Sabuna Distributary to the north(159).

It was necessary to restore the situation somehow. Four hours later, at 2330 hrs on 3 Dec, one company of 4 Jat, supported by about a Sqn 18 Cavalry counter-attacked. As the Jats did not know where actually the enemy was or what his strength was, the attack was foredoomed to failure. Though the Jats failed to recapture the bridge, the Battalion re-established itself on the tail end of the Distributary. The 3 Assam held the Distributary south of the Beriwala Bridge.

Both the Battalions - 4 Jat and 3 Assam - were still reeling under the shock of the sudden reverse they had suffered. The Pak force was reported to be moving between Qadir Bakhsh and Muazzam, thereby, threatening to turn the flank of the Sabuna Distributary. The fog of war, coupled with exaggerated reports that the enemy opposite him was worth two infantry brigades and more than two armoured regiments, inclined Brig S.S. Chowdhary, to fall back on to the Fazilka fortress and readjust the defences. Maj Gen Ram Singh, however, overruled him and told him that defences on the Sabuna Distributary would form part of the main defences and instructed Brig Chowdhary not only to evict the enemy from the Beriwala Bridge where he had secured a lodgement but also to capture as many BOPs as possible, especially to the west of Fazilka and opposite the southern half

of the Sabuna Distributary(160).

The 4 Jat launched a second counter-attack on the Beriwalla Bridge on the night 4/5 Dec under the orders of Maj Gen Ram Singh. This time the tanks were in fire support role. But the Pak shelling was so intensive and deadly that it made the counter-attack ineffectual. The Jats suffered heavy casualties, and a total of nine tanks either got bogged down or were destroyed. The infantry was only able to regain possession of Gurmukh Khera and part of the Bund north of the Beriwalla Bridge.

Maj Gen Ram Singh told Lt Gen N.C. Rawlley, GOC 11 Corps, that 67 Indep Inf Bde was discomposed and flustered; its men were demoralised and put out, and he wanted the Brigade to be replaced by another Brigade. This was not agreed to, but the Army Commander (Lt Gen K.P. Candeth) agreed to 3/11 GR being released from 116 Inf Bde and moved to Fazilka. The Battalion reached there on 7 Dec. Candeth also released 115 Inf Bn (TA) less two companies to strengthen the Fazila garrison. The Foxtrot Sector Commander, Ram Singh, further reinforced the garrison by moving one company 60 Engr Regt from Abohar to Fazilka(161).

Having failed to dislodge the enemy in spite of two counter-attacks, 4 Jat supported by tanks launched a third attack on the night 5/6 Dec. This also failed miserably, with the Jats suffering heavy casualties.

After the arrival of 3/11 GR on the scene, it was considered opportune to release 15 Rajput from the Fazilka defences with a view to launching a counter-attack. The counter-attack was made on the night 8/9 Dec, but the Rajputs also recoiled in the face of intense artillery and small arms fire by the Pakistanis.

The heavy losses suffered so far in men and equipment led to the decision that the Pak force be contained on the Sabuna Distributary and should not be allowed to advance further. An enemy attack from the northern direction had been on the cards. It became imminent when the Pak Commander moved approximately one infantry battalion and a troop of tanks into the general area north of Fazilka. The threat was too serious to be ignored. The Indian flank was exposed and the enemy could circumvent the Sabuna defences. To counteract the threat, it was considered essential to capture area Muazzam, and the task was entrusted to 3/11 GR. The Battalion encountered negligible opposition and gained possession of the village Muazzam by mid-night 11/12 Dec. In furtherance of the

objective of disposing of the enemy threat from the north, 15 Rajputs launched an attack on Ghazi Post on the night 13/14 Dec. The Rajputs this time caught their enemy completely unawares. They made a wide, encircling move, went into the rear of the Pak defences and made an attack from a direction never anticipated. The Battalion knocked out two and captured one Sherman tank, seized a large amount of weapons, equipment and ammunition and also captured a large number of prisoners, including the Ranger Officer(162). The Battalion, however, failed to reap the benefits of its efforts. The Pakistanis counter-attacked. The Rajputs, who had not regained their poise, had to withdraw, abandoning most of the arms and equipment they had captured. To avoid further erosion of the position, one company 3/11 GR was moved up and positioned in area Muazzam BOP - Muazzam Bund.

Even as the Ghazi Post was being attacked on the night 13/14 Dec, 4 Jat mounted the fifth Indian, and their fourth, counter-attack to recapture the Beriwalla Bridge, but once again they failed and suffered heavy casualties. After this, the Indian troops stayed put on the Sabuna Distributary and in the area north of Fazilka.

The operations in Fazilka were characterised by fierce fighting, stretching over a period of 14 days. The 4 Jat fought determinedly and suffered heavy casualties. The 3/11 GR and 15 Rajputs also suffered heavy casualties, caused mainly by artillery fire. The total casualties suffered in this Sector were large enough to give an idea of the severity of the fighting, viz., killed 189, including 11 Officers and 10 JCOs, wounded 425 and missing 196(163).

As was the case with most sectors in the Western Theatre, there was paucity of intelligence about the enemy deployment in this Sector too. What intrigued the Indian military planners most in the northern part of this theatre was the precise location of Pakistan 7 Inf Div.

In the Foxtrot and Southern Command Sectors, the unconfirmed intelligence about the location of 33 Inf Div in the Bahawalpur area and of 1 Armd Div in the Okara area, inhibited bold strategic planning and confident moves.

On the concept of battle in the Fazilka Sector, there were differences of opinion between the higher commanders. While the Army Headquarters and Headquarters Western Command wanted Fazilka to be defended at the international border to prevent loss

of real estate and to impose attrition on the enemy, the GOC 11 Corps, Lt Gen N.C. Rawley, held the view that the battle should be joined at Fazilka, which would favour the defenders. This divergence of opinion was unfortunately not ironed out before the commencement of the operations, and this influenced the distribution of available forces between the Sabuna Distributary and the close defence of the Fazilka town. In relation to the threat, the troop density was low, and the units and formations held large frontages with practically no reserves. The 67 Inf Bde was over stretched and the numerous and divergent tasks assigned to it were apparently beyond its capability, comprising as they did the diverse and mutually incompatible functions of defending Fazilka at all costs, containing the Sulaimanke bridgehead, and launching limited offensives. This ambivalence also seems to have been responsible for the sector suffering from ad-hocism and lack of essential infra-structure from the inception.

The tactical concept followed in the Fazilka Sector was fortress type defence and defence on built up areas, and ditch-cum-bund defence. The fact that the forward defences were simply overrun by the enemy, and the bridges were destroyed hastily, shows that the bulk of troops were deployed ahead to provide depth and to ensure that likely assembly areas, FUPs and gun areas for assault on the built up areas were denied to the enemy. The hasty and thoughtless destruction of the bridges deprived the Indian troops of the flexibility to carry out any manoeuvre on the far side of the obstacle.

In view of the tactical significance of the Pak salient across the Sabuna Distributary, a series of counter-attacks were launched under pressure from the higher Headquarters. But the salient could not be eliminated (164). Pak force offered dogged resistance, and relied heavily on fire power. Intense shelling of the objective area and the attacking troops broke up all the Indian assaults. These tactics proved especially effective in the semi-desert area under the Foxtrot Sector where there was no cover worth the name.

However, much loss in men and material could have been avoided if hurried and repeated counter-attacks had not been made to dislodge the enemy from the Beriwalla Bridge. Deplorably enough, the attacks were all made from the same approach, even though it had little room for dispersal or manoeuvre and the attacking troops only exposed themselves frontally to the enemy, offering his artillery easy targets. The heavy casualties sustained eroded morale

further and further. Also the old dictum "In battle never reinforce a failure" was lost sight of. Some attempt was, however, made to change the method and direction of the attack. Rawley tried alternative manoeuvres and directed Ram Singh to raise a task force from whatever reserves were available. The latter ordered Brig G.S. Reen(165) to manoeuvre this force into the rear of the enemy at Pakka from the south-west. However, as not enough armour was available in the sector, the plan to launch the operation was held in abeyance. The 15 Rajput did initiate the manoeuvre from the north-east by assaulting the Ghazi post. Unfortunately, however, this operation too could not be developed further, as the Rajputs failed to hold on to the objective captured by them(166). Rawley also ordered on 16 Dec a raid across the border towards area Mandi Sadiq Ganj, but before it could be executed, cease fire was declared(167).

"Juliet" and Suratgarh Sub-Sectors

The sub-sector named Juliet was assigned the task of defending Abohar by holding covering positions on the Gang Canal. It had its Advance HQ at Haripura (SM 3532), and 19 Rajput and C Sqn 18 Cavalry were deployed in the area. Suratgarh sub-sector was defended by 163 Inf Bde, comprising 5 Bihar and 2/8 GR battalions.

Both these sub-sectors of Foxtrot Sector remained dormant and saw no action worth mention in the War of 1971.

The Ganganagar Sector

Ganganagar district was bounded in the north and west by Bahawalpur district of Pakistan. This region was a sandy, ill-watered and generally unproductive, at the edge of Great Indian desert or Thar. With the construction of the Gang Canal, the north-eastern portion of the Ganganagar district had been reclaimed for intensive agricultural production.

It was envisaged that Pakistan might launch a limited offensive to capture territory upto the Gang Canal, or a major offensive to capture area upto the Rajasthan Canal(168). In the latter case, it would become necessary for the invader to capture Ganganagar town in order to open the axis of maintenance for the force across the Gang Canal. So Ganganagar was prepared as a fortress defence, and Para, 4 Para and 11 Dogra were given the task of guarding the various approaches to the town(169).

Prior to cease fire, a few BOPs were successfully raided by the Indian troops in this Sector. But no major action took place during the war. After the cease fire, about one platoon of the Pak troops infiltrated approximately 550-640 metres on 27 Dec and encroached into the area Sand Dunes (SL 7003) under the very nose of the Border Security Force post at Nagi (SL 7100)(170). One company of 4 Para, with one company in reserve, launched an attack to evict them at 0400 hrs on 28 Dec. But the intruders were strongly placed in trenches and bunkers with overhead protection, and had also mined the area. The Pak field and medium guns poured down concentrated fire and engaged the assaulting Indian company. The 4 Para suffered heavy casualties. Undaunted, the Company Commander rallied his troops and, magnificently defying the artillery shelling, assaulted the objective through the minefield(171). This audacity and valour was rewarded and the Pakistanis fled in disorder. The Para company finally secured the objective by 0550 hrs on 28 Dec(172). The Battalion had to contend itself with this success, which it could not exploit further as the area Tilla was heavily fortified with mines and barbed wire obstacles and held by a platoon supported by MMGs, and the high ground east of Jalwala was also strongly held(173). The short, sharp bout ended.

OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTHERN COMMAND THEATRE

The Southern Command was responsible for the defence of Rajasthan (excluding Ganganagar district which was under 11 Corps) and Gujarat with an international border of 1344 km with Pakistan.

The theatre was divided into the following sectors:- (174)

Sector

Formation allotted operational responsibility

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| i) Bikaner Sector | Sector HQ Bikaner, later HQ Kilo Sector. |
| ii) Jaisalmer Sector | 12 Inf Div |
| iii) Barmer Sector | 11 Inf Div |
| iv) Kutch Sector | Sector HQ Bhuj |

Topography

The area under the Southern Command comprised the districts of Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Barmer in Rajasthan and most of the Little Rann and Great Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. The whole Rajasthan Sector was a vast stretch of sand, while the Rann of Kutch was a vast marshy plain(175). The Rajasthan Sector was

situated along the underbelly of the Pakistani province of Sind. It had many strategic objectives, within striking distance, such as the rail and road communications connecting Karachi with Lahore, the Sukkur Dam at Rohri which was vital for the agricultural economy of the region, the naval and air force installations at Karachi, Badin and Malir. The desert belt, however, was not hospitable and acted as a shield for these attractive military targets. The area was a sandy plain with a few rocky patches. It was dry and ill-watered and unkind to all forms of life. The topography was undulating, covered with sand dunes, and uncongenial to wheeled movement.

In the Kilo (Bikaner) Sector in the north, the road communication was poor, posing logistic difficulties. The Jaisalmer district in the centre was bounded on the west, and north-west by Pakistan. The biggest sand-dunes were found in Ramgarh and Sam Tehsils of Jaisalmer. Many sand-dunes had stabilised as sand hills. The Barmer Sector consisted of the southern portion of the Rajasthan desert up to Bakhasar, north of the Little Rann. The area was a vast sand-covered plain with sub-stratum of gneiss, hornblende and quartz, which rose up here and there through the sand, in some instances to a height of 240 to 300 metres. In the extreme north and west, the sandy plain was diversified by sand hills which sometimes rose to height of 90 to 120 metres(176). The main rail and road communications ran from Barmer to Gadra Road via Ramsar and thence to Munabao on the border and linked with the Pakistani system. Only camel tracks crossed the long border northwards from Barmer to Ganganagar. Metalled roads, however, came near the border on either side at several places.

Enemy Threat and Deployment

It was assessed that Pakistan's 18 Inf Div was deployed opposite the Southern Command. The formation included two armoured regiments with Sherman tanks, five wings of Desert and Indus Rangers and seven or eight Mujahid battalions. The Division had no Recce and Support battalion and the armoured regiments did not have modern T-59 tanks. It was also appreciated that in case an unfavourable situation developed consequent upon an Indian offensive, a portion of 33 Inf Div would be diverted to reinforce 18 Inf Div(177).

The Indo-Pak border in this area was extensive and far-flung. Pakistan's main defences were located at the edge of the green belt. They were not based on any natural obstacle, though minefields had been laid(178). It was reckoned that Pakistan would

generally remain on the defensive in this theatre, as its attention would be focussed on protecting the rail and road communication centres in areas Rahimyar Khan - Sadiqabad (WC 2994) and Naya Chor (QA 4050), opposite the Jaisalmer Sector in the north, and area Naya Chor - Umarkot (QA 3331) opposite the Barmer Sector. For, these focal points were within reach from the Indian border. Pakistan would, thus, have the advantage of easy availability of water and better communications at the edge of the green belt, while the Indian forces would be handicapped on those counts(179). The Kilo and Kutch Sectors had inhospitable terrain, poor road communications and consequent logistic problems for both sides. At best, Pakistan could mount a limited offensive against either the Jaisalmer or the Barmer Sectors at any one time, with a force of approximately two infantry brigades. The distances from her roadhead would make it difficult for them to maintain such forces, and the capability of the Sherman tanks for traversing the desert for long distances was also restricted(180).

As it turned out, Pakistan deployed approximately one infantry division north of Rahimyar Khan in the jaisalmer Sector. In the Barmer Sector, one infantry brigade group with one armoured regiment (Shermans) was positioned. And the area Mirpur Khas had one infantry brigade group as reserve(181).

Deployment of Indian Forces

Lt Gen G.G. Bewoor, the GOC-in-C Southern Command, had given the 12 Inf Div (Maj Gen Khambata) the operational responsibility for the Jaisalmer Sector, and 11 Inf Div (Maj Gen R.D.R. Anand) for the Barmer Sector, while Commander Kilo Sector and Commander Kutch Sector were operationally responsible for their respective areas.

The 12 Inf Div had 45 Inf Bde Gp strung along the road Kishangarh - Tanot - Sadhewala, the 30 Inf Bde Gp in the rear at Ghantiyal Ka Mandir (LM 1219) and 322 Inf Bde Gp deployed at Kuriya Beri (LM 2225). There was only one Coy located at Longewala to the south. The Division's administrative echelon and supply elements were at Ramgarh.

The 11 Inf Div had deployed its 31 Inf Bde Gp at Gadra Road, 85 Inf Bde at Harsani and 330 Inf Bde at Chauhtan to the south-east.

The task entrusted to 12 Inf Div was to destroy any enemy force that might enter the Jaisalmer Sector, and to undertake offensive operations across the Indo-Pak border by advancing on axis Kishangarh -

Sakhirewala Khu (LM 4438) - Bhagla (WC 6992) and contact Pakistani defences in area Rahimyar Khan; cutting Pakistani rail communications and destroying maximum enemy forces in area Rahimyar Khan -Sadiqabad(182).

The 11 Inf Div was charged with the responsibility of denying approaches into the Barmer Sector, undertaking offensive operations to capture area Khokhropar(QA 8271) and Gadra City, dominating the general area Mankau (LV 6619) - Relnor (QA 6491), covering ingress routes to the Miajlar area by eliminating the Pakistani border posts, and developing a threat towards Naya Chor(183)

Commander Kilo Sector had orders to deny approaches into his sector and destroy any enemy that might enter it, and also destroy some specific Pak Ranger posts. Commander Kutch Sector was commanded to deny approaches to his sector by occupying area Kuarbet (QL 2565) - Nara Bet (QM 9191), prevent enemy penetration beyond the general line Lakhpat (UP 1848) - Khavda (QL 2547) - Nara Bet, and, if so ordered, destroy Pakistani Indus Ranger Posts in area Nagar Parkar (QG 4107) and Rahim Ki Bazar (UK 6406)(184).

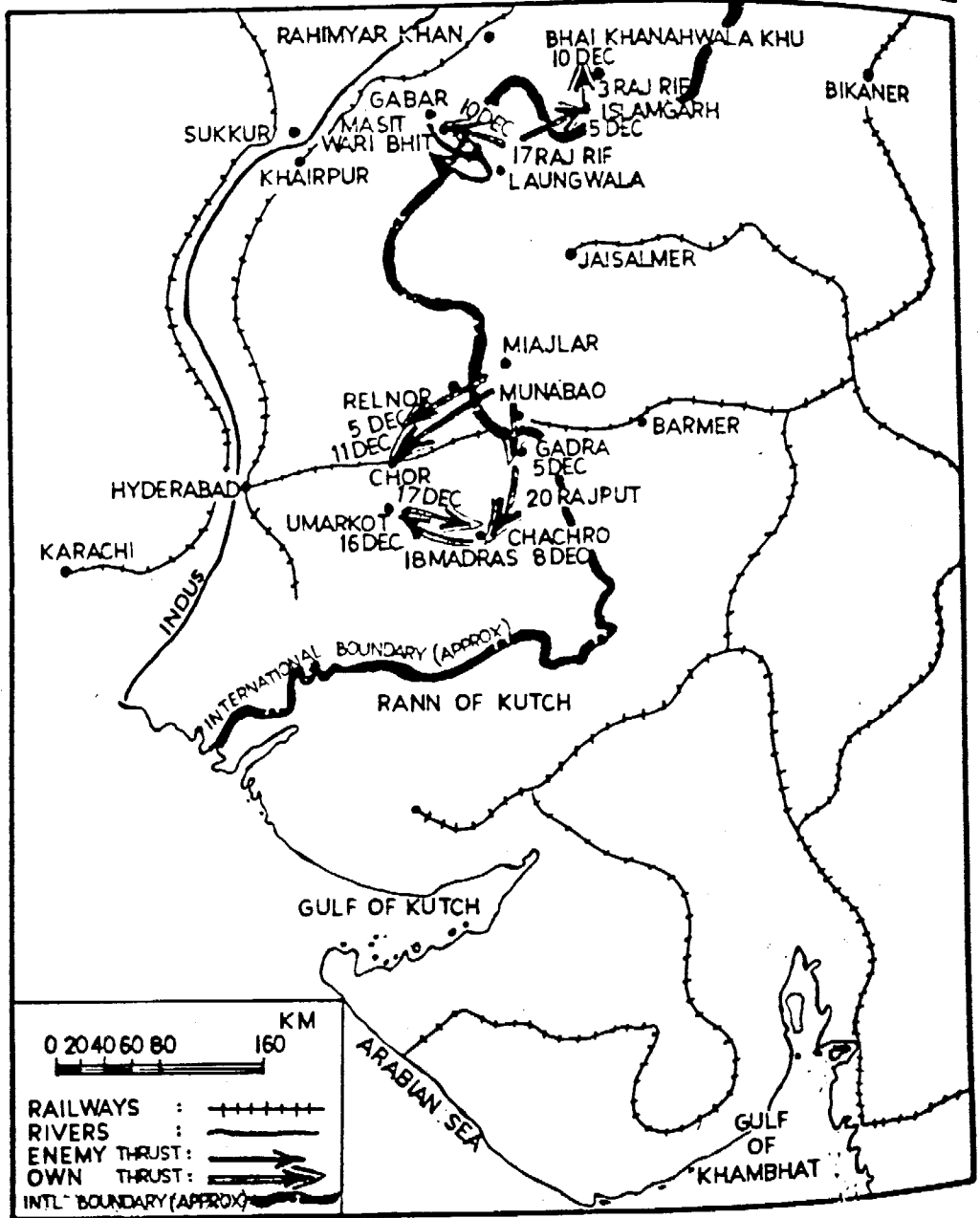
OC 10 Para Commando was assigned the task of assisting the operations of both 12 Inf Div and 11 Inf Div. The Commandos played a significant part in these operations(185).

The only reserve available to the whole of the Southern Command was 27 Madras which was expected to carry out multiple contingency tasks(186).

It was intended to give the impression of simultaneous attack by 11 and 12 Inf Divs on the whole front in order to confuse the Pakistanis about the main thrust line. 11 Inf Div launched its offensive at 1830 hrs on 4 Dec. The 12 Inf Div required some more time to move to the assembly areas. But, to achieve the impression of concurrent attack, this formation was ordered to launch the first phase of the offensive on 4 Dec and capture Sakhirewala Khu and Islamgarh (LM 5729) and raid Sandh (LL 7335),(187) though the main offensive towards Rahimyar Khan would start a day later.

The operations in this theatre are dealt with here from north to south.

THE SOUTHERN COMMAND OPERATIONS



The Kilo Sector Operations

In the Kilo Sector near Bikaner, the operations were basically defensive, and offensive actions were taken only against selected Ranger posts, owing to poor communications, desert terrain, lack of water and limited resources. The Pak BOP at Ghunnewala Khu was successfully raided by a column from 11 BSF Bn on 4 Dec(188). The attack on Rannal by 13 Grenadiers on 6 Dec was preceded by 20 minutes of preparatory bombardment which shook the garrison and the post was captured at 0945 hrs. Next day, the Battalion attacked the Ranger post at Rukanwala from the north and captured it at 1500 hrs(189). Meanwhile, 11 BSF Bn had captured Salamsar (LN 7341) at 0400 hrs. It was then planned to capture Bijnot, but administrative difficulties compelled the postponement of the attack. The Indian Air Force softened the defences on 10 Dec by carrying out a strike mission on the post at 1500 hrs. The 13 Grenadiers marched upon the post the same night, found it vacated, and occupied it. On 17 Dec one platoon of 12 BSF Bn occupied the Ranger post Boreh Ka Toba at 1100 hrs(190). The operations in this Sector resulted in the occupation of 320 sq km of Pakistani territory(191)

The Jaisalmer Sector

As already stated, 12 Inf Div was to begin its main offensive towards Rahimyar Khan on the night 5/6 Dec. Before that, however, to give an impression of concurrent offensive with that of 11 Inf Div in the Barmer Sector, the Division mounted a minor offensive to capture certain enemy positions on 4 Dec. The Indian Air Force made an air strike at Sakhirewala Khu at 1720 hrs. The 3 Jat crossed the international border soon after and captured the position by 1830 hrs(192). The next morning, (5 Dec) at 0400 hrs, 3 Raj Rif captured Islamgarh(193).

The Battle for Longewala: However, soon after, at 0530 hrs on 5 Dec information was received that six Pak tanks had been seen in the area Kharotar (IQ 8488) near Longewala. A slip-up on the part of 12 Inf Div stands out in bold relief. Although preplanned Tactical Recce was available to it throughout the war,(194) it made no effort to recce the Ghabbar-Longeweala axis, trotting out the fallacious plea that there was paucity of Tac Recce sorties(195). Had it detected the Pak thrust on 4 Dec, the Division could have met and dissipated it, and gone ahead with its offensive as originally planned. As it turned out, the Divisional offensive (OP Dare Devil) was postponed, till the clouds gathering over Longewala were dispelled.

Air strikes were requested for and immediately mounted from Jaisalmer airfield. Fifteen modern Pak tanks (T-59) were attacked in the area Longewala at 0830 hrs on 5 Dec and four were destroyed(196). Air recce reported that the advancing column, which had already crossed into the Indian territory and was stretched over a distance of 20 km along the track Kharotar BP 638 - Masjid Wari Bhit (LL 6202) - Gabar, consisted approximately of one armoured regiment of T-59 tanks and one infantry brigade(197). The ominous development indicated that an attack on Longewala and subsequently on Ramgarh and Jaisalmer - only about 100 km from Longewala along a motorable road - was in the offing. All available air effort was diverted to deal with the situation. A total of eleven air strike missions were flown. Seventeen Pak tanks were knocked out and 23 damaged(198). Early in the morning of 6 Dec, the invaders intermittently shelled Longewala with medium artillery(199) and at 1145 hrs their tanks were again reported in area Kharotar(200). A strike mission by the Indian Air Force knocked down two more tanks and twenty vehicles(201). The armoured column was broken up. The major credit for this goes, of course, to the IAF which rose to the occasion on very short notice and inflicted crippling losses on the enemy tanks and vehicles. The company defending Longewala also held out tenaciously against heavy odds until reinforcements arrived. The other factors contributing to Pakistan's debacle at Longewala were her inability to build up and maintain the momentum of her offensive due to the difficult sandy terrain, and failure to provide air cover for her force. Even so, if the Pakistanis had pressed home their attack on 5 Dec, they would have occupied Longewala, though it also appears certain that if they had gone deeper leaving the bulk of 12 Inf Div on their left flank, their total destruction would have become a virtual certainty.

Reports suggested that the bulk of the invading force had bogged on the axis Gabar (BP 638). The Army Commander, Lt Gen G.G. Bewoor, therefore, urged Maj Gen Khambata, GOC 12 Inf Div, to destroy the enemy force (22 Cavalry and approximately two infantry battalions) quickly. He told him that the enemy was without water, facing logistic difficulties, and stuck in the sand and the Indian Air Force had already destroyed half his tank force. Indian armour enjoyed numerical superiority and matched the Pakistan armour in type of tanks. Khambata must not, therefore, let the enemy tanks get away, and must also destroy his infantry within the Indian border, especially as the Indian Air Force was fully geared to support him(202).

The Indian Air Force flew five more strike missions on 6 Dec and played havoc with the Pak column(203). Bewoor congratulated the IAF on their magnificent performance.

The Pak force was in disarray and in the process of withdrawing. The pursuit of the enemy, however, did not immediately get off the ground. 7 Dec was spent in making preparations for the counter-offensive. Bewoor urged Khambata again to speed up the pace of the counter-offensive(204). Had Khambata been able to do so, the whole enemy column could have been annihilated(205). But the pace of the counter-offensive was painfully slow. It commenced only in the morning of 8 Dec, and did not make much headway even by noon. This irritated Bewoor, who directed Khambata to launch strong brigade attacks, supported by armour and artillery and direct the operation personally. Khambata, however, continued to grapple with the enemy companies deployed opposite 322 Inf Bde in the Sakhirewala Khu area in the north, and those holding Sarkari Ka Tibba (LQ 7293) in front of 30 Inf Bde(206). Bewoor asked Khambata to destroy the intruding enemy forces before nightfall on 9 Dec. The Division cleared the invaders from the Jaisalmer Sector by 2135 hrs on 9 Dec(207). One company of 17 Raj Rif advanced beyond the international border and captured area Masit Wari Bhit at 0300 hrs on the night 9/10 Dec after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. In the north 3 Raj Rif captured Bhai Khanahwala Khu (IM 5242) the same day taking 24 prisoners of war. On the night 10/11 Dec, the Pakistanis were compelled to withdraw from Tamanchi Wala Toba (LL 9138)(208).

The Division did not, however, achieve much success in the Longewala area. But for dislodging the invaders from Indian territory and carrying out a few offensive probes, the Division contented itself with merely keeping the enemy at bay(209).

Therefore, on 12 Dec the Division was ordered to send 322 Inf Bde to the Munabao area, and the next day 27 Madras was also taken away and sent to Kutch Sector. Still, the Cease Fire found 12 Inf Div in occupation of about 800 sq km of enemy territory.

Many reasons were given for 12 Div's failure to destroy the Pak Column near Longewala or advance towards Rahimyar Khan. It could not undertake a major thrust across the border, it is said, in the absence of the support of an integral medium artillery regiment which was surely needed for an advance by armour. The AMX tanks of 20 Lancers were not capable of offensive operation over a long distance(210). The radio communications were in a poor state. Nor was

there adequate logistic and administrative backing available for maintaining the advance forces. While many of these pleas have some force, it cannot be denied that the advance towards Rahimyar Khan had been deliberately planned, and the plan had presumably been accepted as feasible by the Div Commander. Changing the axis of operations in mid-stride is admittedly a difficult manoeuvre and takes some time. HQ 12 Inf Div took 48 hours to do so, but failed to pursue and destroy a retreating enemy in the Longewala Sector, even after the 48 hours.

Operations in the Barmer Sector

On the night 4/5 Dec, 11 Inf Div launched a three-pronged offensive to capture territory up to Naya Chor. The main thrust was on the axis Munabao - Parbat Ali - Naya Chor. The three different thrust axes were: (211)

- (i) The Northern Sub-Sector of Mithrau-Mankau - Saidau (LV 6516) - Relnor-Kitlor (QA 6484) - Jamo (QA 7384).
- (ii) The Central Sub-Sector astride the railway line and track running west from Munabao to Naya Chor.
- (iii) The Southern Sub-Sector of Gadra Road - Gadra City (QB 2965) - Pirani Ka Par (QB 0752) - Dali (QB 1741) - Bagal (QB 0436) and Kelnor - Bhame Ka Tar - Khimsar.

These operations progressed as follows :

The Northern Sub-Sector : Crossing the international border at 1830 hrs on 4 Dec, 17 Grenadiers, the Camel Battalion, secured Ranak - Dhar (QA 7294) at 2359 hrs(212). The next day, it captured Rotak (QA 7091), Relnor and Mankor (QA 6895). From Relnor the Battalion secured area Parchiarisar and Saidau on 7 Dec(213). The Grenadiers were to develop operations along the axis Relnor - Naya Chor and pose a threat to Naya Chor. But 2,000 Mujahids were reported to be concentrated in area west of Saidau, and the task was modified and limited to consolidating the areas captured and denying the ingress routes to Miajlar(214).

The Central Sub-Sector: The Division's main thrust was made in this Sub-Sector, on the axis Munabao - Parbat Ali - Naya Chor. In this sector, the Indian Air Force carried out strikes on Gazi Camp, Kajlor and Khokhropar in the evening of 4 Dec(215). This was followed by a swift offensive by 85 Inf Bde,

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which captured Gazi Camp and Kajlor on the night 4/5 Dec and Bhitala and Khokhropar the next morning. The defenders offered light opposition at these places and left behind a large quantity of ammunition(216).

But now the Brigade faced problems of communication. The track beyond Khokhropar was in a bad condition and the one forward of Bhitala was much worse. The railway line was found in good shape, but there was no rolling stock at the Khokhropar railway station. A duck board track had to be constructed from Munabao to Khokhropar for the movement of logistics(217). These problems slowed down the advance of the Brigade. However, by 1400 hrs on 6 Dec, the area Vasarabh - Sakna (QA 6659) had been secured(218). On 7 Dec, 10 Sikh LI advanced along the railway line and occupied Jalu Jo Chaunro (QA 6158) by 0500 hrs and area Parche Ji Vari by 1000 hrs. The 10 Sikh, who had resumed advance at 0200 hrs south of the railway line on axis Vasarabh - Parche Ji Vari (QA 5156) - Naya Chor, secured an area of approximately 900 metres south-east of Parche Ji Vari by 1300 hrs. The 2 Mahar, who had secured the Vasarabh railway station, advanced along the railway line and south of it and firmed in at Parche Ji Vari railway station by 1500 hrs. During the day, PAF aircraft strafed and bombed 85 Inf Bde four times. Three Sabres and one B-57 strafed Vasarabh and Khokhropar railway stations also at 1530 hrs. The Indian Air Force flew four strike missions in the area Naya Chor(219). The Brigade reached the vicinity of Naya Chor by 0800 hrs on 8 Dec and established contact with the defenders in the area Apex (QA 5051), (220) which was the screen position of the main defences at Naya Chor and formed part of a protective and early warning system(221). By the morning of 11 Dec, the Indian troops moved up to Parbat Ali. The 10 Sikh and 2 Mahar attacked the Apex position at 0135 hrs on 11 Dec. The Pakistanis did not offer much resistance and pulled back to Parbat Ali, which was strongly held by one infantry battalion with at least ten MMGs(222).

It was discovered that Parbat Ali could not be taken by an improptu attack. It dominated both the railway line and the main tracks to Naya Chor and so was build up into a formidable position for the defence of Naya Chor. It was protected by a minefield with a depth of 550 to 730 metres and also by wire obstacles laid in front of the forward localities(223).

Parbat Ali was subjected to a brigade level attack carried out by 2 Mahar and 10 Sikh with 10 Sikh LI and 2 Raj Rif respectively providing them firm bases and simulating attacks from other directions.

The 3 Indep Armd Sqn provided anti-tank cover and simulated an outflanking move on the left flank. The assaulting battalions were provided one medium and three field batteries each. The 78 Fd Coy were to breach the minefield and create a vehicle lane from Apex to Parbat Ali(224).

The attack, preceded by a 10 minute barrage of artillery fire, was launched at 0300 hrs on 13 Dec from an unexpected direction. The defenders did not expect an attack so soon after the capture of the Apex area, least of all from an approach that involved a difficult climb of 80 degrees. The assaulting companies reached the objective at 0745 hrs(225). They came under MMG and small arms fire only when they had come close to the forward localities. Nor could the Pakistanis use artillery or mortar fire during the assault. But still they offered stiff resistance. Both 2 Mahar and 10 Sikh mopped up from trench to trench and succeeded in finally evicting the garrison(226) by 1000 hrs on 13 Dec after hand-to-hand fighting. The Pak troops put in three successive counter-attacks, which were all beaten back. They left behind 57 dead, and 35 prisoners of war were captured(227).

The 85 Inf Bde continued its efforts to close up to Naya Chor. The duck board track had been constructed up to a distance of 9.5 km from Khokhropar. The 10 Sikh LI secured area Parche Ji Vari Village by 0530 hrs on 15 Dec and cleared area Six Trees by 1100 hrs, and thus arrived before the main enemy defences. But these were protected by an extensive minefield in front. The Pakistanis counter-attacked twice with infantry and armour. Though the Sikhs beat back the counter-attacks, they soon withdrew to the area Village as the Six Trees position was dominated by the enemy(228). As the PAF was very active and as it was becoming increasingly apparent that the Division had over-stretched itself, it was decided to give up the piecemeal nibbling of enemy defences and put in a more concentrated effort after proper build up(229). But the Cease Fire came before the build up.

The most important factor which led to the stalemate was the incorrect intelligence about the state of the track Munabao - Naya Chor. It had been appreciated earlier that only a part of the track needed laying of duck board track. It was now discovered that the intelligence had been false and the whole length of the track from Khokhropar to Naya Chor had to be attended to(230). One important gain had, however, been made by these operations: Pakistan had been compelled to reinforce the Naya Chor sector

with 33 Inf Div which relieved pressure, to some extent, opposite the Western Command.

The Southern Sub-Sector : The 31 Inf Bde crossed the international border at 1830 hrs on 4 Dec. The 20 Rajput captured Bhame Ka Tar by 1900 hrs and 18 Madras seized Mahadan Ki Dhani (QB 3268) at 2305 hrs(231). On 5 Dec the Pakistanis were dispossessed of many more positions. The 15 Kumaon wrested Gadra City at 0735 hrs that day, in the face of heavy mortar, MMG and LMG fire and after hand-to-hand fighting for an hour. The defenders suffered 40 killed and many wounded(232). The Battalion then advanced towards Dali (QB 1741) at 1400 hrs and captured Kathe Ka Par (QB 2557) by 1800 hrs. The 20 Rajput attacked Khimsar at 1540 hrs and secured it by 1800 hrs. The Battalion suffered only 2 ORs wounded while dead bodies of 1 Officer and 40 ORs of the enemy were recovered. The 18 Madras helped themselves to Pirani Ka Par by 1300 hrs(233). The 15 Kumaon contacted Dali position at 1345 hrs on 6 Dec(234). The Engineers made provision for the maintenance of the track Gadra-Dali. This facilitated the capture of Dali at 0600 hrs on 7 Dec(235). At about 0800 hrs on 7 Dec, 9 Madras captured Mahendro Ro Par (QA 8054) and Fateh Ro Par. The same day (7 Dec) a combat group of 10 Para Commando raided Chachro at about 0300 hrs with a view to facilitating the capture of the place by 20 Rajput. The Commandos captured 17 prisoners of war and some weapons and equipment(236). The Rajputs cleared Chachro by 1300 hrs on 8 Dec, and were thus in possession of the area Khimsar-Chachro. The Commandos then left for Khimsar. Another combat group of the Commandos raided Virawah at 0200 hrs on 8 Dec(237).

The 31 Inf Bde had thus captured Gadra City, Pirani Ka Par, Mahendro Ro Par, Dali, Khimsar, Bagal and Chachro in rapid succession. The troops now concentrated on the consolidation of these areas and on the improvement and maintenance of the tracks and the build up of logistic support.

It was, however, proving difficult in this Sector to build up and maintain the Division on a single desert track. It also appeared necessary to develop a subsidiary operation elsewhere in order to draw a portion of the enemy away from Naya Chor, and thus assist the main offensive against that place. Hence the original plan of confining 31 Inf Bde to the Chachro axis was modified, and it was ordered to send one battalion group to advance on the Chachro - Umarnkot axis(238). The 18 Madras, with one field battery and one light battery, was allotted this task, and the advance commenced at 1400 hrs on 13 Dec.

But it proved an ill-advised operation. The Battalion reached the area Hingo Ro Par (QA 4229), 7 km east of Umarkot and took position there during night 16/17 Dec(239). The track conditions did not permit forward movement of the field guns. The defenders were prolific in the use of mines and there were extensive anti-personnel and anti-tank mines along the entire front in depth. A large number of nuisance mines had also been laid along the tracks and the railway line(240). The Battalion was shelled heavily in morning of 17 Dec and was subsequently assaulted. Though the initial attack did not have much impact, the Pakistanis put in a major attack the second time. The infantry column was thus stuck up in an area where it could neither be reinforced nor supported by artillery from the main axis. The Battalion had also spent most of its small arms ammunition. It was, therefore, compelled to fall back to an area within the range of Indian field guns. Fortunately, the Pakistanis proved unenterprising and did not pursue the Battalion. The operation thus fizzled out and the Battalion rejoined 31 Inf Bde at Chachro(241).

During the operations in the Barmer Sector the 11 Inf Div had occupied 4582 sq km of Pakistan territory,(242) even though the objective had eluded it.

Operations in the Kutch Sector

Kutch was a crescent-shaped region forming part of north-west Gujarat. To its north and north-west lay Sind (Pakistan). On the whole, it was a treeless, barren and rocky area, with the aspect varied by ranges of hills, rugged and deeply cut river beds, and tracts of rich pasture land(243). To the south, a high bank of sand lined the sea coast. The international border ran here West to East along the Rann of Kutch, which in winter looked like a frozen desert of salt with few tracks or inhabited localities.

Opposite this Sector, Pakistan had deployed Rangers and Mujahids, backed by regular troops in selected areas. They remained on the defensive in this area, perhaps because they had the impression that one infantry brigade group was deployed in this Sector,(244) whereas, in reality, there were only three BSF battalions and about one infantry battalion of the territorial Army. The Sector Commander had been ordered to remain on the defensive, and to take offensive action only at a favourable time and place without disturbing the balance of deployment. When the intercepted messages revealed that the Pakistanis

planned to vacate certain posts from the Eastern and Central Sub-Sectors, the BSF battalions distinguished themselves by carrying out offensive tasks for which they were not trained or equipped, and captured a large number of posts opposite Dharamsala (QL 1871) and Suigam (QN 0879)(245). The 10 Para Commandos concentrated at Nagar Parkar on 16 Dec and infiltrated and softened up Virawah on 17 Dec by carrying out successive raids. These paved the way for the capture of the whole of the Nagar Parkar Bulge, though not the town itself. So, the Kutch Sector at the time of the Cease Fire occupied 1741 sq km of Pakistan territory.

In the Southern Command area Pakistan could not occupy an inch of Indian territory, while the Indian forces occupied a total of 7443 sq km of Pakistan territory.

LOOKING BACK

On the Western Front the task of the Indian Army was basically to hold the ground, while the Pak Army had to attack and capture enough territory to off-set likely losses in East Pakistan. In the 1971 operations, the Pakistan Army could occupy some territory only in Chhamb, Hussainiwala, and Fazilka Sectors, and these gains were smaller than the Pak losses in the Shyok Valley, Kargil, Chicken's Neck, Shakargarh, and Barmer areas. Pakistan, therefore, had no advantage of conquered territories in the peace negotiations after the loss of entire area of East Pakistan. That was the basis of Pakistan's overall defeat in 1971.

Looking at the Western Front alone, however, the honours were more evenly divided. The Indian Army had planned for an offensive-defensive war to capture and keep the initiative in the West also. But at the same time they had orders to lose no territory anywhere. Such a stipulation over-stretched the resources at the disposal of the Indian Commanders, who tried to play safe by prematurely breaking-up their reserves and dishing out units to vulnerable areas even before the out-break of hostilities. The stipulation also robbed the Commanders of all flexibility and manoeuvrability in conducting the campaign.

In retrospect, it is obvious that the decision at the highest level to change the posture from the offensive to the defensive at the eleventh hour had disastrous consequences, particularly in such key areas as the Chhamb Sector. Irrespective of the spate of arguments and the semantic sophistry that followed the Chhamb debacle, and even though an abler Indian Commander would have escaped more lightly, one

important fact has to be recognised; firm base for an attack cannot have the same defence potential as an organised defended sector.

High Altitude and Hill Sectors

The thinning out of a Brigade from 3 Inf Div consequent on the onset of winter was a sound decision. In the Shyok Valley, operations were successfully carried out at exceptional heights and climatic conditions. But the fact that success was made possible by a very weak opposition should warn Indian Commanders that similar feats would not be repeated against a better equipped and more determined enemy.

The Kargil Sector witnessed bitter close quarter battle where Indian troops got the better of the enemy and won further cushion to the security of the vital Srinagar-Leh artery.

Further South in Punch, timely reinforcement and spirited fighting averted what would have been a major triumph of the Pakistan forces. But the laurels of Punch were squandered away in the ill-fated battle of Daruchhian where the attack floundered on account of faulty planning and poor management.

Plains Sectors

The fate of India's Chhamb offensive was sealed the moment the critical decision was taken just two days before D Day to remain on the defensive initially. The planners ignored a series of indicators and intelligence reports pointing to a contemplated offensive by Pakistan. Circumspection in the face of unambiguous danger signals was thrown overboard. Instead, a misplaced sense of commitment to the offensive pervaded the Div HQ, regardless of the major shift in the strategic posture. Consequently, the Pakistani offensive caught the Division in a state of imbalance, which was compounded by panic reactions. The series of Indian responses which entailed move of reinforcements from Samba and Jammu upset the Indian offensive plans elsewhere. Even with the benefit of hind sight, if Pakistan claims that its 'spoiling attack' in Chhamb achieved its purpose, the assertion appears justified because the offensive, apart from ensuring depth to its vulnerable areas dislocated the contemplated Indian offensive to a lesser or greater degree in a wide area.

The operation in the Chicken's Neck was a copy-book example of an attack by infiltration which was boldly conceived and well executed. The Indians

not only removed a dangerous salient but induced hasty reactions on Pakistan High Command, particularly in relation to the defence of the critical Marala Headworks. The attrition inflicted on the Pak Army, however, was minimal in this action.

The 1 Corps operations have to be viewed against the over-riding consideration that the vital Jammu-Pathankot artery had to be protected against an anticipated foray by Pakistani's 6 Armd Div. At the same time a major offensive was sought to be launched not only to capture some 'real estate' but to maul the Pakistani forces. The ghost of 6 Armd Div appeared to have constantly haunted the GOC 1 Corps. By 9-10 December, it should have been quite clear that the threat from Armd Div was no longer credible. There was still time for bold manoeuvres to outflank the obstacles and hit the communication centres at the rear. Instead, hard sloggng matches were deliberately stage-managed against continuous minefield belts and skilful rearguard actions by a nimble-witted enemy. Halfhearted attempts were made to take Shakargarh. The failures only added regrettable chapters to a ponderous story of excessive caution and no ingenuity. With those resources 1 Corps should have made a significant dent. In actual fact, it barely made an impression on the periphery.

Two major setbacks characterised operations in the Punjab Sector. The Hussainiwala enclave was lost on account of complacency followed by confusion. The pugnacity of the forward troops could not be sustained by the indecisive pusillanimity of the commanders, who chose to remain on the safe ground of the Eastern bank instead of crossing over to the West and taking over the battle. In the Fazilka Sector the concept of operation was clouded by ambiguity. The commanders at different levels were not on the same grid as far as the design of the battle was concerned. One company of the enemy rushed to the important bridge at Beriwala and captured it. Instead of delivering well chosen ripostes to out-manoeuve the enemy from his precarious toe hold, futile and bloody counter attacks were repeated. The carnage was frightful, the gains negligible.

The Desert Sector

The unexpected Pak attack on Longewala and the vicious strikes by IAF, which played an outstanding role, changed the complexion of the 12 Inf Div operations. In retrospect, it is doubtful whether the original plans aimed at the capture of Rahimyar Khan had any chance of success. Rahimyar Khan was held almost by two Pak brigades. The head start given by the IAF was not exploited by the ground forces. In

the Barmer Sector the operation made satisfactory progress till the force overstretched itself and suffered a reverse on the outskirts of Umarkot. The operations were enlivened by such unorthodox operations as the daring Commando raid on Chachro.

A survey of the operations in the desert gives an impression that the plans were far too ambitious. Lack of mobility and fire power and the special problems of desert logistics should have dictated a more modest plan which packed sufficient punch to achieve limited objectives. Instead the assets were frittered away on two widely divergent axes in two weak thrusts that were neither individually viable nor mutually complementary.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Official Records.
2. Ibid.
3. The Map Grid References are given in yards (and not in metres) according to the old maps then in use.
4. From Official Records.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. The Pakistan Army Journal for September 1984 carries an article "Covering Troops Battle-Shakargarh 1971" by Brig Nisar Ahmed Khan, SJ (Retd). The author claims that the covering troops holding this area were an ad hoc brigade created on 3 December 1971 "to act as covering force in the Shakargarh Sector". This force, called the 'Changez Force', is claimed to have consisted of X Lancers with 35 Sherman II tanks, Y Cavalry having 41 M47 tanks (Pattons) and Z Punjab, a standard infantry unit. A similar account features in the 'History of Pakistan Artillery' by Maj Gen Shaukat Riza (Retd) who states (pp 414-418) that the Changzez Force comprised an Armd Regt (35 tanks) supported by 106 Med Bty. Another Armd Regt (41 tanks) supported by 38 Med Bty, and an Inf Bn (not motorized). Pakistanis also claim that Brig Nisar had been ordered to delay the enemy for 24 hrs and 48 hrs at the first and second positions respectively. In actual fact, the Indians were delayed for seven days. However, Lt Gen WAG Pinto, the then GOC 54 Inf Div, when interviewed, refuted these claims and dismissed them as concoctions innovated to boost Pakistani morale.
9. From Official Records.
10. Ibid.
11. In the interview held with Lt Gen K.P. Candeth, he said that the Corps Commander, Lt Gen K.K. Singh, was rather too cautious. However, K.K. Singh argues that he had to be deliberately cautious because he was also given the vital task of protecting the Jammu-Pathankot road axis.
12. From Official Records.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Brig Nisar Ahmed Khan, Pakistan Army Journal, September 1984.

21. From Official Records.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Brig A.S. Vaidya, MVC, who rose to become Chief of Army Staff.
26. Brig Arjinder Singh.
27. Lt Col B.T. Pandit.
28. From Official Records.
29. The Division was, however, depleted by some operational constraints. 6 Madras ex-91 Inf Bde and 90 Indep Recce Squad ex-16 Indep Armd Bde operated under HQ 39 Inf Div to hold a firm base in the general area Londi till the capture of Shakargarh. Besides, the two battalions defending the area Raipur (NX 2626)-Raiyan (NX 3025) were not to be lifted until the Supwal Ditch had been cleared - Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. 72 Inf Bde and a battalion of 115 Inf Bde of this Division supported by 2 Indep Armd Bde less 14 Horse were placed under command HQ 39 Inf Div for operations from the Londi sector.
43. From Official Records.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. This version is bitterly contested by Maj Chaudhary. He says despite short notice his Coy Gp had successfully infiltrated to what he called the flank and rear of enemy defences who not only panicked but remained inactive till the early hours of morning. His repeated pleadings to move forward the armour and rest of the Battalion were of no avail. He decided, however, to stick on and fought till about 0700 hrs on 14 December when he was hit by a shell splinter on his left eye. He was unconscious

thereafter, and was made POW.

In a tone that barely disguised contempt Maj Chaudhary brought out that he was deserted by his Bty Comdr and Engr Rep who later claimed to be decorated. (It was Maj Chaudhary and not the Bty Comdr who was hit, blinded and rendered unconscious by the shell splinter - Sukhwant Singh, (II).

53. From Official Records.
54. This is confirmed by a Pak Army Officer, Brig Nisar Ahmed Khan in his article in Pakistan Army Journal, September 1984.
55. From Official Records.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Brig Jahangir Karamat, Pakistan Army Journal, September 1983.
67. Interview with Lt Gen WAG Pinto at Pune.
68. The information regarding deployment of Pak forces is mainly based on Maj Gen Sukhwant Singh's book entitled 'Defence of the Western Border', Vol.II. However, as for Pak 103 Inf Bde whereas Sukhwant Singh has mentioned 108 Inf Bde, Fazal Mugeem Khan and Brig Baqir Siddiqui COS, HQ Eastern Command interrogation reports have mentioned 103 Inf Bde as part of 10 Inf Div. From Official Records.
69. Ibid.
70. For details see Sukhwant Singh, Vol.II, pp. 149-151.
71. Less two regiments.
72. From Official Records.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. 1955 hrs. Ibid.
77. From Official Records.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Killed 3 Officers, 1 JCO and 32 ORs and wounded 1 Officer, 3 JCO and 97 ORs. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Lt Gen P.S. Bhagat in his book "The Shield and the Sword", (pp 30-31) says that "The Ichhogil Canal connects the river Ravi with the water system of the Sutlej and the Canal alignment is important for its strategic value. It runs parallel to the border. In the north, the built-up area of Lahore extends eastwards up to it". It was called BRB Link Canal by Pakistan.
97. From Official Records.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid.
128. According to Lt Gen K.P. Candeth, the Commanding Officer, 15 Punjab "was attending a farewell party given to him by his JCOs". p. 140.
129. From Official Records.
130. Ibid. This is concealed by Fazal Muqem as quoted by Candeth in his book, p.140.

131. Ibid.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. The formation was initially commanded by Maj Gen H.S. Bakshi who was evacuated on 7 December after being wounded as a result of his jeep going over an enemy anti-tank mine . Ibid.
140. Ibid.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid.
150. According to Maj Gen Ram Singh (Retd), the then GOC F Sector, it would have been certainly more appropriate and administratively more efficient if F Sector had been made a full Division, instead of the area being defended by making ad hoc arrangements.
151. From Official Records.
152. Ibid.
153. Considering the fact that 1 and 6 Armd Divs and 7 Inf Div were Pakistan GHQ Reserves, the assessment of enemy threat seems to have been grossly exaggerated.
154. From Official Records.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid.
157. Ibid.
158. The account of operations in the Fazilka areas has benefited greatly from some valuable studies made at School of Combat, Mhow.
159. When interviewed, Maj Gen Ram Singh, justified the demolition of these bridges. In his view, they were fit only for bullock-carts and could be used by the enemy for infiltration purposes.
160. From Official Records.
161. Ibid.
162. The operation was remarkable for another reason. For the first time, accurate information was gathered about the enemy and his locations. The prisoners revealed that 7 Punjab and two troops of armour were located in the area between Qadir Bakhsh and Muazzam, 6 FFR on the Sabuna Distributary at the Beriwalla Bridge and Pakka and 18 Baluch south of Pakka.

163. From Official Records.
164. Ibid.
165. Virtually in command of the Brigade from 7 to 11 December.
166. From Official Records.
167. Maj Gen Ram Singh justified the repeated but expensive counter-attacks on the ground that they were necessary to restore morale. On the contrary, they eroded morale further.
168. From Official Records.
169. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid.
175. Dist. Gazetteer, Kutch Jaisalmer and Barmer.
176. Ibid.
177. From Official Records.
178. Ibid.
179. Ibid.
180. Ibid.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid.
183. Ibid.
184. Ibid.
185. Ibid.
186. Ibid.
187. Ibid.
188. Ibid.
189. Ibid.
190. Ibid.
191. Ibid.
192. Ibid.
193. Gen Bewoor told in the interview that when the enemy forces were withdrawing from Islamgarh, our artillery, which consisted of only 25 pr, could not get going and had to be pushed over the track. Had the Indian troops a medium regiment, the enemy could have been annihilated!
194. From Official Records.
195. Ibid.
196. Ibid.
197. Ibid.
198. Ibid. Also acknowledged by Pakistan. See S. Riza, p.449. The IAF tally is not identical, naturally.
199. From Official Records.
200. Ibid.
201. Ibid.
202. Ibid.
203. Ibid.
204. Sukhwant Singh, however, blames Bewoor and gives credit to the Chief of the Army Staff for pressing Bewoor to pursue the enemy.

205. From Official Records.
206. Ibid.
207. Ibid.
208. Ibid.
209. Ibid.
210. Ibid.
211. Ibid.
212. Ibid.
213. Ibid.
214. Ibid.
215. Ibid.
216. Ibid.
217. Ibid.
218. Ibid.
219. Ibid.
220. Ibid.
221. Ibid.
222. Ibid.
223. Ibid.
224. Ibid.
225. Ibid.
226. Ibid.
227. Ibid.
228. Ibid.
229. Ibid.
230. Ibid.
231. Ibid.
232. Ibid.
233. Ibid.
234. Ibid.
235. Ibid.
236. Ibid.
237. Ibid.
238. Ibid.
239. Ibid.
240. Ibid.
241. Ibid.
242. Ibid.
243. Dist. Gazetteer, Kutch.
244. From Official Records.
245. Ibid.

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