

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

FEATURE

**KARGIL WAR BRINGS INTO SHARP FOCUS
INDIA'S COMMITMENT TO PEACE**

- A.K. Chakraborty*

On July 26, 2000, the nation will be paying its homage to brave soldiers and airmen who made supreme sacrifice while defending India against aggression in Kargil sector. In recalling this war of significance it would be befitting to highlight the military run up to the war, apolitical traditions of Indian Army and its wont to abide by civilian authority and how Kargil war has brought into sharp focus Indian Policy of Peace.

"Battalions of Northern Light Infantry (NLI) were wiped out by the Indian Forces in Kargil", the deposed Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharief told newsmen while in detention testifying to the ferocious counter attack launched by the Indian Army and Indian Air Force to evict the regular Pakistani intruders from Indian soil in the Drass, Batalik, Mushkoh sectors in June-July last year. The nation gratefully commemorates the sacrifices made by 527 brave soldiers and airmen for the success of "Operation Vijay", which is being observed as *Kargil Vijay Diwas* on July 26, 2000.

Indian forces had thus

foiled Pakistan's politico-strategic motives to internationalise Kashmir as a nuclear flash point requiring urgent third party intervention, to alter the Line of Control (LOC) and disrupt its sanctity by capturing unheld areas in Kargil and to achieve a better bargaining position for a possible trade off against the positions held by India in Siachen. Another tactical move on the part of enemy, was to interdict the Srinagar-Leh road by disrupting the vital NH-1A and to give fillip to militancy in J&K. The Indian political leadership and the various Ministries of Government of India worked in perfect synergy to meet the challenge. The media coverage on the Kargil war, especially the electronic media, served as a force multiplier leading to a national upsurge of giant proportions and a feeling of oneness with our courageous *jawans*.

Significantly, as the 15 Corps mobilised its forces for the counter attack and elements of the 18 Mountain Division poured into the various sectors of Kargil, the people of Jammu & Kashmir were steadfast against the enemy forces. The gallantry displayed by 'Ladakh Scouts' and 'J&K Light Infantry'

is testimony to that. The rapid Indian deployment was not reckoned by the Pakistanis. The use of the Indian Air Force in support of the Army in Kargil had a strong impact on the course of the tactical battle in terms of the interdiction of Pakistani supply lines within Indian territory, the damage inflicted on the Pakistani defences and the lowering of the morale of the intruders. In a skilful use of naval power in the form of 'Operation Talwar', the 'Eastern Fleet' joined the 'Western Naval Fleet' and blocked the Arabian sea routes of Pakistan. Apart from a deterrent, the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharief later disclosed that Pakistan was left with just six days of fuel (POL) to sustain itself if a full fledged war broke out.

At the end of the day, it was the courageous deeds of soldiers from the *Jat Regiment*, *Rajputana Rifles*, the *Grenadiers*, *Madras Regiment*, *Sikh Regiment* and *Mahar Regiment* at the icy heights of Kargil mountains that overwhelmed the enemy. The 'Artillery Regiments' performed a splendid job by destroying enemy positions and pinning them down by continuous barrage of fire from 155

mm Bofors howitzers and 130 mm field guns. When the strategic Tiger Hill fell on account of a brilliantly executed tactical plan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharief was blissfully unaware of the development. His wife Kulsoom Sharief heard the news on ZEE TV and rushed to inform Nawaz Sharief, who was then enjoying golf at his residence near Lahore.

Apart from sheer courage of forces fighting in very hostile and inclement weather conditions, the military leadership has to be given due credit for keeping up the great traditions of Indian Army namely, obedience to the civilian authority in letter and spirit. The situation was such and militarily so compelling that the Army Chief would have felt it absolutely necessary to violate the LOC and get behind the enemy and threaten its lines of withdrawal. In doing so, the Indian side would

have succeeded in driving out the enemy much earlier. While the Army considered this option, it also restrained itself to go by the Central Government decision, i.e. to avoid the escalation of the conflict. It is precisely because of this reason that the eviction of the enemy took a little over two months and resulted in heavy loss of life.

Strangely, a war limited to a small area like Kargil sector had gone to highlight the Indian Foreign Policy that is principally directed towards world peace. By deciding not to take the war with Pakistan, by deciding not to violate the LOC, by deciding to wily-nily accept high rate of casualties on its side and thus limiting the conflict on its side and in determining that these are small sacrifices in the larger cause of world peace – all this reflects India's innate love for peace and good neighbourly relations even if

it meant at some cost. This exemplary demonstration of restraint, in the face of provocations, India was able to project itself to the international community that it stood for peace and not war. This peaceful assertion turned the tables on Pakistan to the extent that America, once Pakistan's most dependable ally, not only chose to condemn it as an aggressor but build up fresh solid relations between India and itself. The result is Pakistan's isolation and General Musharaaf's regime left in lurch. For, this is the first military regime in Pakistan that has been disapproved by America and P-5 countries. Kargil war brought into sharp focus India's commitment to peace. While remembering the martyrs of Kargil war, let us also imagine what these martyrs were saying while dying, "go back and tell them that we are giving up our today for their tomorrow."

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