

Battle of Chhamb: Indo-Pak War 1971[#]

Lieutenant General RK Jasbir Singh (Retd)[@]

“It is much better to have several bodies of reserve,
than to extend your front too much” - Vegetius

Abstract

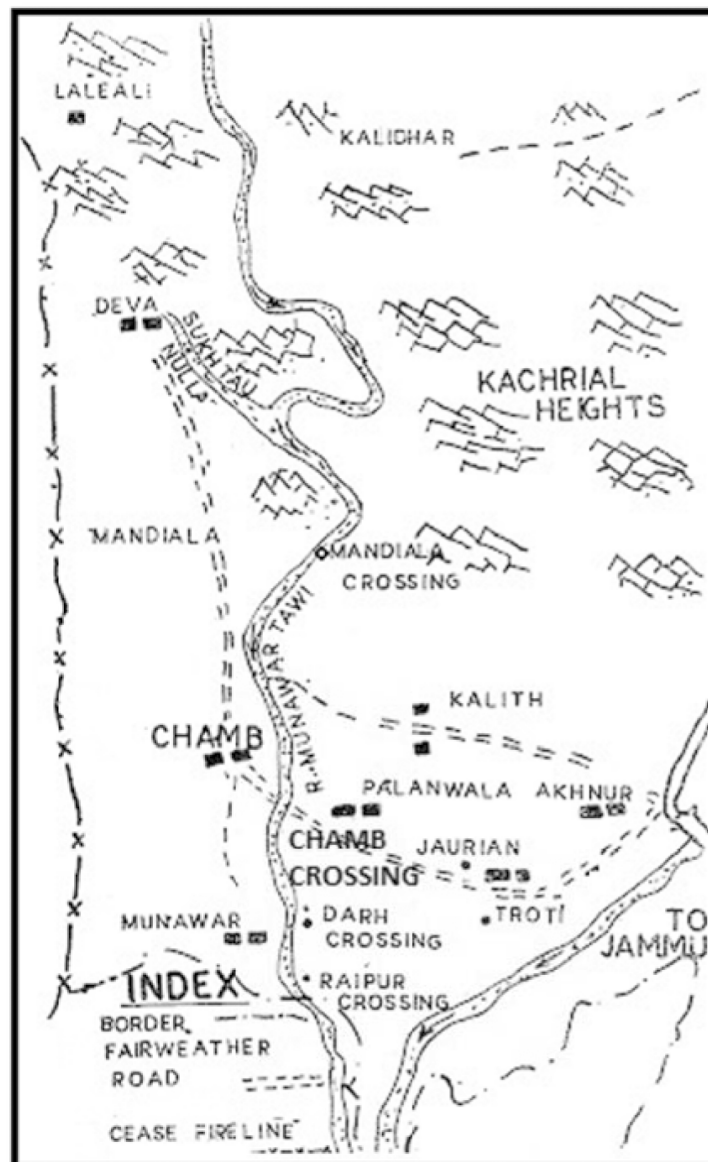
The Battle of Chhamb, 1971, has been discussed with the same ferocity as it was fought. No other battle fought by India since independence has generated such controversy or been dissected and analysed like this battle. Consequently, there has been the inevitable misconception, misinformation and (regrettably) disinformation about the way it was fought. There has been much criticism but this has been softened by those who understood the environmental conditions at the broader level and the compulsions under which the commanders were operating. This article attempts to clarify the operation especially because it is the transcription of a talk given 18 years after the event when a clearer perspective was possible.

Topography

The Chhamb-Jaurian sector lies between the outer hills of Kashmir and the plains of the Punjab. It is shaped like a funnel — the area west of Manawar Tawi (referred to as the Tawi here) forming the broad base and the area around Akhnur, its apex. The narrowing of the funnel begins along the line Dhonchak-Troti-Kalit which lies between the Chenab River and the 1727 metre high, Tam Ka Tilla feature. The ground is interspersed with several nullahs, which progressively slope southwards. The Chenab is a major obstacle. It can be crossed by ferries or by the Class-

[#]Text of a talk given to the members of the USI on 28 December, 1989.

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Topography Chhamb-Jaurian Sector
 (Derived from 'Kargil to Kurukshetra' by Brig K Kuldip Singh)

18 bridge at Akhnur, which can take light tanks and armoured cars. The Manawar Tawi flows from the north to south and ultimately joins the Chenab a mile south of the international border (IB). The Chhamb sector lies to the west of Manawar Tawi, which is fordable at several places during the dry season — the main

crossings being at Mandiala, Chhamb, Darh and Raipur. The concrete bridge at Chhamb crossing was completed just prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The area south of Palanwala-Khaur opposite the Nadala salient, south of the International Border (IB) is mostly waterlogged, due to the emptying of the waters of the New Pratap Canal in this area. Employment of armour is generally restricted to squadron/troop level, except in the area south-west of the Chhamb sector, where up to a regiment can be employed. The area north of Chhamb and the new Pratap Canal restricts the employment of armour, as it merges into hilly terrain. Armour can be used only along existing tracks in the area opposite the Nadala Salient.

There are only two main roads in the sector: road Akhnur-Jaurian-Khaur-Palanwala-Chhamb and road Akhnur-Kalith-Chhamb, in the north. Beside these several minor roads and tracks existed on both sides of the Tawi, which could be used for most of the year.

Manawar, Jhanda, Point (Pt) 994 (popularly known as Pt 303), Phagla Ridge, Gurha, Mandiala heights, Buchoe Mandi, Tam Ka Tilla, Troti and Fatwal where some of the more important features on both side of the Tawi. The area between the Chenab and its offshoot, the Chandra Bhaga, south of the IB, was known as the "Dagger" till Major Gen Zoru Bakshi, GOC 26 Infantry Division, renamed it the "Chicken's Neck".

The Importance of the Chhamb-Jaurian Sector

The Chhamb-Jaurian sector is the southernmost bulge into Pakistan occupied Kashmir. It is the only open, plain and tankable country along the Cease Fire Line (CFL) / Line of Actual Control (LAC), beside Jhangar-Naushara. Because the IB and CFL meet in this sector Pakistan enjoyed the tactical advantage of being able to pick and choose either of the borders for an offensive. In the context of the Karachi agreement of 1949, which forbade induction of additional troops, construction or strengthening of defences in J&K, this gave Pakistan not only the whip land, but conferred enormous flexibility to them in a conflict. Conversely, the defenders of Chhamb (i.e., area of West of Tawi) were faced with the prospect of having to defend two fronts. In offensive operations, Pakistan had the ability of not only supporting an assault across the CFL from positions South of the IB, and thus ensuring the localising of

the conflict to “disputed territory”, but of being able to enlarge the conflict by simultaneous (or in tandem) assaults across the IB.

An offensive launched from Chhamb has attractive prospects for both sides. From the Indian viewpoint from this direction a direct threat is posed to the sensitive 180 miles road and rail link between Rawalpindi to Lahore and to the Marala Headworks. The Pakistanis, on the other hand, by attacking Chhamb not only remove the threat, but also in turn threaten Akhnur, the capture of which would not only sever the Rajauri-Punch lines of communication but pose a direct threat to Jammu-Pathankot from the west.

It is, therefore, inexplicable that not much military significance has been attached to this sector. In 1948, the capture of this area was of secondary importance — it was a subsidiary operation to the main thrust on the Naushara-Kotli-Punch axis. Having established a bridgehead across the Tawi by securing the line of the nala running southwards from Chakla-Dewa to Moel-Burejal, the Indians were more than content to rest on their laurels. It was considered inexpedient to clear the ‘raiders’ from the rest of the area towards Bhimber on the specious premise that a further advance would increase the vulnerability of the CFL. By abruptly halting the operations along ill-defined features, with no natural strength, the area west of Tawi become virtually indefensible.

The Battle of Chhamb - 1965

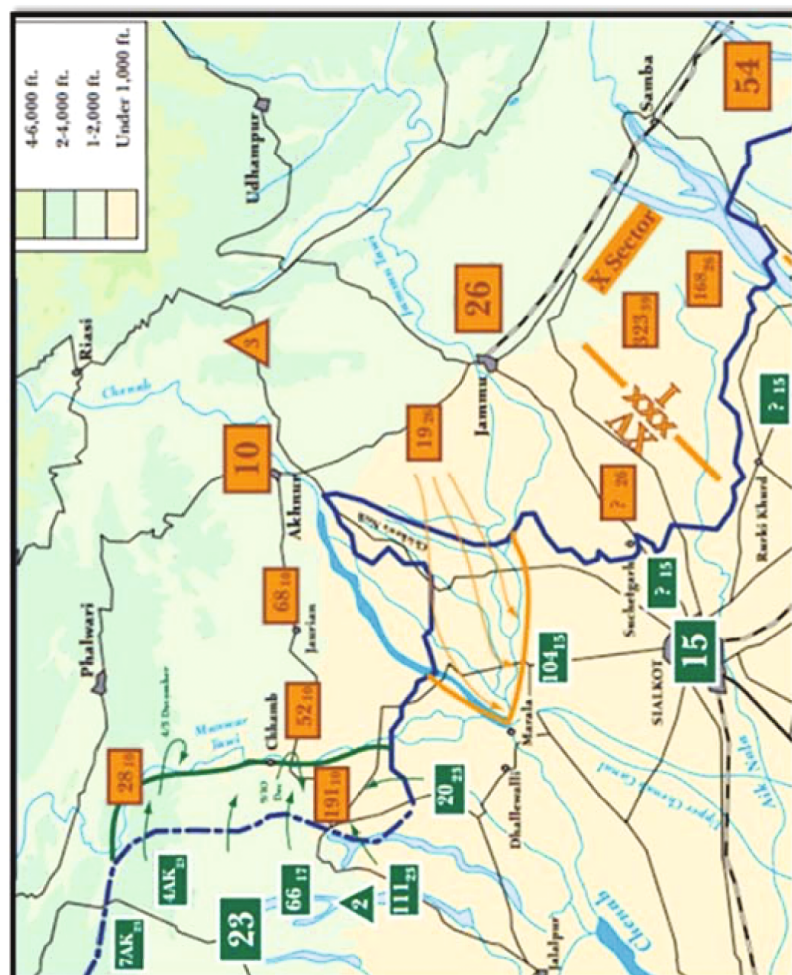
Operation ‘Grand Slam’ which was a corollary to Operation ‘Gibraltar’ — the massive infiltration operation in J & K — was launched by Pakistan with the aim of gaining maximum strategic advantage with least effort. The choice of the Chhamb-Jaurian sector was logical and inevitable. Having lulled the Indians into thinking that operations in this sector would be limited to infiltration, the Pakistanis launched a full-scale offensive with the object of capturing Akhnur. 191 (Independent) Infantry Brigade deployed in a counter-infiltration role west of Tawi, could offer no co-ordinated resistance, and was forced to withdraw within hours to Akhnur. Akhnur was saved because the Pakistanis failed to maintain the momentum of the offensive after the establishment of a bridgehead across the Manawar Tawi. This fatal pause enabled the Indians to reinforce the sector, and to effectively halt the enemy west of the Fatwal Ridge. The offensive by 1 Corps in the adjacent Sialkot

sector of 6 Sep 65 put paid to any hopes the Pakistanis may have entertained of capturing Akhnur.

The Battle of Chhamb 1971

Threat Assessment. After the Chhamb battle of 1965, a reappraisal was made regarding the threats to Chhamb-Kalidhar sectors. It was assessed that the Pak 12 Infantry Division would no longer operate in the sector. The likely Pakistan threat would emanate from Kharian, where the newly raised Pak I Corps was located. Pak 6 Armoured Division with 9 Infantry Division and supported by 1 Corps Artillery Brigade would most probably be employed against the plains sector. The exact quantum of armour could not be assessed. At the worst, the entire 6 Armoured Division might be used. It was felt that Pakistan would probably use one or two Azad Kashmir (AK) Brigades ex 23 Infantry Division, against the hill sector. This threat assessment was valid till early 1971. With the escalation of fighting in East Bengal, and the induction of formations including 9 Infantry Division from West Pakistan to that sector, a diminishing of Pakistani capabilities in Chhamb sector was perceived.

By mid Oct 1971, at a briefing held at my HQ, despite evidence to the contrary (troops in contact and intelligence sources had identified 20 Infantry Brigade and 4 AK Brigade. As also approximately two regiments of armour, elements of a heavy artillery regiment and integrated artillery regiments of the two brigades opposite the sector), GOC 15 Corps declared that only one Infantry brigade (20 Infantry Brigade), its affiliated artillery regiment and a squadron of Sherman tanks need be expected in the Chhamb-Jaurian sector. Later, GOC 10 Infantry Division echoed this assessment, adding that the only enemy formation (the newly raised 17 Infantry Division located at Kharian) had been committed elsewhere and that according to higher intelligence, including R&AW the main Pakistan effort would be made against the Punch sector. It was decided that preparations for the offensive by 10 Infantry Division would continue. (At a subsequent planning conference at Corps HQ, GOC 10 Infantry Division revised his view about dispositions of Pakistan troops opposite Chhamb. However, he was accused of getting cold feet and wanting to call off the offensive). The actual Pakistani forces employed against Chhamb are given in appendix A.



The Chhamb-Jaurian Sector with Own and Enemy Orbat (From "1971 War: Battle of Chhamb" By Maj Gen Sukhwant Singh (Retd))

Own Plans. After the 1965 war, 191 Infantry Brigade had come under 10 Infantry Division. The hill sector was made the responsibility of 28 Infantry Brigade, with its HQ located at Pathankot along with HQ 10 Infantry Division. The third brigade, 52 Infantry Brigade was located at Dalhousie. The plan to deploy 191 Infantry Brigade along line Tam ka Tilla-Kalit-Torti-Dhon Chak-Bakror was well conceived. It was a tacit admission of the fact that the defence of the area west of Tawi was beyond the capability of an Infantry brigade if it was to fulfil its main task of protecting the approaches to Akhnur. The defence plan envisaged the denial of the area ahead of the main defences for 48 hours, by covering troops based on 5 Sikh less a company with A Squadron 9 Horse (Papa Force) west of Tawi, and 9 Horse less two squadrons with a company each from 4/1 GR and 5 Assam (Quebec Force) in area between Manawar Tawi and Chenab opposite the Nadala silent. One of the tasks given to 52 Infantry Brigade was to reinforce the sector. Since the Chhamb sector never merited high priority 52 Infantry Brigade did not take this task seriously.

In early 1971, the defence plans were, for all intents and purposes, put in cold storage. The buzz word was offence. GOC 10 Infantry Division had managed to sell one of the most impracticable and audacious offensive plans to higher commanders. GOC-in-C, Western Command, however, remained sceptical of their viability, even though he let the preparations go on. That the attack plans may well have succeeded could be primarily because of their unorthodoxy and complete disregard to realities on the ground. It is a different issue that right up to 01 Dec 71 — when orders were given for the suspension of all offensive plans in the Western theatre — the preparations for the 10 Infantry Division offensive had dominated all other activities. Even after 01 Dec, they continued to cast a pervasive influence over the defence posture adopted by the Division.

As the crisis in the East deepened there was a palpable reaction along the Indo-Pakistan border. Due to increased activity opposite the Chhamb-Jaurian border, the covering troops were ordered to be deployed in the first week of Oct. This was followed by the occupation of the main defences by my brigade east of the river. However, the preparations for the firm base west of Manawar Tawi (for an offensive), continued unabated. Since there was an acute shortage of defence stores, considerable amount of improvisation had to be restored to make the firm base viable.

On 01 Nov, the COAS visited the sector. On the recommendations (and insistence) of the Corps and Division commanders, the COAS agreed to permit the deployment of 191 Infantry Brigade across the Manawar Tawi, i.e., in the firm base. No explanation was given for this move though the occupation of the firm base without any immediate plans for launching the offensive was patently unsound. This had nullified all the extraordinary measures adopted to conceal our intentions in this sector. However, it has been maintained that the holding of the forward defence line across the Tawi had been planned as a part of the offensive. This was never conveyed to 191 Infantry Brigade. GOC-in-C, Western Command had protested to the COAS over the deployment but was overruled.

By mid Nov 1971, Division HQ and Division troops, 52 Infantry Brigade and the additional troops allotted for the offensive, 72 Armoured Regiment, 2 Independent Armoured Squadron, 216 Medium Regiment and 106 Engineer Regiment, had been inducted. 191 Infantry Brigade now held Mandiala, Gurha, Phagla, Barsala, Jhanda and Manawar by 5 Sikh (with one platoon holding Buchoe Mondi) and 5 Assam with two coys ex 4/1 GR, west of Tawi. East of Tawi the area extending from Chatti Tahli to Nawan Hamirpur, on the Chenab, was held by 4/1 GR less two coys 10 Garh Rif. 57 and 51 BSF Bns were either completely replaced by regular troops or thinned out leaving small detachments mixed with regular troops for deception purposes. 52 Infantry Brigade was deployed in area Dhon Chak-Troti with a battalion on road Jammu-Akhnur to foil any threat emanating from Chicken's Neck. 68 Infantry Brigade was held back at Akhnur and not committed to the ground. 216 and 39 Medium Regiments were deployed in area Chapreal and Kachreal, whilst the bulk of the field artillery consisting of 81 Field Regiment and a battery each of 12 and 18 Field Regiments were deployed west of Tawi in area Sakrana. (This risk-laden forward deployment was basically for the projected offensive, it was stated). The order of battle of 10 Infantry Division is given in appendix B.

Mines had been laid all along the brigade front on both side of the Tawi, except for gaps and lanes left for the offensive. A vital gap of 6000 yds in front of 5 Assam positions at Barsala had been left bare, despite my repeated protests. This was to facilitate the move of armour in Phase 2 of the Division offensive. The nuisance

mines laid were ordered to be lifted later, since it was felt that they endangered own civilians. Consequently, the mines laid in Sukhtao Nala North of Mandiala were also lifted.

The Change to a Defensive Posture

On 01 Dec 1971 at 1930 hours at a conference held at Division HQ, orders were issued for the adoption of a defensive posture as it had been decided that no pre-emptive action would be taken by India in the West. It was anticipated that hostilities may break out by 04 Dec. At the co-ordinating conference held on the afternoon of 02 Dec the following decisions were taken:

- 4/1 GR less two companies were to hand over their responsibilities east of Tawi to 10 Garh Rif. 4/1 GR was to now hold areas Manawar, Jhanda, Malke Camp and Nageal with a company each. Area Mangotian was to be held by a platoon ex Mangotian coy.
- 5 Assam to hold area Pt 951, Barsala, Ghogi and Singri with a company each. The dummy minefield in front of the battalion was to be closed by 102 FD Coy immediately, leaving a few lanes for the offensive.
- 5 Sikh to continue to hold Pt 303, Phagla Ridge, Gurha with a company each and Mandiala North and South and Buchoe Mandi with a platoon each.
- 10 Garh Rif handed over the area from Garadh to Nawan Hamirpur to 16 Punjab (52 Infantry Brigade) and were to be responsible for area Chatti Tahli, Gigrial and Raipur Crossing. A Group 9 Para Commando was to be in location in the battalion area.
- 101 and 102 Field Companies were to hold defence localities under 5 Sikh and 4/1 GR at extension (a feature immediately west of Chhamb Bridge) and South of Chhamb village respectively, after completion to their engineer task.
- A Squadron 9 Horse was move to Dervish Colony, and company Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) 12 Guards was deployed between Manawar and Barsala.

The deployment of the remaining Division is pertinent to the operations across the Manawar Tawi. The threat through Nadala

Salient and Chicken's Neck had been grossly exaggerated. Beside the fact that any build-up in these areas cannot be concealed, the use of armour and heavy vehicle is severely restricted. Basically, only an infiltration threat existed from this area. The deployment of two battalions (16 Punjab and 10 Garh Rif) and B Squadron 9 Horse opposite Nadala and the holding back of 68 Infantry Brigade (less 5/8 GR at Troti) with 3/4 GR ex 52 Infantry Brigade to counter the threat from Chicken's Neck towards Akhnur and Jammu, could not really be justified. The deployment still had an offensive bias. It did not consider that the real threat existed from Chhamb eastwards and this approach, particularly the eastern bank of Tawi needed to be guarded.

The situation west of Tawi at this juncture was that while the defended areas held by 5 Sikh and 4/1 GR besides being on dominating ground, were mined and reasonably well prepared (as far as 5 Sikh positions on Mandiala, Gurha, Phagla and Pt 303 were concerned this had been prepared over the years covering troops positions and had concrete bunkers in a few localities) the 5 Assam defended area was a cause for concern. It lay along the best armour approach on flat and featureless ground. If the enemy discovered the existing 6000-yard gap in the protective minefield they could roll up the defence along the shortest route to Darh and Raipur crossings. The depth companies at Sangria, Malke Camp and Nageal would be able to offer only token resistance. 1965 would be repeated if they managed to simultaneously capture ground east of Tawi via the northern approach.

The Breakout of Hostilities — the Enemy Plan

It is apparent that the enemy plan to attack Chhamb-Jaurian sector, given below, had been made well before Dec 1971; (its model was the 1965 attack plan and was based on Chhamb being held by covering troops).

- 7 AK Brigade to engage area in the hilly terrain held by Indian 80 Infantry and 28 Infantry Brigades.
- 4 AK Brigade to capture area astride the Sukhtao Nala and Mandiala Heights and establish bridgehead east of Tawi.
- 66 Infantry Brigade to capture area Gurha and Phagla and link up with 4 AK Brigade in the bridgehead at Mandiala and Chhamb Crossing.

- The armoured brigade to break out from the bridgehead by first light 04 Dec and having captured Palanwala, to exploit eastwards.
- 111 Infantry Brigade after having reduced the BOPs, to capture area Pt 303 and Chhamb. (it appears that this brigade was earmarked for operations east of Tawi with the Armoured Brigade).
- 20 Infantry Brigade to capture area Manawar and Jhanda and link up with 111 Infantry Brigade in area Chhamb.

H-hour was initially fixed at 2030 hrs, 02 Dec. This was subsequently changed to 2030 hrs, 03 Dec. In fact bombardment commenced 10 minutes early. A panicky Mujahid manning a 17-pounder gun was blamed.

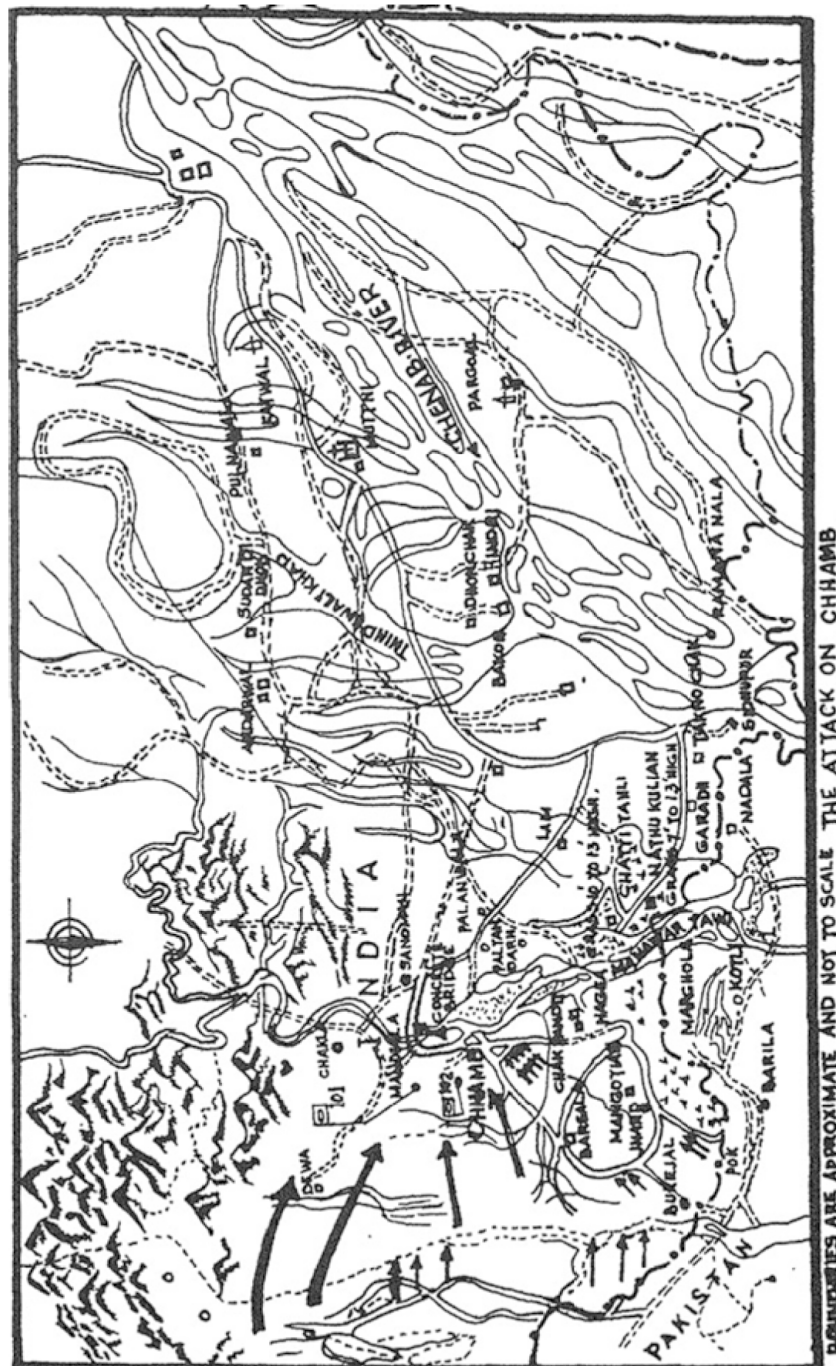
Sequence of Events — Night 02/03 Dec

During the night 02/03 Dec 191 Infantry Brigade was busy readjusting its defences. 102 Field Coy were to close the 6000 yds gap in the protective minefield at Barsala. Since these mines never fetched up, some 900 anti-tank mines were allotted to 5 Assam from the brigade reserve. These were only partially laid when heavy vehicular movements from across the border were reported. The brigade was placed on the alert.

Day 03 Dec and Night 03/04 Dec

On morning of 03 Dec, approximately a squadron of Sherman tanks deployed opposite Manawar and Jhanda between Hanj and Barila. All Pakistan villages were reported to have been evacuated. Despite exhortation not to panic (we wished to maintain an atmosphere of normalcy along the border as part of our deception plans for the offensive) our villagers too, had withdrawn.

The news that Pakistan had attacked our airfields at Amritsar, Pathankot and Srinagar, and that we were in a state of war, was conveyed at 1830 hrs. The brigade was immediately warned and evacuation of BSF personnel and remaining civilians ordered.



4/1 GR reported that tanks opposite them had started their engines. A Squadron 9 Horse was redeployed in area Manawar-Jhanda Barsala as a precautionary measure. Heavy vehicular movement from Padhar to the border was reported by 5 Sikh. A little later all BOPs and the brigade sector were subjected to artillery shelling with Handa, Manawar, Moel, and Pir Jamal receiving heavy punishment. This was followed by attacks on all these localities. Pir Jamal and protective patrols ahead of Manawar and Jhanda fell back. The remaining attacks were beaten back. All these positions were again attacked twice during the night, but they held on.

By midnight, the enemy had made contact with the main defences of 5 Sikh and 5 Assam, probably by infiltrations. These attacks were beaten back. In the meanwhile, Regimental HQ 9 Horse with B Squadron were allotted to 191 Infantry Brigade. A squadron of 72 Armoured Regiment was also moved forward to Kachreal to be readily available to 191 Infantry Brigade. All the available armour was deployed in an arc extending from Moel to Manawar, except for two tanks of the RHQ at Gurha.

Day 04 Dec

During the morning, enemy concentrated on 5 Sikh screen at Moel. Some tanks and jeep mounted Recoilless guns (RCLs) had penetrated between Moel and Bokhan. There was uncertainty about the protective patrol at Paur. A Squadron 9 Horse, operating ahead of the FDLs managed to clear the enemy armour knocking out three tanks in conjunctions with the ATGM detachment at Barsala. The other screen positions at Burejal, Bokhan and Dalla had not been touched, so it was decided to hold on to Moel, which had already withstood two attacks.

In the meanwhile, reports began trickling in from 28 Infantry Brigade positions north of Dewa, of enemy armour and infantry columns moving towards Gurha and Mandiala. 5 Sikh also reported Mandiala North under pressure. The enemy had infiltrated between the minefield and FDLs and attempts to eject them had failed. At 1230 hrs the position was reported overrun, with the remnants of the platoon having fallen back on Mandiala South.

The loss of Mandiala North opened the way to Mandiala crossing. The gun and concrete bridge were now directly endangered. In view of the prevailing situation and the realisation that the enemy strength had been grossly underestimated, GOC 10 Infantry Division ordered 68 Infantry Brigade to counterattack Mandiala North. 7 KUMAON, located at AKHNUR, was earmarked for the task by 68 Infantry Brigade. In the meanwhile, besides side-stepping A Group 9 Para Commando to east of Mandiala Crossing to reinforce the troop C Squadron 9 Horse, B Squadron was moved to Phagla, which was under attack. The enemy lost six tanks and the attack was broken-up.

The screen positions (all led by officers instead of Junior Commissioned Officers) at Moel, Bokhan, Burejal and Dalla Camp were under heavy pressure. They were ordered to be withdrawn, since the FDLs of 5 Sikh and 5 Assam had already been contacted by the enemy. However, Moel (5 SIKH) and Burejal (5 Assam) platoons were overrun. Dalla (5 Assam) lost an officer and 6 men. In other words, almost three platoons were written off from forward companies of 5 Sikh and 5 Assam, who were already thin on the ground.

A determined attack was launched against Manawar by infantry supported by armour at 1500 hrs. This was beaten back but Maj Lakhan Pal, the Coy commander was killed. Jhanda, too beat back an attack. Whilst the situation in 4/1 GR stabilised somewhat after this, the enemy continued to probe 5 Sikh and 5 Assam defences. It was evident that the success of the enemy trying to establish themselves east of Tawi, would hinge on his ability to capture Phagla, Pt 303 or Barsala. All efforts were, therefore, made to prevent him from doing so.

At about 1545 hrs, GOC 10 Infantry Division informed me that 7 Kumaon's move forward had been disrupted due to enemy shelling and that he had decided to deploy the battalion instead to cover the Mandiala Crossing. Almost four hours had been wasted in launching the counterattack on Mandiala North. At that time the situation was extremely fluid. The only troops that could be lifted from within the brigade, were the two companies of 4/1 GR at Malke Camp and Nageal or 5 Assam company at Singri. After studying the pros and cons, a decision was taken to counterattack Mandiala North with the company less a platoon at Moel Camp

(the third platoon was at Mangotian). 101 Fd Coy at Extension was ordered to move to Malke Camp. This it never did, though Extension was vacated. The reasons for this were lack of communication between the field company and 4/1 GR, for which the latter must take the blame. The counterattack ordered at about 1600 hrs did not take place till 2030 hrs. The excuse given was that the troops were unfamiliar with the terrain and elaborate briefing by 5 Sikh was necessary. Even though the attack was supported by tanks of B Squadron 72 Armoured Regiment, which had been inducted at 1900 hrs and had night firing capability and was later reinforced with a platoon of 5 Sikh, only a portion of the locality could be captured. The company commander was wounded and the senior JCO killed. The position being untenable the company had to be withdrawn. Not only did this company not return to Malke Camp but its platoon at Mangotian vacated its position, when it found the remainder of the company missing from Malke Camp. This position had to be retaken next day, after it was occupied by the enemy, by launching a counterattack with armour and a platoon of 4/1 GR.

In the afternoon the enemy attacked Phagla and Pt 303 in a determined bid to affect the link up with 4 AK Brigade. Heavy shelling and several air attacks by the enemy continued unabated. Our own air effort was negligible. Of the three missions demanded, only one was executed.

Night 04/05 Dec and Day 05 Dec

During the night, Pt 303 and Phagla were again attacked. By dawn, A Group 9 Para Commando reported having been attacked by enemy infantry in area east of Mandiala Crossing. Whilst they had repulsed the attack, they reported that there were no signs of either 7 Kumaon or Squadron 72 Armd Regiment, who were to reinforce their position. The troop 9 Horse had, however, destroyed six enemy tanks in Mandiala crossing. By 0830 hrs the enemy (later identified as 13 AK Bn and elements of 47 Punjab ex 4 AK Brigade) had not only overrun 216 Medium Gun positions but captured Chhamb Bridge. 39 Medium Regiment had engaged the enemy with 'open sights' and inflicted a number of casualties.

The bridge was recaptured by a two-prong attack from the east and the west by a company 5/8 GR and platoon ex 5 Sikh with two tanks of RHQ 9 Horse respectively. The bridgehead

formed by the enemy was in disarray. Desperate attempts by 66 Infantry Brigade to affect a link up with the troops on the east of Tawi, by attacking Phagla and Pt 303 failed. Their armour had already been bottled up in Sukhtao Nala. The two battalions that had crossed over suffered grievous losses (one report said 13 AK Bn had just 17 Survivors after this action). Mopping up continued well after 06 Dec. However, we too had not been spared — 216 Medium Regiment had been rendered completely ineffective and 39 Medium Regiment could give limited support only to the troops west of Tawi on 04 Dec.

The enemy made two more futile attempts to capture Phagla and Pt 303. They then diverted their attention to Ghogi and Barsala both these localities being attacked more than once during the day. At 1630 hrs during an attack on Pt 303, Maj DS Pannu, the company commander was killed, but the locality held on. Air attacks and heavy shelling of brigade sector continued throughout the day. Jhanda and Manawar, which had some respite till then, were again attacked at 1700 hrs.

In the afternoon, GOC 10 Infantry Division rang up and give me two alternatives — both unsavoury. To withdraw to the main defence positions at Troti or to adjust my defences along line Nageal-Malke Camp-Barsala and abandon Manawar and Jhanda. It was pointed out that at this juncture, with all my defences intact barring Mandiala North, the question of withdrawal should not even be considered. (Since the GOC was directly responsible for the forward deployment of the troops against my advice, the suggestion was, to say the least, surprising). Similarly, to readjust along the line recommended with the localities at Jhanda and Manawar locked in battle and no prepared defence line in depth, would be disastrous. It was requested instead that my sector be reinforced with an infantry battalion and additional armour, to give me a readily available reserve, uncommitted to the ground. Major General Jaswant Singh, who was a pragmatic and understanding commander, readily agreed. 5/8 GR, less a company deployed at Chhamb Bridge, and A Squadron 72 Armoured Regiment were allotted. 10 Garh Rif was placed under command 52 Infantry Brigade. 5/8 GR on arrival at 2200 hrs was deployed in depth area in Bahleal and Sakrana. A Squadron 72 Armd Regiment arrived the next day.

In the meanwhile, all artillery deployed in Chhamb Sector was withdrawn to east of Tawi. Despite an assurance given that artillery support would not be affected during the withdrawal, but with 216 Med Regiment already *hors de combat*, the artillery support after this readjustment was severely curtailed. It had a direct bearing on the subsequent fighting. 5 Assam, for instance, could be supported only by a battery of 18 Field Regiment firing at extreme range at a critical phase of the battle.

At about 2030 hrs the enemy managed to overrun the Ghogi locality held by a company of 5 Assam. A counterattack with the depth company at Singri and armour in support was immediately ordered. The position was recaptured, though the company commander Maj Makin was killed, and the company suffered 20 other casualties. The Ghogi Company was again attacked during the night and had ten more casualties.

Day 06 Dec

As the battle progressed, the effects of almost continuous shelling, strafing and physical assaults by the enemy on the most localities began to tell. Besides sleeplessness (everyone had been on their feet since 02 Dec), a number of weapons had been either damaged or were malfunctioning due to dust and dirt and lack of maintenance. 5 Assam fighting from open trenches, which suffered fairly heavy casualties (5 officers were killed besides a number of other ranks), was particularly affected. However, they continued to beat back the enemy attacks.

During the night 05/06 Dec, enemy either demonstrated in front of or attacked most localities, 5 Sikh positions, particularly Pt 303 receiving special attentions. The enemy managed to penetrate the defences of the Phagla Company, where hand to hand fighting ensued. The attack was repulsed. Captured documents revealed the order of battle and the fire plan of the enemy which confirmed our own assessment though the employment of five brigades and artillery (almost 11 to 12 regiment worth) came as a shock. (It is now revealed that Maj Gen Iftexhar Janjua, GOC 23 Infantry Division realising the failure of 4 AK Brigade to establish bridgehead across the Tawi at Mandiala crossing rehashed his plans. The armoured brigade, with one infantry battalion, was ordered to capture Chhamb village from a south easterly direction, in conjunction with 66 Infantry Brigade, who would converge on Chhamb after capturing Phagla Ridge and Pt 303.

At 0630 hrs, the enemy at last managed to capture Pt 303. The remnants of the company fell back on Brigade HQ. The officiating company commander (Capt Kamal Bakshi) was reported killed and tanks of B Squadron 9 Horse rendered ineffective. This was a very serious deployment. The way to the Darh and Raipur crossings now lay open. A counterattack with a company 5/8 GR and a platoon 5 Sikh from the North via Sakrana was immediately ordered. B Squadron less troop 9 Horse was ordered to attack Pt 303 at the same time, from the direction of Khairwal. In case Pt 303 could not be captured, the armour was directed to block this approach and prevent further ingress. B Squadron 9 Horse recaptured Pt 303 meeting only token resistance — the enemy had managed the push in two tanks through a minefield lane. These were destroyed. Company 5/8 GR, not being familiar with the terrain, initially attacked an area north of Pt 303. When this mistake was discovered, the company was ordered to advance southwards till they linked up with own armour. They cleared the area destroying two MMGs and killing 70 enemy soldiers (2 MMGs and 60 rifles were captured). Pt 303 was recaptured by 0930 hrs, three hours after it was overrun by the enemy.

Between 0630 and 1000 hrs, the enemy launched co-ordinated attacks with Infantry and armour against all three companies of 5 Assam. He managed to penetrate between the dummy minefield and FDLs of Ghogi Company, which suffered 5 killed and 33 wounded/missing. However, even though he hung on, the enemy too suffered heavy losses in armour and personnel. There were reports of a large armour build up opposite Jhanda and Pt 951. The area was accordingly reinforced by own armour. In the meanwhile, A Squadron 72 Armd Regiment began arriving. This Squadron was also deployed to cover the front of 5 Assam as also Pt 303.

There had been substantial losses in armour. The piecemeal induction of armour, overlapping of tasks and intermingling of troops 9 Horse and 72 Armd Regiment had led to serious command and control problems. It was decided to rationalise the armour deployment so that the squadrons could function as subunits under their respective commanders. However, this re-deployment could not be affected due to subsequent events.

The lull between 1000 and 1400 hrs, was short lived. 5 Sikh reported that Gurha company, which had been under pressure for some time, had been overrun by enemy armour and Infantry. Shortly afterwards 5 Assam reported the loss of Ghogi Company. This posed a dilemma. The only Infantry available was a company plus 5/8 GR (it appeared that even though only a company had been earmarked for the counterattack on Pt 303, in actual fact more than a company had been committed there) thus the brigade had the capability of launching only one local counterattack. It was an extremely difficult decision to make since both localities blocked approaches to ground vital to the integrity of the brigade defended sector and were of equal importance. The matter was taken out of my hands by Pt 951 and Barsala failing in quick succession to enemy armour. The whole of 5 Assam defended area was now in enemy hands. The recapture of this area was beyond the capability of an Infantry Company. Accordingly, it was suggested to the GOC that either he should launch a division level attack to retake the 5 ASSAM positions, or an additional battalion be allotted to the brigade for this purpose. In the meanwhile, he was informed that Gurha was being counter attacked with Company, 5/8 GR and armour.

The GOC expressed his inability to launch either a counterattack or make available additional troops for 5 Assam positions due to the prevailing situation. He instructed me to re-adjust the southern sector by withdrawing 4/1 GR company from Jhanda and redeploying it in area Malke Camp-Singri. Whilst Gurha was recaptured by 1800 hrs the re-adjustment along line Pt 303 Singri-Manawar could not be carried out as Singri was found occupied by the enemy. The Jhanda company commander seeking directions from his battalion commander found that he was out of communication. Therefore, he withdrew to east of Tawi. Bn HQ 4/1 GR had been forced to abandon their position when some armour was observed moving from Singri towards Chak Pandit. The remnants of the company at Nageal Bn HQ 5 Assam also withdrew to east of Tawi. Wireless communication had been disrupted and the news of both battalions falling back was conveyed through artillery radio nets. A little later, Mandiala North was reported lost. The armour was deployed along line Bahleal-Khairwal with orders not to permit any further ingress. It was anticipated that the enemy would not advance further during the night and if he did

some token resistance could be offered by brigade defence locality at Chhamb village.

At 1900 hrs GOC 10 Infantry Division, after consultations with GOC 15 Corps, ordered the withdrawal of the brigade from west of Tawi to their main positions at Troti. The withdrawal was completed by 2330 hrs.

Conduct of Pak Operations East of Tawi

In the meanwhile, Indian 10 Infantry Division had deployed 68 Infantry Brigade along the east banks of Tawi, with 7 Kumaon holding area of Mandiala Crossing, 5/8 GR astride the road, and 9 Jat on Darh Crossing. 10 Garh Rif was responsible for Raipur Crossing and area south of 68 Infantry Brigade.

It is known that the enemy did not make any progress during the night 06/07 Dec. The area west of Tawi was finally occupied by early morning of 07 Dec. Since the time plan for the offensive was now completely upset, GOC Pak 23 Infantry Division, not savouring further delay (GHQ Pakistan, had already withdrawn an armoured regiment from the sector due to pressure elsewhere) ordered an attack to be launched across the Tawi at 1700 hrs, i.e., 90 minutes from the issue of orders at 1530 hrs. The assaulting commander's request for postponement of H Hr was vetoed. The attack broadly envisaged the armoured brigade with an Infantry battalion capturing area up to Palanwala by last night, 07 Dec. This was to be followed by 111 Infantry Brigade capturing Khaur and Jaurian and relieving the armoured brigade.

The attack was postponed to 0100 hrs 08 Dec as the assaulting battalion commander was wounded due to shelling. However, this time the Infantry never turned up. The artillery, nevertheless, began its bombardment as per schedule at 0030 hrs and continued till 0130 hrs. A further postponement to 0800 hrs 08 Dec was ordered. A half-hearted attack was eventually launched by two companies against 10 Garh Rif at Chatte Tahli. This was easily beaten back, with heavy loss to the enemy. The enemy then called off the attack, and the armoured brigade was now ordered to capture Palanwala by last night, 09 Dec. At 1600 hrs, 09 Dec, Gen Iftekhar Janjua's helicopter crashed killing the General. The command of 23 Infantry Division now devolved on Brig Kamal Matin.

Whilst some demonstrations continued against 7 Kumaon, 5/8 GR and 9 Jat, effective artillery fire deterred any worth-while attempt being made against any of these localities. It was only during night 09/10 Dec, that a co-ordinated and determined attack was launched by the enemy on localities guarding Darh and Raipur crossings. The assault by the leading battalion was virtually broken up at the start line by own accurate and concentrated artillery fire, both Pak company commanders and CO being wounded. However, at 0630 hrs both 10 Garh Rif and 9 Jat companies were attacked at the crossings. It appears that the enemy penetrated between the FDLs and attacked the depth company of 9 Jat, over running it and causing heavy casualties. This was possible as mutual support between forward companies had been limited due to a thick growth of *sarkanda* (elephant grass) on the east bank of the Tawi which had been allowed to stand in order to conceal own forward movement during preparation for the offensive.

The Raipur and Darh companies fell back. A counterattack was launched from the north with 3/4 GR and 9 Horse to recapture Darh. However, the tanks were bogged down in the soft ground, (as CO 9 Horse had predicted) and the attack fizzled out. As communications with forward companies were disrupted, the fog of war descended on the battlefield. GOC 10 Infantry Division, considered the withdrawal of the two brigades to depth positions behind Troti. When this was suggested to the higher HQ, GOC 15 Corps flew down and assumed control. He ordered a counterattack to be launched from the north with a company each from 5/8 GR and 7 Kumaon, for recapturing Darh. At the same time 10 Garh Rif was ordered to counterattack Raipur Crossing from the south with a company. By now the enemy had suffered heavy losses, particularly in armour (six tanks had been lost whilst crossing the Tawi itself). This coupled with reports of heavy vehicles moving from Akhnur towards Jaurian, decided the issue. At 1230 hrs, all Pakistani troops were withdrawn from east of the Munawar Tawi.

Unaware of these developments, our troops launched the counter attacks as planned. Both localities were captured without any opposition by 1900 hrs. However, the news of the capture of Raipur Crossing was delayed. In the confusion 3/4 GR was ordered to counterattack Raipur already held by 10 Garh Rif. The mistake was soon discovered and not much damage was done. This would not have been the case had A Group 9 Para Commando carried

out its orders to launch a counter attack from the east on Raipur and Darh crossings in conjunctions with the counter attacks from the north and south.

After this the enemy made no further attempts to cross the Tawi, and the situation stabilised. Preparation for the counter offensive by own troops continued, till the declaration of ceasefire on 17 Dec 71.

What Went Wrong



Chhamb : Area Captured by Pakistan 1971 War (from Major General Jagjit Singh "Indian Gunners at War: The Western Front-1971")

On reflection and with benefit of hindsight, I feel Chhamb need not have been lost. One factor which is forgotten is that when the orders for withdrawal were given on 06 Dec, no one could have imagined that the war with Pakistan would end so abruptly. In a prolonged war, trading space for time would have made good sense. It is axiomatic that the aggressor in the initial stage of war will gain some modicum of success, for both surprise and initiative will be on his side. This success could have been turned to advantage had time been with us. After the ceasefire, the COAS addressed the troops. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the performance of 10 Infantry Division. At the end he asked whether there were any doubts. A havildar from the artillery asked, "Sir, if you wanted to see us in Pakistan then why did you declare a ceasefire?"

Aim. The basic error committed was that we were never clear of our aim. Had this been unambiguous, an almost impregnable defence posture could have been adopted in the time available to us. The deployment of 10 Infantry Division was a compromise between offensive and a defensive posture. What was unpardonable was that in the two months preceding the outbreak of hostilities, the task of the Division, in general, and that of the brigade, in particular, was changed four times. From deliberate defence in Troti, to an offensive, thence to a forward posture, which also entailed safeguarding the sanctity of the CFL, and finally on 01 Dec, the adoption of a defence posture.

Intelligence. Though adequate intelligence of enemy concentration opposite Chhamb was available, a proper analysis was not made of likely enemy intentions. Whilst the threat to this sector was deliberately underplayed, the threat to 25 and 26 Infantry Divisions was blown out of proportion. The reasons for this are not far to seek as far as 10 Infantry Division is concerned. Had the actual threat been correctly evaluated then the offensive, for which the Division had slogged for over a year, would have been permanently shelved. The higher intelligence, particularly R&AW, actively aided and abetted this assessment by stressing that the main enemy thrust would be towards Punch.

Ground. There is much made out regarding the importance of Mandiala heights and faulty reading of ground in the deployment of troops west of Tawi. It was not appreciated that the Sukhtao

Nala approach could have been a death trap for armour, and that deployment of an offensive southwards towards Gurha-Chhamb from Mandiala, was also extremely difficult. By adopting the northern approach via Sukhtao Nala the momentum of the attack was broken. It gave us the much-needed respite to deploy 68 Infantry Brigade to guard all the crossing places on the Tawi in the North. Had this been done at the outset, not only would the medium guns have been saved but 68 Infantry Brigade would have carried out its counterattack tasks in 191 Infantry Brigade sector, for which it had been earmarked, more efficiently. Further, a more pragmatic appreciation of the threats from the Nadala salient and through the Chicken's Neck should have been made. Because of the over assessment of enemy capabilities from these directions a disproportionate number of troops were deployed to cover the imaginary threats which were not corroborated by troops in contact. The deployment of the other two brigades could then have been rationalised. Logically, 68 Infantry Brigade, which was the Corps reserve, should have been retained intact in Akhnur and given the task of guarding Akhnur and the road Akhnur-Jammu. Since the threats in this area were basically from infiltrators, its lifting for other tasks would not have seriously jeopardised the defence of either Akhnur or Jammu. 52 Infantry Brigade, which was under-utilised, should have been deployed to cover all the crossing on the Tawi. This could have been done with two battalions (ie 10 Garh, which should have been placed under command of 52 Infantry Brigade at the outset, and 3/4 GR which was protecting the Jammu-Akhnur road). The third battalion (16 Punjab) with 10 Garh company of Chatti Tatli, plus the BSF could have adequately covered the Nadala salient. The fourth battalion, 7 Garh Rif positioned at Troti would have been available as reserve.

Infantry. The Infantry withstood several attacks and intense and continuous artillery bombardment, as also fairly frequent air attacks. However, patrolling was not carried out sufficiently to dominate no-man's-land with the result contact was often lost with the enemy. There was also a tendency noticed to rely heavily on armour and artillery and a reluctance to use own integral weapons. The loss of commanders, led to rapid disintegration of control in some cases.

Armour. The misuse of armour has already been commented on. It was seldom used concentrated as squadrons. The reasons for this have already been given as well as the compulsions for mixing tanks of 9 Horse and 72 Armd Regiment. Contingency planning for additional induction of armour west of Tawi was never done.

Artillery. The forward deployment of artillery to cover depth targets during the offensive should have been rectified once the decision to adopt a defensive posture was taken. 216 Medium Regiment deployed opposite Mandiala Crossing was particularly vulnerable. The regiment's failure to cater for local defence against ground attack resulted in the gun areas being overrun. Similarly, deployment of 81 Field Regiment and a battery each of 18 and 12 Field Regiments, west of Tawi, was unjustified. Their withdrawal during a critical phase of the battle was a major contributory factor in some localities being overrun. The fire support, however, was most effective, notwithstanding the disadvantages under which the artillery operated.

Engineers. The engineer companies (101 and 102 Field Coys) were never meshed in properly with the battalions in whose areas they were employed. This was partly due to lack of time and partly due to lack of communications with the battalions.

Signals. Permanent Line routes unless properly buried have little chance of survival in modern warfare. Radio communications had to be used extensively due to frequent disruption of line communication. These were not secure. On one occasion, the Pak 23 Infantry Division net seemed to be functioning on the same frequency as 191 Infantry Brigade forward net.

Air Support. While the enemy was most active from 04 to 06 Dec (74 air attacks were launched on our defences on 04 to 05 Dec, and 3 more on 06 Dec) our own response was negligible. The brigade had demanded three missions each on 04, 05 and 06 Dec. All were executed but only one was effective. This was not the fault of the IAF, who had made some radical changes in the concept of air support to the ground forces, particularly ensuring liaison at all levels well in time. The fault lay with the higher HQs, who had already spelt out priority sectors for air support. Nevertheless the air attacks by Pakistan Air Force had little effect on our defences, except for its psychological impact.

Casualties and Battles Fatigue. It is maintained that a simple method to gauging a unit performance is to calculate the number of personal casualties it has suffered. 10 Infantry Division suffered a total of 1343 casualties (430 killed, 723 wounded and 190 missing, out of which were 23 officers killed, 36 wounded and 05 missing). The bulk of these occurred the west of the Tawi. Contrast these with casualties suffered in other sectors in the West:

	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
Punch	130	23	5	158
15 Corps	180	653	61	902
1 Corps	301	873	151	1325
11 Corps	371	888	348	1607

It is maintained that a simple method of gauging a unit's performance is to calculate the number of personnel casualties it has suffered. If this was so, then 10 Infantry Division would come out with flying colours. There are other factors which influence men's will to fight. The chief amongst these is battle fatigue. The effects of sleep deprivation can have a far-reaching result on soldiers. Disorganisation of mental processes can occur which can lead to slow thinking, loss of concentration, incoherence, and the inability to recognise or correct errors. The heavy and persistent attacks on companies preceded by concentrated artillery fire, aerial bombardment and tank firing had rendered many weapons ineffective and destroyed most defence works. Just before cessation of hostilities, on the enemy side approximately 35 round of ammunition per gun remaining according to a Pakistani artillery OP, who defected to our side.

Counter Attacks. Why it was apparent that timely local counter attacks launched had proved successful at Ghogi, Mangotian, Pt 303 and Gurha, no deliberate counterattack at higher level west of Tawi, was even considered. A proposal was made to the GOC by me, after Gurha had been recaptured that he may consider launching a Division level counter attack on the abandoned 5 Assam positions at Ghogi and Barsala. However, at that stage due to paucity of troops at his disposal and the prevailing uncertainty, he advised the readjustment of 4/1 GR positions. By

accepting this advice, the fate of Chhamb was sealed. The only opportunity to restore the situation was lost. Fresh induction of troops, in the void created by the abandonment of opposition by 5 Assam, would have stabilised the situation. It is likely that had this been done Chhamb would not have been lost. However, this is hindsight. It must be remembered that the GOC had to, in the fog of war, decide whether by reinforcing Chhamb Sector he would be able to ensure the security of area West of the Tawi or whether he would have been only reinforcing failure.

Appendix A

ORDER OF BATTLE OF PAKISTAN TROOPS
EMPLOYED IN CHHAMB BATTLEHQ 23 Inf Div.

1. Armour - 11, 25 and 28 CAV

2. Artillery - 17 and 23 Inf Div Artillery Brigades composed of 11 and 39 Fd Regts (25 pounders), 50 and 63 Fd Regts (122 mm how), 28 and 64 Med Regts (155 mm how), 51 Comp Mtn Regt (105 mm how and 3.7 in how), 71 Mtn Regt (105 mm how), 81 AK Bty (8×25 pounders), 285 Div loc Bty (6×3.7 in how), sec 7.2 in guns ex 145 Hy Comp Med Hy Regt and 16×17 pounder guns manned by Mujahids. A total of approximately 31 fire units.

3. Infantry - 19 Baluch R & S Bn

(a) 66 Inf Bde ex 17 Inf Div (4 Punjab, 23 Baluch, and 33 FF)

(b) 20 Inf Bde (14 Punjab, 47 Punjab and 17 FF)

(c) 111 Inf Bde (8 Punjab, 42 Punjab and 10 Baluch)

(d) 4 AK Bde (2 AK Bn, 3 FF, 6 AK Bn and 13 AK Bn)

(e) 7 AK Bde (1, 4 and 8 AK Bns)

(f) Additional units - Wing Mahsud Scouts, Wing Zhob Militia, one Mujahid Coy, Ak Rangers, Chenab Rangers one Ak Sp Coy, three Ak anti tank Coys.

Appendix B

ORDER OF BATTLE-OWN TROOPS
(as on 3 Dec 71)HQ 10 Inf Div

1. Armour - 9 Horse (T-54), 72 Armd Regt (T-55) and 2 (Indep) Armd Sqn.
2. Artillery - 12, 18 and 81 Fd Regts, 39 Med Regt (5.5 in) and 216 Med Regt (130 mm), 86 Lt Regt, Bty 45 AD Regt, Tp 151 AD Regt and 1-27 Div loc Bty.
3. Infantry
 - (a) 28 Inf Bde (5 Rajput, 2 JAK Rif, 8 J&K Militia)
 - (b) 52 Inf Bde (16 Punjab, 7 Garh Rif and 3/4 GR)
 - (c) 191 Inf Bde (5 Sikh, 10 Garh Rif, 5 Assam, 4/1 GR, C Coy 12 Guards and Gp 9 Para Cdo)
 - (d) 68 Inf Bde (Corps reserve) - (9 Jat, 7 Kumaon and 5/8 GR)
4. Engineers (61 and 105 Engr Regts)
5. Signals (10 Inf Div Sig Regt) and 68 Inf Bde Sig Coy)
6. Para Military - 51 BSF less two Coys and 57 BSF

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS FOUGHT WEST OF MANAWAR TAWI

	3 Dec (Hrs)	4 Dec (Hrs)	5 Dec (Hrs)	6 Dec (Hrs)
MANAWAR and JHANDA PT 951	2145 Two coys/ armr	0300 Probing 1500 One inf bn/armr	--	0530 Two inf coys 0630 One inf coys 1715 Two inf coys armr . Over run 0630 Two inf coys & armr 1730 Over run by two inf coys/armr
BARSAIA	--	1800 Feint	0730 Two inf coys	0100 Probing 0630 Probing 1600 Over run by inf/armr
GHOGI	--	0030 One inf coy	0730 Two inf coys 2020 Two inf coys/armr over run 2320 Counter attacked & recaptured	0430 Two inf coys/armr 0630 Over run by inf/armr 0930 Counter attacked and retaken 0530 Partially over run but enemy ejected
Pt 303	2330 Probing	1800 Two inf coys	0400 Probing 0600 In strength 1500 Probing 1600 In strength	0300 Inf Bn/armr 0435 Inf Bn/armr 1400 Over run 1700 Counter attacked & retaken
PHAGLA	2330 Probing	1430 Probing	0400 Probing 0600 In strength 1130 Probing 0600 Probing	
GURHA	--	1130 Probing		
MANDIALA (North)	2330 Probing	1230 over run 2030 Counter attacked unsuccessfully		
MANDIALA (South)				1730 over run

1971 – An Excursion in Sindh: Notings from a Soldiers Diary[#]

Captain Shekhar Dutt, SM, IAS (Retd)[@]

Editor's Note

This is a narration of events of the 1971 War in Barmer – Naya Chor (Sindh-Pakistan) Sector, seen through the eyes of a young officer, Captain Shekhar Dutt, SM, who later joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and rose to be the Defence Secretary. The narration takes place in the backdrop of operations of 11 Infantry Division (11 Inf Div), which was tasked to advance to Naya Chor – Umarkot across the international border and pose a threat to Hyderabad (Sindh-Pakistan). Shekhar Dutt was posted in 218 Medium Regiment (218 Med Regt) and was affiliated as Forward Observation Officer (FOO) to 3 Independent Armoured Squadron [3 (I) Armd Sqn], equipped with T-55 tanks. This squadron, supported by a company of 2 MAHAR, was to spearhead the attack in this sector. Captain Shekhar Dutt carried a small green rexene jacketed notebook (2.5"x 4") in his dungaree (overalls) pocket; wherein he made very cryptic entries which in this narration have been elaborated upon from his memory. The elaborated entries have been edited at places to keep the narrative short and to the point, but what appears in the pages that follow is generally his own words. Nothing has been edited in the narrative that either changes the events or thoughts or the context. The actual entries in the notebook are highlighted in bold and have been produced verbatim. Please refer to Sketch P while reading the narrative.

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