

Captain Anuj Nayyar: A Valiant Hero of the Kargil War

Introduction

The Kargil War was the last war fought between India and Pakistan. The war was ignited by the infiltration of regular armed personnel from the Pakistan Army along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kargil District of Jammu and Kashmir. The war lasted for approximately two months, starting in May and ending in July, 1999. It was a significant conflict that highlighted the complexities and challenges in bilateral relationship of both countries. The war highlighted Pakistan's aggressive military actions and raised international concerns about its support for cross-border terrorism. While India's diplomatic efforts effectively highlighted Pakistan's transgressions, leading to its diplomatic isolation in the international community. This also bolstered India's strategic position and increased its credibility on the global stage.

The outcome of the war was a clear victory for India. Indian forces successfully evicted Pakistan's troops from the strategic heights they had intruded in the Kargil Sector. This victory established a precedent that India would not tolerate any attempts to alter the status quo along the Line of Control (LoC) through any means. It also demonstrated India's military capabilities and resolve to defend its territory. Undoubtedly, the sheer guts and perseverance of Indian soldiers fighting on the ground played a crucial role in ensuring India's victory in the war. This courage and commitment become especially critical considering the fact that, in addition to intruder's occupying strategic higher ground the weather, high altitude mountains with jagged, near vertical hill faces, posed both tactical and logistical problems.

The Kargil War, witnessed numerous acts of bravery and sacrifice. Among the gallant soldiers who etched their names in history was Captain Anuj Nayyar of 17 JAT. While serving in the Indian Army's 17 JAT, Captain Nayyar displayed exceptional valour and selfless devotion to duty, making his story a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Indian armed forces during the intense war in the Kargil sector. It serves as a reminder of the extraordinary individuals who laid down their lives for the country.

Early Life and Military Career

Captain Anuj Nayyar was born on 28 June 1975 in Delhi, India. From a young age, he displayed a keen interest in the military and resolved to join the Armed Forces. When a young Anuj Nayyar was waiting outside the Allahabad SSB Centre, he confidently told his father, "I am going to make it, Poppin. I promise you".^[i] Inspired by stories of bravery and sacrifice, after completing his schooling from Army Public School, Dhaula Kuna, he pursued his dream by enrolling in the National Defense Academy (NDA) in June 1993 as part of the 90th Course. Thereafter, on completion of his training in the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun in June 1997, Captain Nayyar was commissioned into the Indian Army's 17 JAT on 07 June 1997.^[ii]

Known for their resilience and tenacity, the JAT Regiment has received numerous applauds and awards. Captain Nayyar's remarkable leadership skills and unwavering dedication to his duty quickly earned him the respect and admiration of his fellow soldiers. It was this same commitment that would define his actions during the Kargil War.

The Kargil War and Captain Nayyar's Heroic Acts

During the war, one of the most critical features held by the enemy was Point 4875. The 17 JAT was inducted into the valley on 26 May 1999 and tasked with capturing features Pimple 1, Pimple 2, and Whale Back. Colonel Umesh Singh Bawa, the Commanding Officer, planned to launch the attack in two phases. In the first phase, he aimed to attack Pimple 1 and Whale Back from the South West and South, respectively. The second phase would involve capturing Pimple 2 and North Spur. On 5 July 1999, after successfully capturing features Pimple 1 and Whale Back in Phase 1 of the assault, the CO decided to halt for a day before launching Phase 2 of the attack. On 06 July 1999, 17 JAT launched an attack on Pimple 2 from the direction of Whale Back. However, during the initial move, the Commander of the 'C' Company was seriously wounded, and Captain Anuj Nayyar, the Second-in-Command, took charge.^[iii]

Under intense enemy fire and adverse weather conditions, Captain Nayyar led his troops with exceptional courage and tactical acumen. As his troop approached, they identified three to four enemy positions. The enemy had entrenched themselves deeply and had complete control over the area.^[iv] With relentless determination, Captain Nayyar devised a plan to neutralize the enemy's fortified Sangars. Rocket launcher and grenades were used on the enemy's first position, but they were not futile. Captain Nayyar's troop was severely outnumbered and outgunned. Yet he fearlessly manoeuvred his men through the assault, motivating them to fight against all odds. He led a frontal assault, risking his own life.^[v]

He advanced with the leading Section and engaged in a hand-to-hand combat with the enemy and cleared the first position. The enemy was determined and fired with heavy automatic fire. Captain Nayyar was tenacious while he fearlessly charged ahead, inspiring his troops to exhibit unparalleled bravery. He unmindful of his personal safety motivated his men to continue their assault and eventually cleared two other enemy positions.^[vi] While attempting to attack the fourth position, the enemy launched a rocket grenade against his men. Without hesitation, Captain Nayyar bravely stood between his men and the enemy fire, sacrificing himself to save his comrades and the operation. He was hit by a RPG.^[vii] Before he laid down his life, he had killed nine enemy soldiers and destroyed three medium machine gun positions of the enemy.

Captain Nayyar's tenacity, young and exceptional leadership and strategic acumen proved instrumental in regaining control of the strategic position, effectively weakening the enemy's hold on the area. Captain Nayyar's indomitable spirit motivated his men in achieving the objective. In an act of supreme sacrifice, he laid down his life for the nation, never wavering from his duty until his last breath. His sacrifice and unwavering determination to protect his comrades and his country resonated across India. He was posthumously awarded the nation's highest military honour, Maha Vir Chakra.

Conclusion

Captain Nayyar's bust stands at the Kargil War memorial. His selfless sacrifice and unwavering bravery serve as a reminder of the extraordinary valour displayed by countless soldiers who laid down their lives for the nation. Captain Nayyar's name will forever be etched in the hearts of his countrymen, inspiring future generations to strive for greatness and embody the true essence of patriotism.

The Kargil War not just had far reaching impacts on the Indian foreign policy but also left deep imprint on the minds of every Indian. It was the war in which Indian Army lost maximum number of its young Commanding Officers. Their sacrifices reinforced India's commitment to strengthening its defense capabilities, countering terrorism, and maintaining diplomatic pressure on Pakistan. The war also highlighted the necessity of pursuing dialogue and confidence-building measures to prevent escalation and promote stability in the region.

But, despite tasting defeat in its motive to annex Kashmir by strength, Pakistan didn't back down from its sole agenda of establishing a foothold in the region. Over the years, Pakistan has allegedly fuelled multiple radical terrorist organisations to disrupt stability in the region. In an attempt to establish peace, the Indian Government revoked Article 370 and turned the state of Jammu and Kashmir into a Union Territory of India. Despite initial agitation towards the Abrogation of Article 370, the masses welcomed this move, and Kashmir is now slowly moving towards peace and regular life after decades of turbulence.

However, even after 24 years of Kargil War, Pakistan still hasn't stopped with its unsuccessful attempts to disrupt the valley's peace. Pakistan's such adventures beyond its territorial integrity have again and again left India with the thought whether we need more peace talks with Pakistan or confrontation is the only solution.

[i] "Capt Anuj Nayyar" Gallantry Awards | Ministry of Defence, Government of India. Accessed July 18, 2023. <https://www.gallantryawards.gov.in/awardee/1504>.

[ii] Nayyar, Meena, and Himmat Singh Shekhawat. The Tiger of Drass: Capt. Anuj Nayyar, 23, Kargil Hero. Gurugram, Haryana: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2022.

[iii] Heroes of Kargil. Colonel Gurmeet Kanwal (2002) Army HQ, New Delhi.

[iv] Anuj, Rachna Bisht Rawat, Scholar Warrior, CLAWS, (Accessed on 24 May 2022) https://archive.claws.in/images/journals_doc/260506833_RachnaBishtRawat.pdf

[v] Nayyar, Meena, and Himmat Singh Shekhawat. The Tiger of Drass: Capt. Anuj Nayyar, 23, Kargil Hero. Gurugram, Haryana: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2022.

[vi] "Capt Anuj Nayyar" Gallantry Awards | Ministry of Defence, Government of India. Accessed July 18, 2023. <https://www.gallantryawards.gov.in/awardee/1504>.

[vii] Nayyar, Meena, and Himmat Singh Shekhawat. The Tiger of Drass: Capt. Anuj Nayyar, 23, Kargil Hero. Gurugram, Haryana: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2022.

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