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**S**ECTION VII  
Military History

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## Dograi: A Battle Like No Other...

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*A hard-bitten, no-nonsense, cryptic Anglo-Indian officer of Irish extraction of the crusty old school who was the embodiment of Naam, Namak, Nishan; hardy officers and sturdy, fearless Jat troops whose ancestors had deathless heroism in their DNA since they almost defeated Alexander the Great at Mung and Bhera on the Hydaspes (Jhelum) in 326 BC... This was all Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Hayde had and it turned out to be more than enough. He was launched in battle off the back of a typically Indian intelligence void of gigantic proportions (the Ichhogil Canal details were not known or conveyed to him)... Launched into key Pakistani Punjab heart-land with his 552 brave-hearts with all else struggling to keep pace... including his controlling HQ... History does not record too many instances when an Infantry Battalion Group has conducted Opposed Canal Crossings twice within two weeks; both times successfully and against a determined and well-trained, latterly well-prepared enemy. The 3 JAT Group under Hayde did just that; writing for India and Infantry world-wide a tale of rare grit, follow-me and heroism taught in Infantry Training Establishments. General Raj Mehta tells the fascinating story of this battle that was like no other as his tribute to ace soldiering exhibited across ranks by this amazing band of driven soldiery across*

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*arms...led on by an uncompromising, brave, ethical man for whom winning was his only choice; well above death, dishonour or both. Read on, dear readers...*

India (by war's end) ... was in a position to inflict grave damage to, if not capture, Pakistan's capital of the Punjab (Lahore) when the cease-fire was called...much to Ayub's chagrin.

### **Stanley Wolpert's: *India***

A brief but furious 1965 war with India began with the city of Lahore threatened with encirclement by the Indian Army. John Keay's *India: A History* (UK: Harper Collins UK, July 2013).

Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Hayde was angry, concerned, and annoyed. Any one in his place would be. Ordered to lead the 15 Infantry Division advance into Pakistan, this newly appointed Commanding Officer (CO)—he was 2IC to the last CO, Lieutenant Colonel JS Mundy—had a fine body of men to command just down from alpine heights at Sikkim. The annoyance was because he had been provided inadequate maps and topographical information. It was because he needed his men to 'battle-zero' their weapons before they went in and the establishment was not helping. However, went in he did—and post zeroing of his small arms, but let that wait. Let's start with the basic story first.



Lieutenant Colonel Desmond E Hayde, MVC, by MF Husain

## **Op Riddle and Hayde**

Post the Kutch foray in April-May 1965, Pakistan felt sufficiently emboldened to launch Op Gibraltar in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). When that was largely still-born, Op Grand Slam was launched with rather more success. India almost lost Chhamb before Army-IAF synergy saved Chhamb and launched a riposte into prime Pakistani territory. For 11 Corps in Punjab, this meant a three division shallow offensive designed to lean on the Ichhogil Canal; then explore opportunities that might open. 4 Infantry Division, starting with initial adversity at Kasur, recovered to make the Pak armoured offensive towards Beas Bridge just an opium driven talking point and, instead, leave 97 Pakistani tanks (largely Pattons) either smoking hulks in the flooded fields of Khemkaran/Asal Uttar or driven off in mint condition as by Patton-busting 3 CAV. The Deccan Horse and equally importantly, Grenadier Abdul Hamid, PVC (Posthumous) all combined to castrate Pakistan 1 Armoured Division. While the Ichhogil wasn't reached, Beas and thereby Amritsar had been defended from Pak depredations, even if Khemkaran had been lost. 7 Infantry Division in the centre took Burki on the Ichhogil. At some distance off, lay Lahore...

The laggard clearly seemed to be 15 Infantry Division and that hurt the GOC 11 Corps, Lieutenant General Joginder, and the Army Commander Western Command, Lieutenant General Harbakhsh. It faltered, with GOC 15 Infantry Division, Major General Niranjan being removed from command. Dograi (Batapur/Jallo Mor for Pakistan) on the Ichhogil was identified as the respect-restoring intermediate objective for the Amritsar Division as its capture just off the GD Road would expose strategically important Lahore city to India. Dograi

therefore had to be taken and 3 JAT was chosen by GOC, Major General Mohinder Singh and Brigadier MS Rikh, Commander 54 Infantry Brigade to provide a firm base to aid its capture by other units.

A golden chance to advance to undefended Lahore was left unexploited.

### 3 JAT Do Their Bit; The Others Falter



Plate 1: The Dograi Battle Area

Hayde's Marauders crossed the IB on 6 September 1965, taking villages Gosal-Dial by 7 AM in a surgical strike. Surviving a murderous air strike, the Unit took on tasks allotted to others who weren't in position, securing the Ichhogil east bank by 11:30 hours. This was followed by opportunistic crossing over and capture of Dograi, Batapur (a bustling town) and Attoke Awan, besides defeating a Pak counter-attack. With HQ not in communication and supporting fires absent, besides serious strafing damages to its logistics, Hayde was ordered back on the Scinde Horse tank troop net as conveyed by Lieutenant Brijendra, his brave-heart supporting troop commander; returning to Gosal-Dial by 1715 hours. A golden chance to advance to then undefended Lahore was left unexploited by headquarter overtaken by the speed of operations and by poor decision-making. Restoring command coherence took over 10 days.

CO's orders were clear - Follow the leader, shoot at anything that looks potentially harmful and ask no questions.

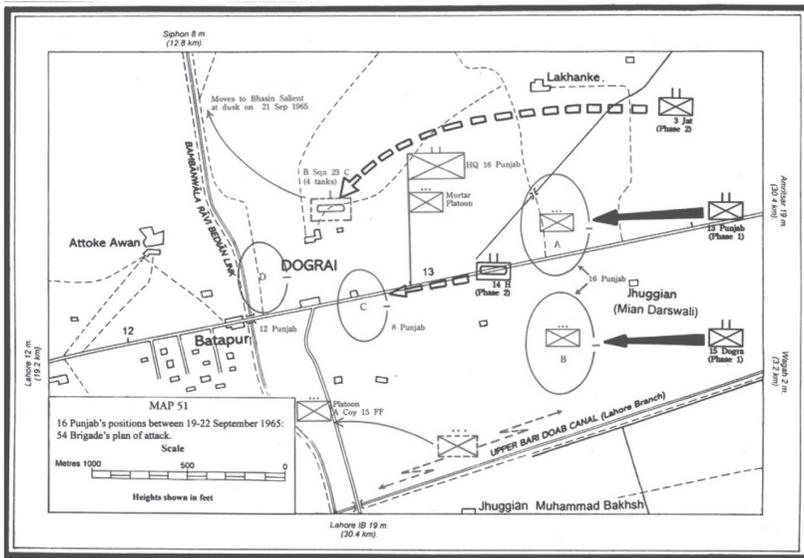
That tentativeness over, recapture of Dograi was ordered on 19 September. Wily old fox Hayde had, however, been planning for that contingency since 12 September. These were traits that made him and his band of brave-hearts different, very different. They were determined to win and win they did.

### **Dograi Redux: Hayde Prepares with Prescience, Resolve and Grit**

Clearly, Hayde had not wasted the period that senior commanders were employing to get their act together. His *Battle of Dograi* lists in painstaking detail what he ordered to be done to get his intelligence about enemy and defences; terrain and enemy order of battle plotted with damning accuracy before he made his plans for capturing the reinforced Dograi whenever he was ordered to retake Dograi. Clinical recce, plotting of bunkers, pill boxes, tank hides, company defended localities, he got the intelligence picture clear, making the Pakistani defences and intent transparent to his now amazingly empowered officers and men who thought, spoke, and dreamt victory; letting their spirits soar in anticipation of runaway battle success. 16 PUNJAB and elements of 8 PUNJAB, 3 BALUCH, 18 BALUCH, and R&S were deployed at Dograi with two companies at Mile 13. Two troops of tanks/TDU were also in location to assist the Pakistani Infantry; a formidable opposition indeed, deployed both east and west of the Ichhogil.

Faced with a mix of experienced senior JCO's and dashing but young and inexperienced officers, he broke convention by placing his younger company officers under company JCO's who were experienced and steady. The battle proved that his instinct served him nobly and at critical turning points of the battle. His orders were equally clear and forged in steel. He said:

Follow the leader. Shoot at anything that looks potentially harmful; ask no questions. Reach your stated objective dead or alive but reach because I certainly will. Secure the objective and keep it secure because the enemy will counterattack and you must not allow him to regain what we have captured.



Map 1: Advance to Dograi

### For Whom the Bells Toll...Battle Honour Dograi

The plan, when it emerged, was phased. 13 PUNJAB, an old Paltran, was to capture Mile 13 by midnight 21 September in the opening phase. In Phase 2, Hayde's 3 JAT was to take Dograi from the north, detouring 6,000 yards to do so. Breaking convention yet again, Hayde allotted each attacking company a Pakistani company defended locality as their objectives. It was a brilliant plan which did not allow the attacked company to seek or give help to others being attacked. The only reserve Hayde kept was the guts and grit of his officers and men; fuelled by his own 'never say die' spirit and cool thinking under fire.

With the 13 PUNJAB attack to secure a firm base only partly successful, Hayde, nothing hindered, ordered his attack to commence in pitch black darkness at 01:30 hours on 22 September. The enemy right and rear were attacked with brutal hand-to-hand fighting becoming the rule rather than the exception. After bloody hours of fighting, led by amazingly brave CO, company commanders both JCO's and officers,

interspersed by deathless courage shown by several young officers and men, Dograi lay re-captured yet again. The Jats had been at Dograi hammer and tongs without pause and the essence of the Jat Balwan spirit is perhaps best brought out in the words of Colonel Hayde himself:

It was from 400 metres short that we really started getting it. A whole machine gun complex, along the eastern bank of the Ichhogil Canal opened up. They must have been in the area in which I, my IO and a few others were. We must have been under the fire of at least eight machine-guns at every step we took. We had a lot of fresh young troops. But we had made it very clear to them, that there was only one aim, and that aim was to close the gap from the FUP, on the objective from where the enemy was firing, as quickly as possible, whether it be in the open, whether it be through cover, whether it be at the run, whether it be on your belly. There was to be no stop until they had made the built up area on the north-eastern and northern edge of Dograi. This, I am really proud so say, my young Jat jawans did with full valour; with full vigor, under the terrific and dynamic leadership of my company commanders, platoon commanders and junior leaders. Once my boys closed in with the enemy on the objective, very intense and severe hand-to-hand fighting had to take place, because it was difficult to get the enemy out of their trenches. The enemy for obvious reasons was not very keen to leave their trenches and we for very obvious reasons had to get in there and push them out.

### **Stock Taking**

What needs statement with pride and awe is that the Jats, as predicted by Hayde, withstood four determined counter-attacks with close quarter fighting between 0130 and 1200 hours on 22 September till hostilities ceased on 23 September 1965. 3 JAT paid a heavy price of five officers and 59 men killed, while the wounded included six officers, five JCOs, and 142 men. This figure does not include one officer, one JCO and 23 men killed, and three officers (including the

CO), three JCO's and 72 men wounded between 6 and 20 September. Thus, in total, 3 JAT had 322 all ranks killed and wounded against the 552 all ranks that took part; a huge sacrifice for sustaining the Battalion and the Indian Army's ethic of *Naam, Namak, Nishan*. The enemy dead (just the second time around) were 305 with many more wounded; their overall casualties easily being double of 3 JAT. Besides, 3 JAT captured 108 officers, JCO's, and men including CO 16 PUNJAB, Colonel GF Golewala; the key opposing Unit that had faced the Jats. There were six enemy tanks of 30 TDU/23 CAV that were also destroyed and six captured by the 3 JAT group which included commendable performances by the Scinde Horse subaltern, Brijendra Singh, and his diehard lads.



Plate 2: Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Hayde, MVC, briefing the RM and Brigadier Niranjn Singh

### Honours and Awards

In terms of honours and awards, Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Hayde was awarded an MVC (it should really have been MVC\*\* as Colonel Hayde should have been decorated twice for his gallant action). Along with him, Major AR Tyagi and Captain Kapil Thapa were awarded MVC posthumously for inspirational bravery of an exceptional kind. There were 4 VrC awards, 7 SM's, 12 M-in-D awards, and 12 COAS

Commendations. GOC 15 Infantry Division, Major General Mohinder Singh was also awarded an MVC for his hands-on leadership.



Plate 3: 3 JAT flies the Tricolour proudly at Dograi post its capture

### **Hayde's Legacy: Gritty, Follow-Me Leadership, Grit, and Compassion**

Retiring in 1978 as a Brigadier, Hayde settled at Kotdwar, donating much of his land for a school now called Hayde Heritage. A strict, taciturn man who hid his compassionate side well, he is remembered by locals as a great man and by his Jats and the larger Indian Army as a world class wartime leader, officer, and gentleman of impeccable pedigree. He drove his men when it mattered, to fight with everything they had, including, on occasion, bare hands. They fought; they lost men but never their spirit, resolve, and focus. In the real stakes of war they won in a manner that they are now part of the fighting man's folklore in the same class as Saragarhi, Thermopylae, and similar other battles worldwide. He passed away at 87, his death merely a timeless journey into deathless bravery, courage, and grit of the rarest kind displayed in the persona of an inspirational leader whose key command was 'Follow Me'.