

Operations in Jammu and Kashmir 1947-48¹

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General

At the time of Independence, Jammu and Kashmir with a geographical area of 222,870 sq km was the largest Princely State of India. But, this large area was inhabited with only 39 towns and 8903 villages. The total population in 1947 was estimated at about 4 million. The density of population was 17 persons per sq km. The main mountain ranges, viz, the Karakoram, Great Himalayas and the Pir Panjal divide the state into three distinct geographical regions: Jammu and the outer hills; the valley of Kashmir and the high mountainous regions of the North.²

Demography

Demographically, the outer hills of Jammu region were occupied by a race of warlike and sturdy Rajputs who were both Hindus and Muslims. The areas around Jammu were mostly occupied by the Hindu Dogras whereas converted Muslims were present in areas towards the west. They were called the Chibs in Bhimbar and Mirpur, and Sudhans in Poonch. The Hindu and Muslim Rajputs of the Jammu region provided a large number of soldiers to the British Indian Army and the armies of the Dogra Maharajas. Apart from these races, the Pir Panjals were also populated by the Hindu Gaddis and Khakas, Bambas and Gujjars of the Muslim faith.

The population of the Kashmir valley was predominantly Muslim with some Hindu Brahmins. The Brahmins or the Kashmiri Pandits were a highly intellectual

and industrious people who went outside the state in large numbers to earn their livelihood. The Muslims were primarily engaged in agriculture or were engaged as artisans in small trades like carpet weaving, etc. The population of Srinagar city was 207,787 in 1941 and was the highest in the state.

The western portion of the mountainous North was predominantly Muslim with a number of other ethnic groups. The people of Gilgit shared a common affinity with the population of Afghanistan. The eastern part of this region, namely Kargil and Ladakh were inhabited mainly by the Buddhists of Tibetan ancestry.

Communications

In 1947, no fully-equipped airport existed in the state though emergency landing strips were there at Gilgit, Chilas, Srinagar and Jammu. A railway line connected Jammu from Sialkot.

The major all-weather roads that existed in 1947 were:-

- Rawalpindi-Muzzafarabad-Srinagar: The distance between the state's boundary at Kohala and Srinagar was 205 km. Running along the Jhelum river, this was the most convenient axis to enter the Kashmir valley.
- Jammu-Srinagar: This 320 Km long road crossed the Pir Panjal range at Banihal Pass was the only road link connecting the valley of Kashmir to the rest of the country after Pakistan's tribal invasion.
- Jammu-Pathankot: This tenuous track of 112 Km was India's only road link to the state of Jammu and Kashmir after partition.
- From Srinagar, a number of roads led to Tangmarg, Bandipur and Pahalgam. Jammu was also connected to Akhnoor, Rajouri and Poonch by a motorable road. A fair weather road connected Uri and Poonch over the Haji Pir Pass.

The most important of the non-motorable tracks was the one connecting Srinagar and Leh. This 389 km long track crossed the mighty Himalayas at the formidable Zoji La Pass (3528 m) ahead of Sonamarg and Baltal. Ahead of Leh, this ancient caravan route went over the Karakoram Pass to Yarkand in Xinijang. Another 365 km track connected Srinagar and Gilgit via Bandipur, Razdhan Pass and Gurez. This route was used by the Maharaja's forces to maintain the garrisons around Gilgit and at Skardu.

Administration

The Maharaja was the Head of the Government as well as the C-in-C of the State army. The Paramountcy of the British was maintained through a Resident who

had the powers to control almost every affair of the state. The summer capital of the state was Srinagar and Jammu was the winter capital. The state was divided into four provinces, namely, Jammu, Srinagar, Gilgit and Ladakh, each under a Governor. Poonch was a feudal jagir under its own raja whereas Gilgit was held on lease by the Government of India till August 1947.

Genesis of the problem

At the time of independence, nearly 565 minor and major princely states existed in the country. These states were given the option to join either of the two independent dominions of India and Pakistan. The newly formed Government of India did not consider them independent. However, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the first President of Pakistan in order to foment troubles for India declared that the princely states could also remain independent, if they so desired. While most of the princely states merged with the Union of India, Jammu & Kashmir and Hyderabad vacillated in order to retain their independent status. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan in August 1947. The postal and telegraph facilities of J&K were placed under the control of Pakistan and the latter also agreed to continue with the existing arrangements for the supply of essential commodities like fuel oil, kerosene oil, wheat, cloth and ammunition to the state.

Pangs of Partition

Jammu and Kashmir could not remain isolated from the ghastly communal violence that had engulfed Punjab in August 1947. Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan and Muslims from India began to pour into the state. Soon, communal clashes were reported from different provinces of the state. The situation took an ugly turn when the state army took action against some Muslim trouble-makers in Poonch. The Muslim League of West Punjab and some newspapers saw this as a deliberate aim by the Maharaja to harass the Muslim community. On 27 August, a telegram was sent to the Maharaja from Hazara threatening to attack the state if atrocities against the Muslims were not controlled. By September, bands of raiders ranging from 200-500 men carried out harassing raids and looting of Hindu villages and refugees at Kotha, Chak Haria and Ranbirsinghpura in Jammu province. On 4 October 1947, an aircraft carried out reconnaissance activity over Kohala and Palandari. The raiders started harassing the state army contingents by carrying out hit-and-run attacks at Chirala and Bagh in Rawalkot and also began infiltrating into Poonch.

Economic Blockade and Negotiations with Pakistan

By September, Pakistan had put in place a loose economic blockade of J&K by holding up supplies of essential commodities. It had also snapped the post and telegraph links to the state. All negotiations by the state government to open up supplies from Pakistan failed with the latter citing its inability to provide escorts for supply columns. The state government sent desperate telegrams to Pakistan and the British government on 15, 18 and 22 October 1947 in order to ease the situation but to no avail. By mid-October, large concentrations of raiders were sited around Bhimbar, Mangla, Mirpur and Fort Owen near Poonch had to be evacuated by the state forces.

Therefore, with an economic blockade and increasing raids by marauders, Pakistan had set the stage for a full-fledged invasion of Jammu and Kashmir.

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Op Gulmarg – The Tribal Invasion

The Islamic nation of Pakistan was formed on the basis of the two-nation theory which advocated a separate nation for Muslims carved out of the Muslim-majority areas of the then undivided India. Based on this reasoning, Pakistan saw it natural for a Muslim-majority Kashmir to be part of Pakistan. Another motive for launching the tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir was to maintain control over the restive North Western Frontier Provinces (NWFP). If the aspirations for independence of the Pathans could not be checked, then the very basis of Pakistan – formed on a distinct Islamic identity would have collapsed. During the time of partition, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's (Badshah Khan) also known as 'Frontier Gandhi' Pathanistan movement had begun to gain steam. It is believed that one of the primary motives of launching the tribal invasion of Jammu and Kashmir was to create a diversion for the Pathans by luring them towards the wealth and prosperity of Kashmir. A communal twist was given to the events in J&K to portray that the Hindu rulers were oppressing the Muslim subjects of the state.

Op Gulmarg – The Plan

Op Gulmarg was conceived at the Pakistan Army HQ in Rawalpindi soon after independence. DO letters detailing the operational instruction had the stamp of

approval of the then British C-in-C of the Pakistan Army, Gen Sir Frank Messervy.

According to the plan, lashkars of 1000 pathans each were to be raised by every pathan tribe. For this purpose, separate instructions were issued to the Deputy Commissioners and Political Agents. Once recruited, these lashkars were to concentrate at Bannu, Wana, Peshawar, Kohat, Thal and Naushera by the first week of September 1947.

The Brigade Commanders at these places were to then equip them with arms, ammunition and some clothing. On paper, these issues were shown against regular Pakistan Army units.

Each Tribal laskhar was commanded by a Major of the Pakistan Army who was to act as the advisor to the Malik or the nominal commander of the lashkar. The Major had a Captain and 10 JCOs under his command. Each irregular company was commanded by a JCO. All the Pakistan Army regulars were pathans. Each Lashkar were provided with at least four guides/informers.

Forward ammunition dumps were to be established at Abbottabad on 18 October and subsequently moved to Muzzaffarabad and Domel after D Day.

The invasion force was led by Maj Gen Akbar Khan (code-name Tariq) and assisted by Brig Sher Khan. Their HQ was located inside the Pakistan Army HQ in Rawalpindi.

All lashkars were instructed to travel in civil buses at night and concentrate at Abbottabad by 18 October 1947.

The operations were to progress as under:-

- The main force of Six lashkars was to advance on to Srinagar from Domel on the Muzzaffarabad-Uri-Baramulla-Srinagar road.
- A force of two lashkars would provide flank protection to the main force by moving on to Gulmarg via the Haji Pir Pass.
- Another force of two lashkars was to capture Handwara, Sopore and Bandipur by crossing the Nastachun Pass beyond Tithwal.
- A force of 10 lashkars was earmarked for the Bhimbar, Rawalkot and Poonch areas with the objective of capturing Rajouri and Poonch and then advancing on to Jammu.
- 7 Infantry Division of Pakistan Army was asked to concentrate in area Murree-Abbottabad by last light 21 October and be ready to move immediately into J&K to support the tribal militias and consolidate their positions. One Infantry Brigade was put on readiness at Sialkot for moving on to Jammu.
- The D Day for Op Gulmarg was 22 October 1947.^{3,4}

The Disposition of state forces of J&K on 22 October 1947 were:-

Jammu Brigade

Bde HQ

J&K Rifles Regt Centre - Jammu

5 J&K Rifles

J&K Body Guard Cavalry less

one sqn - spread in sub-units from Kathua to Bhimbar

Four garrison police companies

Kashmir Brigade

Bde HQ

J&K Trg School

One Sqn J&K Body Guard Cavalry - Badami Bagh Cantonment, Srinagar

7 J&K Rifles less two companies - Srinagar

4 J&K Rifles less two companies - Domel

Coy - Kohala

Coy - Spread in gen area Keran

6 J&K Rifles less two companies - Bunji

Coy less one platoon - Leh

Two Platoons - Kargil

Coy less one platoon - Skardu

Poonch Area

Force HQ - Punch

1 J&K Rifles - Spread in base area

8 J&K Rifles

(relieving 1st Bn)

9 J&K Rifles

Two Companies 7 J&K Rifles - Rawalkot (spread in sub-units)

Mirpur Brigade

Bde HQ

One Platoon 2 J&K Rifles
One Platoon 3 J&K Rifles
One garrison police company - Dharamsal-Jhangar
2 J&K Rifles less one platoon - Naushara and its outposts
3 J&K Rifles - Mirpur and its outposts

* Note: The J&K Infantry (KI) battalions mentioned above were later merged with the regular Indian Army and formed the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles. The J&K Militia were converted into the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry.

The first strike

The raiders launched a frontal assault along the Jhelum valley road and captured the Lohar Gali and Ramkot outposts arriving in 200 civilian lorries. The Muslim company of 4 Kashmir Infantry (KI) joined the raiders. The Dogra picquet located at a school ground in Muzzaffarabad held on for a while inflicting heavy casualties on the raiders. The Muslim troops at Domel also joined ranks with the enemy. By night fall, the Battalion HQ of 4 KI at Domel along with its outposts were overwhelmed. A detachment managed to retreat to Bagh (escorting 9000 refugees) and another one reached Srinagar. A composite detachment of 150 troops from Srinagar led by Brig Rajendra Singh, the officiating Chief of the State Forces had reached Uri by the evening of 22 October. But, heavily outnumbered by the raiders, they had to withdraw to Mahura. Brig Rajendra Singh was killed while encountering a roadblock between Mahura and Baramulla. He was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for delaying the enemy advance to Baramulla by four days. The raiders entered Baramulla on the evening of 26 October 1947 and indulged in mass pillage and looting of the town. Col Dykes, a British officer and his assistants at a missionary were also not spared.

J&K accedes to the Union of India

On the evening of 24 October, the Government of India received an emergency telegram from Srinagar informing them about the invasion with urgent pleas for dispatch of Indian troops. VP Menon, Secretary of States, Government of India flew to Srinagar the next day and reported on the grave situation prevailing in Srinagar. He accompanied the Prime Minister of Kashmir State to New Delhi. On 26 October 1947, the Instrument of Accession was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh in Jammu. VP Menon carried the document to New Delhi on the same day and the merger of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the Union of India was completed.

Operation Jak

Brig Kalwant Singh, the acting CGS of the Indian Army earmarked 1 Sikh, located at Gurgaon to fly-in to Srinagar and secure the aerodrome and the wireless station there. The first Dakota carrying Lt Col DR Rai, CO, 1 Sikh landed at Srinagar airfield at 0830 h on 27 Oct 1947. By the end of the day, the remaining three flights of Dakotas were completed and 1 Sikh had concentrated at the Srinagar airfield. A company of 1 Sikh was dispatched to support two platoons of state forces who were holding the enemy's advance at a high ground, 5 km east of Baramulla. On the morning of 28 Oct, Lt Col Rai went forward with two more companies of 1 Sikh. On assessing the precarious situation and the overwhelming numbers of the raiders, he decided to fall back to a stronger position 8 km north of Srinagar. Lt Col Rai while overseeing the withdrawal of the last screen died after being hit by a stray bullet in the neck. He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra posthumously. 1 Sikh suffered 6 fatal casualties in their first contact with the raiders near Baramulla. The high ground, east of Pattan at Milestone 16 was being held by 1 Sikh, 13 Battery Royal Indian Artillery and six Machine Guns of 3/15 Punjab. A Company of 1 (Para) Kumaon was holding the Srinagar airfield.

By 31 Oct, HQ 161 Brigade was air-lifted to Srinagar while a battalion 3 (Para) Rajput with a company of 1 Mahar (MMG) had linked up with the Jammu garrison by road from Pathankot. On 01 Nov, the disposition of Indian troops was as under.

HQ 161 Bde and one coy 4 Kumaon	– Near Srinagar Airfield
1 (Para) Kumaon less one coy	– Airfield
Coy 1 (Para) Kumaon	– Road Junction Narbal
1/2 Punjab	– Road Junction Shalateng
One Coy 1 Sikh	– Hill east of Pattan
One Coy 1 Sikh	– Srinagar Airfield

Advance HQ 50 Para Bde, 1 Coy	
3 (Para) Rajput, 1 Coy Mahar (MMG)	– Jammu
One Coy 3 (Para) Rajput	– Samba
One Coy 3 (Para) Rajput	– Madhopur

India's first Param Vir Chakra (PVC)

On 3 Nov, One Company of 1 (Para) Kumaon and two Companies of 4 Kumaon went on a reconnaissance of Budgam. While returning, D Coy of 4 Kumaon was ambushed by about 700 raiders at a point just north of Budgam in an attempt

The enemy are only 50 yards from us. We are heavily outnumbered. We are under devastating fire.

to press towards Srinagar airfield. Some of the raiders had merged with the population in Budgam village. In the fierce engagement, the Kumaon company suffered 15 fatal and 26 non-fatal casualties. One ammunition truck was also looted by the raiders who dispersed after being strafed from the air. Maj Somnath Sharma, who was earlier wounded continued to fight till the last and was posthumously awarded India's first PVC – the highest honour of the land. His last message to the Bde HQ was – “The enemy are only 50 yards from us. We are heavily outnumbered. We are under devastating fire. I shall not withdraw an inch but will fight to the last man and the last round.” After this major action, a series of probes and sneak-ins were carried out by the enemy into Srinagar while 161 Bde consolidated its position at Shalateng.

The recapture of Baramulla and Uri

On the morning of 7 Nov, 161 Bde supported by aerial strafing managed to break the large enemy concentration around Shalateng. Two troops of armoured cars and one rifle troop of 7 Cavalry attacked the enemy from the rear after turning left on the Pattan-Srinagar road at Krahom from Sumbal. 1 (Para) Kumaon attacked the right flank of the enemy. The rout began and the enemy fled in just 20 minutes leaving behind at least 500 dead. 1 (Para) Kumaon then cleared Zainkut ridge and 1 Sikh passed through their position. By 1830 hrs, 1 Sikh had destroyed the enemy HQ near MS 7 and opened the road up to Pattan. Lack of fuel stalled the further advance of Indian troops. On 08 Nov, the advance was resumed and by evening, 161 Bde had established its HQ at Baramulla.

The Indian advance resumed on 10 Nov after mopping up the enemy from Baramulla and was held up due to the destruction of the Mahura bridge by the fleeing raiders. The Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF) continued to target the enemy by aerial strafing all along the Baramulla-Muzzaffarabad road. The obstacle around Mahura was by-passed and the Indian advance reached MS 79 ahead of Mahura on 12 Nov. Nine spitfires and two Harvard sorties were flown on that day to bomb Domel, Kotli, Mirpur and Uri. Mahura was captured by dawn on 12 Nov. The Rampur brigade was repaired and made usable for 3-ton traffic. 1 Sikh and 1 (Para) Kumaon edged forward and re-captured Uri by the evening of 13 Nov. Thus, the threat to Srinagar was completely removed and the raiders driven back from the valley.

Situation in the Jammu division

While the threat to the valley was removed by 13 Nov, the situation in the Jammu division had worsened considerably. The Muslim components of the State Forces in Mirpur and Poonch had deserted and the garrisons were encircled by 18 Oct. Aerial supplies were dropped on Kotli on 28 Oct. The primary responsibility of 50 Para Brigade which had arrived at Jammu was to keep open the Pathankot-Jammu-Srinagar line of communication and to reinforce the Srinagar brigade if required. Therefore, no relief could be provided to the State Forces garrisons at Kotli, Mirpur, Bagh, Rawalkot and Poonch. Several thousand Hindus had been slaughtered in these areas and refugees were fleeing towards Jammu in hordes. In Rajouri alone, 30,000 non-Muslims had been killed. 1 Patiala and elements of 7 Light Cavalry had advanced only 30 km from Jammu reaching Akhnoor by the evening of 13 Nov.

Naushara and Kotli are relieved

With the arrival of 268 Brigade, 50 Para Brigade could finally concentrate on the task of relieving the beleaguered garrisons in Jammu division while the former took over line of communication duties from Kathua to Srinagar. On 16 Nov, B Coy of 1 Patiala secured Beri Pattan Bridge to enable the advance of 50 Para Bde towards Naushara. On 18 Nov, the forward battalion of 50 Para Brigade had entered Naushara. 1/2 Punjab now advanced towards Kotli from Jhangar and contacted the garrison on 26 Nov after clearing several roadblocks and encountering enemy sniping around Dungi and Ban.

Mirpur could not be relieved and the garrison there was evacuated on 25 Nov. Several refugees from Mirpur were escorted by Indian troops to Jhangar.

Setback at Kahuta

The attempts to relief Poonch from Uri received a setback when the State Forces picquet at Kahuta set fire to the bridge mistaking the relief column of 161 Brigade for the enemy. On 21 Nov, this column was ambushed at a road bend killing 16 and wounding 14 soldiers. 24 vehicles also got damaged in this ambush. During the night of 22/23 Nov, about 900 raiders launched a frontal attack on an isolated picquet of 1 Sikh across the Jhelum river in Uri. But, the picquet manned by only 20 men under a spirited JCO beat back several waves of enemy assaults despite being cut-off from the rest of the battalion. Meanwhile, 1 (Para) Kumaon less one company had linked up with the Poonch garrison after fording the river at Kahuta.

Appreciation of the situation

By the end of November, initial operations had been completed and Army HQ had carried out an appreciation of the situation. Preparations were underway to maintain troops during the winter months and consolidate the position as west as possible from Uri. It was decided not to evacuate the garrison at Poonch in order to prevent the population from being massacred by the enemy. With the arrival of an additional brigade group in Jammu plans to mop up positions north and south of Akhnoor were underway. The strength of the enemy was estimated to be around 15,000, organised in small groups and employing guerilla tactics.

The enemy strikes back

Even as the Indian Army was digging in and planning to carry out more deliberate and effective offensive operations, the enemy struck first at Uri and then at Jhangar towards the end of Dec 1947. At this time, 161 Brigade held Uri with 1 Sikh, 4 Kumaon, a squadron of 7 Cavalry, and companies each of 1 (Para) Kumaon, 1/1 Punjab, 1 Mahar (MMG), a troop of 32 Field Battery and one platoon of 32 Assault Field Company. 2 Dogra was spread along the line of communication between Uri and Baramulla and 6 Rajputana Rifles was based in Srinagar along with rear elements of the brigade.

An enemy attack on Diamond picquet on the Sank ridge was repulsed by 4 Kumaon on 1 Dec and another on a picquet across the Jhelum on 06 Dec. On 08 Dec, 4 Kumaon cleared the enemy from the village of Mukdam Saiyidan. D Coy carried out an attack on Muhri Doba while C Coy with one platoon of 1 (Para) Kumaon attacked the main Sank ridge. These operations were highly successful and the enemy suffered heavy casualties of 80 killed and 50 wounded. An enemy counter attack on Jitter picquet was beaten back.

The Bhatgiran Affair

1 Sikh less A Coy had launched an attack to drive out the heavy concentration of raiders on the high ridges overlooking Uri. The attack was launched on 12 Dec and the top of the ridge was reached without encountering much opposition. But as the assault party started coming down towards Uri, it was fired upon by the raiders from three sides. The Sikhs managed to extricate themselves under tremendous odds but not without suffering heavy casualties in the process. The Commanding Officer, Lt Col Sampooran Bachan Singh and his company commander, Maj Ajaib Singh were wounded. The total casualties were 60 killed and 59 wounded. 1 Sikh was relieved by 6 Rajputana Rifles and moved to Srinagar for rest.

80 Brigade had arrived in Jammu on 13 Dec and took over responsibility of the Akhnoor-Chamb sector. Several small-scale actions were carried out by 1 Patiala (before being reverted to 268 Brigade), 1/9 Gorkha Rifles, 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles, 4 Rajput and 2 Jat in this sector. On 20/21 Dec, 1/9 Gorkha Rifles and 2 Jat dislodged the enemy from Kali Dhar ridge ahead of Akhnoor killing 40 and wounding around 79 raiders. 50 Para Brigade under Brig Mohammad Usman had advanced up to Chingas from Jhangar.

The fall of Jhangar

The enemy had begun probing the defences of 1/2 Punjab at Jhangar on 09 Dec. It also carried out ambushes to disrupt the lines of communication between Naushara and Jhangar and between Chauki and Beri Pattan. On 23 Dec, around 1000 raiders had established four roadblocks on the Naushara-Jhangar road and engaged columns of 1 Rajput at two places. The columns fought back repeated waves of enemy attacks throughout the day.

On 24 Dec, a band of more than 2000 raiders launched their main assault on Jhangar from the south-west. A second wave of 1000 raiders pushed on from the north-west. The Pir Matalsi ridge was captured by afternoon forcing the rest of Jhangar's defences to withdraw to Naushara. The enemy had also cut off the Jhangar-Naushara road link, preventing the arrival of a relief column. The fall of Jhangar was a tremendous setback and the Indian casualties were 60, including two officers killed and 56 wounded. A large number of assorted weapons including 70 rifles, 17 pieces of three and five-inch mortars, 4 MMGs, 14 LMGs along with four armoured cars were lost in the fighting at Jhangar. The enemy attack on Naushara was thwarted.

After the fall of Jhangar, the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Force was built-up by moving two additional battalions from Delhi and East Punjab Command. It was decided to hold firm bases at Uri and Akhnoor-Naushara and protect the precarious lines of communication to prevent the enemy from attacking Srinagar and Jammu.

The Battle of Naushara

The month of January was spent in several raids and counter-raids which were basically preliminary operations to probe each others' defences. 80 Brigade now established its Tac HQ at Chhaon, 8 km short of Naushara to reinforce 50 Para Bde. This force was called Z Bde Gp and comprised of 1/9 Gorkha Rifles,

3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry, 1 Patiala less two companies, one platoon of 1 Mahar (MMG) and support elements. The road Beri Pattan-Naushara was finally cleared on 10 January. 50 Para Bde undertook offensive patrolling ahead of Beri Pattan and Naushara. 2 Jat carried out Op Satyanas to mop up the enemy concentration around Beri Pattan and 7 Cavalry along with 1/7 Rajput struck at the enemy base at Assar/Kadala inflicting 300 casualties on them.

Op Kipper

The aim of Op Kipper (which was the nick-name of Lt Gen KM Carriapa, Western Army Cdr) was to clear the ridge 9 Km North East of Naushara. This ridge overlooked the Naushara-Tawi valley. The objective was Kot, the highest point on the ridge. On 31 Jan 1948, 2 Jat was launched on boats and made to demonstrate towards Lamberi forest in order to deceive the enemy into believing that an attack on Jhangar was in progress. In the Meanwhile, 2/2 Punjab moved towards their objective Pt.3227 and Kot from the left and 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry advanced towards Pt.3284, Pathradi and Uparla Dandesar from the right. The objectives were captured on 01 Feb. Several enemy counter-attacks on these features were repulsed throughout the day. Tempest aircrafts from Jammu provided air support for Op Kipper. The artillery also played a decisive role in softening up the positions before the Infantry attack went in. 156 enemy were killed and 201 wounded.

The enemy counter-attack on Naushara

Refusing to get bogged down after the loss of Kot, the enemy with a strength of about 3000 Pathans from Swat and Dir and 3000 Sudhans launched a major counter-attack on Kot and Tain Dhar ridges ahead of Naushara. Waves after waves of enemy assaults were beaten back. 24 out of 27 men manning a post of Picquet No.2 on Tain Dhar Ridge had died after valiantly holding three enemy attacks at the wire-perimeter of the post. It was in this action that Nk Jadh Nath Singh was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) for his act of unparalleled bravery and raw courage in defending the post. A company of 3 (Para) Rajput arrived just in time to prevent the picquet from falling into enemy hands which would have made the defence of Naushara untenable.

The enemy also launched an attack on the Kangota feature and had also invested the Naushara valley. Brig Usman now decided to strike at the enemy concentration south-west of Naushara to weaken their attack. 3 (Para) Mahratta

Light Infantry which was out on ROP duties was pressed into battle to clear the Naushara valley. The battalion occupied Redian and cleared the enemy from Nunial and Bhajnoa. 200 enemy were killed in the Naushara valley. Eight 25 Pounder guns and two 3.7 inch Howitzers played a crucial role in breaking the enemy's assault and inflicting heavy casualties on them throughout the battle of Naushara. At one place, around 500 pathans were caught in the open and air-burst rounds were brought down on them. The artillery fire also held the enemy at the perimeter defences of Naushara when 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry was out on Line of Communication duties towards Beri Pattan. 963 dead bodies of the enemy were counted after the fighting was over. Brig Usman made a modest estimate of at least 2000 enemy fatal casualties. 50 Para Brigade suffered 33 killed and 102 wounded in the actions. The Battle of Naushara was a turning point of the campaign in the Jammu province and broke the resolve of the enemy.

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Jhangar is re-captured

The operation to re-capture Jhangar was divided into three phases. In the first phase (7-29 Feb), the enemy defences were probed. 1 Kumaon Rifles and 4 Dogra carried out offensive sweeps towards Manpur and Kalal. In the second phase (1-4 Mar), a double-thrust was directed against Ambli Dhar and Kaman Kosha Gala. The Tain Dhar and Ambi Dhar features were part of a 6 km long ridge which overlooked Naushara from the North. 50 Para Brigade captured Ambi Dhar which was held by the enemy and 19 Brigade made a thrust towards Kaman Kosha Gala. 2/2 Punjab supported by 4 Dogra of 19 Brigade secured their objectives by 01 March. 1 Rajput while securing a bump near Katora Khori suffered 11 fatal casualties.

Op Vijay

In the third and final phase, Jhangar was to be entered on 18 March. The operation was to progress in two phases. In the first phase, 19 Brigade with 1 Rajput, 4 Dogra, 1 Kumaon Rifles and support units were to capture Pt. 3327 and Pt. 3283 and exploit towards Nakka gap. In Phase 2, 50 Para Brigade consisting of 3 (Para) Mahratta Light Infantry, 3 (Para) Rajput, 1 Patiala was to secure Pt. 2701, Jhangar, Pt. 3399 and Pt. 3374. 2 Jat, 2/2 Punjab and 2 Rajputana Rifles were earmarked for the defence of the Naushara garrison. Op Vijay was launched on 15 March. An

enemy Brigade held Pir Thil Nakka which was attacked by 3 (Para) Mahratta and 1 Patiala of 50 (Para) Brigade with artillery support. The objective was secured on 17 March while 19 Brigade had advanced upto Gaikot forest.

Jhangar was entered on 18 March by the two battalions of 50 Para Brigade. C Squadron of 7 Cavalry also arrived in Jhangar after the road from Naushara was opened. After consolidating their positions, 19 Brigade and 50 Para Brigade were holding Naushara while another Brigade (King Brigade) was at Naushara.

Op Ranjit

19 Brigade launched Op Ranjit to capture Chingas and Rajouri on 8 April. The battalions had made good progress and by 9 April, 2 Rajputana Rifles had secured Mal Contour and 4 Dogra after capturing Barwali Ridge had progressed to Rani forest and Chor Ban on the right flank. 2 Jat and 1 Kumaon Rifles had progressed upto Chakli on the left. Chingas was occupied on 11 Apr and 4 Dogra entered Rajouri on 13 April. 500 enemy were killed in these operations. To support Op Ranjit, 50 Para Brigade and 80 Brigade carried out diversionary operations in Beri Pattan and Jhangar. On 16 April, the enemy launched coordinated counter attacks on Naushara, Jhangar and Rajouri. All these attacks were repulsed but at Jhangar the fighting had been intense with the enemy managing to reach 450 m from the main defences. On 02 May, 1 Kumaon Rifles carried out Op Birbal and captured Thanamandi. In subsequent operations, 19 and 80 Brigades drove out the enemy from Chhawa ridge and Sadabad-Samani thereby permanently removing the threat to the Jammu-Naushara line of communication.

On 10/11 May an enemy brigade sized attack on Jhangar was beaten back. An attack by 50 Para Brigade on Sabzkot and MG Hill was met with failure as the enemy managed to beat back the Indian assaults.

The Lion of Naushara is Martyred

On the evening of 3 July 1948, the enemy began to shell Jhangar camp. Brig Mohammad Usman was directing own artillery fire on Pt. 3150 when a 25 pounder shell landed near the door of a bunker he was about to enter. Thus was martyred the 'Lion of Naushara' who had resolutely led 50 Para Brigade in capturing Naushara and Jhangar. 3 (Para) Mahratta captured Khambah fort, a feature from where enemy artillery fire was being directed and 1 Rajput cleared Gari forest. 50 Para Brigade was finally relieved by 268 Brigade at Jhangar.

The Relief of Poonch

The Poonch garrison under Lt Col Pritam Singh with 2500 state forces and elements of 1 (Para) Kumaon and 3/9 Gorkha Rifles had valiantly held on for one year despite being surrounded and harassed by the enemy from all sides. The garrison on its own initiative had carried out several offensive operations to prevent the enemy from closing its ring around the garrison. The air force had established a landing ground at Poonch which helped in provisioning the garrison with supplies from air. 'Op Easy' to link up with Poonch was launched on 08 Oct.

The advance began with 268 Brigade comprising of 1/1 Gorkha Rifles, 1/2 Punjab and 1 (Para) Kumaon securing Pir Badesar and 5 Brigade with 4 Madras, 1/4 Gorkha Rifles and 5 Rajputana Rifles capturing the Pir Kalewa ridge line by 27 Oct. By 9 Nov, the advance of 5 and 19 Brigades had reached Mendhar after the capture of Bhimbar Gali 6/8 Gorkha Rifles and 4 Madras captured Naghun and Pt. 6480 respectively thereby securing the flanks of the two columns advancing on to Bhimbar Gali. The advance of the relief columns through Poonch via Topa, Pt.5982 and Danna-na-Pir progressed according to plan while the column from Poonch moved southwards and cleared the enemy from Pir Margot Ghazi. This column shook hands with 1/4 Gorkha Rifles on 20 Nov thus completing the link-up with Poonch.

Progress of operations in the Kashmir valley

In the first week of February 1948, the enemy had occupied Tangdhar and Trehgam valley after crossing the Shamsabari Range at Pharkian Ki Gali. Z Force, later renamed 163 Brigade was opened at Srinagar for operations across the Zoji La. In Feb 1948, 1 Sikh, 7 Sikh, 1 Bihar and 7 Kashmir Infantry of this formation were tasked to operate on the Sopore-Handwara-Kupwara axis. 1 and 7 Sikh had managed to occupy picquets at Handwara, Kupwara and Trahgam by the end of April. But the enemy came back to evict the Indian troops from Trahgam, Shulur and Sonamul.

The Capture of Tithwal

By the first week of May, several enemy raids to cut off the line of communications between Uri and Baramulla were countered and the threat to Uri and Mahura were finally removed. By 13 May, preparations were in full swing for the recapture of Domel and 161 Brigade was earmarked for the offensive. The defences around Uri were taken over by 77 Para Brigade.

163 Brigade was tasked to make a diversionary push towards Tithwal from Handwara and Kupwara. The strength of the enemy in the Handwara-Tithwal sector was estimated to be around 6000. The Handwara column comprising of 1 Madras and 1 Sikh had driven off the enemy across the Kahmil river and occupied the Dogarpur ridge by 18 May. The Kupwara column of 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles secured the Trahgam ridge after suffering initial reverses by 18 May. In Phase 2 of the operations, 163 Brigade occupied Panzgam ridge on 19 May and Chowkibal by 20 May. In the final phase, Nastachun Pass was occupied on 21 May without facing much opposition.

From the pass, 1 Sikh carried out a night advance along Chhamkot-Baltal track along the watershed and secured the spur overlooking Tithwal by first light 23 May. 1 Madras secured the high ground on the left. The enemy fled in disarray leaving behind huge stocks of ammunition and supplies.

On the Uri front, preliminary operations for the thrust towards Domel had begun. 4 Kumaon had captured Chota Kazinag and Pandu by 20 May while 2 Dogra reinforced by 6 Rajputana Rifles failed to drive out the enemy from Salamabad. 7 Sikh secured Urusa, south of the Jhelum river. The advance on the Uri-Domel road was met with stiff resistance from the enemy who had occupied strong features along the road. The progress was also slowed due to the enemy's ability to bring down withering artillery fire on the road and burning of bridges. Maj Gen Thimmaya, the Kashmir force commander now decided to switch the axis of attack and harass the enemy west of Pandu, north of the Jhelum. 77 Para Brigade was launched on a two-pronged thrust. After bitter fighting, 4 Kumaon captured Pt. 6873, Chinari and Kathai but 2 Dogra could not dislodge the enemy from Pt.10027 and Pt. 6065.

Meanwhile, 161 Brigade managed to get behind the enemy on Chakothe and Bandi forest. Sawai Man Guards (later 17 Rajputana Rifles) advanced from Uri-Salamabad-Pt. 9768 towards Ledi Gali while 6 Rajputana Rifles advanced from Urusa to Pt.9356. 2/3 Gorkha Rifles finally secured Pir Kanthi and Ledi Ridge by 20 June. 2 (Para) Madras also failed in completing the left hook of the main offensive towards Domel. On 17 June, the advance of the battalion to capture Haji Pir Pass was beaten back by effective withering fire from the enemy who was in a dominating position due to its occupation of Kiran feature and both the flanks astride the Uri-Haji Pir road. In a surprise attack on Pandu launched by the enemy on 23 Jun, 4 Kumaon suffered 13 killed and three wounded. The enemy finally managed to re-capture Pandu on 24 July by carrying out a two-pronged attack on the feature. After beating back several attacks by nearly two battalions

of the enemy, 2 Bihar (which had relieved 4 Kumaon) had to withdraw to Uri after running out of ammunition.

The advance to Domel from Tithwal – ‘Op Surya’ could also not be launched due to inadequate force available with 163 Brigade. But the Brigade decided to keep up the pressure on the enemy by remaining on the offensive. 3 Royal Garhwal Rifles had captured Keran on 9 June. It launched an attack on Mussargate on the Mir Kalsi ridge but it was met with stiff opposition from the enemy. The enemy also succeeded in driving out 1 Madras from the Ring Contour feature. 163 Brigade launched several counter-attacks to reclaim the feature but could not succeed in the absence of fire support. The fall of Ring Contour was a serious setback and 163 Brigade had to fall back across the Kishanganga river. 163 Brigade now held the line at Tithwal ridge.

Param Vir Chakra Action of Sepy Piru Singh

On 11/12 July, 6 Rajputana Rifles was ordered to capture the two Ring Contours on the ridge towards Raniwala Dana. The first feature was occupied without facing any opposition. However, on the second feature, the advance was met with stiff resistance at a narrow path which was only three metre wide with sheer falls on both sides. The enemy which held the feature in strength pinned down the Indian troops by bringing down effective fire from three medium machine guns. It was here, that Sepoy Piru Singh cleared the first machine gun position with his sten. A grenade caused splinter injuries on his face. He then leaped forward and threw a grenade into the second machine gun position. He was hit by a bullet on the head while coming out of the second trench but succeeded in lobbing a grenade inside the third trench. Sepoy Piru Singh made the supreme sacrifice but not before silencing all the three machine gun positions which had stalled the Indian advance. 6 Rajputana Rifles suffered 15 killed and 58 wounded in this attack while seven others were missing. On 20 July, the enemy attempted to dislodge A Company of 1 Sikh from Richhmar Gali. The attack was however repulsed and the enemy retreated after suffering casualties of 30 killed and 60 wounded.

The fall of Gilgit and Skardu

By the end of Oct 1947, the raiders had begun to pour into the Northern Areas of J&K. A gradual effort was made to incite the local Muslim population to rebel against the administrator of Gilgit. On 01 Nov, their efforts bore fruit and Gilgit was seized in a coup led by Maj Brown and Lt Haider Khan and Sub Maj Babar

Khan and 100 men of the Gilgit Scouts who had sided with the raiders. At Skardu, the situation was increasingly becoming tense and the five jagirs of Rondhu, Khapalu, Shigar, Kharmarg and Skardu were being progressively instigated to move against Skardu. In view of the deteriorating situation, a force of 75 other ranks of Kashmir Infantry led by Maj Sher Jung Thapa arrived at Skardu from Leh. By 14 Feb 1948, the total strength of the Skardu garrison was 160.

On 09/10 Feb, a 600 strong force led by Maj Ehsan Ali, a deserter from 6 Kashmir Infantry (KI) at Gilgit launched their attack. All the Sikh troops of KI manning an outpost at Tsari were killed. The Muslim troops at another outpost across the river sided with the raiders and pressed on towards Skardu. However, the attackers were beaten back at Skardu and suffered seven fatal casualties. By 15 Feb, Maj Thapa had organised his defences in and around Skardu fort with 285 men and 271 refugees. The enemy took up positions across these defences and also occupied Pt. 8853, a hill feature overlooking the fort. For ten months, the Skardu garrison and the enemy ring around it were locked in continuous sniping and mortar shelling. Several attacks on the forward pickets of the fort were beaten back.

Attempts to relieve Skardu ends in failure

By the first week of May, two relief columns from Srinagar comprising of troops from 5 and 7 Kashmir Infantry were advancing towards Skardu from Kargil. Earlier on 20 April, a column led by Maj Coutts of 6 Rajputana Rifles was ambushed at Parkutta leaving six soldiers dead and nine injured. The relief columns spread out between Bagicha and Parkutta and had occupied defences along the Shingo river instead of occupying the flanks on either side of the river. Both these columns were subjected to regular sniping from the enemy thereby stalling their advance.

The enemy captures Kargil and Drass

On 10 May, the enemy carried out a brilliant right hook attack on Kargil and Drass. On 28 Apr, a feint attack was launched across the Razdan Pass threatening Bandipur. Another column set fire to the bridges between Kangan and Sonamarg while a third column attacked Drass. At Kargil, the raiders first liquidated a Gorkha platoon post at Kharal bridge and then pressed their offensive on Kargil after subjecting it to shelling by 3-inch mortars.

Fate of the relief columns to Skardu

Meanwhile, as the main attack was launched on Kargil and Drass, the enemy

had infiltrated in between the relief columns between Skardu and Parkutta. Both the columns disintegrated and were in retreat. Lt Col Sampooran Bachan Singh and Maj Coutts swam across the Indus and reached Leh on 15 May. The Sugar Column of Lt Col Kripal Singh and 150 men surfaced at Sonamarg on 15 Jun. Thus ended the attempts to relieve the besieged garrison at Skardu.

On 21 May, 1 Patiala in an attempt to link up with the besieged platoon of Kashmir Infantry at Drass encountered stiff resistance from the enemy at Gumri suffering 12 fatal casualties. The force recoiled to Matayan. Capt Kashmir Singh and two platoons of 5 KI crept out of Drass on 6 June. By 25 June, 1 Patiala concentrated at Baltal and one company of 2 (Para) Madras was at Matayan.

Fall of the Skardu Garrison

Maj Gen KS Thimmaya, GOC Sri Force had ordered Maj Thapa to break out towards Olthingthang on 16 May but the latter expressed his inability to do so in face of the heavy enemy presence. Tempest aircrafts of the RIAF dropped aerial supplies at Skardu on 28 Jun and 01 Jul. On 19 Jun and 07 Aug, the tempests bombed the enemy headquarters at Olthing and Sondus. The Skardu garrison finally surrendered on 14 Aug after running low on supplies and ammunition. The garrison had valiantly held out for 10 months on their own in the hope of being relieved.

Operations in the Gurais valley

On 27 May, 1 Indian Grenadiers had secured the Razdan Pass. Op Erase was launched on 26 Jun for the re-capture of Gurais. 1 Indian Grenadiers advanced from Kuljian Gali towards the Viji Pass. The advance ahead of Viji Pass was resumed after clearing the flanks of the pass viz, Camel and Sausage ridges. By 26 Jun, 1 Indian Grenadiers had driven out the enemy from Gurais and 2/4 Gorkha Rifles had reached Kanzalwan while advancing across the Razdan Pass and Charpathar. The enemy attempted to take back Kanzalwan by surrounding the two Gorkha companies there. The siege was broken with elements of 1 Indian Grenadiers moving along the Kishanganga from the east. The enemy was now in full retreat and the threat to Srinagar from the north (Kishanganga valley in Gurais) was permanently removed.

The Defence of Leh

After capturing Kargil, the enemy had advanced along the Indus towards Leh. On 22 May, they had reached Khaltse bridge which was destroyed by own troops. On

24 May, the first Dakota landed at Leh piloted by the legendary Cmde Mehar Singh and accompanied by Maj Gen Thimmaya. This act boosted the morale of the tiny Leh garrison and the citizens of Ladakh. On 01 Jun, D Coy of 2/4 Gorkha Rifles was air-landed at Leh. On 26 Jul, nearly 600 raiders attacked a position being held by the Gorkhas at Dumkur out of which 30 were killed. But the Gorkhas withdrew 24 kms to Nurla. On 05 Jul, elements of 2/8 Gorkha Rifles arrived at Leh from the Manali route. By 10 Jul, the raiders had captured Hemis. On 18 Sep, the 'Arjun' Column made of B and C Companies of 2/8 GR arrived at Leh from Ferozpur via Manali. The strength of the Leh garrison was nearly two battalions strong and the enemy forces were 6 and 13 kms away from Leh. Lt Col HS Parab, CO, 2/8 GR was appointed the Military Governor of Leh with instructions to hold Leh at any cost. Maj Hari Chand had organised a guerrilla company with local men and elements of 7 Kashmir Infantry. This force carried out several raids by silently creeping behind the lines of the enemy. In one such raid, a 3.7 inch howitzer said to have been captured by the enemy at Skardu was destroyed at Bagso. On 20 Nov, a force organised into X and Y Companies under the command of Maj RC Mathur advanced on Tharu after re-occupying Chilling. Khaltse and Lamayuru were reached on 22 Nov. The force had advanced 80 kms in three days. In the Shyok valley, Thoise was re-taken and the advance was halted 8 km west of Biagdangdo on 23 Nov.

On 24 Nov, Col Kharab linked up with Brig KL Atal at Kargil.

The re-capture of Drass and Kargil

After pressure was relieved from the major operations in the Uri and Tithwal sectors, 77 Para Brigade was fully made available for launching an offensive across the Zoji La to re-capture Drass and Kargil and relieve the pressure on Leh. 1 Patiala, 3 Jat (later relieved by 4 Rajput), 5 Mahratta, 1/5 Royal Gorkha Rifles (FF) were concentrated at several places between Sonamarg and Zoji La. Maj Gen Thimmaya had originally planned to attack Drass and Kargil from the right by advancing from Khanabal and crossing the Amarnath Hills at either Bobang or Lovilad Pass. But this plan of employing two battalions could not fructify due to the inability of supplying such a large force over such a long marching axis. By 14 Sep, two well planned attacks on the right flank of Zoji La at Mukand and left at Chabutra had ended in failure.

Op Sparrow

An ingenious plan to push tanks across the nearly 12,000 ft high and snow swept Zoji La was made and C Squadron of 7 Cavalry led by its CO, Lt Col Rajendra

Singh (whose nick-name was sparrow) bore result. The Stuart tanks were secretly hauled up to Baltal in by the end of October. On 01 Nov 1948, Op Sparrow was launched and 1/5 GR occupied both the flanks of the Zoji La without facing any major opposition from the enemy. The RIAF Dakotas had softened up the enemy by bombing their position at Pindras. By the afternoon of 01 Nov, C Squadron of 7 Cavalry was at Gumri. The enemy, fazed by the sudden appearance of tanks was in flight. The tanks were also able to clear stiff opposition due to armour protection against small arms fire and the ability to bring down a high velocity of fire on fortified enemy positions. By 02 Nov, 77 Brigade had concentrated at Machoi. On 04 Nov, 4 Rajput passed through 1 Patiala after the latter had cleared the Island feature and arrived at Matayan. In the next phase, 4 Rajput captured Batkundi Hill while 1/5 GR held Pt.12967. On 15 Nov, two ridges, Anant and Kumar were captured by 1/5 GR. 1 Patiala captured Brown hill and 77 Brigade entered Drass on 15 Nov.

The dash to Kargil was resumed on 18 Nov with 1 Patiala reaching Kharbou the next day. On 21 Nov, 1 Patiala was at the junction of Drass and Shingo rivers. C Coy of 1/5 GR fell back on Kharbu and crossed over to the right bank of the Drass river but they were ambushed at Kharal brigade suffering 18 dead. On 22/23 Nov, a platoon of the Gorkhas drove out the enemy from Kharal brigade while another party entered Kargil from a short-cut, climbing straight up a steep hill feature. Thus, Kargil was re-occupied by Indian troops and the link up with the Leh column was affected on 24 Nov. The attempts to push on towards Marol received a setback after a Gorkha column was ambushed at Gangam on 29 Nov. The column having suffered six casualties fell back to Kargil.

Casualties

1103 personnel of the Indian Army made the supreme sacrifice during the 1947-48 Operations in J&K. This included 76 officers, 31 JCOs and 996 Other Ranks. 3152 men were wounded. In addition, 1990 officers and men of the J&K State Forces were martyred in the campaign. 9 officers and 23 men of the Royal Indian Air Force also laid down their lives in the defence of the motherland.

According to an estimate, the enemy suffered 20,000 casualties including 6000 killed.

Awards & Decorations

The Government of India conferred a large number of gallantry awards to personnel of the Indian Army, Air Force, J&K State Forces and a few civilians for

their acts of valour in the campaign. A total of 5 Param Vir Chakras (PVC), 53 Maha Vir Chakras (MVC) and 313 Vir Chakras were awarded.

Force Levels

The total concentration of forces in the J&K theatre towards the end of the operations was as under:-

	India	Pakistan
Div HQ	Srinagar Div Jammu Div	7 Inf Div 9 Frontier Div Elements of 8 Inf Div
Brigades	Jammu Div: 5,80,19, 50 Para and Jammu SF Bdes Sri Div 161,163,165, 77 and Srinagar SF Bdes L of C Sub Area (responsible for protecting the L of C from Pathankot to Srinagar)	10,25,100,101,102 Bdes + 14 Para Bde & 3 Armd Bde + 7 Bdes of Azad Kashmir Forces
Total	2 Divisions; 12 Infantry Brigades; 50 Infantry Battalions (including Indian State Forces Battalions); 14 Battalions of J&K and East Punjab Militia	3 Divisions, 14 Infantry Brigades, 23 Infantry Battalions; 40 Battalions of Azad Kashmir Forces (comprised of 4000 men of Gilgit Scouts & Chitral Body Guards; 15,000 tribal raiders)

Deductions

Political

- At the time of Independence, India's newly established government failed to anticipate Pakistan's designs over Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government also did not respond to the J&K government's proposal of signing a standstill agreement. If the merger of J&K with the Union of India had been predicted, more efforts could have been made towards gathering intelligence on Pakistan's operational plan for the invasion, instructions for which had been issued to Pakistan Army units as early as on 20 August 1947. Even the information on 'Op Gulmarg' provided by Maj OS Kalkat was not given much seriousness at the time. In such a scenario, the process of merger could have been hastened. The government of J&K was also not fully aware of Pakistan's actual designs when it had carried out a partial economic blockade of the

state. If it did, then it should have not vacillated till the end before finally agreeing to sign the instrument of accession with India.

- If the tribal invasion backed by the Pakistan Army had been anticipated well in time more elaborate and detailed plans could have been made for reinforcing the state forces of J&K.
- No clear cut politico-military directives were given to the Armed Forces for achieving the desired end state. The confused thinking in the government was reflected in the operational instruction issued to Lt Col DR Rai, CO, 1 Sikh.
- Even when the operations progressed, the government could not clearly decide on whether the final objective should be to wrest the entire state from the enemy's control or to defend the existing positions.
- The political leadership ignored the military advice and agreed to cease operations at a time when the Indian Army was poised for an offensive towards Muzaffarabad.
- If advance notice had been given to the military leadership on the government's intention of agreeing to a cease-fire, the army could have positioned itself favourably along the cease-fire line by occupying certain tactically advantageous features.

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Military

- The aerial dispatch of troops to Srinagar was achieved within 72 hrs of the receipt of the emergency telegram from the J&K state. This was a remarkable achievement of the General Staff in Delhi which could muster the logistics and troops at such short notice.
- With no clear-cut politico-military directives, the hastily organised force in Srinagar cleared the raiders from the Kashmir valley within a fortnight of being deployed.
- As priority was accorded to wresting control of the Kashmir valley, the advance from Jammu had covered only 30 kms in 15 days. This delay proved fatal and had sealed the fate of Mirpur and Kotli forever. Even in the valley, operations were being conducted by only one brigade (161 Brigade) till December 1948.
- The pace of operations in all sectors was slow due to unavailability of troops at the right time. The shortage of troops was due to the apprehension of

The pace of operations in all sectors was slow due to unavailability of troops at the right time.

hostilities breaking out with Pakistan along the Punjab border and commitment of troops for the liberation of Hyderabad.

- The long lines of communication and the location of major supply bases in the plains of Northern India also hindered the progress of operations.
- A combination of factors precluded a rapid Indian advance on all fronts. Some of these were: establishing firm bases before exploiting a breakthrough; inadequate availability of troops and supplies; commitment of troops for protecting the long lines of communications. Lack of supplies and logistics also prevented the Indian troops from relentlessly pursuing the enemy when it was in retreat and to further the advance.
- On several occasions, a major Indian offensive was stalled due to the adoption of guerrilla tactics by the enemy. It had the ability to infiltrate between own columns or harass the newly-established garrisons from the rear.
- The slow pace of operations is reflected in the following:
 - In the valley sector, the Indian advance remained where it was on 13 Nov 1947 at the time of the ceasefire on 1 Jan 1949. This is despite the fact that initially, priority was accorded to the operations in the Kashmir valley. . If more forces had been concentrated before the total onset of winters and blocking of passes, the successes achieved till 13 Nov could have been extended till Muzzaffarabad without giving the enemy enough time to regroup.
 - In the Jammu sector, effective operations could be launched only after the complete concentration of 50 and 80 Brigades and later 19 Brigade to the Jammu Division. Till December 1947, the situation had remained grim with the enemy managing to re-capture Jhangar. The first major breakthrough in this sector could be achieved only on 01 Feb after 50 Para Brigade had inflicted a crushing blow to the enemy at Naushara. Even after this major success, the enemy managed to prevent the Indians from consolidating their positions and dig-in for launching an offensive to either relieve the Poonch garrison or re-capture Mirpur or Kotli.
 - The garrisons at Drass-Kargil, Leh and Skardu could not be relieved in time and troops (77 Bde) could be concentrated only after June 1948 when the pressure of enemy counter-attacks on Uri and Tithwal had abated.

- It was due to extremely high qualities of leadership and the ability of a small contingent of battle-hardened men to prevail under adverse conditions that the garrisons at Poonch and Skardu managed to withstand repeated onslaughts by the enemy.
- Due credit must also be given to the Indian Army Engineers who by their ingenuity had managed to bridge the Ravi, Chenab and Tawi rivers enabling their crossing by troops and mechanical transport columns.
- The Indian Air Force played a decisive role in the war by air-lifting troops to Srinagar, Poonch and Leh. On 27 Oct 1947, Srinagar could have been saved from the invaders only by air as an advance along the road from Jammu would have decided an outcome in favour of the enemy. The air force despite its limited resources carried out numerous supply and aerial strafing missions from their base in Amritsar and the newly established air fields in Jammu and Srinagar.
- The Indian Army drew several lessons from the campaigns of 1947-48. The experience gained was to prove useful in planning subsequent deployment and maintenance of troops in mountainous terrain.
- The major Indian supply base for the J&K theatre was established at Pathankot after the war. The operations in the Ladakh sector also led to the opening of an alternate land route (Manali-Leh) highway for reinforcing the region. This route has now acquired immense strategic significance in the context of the threat posed by our Northern neighbour in that sector. It is also protected by high mountain ranges on both sides and unlike the Srinagar-Leh route does not run close to the line of control.
- The enemy forces enjoyed numerous tactical advantages over the Indian Army:-
 - Op Gulmarg was planned well in advance and all the arrangements for equipping, supplying and launching the various forces. Even the regular formations of the Pakistan Army were allotted tasks they were required to carry out after the marauders had executed their invasion. Thus, Pakistan used the element of surprise to their favour and caught the state force of J&K completely off-guard.
 - The Pakistani forces enjoyed considerable advantage as their supply bases were located close to the theatre of operations and had shorter lines of communications. Pakistan had a good network of roads and tracks

The air force despite its limited resources carried out numerous supply and aerial strafing missions from their base.

leading to the places where their forces were concentrated. It therefore enabled them to re-group, re-equip and re-supply their forces quickly and in a sustained manner.

- The Pakistani forces also enjoyed numerical superiority over the Indian forces deployed in J&K.
- The Indian Army was superior in training and valour than the Pakistani forces. But the enemy overcame this deficiency by employing guerrilla tactics and did not present open and large targets to the Indian Army. In addition to harassing the vulnerable Indian lines of communications, the enemy maintained regular contact with the Indian defences and garrisons, thereby preventing them to dig-in firmly or give adequate time to regroup for launching a decisive or all-out offensive.

Conclusion

In the ultimate analysis, the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir from the tribal raiders supported by the Pakistan Army was a remarkable feat achieved by the Indian Army under extremely difficult circumstances. The operations were mostly planned and led by Indian officers at a time when a new nation was in its nascent stages of formation. This would provide them with tremendous experience and confidence in organising the Indian Army later. The Invasion of J&K posed the first major challenge to the Indian Army immediately after achieving Independence. The Army not only stood up to this challenge but the high standards of training, valour and sacrifice displayed by the men helped in maintaining its reputation of being one of the finest fighting forces of the world. The Indian troops were also battle-hardened and achieved tremendous fame and success due to their exploits in Italy, North Africa and Burma during the Second World War.

However, the ultimate legacy of the operations of 1947-48 is that the enemy managed to wrest control of nearly 37 per cent of the total land area of Jammu and Kashmir. The failure to re-claim Skardu led to the severing of India's geographical linkages with Afghanistan and Central Asia. This takes us back to May-June 1948, a crucial stage in the operations when a two-pronged offensive from Uri and Tithwal was launched to capture Muzaffarabad. The Indian advance from Uri got bogged down whereas the offensive from Tithwal could not even be launched. It is debatable whether at this time more troops should have been released for the offensive across the Zoji La and to link up with the besieged garrison at Skardu by moving across the Burzil Pass from Gurez. None of these

objectives could be met and Drass and Kargil were cleared only in November 1948. This brings us to the question whether the political leadership at that time had clearly understood the strategic significance of the Gilgit-Skardu region or whether more priority was accorded for securing the Muzzaffarabad valley. The operations in the Jammu division also progressed at a slow pace and no offensive was planned to re-take either Mirpur or Rawalkot. The link-up with Poonch was also achieved only towards the end of November. It was also felt at that time that threatening Mirpur would have threatened the Mangla reservoir provoking an all-out war with Pakistan.

Mountains consume troops and both the divisions in J&K had limited resources available for taking decisive offensive actions to liberate the entire state and defend the cleared areas simultaneously. Again, it may have been a gamble to deploy more brigades from the Western Command for operations in J&K. At that time, 29 Infantry battalions of the Indian Army were deployed for the defence of East Punjab and 19 Infantry battalions were kept in readiness for the impending operations in Hyderabad. Military analysts also believe that the Pakistan Army could have been easily defeated in a full-scale war fought in the plains of Punjab where massed targets could have been presented to the Indian Army. But, Prime Minister Nehru had already sought the intervention of the United Nations and had hoped that the two neighbours could live in peace after hostilities had ceased in J&K. But history was to belie his hopes and Jammu and Kashmir continues to be a major source of discontent and perpetual conflict between India and Pakistan.

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Notes

1. **Source:** Operations in Jammu & Kashmir, History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, *Nataraj Publishers*, Reprinted edition in 2005.
2. For detailed terrain analysis, please see *Scholar Warrior*, vol. ii, Spring 2011.
3. A DO letter marked Personal/Top Secret from Gen Frank Messervy addressed to the Pakistan Army Brigade Commander of the Bannu Frontier Brigade Group was personally received and opened by Maj (later Maj-Gen) Omkar Singh Kalkat on 20 August 1947 in the absence of the Brigade Commander. Maj OS Kalkat was then the Brigade Major of the Brigade Group. This letter provided a detailed plan of 'Op Gulmarg' and bears testimony to the active involvement of the Pakistan Army in the operation. p. 17, Operations in Jammu & Kashmir: 1947-48, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, *Nataraj Publishers*

4. Another source which indicated the active involvement of the Pakistan Army was Shri GK Reddy, an Indian journalist based in Lahore who had inadvertently received a phone call to API Lahore from Lt Col Alavai. Alavi stated in his phone call that the attack on Ramkot (a border out post) would be carried out by 'Azad Kashmir Forces' on 21 October 1947. P.17-18, Operations in Jammu & Kashmir..