

# The Raid at Mandhol by 9 Para (SF)



Mandhol village in POK across the Punch river as seen from own side of the LC

After some minor tasks at Madarpur, picquet No 405 at Satwal (the group was given a worth while job at Mandhol, a village about 12 miles South-West of Punch (Map 28). Close to this village was a Pakistani battery of six 122mm Chinese made guns. This battery supported the enemy position at Duruchhian, and was a great nuisance to own 93 and 120 Infantry Brigades. On the night of December 13/14, 14 Grenadiers were to attack Duruchhian; Major-General Kundan Singh, Commander of 25th Infantry Division, decided that the Para Commandos should get rid of the guns at Mandhol at the same time.

The group, together with Captain D Tyagi, the OP officer from 195 Mountain Regiment, reached Dhip at 5 PM, on Dec 13. After a short halt for an early dinner,

they left for Mandhol, and reached a point on the East bank of the Punch River opposite the village by 10.30PM. It was lucky for the Commandos that the villages on the way were empty, and they encountered no enemy patrols. Wading through the waist-deep water, the group soon climbed on to the spur north of the village. A search showed that it was absolutely deserted, except for an old man.

He was quite helpful, and told the search party that the guns were located about a thousand yards from his house. Half an hour before midnight, our artillery opened up at Duruchhian in preparation for the Grenadiers' attack. The guns at Mandhol soon began to answer; that helped the commandos to locate the position of each gun.

Raid Cdr split his group into seven assault teams and support detachments to cover the move of the assault teams to their targets. About half an hour after midnight, when the teams had taken up position for the assault, the support detachment started for the place from which it was to cover them. Soon, the scouts observed a sentry post on a bunker, they crawled up from behind to finish him. He was killed, but the scuffle woke up the inmates of the bunker. Meanwhile, an enemy gunner spotted one of the teams crouching for attack; he raised the alarm.

This became the signal for the assault. 'For the next 10 minutes; says the battalion War diary, there was utter confusion while a hand-to-hand fight went on. Then there was a bang: No 2 Team led by Naib Subedar Zile Singh had blown up one of the guns. Unfortunately, it was loaded, and the bursting of the HE shell blew its barrel into bits, the flash temporarily blinding a few of the commandos.

By 2 AM, the commandos had gained complete control of the gun area and they systematically dealt with the remaining five guns. Many of the enemy lay dead; other had run for their lives.

Having finished its mission, the group withdrew around 3 AM. The men naturally felt the elation that comes from success. The group suffered 16 casualties in this action, two other ranks killed, and 14 wounded (including an Officer and a JCO).

C Group was attached to 80 Infantry Brigade on December 17 for a repeat performance at Chauki. But after the troops had moved to forward assembly areas, the operation was called off due to the cease-fire.

Lance Havildar Yeshwant Singh of C Group had the distinction of winning two awards for conspicuous gallantry during the operations. He received the Vir Chakra for his part in the action at Nagali, and a Sena Medal for the raid at Mandhol. Other recipients of awards in the battalion were Capt MA Kariappa

and Second-Lieutenant AV Taskar; both were awarded the Sena Medal. The Battalion commander and an NCO were mentioned in despatches.

*The above action was part of operations carried out in the Western sector during the Indo-Pak War of 1971. Apart from the destruction of guns, ammunition and other vital equipment, the Pakistanis suffered 37 killed, 41 wounded and a great loss of face. This raid, launched at a crucial time to enable India's 25th Infantry Division to continue their operations on Daruchian (a Pakistani occupied post). For overall operations in this sector, the Para Commandos were awarded the Battle Honour, 'Defence of Poonch' in the 1971 war. This is the one and only classical raid ever executed by the Indian Special Forces.*

**Source:** 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces).