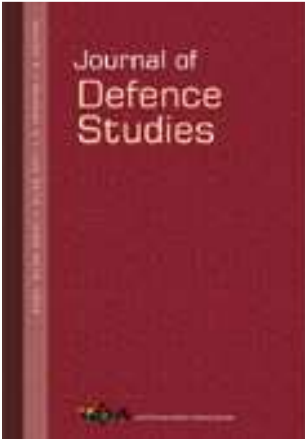


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No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg  
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010



## Journal of Defence Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.idsa.in/journalofdefencestudies>

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To cite this article: P.K. Chakravorty and Gurmeet Kanwal (2015): Operation Gibraltar: An Uprising that Never Was, Journal of Defence Studies, Vol. 9, No. 3 July-September 2015, pp. 33-52

URL [http://idsa.in/jds/9\\_3\\_2015\\_OperationGibraltar.html](http://idsa.in/jds/9_3_2015_OperationGibraltar.html)

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## Operation Gibraltar An Uprising that Never Was

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*Launched in early-August 1965, Operation Gibraltar was designed to infiltrate several columns of trained and well-armed Mujahids and Razakars, led by Pakistan Army Majors into Jammu and Kashmir. Under the cover of fire provided by the Pakistan Army deployed on the Cease Fire Line (CFL), the columns managed to infiltrate, but failed to create large-scale disturbances and did not receive support from the people. In fact, locals often provided information about the columns to the Indian Army, which led to their being captured or neutralised. By the third week of August, the Indian Army's counter-infiltration operations had been successfully concluded. Trans-CFL operations were then conducted to capture the Haji Pir Pass and important heights in the Kargil sector. This article revisits Operation Gibraltar, the thinking behind it and the tasks set, the execution of the operation, the Indian response and the lessons learnt.*

The state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) acceded to India on 26 October 1947 when Pakistani invaders were virtually knocking on the gates of Srinagar. Pakistan did not accept the accession and it has been its aim since then to wrest it from India.<sup>1</sup> The foreign policy of Pakistan thus treats J&K as the 'core issue'. To achieve this aim, successive regimes in

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Pakistan have fought wars with India. Pakistan also became an ally of the United States (US) by joining the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). It also resorted to desperate manoeuvres in the United Nations (UN). Between 1956 and 1962, the US gave massive military aid to Pakistan which increased its offensive capability, and helped reduce considerably the gap in relative strength with India.

Pakistan noted with satisfaction that India had been humbled in the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. It befriended China and looked for an opportunity to fulfil its aim militarily. Further, Pakistan made the Ichhogil Canal, parallel to the international border (IB) in the Amritsar–Lahore sector, a fully developed obstacle. Pakistan was glad that its northern neighbour, China, was more than capable of standing up to India and there was a common adversary for both states. The historic border agreement signed between the two countries on 2 March 1963, wherein Pakistan handed over the Shaksgam Valley of J&K to China, further bolstered the alliance between the two countries. Pakistan felt the time was ripe for it to attempt to capture Kashmir before the post-1962 Indian Army optimised her capabilities.

The operations in J&K in August–September 1965 were preceded by the operations in Kutch which commenced in February of that year. The terrain offered advantage to Pakistan to launch offensive operations, which were soon brought to a halt by the Indian Army. As a strategic response, the Indian Army deployed on the border in Punjab and captured three posts in Kargil on 16 and 17 May 1965. A ceasefire agreement was signed on 1 July 1965.<sup>2</sup> The Pakistanis inferred incorrectly about the weak offensive capability of the Indian Army and started planning on their cherished goal to liberate Kashmir. It is important to note that the Kutch issue had been resolved and India had withdrawn from the three posts she captured in Kargil.

There were a few other issues which encouraged Pakistan to undertake the (mis)adventure.

1. Field Marshal Ayub Khan felt that the Indian leadership, after the death of Nehru, was weak and would not be able to withstand the Pakistani offensive.
2. Pakistan was prospering economically and recording food surpluses, while India was facing local famines and serious economic difficulties.

3. India's re-equipping programme after the 1962 war was in full swing. Further, India had also begun to receive military aid from the US. The Pakistanis were apprehensive that their advantage would be lost in a few years.
4. The state of J&K was in a flux with Srinagar coming to a virtual standstill due to the loss of the Holy Relic (a strand of hair believed to be of the Prophet called Moe-e-Muqaddas) from the Hazratbal shrine on 27 December 1964. Though the relic was found and certified as authentic, Pakistan tried to create suspicions about the issue in the state. Further, Sheikh Abdullah was interned in May 1965 by the Government of India, leading to unrest in the state.
5. Ayub had won Pakistan's presidential elections by rigging against Fatima Jinnah. The attention of the people could be diverted from this by launching operations to regain Kashmir.
6. The international situation favoured Pakistan with an alliance with the US and a de facto alliance with China. The Soviet Union was less hostile than for many years.<sup>3</sup>

#### **CONCEPT AND PLAN FOR OPERATION GIBRALTAR**

Field Marshal Ayub Khan had secretly approved military plans for a limited war in Kashmir by the early summer of 1965. This was approved despite opposition from the Chief of Army Staff, General Musa, and a few other senior army officers. It was confirmed later by Major General Akhtar Hussain Malik, General Officer Commanding (GOC) 12 Infantry Division, that he was given the authority to plan and execute Operation Gibraltar. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as well as many senior officers were of the view that India was in no position to risk a general war and Pakistan had either to act bravely now or to allow the initiative to pass to India, which would launch an attack at a time of its own choosing. Accordingly, General Malik proceeded with the preparation of plans.

Operation Gibraltar was conceptualised with the objective of creating large-scale disturbances in J&K. The plan was to send about 8,000 Pakistani soldiers and Razakars into J&K disguised as guerrillas. The first phase was to create a shock wave by launching raids on selected targets, thereby preparing the ground for a civil uprising due to the chaos and consternation that would be caused in the state. The second was the fusion of the civil uprising with the infiltration operation.

This would compel India to take major political and military steps to tackle the situation, presenting a picture to the world that a problem exists in Kashmir. The armed fighters were meant to tie down Indian forces in a protracted guerrilla war in a manner similar to the war in Vietnam. General Akhtar Malik never felt that Operation Gibraltar would succeed as a stand-alone operation. Accordingly, along with it, he combined Operation Grand Slam which was the plan for an armoured thrust across the ceasefire line (CFL), with a view to capture Akhnoor, thereby threatening the line of supplies from India to Srinagar. The plan, in principle, was accepted by Field Marshal Ayub Khan in May 1965. He was convinced that military action was required to resolve the Kashmir issue. The operation was planned in the beginning of August and the Field Marshal addressed the officers of the Gibraltar Force about their role, tasks, and his expectations.<sup>4</sup>

#### PREPARATION OF FORCES

The planning for the operation, after approval by Ayub Khan, commenced on 17 May 1965. Major General Akhtar Malik, the chief planner, sent a note to senior commanders exhorting them to adopt a more aggressive attitude and discard hopes of peaceful approach to the Kashmir problem. It was felt that by adopting violent methods, resulting in shock action, India would be compelled to negotiate in a chastened mood. The GOC Pakistan Forces in Kashmir was overconfident and underestimated the Indian capabilities.

The infiltrating force for the operation was grouped in task forces, with officers and men from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) battalions for better command and control. The Razakars, who formed about 70 per cent of the force, were raised in PoK in August 1962. They basically included all able-bodied civilians living near the border, and many had been recruited forcibly by the civil authorities. The infiltrators were grouped into 10 forces and each force comprised six units of five companies each. Each force was commanded by a Pakistani Army Major and was allotted a code name. Each company was commanded by a Pakistani Army Captain who was called commander. The company comprised one to three Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs), about 35 key personnel from the PoK battalions or units of Northern Scouts, three to four Other Ranks (ORs) from the Special Services Group (SSG), and about 70 Razakars, making a total strength of approximately 120. The PoK soldiers were mostly from the commando platoons and they formed

the core of the company, while the SSG personnel handled the explosives during demolitions and sabotage.

The Razakars were given elementary training in PoK at Nikial, Khuriatta, Darman, Kalargala, Tarkundi, Bohri Mahal, Pir Kalanjar, Hajira, Kotli and Bher by PoK battalions. Subsequently, they were given intensive training along with the regular troops at various centres. Marrying up between the regular troops and the Razakars was carried out during six weeks training at the guerrilla warfare schools at Shinkiari, Mang Bajri, Dungi and Sakesar in PoK. The training of the Razakars included the following:

1. laying of an ambush;
2. destruction of bridges and disruption of lines of communication;
3. raids on military formation headquarters (HQ) and supply dumps;
4. endurance exercises; and
5. unarmed combat.

In addition to small arms, the infiltrators were equipped with the following:

1. wireless set ANGR-9 at one per force HQ;
2. Blendicide 83 mm rocket launcher, one per company;
3. plastic explosive, 100 pounds per company;
4. light machine gun (LMG), one per section;
5. transistor set, one per platoon;
6. Veray light pistol, one per company; and
7. 12 bore shotgun, three per company.

The arms and equipment supplied to these men generally did not bear Pakistani markings. Each member of the force carried a weapon, some ammunition and four grenades. Ammunition was issued on a lavish scale, which comprised 200 rounds per rifle, 200–500 rounds per Sten carbine and 750 rounds per LMG. Some companies carried 2 inch and 3 inch mortars based on the requirement. Prior to being infiltrated, the personnel were issued civilian clothing—green *mazari* shirt and *salwar* along with jungle boots.

At the time of infiltration, the men of each force were given seven days composite rations. They were also issued fake identity cards and adequate Indian currency to enable them to make purchases from the locals. Each company commander was given Rs 10,000 to meet contingencies.

This enabled the infiltrators to subsist on local food supplies for a long period. Rations and ammunition were carried by mules and porters. There was also a plan to supply major groups of infiltrators rations and ammunition by mule convoys across the CFL and arrange for airdrops. Support from locals who were pro-Pakistani, loot and arson were other means of subsistence for the infiltrators. The planning entailed creation of small dumps of ammunition at selected places for subsequent use by infiltrators. Each soldier was provided with a first aid kit. It was planned that wounded infiltrators would be left behind in residential accommodation of sympathisers. The people who were killed were to be buried in the jungles. The overall medical plan was unsatisfactory and, naturally, it lowered the morale of the infiltrators.

Command and control of the operation was exercised by HQ Gibraltar Force in PoK. As mentioned earlier, the force HQ was provided with ANGR-9 wireless set for long-range communication and a transistor set was issued to each platoon. Instructions to the infiltrators were transmitted through the Azad Kashmir Radio in specified codes at specific times.

#### TASKS

The ultimate aim of the Gibraltar Force was to create large-scale disturbances in the state of J&K. The tasks assigned were as follows:

1. To establish bases for subsequent operations at various points within the state of J&K, with the help and support of local elements.
2. To operate from these bases as and when possible in order to commit acts of sabotage and violence.
3. To terrorise peaceful and loyal citizens, as also to provide support to pro-Pakistani elements.
4. To attack civil and military personnel and government institutions in different parts of the state so as to disperse Indian Army and police forces.
5. To create unrest and lawlessness in the state with a view to paralyse the internal administration and create a situation of internal revolt.
6. To facilitate the induction of more armed personnel from Pakistan.

7. Demolition of bridges, disruption of lines of communication, raids on ammunition and supply dumps.
8. After carrying out subversive activities, the infiltrators were to merge with the local population and await further orders.

The infiltrators organised in forces were to operate in different areas of the state as given below:

1. Force Tariq, to operate in Sonamarg, Dras and Kargil.
2. Force Qasim, to operate in Kupwara, Gurez and Bandipur.
3. Force Khalid, to operate in Trehgam, Chowkibal, Nangaon and Tithwal.
4. Force Salaudin, to operate in Uri and Srinagar.
5. Force Ghaznavi, to operate in Mendhar, Rajouri and Naushera.
6. Force Babur, to operate in Kalidhar Range and Chhamb.
7. Force Mutaza, to operate in Bandipur.
8. Force Jacob, to operate in Sonamarg.
9. Force Nusrat in Tithwal.

In addition to these forces, the Sikandar force and some other unidentified groups were also organised to conduct subversive activities in the state. A group of infiltrators, based in Pakistan, was to carry out raids in areas to the south-west of Samba, so as to disrupt communication between Pathankot and Jammu.

Reports indicate that the force commanders assembled at Murree during the second week of July 1965 and were addressed by the President, Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Major General Akhtar Hussain Malik, who was to monitor the operations of the infiltrators, addressed the force commanders on 1 August 1965 and focused on issues which merited importance. He exhorted them to do their best as it was their last chance to liberate Kashmir.

The planned routes of infiltration were as follows (see Figure 1):<sup>5</sup>

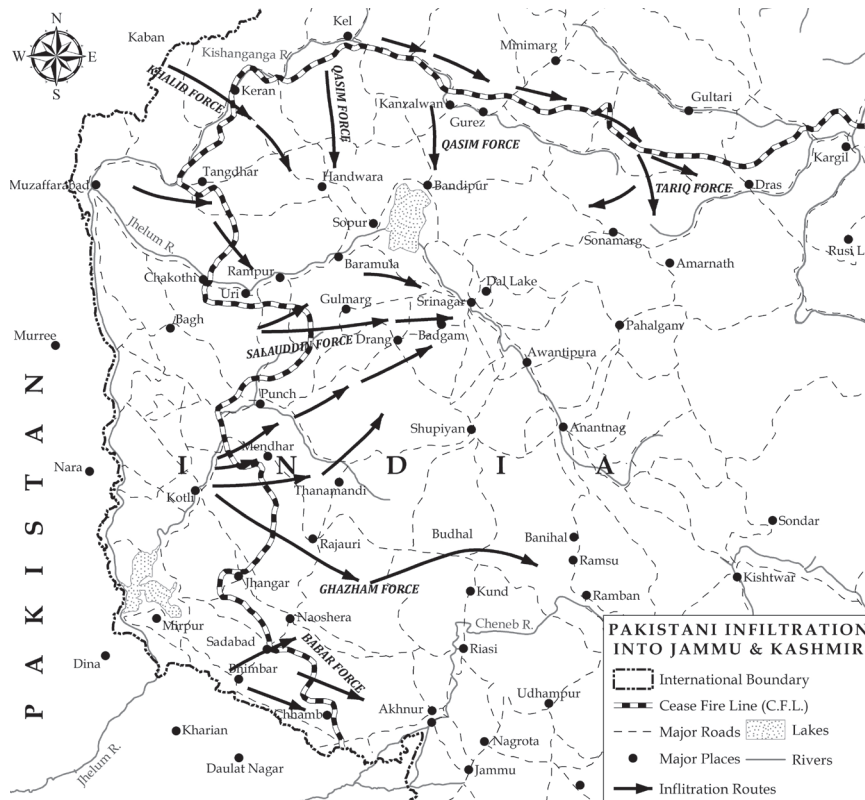
1. Gultari–Marpola–Goson–Dras;
2. Banihal–Shandorila–Bhimber–Dras;
3. Matiyal–Chehumudo–Palawar–Kaksar–Kharbu;
4. Dusnail–Kirkitchu–Chunagund;
5. Brielman–Simul–Kargil;
6. Natsara–Oitjing Thang–Musbar–Chuli Chang–Batalik–Kargil;
7. Gultari–Kel–Marpola–Sonamarg;
8. Kel–Kanzalwan–Bandipur;
9. Kagan–Keran–Handwara;



10. Jura–Tithwal–Kupwara;
11. Chakoti–Uri–Srinagar;
12. Chirkot–Poonch;
13. Kotli–Mendhar–Thanamandi;
14. Kotli–Gambhir–Rajouri
15. through Sadabad Gap on to Jhangar–Naushera; and
16. Bhimber–Chhamb–Akhnoor.

### PLAN FOR INFILTRATION

To facilitate the infiltration, another group was organised by the name of Nusrat, comprising 14 groups each of 350 personnel. Nusrat forces were to



**Figure 1** Infiltration Routes

Source: S.N. Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal, 'Operation Gibraltar, Pakistan on Collision Course', Chapter 3 in *The Indo Pak War of 1965: A History*, Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2011.

harass the Indian forces along the CFL, prior to the infiltration, and assist the Gibraltar Force columns in their move into J&K. The infiltration plan was methodically worked out. The force was to infiltrate in small groups between 1 and 5 August 1965. They were to assemble at pre-selected points on different routes of infiltration. Having moved inside the Valley, they were to mingle unnoticed among the crowds celebrating the festival of Pir Dastagir Sahib on 8 August 1965. A political demonstration was planned on 9 August to commemorate the first arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in Srinagar. The raiders were to mingle with the demonstrators, engineer an armed uprising and in the process, capture the radio station, airfield and other vital installations. In tandem, the other columns were to block Jammu–Srinagar road in the south and Kargil–Srinagar road in the north-east to isolate Srinagar. Success in these operations would lead to a Revolutionary Council proclaiming itself as the lawful government, which would then broadcast an appeal for recognition and assistance from all countries, especially Pakistan. This was to be the signal for the Pakistani Army to move further and consolidate the process.

It is pertinent to analyse whether any political and intelligence groundwork was done to prepare the local population for this operation. This has proved to be a contentious matter and, obviously, reflects poor forethought and planning. It is a fact that no senior Kashmiri leader appears to have been taken into confidence and no action was taken to seek assistance from the local population who, to Pakistan's surprise, fully supported India's security forces. This lapse resulted in the Gibraltar Forces paying a heavy price, for which Major General Malik took personal responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

#### EXECUTION

As the forces had to move close to the infiltration points, the move began around 24 July 1965. Having reached the CFL, the infiltration commenced on 5 August 1965. Initially, about 1,500 infiltrators crossed over in small batches and concentrated at selected points in Kashmir to organise themselves into larger groups. They concentrated mainly on Kanzalwan, Keran, Tithwal, Uri, Gulmarg, Mendhar, Poonch, Rajouri, Naushera and other areas of the Jammu region. The second batch of infiltrators was pushed in in the third week of August and comprised 6,000 infiltrators. By the first week of September, there was another group ready for induction but could not be sent due to counter-offensive operations launched by India.

The infiltrators worked in small groups independently. Subsequently, in the hope of better results, they changed their tactics and started concentrating in selected areas in larger groups. Some infiltrators exfiltrated without having participated in any operation. During the later phase of operations, they were able to establish strongholds in some isolated mountainous regions. Essential details are elucidated next.

### **The Valley**

The Salaudin force comprising six companies reached Chor Panjal on 1 August. Here, it was split up into two columns: the first column of two companies headed for Gulmarg, while the second column headed for Khag. On 8 August, they attempted to blow up a bridge at Bimna and killed a policeman. This column caused sabotage, arson and violence in Baramulla, Badgam and Srinagar. They managed to penetrate into key suburbs of Srinagar, close to the cantonment, radio station and the secretariat, without causing any damage except for sniping at the police lines. They received no support from the locals and, losing patience, set fire to 300 houses in the Batamallu locality of Srinagar. Elements of this column also operated in Anantnag–Achabal–Kazigund area. They established their base in Khag, fought some major encounters with the Indian forces and suffered heavy casualties. In the process, the column completely disintegrated and the survivors trekked back to PoK via Sonal Nala by 15 August 1965.

### **Kargil**

Tariq force operated in Dras and Kargil areas. The force infiltrated through Gultari–Marpola and Kaobal Gali. One of the columns headed for Zoji La and Sonamarg. They attempted to blow up the Hamilton Bridge near Sonamarg and a cement bridge near Zoji La. On 29 August, in an encounter with the Indian security forces near Sumbal Bridge, 20 raiders were killed and the rest fled across the CFL. While counter-infiltration operations were in progress, the Indian Army recaptured the heights of Point 13620, Saddle and Black Rocks, which had been returned after the Kutch operations, on 15 and 16 August 1965.

### **Kishanganga Sector**

This sector comprises Naugam, Sopore, Bandipur area and Kishanganga Valley. The Qasim and Khalid forces operated in this sector. The Qasim force reached Bandipur via the Razdhan Pass and established a

base in the forest area near the pass. It tried to set fire to the Bandipur Police Station but failed. Efforts were made to burn the Kanzalwan Bridge twice, the first on 11 August and the second on 15 August. They established a stronghold in Malud Behak and operated in the area of Woyil Bridge. Helicopters were used to mop up the saboteurs in this area and the force was liquidated. The Khalid force encircled Handwara from the west. It attacked Naugam Bridge on 12 August and Lingayat Bridge on 21 August. The attacks failed, but they were able to destroy Kazilpur Bridge, and also attacked Chowkibal with some success.

#### **Tithwal–Tangdhar Sector**

Nusrat force operating in this area failed in the fulfilment of their tasks. They were supported by Pakistani troops located near Mirpur. The Pakistani forces raided Indian posts from 13 to 18 August. The Indian troops retaliated and captured three Pakistani posts on 24 August 1965. It was during this action that a 'Divisional Order' signed by Major General Akhtar Hussain Malik was captured. It conclusively proved that Pakistan had sent the infiltrators to J&K. The Indian forces advanced right up to the line of Neelam (Kishanganga) River and secured its southern bank.

#### **Mendhar–Rajouri–Chingas–Jhangar Sector**

The Ghaznavi force operated in this area. Initially, it comprised six companies but later swelled to 2,000 personnel. This force had personnel who belonged to the same ethnic group as the locals and could accordingly establish a base at Dudaruni with full control of Budhil. It was supplied by air and 500 rifles were para-dropped at Dana. They attacked an ammunition dump at Narran but failed. They targeted the bridge over the Chenab River at Ramban and some other bridges on the Udhampur–Srinagar road, but quick responses by Indian troops denied them success. The force inflicted considerable casualties on the Indian troops in Poonch and Mandi. An all-out drive was launched against them after the ceasefire, but most of them managed to escape across the border. Some elements of Nusrat and Babur forces also operated in this area.

#### **Kalidhar–Samba Sector**

The Babur force comprising 400 members infiltrated through Bhimber,

Sadabad, Penga and Kalidhar with a view to spreading out in the Naushera–Sunderbani area. On 9 August 1965, infiltrators were sighted at Banjaro, north of Chhamb, and by 12 August, they had established a camp in Narijira and Panapura. About 200 infiltrators who had penetrated Kalidhar were engaged by the security forces of India and suffered heavy casualties. A group of infiltrators based in Shakargarh area of Pakistan raided Samba in Jammu with a view to disrupt road communications between Pathankot and Jammu. It also ambushed some convoys during August and September.

The Gibraltar Force failed to cause an uprising in the state. About 1,000 personnel were killed, many managed to exfiltrate back to Pakistan and by mid-October, only 500–600 infiltrators were left in India. The force did succeed in committing some acts of sabotage, but it failed to achieve its objectives.<sup>7</sup>

#### INDIAN MILITARY RESPONSE

The Indian Army received vague intelligence reports of training of infiltrators by Pakistan and the possibility of them being infiltrated into J&K. However, there was no ‘actionable’ intelligence. Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Harbaksh Singh, the Army Commander Western Command, stated that it was a tribute to Pakistan’s security measures and poor reflection on Indian intelligence operations.<sup>8</sup>

On 5 August 1965, at a village named Darra Kassi, located south-west of Gulmarg, a young Gujjar boy named Mohammed Din was approached by two men in green *salwar kameez* while attending to his cattle. He was offered money for information on deployment of Indian troops. The boy cooked up a story and immediately reported the matter to the police station at Tanmarg. An army patrol was immediately despatched to the area and in the ensuing clash, seven infiltrators were killed.<sup>9</sup> A few hours later, Wazir Mohammed was approached at Galuthi in Mendhar sector. He too alerted HQ 120 Infantry Brigade, which despatched a column that fought the intruders and compelled them to exfiltrate. Three days later, on 8 August, two PoK officers were captured near Narian. During interrogation, the officers made astounding revelations about the entire operation. The documents held by them revealed detailed plans for the execution of Operation Gibraltar.

This enabled the Indian Army to plan suitable counter-measures. The sequence of events from 5–17 August 1965 are discussed next.

### **5 August 1965**

The infiltrators reported by Mohammed Din in Gulmarg were intercepted by an army patrol. Similarly, the information given by Wazir Mohammed in Galuthi saw a column being despatched that fought fiercely with the infiltrators, resulting in their exfiltration across the CFL.

### **8 August 1965**

Captain Ghulam Hussain and Captain Mohammed Sajjad were captured near Narian and, as stated earlier, revealed the details of Operation Gibraltar. The entire plan came as a surprise as no intelligence was available regarding the operation. The infiltrators entered some suburbs of Srinagar but fled when attacked by Indian patrols. In Narian, the attack on a logistics dump failed. As the situation in Rajouri (25 Infantry Division sector) was deteriorating rapidly, the Army Commander, Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, ordered the move of 52 Infantry Brigade from 26 Infantry Division to Rajouri. The infiltrators attacked HQ 120 Infantry Brigade with no success.

### **9 August 1965**

A battalion of 2/9 Gorkha Rifles was moved into Srinagar and 4 Sikh Light Infantry was gradually flown in from Ambala. This stabilised the situation in Srinagar. Counter-actions were taken against raiders in Bedori, Gulmarg and Zurahom in the Valley. In Poonch sector, infiltrators were engaged while attempting to cross through Jarni Gali. They attacked the police station in Mandi and occupied the Mandi heights dominating the Poonch road. They were also located in Sunderbani and in Kalit village, next to Jaurian. The infiltrators damaged two bridges near Kargil, thereby preventing the move of 163 Infantry Brigade to the Valley.

### **10 August 1965**

This was a day when the situation in Srinagar was brought under control. In a vigorous counter-drive, the area of Tangpur on the outskirts of Srinagar was cleared of the infiltrators and a large quantity of ammunition and equipment was recovered. Meanwhile, four ad hoc companies organised from 19 Infantry Division had been concentrated at the Tattoo Ground in Srinagar. At about mid-day, the advance party of 163 Infantry Brigade arrived from Leh by road. Srinagar having been stabilised, the 8 J&K Militia was ordered to move to Pir Panjal heights with battalion

HQ at Shopian. The area around Rajouri, Akhnoor and Jhangar near Naushera saw intense activity. About 250 infiltrators were observed in Saranu (Rajouri sector) and a few of them were observed near Sunderbani. Heavy shelling was undertaken by Pakistani forces at Jhangar close to Naushera. One officer and three raiders were captured by 80 Infantry Brigade. Further, one officer and seven raiders were injured at Jaurian. At night, sporadic firing took place at Srinagar and continued throughout the night without any meaningful result.

### **11 August 1965**

This was an important day as 163 Infantry Brigade, with all its elements, arrived in Srinagar. The city was stable with this formation and the 2/9 Gorkha Rifles and 4 Sikh Light Infantry. The troops of the 19 Infantry Division who were involved in counter-insurgency operations were relieved and they were now being prepared for the offensive on Haji Pir Pass. Meanwhile, the situation in the 25 Infantry Division caused concern. There were about 300 infiltrators in Mahadev. It was important to engage the militants in Mandi near Poonch. During the afternoon, an attack was launched on Mandi by 8 Grenadiers with a company of 7 Sikh, under the overall control of HQ 52 Infantry Brigade. The Mandi heights were captured by evening and this facilitated the capture of the area.

### **12–17 August 1965**

The Pakistani infiltrators were spread thinly from Kargil to Akhnoor. The only place they received support from the local people was in the areas of Mandi, Narian and Budhil in 25 Infantry Division. During this period, the 8 Kumaon battalion base at Naugam was attacked at 0600 hours on 13 August 1965. The commanding officer was killed and the second-in-command was injured. The situation was retrieved, but the raiders also attacked a military convoy and it took some time to control the situation. On 14 August 1965, it was decided that a separate HQ should be established for dealing with the infiltrators in the Valley. Thus HQ Sri Force was designated under Major General Umrao Singh to undertake operations against the infiltrators, while HQ 19 Infantry Division moved back to Baramulla to plan for offensive operations. Meanwhile, 17 Punjab in Kargil performed an outstanding task by capturing Point 13620, Black Rocks and Saddle. These posts were attacked on the night of 14 August and captured by the morning of 15 August. On the same day, Pakistani

artillery directed by an air observation post, shelled the Indian post at Dewa where an artillery ammunition dump was located. A stray shell blew up the dump and killed the Commander of the 191 Infantry Brigade, Brigadier B.F. Masters. Six guns of 14 Field Regiment were destroyed. Due to the explosion, Palanwala post was abandoned. Immediate orders were given by the Army Commander to move a brigadier, an infantry battalion and a battery of guns from the 26 Infantry Division. Further, they were ordered to recapture lost positions. Meanwhile, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), the Army Commander and the Corps Commander met at Jammu on 17 August 1965 and discussed the overall situation. The COAS felt that Pakistan would continue to pursue the infiltration campaign, without recourse to open warfare, as such a course of action would fulfil its intention of compelling India to discuss Kashmir. The directions given by the COAS were:<sup>10</sup>

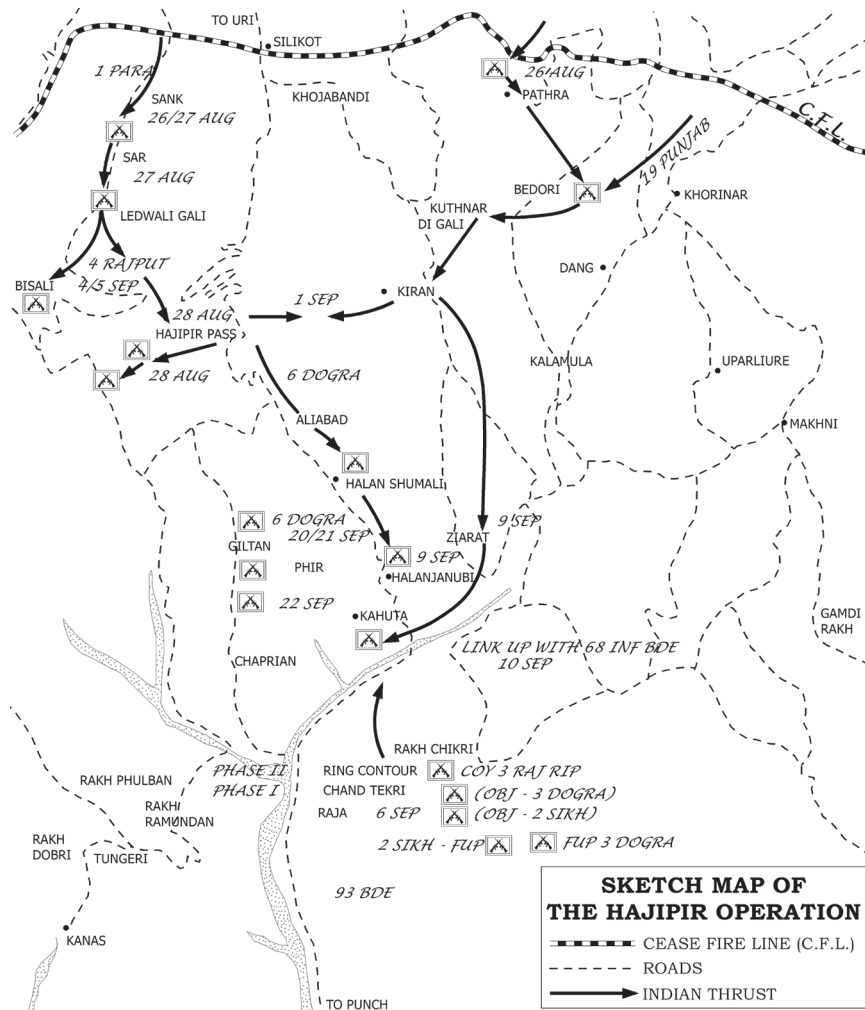
1. More vigorous steps would be taken to eliminate infiltration in the Valley.
2. Planning for taking Haji Pir Pass should progress to ensure it is taken on the due date (operations to commence possibly after 24 August 1965).
3. 25 Infantry Division was to readjust to close infiltration corridors.
4. Plan to move forward to reoccupy Dewa would be implemented.

By 18 August 1965, there was a perceptible decrease in the tempo of infiltration and the focus gradually shifted to offensive plans. On 21 August, it was assessed by the 15 Corps Commander that there were six columns operating in J&K. Each column had eight companies but all the companies had not been employed till then. At a meeting on 21 and 22 August, the COAS and the Army Commander directed that 15 Corps, with its own resources, eliminate the infiltrators and launch operations to capture Haji Pir Pass.

#### **COUNTER-INFILTRATION OPERATIONS**

Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, the Western Army Commander, read the infiltration campaign correctly. He analysed that apart from eliminating the infiltrators, there was a need to undertake offensive operations at Haji Pir and across the Kishanganga to counter the infiltration. Despite the reluctance of the Corps Commander, he convinced the COAS, who issued directions in consonance with the plan of the Army Commander. The plan of attack for the capture of Haji Pir Pass is indicated in Figure 2.





**Figure 2** Plan for the Capture of Haji Pir Pass

Source: S.N. Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal, 'Operation Gibraltar, Pakistan on Collision Course', Chapter 3 in *The Indo Pak War of 1965: A History*, Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2011.

The figure lucidly indicates the operation which was launched by 19 Infantry Division from the north, of which the western approach proceeded through Sank and the eastern approach through Bedori. The objective of the division was Haji Pir Pass. 25 Infantry Division launched an attack with two battalions from the south on Raja and then, to Kahuta.

This was to link up with the assaulting forces of 19 Infantry Division. The attack from the north commenced on the night of 26 August 1965. The initial attacks were by 1 Para on Sank and 19 Punjab on Pathra onwards to Bedori. Major Ranjit Singh Dayal of 1 Para (later Army Commander, Southern Command) captured Sank despite heavy rain, and swiftly moved on to Sar and Ledwali Gali. His troops climbed 1,200 metres at night and captured Haji Pir Pass by 28 August 1965. The Bedori forces encountered stiff opposition and reached the pass by 1 September. This was a great achievement and the Commander, 168 Infantry Brigade exploited south-east towards Aliabad on to Halanjanubi, north of Kahuta.

The second pincer was launched from 25 Infantry Division to link up with 68 Infantry Brigade from the Poonch sector. It envisaged an attack by two battalions under 93 Infantry Brigade to push towards Kahuta. The plan involved the capture of two strongly defended features, Raja and Chand Tekri. The preliminary attack to capture the screen positions was launched by 3 Raj Rif and this was captured by 30 August 1965. On the night of 1 September, 3 Dogra attacked Raja without success. It was then decided to launch a brigade attack with firepower from the artillery. On the night of 5/6 September, a simultaneous attack was launched by 2 Sikh on Raja and 3 Dogra on Chand Tekri. Both these objectives were captured with heavy losses. Though Raja and Chand Tekri were captured, several brisk actions had to be fought before a link-up between the two pincers was achieved on 10 September 1965. Further exploitation under 68 Infantry Brigade continued up to 22 September 1965.<sup>11</sup>

The battle of the Kishanganga Bulge in the Tithwal sector involved securing of a series of tactically important features, the capture of which was essential to dominate the sector. The initial phase on 23 August was the securing of Ring Contour by 2 Rajput and 3/8 Gorkha Rifles on the night of 23 August. On 24 August 1965, 1 Sikh captured Richhmar Ridge without difficulty and proceeded to attack the formidable Pir Sahiba feature on the night of 25/26 August. They captured the objective after a stiff fight. Capture of these areas enabled the units to dominate the infiltration routes, thereby checking the saboteurs' entry and exit into the Valley. The Sunjoi feature was captured by 3/8 Gorkha Rifles on the night of 3/4 September. The Pakistanis counter-attacked twice, but the Indian troops held on. With the capture of Sunjoi, the Indian troops reached the outskirts of Mirpur, a few kilometres east of Muzaffarabad, enabling them to dominate the whole area east of the Kishanganga River.

The final objective in this sector was Point 9013, which was captured by 4 Kumaon, with the support of the massive firepower provided by the artillery. Though the approaches were heavily mined, the objective was captured after three hours of fighting.<sup>12</sup>

The success achieved in capturing critical areas in Haji Pir, the Kishanganga Bulge and Kargil helped to contain the infiltration, and enhanced the morale of troops in the ensuing operations against Pakistan which commenced on 1 September.

#### LESSONS LEARNT FROM OPERATION GIBRALTAR

A British review of the 1965 war commented that Pakistani planning and execution of this aspect of the war was, in effect, calling tails with a double-headed coin. Pakistani Generals and writers have accepted that Operation Gibraltar was a failure and did not achieve its objectives.<sup>13</sup> The only area it met with success was in the area of Mandi in the Jammu division in 25 Infantry Division, where the infiltrators were able to get the cooperation of the local people and offer resistance to the Indian Army. The operation lost its sting as Pakistan's ensuing Operation Grand Slam was delayed to 1 September, by which time most of the infiltrators were killed or exfiltrated. India achieved its objectives by capturing areas which dominated the infiltration routes, thereby causing the entire process to be terminated.

Operation Gibraltar was a unique operation which brought out important lessons.

1. Pakistan believes that the best way of dealing with the Kashmir problem is to infiltrate its soldiers into Kashmir with the aim of creating an uprising, which would compel India to come to the negotiating table and accept that the state would like to secede from India. It has made similar efforts in 1947–48, 1965, as also during the Kargil conflict of 1999. As Pakistan does not appear to have learnt any lessons, it will continue looking for opportunities to apply this strategy. The current stance of Pakistani Embassy officials meeting the separatists is a continuation of this policy.
2. Without local support, infiltrators cannot operate successfully in in-depth areas. Operation Gibraltar failed as Pakistan had contacted no Kashmiri political leader nor had support from the local people. The infiltrators whereabouts were reported by the people, leading to their capture. The only area where they gained

success was in 25 Infantry Division at Mandi, where they could obtain some local support.

3. Pakistan's ability to maintain the security of its operational plans led to the element of surprise. Indian intelligence was unaware of Operation Gibraltar and learnt about the infiltrators only when the local people informed the security agencies. Indian intelligence agencies must acquire the ability to provide actionable intelligence in real time to the security forces.
4. Pakistan had no logistics replenishment plan for the operation and this resulted in lack of supplies, as also the inability to evacuate the wounded and bury the dead. Their claim that the infiltrators were Indians was soon disproved. The wounded were left to fend for themselves.
5. The infiltrators sent in were assessed by the *British Military Review* to have been physically unfit, incorrectly briefed, with low morale. It was indeed demoralising for the Pakistanis to hear two of their captured officers divulge all details of the operation on All India Radio.<sup>14</sup>
6. Pakistan launched its follow-up operation called Operation Grand Slam on 1 September—one month after Operation Gibraltar. This delay enabled India to stabilise the situation and be prepared for an offensive, while undertaking counter-infiltration operations. Operations in the rear areas would have made a greater difference had the main offensive been launched by 15 August 1965.
7. Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, the Army Commander, was able to read the battle correctly, thereby synergising the move of security forces in a balanced manner and defeating the saboteurs. He held the hand of his Corps Commander, Lt Gen P.C. Katoch, who was apparently overawed by the situation.
8. Counter-infiltration operations launched at Kargil, Tithwal and Haji Pir by the Army Commander resulted in the capture of areas which dominated the routes of infiltration, resulting in termination of Operation Gibraltar. It is essential to hit the enemy in his territory to destroy the lines of communication of the infiltration and thereby degrade the operation.
9. The capture of Haji Pir Pass was the most successful operation of the 1965 war. This unnerved the higher echelons of Pakistan Army. They had no other option but to demonstrate their capability by attacking Chhamb with a view to threaten Akhnoor.<sup>15</sup>

10. Indian officers led from the front and achieved success against all odds. There are numerous examples, but the outstanding ones were those of Major Ranjit Singh Dayal of 1 Para capturing Haji Pir, Lt Col Khanna of 2 Sikh capturing Raja and Major Megh Singh leading his commandos behind enemy lines.
11. There was perfect synergy between the infantry and artillery in all actions, resulting in unprecedented success.

Operation Gibraltar was an audacious operation launched by Pakistan, which failed to achieve its objectives. Credit must be given to Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, then Army Commander, for his comprehension of the situation, and for responding offensively, resulting in the capture of the Haji Pir Pass and Tithwal. The post-1962 Indian Army was tested and found to be ready to face the emerging challenges.

#### NOTES

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2. Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent: The India-Pakistan War of 1965*, New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014, p. 91.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
4. Lachman Singh, *Missed Opportunities: Indo-Pakistan War 1965*, Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2005, p. 128.
5. S.N. Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal, *The India-Pakistan War of 1965: A History*, New Delhi/Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2011, pp. 51–55.
6. Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent*, n. 2, p. 109.
7. Prasad and Thapliyal, *The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965*, n. 5, pp. 56–59.
8. Singh, *War Despatches*, n. 1, p. 25.
9. R.D. Pradhan, *1965 War: The Inside Story*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors Private Limited, 2013, p. 5.
10. Singh, *War Despatches*, n. 1, pp. 38–39.
11. Singh, *Missed Opportunities*, n. 4, pp. 148–50.
12. Singh, *War Despatches*, n. 1, pp. 53–55.
13. Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent*, n. 2, p. 125.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
15. Singh, *Missed Opportunities*, n. 4, p. 152.