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## **THE BLUNTED SCIMITAR** **The Navy's Trammels and Compulsions** **During the 1965 Indo-Pak War**

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Much has been written on Indo-Pak relations since the two countries attained Independence in 1947. In a very recent volume titled *India and Pakistan - Crisis of Relationship*, edited by Air Commandore Jasjit Singh, Director, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, he writes in his introduction 'If a single most dominant characteristic of the relations between Pakistan and India since 1947 was to be identified then the finger would almost involuntarily point to the mistrust and lack of confidence between the two sovereign states, both highly sensitive to their separate-ness and sovereignty as young modern nation states burdened by a deeply shared, historically long continuity of civilizational and cultural bonds. Although the manifestation of this in the shape of animosities is not necessarily shared by the peoples of the two countries, many attitudes and perceptions among them have been shaped by this crisis of relationship at the state-to-state level. This factor has been central to the growth and sustenance of antagonisms. The degree and form of crisis in the relationship -and the rhetoric that goes with it - has varied with time, events and personalities; but the substance of it has remained.'

He, further, very pertinently observes, The emotional upsurge which helped to establish the nation state (Pakistan) could not be translated or transformed into a durable political system to govern it. The fragility of the political institutions increased with the passage of time. This in turn generated and sustained the third factor-the rise of the praetorian state in which the military, the bureaucracy and the feudal lords (of land and business) progressively acquired a dominant control over the state structure. This 'troika' of ruling elites, in a nascent nation state, not only sustained itself on the animosities in relation to India but in the process acquired a vested interest in perpetuating conflictual relationship with India.'

In 1965 Pakistan was in the thrall of Ayub's military machine which felt that the time was ripe to

exacerbate the country's largely illiterate population's anti-Indian feelings. For this purpose the easiest course of action was to whip up anti-Indian hysteria and stage a limited operation to, firstly, 'liberate' Jammu and Kashmir, and secondly, to humiliate India in the eyes of the world polity. Some of the morale-boosters that Pakistan at this time had were its improving internal economy, the support of China which had exploded a nuclear device in 1964, a successful foreign policy bringing in a bonanza of military aid, both from capitalist and communist countries, the backing of the Islamic bloc and, what proved to be the most provocative spur, the Sino-Pak Protocol Treaty signed in March 1965! The stage was thus set for Pakistan to launch a major military adventure to humiliate India.

### **The Kachchh Episode**

The 1965 Indo-Pak conflict began with the sudden Pak claim, after 18 years of freedom and the acceptance by that country of the carefully and clearly delineated international boundary line between the two countries, of a marshy expanse in the Rann of Kachchh known as Kanjarkot. A Pak Army brigade was soon moved from Malir, a cantonment near Karachi, to the Kachchh border in March that year. On April 9 this brigade suddenly attacked a contingent of the Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) at a patrolling post three miles south-west of Kanjarkot and captured the commander of the post. The attack was duly repulsed and soon Pakistan attacked once again, this time with armoured vehicles, and forced the CRPF contingent to withdraw to a place called Vigokot. The task of sanitising the area was then taken over by the Indian Army which soon occupied Vigokot and served notice on the Pak Army for vacating Kanjarkot as it had been a part of undisputed Indian territory before its forcible occupation. Pakistan refused to comply and on April 16, 1965 it became apparent that the polarisation of the Pak attitude was complete and absolute when her Foreign Minister formally claimed the post to be Pakistani territory and ruled out any possibility of its being vacated.

Pakistan then moved an infantry division to the occupied area which, despite the presence of an Indian brigade, attacked four Indian positions on April 24 forcing the Indian Army to withdraw. On April 25 and 26 they attacked Biar Bet (the word bet in Kachchh means a high ground as opposed to the swampy low-lying areas of the Rann) and occupied most of it, though their attack on Vigokot and Sardar Post was effectively repulsed.

This was followed by an undeclared truce but only a month later, on May 25, Pakistani forces once again attacked an Indian military patrol in Biar Bet which was soon repulsed. Sporadic fighting continued for another month when, at the intervention of the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, the Pakistani President, Mohammed Ayub, and the Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, agreed to a cease-fire. There was a short welcome respite though the Pakistani hawks wanted the conflict to escalate to a full-fledged war and took the Indian bid for peace as a sign of weakness and attributed Ayub's acceptance of the cease-fire to his indecisiveness.

In his *My Years with the IAF*, Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lai confirms this impression, 'With the benefit of hindsight, it

seems likely that the Pakistanis judged 1965 to be the right year to force a settlement of the Kashmir issue that had eluded them in 1947-48. The dismal showing of the Indian Army in April-May 1965 over the border dispute in the Rann of Kachchh bolstered their confidence. They took this as proof of India's apparent military weakness particularly since it came not long after Pandit Nehru's death. But before that the widespread troubles in Kashmir following the loss of a holy relic from the Hazratbal shrine on December 27, 1963 must have led them to believe the ground was ready to receive the seeds of revolt.'

In an article published in 1986 in the Islamabad newspaper, *The Muslim*, its editor, Mushahid Hussain, stated that this war had been started by Pakistan to divert public attention within the country from the political turmoil the country was going through. In his two-piece article, *Shadows of the 1965 War*, published in *The Hindustani Times*, New Delhi, Pran Chopra says, 'Another article (in *The Muslim*) by Mir Abdul Aziz, a veteran journalist, shows that President Ayub's motives in starting it were personal, base and unintelligent. He cites General Musa's *My Version* (General Musa was the Pak Army Chief during the 1965 conflict) to show that the General thought the plan was unwise and he shelved it for a year. Then 'something happened', says Abdul Aziz. He quotes Nawabzada General Sher Ali, a former Information Minister of Pakistan, as telling him that the 1965 war was suddenly started by 'Bhutto, Aziz Ahmed and Nazir Ahmed (former foreign and defence secretaries) in the hope that there would be reverses for Pakistan, for which the blame would be laid on Ayub Khan, who would get pressed to quit and make room for younger leadership'. While this portrays Ayub, Washington's darling for over a decade as the ideal type (of) leader for Third World countries, as lacking the intelligence to see through the plot, Abdul Aziz leads another witness for worse evidence against Ayub, 'a retired officer of the Ministry of Information who in his official capacity was close to Prime Minister Bhutto.' Aziz says he learnt from this officer that though Ayub had first turned down the 1965 war plan, he turned to it again, on Bhutto's advice, as relief from his political difficulties following his near-defeat by Miss (Fatima) Jinnah in presidential elections. Bhutto told Ayub, says the informant of Aziz, 'General Sahib ... if the nation is switched towards India it will forget everything and you will be the hero of the hour/ In the event Ayub did not become a hero even for one hour. Abdul Aziz adds, Ayub wanted some gain, and Bhutto wanted to play his own game. Bringing Kashmir into the limelight was a secondary proposition.'

Before going on to the other Pak acts of perfidy during the months following the Kachchh imbroglio, it must be mentioned that, just as had happened when the Kashmir issue had been referred to the UNO in the late 1940s and India had lost the Pak-occupied areas of Kashmir (POK), in the wisdom of the powers that ruled India during the second half of the 1960s, the dispute over the territory in Kachchh was referred to an international tribunal. On February 19, 1968, this tribunal awarded 480 square kilometres of Indian territory in Kachchh to Pakistan out of the 4,800 square kilometres claimed. And with this dispensation the international border in Kachchh was delineated anew resulting in Pakistan achieving tactical superiority in the area as the area awarded to it had a large number of bays while the area remaining with India comprised large expanses of low-lying swamp.

## **On to Kashmir**

The scene had soon shifted to the Kashmir valley. Between May 16 and June 7, 1965, Pakistan had also committed a

number of violations of the Pak-Kashmir border and had launched several attacks in the Kargil sector of Kashmir. In order to thwart Pak forces from continuing with such attacks, a counter-offensive had been launched and certain areas of Pak-occupied Kashmir had been captured. But when the Kachchh agreement was signed, India had relinquished all these positions thus giving Pakistan the impression that she was not capable of withstanding sustained full-scale attacks in case a war was launched. This had tempted that country to make a bid for Kashmir once again a few months later.

Thus, said Lieutenant General B.M. Kaul in his *Confrontation with Pakistan*, 'Pakistan had lulled us into a false sense of security by outwardly lying low after the truce of Kachchh, having assessed our reaction and pinpointed our weaknesses in this short conflict of April-May 1965. While our high command had remained blind to this ruse and was off-guard, allowing our forces to relapse into peacetime postures, the Pakistanis were secretly preparing to strike in Kashmir in August and take us by surprise.' And take us by surprise they did when 10,000 infiltrators - Pakistanis called them 'freedom fighters' though in act the main bulk of them were Pak Army officers and men in some kind of *mufti* leading a brain-washed band of tribesmen from the NWFP trained by the Pak Army in guerilla warfare to wage a *Jehad* for the 'liberation' of their Kashmiri Muslim 'brethren' in the 'Indian-occupied' part of Kashmir - crossed the 750-kilometre-long cease-fire line on August 5, 1965.

### **The Force Levels**

At this time, the strength of the Indian Army was 800,000 comprising 16 divisions of full strength, nine of which were mountain formations and four of reduced strength. It had about 1,000 armoured fighting vehicles, including reserves, and about 200 pieces of artillery. The Indian Air Force had about 900 aircraft of various types including the MIG 21, out of which about 550 were combat aircraft. The small Indian Navy had one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, three destroyers, three escort destroyers, eight modern anti-aircraft frigates, three frigates of World War II vintage, four coastal minesweepers, two inshore minesweepers, nine seaward defence boats, one landing ship, one landing craft, four shore patrol craft and a large number of auxiliaries and harbour craft but no submarines.

The strength of the Pakistan Army was 250,000 including about eight divisions of full strength and a large number of *Mujahids* (crusaders), *Razakars* (defenders of the faith) and other irregulars. It had approximately 800 armoured fighting vehicles including modern Pattons, and its artillery strength was less than India's though the guns were superior in firepower. The Pakistan Air Force had approximately 200 combat aircraft which included F-86 Sabre fighters, a squadron of F-104 Starfighters and B-57 Canberra bombers. The Pakistan Navy's Fleet consisted of one submarine (the *Ghazi* which was sunk later by the Indian Navy during the 1971 War off Vishakhapatnam), one light cruiser, five destroyers, two anti-submarine frigates, eight coastal minesweepers, four patrol craft, two seaward defence motor launches and a large number of auxiliaries and harbour craft.

At the beginning of May, the ships of the Indian Fleet had been carrying out routine assignments on both coasts and the Bay islands. The aircraft carrier, *Vikrant*, along with some of the other ships of the Fleet *Ranjit*, *Kuthar* and *Kirpanwas* at Cochin awaiting the embarkation of the Seahawk and Alize, squadrons from *Garuda*, the Naval Air station; the *Talzoar* was on passage from Bombay to Cochin, the *Brahmaputra* was on patrol off Cochin, the *Akshay* was at Calcutta,

the *Jumna*, *Sukanya* and *A/ay* were at Vishakhapatnam, the *S/wrda* and Investigator were at Madras and the *Beas* was at Port Blair. The other ships of the Fleet were in various stages of refit at the Naval Dockyard, Bombay.

Regular maritime reconnaissance of the sea areas vital to the security of the country by IAF aircraft had revealed the fact that nearly all ships of the Pak navy had been put to sea and the submarine *Ghazi* had been positioned off the Western Coast of India. In fact, the *Ghazi* had been sighted while diving about 60 nautical miles west of Daman on May 9, 1965 by IAF aircraft and warships and had been sighted off Minicoy soon thereafter. A few unidentified aircraft had also been seen flying at high altitudes over the Arabian Sea off our West Coast and the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal but by the time IAF aircraft or ships of the Fleet were despatched to these areas to carry out searches, all aircraft, ships and the submarine had disappeared. Continuous vigil was, however, maintained by the Indian Fleet over the entire sea area off the Indian peninsula until the 'thaw' in Indo-Pak relationship with a *de facto* truce in May 1965 which was sporadically violated by the Pak forces a number of times, the last such violation taking place on June 15 when they suddenly attacked certain areas in the vicinity of Sardar Post and Vigokot in Kachchh but were beaten back after suffering heavy casualties and the capture of a Pak Army Major by the Indian forces.

### **The Sparring Begins**

As mentioned earlier, it was on June 17, 1965 that Prime Minister Shastri met President Ayub of Pakistan at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference at London and the informal discussions between the two appeared to have been cordial enough to lead to a formal cease-fire, which was signed on June 30, 1965 and made operative from July 1.

Shri L.K. Jha, the noted diplomat-economist-civil servant-governor, who was the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Shastri at that time, when interviewed on September 11, 1986, said,

I was involved with some of the overall considerations which were guiding the war effort and meetings of the Emergency Committee of the Cabinet as well as the Secretaries where some aspects were viewed largely from the political point of view but equally from an operational point of view. Now, first of all, the attempt on our part was to keep the whole thing confined<sup>^</sup> territorially as well as otherwise, to a local conflict, rather than allow it to assume the character of an Indo-Pak War. This was the prime objective of our policy - it had been in the past also.

But at the same time, we had come to realise that fighting on terrain chosen by the enemy would always leave you at a disadvantage. This came out very, very vividly during the Rann of Kachchh affair when Pakistan had all the logistic advantage and we had a tremendous problem in getting men, material and supplies moving to the front. At that very time a political decision had been taken that we wouldn't fight with our hands tied behind the backs and therefore a plan for opening a second front in the Punjab by marching into Lahore had been drawn up and perfected. But it was not launched because a cease-fire came into existence, and we naturally hoped that some peaceful way of resolving the Rann of Kachchh dispute would be evolved and in fact it went to an international body to settle.

But even when there was the state of uncertainty, a kind of simple cease-fire without any formal agreement,

the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was taking place in London. Shastriji went to London and I went with him. And when going, there was concern - supposing things hotted up in our absence should the operation to march into Lahore be launched or not. The arrangement I had made with Shri Y.B. Chavan, who was then the Defence Minister, was that if such a contingency arose, he would send me a message indicating the date by which the Prime Minister must get back because we were about to move forward. However, the contingency did not arise.

In fact, I recall, and it might be useful for the record, a meeting between Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub during the Commonwealth Conference session. It was a private meeting and I was there. Ayub said somewhat patronisingly. You know, your chaps tried to commit aggression on our territory, our chaps gave them a few knocks and then they began to flee/ Then Shastriji said, \*Mr President, you are a General. I have no military knowledge or experience. But do you think if I had to attack Pakistan, I would choose a terrain where we have no logistic support and you have all the advantages? Do you think I would make such a mistake or any of my Generals would allow me to make that mistake?' And one could see from the face of President Ayub that this thought startled him. Because quite obviously he had been led to believe, in my judgement by Bhutto, that the Indians had attacked in the Rann of Kachchh. And he was firmly of that view until this question posed by Shastriji and I could see him visibly pause and not pursue the point any further.

### **The Navy's Deployment**

A **large** number of the Navy's ships were either undergoing major and **minor refit or were due** for maintenance at the various repair facilities **at Bombay and** elsewhere till the time of the declaration of a cease-fire on **July 1965**. Since they had had to be hurriedly brought out for deployment **at sea, it** was now decided to update the operational readiness of as many **ships** as possible so that, first, they could be better prepared to meet an emergency and, next; to work up all these ships as a balanced task force, **especially** in antisubmarine warfare as the Pak submarine *Ghazi* would pose a serious threat to our Fleet ships as well as the merchant marine. The **Indian** Navy at this time had no submarine nor any practical experience in **handling** submarine threats except for the occasional exercises with the Commonwealth navies.

Said Admiral *BS. Soman*, who was the Chief of the Naval Staff at that time,

After the fizzle-out of the Kachchh affair for which the Fleet ships had been hurriedly brought out from their refit and periodic maintenance, we had the Hobson's choice of either committing them back to their refit and maintenance, or of continuing to keep them operational in **order** to make full use of the (already projected) live antisubmarine training with a Royal Navy submarine which was due to arrive in India shortly. It had been our experience in the past that no amount of simulated training on attack teachers in antisubmarine training schools ashore can ever make antisubmarine teams fully efficient.

**It** was decided, therefore, that the live target hunting **and tracking** opportunity was too valuable to be missed even if, during the period, the ships were not in as good a shape in their material state as they should be,

so long as their antisubmarine searching, hunting and attacking equipment and personnel were effective and efficient, in making this decision, I had assessed that we perhaps had time till about November 1965 before things might get hot again.

In the context of this assessment, I must point out that while Mysore and the antisubmarine frigates were sent out to the East Coast for antisubmarine exercises with the British submarine *Astute*, *Vikrant* was put into the drydock for her normal but long overdue periodic maintenance, particularly the repairs to her flight-deck machinery, malfunctioning of which would have endangered valuable lives pilots and caused losses of aircraft. Another consideration in committing *Vikrant* to her refit during this period was that the weather and visibility conditions during the monsoon do detract somewhat from the full operational value of such a ship. All ships on the East Coast were due back from the antisubmarine exercises in early September 1965 and, after normal maintenance would have been operational again by early November 1965 by which time the *Vikrant* was also scheduled to get ready.

As it happened, events forestalled our calculations. -*Mysore* and the first pair of frigates to complete their exercises with the submarine carried out such normal periodic maintenance as possible with the limited available resources at Vishakhapatnam, and were deployed in the Andaman and Nicobar area from where, during the monsoon period, smaller patrol aircraft are withdrawn. This was in accordance with the normal operational programme of the ships and was necessary, as there had been reports of surface and submarine (of unknown nationality) activity in this area. It was virtually in the middle of this deployment and before the second group of ships exercising with the submarine had finished their periodic maintenance, that all these ships had to be deployed to the West Coast to cater for any Pakistani naval activity. Needless to say, therefore, the material state of the ships, so far as their propulsion systems were concerned, was by no means at the optimum, as it perhaps could have been had we forgone the antisubmarine exercise. I have no doubt, however, that the antisubmarine exercises carried out with the submarine *Astute* stood our ships in very good stead.

From intelligence available prior to the end of August, it was known that the Pakistan Fleet was in Karachi carrying out maintenance and various exercises throughout the months of July and August 1965, while ours was on the East Coast. Being away from their home port, Bombay, our ships had to continue to make do with very meagre maintenance and repair facilities and resources which had yet to be developed on the East Coast.

A warning on the worsening situation was sent to the Fleet Commander, Rear Admiral (later Vice Admiral) B A. Samson, on August 30, 1965, but it was not till the next day, September 1, 1965 that the Fleet ships were ordered to rush back to the West Coast; and operational directives to the Fleet and Commands were issued two days later.

## The Preparatory Stage

It had already become apparent to politico-military observers that with the rain clouds having receded during the later half of August 1965 and the gathering of war clouds over the western horizon, the Pakistani authorities had a sinister intent as it was common knowledge that Pak defence lines along the international border were being reinforced, massive military exercises had been conducted and the Pak forces, especially the army and the air force were being deployed in strategic positions in the Kashmir and Punjab sectors close to the border. While the Indian Army and (the Air Force adopted adequate measures to forestall any wild land or air misadventure on the part of the Pak forces, the Naval Chief, Vice-Admiral B.S. Soman, was 'persuaded' by the authorities not to recall the Fleet from the East Coast for deployment in the Arabian Sea for reasons best known to the Government.

Recalls Vice-Admiral N.P. Datta, who held several important appointments in the Navy before his retirement in 1981 and who was the Deputy Director of Personnel in the rank of Commander at Naval Headquarters in 1965,

The Pakistani operations with their tanks in the Rann of Kachchh was their first foray into Indian territory and, what is more important, into the will-power of the Indian Government and the Indian Armed Forces, to see whether they would be able to withstand the shock of a sudden onslaught. Our response, I think, was slow and probably guarded because of the fact that the Army thought it was only a side operation with a view to decoying our tank forces away from the main theatre into the Gujarat sector and they were not going to fall for it,

That was the sum and substance of the Indian response and one could take two views on it: one, we should have given them a fitting answer and if we had done that, perhaps the September operation would not have materialised. On the other hand, one can say that we did not fall a prey to their manoeuvres and we kept our cool but the overall effect of it was that the Pakistani General Staff thought that the Indians had no fight left in them and thus they made a wrong assessment of India's ability to fight and it was this wrong impression which fortified the hawks in the Pak Army to undertake much larger-scale operations in September 1965.

As the Deputy Director of Personnel at Naval Headquarters at that time, my job was to make that our forces at sea were kept in an operational state all the time. The normal annual turn-around of officers that took place in the Navy in March and April of every year had not been done with a view to not disturbing the ship's companies (crews) which had been worked up (brought gradually into a state of efficiency) together for the last 18 months or so. So I froze all the appointments, both ashore and afloat, and saw to it that the efficiency of the Indian Fleet was not impaired in any way.

Soon after the Rann of Kachchh crisis was over, we realised that it probably was just a preliminary skirmish and the bigger test would come later on. So immediately my concern was to make the necessary changes as quickly as possible and to see that the Fleet worked up again in the intervening period which we did in the months of May, June and July and it was a wise precaution because very soon thereafter the whole thing flared up again.

My recollection of this phase of the operation is that the Indian Navy was not kept fully in the picture as to the

extent of the operations envisaged by Pakistan and our reaction to it. It had been quite well-known even outside the military circles for sometime that Pakistan was planning a major offensive in the Jammu and Kashmir sector with a few probes in the Northern Punjab sector as well.

It was also known at that time that the Government of India directive was that if Pakistan started any major operation in the Jammu and Kashmir region, our response would be to hit them back at the place of our own choosing in the Punjab sector which would mean an all-out war and in the situation of an all-out war it was not only the Army but the Navy and the Air Force as well that would be involved.

I distinctly remember that around the middle of August 1965 I had gone to the Naval Chief, Vice Admiral Soman, with whom I had earlier served in the Fleet as the Fleet Operations Officer, and had given him my view which was that the Indian Fleet at that time was embarked on a peace-time routine, that is to say, normal exercises were being carried out during the monsoon period in the Bay of Bengal which were combined with a few goodwill visits and, according to the programme at that time, the bulk of our strike force was tied up at Calcutta. If this force was to be recalled, it would take up to two weeks or even longer to get them back to the West Coast where they were likely to be required. Thereafter, having made such a rapid journey, it would require another week or 10 days for replenishment and necessary repairs and thus these ships would not become a fighting force till about the first week of September.

Admiral Soman said that this was the very point that he had made to the Chiefs of Staff Committee but had been overruled by the Army Chief, General J.N. Chaudhuri, as the Chairman of the Committee who had said that if any alterations were made in the disposition of the Indian Fleet, if the ships were hurriedly recalled from Calcutta and sent back to Bombay, it would create a furore in **the** press and it would forewarn the Pakistani General Staff of the Indian Armed Forces' knowledge of their plans and hence their reaction would be severe - a curious line of reasoning because Pakistan was **already** planning the first aggressive moves in Jammu and Kashmir **and** could not be unaware that we were bound to react.

I did not thus quite see the logic of it because this was common knowledge and it was something being openly discussed in the news-papers. It was also common knowledge what the reaction of **the** Government of India would be in regard to preventing the Pakistani General Staff from making any rash decision to attack India. Prime Minister Shastri had repeated a number of times, on the floor of our Parliament and outside, that the consequences of any rash action in Jammu and Kashmir would be very severe. But I do not think that the Pakistani General Staff was in any doubt as to what our reaction would be and, what is more, they went by the disposition of **the** Indian Army and the Indian Air Force in the relevant sectors of Punjab and not by that of the Indian fleet because they thought that in a limited war the Navy would have a small part to play and it was generally known that the Indian Armed Forces - the armoured divisions, the fighting formations, etc - had been transferred in larger numbers to Punjab. They were in no doubt as to what our disposition was and what our intentions were.

But anyhow the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee was able to persuade Vice Admiral Soman

not to recall the Fleet. He, however, called them back round about August 31, 1965. As I had predicted, by the time they came back to Bombay, around September 7, they needed a little more time for necessary repairs and replenishment and taking on ammunition, oil and other supplies and by **the** time they put to sea, the war had already progressed by over a week.

### **The Pros, Cons and Pinpricks**

While analysing the causes of India's failure to achieve an outright victory and the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee's sidelining of the Navy and the Air Force, Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lai, in his *My Years with the IAF*, is fairly censorious of General Chaudhuri,

I mention the ChhadBett incident at some length because it was later said by General Chaudhuri that it had given him a clear indication of Pakistan's intentions in regard to Kashmir. If so, he did **little** to **alert** the other two Service Chiefs about the danger ahead. In the National

Security Lecture that he delivered in January 1971, he stated that, It was on the May 5, 1965 that the larger pattern of Pakistan's intentions to seize Kashmir. ... became apparent.

He goes on to say that he discussed the pros and cons of this possibility with the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister (Chavan) and 'the necessary sanction was obtained', though precisely for what is not clear. Sometime later, the Air Chief was also informed of what was going on. This was done through informal meetings from which the Naval Chief was excluded 'for the Navy's role did not look like being a very big one'. To ensure security, the General applied the 'need to know' yardstick so thoroughly that the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the joint intelligence and planning staff were completely bypassed. No contingency plans were drafted, nor were the three Services asked to define the parts that they would have to play in the event of a war.

Gen Chaudhuri speaks with satisfaction of the freedom with which views were expressed at his informal meetings with the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, and the speed with which decisions were taken. It comes through clearly from his statements that he treated the whole business as his personal affair, or at any rate that of the Army's alone, with the Air Force as a passive spectator and the Navy out of it altogether. He ignored the basic concepts of our higher Defence organisation and displayed what maybe called the 'supremo syndrome', a disease that grows out of the belief that one head is better than three. The origin of this disease can be traced to pre-independence days, when the Army Chief was also Commander-in-Chief of all Armed Forces in India.

As regards inter-service co-operation, especially at the level of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Chief Marshal Lai says,

But most of all it was shown that no matter how able or intelligent a senior commander might be - and General Chaudhuri was an outstanding person in all respects - he could not expect to fight a war on his own. Planning must be carried out through the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and the Navy and the Air Force must

be taken into confidence. They must be given the opportunity to contribute their ideas and expertise to the development of contingency plans. Had General Chaudhuri done so as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee the outcome of the war might have been very different. As it was all three Services suffered, the Army perhaps most of all. However, the war marked a turning point in military thinking and preparedness, for it brought out the shortages and deficiencies to be made good in organisation and procedures and in terms of equipment and resources.

As is well-known, Pakistan had been committing violations of the Indo-Pak border throughout the summer months of 1965 and the frequency of these violations had increased further during the first week of August culminating in a large number of armed infiltrators crossing the cease-fire line in Kashmir on August 5. In spite of continued peaceful efforts made by India, the situation soon aggravated and the Indian Army had to take preventive measures in Kashmir to plug the entry points of these infiltrators.

Not satisfied, however, with its subversive activities in Kashmir which failed to achieve the desired objective, Pakistan launched a massive attack with armour against India across the international border in the Chhamb Sector on September 1, with the Pakistan Air Force supporting its Army and carrying out strike missions against Indian Army units. The Indian Air Force had, therefore, to extend suitable air cover to the Army and launch operations to prevent Pak aircraft from intruding into our air space. Since Pakistan was likely to extend the war to the Arabian Sea as well, Karachi being its main naval base, the Indian Naval authorities decided to initiate necessary action to prepare against such an attack and ordered the Fleet home.

### **The Indian Fleet**

At this time, consequent to the Government's decision not to commit the Navy to the conflict and its stated desire not to allow the land and air operations to escalate to a full-scale war, the Fleet was in a dispersed state all along the country's seaboard. At Vishakhapatnam on the east coast were the only capital ships in an operational state, *Mysore* (Captain, later Commodore, D.R. Mehta), along with the destroyer, *Ranjit* (Commander M.M. Johri), three antisubmarine frigates of the 14th Frigate Squadron, *Khukri* (Captain, later Vice Admiral, R.J.S. Gandhi), *Ktrpan* (Commander, later Rear Admiral, D.S. Paintal) and *Kuthar* (Commander, later Captain, B.D. Law), and the seaward defence boat, *Ajay* (Lieutenant, later lieutenant Commander, S.J. Nagrani). The two anti-aircraft frigates, *Brahmaputra* (Captain, later Rear Admiral, Kirpal Singh) and *Beas* (Commander R.N. Das Gupta), were at Calcutta. Bombay had the 'R' class destroyer, *Rajput* (Captain, later Commodore, B.J.L. Kapoor), the frigate, *Kistna* (Commander J.N. Maitra), the converted survey ship, *Sutlej* (Commander C.G. Francis), (all three of World War vintage) and the helicopter-carrying survey ship, *Darshak* (Captain, later Rear Admiral, D.C. Kapoor), all of which were nearing completion of their essential repairs. The two Hunt class destroyers, *Goatewn* (Commander, later Vice Admiral, M.K. Roy) and *Gomati* (lieutenant Commander, later Captain, C.L. Sachdev), had been positioned at Cochin for local naval defence while the two minesweepers, *Cannanore* (Lieutenant Commander B. Daniel) and *Kakinada* (Lieutenant Commander L.S. Lamba), were at Goa.

Five major ships including two capital ships, one general purpose frigate, one anti-aircraft frigate and one destroyer - *Vikrant* (Captain, later Vice-Admiral, V.A. Kamath), *Delhi* (Captain, later Commodore, P.C. Andrews), *Trishul* (Captain, later Commodore, Inder Singh), *Betwa* (Com-manderGNandySingh) and *Rana* (Commander, later Captain, M.N.Mulla) - were undergoing extended refit at the Naval Dockyard, Bombay. *Talwar* (Commander, later Commodore, V.A. Dhareshwar), the other general purpose frigate, had been carrying out essential maintenance in Bombay during August 1965 but had to be hurriedly boxed up and sent for investigating the presence of possible enemy vessels in the Kori Creek, a few miles south-west of the Indo-Pak border in the Rann of Kachchh, first on August 12, when she remained on task for five days, and once again on August 24.

The Kori Creek report turned out to be a 'red herring' and prevented the *Talwar* from becoming a fully operational ship with well-honed sensors when she was required to carry out a barrier patrol off the northwest tip of the Kathiawar Coast (30 to 80 miles west of Okha) to provide advance warning of the approach of the Pak Fleet. She had been ordered to proceed to this station on September 2 but had to soon take shelter at Okha owing to a major breakdown. On the night of September 7/8, when some Pakistani warships, disguised as merchant ships, approached Dwarka, hurriedly bombarded the temple town and escaped, *Talwar*, which had far superior firepower than these ships and could have easily neutralised their nuisance potential, was only 30 miles away, carrying out essential repairs to her machinery and had virtually become *hors de combat*. Had the Navy received any prior intelligence on the Pak Navy's intentions and had the *Talwar* been operational, the Dwarka incident might have had a different ending.

When Pakistan launched a massive attack in the Chhamb sector on September 1, ships exercising in the Bay of Bengal were ordered to immediately return to Bombay. *Mysore*, *Ranjit*, *Khukri* and *Kuthar* sailed from Vishakhapatnam on September 2 with full despatch. *Kirpan* followed a day later after rectifying some defects in her propulsion machinery. On September 3 *Brahmaputra* and *Beas*, which were in Calcutta, also sailed for Bombay. All ships were to fuel at Cochin on September 5 and were expected to reach Bombay by September 7.

Seahawk aircraft of the No. 300 Naval Air Squadron were 'working up' at Jamnagar and were placed under the operational control of the Air Force on September 2 for offensive action against the enemy. All Naval air squadrons - the No. 300 Seahawk fighter squadron, No. 310 Alize antisubmarine aircraft squadron, No. 550 Seahawk and Alize trainer squadron and No. 551 Kiran jet trainer squadron - were made operational for reconnaissance and antishipping roles and for the air defence of Indian seaports.

Since a large number of ships were still to become operational, the Naval Dockyard authorities at Bombay were instructed to speed up the refit of *Vikrant*, *Delhi*, *Betwa*, *Rana* and *Trishul* while the Naval Commands initiated local defence measures for the ports in their areas.

Intelligence on the disposition of the Pak naval forces had indicated that the Pak submarine *Ghazi* was at sea and was likely to have been deployed off Bombay for antishipping operations and the Pak Fleet had been proceeding to sea every day for exercises and returning to its anchorage in the evening.

## **Return to the Arena**

On September 5 Mysore, accompanied by *the Ranjit*, *Khukri* and Kuthar, reached Cochin, refuelled and sailed for Bombay. Since there was no likelihood of *Vikrant* being available for the operations, the No. 310 *Alize* anti-submarine aircraft squadron was deployed at Bombay by the Rag Officer Commanding the Indian fleet. Although strict instructions had been received from the Government not to seek action at sea outside our territorial waters, all ships were directed to hunt and destroy Pak submarines whenever they were detected.

The Indian Army crossed the international border between India and Pakistan in the Lahore Sector in Punjab on September 6 to forestall further Pakistani intrusions into Indian territory and to destroy Pak concentrations in this area. The Indian Air Force was also fully committed to the operations in close co-operation with the Army and initiated action for raids on vital installations and targets in Pak territory. Vice Admiral B.S. Soman, Chief of the Naval Staff, consequently made a signal at 1030 hours on the same day, based on an Army Headquarters' directive to its Commands, to all naval units and formations stating that war had broken out with Pakistan and all measures were to be immediately adopted for neutralising any misadventure on the part of the Pak navy. A signal already issued by the Pakistan Naval Headquarters and intercepted by the Indian intelligence agencies, had ordered all Pakistan naval units to execute Operation *Response* which apparently referred to instructions and briefings previously issued to the Pak units to commence hostilities against India. However, at 1040 hours, i.e., within 10 minutes of the Naval Headquarters issuing the earlier signal from Delhi, the Government of India directed the Naval Chief to withdraw the signal, causing considerable embarrassment to Vice Admiral Soman, stating that although hostilities had commenced with Pakistan and the Army and the Air Force had been fully committed to the operations, no declaration of war had taken place. It further said that the Indian Naval Fleet and all other units of the Indian Navy were not to seek action at sea and were to confine themselves to being prepared for action and to defend themselves if and when attacked by Pak naval units.

While the main body of the Fleet was on passage to Bombay with full despatch, four ships were on patrol off Bombay with *Alizes* from the Santa Cruz airport carrying out antisubmarine searches ahead of the Fleet with the *Seahawks* of the No. 300 Squadron augmenting its offensive hunting power. Two ships each at Goa, Cochin and Vishakhapatnam, provided local naval defence. All Indian merchant ships were ordered to keep clear of the Pakistani coast and its territorial waters. Orders were issued for the detention of all Pakistani merchant ships in harbour in retaliation for the detention of Indian merchant ships in Pakistani ports by Pakistan.

On this day all units of the Pak Navy left Karachi harbour at 0900 hours and proceeded to sea. In the evening, the Pakistan Air Force launched a massive attack on Jamnagar airfield where, besides, IAF aircraft, a number of *Seahawk* aircraft of the No. 300 Squadron had been deployed. The naval base at Jamnagar, *Valsura*, was only a few kilometres away from the Pak attack approach line but did not suffer any damage. It was sheer ingenuity on the part of the Commanding Officer of the No. 300 Naval Air Squadron, Lieutenant Commander (later Rear Admiral) R. V. Singh, his Senior Pilot, lieutenant (later Captain) R.N. Ghosh and other pilots that saved the *Seahawks* from any damage though several IAF aircraft and the runway suffered severe damage. Pakistani B-57 bombers continued to bomb Jamnagar airport and the IAF station throughout the night of September 6/7 and

withdrew only at dawn.

In fact the Seahawk aircraft of the Navy had been taken to Jamnagar with the specific purpose of putting the high-power radar installation at Badin in Pakistan, which is only 150 nautical miles away from Jamnagar, out of action. These aircraft, with their rockets and bombs, were best suited for the purpose.

Eight Seahawks and one aircraft had arrived in Jamnagar from Goa on September 1 and by September 3 had flown 27 sorties for their armament 'work-up' in preparation for the strike on Badin when they were placed under the operational control of the Western Air Command and adopted the immediate state of readiness on September 5.

### **Jamnagar Attacked**

The strike on the Badin radar installation had been scheduled to be launched at dawn on September 7. However, as mentioned earlier, at 1920 hours the previous evening, eight B-57 bombers of the Pakistan Air Force launched a sustained all-night attack on Jamnagar during which one B-57 bomber, while on a low run over the airfield was shot down, seconds after dropping several bombs. In its hurry to escape the ground flak it also dropped two seven shot US-made Honeycomb rocket launchers near the Seahawk aircraft parked on the tarmac. These have since been preserved as souvenirs of the Pak attack on targets of no military significance.

Since some of the ground installations including the air traffic control tower at Jamnagar had been damaged and the air defence of Bombay needed to be strengthened immediately, the strike on Badin on September 7 was abandoned and all nine aircraft returned to Bombay to provide dawn-to-dusk combat air patrol and operational sorties until the

end of the hostilities. Night patrol sorties were provided by Alize aircraft at Bombay, Jamnagar, Goa, Cochin and at some places in Punjab in support of the Army operations. To quote a senior pilot of one of the squadrons, 'While one of our aircraft was spiralling upwards over an undisclosed tactical area in Punjab to a height of over 15,000 feet in order to provoke the Pakistanis to use their height-finding radar, another aircraft was being rushed through an emergency inspection at the air work hangars at Bombay; while one of our young sailors at Goa was busy writing a letter home during a short respite, using only a penlight torch, to tell his mother how proud he felt to be an integral part of our defence apparatus} his Cochin counterpart was removing a set of aircraft batteries to despatch them to Bombay for immediate repairs; some of our pilots were awaiting their turn to take off at the briefing room at Bombay while others were taking off on a 'no-lights' runway at Jamnagar on reconnaissance and antisubmarine sorties. The cycle of briefing, the mission itself and debriefing continued ceaselessly and we carried on, flying through dusk and dawn; day and night, in a never-ending search for the enemy. The spirits were sky-high and any time any one felt sleepy, he snatched his forty winks under an aircraft fuselage and was soon back on the ball. The mission was clear and there was never any compromise on that - and we discharged our duties as best as we ever could. However, the Pakistanis, it seemed, preferred to remain within their territorial waters and the only tune they dared choose to come out was when they undertook some *kabaddi* type of bombardment on the temple town of Dwarka in which the only casualty was a cow. By the time we reached there to

arrange the cow's funeral, they had vanished and remained so, throughout.

### **On Task**

Meanwhile the major units of the Fleet arrived in Bombay on September 7 and after they were fuelled and all operational defects were rectified, *Mysore*, with the Flag Officer Commanding the Indian Fleet on board and accompanied by *the Rajput*, *Ranjit*, *Rana* and *Betwa*, sailed out of-Bombay before nightfall the same day for defensive patrol outside the harbour as a possible attack onBombay that night had been indicated by intelligence.

By now 19 naval aircraft had been pressed into service for the air defence of three ports on the Western seaboard-six Seahawks and three Alize's at Cochin. liberator and Super-constellation maritime reconnaissance aircraft of the Indian Air Force were also deployed for searches outside the limits of coverage of the Alize's in the sea areas off Bombay and the coasts of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

On September 8, *Kirpan*, which had had a breakdown on the East Coast, arrived in Bombay, followed a day later by *Brahmaputra* and *Beas*, which had sailed from Calcutta on September 3. While on passage to Bombay on September 9, *Beas* had picked up a submarine contact at 1230 hours about 45 miles south of Bombay. An urgent attack had been carried out, followed by a deliberate attack some 25 minutes later but soon thereafter the contact had been lost. The records and analysis subsequently carried out indicated that this may well have been a submarine, though no signs of damage to the submarine were visible on the surface after the attack. A merchant ship *SSJalaveera*, also had a disappearing radar contact twice at 0500 hours and 0700 hours the same day at a position 40 miles west of the position of the *Beas*, thus confirming the presence of a submarine in the approaches to Bombay.

*Talwar*, which had been deployed for barrier patrol off the coast of Saurashtra inAugust 1965 andwhichhadtakenrefuge at Okha after being virtually immobilised by certain major defects in her propulsion machinery, managed to carry out essential repairs and sailed from Okha on September 8 and reached Bombay on the morning of September 9. *Tir* which was on passage to Port Swettenham in Malaysia was directed to return to Port Blair and carry out patrols in the sea areas around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Two seaward defence boats, *Savitri* and *Sharayu*, were sailed from Bombay to Okha to be deployed for barrier patrolling at the entrance to the Gulf of Kachchh.

OnSeptember8, a Paksitani merchant ship at Vishakhapatnam, *SSA1 Ahsan*, was impounded and 51 persons, including the ship's crew' and the Captain's wife and son, were interned. The ship, which had arrived a few days earlier for the ostensible purpose of loading manganese ore, had been making unpredictable movements in the harbour and even its crew's be-haviourwas suspicious. Ithadbeenappreciatedthatif the ship had anyevil intent, she could have scuttled herself inside the harbour to block the turning basin or just outside the harbour to block the entrance channel and thus bottle up the ships inside. She could even damage vital harbour and naval installations and thus had considerable potential for sabotage.

Under the operational control of the Commodore East Coast, Commodore (later Rear Admiral) D. St. J. Cameron, a seaward defence boat, *Ajay*, was assigned the task of closely monitoring the activities of the 7,000-ton Pakistani merchantman which was soon moved to the outer harbour under the supervision of the *Ajay* and

kept under surveillance until the disembarkation of the Pakistani crew.

During the first week of hostilities, the ships of the Indian Fleet had thus been somewhat exposed to Pak air, surface and subsurface threats with operational units trying to reach vantage points with full dispatch. Besides, having been away from the base ports for well over two months during which time the main bulk of the Fleet had been involved in sustained steaming in the Bay of Bengal, most of the ships had developed defects requiring urgent dockyard attention. To mention some of these defects, *Mysore*, with only half her boilers functioning, had her maximum speed reduced from 31 knots to 18 knots, *Brahmaputra*, *Beas* and *Brfuw* could only do 15 knots while their rated speed was 25 knots, *Rajput* and *Rana*, which had been undergoing refit and had to be hurriedly brought out to sea, had only one boiler each operational, *Betwa* was at sea without any trials whatsoever after having undergone along and extensive refit, and *Khukri* and *Kuthar* were unable to sail.

### **Sneak Pak Raid on Dwarka**

As mentioned earlier, owing to the embargo on the ships of the Fleet not to move north of the latitude of Porbander and the immobilisation of *Talwar* at Okha due to engine trouble, Pakistan Naval forces had carried out a sneak raid on Dwarka on the night of September 7/8. This was a proverbial blot on the Indian Navy's escutcheon as such raids could never have been possible if the Navy had been permitted to operate according to its plans which, at that time, were, first, to carrying out sweeps off the west coast of Pakistan to disrupt the port of Karachi and inflict vital damage on port installations (as was done later in 1971), *if ordered*, next, the destruction of the Pakistan naval forces, *if ordered*, third provision of general support for the defence of the major ports on the west coast, and, fourth, provision of general cover and protection to our merchant ships in the Arabian Sea, especially those plying to and from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Had the Indian Fleet been deployed as it should have been, ships of the Pak Fleet would never have ventured out of Karachi harbour (as happened in 1971) and an attack, only for propaganda purposes, on a temple town with no defence establishment and of no strategic or tactical importance would never have taken place. It was not surprising, therefore, that while the only casualty of the attack on Dwarka by a Pakistani 'armada' was a cow which was grazing on the beach and which 'made the supreme sacrifice in defence of the temples'. Pakistan derived considerable propaganda leverage from the incident which was its very purpose.

Vice-Admiral N. Krishnan who, as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command, covered himself with glory during the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict, had this to say on the restrictions imposed on the Navy during the 1965 operations,

Perhaps it was a political decision not to use the Navy in the war. But when an enemy said, 'Delhi chalo', the Fleet's answer should have been an unambiguous 'Karachi chalo'. I may be wrong, but if I have a weapon honed and ready and the political decision is that I should not use it against an enemy at war, my only conclusion would be that my Government has not enough confidence in that weapon for reasons not known. As it was, the Pakistanis bombarded Dwarka which was an undefended port and got away. One of our frigates, *Talzoar*, was at Okha. It is unfortunate that

she could not sally forth and seek battle. Even if there was a mandate against the Navy participating in the war, no Government would blame a man-of-war going into action, if attacked. An affront to our national prestige and honour is no joke and we cannot laugh it away by saying, 'All the Pakistanis did was to kill a cow'. Let us at least erect a memorial to the 'unknown cow' who died with her hooves on in a battle against the Pakistan Navy.

The Dwarka episode is best described in the words of Shri K.D. Kadawala, Senior Platoon Commander, Okha Home Guards who was a member of the Dwarka Lighthouse staff in 1965,

On the evening of September 7, 1965 at around 1730 hours some Pak Navy ships, disguised as merchant ships, arrived at Dwarka and anchored south of the Dwarka Lighthouse, very close to the coastline and visible from the Dwarka town. At that time I was on messenger duty in the lighthouse which is close to the Air Force base, a small observation post which had just been set up. A regular watch was maintained from the top of the lighthouse by the Air Force staff and I used to carry messages from the lighthouse to the Air Force base

During the Indo-Pak conflict there was a complete black-out in the Dwarka town. There was no naval ship in port as a naval base was yet to be established at Okha. However, a small group of cadets from the Indian Navy were stationed at Okha, having accommodation in the town library building and the Commander in charge of the group was stationed at the European Guest House.

At this time, men from the Air Force, Home Guards and the local police used to maintain regular patrolling on the beach. As already stated, the 'merchant' ships arrived at low tide in the evening and it was difficult to identify the nationality of the vessel. However, the matter was immediately reported to the Air Force base at Dwarka.

At around 2355 hours, during high tide, the vessels suddenly started firing over the main temple of Dwarka which lasted for more than 20 minutes. During this period the ship fired around 50 shells which included some 5.25-inch rounds fired by the Pak cruiser *Babur*. But, due to unknown reasons, most of the shells fell between the temple and the railway station, which is around three kilometres away from the lighthouse. There was no damage to any building, though there was some damage to the Railway Guest House situated near the railway station. The twentieth-century *avatars* of Mahmud of Ghazni had failed in their mission.

Nearly all the shells fell where the soil was soft and they remained unexploded. These shells were later collected by the Home Guards, the local police and Air Force men and brought to the Air Force base. Out of them about 35 to 40 were unexploded live shells.

The Pakistani naval authorities must have undertaken this operation with full knowledge of the Indian Government's embargo on the Indian Navy's operations north of Porbandar's latitude and attacking Pakistani naval units if encountered at sea. They were aware of *Talwar's* presence at Okha, the lethality of her firepower and the proximity of some Indian naval units patrolling the seas off the West Coast and yet they ventured to carry out a sneak raid so close to Okha.

Had *Talwar*, which was carrying out essential repairs on the night of September 7/8, at Okha, 30 kilometres north of Dwarka, been operational, she could easily have steamed out of Okha and put paid to the Pak Fleet's wild adventure. The *Talwar's* radar-controlled automatic gunnery control system operating two rapid-fire guns, each capable

of firing 15 long-range high-explosive 4.5-inch shells per minute and her speed of over 30 knots would have easily neutralised the threat from the Pak warships all of which were of World War II vintage and had inferior speed and firepower. Recalls Commodore Y.P. Malik, who was serving on board the *Talwar* as a Lieutenant during the 1965 conflict,

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, *Talwar*, a newly acquired multipurpose frigate, was deployed on barrier patrol off the Indo-Pak maritime boundary. The basic purpose of the patrol was to detect the movement of Pakistani Naval units and report it to the Indian Naval Command. It was also intended to investigate Pakistani trawlers found fishing in our waters to find out if any of them were engaged in espionage or were operating as saboteurs. The ship carried out this patrol on two occasions for a few days each, and it was during the second period that the ship developed major defects in its boilers and started running out of feed water. She, therefore, entered Okha harbour to rectify these defects and to embark feed water for further deployment. The rectification of these defects was attended to both by the ship's staff and by some local ship repair agencies with the assistance of the Okha Port Authority. Some of these civilians who attended to this work onboard were believed to have extra-territorial sympathies.

It was at this juncture that a flash signal from Naval Headquarters was received stating that Pakistan had declared hostilities against India. On receipt of this signal immediate screening of personnel working on board was started to prevent any attempted sabotage on board. Although no orders were received by the ship, an all out effort was made to make the ship operational by the ship's staff. There was a kind of anxiety in the mind of the ship's Commanding Officer, Captain (later Commodore) V.A. Dhareshwar, due to the fact that the *Talwar* was the only fighting unit left on the West Coast, all other Indian Naval units which were operational having just returned to Bombay after long periods of steaming in the Bay of Bengal. The ship was also experiencing tremendous difficulty in communicating with other naval authorities during the nights due to anomalous electromagnetic wave propagation conditions prevailing in that area. The ship could thus receive and transmit signals only during daylight hours and communication at night had to be invariably resorted to with the help of land lines. Under these circumstances there was a certain amount of apprehension in the mind of the Commanding Officer as the ship's position was considered compromised and she was very close to the Pakistani waters and totally isolated from the rest of the Navy. At about 1700 hours on September 7, the ship intercepted a message on Pakistan Navy broadcast addressed to four indefinite call-signs. Thereafter a regular signal traffic between these four units and the Pakistan Navy broadcast was intercepted. At times the ships were heard communicating in plain language saying, 'Do not ask for repetitions. I shall pass you by light', this clearly brought home that four Pakistani naval ships had been put to sea. Intercept bearings (directions from which these signals were being received) of these vessels indicated that they were drawing left. However, at about 1900 hours, the bearings started drawing right. This indicated that the units were carrying out patrolling outside Karachi. At about 2030 hours the intercept bearings of these ships rapidly drew left. At about 2200 hours they were found to be a beam of Okha. 'Action Stations' was sounded onboard the *Talwar* at this juncture as it was concluded that the attack may well be aimed at the *Talwar* and the presence of the ship known to the enemy. However, no effort to leave harbour and engage these ships could be made by Captain Dhareshwar due to the material state of the ship. To our surprise the intercept bearings continued to draw left and we knew that Okha was not the target of the

Pak Fleet. However, an hour later the ship received a message from the Okha Port authorities that Dwarka was being shelled by Pakistanian naval vessels. A few seconds' silence onboard confirmed the same as the sound of the guns could be clearly heard. The Gunnery Officer also claimed that the 45 inch mounting on board could effectively engage the four Pakistan Navy ships due to her superior weapon control system but the *Talwar* was in no state to do so. As a result, the four Pakistani units had a free hand in choosing their targets.

On the morning of September 8 a signal from Naval Headquarters directed the *Talwar* to investigate the damage done to Dwarka by the Pakistanian vessels. Accompanied by another officer of the ship, Lieutenant (later Captain) J.P. Agha, proceeded to Dwarka to assess the possible damage to Indian property and the tactics used by the Pakistani warships. After speaking to various people at Dwarka we learnt that the Pakistani vessels had approached the lighthouse at Dwarka disguised as merchant ships before night-fall, dropped their anchor within about 15 nautical miles from the lighthouse and had opened fire at midnight under cover of darkness on whatever possible target they could aim at. After an interval of about half an hour, one ship was seen to have fired green flares into the air which was a signal for the waiting Pakistani aircraft to commence their attacks. The ships held their fire while the Pakistani aircraft attacked. At about 1700 hours on September 7, the ship intercepted a message on Pakistan Navy broadcast addressed to four indefinite call-signs. Thereafter a regular signal traffic between these four units and the Pakistan Navy broadcast was intercepted. At times the ships were heard communicating in plain language saying, 'Do not ask for repetitions. I shall pass you by light', this clearly brought home that four Pakistani naval ships had been put to sea. Intercept bearings (directions from which these signals were being received) of these vessels indicated that they were drawing left. However, at about 1900 hours, the bearings started drawing right. This indicated that the units were carrying out patrolling outside Karachi. At about 2030 hours the intercept bearings of these ships rapidly drew left. At about 2200 hours they were found to be a beam of Okha. 'Action Stations' was sounded onboard the *Talwar* at this juncture as it was concluded that the attack may well be aimed at the *Talwar* and the presence of the ship known to the enemy. However, no effort to leave harbour and engage these ships could be made by Captain Dhareshwar due to the material state of the ship. To our surprise the intercept bearings continued to draw left and we knew that Okha was not the target of the Pak Fleet. However, an hour later the ship received a message from the Okha Port authorities that Dwarka was being shelled by Pakistanian naval vessels. A few seconds' silence onboard confirmed the same as the sound of the guns could be clearly heard. The Gunnery Officer also claimed that the 45 inch mounting on board could effectively engage the four Pakistan Navy ships due to her superior weapon control system but the *Talwar* was in no state to do so. As a result, the four Pakistani units had a free hand in choosing their targets.

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about half an hour, one ship was seen to have fired green flares into the air which was a signal for the waiting Pakistani aircraft to commence their attacks. The ships held their fire while the Pakistani aircraft attacked the Dwarka railway station where an engine was carrying out loose-shunting of various railway wagons. The air attack resulted in slight damage to the railway engine and a small portion of the roof of the Railway Guest House was blown off. No substantial damage was caused by the ships as Dwarka town was darkened at that moment and most of the shells from the ships, which strangely failed to explode, landed in an open space on the beach. The only casualty of this shelling was an old woman who lost a finger due to a hit by a shrapnel.

The ship in the meantime received orders to return to Bombay. However, in the morning, a number of telephone calls and a couple of telegrams were received by the ship, warning the ship that the Pakistani submarine *Ghazi* was waiting outside Okha harbour for a possible attack on the *Talwar*. These calls were obviously a hoax engineered by the enemy's departure so that a Pak submarine could take up an advantageous position for a possible attack on the ship. The ship left harbour at about 1200 hours and headed for Bombay. On arrival the ship joined the rest of the Fleet units and further operations off the coast of Pakistan were accordingly executed.

### Pakistan's Nautical Phantasmagoria

While the Pakistan Reet based at Karachi never stirred out of her territorial waters during the operations except for the '*Kabaddi-type*' attack on Dwarka, whose only *raison d'être* had been the Krishna temple known the world over, the landing of a few Pak Navy shells on the shores of Kathiawar provided a golden opportunity to the Pak war machine to launch a propaganda war against India *a la* Goebbels who believed that 'a spoonful of fact added to a panful of fiction helps lend credibility to all the false claims and helps the jingoistic utterances go down in a more delightful way, 'if one were permitted to take liberties with Maurice Chevalier. Writes the Pakistani columnist Aziz Beg, in typical medieval naval history style, in his *Seventeen September Days*,

Within hours of the treacherous attack on Lahore on September 6 (presumably by the IAF- author) the Reet was ready in all respects and put to sea to take on the enemy. Such a high state of combat-readiness in (the) case of the Navy, a highly complex war machine, jam-packed with military hardware, honeycombed with electric and electronic devices within its narrow confines, is extremely creditable.

Soon the ships were at sea, riding the waves, pounding the sea, carrying out their many tasks. The Navy was to guard the shores and keep the sealanes of shipping free of enemy interference. This was done with grim\* determination and remarkable efficiency. The alertness, efficiency and high state of preparedness was an effective deterrent to the enemy. Five times our size, the Indian Navy apparently could not venture beyond their safety limits. According to stray reports many of the Indian Navy ships, during this period, managed to spend their time in repair docks or harbours -refitting. This inactivity on the part of the Indian Navy was even questioned in the Lok Sabha later when a member acidly enquired, 'What was the Indian Navy doing when the Pakistan Navy bombarded Dwarka?'

And so round the clock, Pakistan Navy ships churned the seas and kept the watch. The enemy hid himself out of our

reach. Then our bold sailors added a dash of daring and adventure to the otherwise unspectacular patrolling and smashed the fortress of Dwarka (the temple walls of Dwarka must have been misconstrued by the Pak Navy as 'fortress walls').

Situated a little over two hundred miles south-west of Karachi, the fortress of Dwarka occupied a strategic position. With powerful radar installations the enemy kept watch both on aircraft flight and ship movements. It was of value to the enemy for providing protection to Jamnagar and Bombay against possible attack from air and sea. Moreover, it directed its own aircraft to attack the south-east parts of West Pakistan. After the initial unsuccessful attempts by enemy aircraft against Karachi, it was decided to silence this enemy post (Other than an Air Force observation post set up during the operations, Dwarka had no defence establishment or installations and hence had no strategic or tactical importance - author).

It was midday on September 7 when orders were flashed to the Pakistan Naval Flotilla to bombard Dwarka. Within minutes the news flashed through the wardrooms (officers' messes) and the lower decks. There was excitement and the flurry of preparation. Grizzled sailors, who had sailed the wide oceans, seen strange lands, exercised with mighty navies of the world, knew perfectly well the task assigned to them. None underestimated the enemy who, by any standards, had formidable offensive force, consisting of an aircraft carrier, a heavy cruiser, one light cruiser and a number of destroyers. Yet there were no faint hearts, no fear and no false bravado. Every face was grim, every heart stout and determined. The threat to the sacred land of Pakistan was fully understood. Only one thought was uppermost in everybody's mind: to crush the enemy who had dared to defile the sacred land of Pakistan.

During the dark night ships taking part in the operation closed up at 'action-stations'. The 'Operation Rooms', the nerve centres of the ships, were fully manned. The eyes of the navigating officers were glued to their respective radar screens. There was a low throbbing hum in all the ships, the confident hum of the mighty turbines. All eyes were vigilant, all ears intent. The radar screens were dear, reports were being passed to the flagship where they were sifted, filtered and finally evaluated for dissemination to the snips in company. By 2200 hours all were set to go. Now and then the air crackled by sharp orders passed from the flagship. The fleet raced towards its destination, *Alamgir* leading and *Tippu Sultan* bringing up the rear. Precisely at midnight all guns were bearing at Dwarka.

Fifteen minutes past midnight the guns boomed as if fired by one trigger. The still air was rent by deafening thunder. A red flame, a little smoke and the majestic recoil of 45-inch guns and then shells would hurtle through the air every few seconds to bring destruction to the target. Soon the air was filled with the acrid smell of cordite. And men as the clock hands moved to 30 minutes past midnight all guns ceased fire and a silence fell over the sea. Smoke could be seen over Dwarka.

The ships moved into their new stations. The sky was pitch dark; clouds hung over the sea. Northward the fleet moved; silent, majestic and defiant. Swiftly and silently the grey hulls cut their path. Their mission accomplished, their blows delivered, the proud men of the Pakistan Navy stood at their 'action-stations.' In that dark night, the brave sailors of the Pakistan Navy accomplished their task with triumph.

After Dwarka was razed to the ground, it was expected that the enemy, wounded physically and his pride hurt, would come out of his lair. The ships, therefore, remained more alert and more vigilant.

The sailors kept unceasing watch for many days, most of the time at 'action-stations'. They were at 'action-stations'

when the pale sun rose from the sea, turning it into gold. They were at 'action-stations' at noon hours in scorching heat and humidity. They remained alert in cool, soothing evenings when a gentle breeze tried to lull them to sleep after the day's fatigue. They remained awake during cloudy nights with not a single star to cheer them. At last the Indians reacted, but with characteristic treachery.

It was September 22. India had already sought the postponement of cease-fire from midday to the following morning. A Pakistan Navy unit was attacked on the high seas by the Indian warships. The Pakistan Navy unit carried out a successful counterattack and sank one enemy frigate, worth about six crores of rupees. Pakistan Navy suffered no damage or casualties. This heroic action of the sailors of Pakistan Navy is yet another saga enacted during this war. It thus added another glorious chapter to the annals of their Service.

Faced with an enemy which possessed a formidable striking force consisting of most modern warships and supported by a powerful aircraft carrier, the officers and men of the Pakistan Navy never faltered in their arduous, hazardous and hair-raising tasks. With cool courage and selfless dedication to duty they carried out their assignment and successfully defended the coast.

### **Brahmaputra 'Sunk'<sup>7</sup>**

As is well-known, on September 22, in a panic reaction to the sighting of a few unidentified naval ships near the Pakistan coast north-west of Karachi, a Pak Naval unit opened fire and damaged a frigate before realising that the enemy's ships, which managed to limp back to their home port, belonged to Iran and not India. Despite the embarrassing fiasco, Pakistani authorities lost no time in claiming that the Pak Navy had attacked an Indian Naval unit and sunk the anti-aircraft frigate, *Brahmaputra*. The Indian Navy had, therefore, to parade all three anti-aircraft frigates of the Whitby class, *Brahmaputra*, *Beas* and *Betwa*, to convince the world press that had flocked to Bombay that Pakistan's claim was blatantly false.

However, for having 'sunk' the *Brahmaputra* and 'razed the fortress at Dwarka to the ground', three Tierces' of the Pak Navy were decorated soon after the operations were over. They were Commander K.R. Niazi and Lieutenant A. Tasneem receiving the Sitara-i-Jur'at (Star of Valour) and Engine Room Artificer G. Nabi honoured with a Tamgha-i-Jur'at (Medal of Valour).

Though Aziz Beg's saga reads very well and would impress the reader with the facility of his chimerical imagination, the fact that the raid on Dwarka was merely *akabaddi-type* attack on a safe target and not a major naval operation like Pearl Harbour as depicted in Beg's piece of fiction was realised soon after the conflict was over though, to this day, Pakistan has persisted with its claim of having emasculated the Indian Navy with 'a single shot'.

On September 23 a press report from Cairo gave out the facts about the 'sinking' of the *Brahmaputra* which had been realised due to a case of mistaken identity had led to an encounter between the naval units of Pakistan and Iran in which two Iranian ships had been damaged. This had immediately been followed by the President of Pakistan announcing gallantry awards

to the second-in-command and an engine room artificer of the *Ghazi foi* having'sunk'the *Brahmaputra*. As mentioned earlier, the world press and naval attaches of all countries accredited to India were invited to have a cup of tea on board the *Brahmaputra* at the Naval Dockyard, Bombay by the Fleet Commander, Rear Admiral (later Vice Admiral) BA. Samson who told them, 'Tiere you are on board a sunken vessel. Now you know that it has not become a submarine!'

### Material Support

As regards the operations in the Arabian Sea, it goes to the credit of the Naval Dockyard at Bombay that it rose to the occasion and by September 10, through its magnificent efforts, removed nearly all the major defects in the ships which had limped back from the East Coast between September 7 and 9, after an absence of well over two months. By the evening of September 10, when the Fleet sailed out of Bombay for the first offensive sweep off the Kathiawar coast, its material state had improved considerably. The *Mysore* had all her four boilers operational, the *Talxoar* had rejoined the Fleet after her uneasy stay at Okha and a quick overhaul at Bombay and the other ships were in far better shape after the emergency repairs.

### Fleet Operations

As of September 10 the Fleet, having regained about three-quarters of its strength, comprised the cruiser, *Mysore*, the three anti-aircraft frigates of the 16th Frigate Squadron, *Brahmaputra*, *Beas* and *Betwa*, the three ships of the 14th Frigate Squadron, *Khukri*, *Kirpan* and *Kuthar*, the general-purpose frigate *Talxoar*, the two 'R' class destroyers, *Rajput* and *Ranjit*, and the tanker *Shakti*. Maritime reconnaissance aircraft of the Indian Air Force were also made available, their operations being limited to one sortie per day for searches in the sea area south of the latitude of 21 degrees 30 minutes north, i.e., the latitude of Porbandar. A few Alizes and Seahawks had also been positioned at Bombay which, besides the air defence of Bombay, were to carry out searches at sea and to launch anti-ship and anti-aircraft strikes in support of the Fleet, though their operating range was limited by the fact that these aircraft did not have any strategic capability. At this time the Pak submarine, *Ghazi*, was known to have been at sea since September 3 and was suspected to be operating in the waters west of Bombay. The Pakistani Fleet consisting of one cruiser, six destroyers and one tanker, *Dacca*, had infrequently been venturing out to sea for short periods of patrolling within the air cover of PAF aircraft and had only succeeded in landing a few shells at Dwarka and scooting back to the safety of Karachi Harbour. Air cover to the Pak Fleet was provided by four to six long range reconnaissance aircraft of the Pak Air Force fitted with long-range radar and homing equipment. The air strike capability was provided from Karachi by Sabres with an operating radius of 300 miles and B-57 bombers with an operating radius of 650 miles. These aircraft had already exercised with the Pak Navy and had acquired adequate experience in combined and co-ordinated maritime operations.

A comparison of the capabilities and limitations of the two Fleets indicated that while the Indian Fleet was superior to the Pak Fleet in anti-aircraft and anti-ship fire power (all Pak ships, at this time were of World War II vintage while nine out of the 11 ships of the Indian Fleet had been acquired during the 1950s and early 1960s), the

Pakships had greater advantage in torpedo fire power (42 torpedo tubes against 8) though some of the Indian ships were equipped with the latest antisubmarine weapons such as Squid and limbo mortars which fired projectiles in a pattern to achieve a much higher probability of a kill than conventional depth-charges launched by depth-charge throwers. The Pak Fleet had an average speed capability of over 22 knots while the Indian ships averaged only 15 knots, because of her superior material state, and also had better maritime reconnaissance and strike capability than the Indian Fleet.

It was, however, appreciated that though the strike range of the B-57 bombers was 650 miles, only a few of these aircraft and Sabres at Karachi were likely to be committed to maritime reconnaissance and air strike at sea in view of the PAF's commitments to the Pak Army. It would, therefore, be possible for the Indian Fleet to operate up to a range of 200 miles from Karachi or Badin by day and get as close to Karachi as possible by night accepting the risk of air strikes which during the dark hours were not likely to be very effective. It was also realised that the Pak reconnaissance aircraft would be able to track the Indian Fleet with impunity as the latter had no 'integral' air element to provide a combat air patrol or to sanitise the skies. Besides, the Pak Fleet, if located and challenged, could refuse battle because of its superior speed and even attempt another bombardment of an Indian port, however insignificant its tactical importance, for political mileage and as a diversionary measure.

Rear Admiral (later Vice Admiral) B.A. Samson, who was the Flag Officer Commanding the Indian Fleet, relives the days when he led the Indian Fleet into the enemy-infested waters to seek and destroy the Pak Fleet,

Earlier my assumption was that I would have adequate air search capability to provide a reasonable chance of locating the enemy, and on this basis I would have deployed the Fleet to a position which would enable me to meet as much as possible the tasks of bringing the enemy to action, to afford protection to our major ports on the West Coast and to provide cover to our merchant ships from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. But with the very limited availability of reconnaissance aircraft, I had to revise my plan. The problem really was to find the <sup>1</sup> enemy.

I decided to sail on the night of September 10/11 and probe as far north and north-west as possible, not forgetting the possibility of another Pak raid on one of the ports in Saurashtra. I hoped I would find the enemy and I decided also to remain at sea as long as possible, refuelling from the tanker, *Shakti*. This ship, having only one engine operational, was partially disabled and could not replenish me at sea and so I planned for her to sail independently to be anchored at Diu for refuelling the Fleet on September 13 and 14. In the event, her second engine also packed up and she did not sail at all, thus limiting my period of stay at sea. *Rajput*, one of the two destroyers, also packed up and returned to Bombay.

As regards air cover, I decided to stage two Alizes from Jamnagar and to carry out searches north of latitude 21 degrees 30 minutes north from 2000 hours on September 11 onwards and to arrange for six to eight Seahawks to be available at Jamnagar from 0600 hours on September 12 for launching strikes on Pak ships or the submarine up to a range of 150 miles from Jamnagar. The IAF Liberators would carry out searches in areas south of 21 degrees 30 minutes north.

Hying my flag on board the *Mysore* and with (*he Brahma Putra, Beas, Betwa, Khukri, Kirpan, Kuthar and Talwar* in company, I sailed out of Bombay on our first sweep on the night of September 10/11. On the morning of September 11, within hours of our departure from Bombay, *Beas reported* an unidentified aircraft at a range of 42 miles. This aircraft

appeared to have been shadowing our forces and was evaluated as a 'snooper'. Two Seahawk aircraft were scrambled from Bombay but could not intercept the unidentified aircraft as it had disappeared by the time the Seahawks arrived on the scene. Our position was thus likely to have been compromised.

An Alize's search was launched from Jamnagar at 2000 hours on the evening of September 11 and within half an hour picked up a number of contacts confirming the presence of two groups of Pak ships only 50 miles west of Okha and soon made a detailed wireless report on the disposition of the contacts to me and repeated it a few minutes later. Unfortunately, however, due to freak anomalous wireless propagation conditions prevailing in the area on that night, the wireless beam from the aircraft suffered unusually high

attenuation by the atmosphere and multiple reflection and refraction at varying levels as a result of which the signal did not reach the flagship or any other ship of the Fleet nor was it picked up by Jamnagar. At midnight the Alize aircraft landed at Jamnagar and transmitted the report to the Maritime Operations Room at Bombay on land line but even the rebroadcast of the report by the Naval Signal Centre, Bombay at 0200 hours did not reach the Fleet owing to the 'anaprop' conditions still prevailing west of Saurashtra on that night. At 0300 hours on September 12 another Alize took off from Jamnagar, established wireless contact with the flagship and, after carrying out a search, picked up a few surface contacts about 90 miles north of the Fleet but, not being able to investigate them further because of lack of endurance, returned to base. A third Alize was airborne at 0400 hours on September 12 and searched the area without success as by this time the Pak warships had retreated to their own waters.

There was no doubt about the identity of these ships as when the first Alize was flying over them, they had switched their lights on and fired green Very's flares for purposes of identification but when the Alize did not respond with light signals, they had quickly realised that the aircraft was not their own and had then quickly switched off their lights and steamed towards the Pakistan coast at full speed to be in safe waters before daybreak. Thus 'anaprop' conditions had deprived the Indian Fleet of a rich haul that was there for the asking. By 0700 hours on September 12 the Pak warships, whose presence within 90 miles of our Fleet had been detected and reported at 2030 hours the previous night, had disappeared.

The failure of the flagship to receive the wireless message from the Alize aircraft appeared to bear a resemblance to a similar incident during the Battle of Jutland when, on May 31, 1916, the British Grand Fleet did not receive a similar signal on the location and disposition of the German High Seas Fleet from a Short 184 spotter seaplane piloted by Flight Lieutenant Rutland, which had been launched for the purpose by the aircraft carrier, *Engadine*. Two very similar but significant incidents separated by half a century!

The Indian Fleet was then ordered to proceed north with full despatch but had to soon turn south-west when it reached the northern limit of its search. Eight Sea Hawks which had come from Bombay to Jamnagar and two Toofanis (erstwhile Ouragons) of the Indian Air Force also carried out a sweep in the area after refuelling but without success.

On the morning of September 12, *Talwar* had another machinery breakdown and when efforts to rectify the defects failed, she was detached

from the Fleet to limp back to Bombay.

Towards sunset on the same day the remaining force proceeded northwards once again and continued its sweep till the early hours of September 13 when it intercepted two merchant ships laden with arms bound for Pakistan, *SS Steel Vendor* and *SS Steel Protractor*. The ships had to be forced to stop under threat of fire but could not be captured in the absence of clearance from higher authorities as it had been made very clear that the Indian Fleet was not to seek action though it was permitted to open fire in self-defence. And so the *Steel Vendor* and *Steel Protractor* continued to cruise towards Karachi, 'escorted' by the Indian Fleet at a distance of only two cables, until they reached the northern limit of the Fleet's sweep when the merchant ships, after bidding adieu to the Indian Fleet Commander, disappeared over the horizon!

At about 1000 hours on September 13, *Kuthar* picked up an underwater 'sonar' contact of a possible submarine and soon *Khukri* joined in the hunt. The contact was held intermittently until 1100 hours during which time the *Kuthar* launched deliberate attacks with full salvos from her antisubmarine mortar. The contact was, however, lost and the antisubmarine action terminated. The contact was assessed to be tracking at seven knots for a fairly long period and subsequent analysis led to the conclusion that it may well have been a submarine.

Ships were now beginning to run short of fuel and the only tanker, *Shakti*, not being available, the three ships of the 14th Frigate Squadron, *Khukri*, *KirpanandKuthar*, and the destroyer *Ranjit*, were detached on the afternoon of September 13 to carry out an offensive antisubmarine sweep off the approaches to Bombay and after an uneventful night, the Fleet returned to Bombay on the morning of September 14.

On September 17 *Khukri*, *Kirpan* and *Kuthar*, with gunfire support provided by *Rana* and *Ganga*, launched a thorough search of an area of about 5,000 square miles off Bombay as the *Ghaziwas* believed to be operating in the southern approaches to Bombay. On September 21 and 23 'sonar' contacts were picked up and attacks launched by these ships but the contacts were soon lost. The ships continued on their antisubmarine patrol until September 24, one day after the implementation of cease-fire. The main body of the Fleet comprising the *Mysore*, *Beas*, *Betwa*, *Rajput* and *Ranjit* (the *Bmhrnaputraaru* *Talwar* had by then developed a rudder defect and could not sail) carried out a sweep in the Arabian Sea from September 18 to September 23. This was originally planned to be carried out in the general direction of the Gulf of Aden to provide support for a number of merchant ships bringing vital defence cargo from the UK. It was known that Pakistan was aware of the nature of cargo in these ships and men-shipping programme and hence there was a distinct possibility of these ships being intercepted and either captured or destroyed. The distance from Bombay to Aden is 1650 miles and thus this sweep would entail operations far away from our shores but it was considered well within the capability of our whittled-down Fleet. Reports indicating likely Pakistani sea-borne landings on the Kathiawar Coast, however, put paid to the sweep and the Fleet was promptly sailed to intercept the Pak Fleet off Kathiawar.

Recalls Admiral Samson,

I sailed in *Mysore* with *Rajput*, *Ranjit*, *Beas*, and *Betwa* on the morning of September 18. My intention was to reach the Kathiawar Coast as early as possible to counter the landings and so proceeded at my best speed of 22 knots. I had to leave *Beas* behind to follow as she could do only 19 knots.

That evening at about 2015 hours, while I was on my northerly leg, an aircraft contact was picked up some six miles away. This aircraft was sighted by the *Beas* and was heard to be reporting to the Karachi transmitting station the position and disposition of our ships most accurately. The aircraft continued to shadow us and finally faded out at 2130 hours. I continued north till after midnight and then turned south-west. No enemy ships were sighted and it was evident that no landing was being attempted by the enemy on our coast. It is probable that the sea-borne landing operation was cancelled by the Pak Fleet when our presence near the Kathiawar coast was compromised.

Nevertheless, I continued to carry out sweeps in the same area on September 20, 21 and 22. On the evening of the 20th we intercepted wireless transmissions which were obviously from Pak ships and indicated that they had a

contact of an 'enemy' on a south-westerly course at 10 knots. These transmissions were picked up by several of our ships and we were convinced that we were in close proximity of the enemy. However, it was not possible without direction-finding equipment to gauge the direction of these transmissions but they appeared to be northerly and so we continued in this direction. Despite the fact, however, that we continued in this direction for several hours at our best speed, we did not make any contact with the enemy. Bearing in mind that the intercepted message indicated that the contact they had was proceeding in a south-westerly direction, it was obvious that this contact could not be the Indian Fleet and in all probability was some merchant ship proceeding either out of Karachi or the Gulf of Kachchh. I, therefore, turned towards the Gulf in case the enemy was attempting to intercept one of our merchant ships from this area. I found nothing and it was clear that this was another incidence of 'anaprop' electromagnetic condition and that these intercepted messages were being transmitted by local patrol vessels just outside Karachi Harbour. Thereafter, despite repeated high-speed sweeps as far north as Mandvi, no contact of any Pak ships was gained.

However, we continued to intercept Pak wireless transmissions and it was clear that our forces were being continuously shadowed more or less throughout this particular operation. It was also clear from these transmissions that air strikes were on call for Pak surface ships. Unfortunately our Alizor or Seahawks could not operate from Jamnagar after September 12 as repeated air attacks had rendered the airfield untenable. The liberator maritime reconnaissance aircraft of the IAF, however, continued to carry out reconnaissance sweeps of the northern part of the Arabian Sea but failed to pick up any Pak surface or air contacts. In fact, on two occasions our forces were reported by them as the enemy and on one occasion the position of our force was reported in plain language!

On the morning of September 22, I had to detach the *Rajput* and *Ranjit* as they were running short of fuel. Meanwhile I had received a further signal concerning the merchant ships arriving from the Gulf of Aden bringing vital defence cargo and so I altered course with the *Mysore*, *Beas* and *Betwa* towards the central Arabian Sea to try and escort them to safety. But within a few hours of our sailing on our new mission we received a message from Naval Headquarters conveying our Government's acceptance of a cease-fire from 0330 hours on September 23 and so I decided to return to the Kathiawar Coast to forestall any attempt by the Pakistan Navy to create mischief in that area in a last-minute bid to gain propaganda value. I returned to Bombay with the regret that I had missed an opportunity to try and engage the Pakistan Navy in battle despite waiting just outside its lair for nearly two weeks.

### **Lessons Learnt**

It is evident from this narrative that the war at sea could have had a different ending if the various 'chinks in the armour' of our Navy and the national policy on the Navy had been plugged and reinforced well in time. Some of these chinks were:

One the Arabian Sea is a vast area and pinpointing the enemy on such a wide expanse was of vital importance for which the maritime reconnaissance efforts were totally inadequate, especially because the approaches to our West Coast ports from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden had to be placed under surveillance. Besides, while the Pak Navy continued

to operate off the Pak Coast and the Kathiawar Coast, at no time did our maritime reconnaissance aircraft detect Pak ships while at the same time Pak maritime reconnaissance aircraft were more or less continuously shadowing our Fleet, In addition, the absence of staging facilities for naval aircraft in Saurashtra considerably hampered the Fleet's operations. This was considered necessary not only for increasing the strike and search range for our Naval aircraft but also for using them as diversionary airfields had our carrier been required to operate in the northern waters when they could have been required to divert to these airports owing to lack of fuel, damage or tactical reasons.

Two, intelligence was most inadequate. As is well known, it is not possible to carry out any worthwhile realistic operations if the intelligence-gathering machinery is not geared up to provide timely and accurate information on the enemy.

Three, the operations at sea were considerably hampered by the absence of reliable fleet tankers, especially because the Indian Fleet was not only required to carry out sustained operations in the northern waters but was also assigned the task of escorting our merchant ships from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden to our West Coast ports.

Four, anomalous electromagnetic propagation conditions had deprived the Indian Fleet of neutralising the Pak Fleet when it was out of its 'depth' and within 90 miles of our area of operations. Since the Pak ships had identified our reconnaissance aircraft and were aware of the presence of our Fleet, an alternative mode of communication such as visual signalling could have been used. Had that been done, the Fleet Commander would not have had to wait till morning of September 12 to receive the report on contacts which had been picked up at 2030 hours the previous night and which had disappeared by the time the report was actually received.

Five, far from being able to deploy some warships in the Bay of Bengal for the defence of our ports on the eastern seaboard, the strength of the Fleet fell far short of the requirements of even the West Coast as a result of which Cochin had only two ancient escort destroyers with obsolete weaponry, one diving tender, one seaward defence boat and one coastal minesweeper, viz., *Godavari*, *Gomati*, *Konkan*, *Abhay* and *Kakinda*. Goa had only one coastal minesweeper, *Cannanore*, for their naval defence. The only ships and craft available for the defence of the East Coast and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were two converted training frigates of World War II vintage, *JCisfrwandrir*, and the seaward defence boat, *Ajay*. Hence, had the Pak Navy decided to deploy a few of their warships off East Pakistan, the Indian Fleet would have been hard put to contain them. To quote Admiral Soman, The deployment of the main bulk of the Indian Fleet on the West Coast meant that, had a gunship or two of the Pakistan Navy slipped out into the Bay of Bengal and operated there raiding our ports or sea lanes, we would, in the initial stages, with our small fleet, have been able to do nothing more than what opposition the coast batteries, where they existed, could offer with such assistance as ships like the *Kistna* and *Tir* and one seaward defence boat, could render; which obviously would not have been much, in the absence of any radar linked to the coast battery guns. With our limited resources, there was no alternative to this but to accept this state of affairs, hoping that, once any of the Pakistan ships showed its hands on the East Coast, we could bring it to book, subject only to maritime reconnaissance which unfortunately was most inadequate.

As regards the West Coast it was appreciated that in making our deployment we must ensure that the Fleet

Commander should have adequate ships to deal with the entire Pakistan Fleet at least on even terms in gunpower, and only the balance should be deployed to give seaward patrol and defence capability to the major ports on the West Coast. These ships, with the coast batteries, wherever they were in existence, and the fortuitous availability of Seahawks and Alizes of the disembarked squadrons on the carrier, were to provide the defence for these ports. I must emphasise that the availability of carrier aircraft was a bonus, as fighter cover for the defence of ports was, as matters stood at that time, essentially on Air Force commitment.

Six, though live antisubmarine training with a British submarine had improved the antisubmarine capability of our Fleet, the absence of a submarine wing in the Indian Fleet put the Pak Fleet in a position of considerable tactical and psychological advantage. If India had even one submarine at sea, its presence would have been an effective deterrent against any Pakistani misadventure and would have kept the Pak Fleet far away from India's shores.

Seven, had the eight Seahawk aircraft at Jamnagar been allowed to bomb the 'seeing eye' of the Pak Air Force and its air defence establishment at Badin, only 135 miles away from Jamnagar as the crow flies, on the morning of September 8 as had been scheduled, the war would have been over much earlier than it did and our aircraft losses would have been minimised. Commander P.N. Parashar, one of the pioneers of our naval aviation and a distinguished pilot, feels that a golden opportunity to cut Pakistan down to size was thus lost. He says, 'At the time of the 1965 Indo-Pak conflict, the No. 300 Seahawk Squadron, with Lieutenant Commander (later Rear Admiral) R.V. Singh as its Commanding Officer, was at the IAF Station at Jamnagar for armament training when the Pakistan Air Force attacked the airfield. The Navy missed an ideal opportunity to prove the worth of naval aviation and the country was deprived of an opportunity to deal an effective blow to Pakistan. Across the border from Jamnagar, Pakistan had its major radar installation at Badin. Eight Seahawks of the 300 Squadron were available to attack and destroy it on September 8, 1965. We would have had a few losses. But it was a worthwhile target. I understand our aircrew were standing by and briefed and ready when the permission to launch the attack was denied by higher authorities.'

But the three crucial factors that, far from enabling the Navy to carry out its task effectively, became virtual millstones around the Navy's metaphorical neck, were, first, not permitting the Navy to bring the more important components of its Fleet back to Bombay from the East Coast in August 1965 when it was well-known that Pakistan was preparing for a full-scale war; second, confining the Navy to the sea area south of the latitude of Porbandar, and third, not permitting the Navy to seek action against Pak naval units and to capture Pak merchant ships because of a spurious convenience - a war had not *been formally* declared!

#### The Navy Supplements IAF Surveillance

Another factor that needs to be taken into account is the role played by the Navy's surveillance aircraft. Lieutenant (now Rear Admiral) S. Ramsagar, an Alize pilot and a qualified flying instructor, had the distinction of being selected for piloting and captaining an Alize aircraft which was attached to the IAF for night

surveillance and location of Pak airfields and radar installations during the 1965 conflict. He recall?.

On September 11, when the war had reached a crescendo, L along with Lieutenant (later Commander) D.N. Rao, an Observer, and lieutenant Commander (later Commander) Dilip Chowdhury, another Observer who was the Captain of the Mission (I was the Captain of the aircraft, being a pilot), were briefed by Commander (later Captain) P.I. Telles, Commanding Officer of *Garuda* at Cochin. During the briefing he said that an aircraft was urgently required to assist the Indian Air Force in locating enemy radars on the Western border so that the Air Force could destroy the troublesome surveillance units which were detecting our own aircraft and alerting their air stations of the impending raids.

Commander (later Commodore) R.A.J. Anderson, who was the Commander (Air) of *Garuda*, warned us that the aircraft of the Navy had not been camouflaged for wartime operations overland and that the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force were not at all familiar with an Alize aircraft and were likely to mistake it for an enemy aircraft. Further, the Alize being basically an antisubmarine and reconnaissance aircraft over the sea, it has very poor all-round visibility, especially rearwards; besides, being an unarmed aircraft, except for rockets, bombs and depth charges, it would be an easy target for enemy fighters. He, therefore, emphasised that extreme care, vigilance and alertness would be required to ensure successful completion of this mission.

The main problem the IAF wanted us to solve was the pinpointing of enemy radar stations that were alerting its air stations of our air raids. The India Air Force was very keen to neutralise these surveillance units and regain the element of surprise during strikes. For this purpose it was decided that the Alize would operate from Ambala under the aegis of Air Commodore Randhir Singh, Western Air Defence Commander, operating from Ambala. The aircraft was to fly ten miles within the Indian territory along the Western border and establish the positions of enemy radar stations. The method proposed by them was that the Alizes would fly at night and would transmit the positions of Pak ground radars detected.

However, in 1965 the Indian Air Force fighter squadrons, as a practice, had not done much night-flying. Therefore, Air Commodore Singh was apprehensive of the naval crew being able to cope with this task at night. On seeing my flying log-book, he was pleasantly surprised to find that I had done over 200 hours of night-flying from the carrier, whereas at that time an average pilot of the same experience in the Air Force had done less than 25 hours of night-flying.

After our briefing we got airborne on a pre-determined triangular route at dusk and set course for Fazilka. Unfortunately, Punjab was covered that day with dust-haze up to a height of 300 feet and the whole of Punjab was observing a black-out during the war. With the maps that we had and the strong winds drifting us off course, we realised that lieutenant Commander Chowdhury, our Observer and Navigator, had lost track of our position. Map reading was not possible due to dark-night conditions and total black-out. Within 20 minutes of flying, I realised that we had already crossed the international boundary and had exposed ourselves to enemy radar detection. Therefore, we were forced to turn in the approximate general vicinity of Pathankot and continue climbing parallel to the Indo-Pak border, within a few minutes, on climbing beyond 1,500 feet, the rear-seat observer, lieutenant D.N. Rao, detected the Lahore radar and also two other radars from a bearing of the Sargodha-Peshawar area. There was no method of plotting these bearings accurately as our own aircraft's position was not known. Rao then took their signatures (recorded the distinctive features of the transmission). Within seconds the enemy radar locked on the aircraft and commenced height assessment. Realising that

Pakistan's F 104 Starfighters were fitted with air-to-air missiles with night capability and that no useful purpose would be served by further continuing the sortie, the aircraft returned to Ambala.

As we approached Ambala we found that the whole of Ambala, including the runway, had been totally blacked out and the marshaller was continuing to take me down to a height of 100 feet. When he said that the runway was one mile ahead of me, I saw goose-neck flares being lit one by one on either side of the runway by airmen commencing from the runway threshold. As I landed, the airmen extinguished these goose-neck flares and, within minutes of the aircraft rolling on the runway, the airfield was again in total darkness. We took off at 1000 hours the next morning on the same route and proceeded towards Fazilka and Ferozpur. The Air Defence Commander provided a Gnat combat patrol cover to keep the area clear of all enemy fighters. On climbing over Ferozpur, we did obtain enemy radar transmissions from Lahore and also from the direction of Sargodha. We were able to get the bearings and the bearing lines within a few seconds. After some time we were picked up by the enemy radar and my rear operator indicated that the transmissions were now steady and continuous and that the enemy radar was carrying out height estimation. After positively establishing the radar bearings from this location, we proceeded northwards along the border for establishing a cross-bearing. Unfortunately, this resulted in our aircraft going beyond its intended track. On reaching the Pathankot area, we started climbing the aircraft and picked up a second bearing cut on both the radar transmissions. It was apparent to the rear radar operator, Lieutenant D.N. Rao, that the transmission from Sargodha indicated more than one radar. He quickly analysed and positively established that Sargodha had more than one radar. As we had completed more than three hours of flying in the area and had crossed the tracks beyond our intended area, we set course back towards Ambala.

At this time, as we were proceeding towards Ambala, we were informed by our ground station at Ambala that since Pathankot could not recognize an Alize, several IAF aircraft had been scrambled from the Pathankot Air Force Base and were shortly going to intercept us but assured that we were not to worry, as Ambala had already informed them that the IAF was using a naval aircraft. At this particular moment, I saw a Gnat fighter, with its undercarriage and flaps down, on my port side and the pilot waving to me. Once he identified the Alize as a friendly aircraft, he promptly retracted his undercarriage and flaps, pulled up from underneath in front of us and proceeded back to his base. Later, on landing, we were told that we had nearly created a panic as we had penetrated deep into the adjacent air defence sector and the Air Force stations had gone on the alert to shoot down the intruder. They had launched the Gnats for interception and in passing had reported the matter to Ambala on the approaching intruder to warn them of the likely air-raid. It was at this time that Air Commodore Randhir Singh, realising that it could be the naval aircraft, warned all units in plain language to look out for an unarmed naval Alize aircraft with the marking of the Indian Navy on it. Luckily for us, we were intercepted by the controlling aircraft of the squadron and also the leader of the strike force. Otherwise we could have been shot out of the sky as very few Air Force officers had seen an Alize before.

As the sortie was very effective and the locations of Pak radar installations had been accurately indicated, Air Commodore Randhir Singh directed us to proceed to Palam for further briefing and detection of enemy radars in

other sectors. It is understood that based on the locations given by us on these radar stations, the Air Force launched Canberra photo reconnaissance sorties and thereafter carried out strikes on these radars.

As we had started flying operations late, i.e., after the start of the conflict, on our return to Palam we realised that the ceasefire had already been announced. The IAF, however, wanted us to establish all radar stations located along the border without crossing the border and creating any air violations. We were requested to go back to Ambala and operate merely to ascertain whether the radar stations struck by the IAF were still functioning. We were ordered to operate from Ambala, Jodhpur and Jamnagar. With these instructions, we proceeded again to Ambala and reported to Air Commodore Randhir Singh. We soon located five enemy radar stations, two at and around Lahore and three around the Sargodha Area. Many a time we were required to operate at the ceiling heights of Alizes, such as altitudes between 19,500 and 20,000 feet. It was a very satisfying operation at this period except for one report that came from the Air Headquarters that we had inadvertently closed the border so much that the Pakistanis had lodged a protest.

On successful completion of these sorties at Ambala, we flew over and landed at Jodhpur, my alma mater air station. From Jodhpur we flew all along the Jaisalmer area and confirmed to the Air Force that the radar station located at Badin, which had been attacked by Hunters of the IAF, though successfully neutralised for a few days during the conflict, had again become operational. At this time, during one of our sorties over Jaisalmer, we had a fire in the rear cockpit which damaged our radar detector. We, therefore, returned to Palam and proceeded to Bombay for replacing the radar detector. Within a day the set was made serviceable, test-flown and cleared and so we took off in the same aircraft and returned to Palam by night. We were now instructed to proceed to Jamnagar and establish positively that the Badin Airfield radar of the Pakistanis was operational and also locate any other radar installations operating around Karachi. The IAF Station Commander at Jamnagar was rather reluctant to send naval aircraft to the high seas as, so he thought, if there were to be any 'incidents' on the high seas, as he put it, the sea would swallow the evidence. We, however, convinced him that our element was the sea and we were most comfortable in that environment. So, in one sortie, we were able to identify the Badin radar and also establish one more radar, seven miles north of Karachi. The Station Commander and his team were reluctant to operate the aircraft in this area any longer as there had already been two protests from the Pakistanis on air violations during ceasefire. Further he stated that there were many spies in the Saurashtra area around Jamnagar who reported all movements of aircraft from Jamnagar. Still we completed our task in a record time and returned to Bombay.

So far as these operations were concerned, my only regret is that instead of being directed to operate at high altitudes, had we been permitted to penetrate into the enemy territory at low level by night, as we normally do for radar detection at sea, we could have pinpointed the enemy radar stations in one sortie, and dropped a 'marker' within 100 yards of the target. The targets could have been easily destroyed by the Indian Air Force using bombs and rockets. It would have been cost-effective and very successful. With my experience of over 200 hours of night-flying, this exercise could have been easily carried out at night with minimum danger to the aircraft.

To sum up, in less than 15 days of flying operations over totally unfamiliar territory, an unarmed naval aircraft had done 63 hours of night-flying in the face of grave danger and had accurately located eight Pak radar stations for the

IAF. But these exploits of the only Naval unit in the Western Sector remained unreported and unsung because the IAF signals specialist accompanying our mission had offered to carry all the records pertaining to the sorties carried out by the Alizes to Air Headquarters and Naval Headquarters but, for reasons not known, 'failed' to do so/

### Cramping the Navy's Style

Admiral *BS. Soman* feels that the Navy should have been permitted to deploy its ships well in time after being refurbished for sustained operations at sea as it was apparent as early as the first week of August 1965 that a major armed conflict with Pakistan was imminent and that Pakistan was preparing for a major naval offensive in support of its pre-planned invasion of Kashmir and the other northern states contiguous to Pakistan. He recalls.

After the Indo-Chinese conflict, the defence of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was left entirely to me. The Army refused to even send a platoon there and we had to raise our own land force with sailors in *khaki* uniform to man the various stations in these islands. So far as the navy was concerned, as soon as Pakistan started the trouble in Kachchh, I had felt that my first priority would be these islands because while talking to various people during my visit to Indonesia as the Fleet Commander a few years earlier and subsequently having managed to send Captain (later Vice Admiral) V.E.C Barboza to Jakarta as the Naval Attache and having been briefed on the latest developments, I felt a little nervous about these islands. This was because when the Army refused to send any units for their defence, I had taken on the responsibility of doing so with sailors with no experience in land-fighting. But I had also placed *Mysore* and two major ships in the area till the very last minute. It was only after the war had started and I was permitted to bring the Fleet back to the West Coast that I brought the ships across to the Western theatre because I wanted to ensure that no opportunity was given to Indonesia to start anything at the same time. Whether eventually it proved itself I do not know but prior to that Soekarno was reported to have been keeping an eye on the Bay Islands.

The Fleet, when it reached Bombay, had to be given this thoughtless order from the higher authorities' of not operating north of the latitude of Porbandar. Nothing else could be done by these ships except to try and see that the Pakistani ships did not move towards the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to hold hands with the Indonesians.

I also had some intelligence on the presence of some Indonesian ships at Karachi and knew that any operation undertaken by the combined naval forces of Pakistan and Indonesia would neither be against the Indian Fleet nor the Indian mainland. It was most likely to be for the capture of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. I was quite convinced in my mind that the Indonesian Navy, knowing full well that only a small force of sailors in *khaki* uniform was present on these islands, could make an attempt to capture the Nicobar Island despite the then pretty poor state of Indonesia's Navy.

I may be repeating myself but I must emphasize that the one single aspect of the operation that upset me most was that even after the entire Fleet was made operative off Bombay by the first week of September 1965, not much could be done because of the unwise geographical limitations imposed on the Navy.

As to the details of the constraints placed on the Navy and what I did about it, I can perhaps expand somewhat on what is generally known already.

One morning I received a file signed by Sarin (H.C. Sarin, ICS, then Additional Defence Secretary, later Defence Secretary and Ambassador to Nepal) saying, 'The Navy is not to operate north of the latitude of Porbandar, and is also not to take or initiate offensive action at sea against Pakistan unless forced to do so by offensive action by the Pak forces.' If I remember correctly both the Defence Secretary, Shri P.V.J.L. Rao, ICS, and the Defence Minister, Shri Y.B. Chavan, were out of India at that time. I rang up Sarin and told him that I could not accept that order and was seeing the Defence Minister as soon as he returned which was the very next day.

When I saw Chavan he said that he was sorry that even after the Chinese debacle in 1962, the Navy had continued to be overlooked and as such it would perhaps be better if the Navy did not go looking for trouble. I said that while I was most grateful to him for having appreciated that we were at that time the stepchild of the Government, non-participation by us in an aggressive manner in this war would not only adversely affect the morale of the Service but the Navy's image in the public would go down the drain. He mentioned the fact of the aircraft carrier being in the dock and of the responsibilities assigned to the Navy for the defence of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from a possible and probable attack from Indonesia which, in the Government's, order of priorities, was more crucial than naval operations against Pakistan.

I assured him that I was fully aware of these implications of the Navy's operations and responsibilities. Mysore had already been deployed in that area and all that I was asking for was to leave the Navy to plan and do what it can in an active manner instead of remaining passive. Finally the Defence Minister said that even the Prime Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, did not want the conflict to escalate at sea and that was that. I requested him for permission to see the Prime Minister so that I could convince him of what I felt strongly about and he readily agreed.

I do not now remember whether there was any one else in the room when I called on the Prime Minister. He started by saying that he remembered my late father (who was a colleague of Gandhiji during the Champaran struggle) and that he was glad to see me now as the Naval Chief. I told him that at this particular moment I was not at all glad to be the Naval Chief, what with the Government ordering me not to do what I honestly considered was my duty and of course that of the Navy. Chavan must have already spoken to him about my talk with him, as Shri Shastri brought up the same two points - the Navy had not been strengthened since the Sino-Indian conflict and its responsibilities in the Andaman and Nicobar area were more important than in the Arabian Sea. I told him that it was wrong in principle to tie down one arm of the Defence Services to passive action in a war situation. It should have had the freedom to act offensively so long as it did not bite off more than it could chew. When he brought up the question of the undesirability of any escalation of the war at sea, I reminded him of what happened to Germany on a few occasions in the two World Wars when they kept their fleets bottled up. I added that I was sure that had they used their navy fully, from the start of the wars, the history of the world would have been different, however much the rest of the world disliked this possibility. On this he seemed to be annoyed and told me, 'You have no choice'. I then asked him whether he had any objection to my seeing the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces meaning the President. He smiled and politely said, 'No, you do not have to see him'.

Vice Admiral NP. Datta holds the same view. He says,

Another constraint imposed on the Navy, which we came to know of later, was that we were told not to operate north of the latitude of Porbandar in the Arabian sea. The main objective of our naval force operating at sea at that time should have been and was the interdiction of supplies and reinforcements to Pakistan coming by sea. Pakistan knew as well as we knew that all her oil, all her military purchases had to reach Pakistan via the port of Karachi. So a very useful attempt on the part of the Navy to make a significant contribution to the war effort would be to put a stop to these supplies and we could only do so if we operated right up to the Makran Coast west of Karachi. At that time we were in a position to do so because Pakistan's air force was already fully committed on West Pakistan's western and eastern frontiers. Secondly, the PAF did not have any aircraft especially trained or equipped for maritime operations -they had minimal maritime reconnaissance and strike capability at that time -and so it really would have been quite a safe operation for us. The artificial limit placed on the Indian Navy's operations thus prevented it from contributing much more than it could actually do. However, the very fact that the Indian Fleet had put to sea had imposed a natural restriction on neutral countries planning to send ships to Karachi. It was a natural discretion on the part of oil tanker companies not to send tankers to war-affected areas.

If the Navy had interdicted Pakistani maritime trade from the word 'go', i.e., from September 2, 1965, the Pakistani situation regarding oil and munitions which became critical two or three weeks after the commencement of hostilities, would have become critical even earlier and they would have sued for peace even earlier.

At the same time, in order to prevent the Pak Navy from harassing tankers coming to Bombay, the Indian Navy had taken special steps to escort our tankers and thus the flow of crude to our refineries in Bombay continued uninterrupted.

Rear Admiral Kirpal Singh, who was in command of one of the ships during the war as a Captain, is equally flummoxed by the Government decision not to use the Navy.

It was a mystery to most of us who were at sea as to how the Indian Navy could allow itself to get caught with the bulk of the operational Fleet in the Andaman Islands and Bay of Bengal area. It is surprising that when operations had already started in Jammu and Kashmir, our ships were leisurely steaming from Port Blair to Calcutta! It was only at the last moment that the *Mysore* was diverted from near Sandheads to Vishakhapatnam while the *Brahmaputra* and one of her sister ships were allowed to proceed up the Hooghly to Calcutta. Four or five valuable days were unnecessarily wasted in the process. We then made a dash for Bombay.

Also, for some inexplicable reason we were not allowed to proceed north of a certain area, presumably because the Air Force could not provide any cover to us. Pakistan Navy did bombard Dwarka and got away with it, but its other claim of having sunk the *Brahmaputra* caused acute embarrassment to the Pak submarine Captain. He received a gallantry award with much fanfare while we paraded the three B's - *Brahmaputra*, *Beas* and *Betwa* - in Bombay harbour for the benefit of all the Naval Attaches!

L.K. Jha Reminisces

Even Shri L.K. Jha was considerably circumspect while discussing the factors that prevented the Government from

committing the Navy to full-scale operations instead of confining it to a coastal defence role. He said,

As it happened, the Rann of Kachchh went for amicable settlement but the paper plan for the operation was fortunately worked out in fairly full detail even at that time. Then, when the conflict started in Kashmir, rather in the Jammu area of Kashmir and their tanks came into our territory where our tanks could not easily go because the bridges were not strong enough,, there was a real dilemma. Air Marshal (later Air Chief Marshal) Arjan Singh, the Chief of the Air Staff, and General J.N.Chaudhuri, the Chief of the Army Staff, were present at a meeting to discuss things where we all turned to Arjan and asked him whether he could take on the Pak tanks from the air. Now there was a great deal of hesitation, again on the basic policy of keeping the conflict as narrow-based as possible and in not involving the Air Force. Whether to bring in the Air Force was a matter where a very crucial decision was involved but there seemed to be no other alternative. Arjan agreed to take the Pak tanks on at very short notice without any prior preparation and even in the late afternoon. I think he was able to employ his Air Force to attack the tanks. But still it was being thought of as a local battle. But we realised that the terrain where we were fighting was one where we were much more vulnerable and communication depended on a couple of bridges - if they were blown up, we just would be completely cut off. And, therefore, thought turned to using the plan which had been earlier evolved for marching into Lahore. But even then it was a very firm decision that we would not allow the things to escalate into a full-scale war - in the legal sense - between India and Pakistan. Admiral Soman had in the meantime - ever since the involvement of the Air Force - been straining at the leash, saying, 'look, let me go into action'. But again the same consideration which was acting as a restraint - on using the Air Force or going into Lahore - prevailed. It was felt that if we now opened up another front off Karachi, it would become a major engagement and would no longer be a matter of localised conflict. So the decision was taken that the operation to march to Lahore would be launched but that the Navy would not be involved. And then the news that the Indian Army had crossed the Wagah border and was heading for Lahore, came over the radio and President Ayub went on the air.

It was a very, very strong and angry broadcast. Admiral Soman thought that the opening of the Lahore front meant that a no-holds-barred situation had come and he, I think relayed the signal on the air that we were at war with Pakistan. This had to be countermanded later because we did not want to go to that stage so soon. But still we realised that the Navy had the capability and if the events so necessitated, I don't think there would have been too long a hesitation to use it. But the feeling was strong that if we could contain the Pakistani forces and hold them on land, then perhaps it would be wiser not to get the Navy involved. I knew that the Navy was not happy with my decision because they were very anxious to go into action.

I must add here that there was that fateful evening - I remember it very clearly - when the Pakistanis bombed Amritsar. As that news came Shastriji rang me up to say, 'Xet us inform the various ambassadors - the most important ones - that this is a very major change in the situation.' We were fighting in Kashmir in spite of our handicap but now Amritsar had been attacked and that altered the position totally. I, of course, knew that our forces were poised to move towards Lahore at the word 'go'. One factor was the inclement weather. Now that evening I rang up the Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Shri Balraj Kapoor, and asked him to send for a few of the ambassadors and talk to them. He said, 'My dear L.K., have a heart, at this hour of the night who is going to come?' But I knew the significance of what was happening and so I myself began to send for them. I sent for two people I personally knew well. One was John Freeman, British High

Commissioner, and the other was Chester Bowles, the American Ambassador. I told them that the bombing of Amritsar had altered the whole scenario and even while sitting in the lawn of my house where I was talking to them, I saw the clouds lifting and a bright moon shining. So I said to myself that now probably the weather also was giving the green signal to proceed. And so then next morning the move was started and the rest of it is now history.

Jha adds,

I am not ruling out the possibility of the Navy being involved if the situation so warranted. But the turn of tide in the fighting on the ground between Akhnoor and Lahore was such that it did not really warrant it. In the meantime the UN's efforts to stop the conflict got under way and soon a simple ceasefire was announced. So the Navy was in the reserve no doubt. But a decision to deploy the Navy was not taken - if anything, the decision was not to involve it prematurely. As my own judgement and not based on what was actually discussed - one of the factors to be taken into account was that the excitement over Kashmir was much more a phenomenon with Punjabis in Pakistan than with the Sindhis and the Sindhi population generally was not worked up on it. No doubt Bhutto was in the way but he was playing the power game to get Punjab support - it was quite a different thing. Now, involving the Navy would have definitely meant Karachi and the Sind area being the main target though, as I said, I can't recall that it was stated in these terms. It may well have been a factor in the minds of the political leaders that Sind was not to be brought in - the feeling it would create would be that India was attacking Sind. So that could well have been an additional factor of restraint, quite apart from the general concern that the war should not be allowed to become too widespread.

### The Indonesian Hand

As regards the likelihood of Indonesia joining hands with Pakistan or making an attempt to capture some of the Bay islands which it had been claiming for some time, Vice-Admiral V.E.C. Barboza, who was the Naval Attache at the Indian Embassy at Jakarta at that time, recalls,

The Indonesian Government declared its support for Pakistan in the 1965 Indo-Pak conflict and extended naval assistance which included the despatch of the submarine *Bramasta* to Karachi, she, however, got there when the conflict had all but ended and stayed on till the Tashkent agreement was signed.

Indo-Indonesian relations improved after a new regime gained power in Indonesia in the wake of an abortive *coup d'etat*.

An emissary of our Government privately visited Indonesia shortly after the commencement of the conflict. He claimed that Shastriji had given the nod to the visit, its purpose being to persuade Indonesia to at least not take sides in the conflict. He said that he was armed with an old letter of recognition signed by the Indonesian President granting him what may be described as privileged status to visit Indonesia, meet people, etc., freely.

It got him nowhere. The Indonesian President ignored him, as did others of any importance, and he was quite unable to influence events in any way. He left after a few days' stay.

We later learnt, from private sources, that when deciding to give this gentleman the cold shoulder, the President had remarked that whereas he had been of some help earlier, he had also filled his pockets with much precious metal -

which was compensation enough for his services! True? False? I do not know, but I wonder what story this emissary had to tell when he returned from his futile visit in 1965.

During the conflict with Pakistan there were also reports about the shipping of two Indonesian missile boats in a Pak vessel called *Anwar Baksh* and the despatch of a company of Indonesian Marines with their PT 76 amphibious tanks to East Pakistan.

### The Blunted Scimitar

It was an embittered Admiral Soman who, after the 1965 operations were over and the Navy criticised by the press for not having gone into action, said while addressing senior officers of the Navy,

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Notwithstanding our initial disadvantage of the location of the Fleet on the East Coast at the time of the commencement of the undeclared war, and the material limitations of the ships after three months of exercises away from base, the Fleet, with the help of the valiant efforts of the dockyard, took the initiative to seek the enemy and bring him to battle. Although this was not achieved, I am sure it had placed itself in a position to contain the enemy in his waters if he had ventured out; which, I know, was all that was expected of the Fleet.

It is indeed a great pity that the role assigned to the Navy was mainly a defensive one. History has proved over and over again that at sea, more than perhaps on land and in the air, offence is the best form of defence. In the days of old, when there was no wireless communication, Nelsons could put their telescopes to their blind eyes and get away with it as heroes on top of their respective columns. It indeed took courage to put the telescope to the blind eye and win laurels! But it takes equal, if not greater, courage (perhaps of a different kind) to play the tethered role and curb the offensive spirit of a fighting force in the greater national interest as claimed by the authorities.

The implications of a war at sea did not seem to have been fully understood in the Government agencies at many levels, but when some of these agencies talked glibly of blockade, contraband control, seizing enemy merchant ships and attacking enemy warships at sea and their ports without a proper formal declaration of war, one wondered whether they realised that any such action on the high seas without the declaration of a war was liable to be branded as piracy, especially if any neutral ships became involved.

The need for a 'rethink' on the question of operation and control of maritime reconnaissance had also become apparent. Intelligence is vital for the Navy in planning its operations and executing them. While the Air Force, with their meagre resources and preoccupations with other commitments, valiantly tried to give the limited cover agreed upon, it was disconcerting to comprehend the fact that of the 135 lakh square miles of coverage required for the operations undertaken by the Fleet, a bare one lakh square miles could actually be covered. This too was achieved in 24 sorties of 188 hours by the IAF with its Liberators and Superconstellations, augmented by 60 sorties of 160 flying hours of the Alizes. This meant that the Fleet ships' endurance, limited as it was due to the lack of a replenishment tanker, had to be devoted to searching for

enemy ships, hoping for a chance contact, which was a terrible waste, quite apart from its ineffectiveness, particularly with our meagre ship resources.

As regards his inability to obtain Government approval or funds for rectifying the inadequacies in the Navy's size, operational dimensions, levels of sophistication of weapons, weapon control systems, sensors and other equipment because of the low priority assigned to the Navy and its expansion plans, despite vigorous efforts having been made for over three years, Admiral Somansaid,

When I came to Naval Headquarters, I thought my task was to continue the good work of my predecessors, which was to prepare the Navy for war, should it ever come. I had not bargained to have to fight with no enemy to fight with in peace, emergency or war. I have since learnt that the Defence Services are always at war, fighting for their existence. In peace time they must fight with their Government, and in war for their Government.

I must admit frankly that the strength of the navy and its material state was appreciably lower in 1965 than what it was three years earlier due mainly to the devil of 'no or low priority'<sup>7</sup> on the one hand, and the nation's foreign exchange difficulties on the other. We could make no claims on the indigenous production on account of overriding priorities for the Army and the Air Force and were required to get what we needed from abroad. But when we sought foreign exchange for the purpose, it was not available due to the same Army and Air Force priorities for importing their hardware, which was further aggravated by the tight situation of this commodity. It very much reminds me of the mythological story of Trishanku who even today hangs between Heaven and Hell!

## Trade Warfare

As regards trade warfare, in conformity with her policy in other fields, India did not initiate any war-like measures in the sphere of shipping as well. However, when Pakistan started impounding Indian vessels and cargo without a regular declaration of war, India had no alternative but to retaliate. On September 6, 1965 Pakistan started the process by detaining three of our ships which happened to be in Pakistani ports. So far as these vessels were concerned, Pakistan held 13,980 DWT (dead weight tons) of Indian shipping tonnage with 2,407 tons of Indian import cargo and India held 30,058 DWT of Pakistani shipping tonnage with 4,238 tons of Pakistani export cargo for other countries. In addition, two Indian sailing vessels, *Khatau Pasa* and *Nirnaya Sagar*, were detained in Karachi and a third sailing vessel, *Siddiqui*, was missing and there was a possibility that this vessel too might have been impounded by Pakistan. There were two sailing vessels, *Al Razak* and *Madat Rehmani*, registered in Pakistan which had earlier been operating in India. But the first one was lying submerged in Mangalore since May 1965 and the second one was not traceable.

This was followed by Pakistan enforcing contraband control under which it started off-loading import cargo of India from neutral country flag vessels touching its ports. On September 8, 1965 the Detaining Officer at Chittagong issued a notice to the master of a Philippine ship, *Lemoraskinghim* to unship any article of contraband or war carried on that ship with the warning that 'neutral vessels are liable to capture and

condemnation by a prize court of any offence coming under the head of unneutral service.' The list of articles of contraband which was notified on September 9 included not only the items of absolute contraband but even conditional contraband such as 'all kinds of food, foodstuffs, feed, forage and clothing and manufactured textile products, tobacco articles and materials necessary or convenient or their production, manufacture or use.'

India was thus left with no option but to take similar measures. But in doing so, the Indian authorities decided to avoid the procedures prescribed to be taken during a regular war. Thus, instead of issuing a list of articles considered as contraband of war, they issued a notification under the Customs Act on September 14 prohibiting the entry into India of certain classes of goods if intended to be carried to Pakistan. The list of items did not include any of the items of 'conditional contraband' like food, feed, forage, etc., included in the Pakistani list. While Pakistan had offloaded articles like sculptures, fertilizers, books, personal effects, etc., which cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be treated as contraband, India had taken care to avoid off-loading such articles.

As regards offloading of cargoes from neutral ships, while Pakistan had offloaded 24,187 tons of Indian cargo from 19 neutral vessels, India had off-loaded 9,789 tons of Pakistani cargo from 23 neutral vessels. This disparity was due to certain facts over which India had no control: first, because of India's geographical position, all ships coming from the West with cargo for both countries first went to Karachi before coming to an Indian port and most of the ships coming from the East first went to Chittagong and Chalna before coming to India, and out of the 19 neutral vessels in Pakistan, six were in Pakistani ports on September 6 and 11 more reached there by September 14; next, India's volume of overseas trade was much larger than that of Pakistan - the ratio of Indian and Pakistani cargoes was about 3:1 in the case of imports from the UK and Europe and about 5:1 in the case of imports from the USA and hence it was inevitable that Pakistan would have a much larger quantity of Indian import cargo than India had; third, whereas most of Pakistani cargo was carried on neutral 'bottoms', India's cargo, both for export and import, was largely borne by Indian merchant ships - 250 of them were owned by India while Pakistan owned only 30 merchant ships; and, fourth, the Indian authorities were more concerned about saving India-bound cargo from falling into Pakistani hands than off-loading Pakistan-bound cargo because of the importance of our cargo and the uncertainty of ownership and other legal complications involved in seizing Pakistan-bound cargo.

As a result of efforts made as well as persuasion, the Indian authorities succeeded in saving about 150,000 tons of import cargo from falling into Pakistani hands. If this aspect is taken into account, it would be evident that India had fared better in trade warfare than Pakistan, considering the disadvantages arising out of India's geographical position and our much larger trade.

In addition to the cargo mentioned above, Pakistan had detained about 5,800 tons of Indian import cargo carried in its two vessels, *Sutief* (1,500 tons) and *Ba<sup>e</sup>-e-J<sup>rac</sup>W* (4,300 tons) and India had seized 7,400 tons of Pakistani import cargo from six Indian vessels in Indian ports.

Thus 21,443 tons of Pakistani cargo was detained by India - 4,238 tons off-loaded from Pak vessels detained at Indian ports, 7,416 tons offloaded from Indian vessels in Indian ports and 9,789 tons off-loaded from 23 neutral vessels in Indian ports, while 32,394 tons of Indian cargo was detained by Pakistan - 2,407 tons off-loaded from Indian vessels

detained at Pakistani ports, 5,800 tons off-loaded from Pak vessels *Bagh-e-Karachi* and *Sutiej*, and 24,187 tons off-loaded from 19 neutral vessels in Pakistani ports.

As regards inland water transport between West Bengal and Assam, although both Government and private companies operating such transport had halted their operations on September 5, 1965, nineteen steamers and 37 flats of the River Steam Navigation Company and 22 steamers and 89 flats of private companies were impounded in the then East Pakistan with tea, jute and other cargo worth Rs. 5 crore.

A total of 400 personnel of Indian ships, sailing vessels and inland water transport were interned in Pakistan while India had interned 4,747 Pakistani personnel from Pakistani ships and inland water transport.

In his treatise, *The Indo-Pakistani Maritime Conflict, 1965 - A Legal Appraisal*, Dr. Surya P. Sharma, an authority on international law, while discussing the legal status of the 1965 conflict between India and Pakistan and the latter's seizing Indian ships and off-loading Indian cargo as prize, says that Pakistan's action was a flagrant violation of the tenets of international law regulating the freedom of navigation and the free flow of world trade and commerce. He says,

Acts of seizing Indian ships and cargoes and institution of prize proceedings are, by any measure, the exercise of belligerent rights which, in the absence of a formal state of war, could not legally be resorted to by Pakistan . . . If she had declared war on India, it would have made her *ipso facto* a violator of public order under the UN Charter. And if Pakistan chose not to declare war, as it actually happened, her coercive activities of the nature and scale, in the present case, would be illegal . . . the nature of hostilities did not justify escalation by Pakistan to the point of issuing orders of contraband of war, seizing ships and cargoes, establishment of prize courts and their continuation after ceasefire. Notwithstanding the claims made by the Pakistani junta after the cessation of hostilities, the Indian Navy, despite having been kept away from its training fields for an unconscionably long period and despite the restrictions on its deployment imposed by the Government, had acquitted itself in the conflict creditably. Besides, had the 'cut and thrust' strategy of the authorities in preventing the Navy from expanding to the required size, not permitting the acquisition of submarines, maritime reconnaissance aircraft and additional surface vessels and the establishment of a second Fleet in the Bay of Bengal, not continued till the middle of the 1960s, the Navy could easily have bottled up the Pak Fleet as was done in 1971 when the entire Pak surface force was confined to Karachi Harbour and reduced to the state of a fleet-in-being. As Lome J. Kavic, author of *India's Quest for Security: Defence Policies 1947-1965*, says,

The Indian Navy (of the 1960s) represented a compromise between self-reliance and explicit dependence upon friendly powers. A navy powerful enough to dominate the Indian Ocean against a major power was beyond India's financial capacities, but her continued explicit reliance upon the Royal Navy for naval defence was neither politically possible nor wise as India and Australia both learned to their regret at the fall of Singapore in 1942. Independent India developed a small task force large enough to give her local superiority against any neighbouring country in the strategic arc from Suez to Singapore and so continued as to facilitate cooperation with Western navies to defend their mutual interests in the Indian Ocean

against Soviet bloc submarines in any general war. To some extent, the Indian Navy assumed the functions of the former East Indies Squadron of the Royal Navy. Its development programme was considerably affected by financial stringency, but to no apparent extent by Pakistani or Chinese postures.

## The Post-War Developments

While financial stringencies and priorities had largely limited the Navy's modernisation plans and programmes for the replacement of obsolete warships only through the process of acquisition from foreign countries, until the Indo-Pak conflict, the Government of India evinced greater keenness after the conflict in improving the Navy's firepower and mobility and enlarging its area of influence. While the British Government's offer of a special defence credit totalling £4,700,000 (Rs 62,670,000) to cover the external costs over the next four years of the construction of three Leander class frigates in India had been accepted in November 1964 with plans to lay down the keel of the first frigate in mid-1966 and to complete the first vessel by 1971, a request from the Government of India for the loan of three modern destroyers or frigates was turned down by both the UK and the USA. Hence India accepted a Soviet offer of antisubmarine vessels of the Petyo class in an agreement signed in 1965. In addition, the Government of India soon accepted the long-standing proposal for setting up a submarine arm by initially acquiring a training submarine from the UK. Once again, a World War II model submarine was offered to India against the requirement of a modern submarine and hence was not acceptable. An agreement was thus concluded with the Soviet Union for the supply of four F class submarines.

Three seaward defence boats and two minesweepers were nearing completion and a despatch had been taken to acquire a tanker for the Fleet; a squadron of Seahawk aircraft and some Alouette HI helicopters had been ordered, major operational bases and maintenance facilities began to be developed at Mormugao (including an air station at Dabolim), Vishakhapatnam and Port Blair with provision for developing a naval base in the Nicobar group of islands as well.

The process of expansion of the Fleet, creation of a second Fleet for the Bay of Bengal, indigenisation of the construction of warships and shipboard weapon systems and equipment, creation of a submarine arm, acquisition of surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, establishment of a large number of training and operational naval bases, augmentation of the versatility and firepower of the fleet air arm and acquisition of long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft during the years that followed the 1965 Indo-Pak conflict (a 'war that never was' so far as the Indian Navy was concerned), considerably enhanced the Navy's three-dimensional operational capability, reach and lethality which was amply demonstrated during the 1971 operations against the Pak Navy.

## A Retrospect

As can be appreciated from the whys and wherefores of the Indian Navy's involuntary non-participation in the 1965 War delineated in these pages, the Pak military junta could easily have been brought to its knees within a

week or 10 days of the commencement of hostilities had the Indian Navy been allowed to operate according to its plans. This would have enabled it to not only deploy the Fleet in theatres of operations close to the PakCoast but also capture or sink Pak naval units venturing out of Karachi harbour, neutralise the offence potential of the lone Pak submarine, the *Ghazi*, and what was vital to the Pak armed forces, intercept and cut off all seaborne supplies of fuel and munitions of war to Pakistan from the West. Because of three important deleterious factors -the limited task of coastal defence in the Arabian Sea forced on the Navy, a whole week after the Pakland offensive had been launched, the considerably deficient material state of the ships caused by the Reefs prolonged deployment in the Bay of Bengal and the embargo on its area of operations - the role of the service had been reduced to that of a coast guard resulting in considerable post-war public and media vituperative accusations of non-performance, parasite existence, fair-weather propensity, goodwill-cruise addiction, etc., rebounding to the discredit of the Service.

From these pages it would also be apparent that far from being unwilling to take on the task (formidable but well within its capabilities) of containing the enemy at sea, the Indian Navy had been 'straining at the leash' to go into action from the very beginning but had been rendered *hors de combat* even before the commencement of the operations by, first, the preponence of the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on naval strategic planning and, later, by the authorities themselves. What was gained by assigning such a 'tethered' role to the Navy and thus preventing it from carrying out its tasks, for which it had been honing its weapons and skills for years, has remained indiscernible to this day.