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Indian forces are the world's finest

By Pankaj Vohra | 1 October, 2016

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There has never been any doubt in one's mind that the Indian Armed Forces are easily amongst the best in the world. The gallantry and commitment of our soldiers have been time and again proven. Whether it was World War 1 and the subsequent battles which the Indian Army fought during the British regime or the four major confrontations with Pakistan and a battle against all mortally possible odds with the Chinese, the jawans and officers have made every countryman proud with their valiant deeds. Therefore, it was not surprising at all that the special commandos of the Army carried out precision surgical strikes inside Pakistan Occupied Kashmir earlier in the week to neutralise terrorists who were planning to infiltrate into our territory. The operation, similar to those carried out by Israelis on several occasions, avenged the attack on Uri, as also sent out a strong signal to the Pakistan establishment that India would not tolerate any kind of misadventure on the part of their army or the intelligence agencies. Yes, the strikes have heightened the existing tensions between the two countries and a war like situation has emerged from this strong military rebuttal from New Delhi aimed at warning Islamabad that enough was enough and it was time to take off the gloves.

There have been heroes with unparalleled accomplishments on the Indian side in every war fought by our troops. While many of the deeds have not been recorded accurately due to our inherent diffidence in preserving war history, eminent soldiers have innumerable and priceless tales to tell. Captain Amarinder Singh, former Chief Minister of Punjab, is one of the best known war historians in the country, having written two books—one on the unsung heroes of World War-1 and the second on the 1965 armed conflict with Pakistan. Singh was the ADC to the legendary Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, the GOC-in-C Western Command during the 1965 operations and thereby saw things unfold from a ringside seat. It was General Singh who had saved the day for the troops as he even defied his own Chief of Army Staff, General J.N. Chaudhuri to prevent the Pakistan plan to cut off Jammu and Kashmir and parts of Punjab from the rest of the country. Apart from General Harbaksh Singh, the 1965 war is remembered for the heroics of the Indian Air Force led by another legend, Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh and also scores of brave officers and men including the two Param Vir Chakras (PVC)—Sepoy Abdul Hamid and Lt Col Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently compared the surcharged atmosphere that exists in the country today to the heightened tensions prevailing prior to the 1965 conflict. He is correct perhaps to a point. However, India is better prepared in 2016 than it was in 1965, when the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri inspired the nation to stand up and face Pakistan. Shastri coined the slogan of Jai Jawan Jai Kisan and asked all Indians to miss a meal every Monday night in view of the tight economic situation we were in. A guest control order was notified, which prevented full meals to be served at weddings and other celebratory occasions. The hosts could invite a certain number of guests and could solely offer snacks. India was facing drought and famine in several places and the green revolution had not been ushered in at that point of time. Thus Modi is fortunate that he is presiding over the country which has sufficient resources and is not dependent on any external factors. This is a very big plus.

It also needs to be mentioned that the biggest war India has won was in 1971 when Indira Gandhi assisted by General Sam Manekshaw and others gave Pakistan a whopping drubbing, resulting in the creation of Bangladesh on the eastern side. Indira's feat was acknowledged even by her ample adversaries and both the RSS and Atal Behari Vajpayee, the leader of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh hailed the victory likening her to Goddess Durga. Indian Air Force also won its first PVC in that war and Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon's name is deeply enshrined in the annals of our history along with those of others such as Lt Arun Khetrapal, Albert Ekka and Hoshiar Singh.

While talking about the bravery of our soldiers, a special mention needs to be made of Air Commodore Mehar Singh, also known as Mehar Baba, a sobriquet coined by his colleagues. Had it not been for his dauntlessness of landing Harvard and Dakota aircraft in Poonch and Leh on under - prepared runways with our troops in 1948, the Pakistanis would have captured Kashmir. Mehar Baba quit the Air Force after a tiff with his superiors, but was subsequently awarded the IAF's first Mahavir Chakra. He was a saviour and it is such a pity that most Indians do not know of his existence. Bravehearts like him need to be remembered for their service to the nation. There are many unsung as well as decorated heroes of every war and the various regiments and squadrons swear by their achievements while initiating newcomers into the uncertain world of armed forces, where every soldier is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice, while defending his country. ***The Indian Armed forces have never let us down and will never do so. Jai Hind.*** Between us.

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