CHAPTER IV

RELEVANCE OF INDIAN ARTILLERY IN COUNTER INSURGENCY OPERATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

In the Indian context asymmetric approaches to military conflict primarily implies unconventional warfare viz terrorism, insurgency etc. as opposed to conventional warfare. Insurgency and terrorism seek to undermine a nation state and substitute governance with anarchy. Amongst the practitioners and propagators of this concept of warfare have been Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, Lettow, TE Lawrence, Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara and Osama Bin Laden among others. Che Guevara was perhaps the first to “argue for artificially accelerating popular grievance in order to prime an environment hospitable for insurgency”.1 In recent years terrorism has occupied an increasingly broad spectrum in the continuum of conflict with wide footprint across the continents.

In the late 20th century and the 21st century, insurgencies and terrorism have shown an upward trend worldwide. India has been affected by this growing menace since the independence. Our security forces have been increasingly involved in countering this form of conflict in one region of the country or other. In the prevailing international security milieu and in the context of recent conflicts in Afghanistan, all out conventional war of World War kind is gradually taking back seat. This is more so in the nuclear backdrop scenario prevailing in the Indian sub-continent which has often led to a perception that regular, conventionally armed militaries are gradually becoming less useable and will eventually take over the role of an ‘unsusable’ deterrent along with nuclear weapons. However, limited conventional operations to safeguard national territories or as a punitive response through integrated and orchestrated military action or out of area contingencies aimed at inflicting credible politico – military damage remain an acceptable option. Gradually the international opinion is veering towards a policy of ‘protectivism’, in which, armed forces are less accepted as an ‘instrument of state policy’ but accepted in terms of self defence and as a retaliatory action in protection of national pride, interests, sovereignty and to provide strong response to asymmetric threat beyond acceptable thresholds of national tolerance.

India stands at the cross-roads of geography wherein it is bordered with Pakistan to the west which practices asymmetric warfare or militancy as an ‘instrument of national
Afghanistan is not too far away, Sri Lanka to the south has just emerged out of decades of active insurgency which continues to have deep sentimental impact amongst the Tamil community in the country, to the east it has Bangladesh which is also coming out of the Jehadi influence propagated by the previous ruling elite which had serious security implication for India. China to the north is emerging as the most potent long term adversary with declared interest in the Indian land mass. In effect India is situated at the centre of the most disturbed and violent region in the world.

Counter insurgency operations are primarily low level operations, in a battlefield which is totally different from the conventional one. The major difference is in the realm of battle space that is congested with participants and non participants. It is cluttered with various kinds of arms, ammunition and fighters who are both regular and irregular. As the enemy and his deployments are not defined, the operations are contested using different tactics and are often limited in nature. Use of heavy firepower and air force is generally avoided to avoid collateral damage. Such operations have other ramifications like media interests, intervention of the international community etc.

India has been drawn into fighting both rural and urban insurgencies since independence. The simmering insurgency in the North-East dates back to pre-independence days. By 1960s it had taken deep roots and manifested itself resulting in violent exchanges between the insurgents and security forces. Indian Artillery’s tryst with insurgency dates back to 1960s when it was tasked, for the first time, to employ their artillery guns against the insurgents in the north east. Accordingly, in March 1966, 12 Field Regiment was ordered into operations and grouped with 61 Mountain Brigade to tame insurgency in Mizoram. 80 Field Battery of the regiment was despatched to Silchar while the remainder of the unit concentrated at Lathu Tilla in Assam. Subsequently, 82 Field Battery of the unit also joined 80 Field Battery for undertaking counter insurgency operations.

The operations of 61 Mountain Brigade were to be spearheaded by 3 Bihar Battalion. When the battalion was tasked to advance to Serchhip and clear pockets of insurgency and strongholds enroute it commenced its advance to Maipai on 8 March 1966, with 80 Field Battery supporting the battalion. The advance group reached Aizawl along with 82 Field Battery (6 guns) by dusk. The battalion encountered strong opposition at Vaiphei and after clearing it, reached 17 Border Road Task Force location, two miles north of Serchhip. The guns were deployed and insurgent strongholds at Serchhip and
Bawktary were engaged with artillery fire. A section (3 guns) of 82 Field Battery was then moved to an area ahead of Aizawl where it engaged insurgent hideout at road junction at Mile 88. On 11 March, operations to clear Serchhip commenced with a section of 82 Field Battery redeployed to execute harassing fire tasks on the insurgents. It had telling effect and resulted in withdrawal of the insurgents in the area.4

On 14 March, 82 Field Battery was grouped with a task force of two companies of 8 Sikh, to engage hostiles in area Chingship. Registration of targets by artillery was carried out but, as the attack was to commence, the operation was terminated since the insurgents ran away from the area. In these operations, 12 Field Regiment supported the infantry through dense jungle and over marshy jungle tracks pushing the insurgents back, whenever they reorganised to give a fight.5

59 Mountain Regiment was involved in similar operations against the insurgents in Nagaland. 592 Mountain Battery of this unit supported operations of 8 Dogra for raid on hostile camp at Totok in Nagaland.6 The units also carried out infantry-oriented operations that included cordon and search, road opening, and convoy protection duties. At this time Pt Jawaharlal Nehru decided to discontinue with the use of artillery fire against the insurgents. Now the artillery units were employed extensively on infantry role in Counter Insurgency operations. Artillery undertook counter insurgency tasks in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere over next decades. In later years, artillery employment manifested into larger strength and role which included regimental and artillery brigade level operations in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast. By 1998, at any one time not less than ten to eleven artillery brigades were involved in Counter Insurgency operations across the country.

As the years passed by, artillery regiments and brigades operating on infantry role picked up infantry tactics and methods of operation and started producing excellent results. Presently all the artillery brigades in Jammu and Kashmir and some in the North Eastern states continue to be engaged in active Counter Insurgency operations with quite a few infantry battalions under command. Notably counter insurgency tasks for the artillery have been in addition to its conventional artillery role. It goes to the credit of the Regiment of Artillery that they undertook such diverse duties with utter commitment and achieved enviable results. This is evident from the large number of operational successes and gallantry awards including Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakras, Shaurya Chakras, Sena Medals and others being awarded to the officers and men of the Regiment of Artillery. Large
numbers of artillery units in counter insurgency operations have been bestowed upon the honours of the Chief of the Army Staff Unit Citation and General Officer Commanding-in-Chief’s Unit Appreciation for their exemplary performance in Counter Insurgency operations. Some of the notable actions by the artillery units on counter insurgency role that made deep impact on the army’s overall achievements are described in succeeding paragraphs.

Lohar Majra in Nabha district lasting well over three hours. In this operation Hav Baban Singh and Gunner Muthu Swamy eliminated two terrorists. Large quantities of arms and ammunition were recovered from the terrorists.  

During the challenging period of Punjab militancy during 1991-95 many army divisions and brigades along with their infantry, artillery and other components were rushed to control the situation. Accordingly, large number of artillery regiments too moved to Punjab and rendered selfless service to the nation.

Jammu & Kashmir

Genesis of the insurgency situation in Jammu and Kashmir dates back to 1948 when Pakistan commenced overt and covert interference in the region; which led to wars/conflict in 1947-48, 1965, 1971, and 1999. However, the grass-root level insurgency in Kashmir got impetus around 1987 when the state assembly elections were disputed. Pakistan realized that an opportunity to destabilize J&K has come in its way, and hence it provided overt and covert support to some elements of local political groups, who formed ‘terrorist wings’. Over the years the nature of the insurgency in J&K has transformed into one that is orchestrated by Pakistan through foreign terrorists. Most of the terrorist organisations viz Lashkar-e-Taiyaba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Hizbul Mujahedeen (HM), etc., now operating in J&K are based in Pakistan and mostly composed of foreign mercenaries. Indian army has been involved in countering the threat from these subversive and divisive elements for many years. In this responsibility, the Regiment of Artillery’s role has been substantial. It has been undertaking both conventional and infantry tasks and has achieved spectacular results, much unknown to the citizen of India. Few of the notable counter insurgency operations by the artillery in J&K are described in the succeeding paragraphs to bring forth the importance of artillery towards control of insurgency in India.
93 Field Regiment was inducted in Kashmir valley in 1994. Soon it started fighting the militants in various operations and achieved enviable results. On 6 September 1994 the in militant infested Zakura area in the Srinagar city, column of the unit led by Capt SS Sandhu eliminated three Afghan mercenaries. In this operation, Maj SS Sandhu and Hav V Rathinam were awarded Sena Medal. Hav A Govinda Rao, L/Nk BP Shinde and L/Nk M Siddharthan made the supreme sacrifice during these operations, for which they were awarded the Sena Medal, posthumously. The hard work put in by the jawans of the regiment over three years resulted in recoveries of two Rocket Launchers, ninety one AK-47/56 rifles, 38 pistols, 11 other weapons, 290 kg of explosive, around 4,000 rounds of ammunition and 117 hand grenades. Other achievements of the unit included deactivation of 96 IEDs, elimination of 30 terrorists, apprehension of 84 terrorists, surrender by 32 terrorists and apprehension of 238 over-ground workers (OGW) of various terrorist organisations. For this stellar performance the Regiment was awarded Victor Force Excellence in Operation Banner and Director General Artillery Shield in 1997, GOC-in-C Northern Command’s Unit Appreciation, and COAS Unit Citation in 1998. The actions by this unit resulted in breaking the back of militants in Srinagar area for a considerable period of time.

6 Medium Regiment was inducted for counter insurgency operations in Rajouri sector of J&K in 2003. It replaced 52 Rashtriya Rifles in Bhimber Gali and operated under a Mountain Brigade. As the situation deteriorated along the Line of Control (LC) with Pakistan engaging our defences with mortar and artillery fire, the regiment moved to its conventional artillery posts and started providing telling reply to Pakistani firing from 11 September 2003. It caused substantial losses on the enemy. Thereafter Pakistani army stopped using artillery and mortars against Indian troops and civilians in the sector. On 14 December, the unit launched a search and destroy mission and killed four terrorists hiding in high altitude areas of Pir Panjal ranges. However, in this operation Sepoy Lokesh Kumar of the unit was killed in counter firing by the terrorists.

11 Field Regiment undertook Counter Insurgency commitments in the Kashmir valley from April 1997 to June 1999. In June 1997 the regiment apprehended a Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) activist Javed Ahmed Tota along with JKLF donation pads of Rs 35 lakh face value. The individual turned out to be one of the important finance functionaries of the organisation. Later, in an encounter, the regiment eliminated a self-styled battalion commander of Hizbul Mujahedeen (HM) group in village
Chuntipathri. Subsequently it launched a well-coordinated operation in area Badrakut in South Kashmir between 13 and 20 October 1998 and seized 610 kg of RDX and 270 kg of plastic explosives, which surpassed all past records of explosive seizures in the valley. Thus, it thwarted the Pakistani ISI game plan of carrying out extensive disruption in the region. The unit was also successful in capturing five car bombs after a fierce encounter in June 1999 in which 250 kg of plastic explosives were recovered. In this operation a terrorist with a weapon was apprehended while two others were killed. The information provided by the apprehended terrorists resulted in apprehension or elimination of 31 terrorists, mostly of foreign origin. The regiment was also actively involved in trans-line of control firing to silence enemy guns and mortars that were firing on own locations and villages in Uri sector between 1998 and 2003. It caused heavy casualties on the enemy. Pakistani Army got the lesson and did not venture such misadventure for quite a sometime.  

80 Field Regiment and 306 Light Regiment operated in Poonch Sector in Jammu division from 1991 to 1993. During its tenure it got the opportunity to use its guns effectively in actual combat with the Pakistani army, when it supported 93 Infantry Brigade and 192 Mountain Brigade for re-capture of Kirni village between 28 August and 3 September 1991. The scholar had taken part in this attack on the Pakistani Post as the Chief Operations Officer (Brigade Major) of 192 Mountain Brigade. Notwithstanding the enemy counter-bombardment, Indian artillery fire was instrumental in beating back four enemy counterattacks on the night of 1 September 1991. Earlier on 28 August 1991, 80 Field Regiment had dismantled one 75/24mm gun and carried it nearly two km up a mountain track and deployed it in direct firing role. The gun engaged Pakistani army defences and counter attacking infantry, causing great consternation in the enemy ranks. The scholar was witness to the battlefield being littered with the dead and injured bodies of around 80 Pakistani soldiers. The in-charge of this gun, Hav S Nagarajan was awarded Sena Medal.  

166 Field Regiment moved to Kargil after completion of its tenure in Siachen. It was operationally placed under HQ 121 Infantry Brigade located in Kargil. During its tenure in Kargil the regiment engaged the enemy with artillery fire on several occasions, inflicting telling damages to its defences and its direct firing weapons deployed along the line of control. The regiment bagged a good share of awards. L/Nk Satnam Singh was awarded Vir Chakra. Col Raman Dhawan, Maj SN Ubgade, Maj MPS Mendonca, Maj SK
Sharma, 2/Lt RN Tiwari, Sub Madan Singh, and Nb Sub Harpal Singh were awarded Sena Medals.

169 Field Regiment was inducted in the Kashmir valley in July 1992 when militancy was at its peak. In the atmosphere as was prevailing then, the unit adapted itself to face the gauntlet thrown by the terrorists within an impressive timeframe. It carried out multifarious operations including cordon and search, raids, ambushes, road opening duties, protection of a sensitive army petroleum depot and higher headquarters, as also neutralization of militants in its area of responsibility. The unit was able to achieve commendable results in its drive against the terrorists. In one of its numerous successful operations, the unit apprehended Mohammed Sheikh Yaqoob, the self-styled Divisional Commander of Al-Jehad for Anantnag and Pulwama districts. The arrest created a vacuum in the ranks of Al-Jehad, which became a defunct group. The unit was instrumental in apprehension of 128 local terrorists who were in the process of crossing over to Pakistan in August 1993, for training in terrorist camps in the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

The unit achieved an enviable record by earning twenty five awards. The awards included two Sena medals, fourteen Chief of the Army Staff Commendation Cards and nine Army Commander Commendation Cards. The unit was awarded Chief of the Army Staff Unit Citation on 15 January 1996. The unit was also presented with J&K Governor’s Silver Salver in recognition of its excellent performance in anti insurgency operations in the Valley by Gen KV Krishna Rao, the Governor of J&K.

173 Field Regiment served in the north Kashmir region from September 1995 to 1997 primarily on counter insurgency tasks. It was also tasked to undertake management of the line of control in the difficult high altitude areas of Northern Gullies and Machhal sectors of North Kashmir. In one occasion, it destroyed Pakistani bunkers by artillery fire as retaliation to their actions thereby causing heavy losses. Later, the unit was inducted in the general area of Kalakot in Rajouri district during 2001. On 1 November 2001, following an intelligence input that terrorists were moving in general area of Dambal Nala near village Dahot near Kalakot town, three search parties of the regiment were launched under Lt Gautam Jain, Lt Amit Samanta and Lt RK Jha. The operations commenced next morning. As the cordon was being laid, terrorists opened fire with automatic weapons. Heavy exchange of fire ensued wherein Lt Gautam Jain, while leading the charge, was fatally injured by a volley of bullets. Nk Bhagwan Singh, in his effort to rescue his leader, met with similar fate. While the regiment was able to eliminate three terrorists and recover
a huge cache of arms and ammunition, it lost two valiant soldiers: Lt Gautam Jain and Nk Bhagwan Singh. They were awarded the Sena Medal, posthumously.  

194 Field Regiment served in the Kashmir valley between April 1995 and November 1996. It operated in downtown Srinagar which possibly had the largest concentration of terrorists in the Kashmir valley. The unit was also tasked to assist in the Amarnath Yatra for the devotees during July and August, in the face of serious threats from Hizbul Mujahedeen and Harkut-ul-Ansar terrorist groups. The Yatra passed off peacefully without any untoward incident. On return from Amarnath Yatra duties, the unit was back to counter insurgency operations and notched up an enviable record. The success included killing of five terrorists, apprehension of two terrorists and recovery of an Automatic Grenade Launcher, one Universal Machine Gun, two Pika automatic guns, six AK-47/56 rifles, one carbine, ten pistols, nine 12 bore guns, eight radio sets, two RPG, around 1,400 rounds of ammunition, twenty grenades, around 300 IED detonators and one Night Vision Device. Between October 1999 and May 2003 while operating in Poonch sector the unit achievements included recovery of five weapons, one rocket launcher and substantial quantity of ammunition.

207 Medium Regiment joined 28 Artillery Brigade in 2003 and was located in the high altitude and remote Gurez sector in North Kashmir. Between 21 and 30 September the unit took part in a joint operation under 109 Infantry Brigade, which resulted in the killing of twenty Pakistan terrorists and recovery of huge cache of arms and ammunition. The unit was involved in trans-border artillery firing on 13 October between 10 and 16 July 2005 which resulted in heavy destruction of Pakistani defences. Later a detachment of the unit took part in a joint operation with Dogra Scouts and 11 Sikh which resulted in the elimination of sixteen infiltrating terrorists and recovery of huge quantity of arms and ammunition.

299 Field Regiment moved to Kashmir valley for its second tenure in December 1991 and was placed under command of 8 Mountain Artillery Brigade. During its tenure in the Kashmir valley, the unit blazed a trail of exceptional success. Its first breakthrough came on 28 May 1992, when a quick dedicated group from the regiment swooped down on a tailor shop in Pattan town and recovered a pistol with ammunition. Success after success followed thereafter, resulting in more apprehensions, eliminations, and recoveries. However, these were not without sacrifices, Capt Dhanwant Sharma, Capt Ajit Singh VrC, Nk Munna Lal and Gnr Chittarsen made the supreme sacrifice in an operation near Sopore
on 22 June 1994. If records are any indication of a unit’s performance, then the unit achieved enviable standards. It eliminated twenty terrorists—mostly foreign mercenaries, and apprehended 61; recovered sixty weapons and large amount of ammunition and stores used by terrorists. Among individual honours, it made a tally of one Kirti Chakra, Seven Sena Medals, six COAS Commendation Cards and two General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command Commendation Cards.21

312 Field Regiment was inducted into the Kashmir valley on 12 April 1992. The unit, during its tenure of a little over three years in the valley, undertook over six hundred fifty anti-terrorist operations with incredible success. The trend set by the unit put artillery units on an equal footing with the infantry operating in the valley. The intelligence network established by the unit and the innovative styles of operation were appreciated at the highest levels. The success achieved enlarged the circle of operation of the unit much beyond the stipulated area of responsibility, extending to Baramulla, Sopore, Anantnag, Tral, Srinagar Lal Chowk, Gund, etc. By the end of its tenure the unit had eliminated sixty three Pakistan-trained terrorists, fifty seven locally trained terrorists and had apprehended one hundred and six persons trying to cross-over into POK for arms training. Weapons, ammunition and other warlike stores recovered included eighty eight weapons of all types, fifty five grenades, thirteen IEDs and a large quantity of ammunition. The unit also had the credit of having destroyed twenty one terrorist hideouts.22

Over past few decades many artillery units were inducted in J&K to undertake dual task of engaging enemy guns, mortars and defences when necessary simultaneously, to undertake infantry type counter insurgency operation. They were successful in all their endeavours. They thus greatly enhanced the Comprehensive Military Power of the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir.

**North Eastern States**

North East India represents multi-dimensional and multi-racial culture. The insurgency in the region is the oldest faced by India and dates back to pre-independence period when Angami Zapu Phizo requested the British government to accord independence status to Nagaland. Various insurgent groups in the region looking for independence or autonomy have been active for decades. Indian security forces led by the Indian Army and the Assam Rifles were inducted for undertaking counter-insurgency operation and to ensure sovereignty of the nation.
The state of Assam has been the gateway to the north eastern states. Almost all the militant groups in the north east have had shelter, hideout, etc., in Assam. 1980s witnessed spurt of militancy in the state due to the establishment of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), who sought independence of Assam. Other groups representing various tribal communities viz Dimasa, Bodo, Adivasi, Karbi, etc., also took to arms to seek autonomy. All of these gradually became violent and indulged in killing, kidnapping, extortion, etc. During late 1980s and 1990s the law and order in the state appeared to be going out of hand. Accordingly, the Govt of India and the Govt of Assam decided to launch concerted anti-insurgency operations in the state. The initial operation was code named ‘Bajrang’, which was followed by ‘Rhino’. During this time the counter-insurgency operations in south Arunachal Pradesh districts of Tirap and Changlang, Nagaland and Manipur was also undertaken and was code-named Operation Orchid. The scholar has personally taken part in many anti-insurgency operations in the rural insurgency prone region of South Arunachal Pradesh during 1989 and 1990. Later he was in-charge of six Upper Assam districts for undertaking anti-insurgency operations, from 2003 to 2005 as the Brigade Commander, 2 Mountain Artillery Brigade. Some of the important actions by the artillery units in Assam that immensely strengthened the sovereignty of India were researched and is described in the succeeding paragraphs.

17 (Para) Field Regiment was inducted into insurgency prone North Cachar Hill region in Assam and Jiribam in Manipur in 2000. Its exceptional management of the environment and relentless operations against the terrorists resulted in enviable operational results. In a short time the operational successes counted over twenty five elimination of militants, more than forty apprehensions and recovery of over forty five weapons that included modern automatic weapons. The unit was awarded the prestigious Chief of Army Staff Unit Citation for successful counter insurgency tenure in the North East.21

42 Field Regiment was inducted in Assam in 2003 and operated in Nagaon district. It had several successful operations in the jungles of Karbi Anglong and in Nagaon district. In a daring operation by its Shankardev Nagar column located close to Nagaon town, it apprehended two top Karbi insurgents with large quantity of arms and ammunition on 11 December 2003. On interrogation, these terrorists disclosed that there were two important military camps in Karbi Anglong jungles. The next day, a midnight raid was launched with the scholar in the lead as the brigade commander of the artillery brigade. The raid was conducted on the camp in deep jungle near the Assam-Meghalaya
border which was preceded by a long trek through the deep forest in the area. It was a cordon, seek and destroy operation. An intense firefight began by around midnight when the cordon around the terrorist camp was being established. In the firefight, a self styled militant commander who was assisting the chairman of the organisation was killed. Two cadres of the outfit were also apprehended. Three automatic weapons, ammunition and explosives were recovered in the operation. The regiment never looked back after this successful operation and registered numerous successes, specially in militant infested Nagaon and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam.  

94 Field Regiment joined counter insurgency operations in the Upper Assam during 2003 and was located near Jorhat town in Upper Assam. It served for over the next three and a half years in Operation Rhino under the command of the scholar. The unit blazed a trail of enviable successes in counter insurgency operations. It was split into three and, sometimes, four columns; one each at Lumding, Diphu, and Kaziranga, atleast 70 to 80 km from the regiment headquarters. The unit under Col Surinder Kumar had the terrorists run for cover. It is a recorded fact that during its tenure there was hardly any week that the unit did not produce a major apprehension, surrender, or seizure of arms and ammunition. The unit was awarded the Chief of Army Staff Unit Citation for counter insurgency operations on the Army Day in 2006. It was awarded as many as thirty two gallantry awards.  

313 Field Regiment was assigned an operational role in the sensitive districts of Lower Assam during 1996. During its tenure the unit eliminated eight hardcore militants and apprehended fifty one. It also captured seven weapons and large quantities of ammunition and explosives. The unit has the distinction of destroying the so-called Eastern Command Headquarters of Bodo Security Force. The operation was undertaken on 18 August 1996 under Col MK Tyagi, assisted by Lt Col MK Menon and Maj Jaya Kumar S and one column of the regiment. The raiding party apprehended eight militants and also recovered large quantities of arms and ammunition. In another operation on the night of 23 October, the unit’s quick reaction team of two officers, two junior commissioned officers and 20 other ranks raided an ULFA hideout in Ajra village in Nalbari district of Lower Assam and apprehended ULFA leaders engaged in a meeting there. In yet another operation on 15 February 1997 at Japarkuchi village in Nalbari, 2/Lt Rohit Kushwaha of the unit grappled with a fleeing ULFA and apprehended him. The individual was later identified as the so-called Chairman of North East Council of ULFA.
The apprehended terrorist was later booked under the National Security Act by the Government of Assam. Subsequently, the unit moved to Darrang district of Assam in July 1997. The unit set up an ambush on the night of 5 August 1997 near Mangaldai town where they were successful in eliminating the so-called Finance Secretary and Publicity Secretary of the Regional Council of ULFA. The unit was awarded the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command Unit Appreciation on 28 January 1998.

**Comments**

Contribution of artillery units operating in the militancy affected states in J&K, Punjab and the northeast has been creditable. The commitment continues in J&K and the northeastern states. Each and every unit that has served in the region has left its footprint by undertaking well-planned and successful operations, reaching out to the locals and extending a helping hand through various welfare schemes like construction of schools, computer centres, playgrounds, undertaking medical and veterinary camps, etc., under Operation Sadbhavna. These units have stood by the local people during flood and other calamities. These efforts have been greatly appreciated by the local population and helped in ensuring peace and tranquility in the area as it turned the local population towards national mainstream. *The present situation in Assam where peace has prevailed and almost all the major and minor insurgent groups have started talking to the government for mitigation of their grievances, rather than taking to the guns, Regiment of Artillery can justifiably be proud of its role for the current peaceful situation.*

In the final analysis, it emerges that the Indian Artillery’s role in counter insurgency operations in the country signifies its reach and effect towards safeguarding sovereignty of the country. In fact the artillery units and brigades operate in counter insurgency situations in three levels; on infantry role to fight the militants on the ground, engaging of the enemy across borders by artillery fire thereby causing unacceptable damage on the enemy’s militant launch pads, gun areas and localities, and helping local population in their areas of responsibility by undertaking projects that are beneficial to local population thus winning their hearts and minds. The results of these welfare initiatives in remote areas have been beyond expectation and have resulted in motivating the local population to move away from the militants and join in the national mainstream.

The role reversal of artillery units as described in this Chapter, from asymmetrical warfare to conventional warfare and vice versa is an example of how almost all the
artillery units in J&K and the north east have become more and more relevant to all the emerging challenges being faced by the army. It thus became a forced multiplier to enhance the Comprehensive Military Power of the army in counter insurgency operations.

**Case Studies**

**Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, the role of artillery of foreign armies exemplifies its efficacy in international effort against insurgency. It is well established that the present US led NATO forces are finding great difficulty to even operationally sustain itself wherein increasingly artillery is becoming their saviour. The case study aims at analysing the role of artillery towards force multiplier in Afghanistan.

**Case Study I : Soviet Army Operations**

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during December 1979 was the beginning of large scale employment of artillery in conventional role in counter insurgency environment. In Afghanistan, Soviet Army undertook anti-insurgency operations pitting technologically advanced mechanized forces against motivated Afghan fighters. While the aim of the Soviet invasion was to provide stable communist government and substantially empower the Afghan Armed Forces to take on the Mujahedeen, they depended much on massed artillery fire to destroy them. However, since the Afghan Mujahedeen did not take fixed defences on the ground, this strategy proved unsuccessful. Soviet Army's use of massed artillery against the locals was a brutal, indiscriminate and tactically weak policy that alienated the local population. As the war progressed and Taliban came into being, the Soviet Army did modify their tactics, force structure and training to fight the Afghan insurgents. In these operations artillery still played a significant role in evolving Soviet Army's counter-insurgency tactics, techniques and procedures. In fact, it became dominant element of the Soviet combat power in Afghanistan, when the tanks on which the Soviet Army depended so much failed to be of much help. This led to the military analysts of that time to describe the Soviet ground forces as an artillery army with lot of tanks. While tanks had limited value in neutralizing the Mujahedeen, artillery continued to be mainstay for employment of its combat power, reflecting enormous impact of artillery on the Comprehensive Military Power of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan.
Analysis

Afghanistan was a different war for the Soviet army as compared to their main employment areas in Europe. The problems faced by the Soviet Artillery in Afghanistan against Mujahedeen were as follows :-

- There were hardly any static targets.
- While the Soviet Artillery was trained to obliterate larger areas, the basic requirement for undertaking counter insurgency operations was for precision artillery strikes with minimal collateral damage. Soviet Artillery lacked this capability.
- Templating of Soviet Artillery’s European operational strategy and tactics for Afghanistan operations did not work and turned out to be a disaster.
- Logistics extending from USSR to Afghanistan was costly, unmanageable and open to interdiction by the Taliban and Mujahedeen, it thus became a failure and affected the ground operations and troop morale adversely.

In counter insurgency operations, as mentioned earlier, artillery can only be operationally effective if the militants and their hideouts are destroyed by precision strike with the least collateral damage. This lesson was learnt by the Soviet Army, though belated when they introduced the laser-guided “Smel Chak” (dare-devil) artillery mortar bombs. The massive 2S4 240mm mortars mounted on a tank chassis proved effective in destroying Mujahedeen strong points and fortifications located in caves and terrain folds that even howitzers could not engage. However, it was too little and too late.

In the Panjshir valley the mujahedeen were strongly entrenched and were causing heavy casualties on the Russian army. It was then decided to destroy their hideout. The hideout was located near the Panjshir valley and garrisoned by Mujahedeen troops of Ahmed Shah Masood. The artillery officer decided to use 2S4 self-propelled mortar battery. Accordingly, ground laser – guided “Smel Chak” round was fired. The entire battery fire caused unacceptable casualties on the mujahedeen in the vicinity of the hideout. Later, as the technology improved, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) like Predator came into the war zone and is being used by the NATO forces for pinpoint destruction of militants in the NWFP and Afghanistan.

Soviet army also used artillery intensively to ambush Mujahedeen supply convoys and to support ground ambushes, illumination of the operational zone and destruction of the Mujahedeen assembly areas. They also used artillery for convoy escort duties and,
during its withdrawal from Afghanistan. At one stage the Soviet Generals attempted to substitute firepower with ground manoeuvre by the infantry and tanks. However, it failed as manoeuvre without artillery and aircraft fire cannot be decisive.

**Lesson Learnt**

The lesson that can be drawn from the Soviet experience in Afghanistan is that, in large scale insurgencies artillery can be effective only if it is employed using doctrines and tactics related to the ground situation, utilising equipment and ammunition that reduces collateral damage and is precision in nature. Artillery operations should be supported by clarity in operational and strategic doctrine, political and diplomatic initiatives. It is a hugely effective arm if used carefully.

**Case Study II : Royal Artillery Operations**

Once the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)\(^{30}\) was inducted in Afghanistan during December 2001, the ground scenario underwent a substantial change wherein the Pakhtoon inhabited southern Afghanistan that was under greater ISI influence became the hub of Talibani resistance.

British Army was deployed in the insurgency prone Helmund province in southern Afghanistan. Its experience in handling artillery in operations against the Taliban is a discourse of complexity of ground situation and challenges of a very different kind. During its deployment it saw introduction of many technologically advanced artillery weapon systems, not seen in battlefields earlier.\(^{31}\)

**Employment Philosophy**

The Royal Artillery has followed an employment philosophy of “Strike less, Find more and Attack selectively”. Accordingly, it has been using technology for better understanding of the target, resulting in more precision attacks and reducing suppression fire which wasted ammunition and increased collateral damage. As a concept, it was decided to use heavy volume of artillery fires only when under attack. Decentralization of artillery for better integration of joint and multinational force proved successful and became the bedrock of combined warfare concept.
**Operational Challenges**

The most violent resistance the ISAF encountered has been in the Southern Afghanistan. As the might of IDSF was exhibited on the ground, the area of operations gradually got limited towards the urban areas as the Taliban was cornered and encircled. The shrinking core area of operation made employment of artillery complex and difficult since ensuring minimal collateral damage became more and more difficult. To deal with the situation, newly introduced precision ammunitions were employed, that proved successful. Presently, target identification, artillery intelligence and logistic chain are the major challenges that the Royal Artillery faces every day. The surprise factor has remained key to success of counter insurgency operations as much as in conventional operations. Technology has thus become a prime factor for success wherein Royal Artillery, with its precision ammunition, define outcome of a skirmish/battle due to its ability to surprise Taliban and causing substantial casualty.

Artillery provided the British Army the flexibility to engage multiple targets simultaneously. Taliban has suffered some major losses in the region. It impacted the morale of Taliban to an extent that Pakistani ISI had to intervene and revive it in the region.

While employing artillery in Afghanistan, the Royal Artillery maintains a balance between conventional, enduring and expeditionary requirements. To achieve enduring results, artillery is employed to ensure area saturation. In so-far expeditionary requirements are concerned, employment of artillery is undertaken as a part of joint service operations with the Air Force. Both these concepts have worked well within the limitations of sub-conventional warfare.

**Lesson Learnt**

It is an established fact the emerging challenges give rise to newer solutions. Similar is the case of employment of artillery firepower for counter-insurgency operations. Afghanistan and Iraq operations against the militants have reaffirmed the need to have surgical ground based artillery strikes against the insurgents, to achieve sustainable results. This posed a challenge for technology which realigned its research and development efforts to field newer breed of artillery ammunition delivery means and smart ammunitions. The ones that has proved effective are as follows :-
• **Guided Munition.** These are programmable artillery munitions that destroy the target using active homing device. Royal Artillery has used this ammunition to destroy Taliban hideouts during April 2012.

• **Loitering Munition.** These are artillery shells which when fired get onto loitering mode for a limited period by using inbuilt guidance inputs and thrust vectors. It gets activated on finding its programmed target on ground, which is then attacked and destroyed. It is useful for destroying fleeting and mobile targets. Under trial ‘Fire Shadow’ loitering munition system is reportedly having a range of 50 km and an endurance of 3 hrs. It can achieve substantial surprise on the enemy.

• **Guided MLRS.** Multiple Launcher Rocket System (MLRS) is in use in many modern armies, including India. It is primarily an area weapon which causes extensive damage over large areas. It is therefore not suitable for counter-insurgency operations due to heavy collateral damage. A new set of ammunition and systems developed for MLRS fires the rockets that are guided by using laser and other methods of modern active guidance systems. It is reported that in trials the system has achieved a range of nearly 90 km. It is accurate, having trimode warhead ensuring low collateral damage and a much reduced safety distance.

• **Armed Tactical Air Vehicle.** It is effective for counter-insurgency operations. The entire fuselage is loaded with explosives which becomes an artillery shell when attacking a pre-designated target. It is expensive but effective.

**Comments**

While employment of large armies for World War type wars has diminished in the 21st Century, emergence of sub-conventional warfare is on the rise. Employment of artillery to control such situations as part of overall doctrine has followed naturally. So far Indian Army is concerned, while use of artillery against own countrymen is not contemplated, employment of artillery in ‘out of area contingencies viz foreign territories can well become a part of its doctrine. Success of artillery in counter insurgency operations primarily in infantry role would depend on specialized equipment and training of personnel. Artillery would thus continue to be a substantive part of the nation’s effort in
taming insurgency. The two Case Studies discussed in this chapter have substantiated the necessity of artillery in counter insurgency operations and thus its relationship towards the Comprehensive Military Power of the army that it supports.

2 Regiment History folder No RHF/65/12 FD/RAA of 12 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Regiment History folder No RHF/97/59 MTN/RAA of 59 Mountain Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
7 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 265 and Regiment History folder No RHF/292/124 SATA/RAA of 124 Surveillance and Target Acquisition Battery held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
8 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 273 & 274 and Regiment History folder No RHF/123/93 FD/RAA of 93 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 268 and Regiment History folder No RHF/59/6 MED/RAA of 6 Medium Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
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13 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 271 and Regiment History folder No RHF/118/80 FD/RAA of 80 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
14 A Mukherjee, Colonel, God of War (1st Edition), Lancer Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 222 and Regiment History folder No RHF/165/166 FD/RAA of 166 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 277 and Regiment History folder No RHF/172/173 FD/RAA of 173 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
19 A Mukherjee, Colonel, God of War (1st Edition), Lancer Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 224 and Regiment History folder No RHF/181/194 FD/RAA of 194 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.
20 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 284 and Regiment History folder No RHF/189/207 MED/RAA of 207 Medium Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

21 A Mukherjee, Colonel, God of War (1st Edition), Lancer Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 227 & 228 and Regiment History folder No RHF/229/299 FD/RAA of 299 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

22 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 288 & 289 and Regiment History folder No RHF/237/312 FD/RAA of 312 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

23 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 294 and Regiment History folder No RHF/70/17 PARA/RAA of 17 (Para) Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

24 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 294 & 295 and Regiment History folder No RHF/88/42 FD/RAA of 42 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

25 A Mukherjee, Major General, God of War (2nd Edition), Akshay Media, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 297 & 298 and Regiment History folder No RHF/124/94 FD/RAA of 94 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

26 A Mukherjee, Colonel, God of War (1st Edition), Lancer Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 249 & 250 and Regiment History folder No RHF/238/313 FD/RAA of 313 Field Regiment held with the Regiment of Artillery Association, Nasik.

27 Wikipedia the free encyclopedia, Soviet War In Afghanistan (December 1979 to February 1980: Occupation), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_war_in_Afghanistan and as a part of this research project, the author had the opportunity to discuss these issues with HE Mr Alexander M Kadakin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of India, Admiral Mike Mullen the then Chairman of Joint Chief of Staff US Armed Forces, Gen Sir Richard Dannat, ex-Chief of the General Staff, British Army and Lt Gen Ken Gillespie, Chief of Australian Army in the National Defence College, New Delhi during 2010. These meetings were organized by the Commandant NDC, New Delhi as part of this PhD project. Based on discussions the author has included two “Case Studies” signifying use of artillery in counter insurgency operations in Afghanistan, pertaining to soviet and the British Army.


29 Ibid and A Beletskiy, Senior Lieutenant of Soviet Artillery in Afghanistan, The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan, writes of his personal experience of employing his 2S4 mortar battery against a Mujahedeen stronghold that normal field artillery could not engage.


31 This Case Study has been developed based on the author’s discussions on the subject with Gen Sir Richard Dannat, ex-Chief of General Staff of British Army and Lt Gen Ken Gillespie, Chief of Australian Army in National Defence College, New Delhi, 2010, who had also sent a logistics battalion to Afghanistan.