

The Role of the BSF in the Liberation Struggle – 1971

The BSF played an important and vital role in the liberation of Bangladesh in the year 1971. Shri K F Rustomji, Director General, BSF sensed that the ferment in East Pakistan was bound to develop into an uncontrollable mass agitation and BSF must act vigorously and decisively at the right moment. In order to achieve this, training was given the highest priority and strenuous efforts were made to remove the deficiencies in arms and equipments. BSF officers under the dynamic leadership of Shri Golak Majumdar, IG quickly established trans-border contacts and revived border intelligence developed over the years. The crackdown on the Awami League led to revolt of Bengali Officers in the Pak Army, Police and general administration. BSF was then tasked by the Govt to organize the resistance movement by Bengali officers. There was urgent need for Arms, Amns and other stores which were to be provided by BSF. DG BSF positioned additional units and officers at strategic points on the border. Contact with Awami League leaders were established. They were invited to Delhi as otherwise they would have been killed. They were taken to 2- B Lord Sinha Road, Calcutta, the then Officers' Mess of BSF, for discussion and other strategic planning and subsequently to Delhi. These leaders had several round of talks and they also met the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, there were many other leaders who were requested to come to India from various districts of East Pakistan. Mr. Rustomji selected Mujibnagar to be the place where liberation of Bangladesh was to be proclaimed, due to its strategic advantages. BSF officials were entrusted with duties of securing the venue, transporting reporters including that of foreign media, the leaders and many followers of the liberation struggle. At that time, refugees from various parts had poured in, but the administration was not ready for their reception. The first wave was to be tackled by BSF with the help of district officers and volunteer bodies. BSF doctors inoculated the refugees for cholera and small pox. Raids deep into East Pakistan by BSF caused harassment of Pak Army units and kept them constantly on their toes. The Muktibahini with the support of 18 Bn BSF which was airlifted from Jodhpur to Calcutta swooped down on Jhingargacha and Navaron. Both Muktibahini and BSF suffered casualties since it was their first exposure to the war. Undeterred, the valiant 18 Bn BSF cleared a large area astride the Jossore road. They could

hoist Bangladeshi flag and keep the enemy at bay till the fall of Jossore. BSF conducted the movement of international journalists based at Calcutta to border areas thereby the movement got International publicity. Col Biswas, the Chief Law Officer of BSF formulated the first draft of the Constitution of Bangladesh which was developed subsequently by other eminent barristers of Calcutta. Contribution of BSF in shaping the flag of new Bangladesh and selection of national anthem was immense. Mr. Ahmed Ali, Pak DHC was won over and got declared as Bangladesh DHC by motivation and support by BSF officials led by Shri Golak Majumdar, then IG West Bengal Ftr. That resulted into lowering of Pak flag and hoisting of Bangladeshi flag at Calcutta, which gave the provisional Govt status and recognition. When these developments were taking place in Calcutta, BSF soldiers along with Muktibahini were engaged in causing mass casualties and harassment to Pak Army deep inside East Pakistan. PNS Jossore which used to cross the border along Ichhamati and target BOP Shamsheernagar was struck by BSF with 30 mm guns. In retaliation Pak soldiers targeted BSF patrol vessel ML Padma and damaged it severely. At Petrapole, our position was encircled by BD territory on three sides. As a result of overwhelming enthusiasm shown by highly motivated BSF troops with utter disregard to own life, villages on either side were overrun. Mortar fire by Pak troops took away precious lives of jawans deployed at Khalpara BOP. From September onwards BSF was entrusted with the additional task of collecting military intelligence and spotting of enemy aircrafts. Due to providing of valuable intelligence by BSF troops, three Pak Saberjets could be shot down by IAF hunters. BSF battalions marched inside Bangladesh side by side with the Army from all directions when open war started. 72 Bn went to Jossore and Khulna with Major Gen Dalbir Singh. 73 Bn and 78 Bn accompanied Major Gen L S Sehal's division from the north and 70 and 77 Bn from the south. When the army marched forward only a token strength was left on the border following regrouping of BOPs. BSF was given independent tasks like the taking of enemy positions, guarding arsenals, securing lines of communications and restoring civil administration in captured towns. BSF DIGs marched alongside the Army divisions. Rajsahi was reduced by the BSF before the army took its surrender.

The role of BSF was recognized by our Prime Minister when she mentioned its name in the Parliament along with those of the Army, Navy and Air force.