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# GAINING FOOTHOLD ON SIACHEN GLACIER

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ORGANISED BY CENJOWS  
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Operation Meghdoot was launched on 13 April 1984. The credit for success of this operation goes to meticulous planning and flawless execution, which could be possible due to inputs available from the expeditions of Col N Kumar to Siachen Glacier, his skiing down from Indira Col and climbing adjoining peaks, 'a mountaineer's paradise' in the Great Karakoram Ranges. A chance encounter of Col N Kumar, popularly called 'Bull' with the German Mountaineers alerted MO Branch of Pakistan's cartographic aggression of Area Beyond NJ 9842 by providing permission to international mountaineers to access Siachen Glacier and Climb Peaks over 24,000 feet adjoining the Glacier. Pakistan cleverly joined NJ 9842 to Karakoram Pass instead of adhering to the Karachi Agreement which clearly states, 'Point NJ 9842 thence north to the Glaciers', which actually goes towards K2, the world's second highest peak. Pakistan typical of its perfidious act decided to follow the ADIZ (Air Defence Identification Zone) marked by USA on its maps for ease of flying in such hazardous terrain.

The initial expeditions of Col N Kumar followed by Long Range Patrols conducted by Ladakh Scouts and 4 KUMAON from 1978 to 1983 gave adequate knowledge of the terrain detailing on the possible hardships that one may face, the only difference was that all expeditions to the Glacier were in months from July to October, the mountaineering season. The Pakistani SSG attempting to occupy Siachen Glacier crossing the Salto Ridge line in the month of November 1983 failed miserably, and they were pulled back just in time. Their Northern Area Frontier Commander declared that they would occupy the Glacier in April 1984 after being equipped to stay at such great heights, at temperatures below -50°C. Pakistanis whole heartedly started preparing for the same by purchasing the entire mountaineering equipment available in the European market and started concentrating near Khapalu and Goma for acclimatisation. Indian external intelligence agency intimated the Army authorities about the large-scale purchases of high altitude clothing and equipment. Musharraf as Colonel was then posted in MO branch of Pakistan and was aware of the preparations, he admits 'India pre-empted Pakistan', in his book 'In Line of Fire'. Pakistani SSG troops fully acclimatised, trained and equipped were all waiting just a day away from

Bilafond La- the pass on Saltoro Ridge which the Pakistani Liaison Officers were familiar with.

The Northern Army Commander, who was fully familiar with Siachen due to Col Bull's briefing when he was DGMO, did not want an Aksai Chin situation and even when PM Mrs Gandhi was briefed, did not want the situation from flaring up. Lt Gen Chibber along with Gen Hoon and GOC 3 Inf Div and Brig Channa, Commander 26 Sector, then responsible for Siachen decided to act decisively. Gen Kulkarni's knowledge of the terrain from previous long-range patrols gave the troop enough confidence to be able to execute the operation only that they had not operated as early as April which was a cause of concern. Gen Hoon's efforts paid off and imported mountaineering equipment landed on 12 April 1984 in the evening and the small troop was ready to be launched on the auspicious Baisakhi Day on 13 April. The Air Force Cheetah helicopters lifted two personnel each and dropped them at Bilafond La, thus covering seven days march to 40 minutes, flying over 18,000 feet with a little twist, but safe landing. The weather played nasty by 1100 hrs, the time the 30th personnel was dropped short of Bilafond La, so the Sia La Platoon could not be dropped as planned on 13 April, however, the most crucial Pass had been occupied thus securing Siachen Glacier and Pakistan accepted 'India pre-empted Pakistan'. The failure of Pakistan despite equipping their troops months in advance and acclimatising and camping just a day's walking distance from Bilafond La only waiting for clear skies, left Pakistan humiliated. Musharraf was in knowledge to all that was going on and now approved as Brigadier, volunteered to lead the SSG to evict the Indians from the crucial Pass of Bilafond La but failed despite numerous attempts till 1987. India continues to hold the Saltoro Range and stations at the Siachen Glacier till date. It can be concluded that, Musharraf's Kargil attempt was to avenge his humiliating defeats in Siachen Glacier.