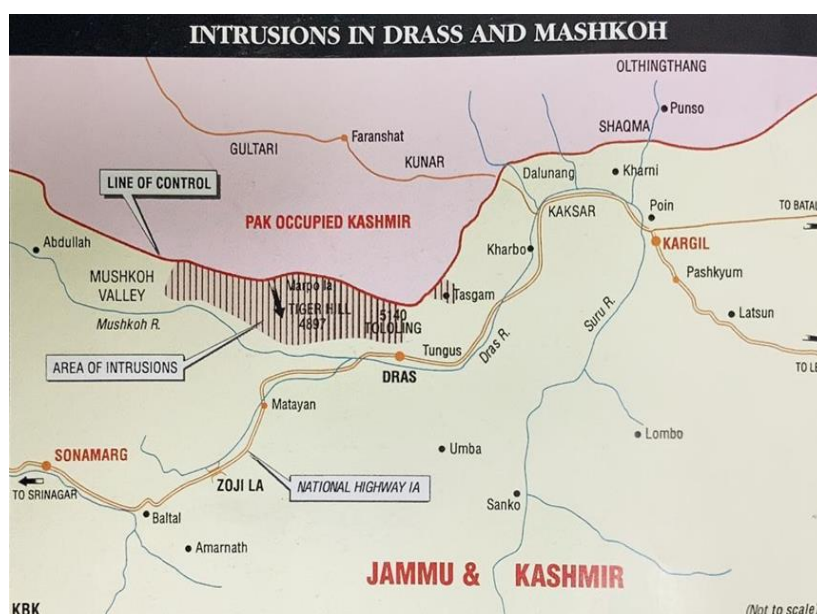


The Battles That Became a Turning Point in Kargil War

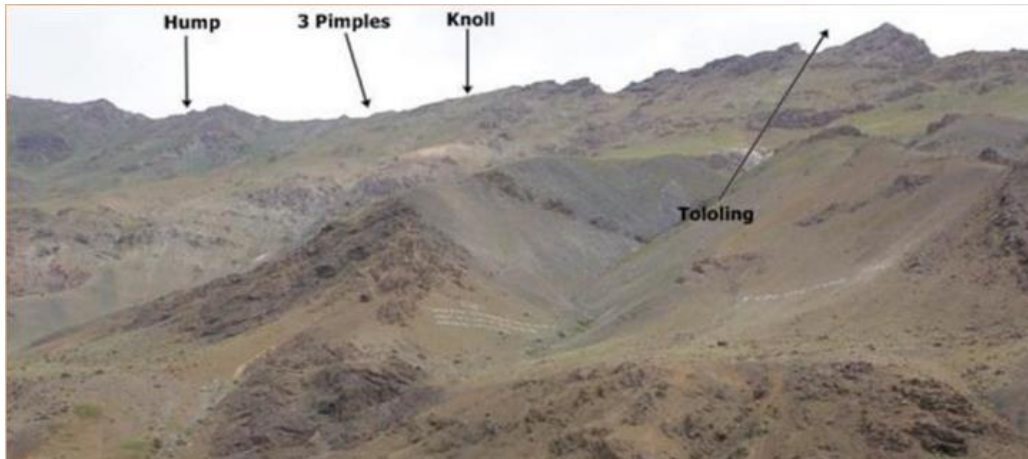
The Kargil War witnessed numerous acts of bravery and sacrifice. There were many gallant soldiers who etched their names in history while fighting the enemy who had intruded our borders along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir. The war lasted for approximately two months, starting in May and ending in July 1999. The war consisted of multiple battles fought at inhospitable peaks throughout the conflict. The outcome of the war was a clear victory for India. Indian forces successfully evicted Pakistan's troops from the strategic heights they had intruded in the Kargil Sector. Here are the five important battles that were strategically important and played a crucial role in reclaiming the Indian territory and flushing out the enemy.



Pakistani Intrusion in Drass and Mashkoh in 1999

Battle of Tololing

Tololing, a desolate mountain, stands imposingly at 16000 feet near the town of Drass. One of Pakistan's primary objectives during the Kargil War was to obstruct India's access to the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh highway. To achieve this, maintaining control over Tololing held great significance for the Pakistan Army. Pakistani forces, sitting on dominating heights, commanded an unobstructed view of every inch of the track. The operations during the war were executed at night, amidst the harsh, howling wind and biting cold temperatures — ranging from -5 to -11 degrees Celsius—all of which offered no reprieve or advantage. The soldiers painstakingly crawled up the steep incline, advancing inch by inch. With a demanding vertical ascent, where every kilogramme of additional weight felt tyrannical, two kilo food packets were relinquished in favour of more ammunition.



After 1 NAGA, 8 SIKH, and 18 GRENADIERS were unable to dislodge the enemy, 2 RAJPUTANA RIFLES was called in. 2 RAJPUTANA RIFLES, under Lieutenant Colonel MB Ravindranathan, crafted a comprehensive plan to uproot the enemy from Tololing. On 12 June, Major Vivek Gupta led a reserve Platoon of his Company to launch an assault on Tololing Top. He was hit by a bullet and made the supreme sacrifice, but not before evicting the enemy from Tololing Top. He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra posthumously. India's relentless three-week assault culminated in the successful capture of Tololing by 0600 hours on 13 June 1999, which served as a pivotal moment in the war. In this three-week-long battle, 18 GRENADIERS endured a total of sixty-six casualties, which included two officers, two Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs), and twenty-one soldiers. Additionally, one officer, one JCO, and thirty-nine soldiers were wounded. Fifteen individuals from the battalion were recognised for their distinguished service and gallantry during the battle.

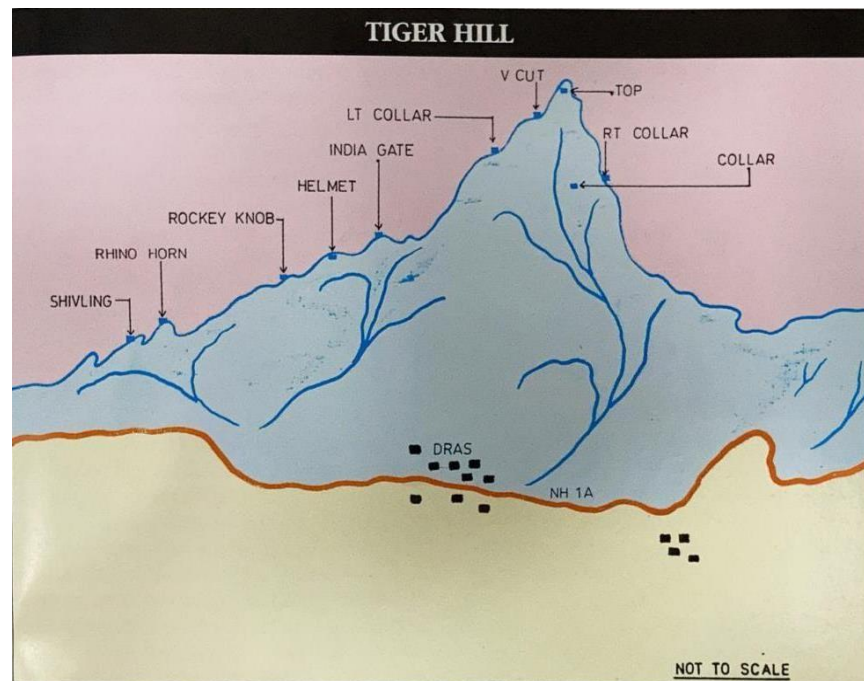
Battle of Point 5140

The capture of Tololing changed the dynamics of the Kargil War. The next objectives were Point 5140 and Point 4875, as these features provided dominant viewpoints to the National Highway 1 Alpha. Point 5140, the highest point on the Tololing Ridge, was one of the most arduous and crucial peaks in the Drass region. If it fell, it would clear the Pakistanis from that sector and pave the way for further victories. This task was entrusted to the 13 JAK RIF. Lieutenant General (then Lieutenant Colonel) YK Joshi, the Commanding Officer of 13 JAK RIF, gave the order for the attack on 03 July 1999. Lieutenant Colonel Yogesh Kumar Joshi had tasked B and D Company, under Captain SS Jamwal and Captain Vikram Batra, for capturing Point 5140 on 20 June 1999. Captain Vikram Batra, who was in charge of the D Company reached close to the objective despite the treacherous terrain. He, along with his company, moved from the East while maintaining absolute silence, achieving complete surprise. Captain Batra reorganised his column and displayed exemplary leadership as he fought the enemy from the forefront. The officer's action motivated his men to physically attack the enemy positions. In an act of formidable courage, Captain Batra

pounced onto the enemy and killed four intruders in the physical combat. It was after the success at Point 5140 that Captain Batra delivered his iconic success signal “*Yeh Dil Mange More*”.

During this battle, Lieutenant Colonel Yogesh Kumar Joshi, Captain Sanjeev Singh, Naik Dev Prakash, and Rifleman Mehar Singh were awarded Vir Chakra for their selfless dedication and immense courage in front of enemy. The success at Point 5140 has apparently boosted the morale of Indian troops fighting to evict intruders from other parts of the Kargil Sector and Drass and Batalik sub-sectors.

Battle of Tiger Hill



Layout of the Tiger Hill

Following the capture of Tololing, the focus shifted to Tiger Hill. Tiger Hill gains importance from the fact that it towers (16,500 feet) above all the other mountains in its vicinity of Drass village. Brigadier MPS Bajwa received orders to relocate the 192 Mountain Brigade to Drass. Assigned to his command were 8 SIKH, 18 GRENADIERS, 13 JAK RIF, and 2 NAGA. A multi-directional attack plan was devised, encompassing three strategic approaches. On 03 July, the soldiers of 18 GRENADIERS embarked on their mission. Due to bad weather and extreme conditions, the progress was very slow. Under the leadership of Lieutenant Balwan Singh, the Commando Platoon advanced, coming tantalisingly close to the summit of Tiger Hill. They found themselves thrust into a fierce hand-to-hand battle with the enemy troops. Despite their fierce resistance, Lieutenant Balwan Singh and his Platoon were gradually pushed back, ultimately finding safety at the position held by D Company, which lay a mere 30 metres away from the pinnacle of Tiger Hill. On the

night of 04/05 July, the fire bases moved forward to a position just short of Tiger Hill Top, where they were grouped under Officer Commanding (OC) C Company, Colonel (then Major) Mijar. In a calculated and stealthy manoeuvre, Captain Nimbalkar, accompanied by his resolute D Company and the steadfast Commando Platoon, silently ascended the uphill terrain, successfully reaching the pinnacle of Tiger Hill. On 04 July, during the action, Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav displayed extraordinary gallantry and was awarded the Param Vir Chakra. With extensive artillery and machine gun action, 8 SIKH and 18 GRENADIERS effectively brought an end to the Tiger Hill operations.



Victory! on Tiger Hill Top

In this arduous battle, ten individuals were recognised for their outstanding gallantry during the battle. Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav was honoured with the Param Vir Chakra, while Lieutenant Balwan Singh was bestowed with the Maha Vir Chakra. Captain Sachin Nimbalkar and Havildar Madan Lal (Posthumous) were both awarded the Vir Chakra.

Battle of Point 4875

Point 4875 in the Drass Sub Sector was an important strategic objective during the Kargil War as it consisted of high mountain features, Whale Back, Flat Top, and Shivling that dominated the LoC. The task to recapture Point 4875 was entrusted to the 13 JAK RIF under the command of

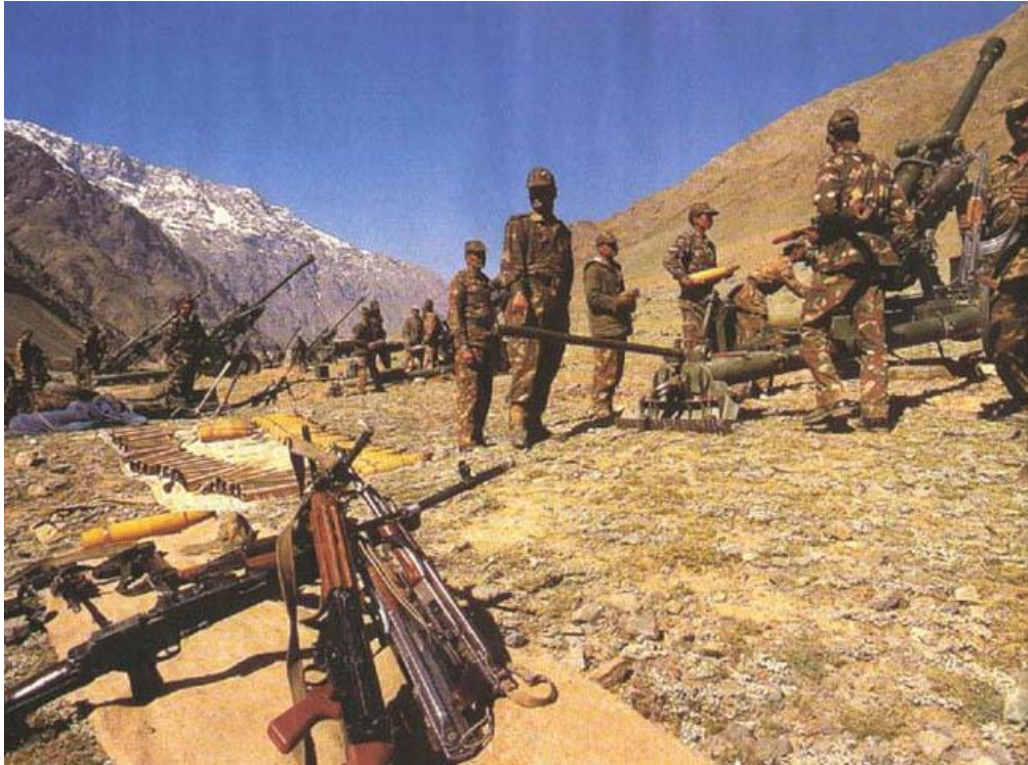
Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) Yogesh Kumar Joshi. B and D Company, led by Captain SS Jamwal and Captain Vikram Batra, respectively, were assigned this mission. The latter, who had become a household name with his “Yeh Dil Mange More” after the capture of Point 5140.

The attack was launched on 04 July 1999, with Major SV Bhaskar leading the A Company from the Eastern slopes of Point 4875 and Major Gurpreet Singh assaulting from the Western slopes of South Spur, with a view to capture Flat Top. Major Gurpreet Singh took a bold decision by deciding to launch a simultaneous assault at Flat Top with a platoon and Point 4875 with the rest of the C Company. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar and Rifleman Shyam Singh were the leading scouts of the attacking column at Flat Top. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar was awarded Param Vir Chakra for his conspicuous gallantry. As the operation progressed, Captain Vikram Batra led an assault on 07 July 1999 from the front and surprised the enemy. Undeterred by his serious injuries, he valiantly destroyed enemy sangars with grenades, inspiring his men to clear the enemy from a dominating position. Later, he succumbed to his injuries. His fearless determination and leadership encouraged his Company men to avenge his death and finally capture Point 4875. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously.

Major Vikas Vohra, Major S Vijay Bhaskar, Subedar Raghunath Singh and Rifleman Shyam Singh (Posthumous) displayed unmatched gallantry while fighting the intruders during this battle and were awarded Vir Chakra.

Battle of Khalubar Top

The Kalubhar Ridgeline dominates the Batalik Area. The Jubar Complex is to its left and Point 5203 to its right in the Chorbat La Area, close to the LOC. The highest feature is Point 5287 (approximately 16,000 feet), with Point 4812 in its vicinity towards the south. The enemy had occupied Kalubhar Ridgeline, and it was important to evict the enemy to reclaim the lost territory. Following the recapture of Point 5203 in the Battalik Sector, the next objective was Khalubar Top, aiming to handicap the enemy and sever their vital supply and escape routes. The attacks on the Khalubar commenced on 30 June 1999, and the initial breakthrough was provided by 22 GRENADIERS.



105mm IFG gun crews, prepare for another round of shelling at the Batalik sector at Kargil in 1999.

Under Colonel Lalit Rai's command, 1/11 GORKHA RIFLES was deployed from Yaldor to recapture Khalubar Top on 02 July 1999. It was while climbing up the precipitous slopes of the Khalubar Mountain that the Gorkha soldiers came under murderous fire from well-entrenched Pakistani troops. Gorkhas engaged in a fierce physical combat and evicted the enemy bunker by bunker. For the display of indomitable grit during this action, Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey was awarded Param Vir Chakra posthumously. The Battle of Kahlubar went on for three days, and as the operation progressed from Ridgeline to the Top, many of our gallant soldiers lost their lives and facilitated the capture of Khalubar Top. With the just handful of soldiers, 1/11 GORKHA RIFLES captured the Khalubar Top on 06 July 1999.

Colonel Lalit Rai, Naib Subedar Tashi Chhepal, Lance Naik Gyanendra Kumar Rai and Havildar Bhim Bahadur Dewan (Posthumous) were awarded Vir Chakra for the gallantry they displayed at Khalubar Top.

CONCLUSION

The Kargil War stands as a testament to the indomitable fighting spirit and unparalleled courage of the Indian soldiers. Their bravery and sacrifices during this conflict have etched their names in the annals of history, showcasing their relentless determination to protect the nation's sovereignty.

Each battle fought during the War, whether it was at Tololing, Point 5140, Tiger Hill, Point 4875, or Khalubar Top, highlighted the exceptional valor and resilience of our soldiers.

These battles collectively illustrate the unyielding spirit of the Indian armed forces. The soldiers' willingness to endure severe hardships and make the ultimate sacrifice reflects their profound dedication to the nation. Their legacy of courage continues to inspire future generations, ensuring that their heroic deeds will never be forgotten. The Kargil War is a poignant reminder of the bravery, sacrifice, and steadfastness that define the true essence of our soldiers.

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