



COLONEL BIKUMALLA SANTOSH BABU

SERVICE NUMBER	IC-64405M
RANK	Colonel
NAME	Bikumalla Santosh Babu
SON OF	Bikumalla Upender and Bikumalla Manjula
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Suryapet, Telangana
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	16 BIHAR
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	10 December 2004
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra (Posthumous)/ 15 June 2020
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	Operation Snow Leopard
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	

Colonel Santosh Babu was born on 13 February 1983 in Suryapet, District, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana). He completed his schooling from Sainik School, Korukonda (1993-2000) and joined the National Defence Academy on 27 December 2000. He was commissioned from Indian Military Academy on 10 December 2004 into 16 BIHAR. During his illustrious career he tenanted all important appointments. A thorough bred regimental soldier Col Santosh Babu had been Ghatak Platoon Commander, Anti-tank Platoon Commander and Rifle Company Commander during his regimental service in the unit. He was posted as Divisional Officer and Instructor class 'B' at the prestigious National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and General Staff Officer Grade I of Headquarters 35 Infantry Brigade. He did exceedingly well in all Army courses. He also attended the prestigious Defence Service Staff Course and the Senior Command Course before assuming the command of 16 BIHAR on 02 December 2019. A born leader, Colonel Bikumalla Santosh Babu's tactical acumen and flair for doing well in active operational areas got due recognition when he was

awarded Chief of Army Staff commendation card for gallantry in Tangdhar (Jammu & Kashmir). He was part of the UN Peacekeeping Force in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Colonel Santosh Babu at the Passing out Ceremony at the IMA

Source: Smt Bikamalla Santoshi



Colonel Santosh Babu at the Passing out Ceremony at the IMA

Source: Smt Bikamalla Santosh

The Bihar Regiment traces its history back to the 34th Sepoy Battalion formed during the tenure of Lord Robert Clive in 1758, which was raised entirely from Bhojpur district. It was during the Second World War that soldiers from Bihar were once again recruited in the 19th Hyderabad Regiment. 1 BIHAR Regiment, which was raised on 15 September 1941, owes its origin to the 11/19 Hyderabad Regiment.

Most of the battalions of the Regiment participated in the Indo-Pak Wars of 1965 and 1971 and accomplished their assigned tasks in a commendable manner. 10 BIHAR was awarded the Theatre Honour of 'AKHAURA' for its gallant action in the Battle of Akhaura in East Pakistan in 1971. 1 BIHAR participated in 'OPERATION VIJAY' in the Batalik Sub Sector and was responsible for recapture of Jubar Hill and Tharu. For its valour, the unit was honoured with Chief of the Army Staff Unit Citation, Battle Honour 'BATALLIK' and Theatre Honour 'KARGIL'.

1 BIHAR was the first Bihar Battalion to take part in United Nation peace keeping mission. The battalion was deployed in Somalia in 1993-1994. Later 10 BIHAR, 5 BIHAR and 14 BIHAR have also had the distinction of participating in United Nation peace keeping operations in Congo in 2004, 2009 and 2014 respectively.¹

India China Border Crisis

India and China have longstanding border issue, and are yet to resolve their boundary problem. China does not accept the customary and traditional alignment of the boundary between India and China. India, on the other hand believe that this alignment is based on well-established geographical principles confirmed by treaties and agreements, as well as historical usage and practice, well-known for centuries to both sides. The Chinese position, however, is that the boundary between the two countries has not been formally delimited, that there exists a traditional customary line formed by the extent of jurisdiction that they claim was exercised historically by each side, and that the two sides have different interpretations of the position of the traditional customary line. The two countries had engaged in discussions during 1950s-60s but these efforts could not yield a mutually acceptable solution.²

¹ History of Bihar Regiment <https://indianarmy.nic.in/about/the-corps-of-engineers/history-the-bihar-regiment>

² Text of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh's Statement in Lok Sabha on September 15 Regarding Situation on Eastern Border in Ladakh, Ministry of Defence, Press Information Bureau, 15 September 2020



Col Santosh Babu, MVC Road

Source: Smt Bikamalla Santoshi

China invaded Tibet and annexed it in March 1959. Growing concern over Chinese aggression forced India to relook at its border policy, as China became India's neighbour. India enacted the "Forward Policy" in 1960, which was aimed to prevent Chinese incursions into Indian territory by establishing Indian stations near the Sino-Indian boundary.³ In reaction to the Forward Policy, China started gradually enhancing her road infrastructure leading to the border and strengthening her military positions along the border.⁴ The Chinese quickened the forward movement of their posts, and soon the empty area between the two armies disappeared. When some Indian posts, for example in the Galwan Valley were established, the Chinese attitude changed and became more threatening. Instead of going back they encountered Indian posts, surrounding the post to cut off its land route of supply, and even opened fire at a number of places.

³ Annual Report of the Ministry of External Affairs For 1962-63 <https://mealib.nic.in/?pdf2489?000>

⁴ Indian War Memorials Around the World Rana T.S. Chhina Last Post Indian War Memorials Around the World Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research United Service Institution of India 2014
https://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/23460_IWM_Book_11-06-2014_.pdf



Colonel Santosh Babu as a Cadet at the NDA
Source: Smt Bikamalla Santoshi

On 30 April 1962, the Chinese government threatened to impose an extension of the patrolling along the entire boundary. Chinese forces surrounded an Indian position in the Galwan Valley in July 1962. The two sides clashed at Pangong Lake. They also continued to set up a number of new aggressive military posts in the Ladakh region. China stepped up its aggressive military actions along the Indian border in the early months of 1962. On 08 September 1962, Chinese forces breached the border in the Northwest corner of NEFA. On October 20, 1962, they launched a massive attack on Indian territory in both the Eastern and Western Sectors following a series of probing operations.⁵

The first India-China War broke out putting an end to any chance of resolving the conflict in line with accepted international norms.

Following the 1965 war with Pakistan, China initiated disturbances along the Tibet-Sikkim border, particularly at Nathu-la Pass. In 1967, India China clash took place due to disagreement over the laying of the border fence at Nathu La by Indian Armed Forces from 11 to 14 September 1967. The skirmish escalated to artillery guns and threats of fighter jets. Similarly, at Tulung La in 1975, an Assam Rifles patrol was fired upon killing four soldiers of the 5 Assam Rifles Battalion.

India used to occupy a seasonal post at Wangdong near Sumdorong Chu from 1984. When they withdrew from the post for the winter of 1985, it was populated by the Chinese forces. On 16 June 1986, a patrol of 12 ASSAM Regiment of the Indian Army noticed Chinese presence in the area and construction of a few permanent structures. The Chinese soldiers were initially identified to be 40 and were soon reinforced by 200 more troops. By August, they had constructed a helipad and were being air supplied.⁶ After rounds of diplomatic parleys and talks between military commanders, the two sides agreed to vacate two posts.⁷

Both India and China have formally agreed that the boundary question is a complex issue which

⁵ ibid

⁶ Major General Mandip Singh, Lessons from Somdorong Chu Incident, MP-IDSA, April 26, 2013
https://idsa.in/idsacomments/CurrentChineseincursionLessonsfromSomdorongChuIncident_msingh_260413

⁷ S L Narasimhan, Chinese Belligerence on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), CLAWS Journal • Vol. 16. No. 1. Summer 2023

requires patience and have committed to seeking a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution through dialogue and peaceful negotiations. In the interim, the two sides also agreed that maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is an essential basis for the further development of bilateral relations.

China continues to be in illegal occupation of approximately 38,000 sq. kms in the Union Territory of Ladakh. In addition, under the so-called Sino-Pakistan 'Boundary Agreement' of 1963, Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq. kms. of Indian territory in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to China. China also claims approximately 90,000 sq. kms. of Indian territory in the Eastern Sector of the India-China boundary in Arunachal Pradesh.

There is no commonly delineated Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the border areas between India and China and there is no common perception of the entire LAC. Therefore, in order to ensure peace and tranquility in the border areas, especially along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the two countries have concluded a number of agreements and protocols.

Under these agreements, the two sides have agreed to maintain peace and tranquility along the LAC without any effect to their respective positions on the alignment of the LAC as well as on the boundary question. It is on this basis, that overall relations also saw considerable progress since 1988. India's position is that while bilateral relations can continue to develop in parallel with discussions on resolving the boundary question, any serious disturbance in peace and tranquility along the LAC in the border areas is bound to have implications on the positive direction of ties.

A key element of both the 1993 and the 1996 Agreements is that the two sides will keep their military forces in the areas along the Line of Actual Control to a minimum level. These agreements also mandate that pending an ultimate solution to the boundary question, the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the Line of Actual Control. Furthermore in these agreements, India and China also committed to clarification and confirmation of the Line of Actual Control to reach a common understanding of the alignment. Thus, in late 1990s and upto 2003, the two sides engaged in an exercise to clarify and confirm the LAC. But, thereafter the Chinese side did not show a willingness to pursue the LAC clarification exercise. As a result, there are some areas where the Chinese and Indian perceptions of LAC overlap. In these areas, as also with other sections of the border areas, the various agreements govern the manner in which troops of both sides should operate and deal with situations of face-offs to maintain peace and tranquility.

The last one decade has been a decade of minor military confrontation between India and China, whether it was the Depsang incident in 2013, or Chumar incident in 2014, stand-off in Doklam in 2017. The confrontation were largely resolved at the ground level without any fatalities on either sides, till the incident at the Galwan happened in 2020.

The Galwan Crisis

Since April 2020, India had noticed a buildup of troops and armaments by the Chinese side in the border areas adjacent to Eastern Ladakh. In early May, the Chinese side had taken action to hinder the normal, traditional patrolling pattern of our troops in the Galwan Valley area, which resulted in a face-off. Even as this situation was being addressed by the Ground Commanders as per the provisions of our bilateral agreements and protocol, in mid-May the Chinese side made several attempts to transgress the LAC in other parts of the Western Sector. This included Kongka La, Gogra and North Bank of Pangong Lake. These attempts were detected early and consequently responded to appropriately by our armed forces.⁸

⁸ Text of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh's Statement in Lok Sabha on September 15 Regarding Situation on Eastern Border in Ladakh, Ministry of Defence, Press Information Bureau, 15 September 2020

India made it clear to the Chinese side both through diplomatic and military channels that China was, by such actions, attempting to unilaterally alter the status quo. It was categorically conveyed that this was unacceptable.

Given the growing friction along the LAC, the Senior Commanders of the two sides in a meeting on June 06, 2020 agreed on a process of disengagement that involved reciprocal actions. Both sides also agreed to respect and abide by the LAC and not undertake any activity to alter the status quo. However in violation of this the Chinese side created a violent face off on June 15 June 2020 at Galwan.

Colonel Bikumalla Santosh Babu, Commanding Officer, 16 BIHAR, was deployed in Galwan Valley (Eastern Ladakh) during Operation Snow Leopard. Operation Snow Leopard was launched after China refused to move back and restore status quo ante in eastern Ladakh. He was tasked to establish an Observation Post in face of the enemy. Organising and briefing his troops about the situation with a sound plan, he successfully executed the task. While holding the position his column faced stiff resistance from the adversary who attacked using lethal and sharp weapons along with heavy stone pelting from adjoining heights. Undaunted by the violent and aggressive action by overwhelming strength of enemy soldiers, the officer in true spirit of service before self, continued to resist the enemy's attempt to pushback Indian troops. Despite being grievously injured, Colonel Bikumalla Santosh Babu led from the front with absolute command and control despite hostile conditions to deter the vicious enemy attack at his position. In the skirmish that broke out and ensuing hand to hand combat with enemy soldiers, he valiantly resisted the enemy attack till his last breath, inspiring and motivating his troops to hold ground. India brave soldiers laid down their lives and also inflicted costs including casualties on the Chinese side. Colonel B. Santhosh Babu was posthumously awarded Maha Vir Chakra (MVC), the country's second highest war time gallantry award, by President Ram Nath Kovind.



Smt Bikamalla Santoshi receiving Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) from President Ram Nath Kovind

Source: Smt Bikamalla Santoshi



Colonel Santosh Babu with his Family

Source: Smt Bikamalla Santoshi

Colonel Santosh Babu is survived by his wife Smt Bikumalla Santoshi, daughter Miss Bikumalla Abhijna and son Master Bikumalla Anirudh Teja. His father Mr Bikumalla Upender is a teacher and mother is a housewife His family is presently residing at Hyderabad.