



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



MAJOR SANDEEP SHANKLA

SERVICE NUMBER	IC-43956
RANK	Major
NAME	Sandeep Shankla
SON OF	Lieutenant Colonel J S Kanwar
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Hamirpur District, Himachal Pradesh
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	18 DOGRA
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/COMMISSION	14 June 1986
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Ashoka Chakra (Posthumous)/08 August 1991
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	



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Major Sandeep Shankla hailed from Hamirpur District of Himachal Pradesh and was born on 03 January 1964. The son of an Army veteran Lieutenant Colonel JS Kanwar and Smt Manju Kanwar, Major Sandeep right from his childhood wanted to follow the footsteps of his father and join the Armed Forces. He continued to pursue his dream and joined the Indian Army after his graduation. He got trained at the prestigious IMA Dehradun and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 14 June 1986 at the age of 22 years into 18 DOGRA.

Operations Other Than War

India's transition from a traditional developing society to a modern State runs concurrently with the emergence of different hues of challenges to the internal security situation. India faces multifaceted internal security challenges which include left wing extremism, a proxy war in Kashmir and the insurgencies in some Northeast states; and organized crime in some of India's major cities. ¹ Operations Other Than War (OOTW) encompass a wide range of activities where military power is used for purposes other than large scale combat operations associated with war. These include sub-conventional and non-combat operations; they usually involve the combined and coordinated effort of government (civil and military) and nongovernment agencies. In essence, OOTW activities assist to deter war, resolve conflict and promote peace and well-being with use or demonstrated threat of use of force.²

The current security challenges are varied, sophisticated and complex. From maintaining a constant vigil on the country's unsettled borders, to combating a proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and terrorist strikes or insurgencies in the North East; the Indian Army is committed to the defence of the country. India is being subjected to state sponsored proxy war and acts of terrorism from across the border. There is thus a need to prepare for the multifaceted security challenges that lie ahead. Ensuring territorial integrity along the Line of Control (LC), Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) and Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the prime responsibility of the Indian Army. Any adversarial attempt to alter the status quo along our borders are dealt with in a firm and resolute manner. While conventional war remains central in the construct of the spectrum of operations, the Indian Army continues to prosecute effective Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorism operations to ensure deterrence through punitive responses, against state sponsored proxy war.

The country has experienced four major conventional border wars besides an undeclared war fought in Kargil in 1999. India is engaged in an externally abetted proxy war for the last several

¹ Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Report 2009-10

<https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR910.pdf>

² Indian Army Doctrine, Types of War, October 2004, Headquarters Army Training Command

<https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/157030/India%202004.pdf>



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years in Jammu and Kashmir and has been combating terrorism perpetuated by militant and terrorist groups sponsored by a foreign State.³

The Government has a policy of zero tolerance against terrorism and the security situation has improved significantly in Jammu and Kashmir in the last one decade. The measures taken by the Government to curb terrorist violence include proactive counter insurgency operations against terrorists, identification and arrest of over ground supporters of terrorists, deployment of police, Army, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs); night patrolling and area domination. Attachment of properties belonging to terrorists and their associates under relevant sections of Law, sharing of intelligence inputs amongst all security forces on a real-time basis and intensified Cordon and Search Operations (CASO) are undertaken to thwart any terrorist incidents in Jammu & Kashmir.⁴

Security Forces also keep a close watch on persons who attempt to provide support to terrorists and initiate action against them. The Government has also continuously encouraged policies to mainstream the youth, including providing employment opportunities to wean them away from militancy. Adequate strength of Forces are deployed in Jammu and Kashmir for augmenting the Counter Insurgency grid, strengthening Internal Security and maintaining law & order.⁵

Further, the Government of India has adopted a well-coordinated and multi-pronged strategy to tackle the cross-border infiltration. This includes tactical deployment of forces at International Border (IB)/Line of Control (LoC), use of technology like Surveillance Cameras, Night Vision Cameras, Heat Sensing Gadgets, etc., multi-tiered deployment along IB/LoC, border fencing, deployment of intelligence personnel to collect advance and target-oriented inputs on infiltration, ambushes and foot-patrolling by Army/Border Security Force (BSF), establishment of Border Police Posts for generating local intelligence and taking pro-active action against infiltrators.⁶

The Indian Army today is engaged in the management of complex and active land borders coupled with ongoing Counter Insurgency (CI)/ Counter Terrorism (CT) operations leading to a 'No War No Peace' Scenario. The primary role of the Indian Army is to preserve National interests and safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of India against external

³ Ibid

⁴ Terrorist Violence And Infiltration, Press Information Bureau , Ministry of Home Affairs, 01 August 2023
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1944716>

⁵ Law and Order Situation in Jammu and Kashmir, Press Information Bureau , Ministry of Home Affairs, 28 July 2021 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1739934>

⁶ Terrorist Violence And Infiltration, Press Information Bureau , Ministry of Home Affairs, 01 August 2023
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1944716>



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threats and internal subversion by deterrence or by waging war.⁷ Additionally, the Army is also geared to provide assistance to civil authority when required.

Jammu & Kashmir

Indian Union Territory (formerly State) of Jammu Kashmir is facing Low Intensity Conflict encompassing all kinds of armed conflicts below the threshold of war. These include proxy war, terrorism and insurgencies; border skirmishes also fall within this category. It involves protracted struggle of competing principles and ideologies. Pakistan is involved in a proxy war with India using non-state players to fight on their behalf across the country but primarily in Kashmir.

Pakistan has been, since independence, aiding and abetting terrorism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The role Indian Army is mandated to safeguard National Interests from External Aggression and Internal Subversion. The Indian Army is committed to bringing down the levels of violence to "manageable levels" in Jammu and Kashmir so as to restore the confidence of the people and create a secure environment to facilitate smooth governance and socio economic development. Army's focus is on conducting of surgical and professional operations based on hard intelligence, while cause minimum inconvenience to the local populace. Simultaneously, the focus has been on destruction of terrorist infrastructure, resulting in a large number of hideouts being busted and recovery of huge caches of arms and ammunition.⁸

In the last one decade, the overall security situation in J&K has undergone an appreciable change and is well under control of the Security Forces. All parameters of proxy war are at an all-time low and the current situation indicates a shift towards normalcy and peace. The growing stability is indicative of the success of the untiring efforts of all Security Forces which includes the Army's Counter Terrorist (CT) efforts.⁹

The DOGRA Regiment, raised in 1877 is one of the older infantry Regiments of the Indian Army. The Regiment traces its roots directly from the 17th Dogra Regiment of the British Indian Army. After World War I, the British Indian government restructured the army, moving from Regiments with a single Battalion to multi-Battalion Regiments. In 1945, it shed the numeral '17' and became Dogra Regiment. The DOGRA Regiment has troops from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and the Northern districts of Punjab. Their Regimental war cry is "Jwala Mata Ki Jai" (Victory to Goddess Jwala). The Dogras have participated in all the wars and conflicts fought by the Indian Army since independence and winning laurels. General

⁷ Land Warfare Doctrine 2018, Indian Army <https://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/Document/IndianArmyLandWarfareDoctrine2018.pdf>

⁸ Counter Terrorist Operations in Jammu and Kashmir, Indian Army <https://indianarmy.nic.in/KnowYourArmy/know-your-army-main/counter-terrorist-operations-in-jammu-and-kashmir-operations-un-mission>

⁹ Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Annual Report 2009-10 <https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR910.pdf>



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N C Vij, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM who was the 21st Chief of the Army also belonged to the DOGRA Regiment.

Starting in early eighties, 18 Dogra battalions have operated in this region. Sporadic cases of terrorism in the Valley were reported with effect from early 1980. In late eighties and early nineties, 7 and 18 Dogra operated in the Baramula-Kupwara area where they went on to earn many more laurels. On the night of 7/8 August 1991, it undertook a massive operation in the jungles around the forested villages of Zafarkhani and Wolyas Kaonar.

In 1991, Captain Sandeep Shankla's unit, 18 DOGRA was deployed in Kupwara of J & K area for Counter-Insurgency operations. The unit troops were engaged in operations against the terrorists on a regular basis as the unit's area of responsibility (AOR) was active with militancy. The area was also prone to infiltration, which necessitated regular armed patrols to check any infiltration from across the border. The AOR of the Battalion also spanned over thick jungles and remote rugged mountainous terrain with extreme weather conditions, especially in the winter season.

On 08 August 1991, Captain Shankla was leading a Company of 18 DOGRA, deployed in Counter Insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir. The Company was ordered to cordon off village Zafarkhani, in Kupwara District and to carry out a search for the militants hiding in the village. Leading from the front, in a swift action, he trapped the militants within the village, who taken off guard, opened fire on Captain Shankla and his men on all sides. In the ensuing exchange of fire, one Dogra soldier was hit by a bullet and fell down, seriously injured. Captain Shankla unmindful of his personal safety rushed forward and carried the injured soldier to safety.

He then rushed back to continue the attack on the militants and killed one of them. At this stage, the militants hurled two hand grenades at him. Displaying rare courage, he picked up one of the hand grenades and threw it back at the militants, injuring one of them fatally. In this sharp encounter, Captain Shankla was critically wounded by a bullet from an AK-47 rifle. However, he continued to lead his men from the front despite injuries, till he breathed his last. It is said that in this encounter nine militants were killed and twenty-two captured.

Major Sandeep Shankla set a glorious example of bravery, leadership and devotion to duty and was honoured with Ashoka Chakra, posthumously. Government of Haryana has built a Memorial in his honour at Panchkula. He is the only officer from the Dogra Regiment to be awarded Ashoka Chakra. His parents are settled in Panchkula, Haryana. His mother, Smt Manju Kanwar runs a trust in the name of Major Sandeep Shankla which is dedicated to education and health related social services.



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*Tributes paid to Captain Sandeep Shankla at his memorial
The Tribune India*

The Regimental Museum at the Dogra Regimental Centre has been named the Shankla Museum to honour Major Sandeep Shankla. The motivational hall at Faizabad has been named 'Shankla Sangrahalaya', to pay tribute to late Major Sandeep Shankla, who laid down his life while fighting the militants in J&K. Zafarkhani Day is celebrated on 08 August every year to commemorate the bravery of Major Sandeep Shankla. A number of events are held to mark this occasion, which includes ceremonial tribute at the Shankla Memorial at Panchkula. Lieutenant Colonel JS Kanwar passed away on 15 November 2024.



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सत्यमेव जयते



Major Shankla's Parents Lieutenant Colonel JS Kanwar and Smt Manju Kanwar



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CITATION

IC 43956, CAPTAIN SANDEEP SHANKLA, 18 DOGRA (POSTHUMOUS)
(Effective date of the award: 08 August 1991)

On the 8th August, 1991, a Company of 18 Dogra under Captain Sandeep Shankla was deployed to cordon off village Zafarkhani, in J& K, and to carry out a search for the anti-national elements hiding in this village. The militants, taken off guard due to the swift action, were trapped within the village. They opened fire from various directions on Captain Shankla and his men. In the ensuing exchange of fire, one Other Rank was bit by a bullet and fell down, seriously injured. Unmindful of his personal safety, Captain Shankla moved forward, carried the injured soldier to safety and rushed back to continue the attack on the militant, killing one of them. At this stage, two hand grenades were thrown at him. Displaying rare courage and determination, he picked one of them and threw it back at the militants, injuring one of them who subsequently died. In the process, Captain Shankla was critically wounded but continued to lead his men from the front despite serious injuries. Soon thereafter he was hit by a bullet from an AK-47 Rifle. Though seriously wounded, he continued to engage the militants till he fell down, un-conscious. He was evacuated but succumbed to his injuries, making the supreme sacrifice of his life in the highest traditions of the Army.

Captain Sandeep Shankla set a glorious example of leadership and devotion to duty and displayed the most conspicuous bravery for beyond the call of duty.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No dated



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सत्यमेव जयते

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3. Operations in Jammu And Kashmir S.N. Prasad. Dr. Dharam Pal (2005). Natraj Publishers And Ministry Of Defence, Government Of India
4. The Indian Army: A brief history. Edited by Major General Ian Cardozo. Center for Military History and Conflict Studies, United Service Institution of India
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<https://usiofindia.org/publication/usi-journal/indias-wars-since-independence-a-concise-history/>
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OTHER INTERESTING RESOURCES

AAN Comics has released a pictorial depiction of Captain Sandeep Shankla's valour and bravery in form of a book.



(Source: AAN Comics)