



रक्षा मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
**DEFENCE**



**RISALDAR & HONY CAPTAIN (Then NAIB RISALDAR) NOOR MOHAMMAD  
KHAN**

<b>SERVICE NUMBER</b>	JC- 51790
<b>RANK</b>	Risaldar & Hony Captain (then Naib Risaldar)
<b>NAME</b>	Noor Mohammad Khan
<b>SON OF</b>	Taj Mohammad Khan
<b>RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE</b>	Jodhpur, Rajasthan
<b>UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS</b>	18 CAVALRY
<b>SERVICE</b>	Indian Army
<b>DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION</b>	30 December 1948
<b>AWARD/DATE OF ACTION</b>	Vir Chakra/ 03 December 1971
<b>WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION</b>	Indo-Pak War of 1971
<b>OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE</b>	

Risaldar & Hony Captain (then Naib Risaldar) Noor Mohammad Khan was born on 30 December 1930, to Shri Taj Mohammad Khan, in Jodhpur District of Rajasthan. He was enrolled into the 18 CAVALRY on 30 December 1948 at the age of 18. During the Indo-Pak War of 1971, Naib Risaldar Noor Mohammad Khan was a Troop Leader in B Squadron of the Regiment.

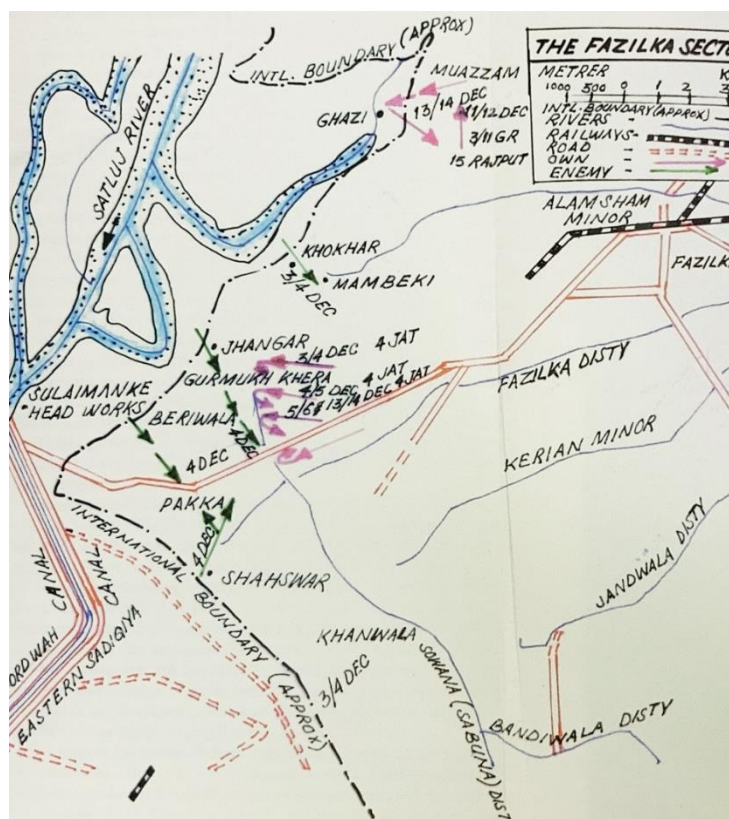
The 18th Cavalry is an old and illustrious Armoured Regiment of the Armoured Corps of the Indian Army. The regiment was created in 1921 through the amalgamation of 6th King Edward's Own Cavalry which was raised in 1842 and the 7th Haryana Lancers which was raised in 1846. The composition of the Regiment after the amalgamation in 1921 consisted of Kaimkhanis, Rajputana, Rajputs, and Jats. The present class composition is of Jats from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan; Rajputs from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan and Hindustani Mussalmans from all over India, but mainly from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal. In the Second sWorld War, the Regiment was sent to North Africa and fought in the Battle of Tobruk . When India was partitioned in 1947 and the Indian Army split between the new created states of India and Pakistan, the 18th King Edward's Own Cavalry was allocated to India. When India became a republic in 1950, the Regiment's title was changed to that of 18th Cavalry. During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 the Regiment equipped with up gunned Shermans had led the advance of 26 Infantry Division in the Sialkot Sector and naib Risaldar Ayub Khan was awarded the Vir Chakra. In 1971, the Regiment saw action in the Fazilka Sector. Naib Risaldar Noor Mohammed Khan was awarded the Vir Chakra. The hard work done and sacrifices made by the valiant soldiers of this Regiment have been duly recognised by the 29 Battle and Theatre honours received by the Regiment, which is the second highest in the Armoured Corps. General Dalbir Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM the 25th Chief of the Army Staff, was the Honorary Colonel of the Regiment and his father Risaldar Major Ramphal Singh (Retired) had served with distinction during both the Indo-Pak War of 1965 & 1971.

The 1971 War was a military conflict between India and Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War from 03 to 16 December 1971. It began with preemptive airstrikes by the Pakistan Air Force on Indian targets, leading to India's involvement in support of Bengali nationalist forces. Pakistan suffered a significant defeat in this War. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian Government engaged all three services on a large scale. A total of 4,090 Indian soldiers made the supreme sacrifice during this war and about 600 officers and men of the Indian Armed Forces were decorated with Gallantry awards. Of these, 04 were Param Vir Chakra, 76 Maha Vir Chakra and 513 Vir Chakra.

India had anticipated that Pakistan could attack Fazilka through the Enclaves, located to the south of river Satluj. An attack was also expected from the North, through Jalalabad or from the Sulaimanke Bridgehead in the West. There was also an assessment that Pakistan would try to lean against the defences on the Sabuna Distributary. After the Indo-Pak War 1965, India had constructed an anti-tank obstacle in the shape of the Sabuna Distributary, about 10 to 13 km from the town of Fazilka, which covered all the approaches. The alignment of the Distributary was parallel to the International Boundary, covered 22 kms from the Gang Canal to Fazilka Creek, and provided for many fortifications. The Salem Shah Nala, just North of the Fazilka town constituted a hurdle, while the Chandbhan drain, 13 km North of Fazilka, was a major obstacle.

67(Independent) Infantry Brigade commanded by Brigadier SS Choudhary was deployed for the defence of Fazilka, comprised three Infantry Battalions (15 RAJPUT, 3 ASSAM, 4 JAT), 4 (Independent) Armoured Squadron of Deccan Horse equipped with Sherman tanks, one Squadron 18 Cavalry equipped with T-54 tanks and two Troops 70 Armoured Regiment with Jonga mounted SS11B1 missiles. It was supported by one Field Regiment and one Medium Battery. Two BSF battalions were also under command.

All planning and preparations for the main defensive battle centred on Fazilka, which was to be held at all cost. The line Sabuna Distributary-Qadir Bakhsh-Muazzam was to be held by a strong Covering Force.



Map

Source: The India-Pakistan War of 1971 A History

However, as the operational responsibility of the 67 (Independent) Infantry Brigade extended over a large territory and there was shortage of troops, the Battalions were so deployed as to build up either on the Sabuna Distributary or on Fazilka, depending on the direction of threat. Shortly before the commencement of hostilities the Brigade was placed under command Foxtrot Sector commanded by Major General Ram Singh. The Brigade was deployed across various areas as follows: In the Shatirwala Area on the Sabuna Distributary, the deployment included 15 RAJPUT, less two Companies; three Companies from the 28 BSF Battalion; and two Companies from the 22 BSF Battalion. In the Chananwala-Choriwala Chisti-Qadir Bakhsh-Khokhar Area and along the Sabuna Distributary, the forces comprised 3 ASSAM, with one Company and two Platoons from the 22 BSF Battalion; two Troops of 'B' Squadron 18 CAVALRY.

In the Muazzam-Fazilka region, North of the Railway Line Fazilka-Muktsar, the deployment included two Companies of 15 RAJPUT and two Companies of 22 BSF Battalion. For the Fazilka-South of Railway Line Fazilka-Muktsar area, the forces consisted of 4 JAT, 4 (Independent) Armoured Squadron, and B Squadron 18 CAVALRY less two Troops commanded by Major Baldev Bawa.

On the evening of 03 December, B Company of Pakistan's 6 Frontier Force, led by Major Shabir Sharif (the elder brother of General Raheel Sharif, the 9th Chief of Pakistan's Army), executed a surprise assault and seized the Beriwal Bridge on the Sabuna Distributary. Initial reports from border outposts indicated the sound of tanks approaching from the enemy side. Around 1800 hours, Major BS Bawa was ordered to position two Troops alongside the infantry. Lieutenant DS Sirohi moved to Pakka across the Distributary, while one Troop was deployed to the Bridge on the Fazilka-Pakka road. By approximately 1845 hours, the enemy began shelling, and shortly after sunset, they launched an attack on several Border Outposts, overrunning Jhangar BOP, which was located in front of the Bridge.

3 ASSAM, which was defending the Beriwal Bridge, was forced to vacate the position. The situation created confusion in the fog of war for the 67 Infantry Brigade, leading them to believe that the enemy had taken control of 'Outfall' near the Creek, the northernmost point of the distributary where the Sutlej River flows back. Major BS Bawa was instructed to counterattack this area, with 'D' Company of 4 JAT placed under his command. The counterattack commenced at 2045 hours, but as a squadron with two troops advanced, they came under fire from the Beriwal Bridge, resulting in the loss of two tanks near Village Gurmukh Khera, and Major Bawa was injured by artillery fire. Despite this, he was ordered to proceed for the 'Outfall.' This decision proved costly. B Squadron, with two Troops, led the charge to 'Outfall' and managed to recapture and secure the Bridge at the Creek by 0330 hours on 04 December. However, two tanks got bogged down, and D Company of 4 JAT incurred casualties due to intense artillery fire at the FUP.

They were then reassigned to capture Beriwal Bridge, but heavy enemy fire prevented any progress. Major Bawa was struck in the forehead by a splinter and had to be evacuated. Captain RKV Reddy took command until Major (later Brigadier) AP Bhargava, the Second-in-Command of the Regiment, assumed leadership of the Squadron later that day. Meanwhile, 3 ASSAM was working to stabilize the situation along the Sabuna Distributary, but the full extent of enemy encroachment remained unclear. As Major Rana of 3 ASSAM moved up in a tank to pinpoint an enemy MMG position, the tank was hit by a direct shell, and Major Rana along with two crew members were unable to escape before the vehicle engulfed in flames. During the counterattack, the strongpoint at Pakka reported an enemy assault just after midnight, leading to the withdrawal of all three strongpoints.

The evacuation of screen positions and the loss of border outposts caused widespread panic, prompting Brigadier Surjit Singh Choudhary to order the demolition of all bridges on the Sabuna Distributary on 04 December, 1971, at 1100 hours. This decision overlooked the strategic importance of retaining these bridges for potential counterattacks. One tank from the Troop under

3 ASSAM remained across the Ditch cum Bundh (DCB) at Pakka and was captured by the enemy. Engagements continued throughout the day, but by evening, the enemy had consolidated their position, holding about 700 yards of the Sabuna Distributary, including the Beriwala Bridge, and had expanded their bridgehead into Gurmukh Khera village. The crew had strayed far to the left and hit the enemy defences.

There were only five tanks in the Squadron on road, as five were bogged down, including three which were close to defences occupied by 3 ASSAM. Three tanks had been hit and one captured at Pakka. Orders were also given to abandon the defences along the obstacles during the night for which B Squadron was tasked to cover withdrawal. At about 2030 hours, 3 ASSAM reported an enemy attack on their right flank; contact was established with the crew of bogged down tanks.

Naib Risaldar Noor Mohammad Khan was the Troop Leader. On the night of 03 December, 1971, his Squadron was ordered to launch an attack in an area in the Western Sector. When he reached the area, he found his Squadron Commander's tank had bogged down. He tried to recover this tank, exposing himself to heavy enemy fire. Since the tank could not be recovered, he offered his own tank to the Squadron Commander and stayed back with the bogged down tank. Later, when the enemy in a Platoon strength attacked his tank, he opened up his cupola and fired with the Machine Gun, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Naib Risaldar Noor Mohammad Khan was awarded with the Vir Chakra for his courage and valour in the face of the enemy.

The operations in Fazilka sector were characterized by fierce fighting, stretching over a period of fourteen days. 4 JAT, 3/11 GORKHA RIFLES and 15 RAJPUTS suffered heavy casualties, mainly caused by small arms and artillery shelling. In these operations Indian casualties mounted to 189 killed (including 11 officers and 10 JCOs), 425 wounded and 196 missing.

## CITATION

Naib Risaldar NOOR MOHAMMAD KHAN (IC-51790),  
18 Cavalry.  
(Effective date of award—3rd December, 1971)

Naib Risaldar Noor Mohammad Khan was a troop leader of a squadron of an Armoured Regiment. On the night of 3rd December, 1971, his squadron was ordered to launch an attack in an area in the Western Sector. When he reached the area, he found his Squadron Commander's tank had bogged down. He tried to recover this tank, exposing himself to heavy enemy fire. Since the tank could not be recovered, he offered his own tank to the Squadron Commander and stayed back with the bogged down tank. Later, when the enemy in a platoon strength attacked his tank, he opened up his cupola and fired with the machine gun, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. In this action, Naib Risaldar Noor Mohammad Khan displayed gallantry, determination and devotion to duty of a high order.

---

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No. 94-Pres./72.—dated AUGUST 19, 1972.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Armour 71, Cavalry officers Association. (2022). Defstrat Books.
2. Candeth, K. P.. The Western Front, Indo-Pakistan War, 1971. India: Allied, 1984.
3. Ian Cardozo. 1971 Stories of Grit and Glory from the Indo-Pak War. Published by Penguin Random House, 2021.
4. Facebook. 2022. Facebook.com. 2022.  
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid035ASncQvNo9fRszTZCfxkrfm6BxMJu4sTSGn5YeAR5DQWQFrMgY4kkH3ZGeWktBzGI&id=100063880773399](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid035ASncQvNo9fRszTZCfxkrfm6BxMJu4sTSGn5YeAR5DQWQFrMgY4kkH3ZGeWktBzGI&id=100063880773399).
5. SN Prasad and UP Thapliyal. The India - Pakistan war of 1971 A History. Published by Natraj Publishers, Dehra Dun on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, 2014.
6. "History of Sikh Light Infantry Volume II" Colonel R.D. Palsokar, MC, Sangam Press Ltd 1997
7. "Battles That Made History – Defstrat." 2022. Defstrat.com. 2022.  
[https://www.defstrat.com/magazine\\_articles/battles-that-made-history-18/](https://www.defstrat.com/magazine_articles/battles-that-made-history-18/).
8. "Preventing a breakout at Beriwala." 2023. Usiofindia.org. 2023. Major General Jagatbir Singh (Retd)  
<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/preventing-a-breakout-at-beriwala.html>.