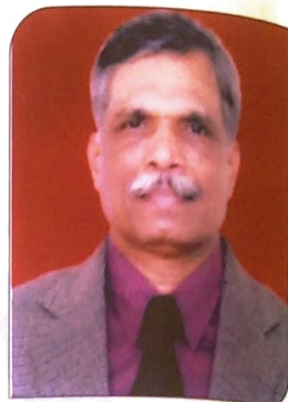


THE GALLANT SOLDIER: SUBEDAR SURINDER SINGH, ASHOKA CHAKRA

Sub Surinder Singh along with six soldiers of 3rd Battalion the Sikh Regiment had laid an ambush on the night of 03 Mar 2002 along the Line of Control (LOC) in Rajouri Sector in Jammu & Kashmir. There was an intelligence report that a group of heavily armed terrorists based in Pakistan were likely infiltrate into India somewhere between Rajouri and Naushera on that particular night. The night was pitch dark with incessant rain and the visibility was not more than two to three meters.



Brig Vinod Adapa

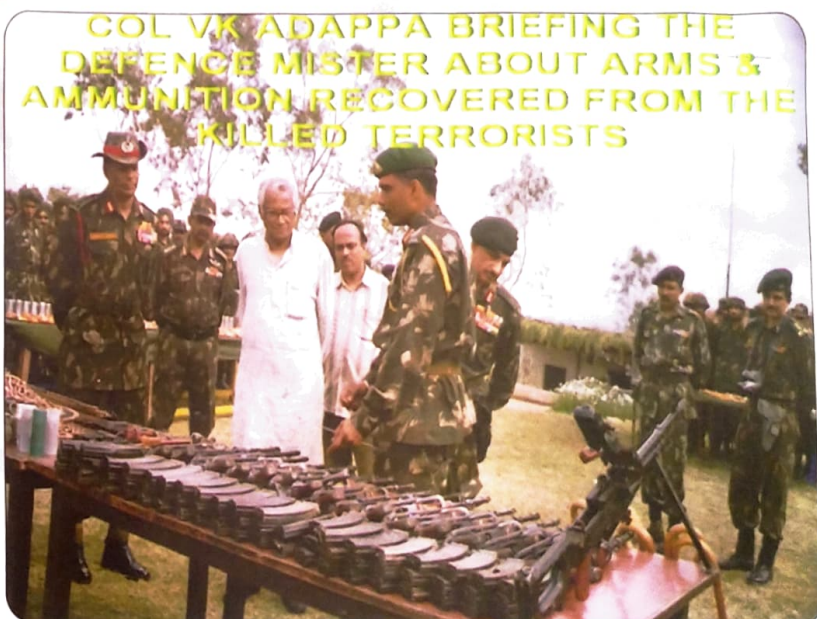
I was commanding the 3rd Battalion the Sikh Regiment and the Battalion was deployed on Counter Infiltration / Counter Insurgency roll in Rajouri Sector wef 08 Feb 2001. Battalion was doing quite well and we had killed 41 terrorists both in Counter infiltrations operations on the Line of Control and in Counter Insurgency operations in depth areas.



Sub Surinder Singh

Based on the Intelligence input on 03 Mar 2002, we had laid 11 ambushes covering the gaps between own forward posts, which are just 100 to 150 meters from Pakistani posts and eight ambushes in depth areas covering the most likely infiltration routes. At around 11 O'clock at night, suddenly the silence of night was shattered with loud blasts and continuous firing of automatic weapons. A group of terrorists had landed up in the ambush laid by Sub Surinder Singh and team. Terrorists had reached as close as three to four meters from the stop laid by Sub Surinder Singh. Sub surinder Singh leapt from his hide, firing a long burst from his AK 47 Rifle and bayoneted the leading terrorist. Before, the succeeding terrorist could react; he let out another burst of fire and kill d him instantaneously. Meanwhile, the following group of terrorists dispersed into the jungle and two terrorists out of them took position behind a boulder and started engaging the ambush party. S b Surinder Singh ordered Naik Harjeet Singh to engage the terrorists with fire and he crawled toward the boulder from another direction. On reaching almost 10 meters from the boulder he threw two grenades simultaneously over the boulder and suddenly the firing from the terrorists ceased.. At first light, when the area behind the boulder was searched, the dead body of one terrorist was found and the other terrorist might have escaped under the cover of darkness.

Immediately after the first contact with terrorists at night, the complete area was cordoned off and stops were established close LOC. The operational area which was cordoned had dense jungle, thick undergrowth and large number houses and Bukharwal huts. Therefore the search operation was tedious and time consuming. At around 7.30 AM two more terrorists were killed by a stop while they were trying to escape from the cordon. At around 8.30 AM, one of my intelligence sources informed me that four terrorists were hiding in a house on the hill side. I immediately mobilised approximately 50 soldiers and rushed to cordon off the particular house. Since the house was located on a hill side with a dominating view, as we started approaching the house terrorists opened fire with Universal Machine gun. However, we managed to establish the cordon without giving an opportunity for the terrorists to escape. The house was stone walled and the roof was made of timber and mud layers. We engaged the house from all directions with Machine guns, Rocket launchers and small arms. We could not approach the house since the terrorists were covering all the approaches with fire. After nearly two hours of intense fire, the house was damaged severely and stone walls on two sides of the house got collapsed. Gradually, firing from terrorists reduced and finally ceased.



I was controlling the operation from a distance of approximately 80 meters from the house sheltered by a big boulder. Since there was no fire from terrorists for nearly 10 minutes, I presumed that due to our intense fire, especially by Rocket Launchers, either the terrorists must have been grievously injured or have been killed. I decided to send a team to ascertain the situation and carry out the final assault to eliminate the wounded terrorists. By then, Sub Surinder Singh had reached my location and he volunteered to lead the team, since that operation was triggered by his Rifle Company and he was keen to finish the operation. As the team reached approximately 20 meters from the house, Sub Surinder Singh heard the noise of cocking of a rifle and he immediately withdrew the team and reached me.

Once again I carried out an appreciation of the situation and came to a conclusion that the only option left to me to eliminate the holed up terrorists was to blast the house roof and assault from top. An assault charge was prepared quickly using explosives. Again Sub Surinder Singh volunteered to lead the assault team. The team crawled up to the house, got on to the roof and blasted a big opening in the roof. Sub Surinder immediately rushed and lobbed two grenades through the opening, but unfortunately, at the same time, a terrorist lobbed a grenade from inside which exploded instantaneously injuring Sub Surinder Singh who was on the roof top. Despite being grievously injured, he lobbed two more grenades through the opening. As he desired all terrorists were killed and the operation had come to an end, but he was no more to see the results. We had eliminated nine terrorists in that operation, but at what a heavy price. I had lost the bravest of brave soldiers who sacrificed his life on my orders. Sub Surinder Singh was known in the Battalion as one man Army for his bravery, initiative and drive. One more valiant son of India laid down his life in honour of his mother land without even thinking for a moment about his wife, young daughter and son at home. The grateful nation honoured late Sub Surinder Singh with the highest peace time gallantry award, Ashoka Chakra on 26 Jan 2003.

