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NEWS / CONFLICT

# Soon After the Indian Army's Cross-Border Operation in Myanmar, the Security Forces Launch Another Strike in Assam

RAJEEV BHATTACHARYA

13 June 2015



Indian army soldiers walk past two young boys at Darranga village in the Nalbari district, which is located close to the Indo-Bhutan border, in Assam on 18 December 2003. According to an official from the intelligence, a group comprising the Indian army, the Assam police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is currently engaged in flushing out Bodo militants from the Manas National Park in Chirang, which is located about 120 kilometres west of Guwahati, and is close to the international border. AFP/AFP/GETTY

IMAGES

On 9 June 2015, the Indian army conducted a “surgical strike” on militant outfits in Myanmar, in retaliation to an attack in Manipur that had killed 18 personnel from the army. As the debate around this cross-border ambush by the military gathers steam, another operation against insurgent organisations is underway near the Bhutan border in Assam.

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Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is currently engaged in flushing out Bodo militants from the Manas National Park in Chirang, which is located about 120 kilometres west of Guwahati, and is close to the international border. The rebels that are being targeted through this operation belong to the anti-talks faction of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), a rebel outfit from Assam that has camps in Myanmar.

The official told me that the strike had started close to four days ago, and that the operation was being conducted on the Indian side of the park. He reiterated that strict instructions had been issued to the troops and their commanders to not cross over to the other side in Bhutan. The official admitted to me, however, that this meant that there was a strong possibility that the rebels may have used the opportunity to sneak over to the other side to avoid being trapped and killed.

The NDFB was formed in 1986, and its objective was to secure the independence of the Bodo-inhabited regions in Assam. In October 2008, it triggered serial blasts in the state that claimed the lives of around 90 people. The NDFB was also one of the three groups—along with the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), a rebel outfit that is active in Assam, and the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), that operates primarily in West Bengal—to have established camps in Bhutan from 1992 to 2003. All of these organisations were forced to leave the country following a military operation by the Royal Bhutan Army between December 2003 and January 2004. I spoke to several former members from an insurgent

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plan and execute strikes in Assam. More recently, the NDFB also became a constituent of the United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW)—a coalition that was formed between separatist groups in the northeast and Myanmar last month.

A functionary from a rebel outfit told me that the UNLFW has reportedly decided to identify vulnerable areas in the northeast that would serve as spots for operations against the security forces. The forces, in turn, according to an official from the home ministry, are on alert in insurgency-prone areas after the twin strikes in Nagaland and Manipur. The areas that surround Assam's border with Bhutan remain vulnerable due to the NDFB's presence in those regions.

According to the official from the intelligence, the trigger for this exercise was an input from the Intelligence Bureau that a group consisting of around 20 members from the NDFB had been spotted in the region and could possibly be preparing to carry out strikes. The NDFB's commander in chief, G Bidai—who had reportedly planned the attack in Kokrajhar and Sonitpur in December last year—was a part of this group .

A senior police official I spoke with, told me that the situation in Assam was not as bad as it was in Manipur or Nagaland. He seemed to believe that none of the groups that are active in the state would be able to assemble a large force and the logistics for a large-scale operation similar to the one that was witnessed in Manipur this month. However, he did not rule out the

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again is the porous border and the hilly terrain in Bhutan. They know the routes well and they often take the assistance of locals.”

The official from the intelligence told me that the NDFB had slipped into Bhutan last month after being chased for days by the army in the Manas National park. Members from the group had been camping at a site in the park for two days and were spotted by a local who worked as an informer for the army. He rushed back to deliver the news, but the insurgents had already fled before the army could reach the spot. A similar incident took place in the park last year when a helicopter was used to air drop commandos into the region for a covert operation. The exercise did not yield any result.

The Manas National Park had been reeling under rebel activities since the late 1980s, so much so that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) had labeled it a “World Heritage Site In Danger” in 1992. Although it is no longer in the list, the park’s location near India’s border with Bhutan had made it an ideal transit route to the camps that were set up the NDFB in association with the ULFA and the KLO. Even after these camps were eliminated in 2003, the militants did not stop frequenting the park as it provided them with a safe sanctuary.

Similar to the government in Myanmar, the Bhutan government also lacks the necessary resources to monitor its borders. Until now, there has been no need for the government in Bhutan to deploy additional forces at the border since it is on extremely friendly

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establishing mobile camps in the country periodically.

But unlike Myanmar, where the need to arise, Bhutan would be willing to cooperate with India to put an end to the activity of the NDFB on its soil. Previously, Bhutan had a harrowing experience with the rebels when they refused to vacate in spite of repeated reminders. The government had even offered to pay the ULFA a sum of Rs 200 crore if it vacated the camps it had established in the country and assisted the government in the transfer of the members of its cadre to Myanmar. The ULFA refused the offer and was forcibly ejected with its allies in 2003. Since then, there have been repeated instances of temporary settlements by these groups, but none have materialised into a permanent affair.

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## COMMENT

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## READER'S COMMENTS

Kenneth T Tellis  
[13 Dec, 2016](#)

Kashmir might end up being India's STALINGRAD, and India will not be able to contain a Chinese invasion and liberation of Indian territory which it has stolen from Nepal and Burma (Myanmar). It is time to take stock

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cease to exist if its  
occupation forces in  
Kashmir surrender to  
the PLA which is  
better equipped and  
trained.  The writing is  
on the wall!



Kenneth T Tellis  
[13 Dec, 2016](#)

If the Chinese use the  
very same methods  
as India did in  
capturing East  
Pakistan in December  
1971, then China can  
arm and train the  
Kashmiri Freedom  
Fighters and use them  
for an invasion of  
India itself. The 6,000,  
000 strong Indian  
Army can be isolated  
as the Soviets did in  
defeating Field  
Marschall Friedrich  
Von Paulus, by  
starving him out by  
cutting off his supply  
lines, and forcing him  
to surrender. If the  
Chinese use that  
method it will bring  
about the end the end  
of India's grand plan  
of recreating the  
Asokan Empire.. Once  
the Kashmiri Freedom  
Fighters get trained  
by the Chinese  
Peoples Liberation  
Army, the end of the  
Republic of India will  
come very past and  
then China can  
liberate Sikkim and  
offer Bhutan aid in  
driving out the India

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Kenneth T Tellis  
[08 Apr, 2016](#)

There is a certain arrogance to Indian Army incursions into Myanmar, supposedly to curtail the Asomese Liberation Front Forces, who do not want Indian domination of their Country. Assam was seized from Burma by forces of the British East India Company and join to their possession, when it still rightly belong to Burma (Myanmar) and not India. Thus it amounts to an Indian Invasion of Burma (Myanmar). The last time India invaded Chinese Territory in 1962,, they were repulsed by Chinese Frontier Forces who chased Indian Forces for 800 Miles, the India Army abandoned cities and all their armaments and went into full retreat. If China now gets into the Asom Fray, this might bring India into open conflict with China and a loss of its own territory in the bargain. gone are the days in 1947 when india seized Junagadh and Kashmir and then seized the Nizam;s Doimion of



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invasion by the  
Invasion of the  
Portuguese Territoty  
of Estado da India on  
December 19, 1962.  
This was also done by  
when Indian Forces  
Invaded East Pakistan  
in 1971 dressed as  
Mukhti Bahini  
guerillas in an  
ongoing civil War  
there. So, it is time to  
teach the Coolie  
Republic of Bharat a  
lesson. China can now  
first warn India and  
then seize its  
territories along  
Sikkim and Aksai  
Chin. But this time  
their will be no Indian  
Coolie Army left with  
even a chance, but to  
run with their Dhotis  
on in abject fear.

SHOW ALL