CHAPTER V

CHALLENGES OF SECURITY FORCES
A State is handled by the SFs when the normal law and order situation totally
deteriorates from 'bad to worse' for which the SFs are not responsible. Therefore, the SFs
have to start with a situation which places them at a great disadvantage and a totally
uncongenial atmosphere with the local masses. SFs are sent to an area which is alien to them.
Some of the political parties exploit the situation for their personal benefits. This is the
condition under which the SFs are inducted when they are deployed for insurgency tasks. A
few instructors, quite a large number of students who had undergone training at Counter
Insurgency Jungle Warfare (CIJW) School Vairengte located at Mizoram, Counter Insurgency
Training School (CITS) Harchura located at Assam were contacted on this issue. An informal
discussion with the troops deployed at Kokrajhar in the rural areas and also troops deployed at
Guwahati in an urban area and the SFs Commanders operating along with these troops was
carried out. Discussion was also done with some of the Officers deployed with troops on the
borders of Bangladesh. In addition, there were formal and informal discussion with the senior
Officers of the SFs of the neighbouring States of Assam. All these were carried out to have
better understanding of the situation and to have bird's eye view of the overall perspective of
the North-East. The relevant extract of all the above pertaining to the topic and this chapter
are discussed here.

A. P. Sinha in his Seminar papers on 'Insurgency in North-East India' bringing out the
problems of the SFs in the CI ops environment in the North-East says "As per a recent
assessment made by Chief of Staff, Eastern Command :-

(a) The administration is not co-operating with Army.

(b) The lack of collective effort by the civil authorities in the North Eastern States
is hampering the Army's operation to contain insurgency.
(c) A demoralised bureaucracy, subversions by Police Officers, co-operation being extended by civil officials and businessmen to insurgent organizations, and inadequate deployment of BSF for border management are siding the spread of insurgency in the North-East.

(d) Important insurgency leaders captured by the Army were being released by the civil authorities as an act of compromise. It is disheartening for the Army to see the insurgents being bailed out while jawans had laid down their lives to capture them.

(e) Insurgency was also resurfacing in North Cachar Hills of Assam, an area free of insurgency for a long time". 1

"For a variety of reasons the logistics of operationally deployed troops in the Eastern Command theatre pose many challenges. Most daunting of all is the near absence of rail communications in States other than West Bengal and Assam. Sikkim and Mizoram, for example, are totally devoid of rail traffic. Then there is the tenuous network of roads prone to disruptions due to rivers in spate, frequent landslides and even the closure of high mountain passes due to the winter snows. To make matters worse, in the CI areas, some of the roads are open for only on certain specified days. Further, at most places on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), troops are deployed at forward locations well beyond the road heads. In such a difficult terrain and climatic setting, made even more complex by poor infrastructure, logistic support has to be finely tuned to cater for numerous conflicting requirements." 2

**Unconventional Operations - Acid Test for Commanders**

Basically most of the SFs are trained for conventional operations. These include operations like Advance, Attack, Defence, Opposed River Crossing, Operations on Ditch cum Bandh and so on. The basic training is not for insurgency operation which is invariably
within ones own territory. Troops have to invariably adjust to this environment. Psychologically they have to be tuned not to commit any excesses. The battle is for winning the hearts and minds of the people. Therefore, there is a requirement to mould a soldier’s qualities for this type of unconventional operation. At the same time Commander at each level has to ensure that he does not become so soft that the operation cannot be carried out at the required vigour. Therefore, this type of operation is an acid test for the Commanders at all level.

**Anonymity of Insurgency**

The identification of a friend and foe is one of the biggest challenge being faced by the SFs. To give a live example which was narrated by one of the old Coy Cdr who is at present a serving Maj Gen would illustrate this.

In Nagaland, in early 1970's there used to be intensive long range patrolling (LRP) hunting for militants. At that time, for carriage of the stores of the LRP party which used to be approximately a strength of about ten they used to employ the porters. The patrolling used to last for 10 to 14 days and sometimes even up to a month. After about 2 weeks when the patrolling was over, they came to know that the main leader of the militant group whom they were looking for was working as one of the porter in the same LRP.

After all, an insurgent is staying amongst the people and it is difficult to recognise them unless specific intelligence is available about the person and this leads to the next challenge being faced by the SFs.
Intelligence

This is one of the most important aspect in CI Ops. Winning or loosing an operation in an insurgency environment depends on the accuracy of information and the fastest means by which it can reach the concerned person who can give a decision and the persons who have to operate. Quite a number of operations proved unsuccessful at the micro level mainly due to lack of information at the appropriate time or having a communication gap. Lack of local knowledge of people and customs makes it even more difficult to make sources. There are various intelligence agencies who operate in a CI Ops environment. There is a lack of co-operation and co-ordination amongst the SFs. Real time information passed to SFs will ensure success.

Sources Collecting Intelligence: These are:

(a) **Secret Information Bureau (SIB)** - This is a Union Government agency responsible for collection of intelligence.

(b) **Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)** – This functions directly under the Cabinet Secretariat. This organization is normally headed by a senior Indian Police Service (IPS) Officer. RAW sometimes even obtain information through the embassies.

(c) **Army Headquarters Liaison Unit** – This is an Army Headquarters Unit responsible for collection of intelligence in a theatre.

(d) **Intelligence and Field Security Units and Command Intelligence Units** - These are the field Units up to divisional level responsible for collection of intelligence.
(e) Brigade Headquarters and Units - The personnel trained at the Brigade and Unit level are responsible for collection of the information.

(f) BSF - Basically they operate on the borders and is responsible for intelligence along the borders.

(g) CRPF - They are responsible for collection of intelligence in their area of responsibility.

(h) State Police - They have their own intelligence network. They have an advantage over the others because they are the son of the soil and knowing the local language is an added advantage over the other groups of the SFs.

(i) Central Intelligence Department (CID) - This is another important agency for obtaining intelligence. The criminal cases are dealt by them. The parallel organization of this in USA is Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in Central Indian States (erstwhile Russia) is KGB and in Pakistan it is ISI.

(j) Signal Intelligence - Electronic Warfare - Detachments at various places obtain the required intelligence by intercepting messages passed by militant organizations. Sometimes information passed through code messages are decoded and information obtained.

In CI ops environment all these above Units obtain information individually and share the information collectively.
The intelligence is required generally on the following :-

(a) Identify causes for frustration among local population.

(b) Isolate and neutralise militant groups and individuals.

(c) Deny intelligence by preventing penetration of militants or their sympathisers in Government organizations and military Units.

(d) Acquire information of tactical nature for conduct of tactical operations against militants.

(e) Collect information about collusive support to underground elements.

(f) Identify Government officials who are sympathisers of militant groups.

(g) Collect, collate, interpret and disseminate to the persons on 'need to know' basis.

(h) Assess the requirement for psychological operations - target audiences intended themes and analyse results of own psychological operations.

We all are aware of the fact that as to how the intelligence failure had lead to recent Kargil crisis from May 99 to Aug 99 claiming the lives of soldiers. Intelligence passed from higher headquarters is normally late and this leads to no reaction time. After all, based on the information available a specific group of personnel have to be prepared for specific type of operation. Civil intelligence always report the information to their own higher officials in the channel. Then there is no parallel sharing of intelligence well in time. Reaction of militants
to situations is very fast. Sources are in grave danger. The SFs can not provide any protection to sources. It is very difficult to get information of value in time whereas insurgents know each and every move of SFs through their own intelligence network as well as civil population.

**Human Rights**

There is a booklet 'Why Separate State of Bodoland (Demand and Justification)' published by All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), H.Q. Kokrajhar. There is a chapter on 'Question of Human Rights'. It reads as under :-

"What is meant by Human Rights ?

'The most important of Human Rights are those that protect the security of the person. Violation of such rights include genocide, slavery, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary arrest or imprisonment, denial of fair trial and invasion of the home. Second is that bundle of rights affecting the fulfilment of such vital needs as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education in the scheme... Third, there is the right to enjoy civil and political liberties, these include not only freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion and freedom of assemble and to petition to redress grievances'.

Human Rights in the United Nations Organization provides a covenant which runs, thus -"The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which came into force on 23rd March, 1976 ensures the right to live, liberty, security and privacy of person and the right to be protected from torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment. The Covenant provides that person belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, shall not be denied, the right in community with other members of group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion or to use their own language. The plains tribal people of Assam have
been denied these human rights by the Government of Assam in one or the other way. Excessive abuses of human rights have been committed by the State Government in respect of the Bodos of Assam". 3

Violation of Human Rights by SFs: The pamphlet brings out that the excessive Police atrocities, raid, mass arrest, inhuman tortures are being continued upon the ABSU activists, supporters and Bodo people due to the present political movement for a separate Bodoland. It accuses the State Government of Assam, Police Forces to say that they are all out to commit genocide of Bodos and crush down the movement of tribals for a separate homeland. Some of the example quoted are as under:-

(a) A Bodo student Sujit Narzary was attacked and killed by chauvinist Assamese people at Tihu Chowk on the 12th June 1987. Another ABSU volunteer Sri Subhas Basumatary had lost one eye due to that attack by Assamese chauvinist people.

(b) Police forces shot dead two ABSU volunteers viz. Kabiram Basumatary and Alendra Basumatary at Lailanpara in Darrang District on the 9th September 1987. Sobin Goyary was seriously injured by a bullet in that firing.

(c) Again, Police fired and shot dead one ABSU volunteer Obiram Mushahary and seriously injured Shadev Brahma near Serfanguri in Kokrajhar district on the 25th September 1987.

The Bodos argue that they have no security of life in Assam. Therefore, they feel that the human rights do not apply to Bodo's in Assam and as such they should have safer homeland for themselves. The Bodos feel that their people's strong urges were turned down by the Government of India and Assam and the process of militarization of the zone had started instead of resolving the genuine problems of the Bodos. As a result, killing of
innocent people in the name of controlling extremists and extremism have become every day's happening,

The publication also reads :-

"As per the UN's Human Rights is concerned and even the Constitution of India itself, no one can be killed directly by the SFs unless he is proved guilty by the honourable court. This is a serious violation of the human rights. The democratically elected Government in Assam is nothing but a repressive Government as if it is not the people's Government. The Bodos have lost not less than 300 innocent people during the past four years in the hands of Government forces and in the Government sponsored group clashes. The Bodoland area needs international attention from human right organizations to ensure the security of people's lives and properties and they also have to take pains to ensure the Civil and Political Rights of the people of that area". 4

The Women's Studies Centre (P) of Dibrugarh University organised a seminar on "Human Rights and Women of North-East India" at the University campus in Apr/May 2000. Prof. R.R. Dhammala, Director, Women's Studies Centre suggested that integrated course on human rights and women's rights could be incorporated in the various faculty programmes of the Universities. She also observed that NGOs could work in association with the Women's Studies Centres. A number of resolutions were taken in this session. These are :-

(a) Introduction of courses on human rights and social work in the University.

(b) Holding of gender sensitisation programmes at all level in the University.
(c) Setting up a watchdog body to work as a pressure group to monitor implementation of various Governmental schemes and programmes meant for women.

(d) Setting up an association for co-ordinating research on women's studies in the North-East.

**Human Rights - SFs Point of View**: A large number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are operating in the State. Any incident of inadvertent nature done by SFs are blown out of proportion as human right violation. Any report of this nature has to be investigated. This leads to:

(a) False propaganda against SFs.

(b) Cautious and conscious tactical operations by troops.

(c) Troops are under undue pressure to perform duties which may lead to excesses.

(d) Any human rights violation by militants goes unnoticed and unpublished.

All these aspects lead to wastage of time and lowering the morale of SFs. The challenges and constraints in a democracy are the fundamental rights, legislature, judiciary and publicity. Therefore, there is a requirement to train the troops psychologically. The SFs personnel operating in CI Ops environment should be made conscious that they are operating against their own citizens and therefore minimum force should be used in controlling a situation. Behaviour with fellow citizens is one of the most important factor which builds the image of the SFs with the public. It is under these trying conditions the SFs have to operate successfully which is one of the biggest challenge for Commanders at all level.
Use of Fire power

There are any number of weapons which are held by the SFs. However, all these weapons cannot be used in an insurgency environment. There are also very clear cut orders as to who is permitted to open fire on what sort of weapon, especially the long range weapons like Light Machine Gun, Medium Machine Gun, area weapons like 81mm Mortars, 84mm Rocket Launchers and so on.

Basically, most of the SF Units are organised to operate on border areas against a known enemy and there is modification of weapons and equipment based on the terrain of operation like deserts, mountains, plains, jungles and so on. There is no separate authorisation of weapons and equipment for operating in an insurgency environment. Therefore, this calls for a separate organization for change in weapon systems and equipment. There is also a necessity to have a separate strategic doctrine for operations in an insurgency environment. This has to be planned at the highest level i.e. National level. In the use of weapons the co-lateral damage should be taken care. People and property around the target area getting damaged is called as co-lateral damage. There is no restriction on co-lateral damage in conventional operations.

Local Support

Insurgents rely heavily on the support of the local population. The movement cannot thrive unless the basic requirement of food, shelter, recruitment, money, moral support and intelligence and so on are met from the local population.
Insurgent movements start because of the support of the local population. The subsequent existence of the movement is possible only with the local support. The local support could be due to the following:-

(a) Voluntarily due to the genuine cause of the insurgents because they reflect the feelings of the common man of the area.

(b) Support due to fear and compulsions of the militants. The common man is basically terrorized by the action of the militants.

As far as the local support for the militant groups in Assam, to start with, this had the tremendous support of the local population since the locals felt that the militants are fighting for a genuine cause. However, over a period of time there had been a shift in the public opinion. This was due to extortion, kidnapping, robbery, blasting at public utility places etc being carried out by the militants. Therefore, the people of Assam have realised that the militant outfits which emerged as the reflection of public feelings have now gone in for easy money. Many militant leaders have become very rich and have enough money in foreign banks and they try and control the organization by remaining abroad. Therefore, there is a shift in public opinion about the relevance of the militant outfits. Our Government should cash on this particular aspect and gain the public support in favour of SFs.

A local teacher in Nagaon who refused to teach the ideologies of ULFA to school children was mercilessly killed. In the field work conducted at New Bongaigaon, a Bodo area, the local Bodos have expressed that over a period of time though they have gained confidence with the SFs they are afraid to give any information due to the fear of the subsequent effect of it by the militants.
This type of incident was also experienced in “Operation Pawan” i.e. in 1989 during the operations in Sri Lanka in Batticalava. One of the school teacher of primary class used to meet the SF Commander who was staying very close to the school. The LTTE cadre suspected the teacher to be the informer. They tied the teacher to a pole and beat him to death. This became a lesson for the other villagers and thereafter the villagers stopped even meeting any of the SFs personnel.

On 15 September 2000 there was a surrender of 200 ULFA militants and 1 UDPS militant of Karbi Anglong. They took a pledge to return to the mainstream, shun the path of violence and lead a normal peaceful life as law-abiding citizens before the Chief Minister, his Cabinet colleagues, senior Police and Civil Officials and other citizens.

Several top ranking leaders of the outfit who surrendered, said the leadership of the ULFA had lost perspective of the struggle and had been running the outfit as their personal kingdom like dictators. The Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta had said that it has been repeatedly proved that nothing can be achieved through the gun. It is only peace and development which will make the State strong and prosperous. He also said, the people of Assam are today fed up with the senseless violence in the past several years. Those, who have taken up arms should respect the popular sentiment against violence he said.

From the above, it is clear that the insurgent groups are loosing support within the organization and with the local population.

**Knowledge of the Area**

After all the militants are the sons of the soil. He had grown up in that environment from his childhood days. He knows the nook and corner of each and every place. If he is from an urban area, he knows the lanes, by-lanes, high rise buildings, sheltered locations and
so on. If he is from a rural area he knows the nearby villages, hide outs available, jungle in nearby vicinity and so on.

In relation to this, the SFs who are newly inducted in that area had to get acquainted to the place and it takes quite some time for this. In addition, the SFs are on tenure based system and there is a change at frequent intervals. Therefore, irrespective of best of efforts in the area of responsibility of a particular Unit deployed in a particular place, mastery of the place is quite difficult. It gets compounded when the local population is hostile or act as neutral to SFs.

**Intensive Operations and Game of Numbers - Conflicting Views**

The conversation with some Unit Commanders who have commanded the Units in an insurgency environment and also a very senior Officer of the rank of a Maj Gen who is commanding an active formation involved in insurgency reveal divergent views.

The view of a Maj Gen i.e. Divisional Commander is that the tendency of counting a Unit's efficiency in terms of militants killed, apprehended, explosives, weapons captured, hide outs destroyed is dying down i.e. no longer the game of Nos is existing. However, he also added to say that Units should not consider it as a peace station posting, while away the time and go away. They should keep the situation of the area of responsibility under control.

However, another very senior Officer of the rank of a Lt Gen in one of his conversation was comparing the efficiency level of a Unit in relation to other Units in the same area in terms of militants apprehended and weapons captured from the militants.

However, the Commanding Officers of the Units in insurgency environment always feel that the efficiency of the Unit is dependent on the game of numbers only. They do not
feel very comfortable or happy when the Unit has not achieved anything in the form of killing or apprehending militants and capture of weapons.

Even in the briefing of a senior Officer it is a normal practice to give the details of various figures in the form of militants captured, apprehended, weapons captured and apprehended like a medal tally of the Nations in the Olympics. However, now there is a tendency in SFs not to measure the efficiency of a Unit by the No of militants killed or captured and weapons captured in an operation. The trend is changing which is a good sign.

**Challenges Specific to Urban Insurgency**

The urban areas pose certain specific added problems. The Units operating in this environment should get acquainted with these problems. These are discussed below:

**Built-up Areas**: Fighting in a built up area is specific to urban insurgency. The built up areas provide inherent protection of concrete walls, well covered for fire by small arms, at the same time giving enough of warning by placing observation posts at high rise building, by lanes as easy escape routes, telephone, fax and other facilities for communication and so on.

**Concentration of Population**: Population is concentrated in communication centres. To search the militants in the crowded population becomes extremely difficult. This is a very tiresome and at times even leads to gaining nothing but ill-will from the local population.

**Floating Population**: A large amount of floating population comes to an urban area for various purposes like shopping, official work, meeting relatives, for seminars, public meetings and so on. The casual visitors are so many that it becomes difficult to search the real militant in an urban area.
Implementing Control Means: There are a large number of educated people in an urban area. The control means include curfew, restriction on gathering, movement of vehicles and so on. There is even a problem of laying a speed breaker in a city. In Guwahati city when the SFs laid the barriers to slow down the move of the vehicles next to the railway station, the report went to the district administration and immediately the barriers had to be removed.

Continuous Change in Tactics by Militants: Initially they operate in large groups then in smaller groups. Sometimes they use the uniform of the SFs. The civil administration should lay restriction on wearing of uniform by the civilian personnel. There had been quite a number of occasions when the militants operated in combat disruptive pattern of uniform. When any such information came, the SFs were asked to change to some other pattern of uniform. To give an example from combat disruptive pattern to olive green colour i.e. OG uniform.

There has been an incident at Jiribam where the militants were carrying out extortion by wearing Army uniform. An Army Major who saw this halted his vehicle and went to find out about the case. To his surprise he found that they were militants and not SFs personnel. Before he could react the Officer was shot dead by the militants.
240 TRANSIT CAMP: A UNIT IN THE THICK OF INSURGENCY IN AN URBAN AREA
Insurgents Operating in Urban & Rural Area

Operational planning by the militant groups are generally done in rural areas because of constraints of space in urban areas. Then they concentrate on the urban area and hit the target. Detailed study of the target is done for 2 to 3 months. They carry out the specific training for that task like destruction of a vulnerable area or a vulnerable point or killing of a VIP and so on. In the case of Rajiv Gandhi, the militant outfit LTTE went back to Sri-Lanka, rehearsed thoroughly and a dry run rehearsal was carried out when V. P. Singh then PM visited South India. The same rehearsal was executed to utmost perfection with no mistakes when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated.

The weapons and ammunition are carried by a different party known as the carriers. They are held in a cache in an urban area. This is known only to the task force commander. Prior to the operation, they go and collect the weapon. They execute the planned task. Leave the weapon and balance ammunition in a different cache. Subsequently these are carried by a different party.

In urban areas, more number of targets are available. The location of 240 Transit Camp in the heart of insurgency in Guwahati is shown on the left. The concentration of troops here to the tune of 500 per day poses a real challenge in the CI Ops environment.

If there is some problem erupting at the last moment in the execution of the original task an alternate target can always be selected. In Operation Bajrang I and II ULFA was following this and were quite successful. NSCN (IM) are experts in this type of operation. In Assam the militants are targeting more on public utility system.
**Differences between Rural & Urban Insurgency**

This can be summarised with the table below:

**TABLE NO 5.1**

**Rural and Urban Insurgency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concentration of Population</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Education &amp; Awareness level</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mob mentality</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Availability of cover</td>
<td>Concrete cover is available</td>
<td>Devoid of concrete cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lanes &amp; By Lanes</td>
<td>More. Facilitates easy get away by militants</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Info about SFs</td>
<td>Easily available for militants</td>
<td>Not so easily available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>More mobile. Easy get away by militants</td>
<td>Comparatively less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Publicity</td>
<td>Printing facilities available. There are audience to read them.</td>
<td>Hardly any printing facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Recruits</td>
<td>Youths of town want to gain 'Robinhood' image. Unemployed youths are gullible easy targets.</td>
<td>Comparatively less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Operating in Small Groups</td>
<td>Invariably operate in small groups in making identification difficult.</td>
<td>May be in small or larger groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Finance</td>
<td>Easily available by both legal and illegal ways. Legal ways like friends in foreign countries and illegal ways like looting.</td>
<td>Comparatively less availability of finances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Communication</td>
<td>Easy and latest mode is available. Militants have imported powerful sets. Now have started using code words.</td>
<td>Comparatively less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Propaganda & Counter Propaganda**

When a rape case or a co-lateral damage is done, militants use it strongly against SFs. A typical case as narrated by a young Officer is brought out here. A jawan was lured by a female, but when the husband came on the scene the individual was injured in the scuffle. The jawan had not done anything physically to the female but, the husband was demanding money for having sex with his wife. The matter was reported to the Police and FIR was lodged by the lady. Later on it was revealed that militants had instigated the husband to lodge the FIR. Media criticised the SFs. The SF person was court martialled for leaving the post and entering the civil area.

**Safety & Security**

**Public** : This is a challenge to SFs to keep the public safe from recruitment, extortion, kidnapping, fear and terror of the militants.

**VAs & VPs** : TV station, All India Radio station, telephone exchange, banks, railway stations, all public places, residences of VIPs are some of the areas where the Para Military Forces are deployed for protecting them.

**Segregation of Population**

We have to identify amongst the population the following :-

(a) Pro-hostile-fundamentalists who are relatives of militants.

(b) Neutrals.
(c) Anti hostile – who have been harassed by militants in the past. Families of SF personnel.

The main emphasis should be on the neutrals because they may side with pro-hostile fundamentalists.

**Civic Action to Win Population**

This is more of a counter-propaganda to militant activity. It is aimed at bringing the neutral population to anti hostile environment. If we do good to the villagers they will be voluntarily giving information to SFs. However, these are done at the cost of the efficiency of a Unit. Basically this is the task of the civil administration.

**Lack of Co-ordination at all Levels**

Co-ordination between various organizations functioning in CI area like Para Military Forces, civil machinery and Police is lacking. If cordon and search operation is to be launched, as per rules and regulations, Police representative is required. But when operations are launched in remote areas, the Police never come there. Basically they want some notice to be given to them which becomes difficult and adequate notice should not be given due to security reasons. We even don’t know whether they are reliable or not. Insurgents have their source at Police level also.

Co-ordination between intelligence agencies also requires revision. Intelligence is passed in own channels. Intelligence is exchanged at the highest level. By the time it trickles down to the concerned it is too late and is of no value.
Hit & Run Tactics by Militants

They inflict casualties and vanish from the scene. It is very difficult to track them after that. Basically their aim is to strike the SFs when they are not prepared. By the time the SFs react, they are not there. When the SFs lay the ambush they fight till the last militant is killed. But when militants lay ambush, after inflicting casualties, by the time the SFs carry out the counter-ambush drills, they already abandon the place.

Contact is Difficult

Inspite of launching many operations the SFs hardly find any militant and is unable to kill them. In two years tenure, in a particular sub-unit not more than five to six encounters are there. But the patrolling and ambush party are going daily. When contact is established it is difficult to maintain contact further due to lack of tracking skill of a normal soldier and also there is no tracker dog at battalion or company level.

Morale & Motivation of Troops

Deployment of troops is very less as compared to the area. Therefore, the troops are engaged for a long duration without rest. The job in CI ops is monotonous. For example, if a person is detailed for road opening, he keeps going for the same thing throughout. You don’t have much of option to break monotony. Leave is a problem in CI Ops. Everybody should ideally go on leave after 3 months. But it is not possible due to less fighting strength. A company post never exceeds 70 or maximum 80 persons. Authorised strength of a company is 128. Troops to area ratio and troops to population ratio always create problems. Law and order problems are to be dealt with the Police, PMF and CPO.
Training of Troops

The training is based on the following:-

(a) Orientation to CI Ops.

(b) Duration of tenure for obtaining results.

(c) Civic action.

The training is also on the local language, IED training, riverine ops, protection against hostile weather, jungles, disease like malaria, preservation of water and so on. The training for the troops being inducted at North-East are being imparted at CIJW School, Vairengte located in Mizoram and CITS located in Assam near Tezpur.

The basic training for SFs is not meant for CI Ops. It is only when a Unit gets inducted it undergoes a capsule course. The qualified persons within a Unit is also limited to impart the training to the troops. Even for basic training, with the commitments, troops are not available for training. Ranges are not available. In a CI Ops environment there is a necessity to search, locate & destroy a target. Our conventional operations are to fire at a fixed target only. For example, a new concept has emerged that if cover is not available, to fire from the left shoulder. Nowhere in the training this concept of firing from left shoulder is taught. Training regarding legal aspects and human rights is not there. Concentration should be more on such issues basically meant for junior leaders.

Political Support to Insurgent Groups

Alignment of various rival groups and patronising by various political parties is there.
**Latest Improvised Explosive Devices (IED)**

As per information available about the IEDs held by the militants, the troops are trained. But with in a short duration they change the tactics. "Don’t pull the loose wires, don’t cut the tight wires" is the normal teaching to the SFs. Militants are using from crude bombs to remote controlled IEDs. Locating and defusing an IED is difficult.

**Hideouts**

These are in remote and far flung areas. It is very difficult to get information about hideouts and secondly very difficult to reach there. By the time the SFs reaches there, they already abandon the hide outs. Surrendered militants only gave the information about the hideout which is used as a training aid in CIJW School, Vairengte. There is only one track and a small force is sufficient to stall that. EW system is efficient. Even aerial reconnaissance cannot locate the hide out. Hide outs across IB are in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar. There are three types of hide outs :-

(a) **Transit Camp.** When they infiltrate across IB use this as the resting place.

(b) **Temporary hide out.** Used before launching an operation in that particular area. After the operation they go underground when SFs are more active. The stay varies from two to three days.

(c) **Military Camps.** Used for training purpose. Training establishment and military headquarters are located here. The duration of stay is one to two months.
**Unified Command**

"In 1997 a unified command was set up. This terminology is a little misleading. It is not a unified command with all the forces working under a Supreme Commander. It is primarily an organization to ensure co-ordinated functioning. However, more important than any framework are the people who operate that organization. This system is working fairly satisfactorily and has produced results". 5

For operational purpose, a united headquarters is established under the chairmanship of GOC IV Corps with operational control over all forces including Para Military and State Police employed on counter-insurgency duties, for co-ordinating the entire operations. The other members of the unified headquarters would be Principle Home Secretary of Assam, DGP Assam, Brigadier General Staff IV Corps, IG BSF, IG CRPF and joint directors of the Intelligence organizations.

The terms of reference of the Unified Headquarters are as under :-

(a) Synergise counter - insurgency operations conducted by Army, Central Police Organizations (CPOs) and State Armed Police, including deployment or re-deployment.

(b) Decide on modification of the areas of operations between the Army and the CPOs vis-a-vis the projected action plan.

(c) Monitor the proceedings or the district level co-ordination committees.

(d) Crisis Management.
District level co-ordination committee is also established under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police and representatives of Army, Para Military and intelligence Agencies as members. They function on the lines similar on the State Unified Headquarters at the district level.

From the conversation from various personnel it is revealed that the Police and civil administration is not taking this new philosophy seriously. To a certain extent failure of this is due to ego, lack of knowledge by SFs, civil administration and vice-versa. Fear of the unknown is always existing with the civil administration. However, sharing of intelligence amongst the SFs is helping to a great extent in carrying out the operations in the insurgency environment.

**Strategic Group Meeting**

This is at the State level headed by the Chief Secretary and comprises of senior representatives of the Army, Para Military Forces, State Police and intelligence Agencies. They work out broad strategies and policy for co-ordination. The group meets as often as necessary but at least once in two months.

**Operational Group Conference**

This is followed by the strategic group meeting. The Unified Force Commander chairs this conference. In this one, all the SFs Commanders evolve a workable strategy to execute the plans decided at the strategic group meeting.
Help by Civil Administration

In carrying out insurgency operations the responsibility of the State Government to SFs are as under :-

(a) To provide telecommunication facilities for the various Army and Para Military Units. The details are to be projected by headquarters IV Corps to Chief Secretary Assam.

(b) To provide administrative and logistic support as far as possible.

Civil administration is responsible for giving accommodation, vehicles, telephone etc. In the field work conducted at New-Bongaigaon one of the Commanding Officer mentioned that the accommodation given is not satisfactory. There was no storage place at all for the ammunition.

In an urban insurgency environment one of the Company Commander operating in thick of insurgency was complaining that out of the seven vehicles given to him from civil administration not even a single vehicle could start in time at the time of crisis. The help is minimal and probably to save the skin.

Role of Mass Media

Mass media plays a major role in insurgency operations. After all, the public come to know about the happenings in the State through the mass media.
What all Constitute Mass Media: These are as under:

(a) **Dailies** - The prominent English dailies are The Sentinel, The North-East Daily, North-East Times, The Assam Tribune. Prominent Assam language dailies are Prati Din, Agardoot, Azir Akhon, Purbanchal, Paltan Bazar, Arul Udoy. In addition, other magazines covering North-East are North East Sun (fortnightly), North East Panorama.

(b) TV.

(c) Radio.

(d) Cassettes.

In an insurgency, after the growth, the second stage is the attack on State apparatus. This is the stage where mass media is involved. The insurgents will also attack some Army troops. At times the mass media wrongly represent the action of the SFs. At this time the public opinion goes against the SFs.

**Main Role**: In handling insurgency there are bound to be some casualties and some actions depending upon the level of operation. The mass media has two basic ground roles:

(a) To make it know to the public that the sneak attacks by militants are unavoidable. No fool proof system can avoid it. In Ireland nobody blamed the SFs for these type of attacks.
(b) They should also make it known to the public that these are basically mindless killings and without any ideological rationale thereby perpetrating such inhuman acts so that public opinion is never with them i.e. with the insurgents.

**Role of Local Rural Reports** : Reports in rural areas file their stories for local dailies and play an important role. These are :-

(a) Field Reporting.

(b) Grass root problems and reporting.

(c) Sometimes unnecessary sensational news to become popular are published.

SF Commanders should be in touch with the locals and media so that an iron curtain vanishes and transparency and objective reporting is there.

**Northern Ireland** : In Northern Ireland in 1976 the electronic media and the print media had a system of interviewing families of victims on the anniversary of that particular incident to bring home to the common man that people like him are only being killed. If the same thing is followed here this would ensure the following :-

(a) The SFs will not be biased by the public opinion.

(b) The public opinion will rally around the SFs.
Negative Points about SFs: The press people feel that the SFs do not release most of the messages in the name of secrecy and therefore this leads to excessive secrecy. Earlier this was a managed affair. Now for the past two years full and free axis has been given for the press. This is a better approach by the SFs.

Views By Manas Chaudhuri, Editor The Shillong Times on "Democracy, Ethnic Conflict and Media Response" - seminar held in North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) from 17 to 19 Apr 2000 on Community Violence and Democracy are explained here.

The crux points are as under :-

(a) Serious journalism in the NE has been rather recent. Guwahati's Assam Tribune was virtually the sole mouth piece of the entire region. After the vivisection of Assam in 1972, the scenario has somewhat altered. Today, all the seven States have their own newspapers to cater to the local needs, although the Guwahati dailies still pass off as regional newspapers. The daily newspaper from the nearest metropolis - Calcutta - enjoyed and still enjoy an impressive readership in the region.

(b) Journalists have not been able to rise above their own community interests, as if it was the responsibility of the journalist and the newspaper to safeguard the perceived community interest or to alert the community to what is often a mere assumption of demographic imbalance not based on any empirical evidence.

(c) The intrinsic tendency among the newspaper men is to be populist and dishout stories which the readers like.

(d) The ethical lapses and transgression can be traced back to 1961 - undivided Assam. The worst ethnic disturbance, popularly termed as language riot was
witnessed at the time. At this time, the newspapers at Guwahati and Calcutta entered in to a race of reports which showed as to which newspaper was on which side. The line was clearly demarcated rather dangerously for journalism, or linguistic lines.

**Biased Opinion** : It is a common experience that border disputes in the region tend to turn into an ethnic battle in the newspapers. When Naga marauders gunned down thirty old people from Assam at the Assam - Nagaland border village called Merapani in the eighties, the Assam dailies took a hard stand reflecting the popular mood of the people. Such heinous acts are abominable. The press in Assam was not entirely unjustified.

The basic question is - Have the newspaper on either side of the boundary able to look at the border issue dispassionately? The answer is an emphatic No.

In a disturbed law and order situation, primarily arising out of ethnic considerations, when the newspapers should be exercising restraints, they end up with inflammatory items. They almost invariably violate the cardinal principle of withholding the names of communities or ethnic groups involved in a conflict situation.

**Role of Mass Media in Handling Ethnic Conflicts** : In reporting, the questions that frame the discourse for analysis of specific cases most commonly revolve around such matters as: Was the coverage accurate and complete? Was the reporting fair and balanced? How was the information gathered? What was the motive of the source of information? What were the consequences of the coverage? Wresting with these questions it affords a critic an opportunity of probing the ethical standards and responsibilities of journalism, particularly when it comes to negotiating ethnic conflicts in a hyper sensitive region like North-East.
The readers have been trained to look for a kick out of newspapers and the newspapers are prepared for playing this type of game to remain afloat in the market. But survival at what price? The society is bound to suffer, if not already suffering, from the reckless and irresponsible reporting and comments on ethnic conflicts in the local dailies.

**Examples**

**1997**: A shillong-based correspondent of an English daily from Calcutta put out a crazy speculative story to the effect that there was a likelihood of ethnic trouble during Durga pooja in Shillong. The story which was apparently based on hearsay triggered a veil of ethnic tension days before the big Hindu festival was to begin. Durga pooja passed off without any disturbance but the guilty newsman did not escape. He was arrested and charged with formenting communal trouble in Shillong. But such instances are rare.

**1992**: Rare also is the breed of O.L. Marbaniang, founder editor of the first daily, U Nawphor, who during the height of ethnic trouble in Shillong in 1992 - put out a front page story giving gory details of how a mob burnt a peanuts vendor alive at Motphran Pont at Bara Bazar in Shillong. He was burnt by overturning his burning charcoal oven. The report which compared the defenceless victim with Jesus Christ obviously did not go well with a section of people i.e. Christian population and he became the target. He escaped an attempted assault on him but eventually had to quit the profession in frustration since little support came his way.

The readers expect to read what pleases them the most. When reporters are objectively put out or are played down for obvious professional reasons, the concerned newspaper at once becomes an object of suspicion with one section of readers.
Need of the hour: More professionally attuned journalistic fraternity is the ability to rise above petty considerations and not be swayed by popular mood in the streets. Responsible journalism can transform the myriad ethnic groups from getting blinded by insular feelings to learning to look from a wider angle.

Road to Responsibility: It is not an easy one. Inspite of criticism both constructive and educative, the aim should be to produce journalism that is recognised for its commitment, high standards and moral principles. B. K. Mathur in his article on 'Media and the Armed Forces' (The Assam Tribune dated 09 Dec 99) calls a reporter also as a researcher, analyst and an investigator who has a fair degree of patience, is unbiased and exercises restraint and balance. He further says that the Generals and Brigadiers keep on talking about misreporting, and there has for long been some sort of misunderstanding between the armed forces and mass media. Quoting a friend who was also from the Army he said: When he was a Brigadier, a Press party was to visit the Unit under his charge. An advice came to him from the Army Headquarters. It said, in his words, 'khoob khilao pilao, kuchch mut batao' (feed them well but do not give them any information).

Secrecy: A tendency has fast grown among the armed forces to consider mediamen - and women also - as somewhat 'untouchable' or 'security risk' or someone who may disclose national secrets. Time was when the Service Chiefs used to talk with Defence correspondents freely and in utmost confidence. One could freely bump into them in clubs and public places and seek information or clarifications. If there was something not to be disclosed to the public in national interest (as Defence Ministers often reply to questions in parliament), they used to say (this reminds me of General Thimayya), 'not for publication'. But now, the distance between the military and the media had increased to the extent that you just can't get information from them except, of course, the defence hand-outs.
The Defence Ministry has a full - fledged Directorate of Public Relations, comprising, among others, PROs from the three Services.

**Bofors Case.** Some body took a commission of Rs 64 crores on the outright purchase of 410 guns at a cost of Rs 1,450 crores an unusual practice in such military deals right from early 1960, when expensive military machines began to be imported. The opposition feel the media with planted stories that the ruling party was blamed for compromising national security by the purchase of an 'inferior gun' for the sake of the Rs 64 crores bribe.

Throughout the raging controversy, surprising not one effort was made by the Army, or the Defence Ministry or the Prime Minister's Office to apprise the media of a correct picture, of the qualities of the gun, of the fact that it was a very effective gun, and what had prompted Gen Sunderji, to recommend the gun after having rejected in once before. Nobody ever told the media why the gun's shoot-and-scoot quality had become relevant against the backdrop of Pakistan's acquisition of a radar system to locate the Arty gun's position.

In an informal chat with Rajiv Gandhi a lunch on meeting at the Press Club of the Prime Minister, who was then also holding the charge of the Defence Ministry, that the military officers and the Defence Ministry's PR set-up had become too much secretive, and that was the only reason for a lot of speculative stories going in to print. Rajiv reacted: "You are serious journalists, it is your duty to find out and investigate"!

The author also says that his long experience in defence reporting shows that while the senior Officers, or the military top-brass is open and willing to talk freely, the Officers concerned with information or those at the junior or middle levels, say Brigadier and below, try to hide things in what they believe as 'national interest'.
History tells that during the past three decades and more, several senior military and civil Officers have been caught selling out confidential information, never a journalist. There is, therefore, the need for a better military-media understanding. As the late General Joshi had once stated, media is a force multiplier.

**Views of Gen V P Malik** : In the article under "**Media, armed forces a dangerous cocktail**", *The Sentinel Oct 25, 1999*, the following are brought out :-

(a) He urged the press not to allow itself to be used in a manner that can erode the apolitical nature of the armed forces. In reporting Kargil operations truth generally prevailed.

(b) **Exceptions** : Certain reports were running down the Army on the basis of half-truths and biased comments and some even violated journalistic ethics.

(c) Many reports showed lack of understanding on the part of the media of our organization, our strategy and our tactics or the way the armed forces worked.

(d) Media could act as a "force multiplier" as also a "force degrader" in a war situation.

(e) Politics and media together could be a dangerous cocktail for the armed forces which could adversely affect its apolitical nature. Soon after the kargil conflict was over the Army got caught in the electoral politics. Armed forces are not used to these kind of things that have happened this time.
(f) In the previous operations the press releases were issued either by the Army Command or Headquarters or the Defence Ministry. Today the situation is quite different because of proliferation of the media and also because of aggressive media persons. The rules had been diluted but they had not been changed.

(g) The Army tried to regulate at some stage the presence of media persons in the war zone during the Kargil conflict, but it did not work.

(h) The coverage contributed to the izzat (honour) of the soldier and sympathy towards the martyrs.

(i) Thanks to the media we saw the national integration of the country as it was never before.

(j) Kargil had provided important lessons on media handling by the Indian Army which is now contemplating imparting regular training to scribes to cover any future battlefront. Apart from reviving the war correspondents course at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh, the Army is also thinking of running short courses at the United Services Institution for media persons, he said, adding later certain advance courses would also be started. Short courses would also be started in metropolitan cities including Calcutta and Pune.

**Shelter in Neighbouring Countries & States**

A cursory look at the demographic mosaic of Assam would show that this region is home to a curious amalgam of cross-cutting societies. What compounds the problem of this plurality is the fact that the tendency for ethno-political assertion is high among almost all the groups. This is primarily because the political boundaries in most cases do not coincide with
the existing social boundaries. Inspite of the several political permutations and combinations the Union Government is not able to cater to the demands of all the ethnic categories, clamouring for recognition of their distinctive identity. The salient features pertaining to neighbouring countries and States are as under:-

(a) Many ethnic groups in the region especially in the areas bordering the international boundaries have more in common with the population living across the boundary than with their own nationals. The affinity of groups with their kin groups across the border and the sense of support (both material and nonmaterial) they derive from them, have had serious implications.

(b) Countries surrounding India have been active in exploiting the volatile situation presented by the turmoil in Assam. Not only countries such as China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar but also smaller powers such as Bhutan and Nepal have been involved in the region. Through political backing, economic assistance, logistical support, military training and arms supplies these countries have contributed to the ongoing violence in this region.

**Involvement of Foreign Countries**

**China**: "The North-Eastern India is inhabited by Mongoloid tribes who have close ethnic and cultural ties with the tribes in China, Tibet and Burma. Barring Khasis and Jaintias of Meghalaya, almost all hill tribes belong to the Tibeto-Chinese fold and to the Tibeto-Burmese family". 6 It was this feeling of affinity towards the border people of erstwhile East Pakistan and Burma that led some of these tribal groups to turn towards their own stock than towards the country they resided in. The strategic location of the North-East and the access of the various groups to China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal, together with material and moral support of foreign intelligence agencies to these groups, have facilitated insurgency
in the North-East region. The Chinese support to insurgents in the North-East came early in the 1960's and continued through the 1970's. The Naga insurgency with the Chinese support became stronger and more intense with better tactics and modern weapons. Apart from the Nagas, the Chinese also extended moral and material support to the Mizo and Meitei insurgents by arranging for their training in guerrilla warfare and subversion in training centres in Yunan province of mainland China and Lhasa in Tibet. Chinese helped Pakistan as a counterweight to India. They have attempted to gain foothold in Bangladesh. China's three largest arm clients are India's neighbours i.e. Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. In 1990's from an active hostile relationship with India, China changed its India's policy to passive hostility and finally neutrality.

**Pakistan**: A slight step back into history would reveal that Assam was always a part of the scheme in the overall Pakistani strategy. From the very outset, Pakistan has shown its disagreement over the territorial division. One time PM of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in his book, 'The Myth of Independence', laid claims to Assam and suggested that he wanted some areas of India's Assam to be included in Pakistan: He wrote "One (of the problems) at least is nearly as important as the Kashmir dispute : that of Assam and some districts of India adjacent to East Pakistan. To these East Pakistan has very good claims, which should not have been allowed to remain quiescent ... The eviction of Indian Muslims into East Pakistan and the disputed borders of Assam and Tripura should not be forgotten." His statement was an open confession of Pakistan designs to convert Assam into a Muslim majority State by pushing in hordes of infiltrators and finally annexing it. Many in India were aware of this Pakistani strategy even earlier.

"From the 1980s, there has been a quantum jump in the covert operations by the Pakistan intelligence agency Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), better known in its acronymic form, which has consistently kept up its cross-border activities for instigating, supporting and directing insurgent activities in North-East India. The aim of such involvement is clear - to
weaken India's internal security system and to engage India internally so that Indian attention is diverted from Kashmir and Pakistan. This strategy was put into action against the backdrop of the latent nuclear-deterrence in the mid-1980s. ISI has operated from Nepal and Bangladesh. It has effectively exploited the prevailing communal hiatus in the North-Eastern region. In fact, in recent years there has been a mushrooming of Islamist groups.

According to Maj Gen B K Bopanna, who was GOC, 21 Mountain Division, some madrassas (Islamic religious institutions) in Assam are helping the growth of separatist forces with active ISI help. According to the General, there are numerous such schools in Lower Assam's Nalbari and Barpeta districts as well as in Southern Assam's Barak valley. Gen Bopanna said, "The Army has taken serious note of it in view of the large-scale Bangladeshi infiltration into the North-East. The possibility of many militants taking shelter in these schools cannot be ruled out". 9

At least 18 separate Islamist militant groups have so far been identified by security agencies, with names like the Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (MULFA), Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA), Peoples United Liberation Front (PULF), Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Adam Sena, 'Jehad Council, etc. The Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam is an umbrella organization recently floated by a number of separate outfits to carry out their activities in a concerted manner. Most of these groups are based in Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta and Nalbari districts in Lower Assam, Nagaon and Marigaon districts of Central Assam and Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Southern Assam's Barak valley, besides the Char (alluvial islands) areas in the Brahmaputra river. Islamic fundamentalists have targeted India in recent years and they have managed to find their sympathisers from these organizations. They have queered the pitch of their movements by saying that they have designs well beyond Kashmir and seek to enlarge the jehad.
The role of ISI is confirmed in the arms-drugs transferred into India. This has also been confirmed by American intelligence findings. Recent reports suggest that ISI base camp in Dhubri sector was being used as a centre for smuggling of ganja and brown sugar. 10

Assam CM Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said recently in Assam assembly that the Assam Police had gathered sufficient evidence to prove that Pak-espionage outfit, the ISI, has been actively involved in formenting violence and terrorism in the State. 11

The unprecedented haul of high power explosives from the Sealdah station and two other places of West Bengal, though not the deadly RDX, was preceded by one of the worst train mishaps at Gaisal and the powerful blast at the New Jalpaiguri railway station in June 1999. This clearly indicated the dent of the insurgents into West Bengal, a State which was considered as relatively quiet in terms of insurgent activities. The ISI-backed agents used just one kg ANFO to trigger the massive blast in the New Jalpaiguri railway station on June 22, 1999 killing nine persons including five soldiers. That the shipment originated in Bangladesh, or was at least transited through it, confirms the suspicion that anti-India insurgent groups, backed and funded by ISI, have struck deep roots in neighbouring countries. Bangladesh and Nepal are infested with ISI operatives who are opening up new fronts on Indian borders to infiltrate into this country and target vulnerable areas. 12

Siliguri in North-Bengal, the gateway to North-Eastern States, is fast becoming a heaven for ISI agents while Siliguri is the main gateway to Guwahati in Assam, Gangtok in Sikkim and Kishanganj in Bihar, it shares borders with three countries - Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Its cosmopolitan culture has enabled people from various parts including ULFA and ISI agents to get mingled with the locals almost effortlessly. The recent arrest of thirteen persons suspected to be on the ISI payrolls for quite sometime, reveals how the subversive organization has hatched a plan to spread its network in the North-Eastern States and carry
out anti-national activities. The Government of West Bengal has admitted in the Assembly that the ISI was indeed active in the area and was using Siliguri as a "corridor".

**Bangladesh**: East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh later after 1971, was host to many insurgent activities unleashed against India in the North-Eastern region. Pakistan had decided quite early to keep India engaged internally. Indo-Bangladesh relations were cordial till Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was in power. After all, Bangladesh emerged as an Independent Nation largely due to Indian military intervention. But soon after Sheikh's assassination, the forces used to the Pakistani style of thinking took over the policy of hosting anti-India insurgents on Bangladeshi soil. In many cases, some of these political groupings in Bangladesh have reaped good electoral harvest by whipping up anti-India sentiments. The salient points which pose as challenges are enumerated as under:

(a) Various Bangladeshi Governments till the present one headed by Ms. Sheikh Hasina had allowed Pakistan intelligence operatives to launch their anti-India activities from the Bangladeshi soil. In most of the cases the Government turned a blind eye to the ISI operations inside Bangladesh. This has facilitated the ISI channelisation of money and materials through Bangladesh to insurgent groups in the North-East.

(b) The anti-India operations was successful due to a large scale of illegal immigrant Bangladeshi population present in the North-East. The porosity of the Indo-Bangladesh border has led to many unanticipated problem for India. The porous border has led to a lot of smuggling activities, illegal immigration and infiltration.

(c) The Bodos are seen to be adopting a communal line over the issue of illegal migrants of Bangladesh and they are reportedly targeting Muslim population in the region.
(d) All action for pushing back infiltrators are turning out to be futile. Many of those who were pushed back, re-entered into Indian territory through clandestine routes.

(e) In continuation of this it is possible to argue that many influential groups in Bangladesh, who have had a dream of unification of Bangladesh with West Bengal and a part of Assam, are in a purposeful way working towards the realisation of this dream. Various opposition parties in Bangladesh led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has argued in favour of treating the anti-India insurgent groups in a soft and relaxed manner.

(e) Media reports suggest that the outlawed ULFA has started several lucrative income-generating projects in Bangladesh to sustain its anti-India activities in this country. These include three hotels, a private clinic and two motor driving schools in Dhaka, a number of grocery and drug stores in Sylhet, poultry farms in Mymensingh, and two schools in Narsingdi. 15

Myanmar: India shares 1,525 km land border and a maritime border of 200 km long with Myanmar. The present day population along the Indo-Myanmar border have a strong socio-cultural affinity, which is the outcome of a long historical process of intermingling among the people of the area. They belong to the Tibeto Burmese stock and trace their origin to the east i.e. through Burma or from Burma. The Indo-Myanmar border remains comparatively peaceful and there is no remarkable border conflict between the two countries. However, the separatist feeling and legacy of discontent among the various tribes straddling the borders still survive.
ULFA are reportedly involved in drug-trafficking and they are using the sale proceeds for purchase of arms and ammunition. The Kachin Independent Army (KIA) and Burmese Communist Party (BCP), the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and other such attempts have all developed nexus with NSCN and ULFA for drug trafficking across the border. The Myanmarese rebels ensure that drugs are brought under their protection up to Tamu on the Indo Myanmar border and also up to Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The Indian insurgent groups and the Bangladesh syndicate take over from these locations and thereafter push the drugs inland.

The Sixth National level meeting between the officials of (Ministry of Home Affairs) India and Myanmar devoted much of its time discussing cross-border terrorism in North-East. Apart from the question of promoting of border trade, the two sides also agreed to check movement of militants across the border. They also agreed to strengthen communication networks along the international border. Moreover, the two sides also agreed to step up measures to check narcotics smuggling across the Indo-Myanmar border. The two sides also discussed the possibility of launching joint operations against the militants operating out of Myanmar. It may be recalled here that the last joint operation code named 'Operation Golden Bird' was very successful and it dealt heavy blow to ULFA.

**Thailand factor**: The Indian Home Ministry is worried about Thailand turning into a base of operations for the various militant groups operating in the North-East. According to a report of the ministry on insurgents in the North-East, Thailand has a flourishing clandestine arms bazaar located in the three Pagoda Pass area opposite Karen State in Myanmar, and along the Ranong coast adjoining Tenasserim division along the country's coastline. The two areas along the Myanmar border are controlled by rebel ethnic groups. Arms of every description, including assault rifles of the Alliester Kalashnikov (AK) series, rocket launchers, communication equipment, night vision aids are freely available. According to senior administrative and Police Officials, the real worry for India starts when these arms are
transhipped from southern Thailand and Myanmar to Bangladesh in fishing vessels operated by Burmese insurgents. The Officials added that 'Operation Leech' mounted by the Indian armed forces off the Andaman coast recently is by far the biggest proof of such shipments. Once these arms land at Bangladeshi ports, they are provided to militant groups operating in Tripura, Assam and Manipur through west and north Mizoram where vigil is comparatively less than other North-Eastern States. At times, Meghalaya has also been used to store arms meant for ULFA.

While unfolding the genesis of North-East insurgents relations with Thailand's arms dealers, the report says that the NSCN was the first group from the region to establish its presence in that country in 1987. Several ULFA activists are also known to have visited Thailand for negotiating the purchase of arms and communication equipment. According to an official here, it was ironic that due to lack of good weapons and sophisticated communication aids with Government agencies, the militants were being able to smuggle their deadly arsenal into India. 17

**Bhutan** : Because of India's porous borders with Bhutan, the militant groups from Assam have very often sought refuge in the Bhutanese territory. It has proved really difficult on the part of the SFs to handle these forces operating from Bhutan. At least 4,000 cadres of the outlawed ULFA and then a thousand tribal Bodo militants from Assam are estimated to have crossed the borders and are based in camps in southern Bhutan. Assam CM P. K. Mahanta recently said that the Bhutanese authorities should come up with firm policy decisions to drive out all Assamese militant groups holed up in well-entrenched bases inside the Himalayan Kingdom. "Bhutanese authorities should take steps to dismantle all militant camps and drive the rebels from their territory", Mahanta said. Media reports quoting official sources suggest that the Assamese rebels are treated with good sense of hospitality from the Bhutanese authorities, who have turned a blind eye to their operations from Bhutanese soil. 18
Nepal: Nepal is acting as the safest entry point for intelligence operations unleashed by Pakistan intelligence agencies against India. The fact that Nepal was being used as a corridor to smuggle in ISI agents has been established after the tracking down of Yakoob Memon, one of the accused in the Bombay blast case in 1996 from Kathmandu. The recent hijacking of Indian aircraft from Kathmandu revealed the dangerous face of cross-border intelligence activities targeted at Indian National Security. Many of the ISI agents have found that the route through Nepal is safe to enter into Northern India and then spread out to the North-East and other regions.

In the first week of January 2000, a junior staffer at the Pakistani embassy in Kathmandu Asim Saboor was caught red-handed by the Nepali intelligence for the printing of counterfeit Indian currency.

The issue of ISI agents operating from Nepal to increase terrorist activities in India topped the agenda of the crucial talks between External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and his Nepalese counterpart Ram Sharan Mahat in June 2000. ISI agents operating from Nepal has been a point of serious concern for New Delhi as the militants have been taking advantage of the 1,800 km porous Indo-Nepal border in fomenting trouble in various parts of India. "The open borders with Nepal should not be misused by extremists elements sponsored by Pakistan's ISI", Indian Officials said. 19

The militants have their camps in neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Bangladesh and Burma. After conducting an operation, they easily cross and go back. It is difficult to catch them. Even if they cross over from one State to another State the Police set up also changes.

Recent Trends: While it is true that most of the countries bordering the North-Eastern region have tried to fish in the troubled waters, the role played by the ISI has been dominant. The main aim of ISI has been to co-ordinate various external interventions into a single
strategic policy in the area. Perhaps, the ISI enjoys tacit support from the Chinese and Myanmarese authorities as well as many official and non-official sources in Bangladesh in carrying out the activities in the whole region.

In recent times, the Pakistan intelligence agencies have expanded their network in the whole of the North-Eastern region. They have sought to unite various insurgent groups in the North-East and make Indian counter-insurgency operations ineffective. In this game, ISI has managed to penetrate into training camps of various insurgent groups in Myanmar and even Bhutan.

Indian intelligence agencies reported, "The ULFA has established training camps and sanctuaries in the Manas Reserve and other densely forested areas of south Bhutan. The ISI remains the principal backer of ULFA. Media reports suggested that ULFA camps at Deothang and Joipani areas of Bhutan and Chittagong hill tracts in Bangladesh have been reactivated through ISI support". 20 Pradeep Gogoi, vice-Chairman of ULFA who was arrested by Calcutta Police in April 1998 stated under interrogation that 'ULFA had close links with some foreign intelligence agencies' and that he himself was a 'State guest in Islamabad between March and December 1991'. Even though the Assamese people have rejected the ULFA ideology, the banned organization still remains as a force to reckon with.

Recently GOC Lt Gen D B Shekatkar said, "ULFA has sought shelter from the NSCN (K) in its camp in northern Burma adjoining border with Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Telephone calls from different parts of Assam are often made to Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot, Narowar and other places in Pakistan. In fact, after Kargil its frequency has increased to even 3-4 times a day". 22

"The US has taken note of the ISI role in fermenting trouble in North-East India. A State department Official confirmed ISI operations in the North-East, when he quoted the
Bangladesh ambassador to Washington, K.M. Shehabuddin to the effect that Pakistani intelligence had been operating terrorist cells in Bangladesh. Reports say, "There are at least 50 Pakistani Afghan nationals who have come under the observation of the intelligence agencies in the capital alone. About 10,000 ISI elements are operating in North-East as the 'resident agents' of the ISI of Pakistan with their biggest concentration in the Tinsukia area of Assam. These elements are crucial clogs in the ISI networks. They provide the logistic and reconnaissance support to the main operatives. The terrorist strikes are carried out after large scale planning and involvement of agents at different levels. The role of the resident agents are important in preliminary investigations".

The Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani has maintained that the insurgency in Assam and other parts of North-East has been encouraged and strengthened by the ISI. The large-scale diversion of the SFs from the North-East in the wake of the Kargil conflict was utilized by the hostile elements to set up bases and training camps. Kargil misadventure has now prompted Pakistan to reorient its low intensity conflict against India by setting up ISI operations in North-East. New ULFA and Bodo camps have sprung up in Assam and existing camps in Bhutan and Bangladesh have been reactivated. The ISI has been actively pursuing for a co-ordinated and unified approach between the militant outfits of the region. An alarming development has been the growth of Islamic fundamentalist organization in the entire region. The growing involvement of the ISI and the emergence of the radical groups would have the effect of prolonging the uncertainty, chaos and bloodshed by India's hostile neighbours and now Pakistan has made the North-East second front of its proxy war against India.

Countries that are unfriendly towards India find an opportunity in the ongoing turmoil in the North-East and their involvement has made the problems much more difficult to resolve. Because of geographical proximity, even smaller countries such as Nepal and Bhutan are unable to remain immune to the developments in this region. The Trans-border
nature of the ethnic and religious affinities provide a fertile ground for external involvement. As a result, various militant groups operating in North-East received political as well as financial support from across the border. The porous nature of the border makes it easier for militants to operate and maintain military and logistical bases in the neighbouring countries. Among the various external forces active in the region, Pakistan has been the prominent player. Even though it has been meddling with the regional politics since the late 1950s, in recent years the involvement has increased. Its support, channelled through the ISI comes in the form of financial assistance, ideological indoctrination and logistical support in the form of false passports and documents. Because of the geographical considerations, Bangladesh and Nepal have emerged as the prime conduits for Pakistani activities in the North-East.

The external powers and their activities have impacted upon the security of India's North-East. The historical and geographical factors have compounded the security concerns of the Government. A number of factors are responsible for the making of unrest and turmoil in the North-East. The role of the external powers in creating unrest in the region has not been understood clearly by the policy makers. It is only in recent years that the destabilising role of the external powers and the security threat that they represent is being probed. The security threats posed by the hostile external forces do not engage the country in the traditional military sense. At the same time support and encouragement of the militant activities through moral and material help has created disaffection amongst local populace and necessitated the deployment of SFs in counter-insurgency operations. Important in the context of the North-East is the threat posed by massive immigration in the region, drug trafficking, the grant of base and training facilities to the insurgents by our neighbours and the attempt to create chasm between communities. The Chinese have scaled down their involvement with the North-Eastern insurgent groups for about two decades now. The Pakistani role in encouraging insurgency in the region had come to an end with the emergence of Bangladesh. This was, however, only temporary. Hostile elements in Bangladesh revived the linkages between unrest in the North-East and the use of East
Pakistani territory by the insurgents. In recent years, Pakistan and the role of ISI has become central to India's security concerns.
REFERENCE


3. All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), *Why Separate Bodoland (Demand and Justification)*, (Kokrajhar) P 69.

4. Ibid P 71.


7. Ibid P 11.


