QUESTIONNAIRE TO UNIT COMMANDERS AND
THE GIST OF THE ANSWERS GIVEN BY THEM

A large number of SFs Commanders at various levels operating in Assam in the Cl Ops environment were contacted to include both rural and urban areas. There was also informal discussion to include the various rank structures of the SFs personnel. The author also interacted with Commanders and the troops operating in Kokrajhar area which was part of the fieldwork conducted by the author. The gist of all these are brought out in the form of question and answers.

Q.1. What are the multi-directional problems of the SFs?

Ans. Operational View: There is a need for more equipment like walkie talkies, light equipment and light civil vehicles. Tracker dogs should be given one for each Company. One nursing assistant should be made available to each Company post. Two casper vehicles per battalion should be given for protection against IED attacks. Certain stores like bicycles are given from Army Commander's fund, but they don't give fund for its maintenance. All Unit Commanders should be given approximately Rs 3,000/- for telephone calls to speak to various places like regimental centres, Formation Headquarters etc. At present these are paid from the Unit's resources. Units should be posted with 100% authorised strength. Attachment of people to other places should be minimum. It is difficult to organise things with public rallies. Target dates are given for projects like finishing of some building construction. Now these things require more time and more realistic and practical approach should be followed. Time bound civil jobs is difficult. There are no Platoons. It is only action group under a JCO of 12 to 13 persons.
Administrative View: From the administration point of view there is lack of adequate accommodation. Units have rear locations in 3 to 4 places. Ammunition dump at Unit location is in open. There is no lightning conductors. The administration of stores become very difficult. Documentation of troops also suffers.

Q.2. What are the valuable lessons for future for curbing insurgency/militancy in Assam?

Ans. Basically it should be political initiative. SFs can create the environment. The actual solutions lies with politicians. The militants who come over ground are not given worthwhile package. A suitable lucrative package to settle those who have come over ground will be a motivation for others. Diplomatic efforts with neighbouring countries should be ensured. Militants should not get any support from them. There should be continuous pressure on tactical and psychological Ops with the aim of destruction and isolation of militants. Wooing of the masses is a must. Proper strategy should be evolved for the same.

Q.3. What is the ideology of the various militant groups in the area of responsibility?

Ans. The NDFB wants a sovereign bodoland.
   BLT/ABSU - wants a bodoland within Indian Union.
   ULFA - wants sovereign Assam.

Q.4. Does the border fencing have any implication on militancy?

Ans. This will have a check on militancy. Migration will get reduced. Border management has to be followed by this. Narcotic trade will be affected. In Nagaland NSCN (IM), NSCN (K) and in Assam the ULFAs will get affected by this.
Q.5. What is the feedback from the surrendered militants? Are the civic action programmes really successful or is it an eye wash?

Ans. Disillusioned: The lower cadres of the surrendered militants are totally disillusioned. Their morale is low. The old cadres are also disgruntled. Dwindling public support is lacking. They are no more having the image of a 'Robinhood'. Public consider them as a nuisance. With extortion and killings the militants have lost the public support. In the militant camps various lectures are given on training. The ground realities do not match this. Some militants leave the camp due to medical problem, they want to get married, domestic problem etc.

Civic Action: As far as civic action programmes are concerned some projects oriented to youth and women are popular. Those projects done for overall community is not very successful. For example a bus stand made for the overall community is not maintained. Computer education has good response. Funds are coming from both SFs and civil administration. There are some problems. For example for a type writing institute there is no provision to pay for the teacher. There are no clear-cut policies as to how to maintain certain institutions. There is a need to formalise these things. The public is welcoming the civic action programmes.

Relief Camps: In a relief camp weaving centre was constructed. Six looms were given, initial thread was given worth Rupees six to seven thousand. In this, hundred percent profit was made. With this they could buy more material. They can made stores worth Rupees fifty thousand. Then they nominated their own President and Secretary. Women folk are happy with such type of programmes.

Favourable Image: Medical camps are appreciated. This gives a favourable image of the SFs.
Q.6. Why the youths supposed to be carrying books have picked up arms?

Ans. The employment opportunity is lacking. Overall development is not there. Genuine involvement of Government is required. There is rampant corruption. Youth gets disillusioned. No projects are coming through and no development is taking place and therefore he has picked up arms instead of books.

Q.7. Do you feel that the improved economy and good governance will stop militancy?

Ans. Yes.

Q.8. What is the implication of Unified Command structure at battalion level?

Ans. At the district level a co-ordinating committee meeting is held. This is a periodic meeting. They review the situation. There is exchange of intelligence inputs. Civic action being executed is discussed. This is held once a month or once in two month. The CO, SP, DC, one or two other aides of the DC attend this.

Q.9. Would you like to give any other misc information?

Ans. The troops are happy. They get good allowance for the type of work they do. In civic action programmes too many personnel are not involved. Generally effort is made to maintain a good environment.