CHAPTER VII

FRONTIER POLICE

Brigadier General W.E. Mulcaster not long afterwards assumed charge as Officer Commanding, Eastern Frontier Brigade. The distribution of the frontier posts between the Regiments and the Police was somewhat delayed. A modification was made in the defence of the Naga frontier shortly afterwards by Colonel Bruce, the Inspector General of Police of the Lower Provinces, when the posts of Mohngdijua, Borpothar and Jamuguri as well as Sibsagar were proposed to be handed over to the Police. The want of sufficient arms prevented the Police from immediately relieving the 42nd Regiment which was then garrisoning the posts on the Naga frontier. These outposts, along with those on the Sadiya and Singhpho frontiers, continued in the hands of the 42nd Regiment. Out of its total strength of six hundred men, no less than 367 were at the outposts\(^1\). These detached duties not only stood in the way of the furlough of the men but adversely affected the efficiency and discipline of the Regiment. In his report on 3 April 1865 Brigadier General Mulcaster observed that the 42nd Regiment was very inferior in all respects to the other Native Regiments\(^2\). The numerous detachments into which it was broken up

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1. F.M.(A) P. July 1865: Nos. 3-4; vide Disposition Return of the Regiment for February 1865.
prevented the men from being sufficiently under the eye of the Commanding Officer. Further, the sickly nature of the country often left the Headquarters under one officer without any staff. Under these circumstances, the report concluded, the duties of the Regiment could not be properly carried on.

The state of the 43rd Regiment was no better. The Regiment under Colonel Campbell, the Commanding Officer, had failed to hold out against the Bhutias at Diwangiri. A hasty night retreat from that place ended in a complete rout. In March 1865 the Court of Enquiry into the disaster recorded that the 'most shameful and unsoldierlike' conduct of the Native officers, Non-Commissioned officers and men throughout the occupation of and retreat from Diwangiri was due principally to: (1) the inferior class of men composing the Regiment, (2) the laxity of discipline, owing not only to the want of care on the part of the Commandant, but also to the fact that the Regiment being for long a local one, performed Civil duties and detached parties of men under non-commissioned officers, to distant outposts, some of which never returned to Headquarters for six or seven years. In his review of the report Sir William Mansfield, the Commander-in-Chief, observed that although a certain portion of the Regiment were trustworthy, there was a large section composed of Assamese

1. M.P. May 1865: No. 137.
from the plains who were not of the fighting class. They were represented to be great opium eaters and totally unfit for the duties of soldiers. He proposed to the Government that these men, about 337 of all ranks, should be replaced by classes best suited for service in Assam. In order to carry out its reorganisation under the personal supervision of the Brigadier General, the Regiment should be withdrawn to Guwahati. Finally, Sir William Mansfield drew the attention of the Government to the manner in which the Regiment had been broken up. Colonel Campbell, the late Commandant, himself testified, wrote Sir William, that the Regiment had never been brought together since 1840 till the outbreak of the Bhutan war in the preceding year. He observed that it could not be expected that a Regiment so circumstanced should be efficient. The Governor-General in Council was accordingly impressed upon the necessity of putting an end to a system which, if continued, could not but lead to disasters similar to that at Diwangiri. The Brigadier General Commanding the Eastern Frontier Brigade should, he recommended, curtail the number of outposts in Assam as far as practicable, and rearrange the disposition of the Force in the Province in such a manner as would ensure the regular reliefs to all detach-

1. Ibid: E. Haythorpe to H.W. Norman, 29 April 1865.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
ments. The Governor-General in Council entirely approved of these proposals. The Commander-in-Chief was informed that the revision of the posts should be carried out in consultation with the Bengal Government.

**GENERAL TOMBS' SCHEME**

On 24 April 1865, Brigadier General H. Tombs, Commanding the Right Column of the Doar Field Force, submitted a scheme for the defence of the North-East Frontier. Tombs wrote that it was not advisable, even if it were possible, to attempt to guard a frontier stretching from Jalpaiguri to Sadiya on the north, and from the latter place to Goalpara on the south. This would require a force of 12,000 men. The only alternative was to subsidise the various chiefs according to their respective importance. These should be made to understand clearly that for every aggression and insult full reparation would be exacted. The subsidy would not only be suspended but a military movement would be made into their hills to inflict reprisals. For this purpose Tombs proposed to maintain two Military Columns, one based at Dibrugarh and the

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1. Ibid. No. 142; Norman to Haythorne, 18 May; also M.L.I.S.S. No. 234; 1 June 1865.
2. F.P. (A) P. July 1865; Nos. 80-82; vide Keep-with, Tombs to Adjutant General, 24 April 1865.
other at Goalpara, ready to move at a moments notice. Each of these Columns should consist of half a company of Sappers and Miners, a Mountain Train with two rifled guns and two 42 inch mortars, Wing of a British Regiment, Wing of Cavalry, two Regiments of Native Infantry - one Gurkha and the other Pathan and Sikhs mixed, mule Baggage Train and elephants. For every raid the tribes made into British territory, the Columns should march into their hills, burn and destroy their villages, kill as many of the offending tribes as possible, and 'inspire these barbarians with such dread and terror of our name that they would only be too glad to receive our subsidies, and let us and our subjects alone'. These Columns should be kept intact and not frittered away in small detachments. The Police should watch the frontier, reporting all that went on and to a certain extent guarding it. The task of repelling organised inroads of the tribes or of making a movement into their hills should be the work of the Military.

In conclusion General Tombs pointed that of all Provinces in India, Assam was worst off in respect of Local Troops. The officers of these Regiments were likely to degenerate into Tea Planters and engage their men in a manner soldiers should never be employed. The Assamese and Cacharises from among whom

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
the Regiments, particularly the 42nd and 43rd Regiments, were
recruited were not of a warlike disposition and ill-qualified to
face the frontier tribes.

LOCAL TROOPS : QUESTION REVIVED

No orders, or even comments, were made upon Tomba's
proposals. In May 1865, Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Gover-
nor of Bengal, brought to the notice of the Governor-General in
Council that the Hindustani Regiments in the Khasi Hills had
shown no aptitude for the service and that their health generally
suffered from the effects of the climate. The attention of the
Military authorities was accordingly drawn to the question of
providing suitable Native Troops for the garrison of Assam and
the Khasi Hills. It was observed to the Commander-in-Chief that
if a good description of soldiers could be found to whom the
climate was more congenial, there would be a great gain in effi-
ciency and economy as well as in the contentment of the Troops.

In July 1865, Sir William Mansfield submitted a plan
proposing the formation of two Local Regiments. Unlike Sir

1. M.P. July 1865: No. 144; From Bengal Government, 23 May.
2. Ibid: No. 145; Norman to Huythorne, 21 June.
3. Ibid: No. 146.
Hugh Rose, his predecessor, Mansfield firmly believed that such Local Troops could be of great advantage, provided due care was taken to prevent them from degenerating into a sort of half police - a process by which they become useless as a soldiery nor useful as a police. The proper model for such troops, he pointed out, were the Gurkha Regiments of the Bengal Presidency and the Sinde Regiments of that of Bombay. These two Regiments had their permanent Regimental Headquarters, or permanent homes, while they were liable to serve anywhere in peace or in war. It was found that under such a system a very good description of recruits readily enlisted, although they had no connection with the province or locality giving the name to the service. Efficiency and discipline could be combined with the contentment of the men. These Local Regiments were further found to display greater fighting qualities in the locality in which they were employed than the ordinary Hindustani Regiments. What was required on the North-East Frontier, Sir William wrote, was a body of men who could grapple with the hill tribes on their own ground, men who were individually courageous and stout and who were not entirely dependent on training. On these grounds Mansfield proposed to raise two Regiments exclusively for local service on the North-East Frontier. The Regiments should be drawn from the

1. Ibid.
Gurkhas, particularly from Eastern Nepal and Sikkim, and one-fourth should be reserved for the frontier tribes to be mixed up with the Gurkhas. The Headquarters of one Regiment should be fixed at Shillong. The two Local Regiments, with the 42nd, 43rd and 44th Regiments properly reorganised, would be sufficient for the defence of the frontier.

At a time when every possible reduction was made in the Military Establishment of the Presidency, the Governor-General in Council thought it inexpedient to raise additional troops for the North-East Frontier. Instead, it was observed that if the 42nd, 43rd and 44th Regiments were made thoroughly efficient by weeding out unfit men, an augmentation of two or three hundred men to each would be possible. These Regiments together with one or two Sikh or Hindustani Regiments, frequently relieved, would be sufficient. In furtherance of this the 44th S.L.I. in the Khasi hills was allowed to be raised to 800 men. Shortly afterwards, the strength of the 42nd and 43rd Regiments were similarly raised to 800 men each. The augmentations involved an additional expense of Rs. 96,624 per annum. As the

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid: No. 147; Norman to Haythorne, 15 July; also M.I.T.S.O. No. 335, 15 August 1865.
3. Ibid.
nature of the duties of the Regiments made it necessary to raise their strength the Secretary of State raised no objections.

MILITARY GARRISON REVISED

The augmentation of the three Regiments and the termination of the Bhutan war made it necessary to revise the Military Garrison of the North-East Frontier. In December 1865 the Commander-in-Chief proposed to withdraw one Regiment of Native Infantry and redistribute the Garrison as follows:

- Dibrugarh (H.Q.) : 42nd Regiment
- Tespur : Native Local Artillery
- Gauhati (H.Q.) : 43rd Regiment
- Cherrapunjee (H.Q.) : 44th Regiment
- Sylhet and outposts : Wing of 5th Regiment

Native Infantry

Although one whole Regiment was proposed to be withdrawn, the numerical strength of the Garrison, excluding the Artillery,

2. M.P. February 1866: No. 278; Colonel Paton to Military Secretary, 23 December 1865.
remained the same at 2700 men. Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor, saw no reason to object to the withdrawal of one Native Infantry Regiment. The defence of Upper Assam would be amply provided for by a Regiment 800 strong. The Abors, Mishmis and the Singphos were then more under control. The steamers on the Brahmaputra could bring early reinforcements.

The organisation of the Volunteer Corps among the Tea Planters had not only given a degree of security to the chief British commercial interests but were in themselves a source of strength to the frontier. However, Beadon pointed out, it would be better to have the Local Artillery at Dibrugarh instead of an Tezpur.

The Headquarters of the 43rd Regiment should be fixed at the latter place which was healthier and in a more commanding position than Gauhati. This Regiment should furnish detachments to Gauhati and Nowgong. Beadon agreed with Mansfield that the 44th Regiment was sufficient for the Khasi and Jayanta hills. With a direct road

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1. M.P. September 1866: Nos. 272-275; The Tea Planters of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Golaghat organised themselves into Volunteer corps, during August and September 1865 for the security of British commercial interests. In Dibrugarh some 60 planters formed a body of troopers under Major Comber, the D.C. as their commandant. The Sibsagar troops consisted of 46 effectives under one Sherlock Hare. These two troops formed one corps called 'Upper Assam Volunteer Cavarly'. In Golaghat an infantry was raised called the 'Assam Golaghat Rifle Volunteer Corps' under W.D.A. Beckett of the Assam Company as its commandant. Both these Volunteer corps were supplied with arms and ammunition by the Government. Drill instructors were deputed to drill them and arrangements were made for their periodical inspection. See also Buckland, C.E.: Bengal under Lieutenant Governors. Vol. I, P. 225.

2. M.P. February 1866: No. 278; Colonel Paton to Military Secretary, 23 December 1865.
to Guwahati the troops there would serve as a support to those in Assam. There was no need for a force at Sylhet, instead there should be a Wing of a Regiment at Cachar. In conclusion the Lieutenant Governor pointed out that the steamers on the Brahmaputra should be continued as before, at the disposal of the Agent to the Governor General. Ordinarily these would be used for general service but would be available for the movement of troops and military stores whenever required. These recommendations were accepted by the Military authorities and the Government of India. The following strength and distribution was decided upon:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dibrugarh (H.Q.)</td>
<td>Assam Local Artillery; 42nd Regiment Native Infantry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outposts at Sadiya</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tespur (H.Q.)</td>
<td>43rd Regiment Native Infantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerapunjee (H.Q.)</td>
<td>44th Regiment Native Infantry; Eurasian Battery Artillery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar and outposts</td>
<td>Wing of 5th Regiment Native Infantry</td>
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In addition to these, there were temporarily at Buxa, the 44th Bengal Sappers and Miners and 1st Goorkha Regiment; at Diwangiri, the 5th Bengal Sappers and Miners and 32nd Regiment Native Infantry (Pioneers).  

1. Ibid.  
2. Ibid: Paton to Military Secretary, 28 February 1866.  
3. Ibid.
In March 1866 it was decided to remove the Headquarters of the Brigade to Khasi hills which was far healthier than Gauhati. Since all the Military stations had then been connected by telegraph the location of the Headquarters was no longer dictated by geographical position alone\(^1\). The choice finally fell on Shillong\(^2\). In July 1866 the designation of the Command was changed to the Eastern Frontier District\(^3\).

ASSAM MOUNTAIN BATTERY

Closely connected with the revision of the strength and distribution of the Native Infantry Regiments was the reorganisation of the Native Local Artillery. Brigadier General Mulcaster, Commanding the Eastern Frontier District, who inspected the Local Artillery in May 1865, drew a very depressing picture of the Company. He wrote that the men knew nothing of the duties required of them and that they were most slovenly dressed\(^4\). Both the Brigadier General and the Commander-in-Chief recommended that the Company should be broken up and those men fit by caste for the army should be sent back to the 42nd Regiment. Instead of them Eurasians or Native Christians

\(^1\) H.F. August 1866: Nos. 497-98.
\(^2\) M.F. April 1866: No. 42.
\(^3\) M.F. July 1866: Nos. 507-509.
\(^4\) M.F. December 1865: No. 118.
should be employed. The Governor-General in Council, while agreeing that the Company was not in good order, considered that with proper weeding and under a good commandant it may be made efficient. Since Artillery was undoubtedly required in Upper Assam it was thought necessary to retain the Company. However, the Governor-General in Council suggested that instead of six guns only four together with two small mortars would be sufficient. The Commander-in-Chief was accordingly requested by the Government of India to discharge the inefficient men, send a good officer to command it and submit proposals for its reorganisation.

In January 1866, Captain W.O. O'Brien of the Royal Artillery, who had since been appointed to carry out the reorganisation of the Native Artillery, submitted his proposals. Captain O'Brien pointed that ninety Native Gunners were absolutely necessary to carry out the duties efficiently. The men should be recruited from Punjabis and upcountry tribes since the Jurwas and Assam tribes were worthless as soldiers. The Hindustanis, from among whom the men of the company were then drawn, were with few exceptions unable to stand the malarious climate of the

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid: No. 119.
province. The Native officers, O'Brien recommended, should be confined to the non-commissioned ranks - amounting to seven havildars, seven naiks, one pay havildar, one drill naik and two trumpeteers instead of buglers. Two European sergeants should be allowed to do the duties of sergeant-major and quartermaster sergeant respectively. Two lieutenants would be attached as 'doing duty' with the Artillery under the commandant. O'Brien recommended that the equipment should consist of four 12 pounder howitzers of 3 cwt weight and two 5½ inch mortars. The howitzers, with 100 rounds apiece, were the most serviceable description of ordnance for the hill warfare on the North-East Frontier. O'Brien further pointed out that the strongholds of some hill tribes could only be reached through belts of heavy terai forests impassable to any description of ordnance except those carried on elephants back. Therefore, the carriage of the Artillery should be elephant. Finally, Captain O'Brien recommended that the Artillery should henceforth be designated the Assam Mountain Battery. The Commander-in-Chief concurred in these proposals except that he did not wish the Native officers to be supplanted by European Non-commissioned officers, or that the Battery should be recruited from the Punjab. The Governor-General in Council

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
approved of these recommendations including the proposed change of designation. These were given effect to by General Orders on 21 September 1866. The strength of the Battery, apart from the Commandant and two lieutenants, was one subadar, one jemadar, five havildars, four naiks, two buglers and sixty gunners.

HOPKINSON'S REPORT: DEFENCE POLICY RE-EXAMINED

The continued aggressions of the Angamis meanwhile reopened the question of frontier policy and frontier defence. On 30 October 1865 Hopkinson, the Agent to the Governor General, submitted a report wherein he examined the merits and demerits of the various expedients resorted to against the Hill tribes. Interference and Non-interference, conciliation through subsidies, or coercion by military expeditions and blockades were not complete in themselves. They were not the 'universal solvent'. Hopkinson pointed that what was required was a policy which could be adopted to the exigencies of the situation. Such a policy should be backed by force: 'the surest foundation on which to

1. Ibid: No. 130; G.O.O.O. No. 795 of 1866.
2. Ibid.
3. F.P.(A) P. June 1866: Nos. 36-39; Hopkinson to Down, 30 October, 1865. Hopkinson thus wrote: 'In restraining the savage tribes which infest our frontier, reliance cannot be placed in one particular course of policy, but there must be a ready adaptation of expedients to suit ever-varying circumstances: sometimes blockades; very often a judicious system of subsiding will keep tribes quiet for a long while'.
build our control over them', wrote Hopkinson, 'will be their fear of us. It is not coercion that has often failed us, but the failure to coerce'. In bringing home to the authorities at the Fort William the necessity of such a policy, Hopkinson wrote that the military was unsuitable for the defence of the North East Frontier. Army administration, military organisation, the quality of troops, the condition of their enlistment, their drill and discipline, were all inappropriate for hill warfare on the Assam frontier. The various measures for defence that had been suggested by military officers always appeared faulty or had proved so on trial. This was because the measures required for the restraint of the hill tribes hardly possessed any military character or upon which the Military authorities were competent to advise. The frontier was, wrote Hopkinson, on 4 November 1865, militarily indefensible,

"a tract to which we can hardly convey troops, a tract into which, if we did get them, we could not feed them nor move them in any direction, a tract void of roads, covered with forest having a dense under-growth, and in which divisions or detachments a few miles apart must be lost to one another, a tract in which the most perfect army would soon become disorganised by sickness."

Military art or organised warfare was ineffective or inapplicable

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
to the hill tribes of the Assam frontier. It was not the case
of one army against another. 'Military organisation', the Agent
further added,

"is concerned with masses not units. A French army
might hold the Pyrenees against a Spanish Army, but
it would certainly fail in dealing with parties of
contrabandists and stopping contraband along the
Spanish Frontier. The Italian Army is efficient enough
but the brigands of the Abrusse are said to set its
detachments at defiance. Though the United States
might be able to overwhelm Canada with its armies, it
cannot prevent smuggling along the Canadian Frontier,
I might even add raids. But the case of our troops in
the Assam terai against parties of Nagas or Abors or
Garrows is, beyond all comparison, a more helpless
one"1.

For such a situation the Military authorities for the most part
had nothing better to propose than the establishment of frontier
posts. There was hardly any difference in their schemes other than
the different distribution of posts they proposed to establish.
Thus the solution of Brigadier General B. Fraser Tytler, Commanding
the Eastern Frontier District, against the Abors was a Regiment
and a steam boat at Sadiya; for the defence of North Caohar against
the Angamis, a Military cantonment on the right bank of the river
Dhansiri 2. The Agent pointed that such measures, though they were
perhaps the best that could have been proposed, would be inadequate
against the incursions of the Abors and Angamis 3.

1. Ibid: Hopkinson to Eden, 4 November 1865.
2. Ibid: B. Fraser Tytler to Hopkinson, 3 September 1865.
3. Ibid: Hopkinson to Eden, 4 November 1865.
At about this time the concept of the frontier and the attitude towards the frontier tribes underwent a radical change. It would be 'a serious error to assume', Hopkinson remarked, 'that we have any other frontiers in Assam than the Bhootan Frontier, the Burmese Frontier, and the Munny pore Frontier'. Between the settled districts and the tribal tracts there was no frontier properly so called; the term frontier simply indicated the intervening tract from which the tribes chose to keep away. The hill tribes were, therefore, not military enemies or aliens, but subjects of the Government over whom it was necessary to establish influence and control. The pacification of the hill tribes was not the work of the Military but of the civil Administration assisted by the Police. Only on rare occasions the Military authorities may be consulted for expeditions. Hopkinson therefore pointed out that the Regulars in Assam should be employed only as a support to the Police and as a reserve at the principal stations in the plains. The duties of what was called the frontier should be left to the Police or even a Militia. The best arrangement, the Agent felt, was an organisation similar to that on the Panjab Frontier; an

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

The Panjab Frontier Force, raised immediately after the annexation of the Panjab, consisted of 7000 men organised into six Regiments of Infantry and twenty seven troops of horse. It was commanded by a Brigadier General acting under the authority of the Civil Government of Panjab. Only the Peshawar Division, which commanded the strategic Khyber Pass, was under the control of the Commander-in-Chief.
Irregular Frontier Force under a local Brigadier who should consult with and take final orders from the Agent to the Governor General.1

By February 1866 the Police, in accordance with Colonel Bruce's proposal, it may be recalled, relieved the 42nd Regiment at the outposts of Geleki, Bebubar, Borpothar, Jamuguri on the Naga Frontier2. The relief of Sibsagar followed soon after. The following posts continued either wholly in the hands of the Military or were held by mixed detachments of Military and Police:

Golaghat: 36 Military; and 20 Constables, two Head Constables and a Sub-Inspector.

Jeypur: 31 Military; 10 Constables, one Head Constable and one Sub-Inspector.

Nowgong: 139 Military; 20 Constables, two Head Constables and one Sub-Inspector.

Bhorkalia: 14 Military.

Sadiya: 114 Military; 12 Constables, one Head Constable and one Sub-Inspector.

Pobamukh: 46 Military.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid: Graham to Pughe, 25 February 1866.
On March 1866 Colonel Hopkinson wrote to the Bengal Government that all frontier outposts should be taken over by the Police. There was no difference, for instance, between the Sadiya frontier and the Naga frontier. If it could be considered safe to leave the latter to the Police, there was no reason why the former could not be left to the same protection. In conclusion Hopkinson observed that for the defence of the frontiers of Assam, what was required was,

"a force, possessing military qualities, and among them, and in a very high degree, mobility, and a capacity for sub-division, without loss of discipline; such a force may be considered a police force, when a reduction in military expenditure is called for, or, .... when the charges on the Civil Budget are found excessive, it may be treated as a military body; but in either case its duties and characteristics will be the same. As a police, it will not be efficient unless its military qualities are fully on par with those of our native troops; and as a military force, it must be cheaply and as readily movable as the constabulary."

FRONTIER POLICE

Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, entirely agreed with Hopkinson that the Regular troops should

1. B.Police P. March 1866: No. 3d.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
be employed as a reserve at the chief stations in the plains. All outpost and frontier duties, including the punishment of outrages by the hill tribes, should be entrusted to the Police.\(^1\)

He hoped that eventually, besides the stations occupied by the Headquarters of the Regiments, there would not be more than three or four places at which detachments of Native Infantry need be placed. None of these detachments should be of less strength than one or two companies, and they should be required only to act in support of the Police whenever called for. All the other posts hitherto held by the troops should be taken over by the Police. Beadon also agreed with Hopkinson that the most effective agency for the defence of the Assam frontiers was a force like the Punjab Frontier, having a military organisation and acting under the orders of the local authorities. But he added that such a force, if organised, would probably take the place of the Regular Regiments in Assam.\(^2\) The actual frontier duty would still have to be performed by the Police. They were more capable than any disciplined troops of pursuing parties of marauding hill tribes into their hills and inflicting punishment on them. In accordance with this the Military authorities were

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1. F.P.(A) P. June 1866; Nos. 37-39; From Eden to Foreign Secretary, 24 April 1866.
2. Ibid.
Informed by the Bengal Government in June 1866, that the Police, if numerically strengthened could relieve the Regiments at all the outposts in Assam except Sadiya. It was further added that if this done there was no reason why the Regiment in Upper Assam should be kept up at a greater strength than 600 men.

Meanwhile the Government of India sanctioned the proposal for the occupation of Samaguting in the Naga hills. In approving of the measure, Sir John Lawrence, the Governor General wrote in May 1866 that the work required an efficient Police under the control of the Civil officer. This could not be performed by the Military troops however well organised for the purpose. He agreed with the Lieutenant Governor and the Agent that the Regiments were sufficient as a reserve. Lieutenant J. Gregory, the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, drew up the organisation of the Police which, with minor modifications by Hopkinson, was approved of in November 1866. The sanctioned strength of the police was 150 men. The men were drawn from the Kacharis, Kukis, Garos and Gurkhas since Gregory found the Jurwas and men from the plains to be useless and troublesome in the hills. The nucleus of the force was formed from the Kacharis in North Cachar and Nowgong Police. As its duties

3. F.P. (A) P. December 1866: Nos. 137-140.
were almost entirely of a military character, escort and guard duties and occasional punitive expeditions against the refractory tribes, the Frontier Police was organised more on the lines of the old police Battalions, than as a Civil Constabulary. The men when not on duty were required to engage themselves in building huts, magazine and stockades and in the construction of public works. The force was entirely under the command of the Deputy Commissioner who was vested with the power of a Superintendent of Police for the purpose. In addition a small party of twenty Kukis were attached to the force. The duty of this party was to discover the secret passes or 'thieves path' by which the Nagas descended upon the Plains. They were also required to scout about the frontier outposts to prevent the Nagas from attacking unwary sepoys as they went to fetch water or answer the calls of nature. Towards the close of 1866 a similar police force, of one hundred constables, was raised for the Garo Hills.

FRONTIER DEFENCE, 1866

Along with the Frontier Police in the Naga and Garo Hills there were in each district a Frontier Police which had relieved the Regiments at the outposts. These Frontier Police

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
functioned as an armed branch of the Assam Police. European Police Inspectors were attached to it to supervise its drill and training in musketry. Selected men were also periodically sent to the Regiments to be instructed in musketry who on return trained the Frontier Police. Unlike the earlier Police Militia the Frontier Police had their superintendents in each district who were responsible for their discipline and efficiency. The Frontier Police in the Naga and Garo hills were directly under the Deputy Commissioner but the drill and discipline was attended to by an Assistant Superintendent of Police. The overall supervision of the Police, including the Civil branch, was in the hands of the Deputy Inspector General of Police, and after the creation of the Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874, in the Inspector General of Police of the Province. The Police Militia, it may be recalled, were under the district Magistrate as nominal commandants, who had little time to turn to its organisation or discipline. Where the Magistrate was not a military man, the affairs of the Militia remained completely unattended to. Though the Frontier Police acquired a military character by its drill discipline and equipment, it did not lose its characteristics as a police. Its mobility remained unimpaired. It was composed of men who were inured to the climate and who had an intimate knowledge of the ground and the ways and usages of the hill
tribes. Relieved from the frontier outposts, the duties of the Regiments became exceedingly light. They were no longer employed on duties prejudicial to health. Better classes of men were now recruited. Sanitary conditions in the cantonments vastly improved. As a result, there was a great decrease in every class of disease, both in the number of admissions to hospitals and in death.

The rapid extension of the Tea Industry and the influx of Europeans, whose tea gardens were often situated in dangerous proximity to tribal areas necessitated increased vigilance on the part of the Frontier Police. The Frontier Police had not only to be increased but efforts had to be made to ensure its increased efficiency. A proposal for the separation of the Frontier Police from the Civil Police, and its organisation on quasi-military lines was first made in 1868 by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal; but it was not till 1878 before this was effected. In March of that year the Government of India sanctioned the separation of the Assam Police into two distinct branches of Frontier Police and Unarmed Branch of the following strength:

1. See Ross, Surgeon Major: Sketch of the Medical History of the Native Army of Bengal for the year 1868, Pp. 12-15.
2. M.P. September 1868: No. 3; Mackenzie to Military Secretary, 26 May.
The extension of British relations with the hill tribes, particularly the Nagas, again demanded an increase to the Frontier Police. Further, it also became necessary to have strong reserves in each district in order that efficiency may be maintained; and at the same time place a body of armed and efficient Police at the disposal of the Government in the event of a sudden collision with the hill tribes. Besides, the rapid expansion of frontier duty without a corresponding increase to the Frontier Police had resulted in the Regulars once again taking outposts duties. Accordingly in August 1879, Sir Stuart Bayley, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, submitted a note to the Government of India proposing the increase of the Frontier Police to 3000 men, and the reduction of the Military to 24 Regiments Native Infantry¹. The Army Commission of 1879, decided not to recommend the reduction of the

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¹. H. Police (A) P. February 1883: No. 2; Note by Chief Commissioner, 12 August, 1879.
². M.P. March 1883: No. 381; Note by Commander-in-Chief, 20 January 1882.
the Military fully down to the Chief Commissioner's proposals, whereupon the question remained in abeyance for two and a half years. In early 1882, Sir Donald Stewart, the Commander-in-Chief, after a careful examination of the problem of frontier defence, recommended that the Frontier Police should be not only be increased but its character as a Military Police should be recognised. He therefore proposed that Military officers from the Army should be seconded to the Frontier Police for a period of five years. These proposals were further elaborated upon by Sir Charles Elliott, Bayley's successor as Chief Commissioner. The result was that the Frontier Police was territorially organised between 1883-84 into four Battalions of Military Police, drilled and disciplined on regimental lines and commanded by officers deputed from the Army. The nomenclature of the Inspectors and constables changed to subadars and sepoys. These developments marked no departure of policy. The changes were made with a view to readjusting the Frontier Police to the changes in frontier policy and administration. The principle, laid down in 1866, of a specialised Frontier Police on the front line of defence backed by the Regulars in the rear, continued to be the cornerstone of frontier defence till the end of British rule.