

## **KARGIL WAR REVISITED:**

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Referring to the '**Daily Beast**' dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2012;

Sandy Berger died on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 morning. He'll be remembered in the history for averting a nuclear war between Pakistan and India – and that time was 'his finest hour' in life. On the morning of 4<sup>th</sup> July 1999, the US President Bill Clinton was convening his national security meeting in the Oval Office. Pakistan and India were at war and the prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, was across Pennsylvania Avenue at Blair House asking for Clinton's help.

Samuel Berger, the president's National Security Adviser, had opened the discussion by saying: '*...this is the most important day of your presidency, Mr. President. Two nuclear states are at war and locked in an escalation ladder that could end in **Armageddon**. You have one shot at stopping the spiral. You must convince Sharif to back down and withdraw his troops behind the old ceasefire line.*'

Samuel Berger had grasped the issue and proposed a clear solution. Pakistan's Army Chief Gen Musharraf had secretly sent his troops across the line of control in Kashmir to occupy mountaintop posts looking down on a key highway that linked Kashmir together around Kargil town. When India discovered the Pakistani ploy, it launched a furious counterattack with air and ground forces.

Sandy had met his Indian counterpart, Brajesh Mishra, in June 1999 who told him that if Pakistan did not withdraw behind the line of control then India had no other option except to expand war. Sandy told Clinton that if India expanded the war, Pakistan would probably lose and inevitably turn to its nuclear arsenal.

On the same morning of 4<sup>th</sup> July 1999, the CIA had already sent a top-secret Daily Brief that Pakistan was preparing its nuclear weapons for deployment and possible use. The intelligence was very compelling – the US administration really got upset.

S Berger urged President Clinton to play his role firmly. Pakistan had started this crisis and it must end it without any compensation. Mr Clinton had to make clear to PM Sharif that only a Pakistani withdrawal could avert further escalation. It worked. PM Sharif agreed to pull back his troops but it later cost him his job: Gen Musharraf ousted him in a coup and he spent about a decade in exile in Saudi Arabia.

How India re-claimed back his lost territory – by launching offensive air strikes. But even otherwise Pakistan had to repatriate back that captured area to India under Simla Agreement.

After surrender of Pakistan Army on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1971, the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi surfaced as a victorious leader and knew that whatever she would dictate at Simla would have to be accepted by ZA Bhutto. Therefore, she included a term about Kashmir in the Simla agreement that:

*'The areas captured across ceasefire line (CFL) in Kashmir would neither be vacated nor given back, instead the present line held will be termed as LoC but areas captured across the recognized international borders would be given back by both sides on the western front.'*

PM Nawaz Sharif and President Clinton had also agreed to bring back the Pak-forces too.

The '**Independent**' dated **5<sup>th</sup> December 2015** added that '*...the infiltration of Pakistani armed forces into Indian Territory, led by Gen Ashraf Rashid initiated the conflict. The Indian army managed to recapture the majority of the Indian side of the LOC.*' Subsequent investigations revealed that only Gen Ashraf Rashid, the then Army Chief Gen Musharraf and two other Generals knew about that operation. The event marked the beginning of the Kargil War.

[Maj Gen Ashraf Rashid was career army Special Forces Officer, responsible for conducting paramilitary operations on the Line of Control in Kashmir. His operational activity at borders once led to the Kargil War. He resigned from his post in September 1999 following the intense pressure on Pakistan from international community to withdraw its military forces from Kargil. He died in October 2004 due to heart attack at Lahore.]

*[Published on pakspectator.com on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015]*