

Command in the Line of Control

Lt Gen (Rtd) Satish Nambiar thinks the onus for vacating the intrusions lies with Pakistan, if the military operations are to stop



A roadside sign board shows the distances to different areas including Srinagar (182 kilometers), capital city of India-administered Kashmir from Muzaffarabad, capital city of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, beside a model of Ghauri missile pointed towards India, 31 May 1999. The tension between the two new nuclear powers Pakistan and India has increased over fighting in the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir.

IT is no great revelation that the Pakistani establishment, particularly its Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), has in recent days, weeks and months been perched over what has been a failure in their efforts at promoting and sustaining subversive activities in Jammu and Kashmir, where life is generally assuming a semblance of normality.

It was therefore almost inevitable that they would try to do something spectacular to convey to the locals, their agents in Jammu and Kashmir and the international community that insurgency in the state had not been brought under control by the Indian authorities. This was particularly so considering the trends in the subcontinent in terms of the bilateral understandings and a consequent easing up of direct pressures in international circles on the two countries in regard to their perennial differences.

It was therefore only to be expected that this year, as the snows begin to melt, Pakistan would make a more determined attempt to resuscitate the commitment of the locals to what was becoming a lost cause, desirably open up new fronts along the Line of Control (LoC) to further stretch the commitments of the Indian Army and in the process try to ease the pressure on the insurgents operating in the state and, furthermore, to restore the focus of the international community on the issue.

That, the Pakistani establishment was successful in getting its agents and supporters (together with Pakistani Army personnel) to seal the LoC without doubt a sizeable 'lodgment' on the glacial heights in hitherto unoccupied areas in the large gaps between the Indian Army posts along the LoC in the Deras-Batalik sector is no doubt a compliment to their preparation, ingenuity, and tenacity.

It is a matter of some concern that notwithstanding the various means that should be at India's disposal for surveillance and monitoring of the area, the actions of the intruders appear to have gone unnoticed till well

after the event.

For a decade now, the Indian government as well as the Indian Army has exercised unmatched restraint in dealing with Pakistani-sponsored insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir and various forms of terrorist activity in one part of the country or another. Notwithstanding all the physical provocation and political rhetoric the government of India and the Indian armed forces have not raised the level of military activity to that of physically targetting the sources of

sustenance of the militants inside Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) or in contiguous areas of Pakistan.

Whether this tremendous restraint was erroneously construed by the Pakistani establishment as a lack of preparedness or political will on India's part must remain a matter of speculation. However, it would appear that, notwithstanding all the recent moves towards better bilateral ties, the Pakistani establishment felt encouraged to test the Indian establishment, which they perceived as being subjected to some political turbulence.

It is a matter of some considerable satisfaction that the government of India has given the armed forces the freedom to take 'whatever action is deemed necessary to evict the intrusion in the sector'. It is to its credit that, notwithstanding the 'caretaker' status, the government has found the will and purpose to take a hard decision.

The necessity to resort to airstrikes under the circumstances would be fully endorsed by most analysts including mil-

itarymen. It is appreciated that the terrain in the sector and the very high altitudes are not conducive to optimum effectiveness of fighter aircraft; it is also understood that targetting of troops in bunkers on mountain tops or narrow ridge-lines with bombs and rockets released from supersonic aircraft has severe limitations.

However, India is dealing with deliberate and blatant aggression. Therefore a strong message displaying its commitment to use all necessary military means to remove the intrusions was essential, as was a reassurance to Indian ground troops that they would be provided full support in their efforts to evict the intrusions. Such airstrikes must therefore continue for as long as it is necessary to physically re-establish Indian control over the area. The unfortunate loss of a couple of aircraft must not be allowed to deter the nation from pursuing the operations till the intrusions are vacated. In so far as ground operations are concerned, one should imagine that the efforts will be at containing, isolating and removing the intrusions by a process of attrition.

The onus for vacating the intrusions lies with Pakistan, if the operations are to stop. And the responsibility for any escalation of the scope of the operations also rests with Pakistan. One hopes that the Pakistani establishment will recognise its miscalculation and retract even at this stage.

One also hopes that the Indian armed forces receive the unqualified backing of the government, all political parties and the people at large in the task of vacating the aggression and restoring the status quo ante. These are difficult times, but it is vital that the nation demonstrates, without any ambiguity whatsoever, that India is not a 'soft' state, and that it will not accept compromises in matters of national security, no matter what it takes.

The writer is former Deputy Army Chief of Indian Army and first commander of the UN Forces in former Yugoslavia.

—India Abroad News Service

AFP PHOTO/SEED KHAN

Dented and Discredited INC

Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz explains how Indian National Congress has been carrying the political baggage of the past

THE high drama surrounding the Congress president Sonia Gandhi's 'foreign' origin is apparently over but the tremor it caused continues to reverberate with its impact felt not only on the party but the polity as a whole. The debate on this non-issue was shrewdly contrived by the BJP to checkmate a resurgent Congress after the state assembly elections of November last year and to the misfortune of the Congress the bait was swallowed even by some of the party stalwarts.

The BJP strategem also included a virulent anti-Christian campaign which was carried forward simultaneously by the party's front organisations obviously to discredit the Congress Roman Catholic president. Although the Congress has managed the crisis by once again bringing the enchanted Sonia at the party's helm the damage has already been done and doubts abound if the party can fully recover from its fallout. While BJP, the Congress' principal contender in 13th Lok Sabha poll is about to ceremonially launch its election campaign, the Congress still seems to be licking its wounds.

Belying earlier speculations, the Congress president — a political novice — however showed considerable skill in the party's reorganisation and exercised restraint as an opposition leader. She shunned opportunism, in seizing power from a fragile government that could be pulled down with little effort. Instead, Sonia concentrated more on the party's long history and admiration from all quarters. She constructively and selectively lent support also to the government and was emerging as a responsible leader of the republic. But then the backroom managers of the party with their keen penchant for power — ones who catalysed the fall of both Deve Gowda and Gujral governments without convincing reasons — started to bitch up a 'Sonia Gandhi as prime minister' operation from early this year. That portended the beginning of the present phase of the Congress' crisis.

Sonia Gandhi was wrongly advised when two months before she pushed her party in first serious confrontation with the government on Bihar issue. She compelled the Vajpayee government to revoke the presidential rule in the state while unsuccessfully opposing the reinstatement of Babri government. Nevertheless, there has been blanket condemnation of the Congress on its role in reviving the inefficient and corrupt Laloo-raj in Bihar. But what has most seriously dented the Congress' image and its credibility had been the party's failure in putting up an alternative administration after the fall of Vajpayee government.

The party's unpreparedness and poor political manoeuvre in gathering support even from its secular fraternity showed it in poor light. Its mustering of only 241 strength in the Lok Sabha in long one week's time was indeed a flop show of its kind that did not really inspire. BJP was the sole beneficiary of the developments that ended for Congress in fiasco.

Also otherwise the BJP, after its series of failures and baulking in the governance was already on a comeback trail. An appraisal of it is in order to focus on the present predicament of the Congress. The Lahore Declaration at the fag end of BJP rule did give Vajpayee a new respectability as a statesman. A universally acceptable budget (1999-2000) dubbed as that of 'recovery' added to the credibility of his government. To the good fortune of BJP the rule was too short to be mired in corruption and financial sleaze. It remained steadfast in not condoning the corruption Ms Jayalalitha in spite of her vital support to the coalition for over one year. The government was adept in managing the fractious coalition and still enjoys the loyalty of its constituent groups and parties. The Pokhran II gave BJP extra political mileage and would continue to preserve for the party the core of Hindu nationalist support.

On the contrary the Congress has been carrying the baggage of the past which hang like an albatross around its neck. An unexpected spate jinx fatally struck the party both before and after the Lok Sabha election in 1996 in which the Congress suffered its worst defeat. Tainted by Bofors scandal, among others, Congress was defeated also in 1989 and became internally divided after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. In 1991 P V Narasimha Rao formed a minority government at the centre but could not maintain the cohesion of the party. In May 1995 the party finally split with a breakaway Congress led by N D Tiwari, an old party veteran. Only months before 1996 election, 'Hawala' transaction charges were levelled against three Congress ministers and the net quickly widened to include a number of other former Congress ministers irreparably denting the party's electoral prospects.

No sooner the election was over it was the turn of outgoing prime minister Rao. Rao and a host of other prominent Congress leaders were now impugned by CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) in infamous JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha) case. Within a month Rao faced another charge of having accepted \$100,000 bribe from Lekhu Bhai Pathak, a British Indian to secure the latter government contract. Another Congress minister Sukhram was implicated in yet another

scandal. Rao was entangled also in St Kitty bribery case in which he was believed to have forged certain documents. Faced with this cascade of ignominious exasperated, Rao stepped down in late 1997 from the presidency of an already tainted Congress by handing its rein over to lacklustre octogenarian, Sitaram Kesri.

The new Congress supremo, through his series of foolhardy actions, only hastened the 12th Lok Sabha election as well as the end of his own leadership. Notwithstanding a partial recovery of the party during 1990 and 1984 elections Congress could never restore its structure of dominance shattered in its 1977 defeat. From 1989 electoral defeat Congress decline had been precipitous. When a reluctant Sonia Gandhi took the rein of the party early last year, she could only stop the precipitation. During the 12th Lok Sabha election she just took over the party which was obviously in a poor shape and could not possibly put in her optimum. Sonia is rendered controversial when the crucibles of her leadership was going to be tested during the forthcoming election.

Once the multiculturalism and secularism hallmarks of Nehruvian nationalism were championed by INC as integral to the definition of India. But years later the secular credentials of Congress itself became surfeit. Rajiv Gandhi calculatingly allowed Hindu worship in the disputed Babri mosque. Narasimha Rao deliberately allowed it to be pulled down. Sonia Gandhi is desperately visiting temples and adhering to Hindu rites. Today anyone including Congress politician — whether he is corrupt, autocratic or hypocrite — can seek instant legitimacy by announcing that he is the true upholder of secularism.

By any reckoning the 13th Lok Sabha poll will be fought between the Congress and BJP as main contenders. According to the pattern of election results from 1980 the BJP notched up to a tally of 177 seats at its peak in 1996 with 25.5 per cent of popular votes. While it is a rising curve for the BJP, it is a gradual fall for the Congress which scored 141 seats in 1998 as against 137 in 1996. But the Congress popular vote share at 28.1 per cent is more than that of BJP. The superior strategy of BJP in forming alliance and its astute leadership account for most of the disproportionate gains of the party. If the Congress can make up its deficiency in leadership at all levels, strike appropriate alliance and consolidate the country's secular forces it has equal if not more chances of carrying the day in the next election. There are however few signs of that prospects from Congress performance till date.

The Dangers of Being Arrogant

An arrogant BJP government has upped the ante in the disputed territory, and now it has to live up to the consequences, says M Ziauddin

WHAT had started in the Kargil sector early last month seemingly as the usual tit-for-tat against continuous violations in Neelum Valley sector now appears poised to take a one-way ticket to destination unknown.

By introducing its air force in this annual summer skirmish on the Line of Control (LoC) between the ground troops of the two countries and then by sending two fighter aircraft into Pakistani airspace India has clearly upped the ante.

Western diplomats believe that Pakistan army patrolling the LoC had no option but to shoot down the intruding two aircraft. They agree that the Indian army would have done the same if it had found two Pakistani fighter aircraft intruding into their airspace, especially at a time like this. What is causing these diplomats excessive concern, however, is the apprehension that the Indian political leadership, at the moment embroiled in a general election, may be tempted to do something even more foolhardy while trying to recoup the loss of face.

Through internationally the Indians have tried to justify their May 1998 nuclear test by citing as an excuse China's nuclear arsenal, its political leadership by issuing mindless warnings to Pakistan soon after, had made it clear to its own people and the people of Pakistan why it had chosen to ac-

quire weapons of mass destruction. Even after Pakistan had tested six of its own nuclear devices against India's five, New Delhi refused to get the message and went ahead with its missile tests forcing Pakistan to flex its own missile muscle.

Realizing rather late in the day that they could not simply overwhelm Pakistan with the display of their firepower, the BJP government began telling their disappointed voters who thought that the victory over Pakistan was round the corner that Pakistan had as much right to acquire weapons as India had and that the two countries should now join hands in evolving a common nuclear arms strategy to ward off the international pressure to force them to give up their sovereign right to make their own weapons. It was a clever ploy.

On the one hand it was supposed to present the BJP government to the eyes of its voters as a benign leader of the subcontinent being very considerate towards naughty Pakistan and on the other it had meant to lure Islamabad away from its friends like China and the US. I had a light bantering sort of an exchange on the subject with

Mr K Subramanyam, one of India's leading bomb lobbyists who was here early last month. He said he was all for evolving a joint Indo-Pakistan nuclear strategy but thought Pakistan was not in a position to accept the Indian offer because of economic woes for which it was totally dependent on the US, at least for the next three years.

He was trying to convince me that no arms race was going on in the region. He did not think that it could be called an arms race if the two countries were in the process of acquiring their respective deterrence capabilities. This was only a western propaganda, he said. And it was not a costly process either, Subramanyam said, because at least in the case of India the bombs and the missiles were spin off from India's technological progress. The bogey of high costs, according to him was also a western propaganda.

I agreed with him in a lighter vein and added that while India's cost for acquiring weapons of mass destruction was minimal because of the spin off effects, Pakistan's cost was next to nothing if one were to believe the Indian propaganda that it was all a gift from

China. So I told him again in a lighter vein that both of us could indulge in this madness as much as we wanted and as long as we desired without bothering about costs.

It was a short encounter and the exchanges were conducted in a non-serious manner in part. Still, I had been struck by a hint of arrogance in what K. Subramanyam was saying and how he was articulating his opinions. This hint of arrogance, I have found out to my disquiet over the last one year, is not confined to Mr Subramanyam alone. Most Indians I had met since May last year and most of which they have been saying since at least on their international affairs programmes over their TV channels indicate that today the Indians are suffering from an acute bout of arrogance.

Once when I asked an Indian diplomat as to what would happen to India's economy if the world decided to punish it for its refusal to join the international non-proliferation efforts, he said with a total non-balance of a non-diplomat that in the first place nothing would happen because India itself was too big a market to be

affected by such moves and secondly no one would like to give up a market of a billion people who would have as many as 200 million middle class consumers.

Another Indian, a businessman this time, while talking about the need to establish meaningful bilateral trade relations between India and Pakistan said that the Indian economy was too big and moving too fast to wait for Pakistan to make up its mind, it would simply overwhelm it from third countries.

To be proud of one's achievement is totally legitimate. No one would grudge this pride. But when the achievements make self-destructive and dangerous for your neighbours. This is when those around you must take all steps to protect themselves against your attempts to live up to this arrogance, especially if the arrogant springs from nuclear achievements.

So, it is indeed a matter of serious concern for the world that an arrogant BJP government has upped the ante in the disputed territory. Now it has to live up to the fiction of invincibility vis-a-vis Pakistan that it has created in the minds of its public. More so because it is election time in India. Not very happy times for the region.

Courtesy: The Dawn of Pakistan

Targeting Critics

The Nawaz Sharif Government's continuing crackdown on journalists comes in for strong criticism inside and outside Pakistan. Amit Baruah, in Islamabad, writes

THE crackdown on the press by the Nawaz Sharif Government does not come as a surprise. It has been in the making for several months now. The first indication came when the Government targeted the Jang group of newspapers — starting it off with *Frontier Post* and launching an investigation into alleged income tax violations by its proprietor Mir Shakilur Rehman.

More recently, on April 1, the Sharif Government got Rehmat Shah Afridi, the Editor of *The Frontier Post*, arrested on charges of smuggling narcotics, on May 4, Hussain Haqqani, a leading columnist and politician, on charges of corruption; and on May 8, Nam Sethi, the Editor of *The Friday Times*, for his alleged links with the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence agency. In an effort to diminish these developments, the Government claims that Afridi, Haqqani and Sethi were arrested not for their writings, but for specific offences that are unrelated to their professional status.

In other instances of harassment and intimidation, M.A.K. Lodhi, the Lahore-based

head of the investigative bureau of *The News*, was detained for 48 hours for 'providing help' to a BBC team that was making a film on the alleged corruption of Nawaz Sharif's family.

Imtiaz Alam, Editor (Current Affairs), *The News*, who organised a meeting of parliamentarians from India and Pakistan in Islamabad, had his car torched by unidentified persons who entered his house in the early hours of the day. Sethi was 'arrested' by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for the 'disparaging comments' he made about an 'all-round crisis' in Pakistan, at the India International Centre in New Delhi on April 30. His comments were used to label him as a person who had 'links' with RAW, and he was accused of undermining the foundations of Pakistan as an Islamic state.

A damning report submitted by Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Pakistan's High Commissioner to India (he was present at the conference Sethi addressed), was used to justify Sethi's 'arrest'. Around 2-30 a.m. on May 8, several armed men forced their way into Sethi's house in La-

hore, beat up two armed guards, and entered his bedroom. Sethi's wife Jugnu Mohsin alleged that they beat him with clubs and the chain attached to the hand-cuffs they carried. She further alleged that Sethi was whisked away without being allowed to put on his spectacles and wear his shoes. She said that when she asked the armed men whether they had an arrest warrant, she was told that she would get her husband's 'body'. Jugnu alleged that she was tied up and locked up in the dressing room.

A statement issued by the Government on May 8 said: 'It is suspected that the journalist has some nexus/connection with the RAW. He has projected a dismal picture of Pakistan at their behest to create despondency and doubts in the minds of Pakistanis. In order to unearth such links, it was considered necessary to investigate him on matters of national security.'

However, it is widely believed that Sethi was arrested not for what he said in India, but for his outspoken criticism of the Nawaz Sharif Government. The tone and tenor of his weekly editorials in *The Friday Times* are biting, and they often mock the Government. It is widely believed that the Government had been waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Sethi began his lecture at the India International Centre by referring to the multiple crises gripping Pakistan. 'The crisis of identity and ideology refers to the fact that after 50 years (of independence), Pakistanis are still unable to collectively agree upon who we are as a nation, where we belong, what we believe in and where we want to go.' He had used these very words in an editorial titled 'What is to be done?' in *The Friday Times* of January 17, 1999. The editorial and the lecture he gave are similar in content.

The Government said that critical remarks about the country could be made on Pakistani soil, but not in India. Obviously, the Lahore Declaration does not extend to individuals or the right to criticise each other's government or society. A fact sheet released by the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (N) on May 13 makes the same point: 'There is enough material to show that he (Sethi) vehemently questioned the very basis of the creation of Pakistan.'

No doubt many others in Pakistan hold similar views, but most of them follow the ethical principle that one does not denigrate or ridicule one's own country when visiting foreign lands, particularly before an audience known to be opposed to the existence of the country. (Obviously, the fact that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee referred to Pakistan and India as 'separate nations' — an acknowledgment of Partition — during his visit to the Minar-i-Pakistan is not enough to convince Sharif's Muslim League that India does not oppose Pakistan's existence.) The 'fact sheet' further states that Sethi started his career as a 'book seller' and a 'gun-runner', and that he has been dabbling in politics, having been a Minister in Farooq Leghari's caretaker government (November 1996-February 1997). 'He is still known to have close links with Mr. Leghari and his recently launched Millat Party,' it states, 'but his detention is related neither to his being an editor, nor a politician from an Opposition party. The immedi-

ate reason officially stated is the speech he made recently at a seminar in New Delhi. But his alleged links with the Indian intelligence agency RAW were under investigation for long.'

Apart from being criticised by independent journalists, human rights organisations and a host of other groups for its actions, the Sharif Government has been strongly criticised by the United States, the European Union and Canada. Interestingly, this is the first time since Sharif assumed power that the U.S. has expressed such categorical views on what is obviously Pakistan's 'internal' issue. The U.S. maintained a studied silence and refused to comment on the dispute between Sharif and Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah in 1997 and of the confrontation between Sharif and the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. Jehangir Karamat, in 1998. Clearly, a battle is on to safeguard the independent press in Pakistan.

Najam Sethi's case could well become a test case. If the Government gets away with putting one of Pakistan's best-known journalists behind bars and the courts remain silent spectators (the Lahore High Court rejected a habeas corpus petition in this regard), all the writers who are critical of the Government would be easy game for the Government. The saving grace is that a small but vocal section of Pakistani society is committed to defending the freedom of the press and the right to expression from attacks by the Government.

By arrangement with the Frontline magazine of India

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overtures by (Prime Minister Nawaz) Sharif, the Pakistan Army moved strategically toward Indian territory. An Air Force officer told India Abroad News Service.

Media reports were also critical of Fernandes as he was seen as countering the Congress Party's bid to form the government after the fall of the Vajpayee coalition at a time when intruders were crossing the LoC. 'He was busy in creating a crisis in Congress Party so he couldn't see enemies entering our territory,' one Congress Party leader told *India Abroad News Service*.

Analysts also pointed out that Fernandes appeared to be more concerned with domestic politics at a time when two army patrols searching for the intruders disappeared on May 8. Although he visited Leh four days later, on May 12, neither he nor the army thought of visiting the Kargil sector, they said.

According to opposition party leaders, Fernandes told them at the all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister Vajpayee last week that it had taken the infiltrators 'three to four months' to bunker down in the sector. 'Which means, even while Vajpayee was signing the Lahore Declaration, they were infiltrating,' J. Chittaranjan, a Communist Party of India (CPI) lawmaker in the Rajya Sabha, Parliament's upper house, told IANS.

Chittaranjan, who attended the all-party meeting, said the intruders were first spotted by a shepherd in the region and it was he who informed the army about them on May 7. Fernandes, however, received the information only on May 12, he added. 'The intruders, two army patrols went missing. It shows complete negligence and criminal irresponsibility of the army and the Defence Minister,' Chittaranjan said. The simmering anger against the Defence Minister came into the open when Fernandes absolved Sharif and the ISI of any responsibility for the incursions into Indian territory.

Addressing reporters after a cabinet meeting which took stock of the rapidly escalating situation, Fernandes said that neither the Sharif government nor the ISI had a hand in the infiltration in Kargil. He added that the operation was being independently run by the Pakistan Army.

Even as opposition parties and defence analysts expressed surprise over Fernandes' statement, Prime Minister Vajpayee — reportedly unhappy with the remarks — said at the all-party meeting that it had been the Defence Minister's assessment and it could be wrong.

Although political parties of all hues are extending 'full support' to the government action against the infiltrators, several leaders openly said they were angered by Fernandes' statement.

Even the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a hardline affiliate of Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), could not hide its dismay over the Defence Minister's remark. VHP general secretary Giriraj Kishore said he found it hard to believe the Pakistan government had no role to play in the military misadventure in Kargil. Openly criticising Fernandes, he reminded the Defence Minister that Pakistan was virtually waging an undeclared war against India.

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It is not as if Fernandes is without his backers. Senior BJP leader K.R. Malkani agreed with Fernandes' remarks. He said that the Pakistan Army's proximity to the United States administration is well known, Malkani alleged that the Kargil incursion was inspired by the U.S. 'I do not think Nawaz Sharif has any role in it,' he said. Federal Minister Rangarajan Kumar-mangalam also pointed out in a television interview that Fernandes 'must have spoken on the basis of some facts he had with him.' The opposition parties, however, defined Kumar-mangalam's statement only 'as a damage control exercise.'

Critics of the Defence Minister also slammed his decision to send Chief of Army Staff V.P. Malik to Poland on a courtesy visit even after he had received reports of infiltrators attacking army camps. They also contend that there was a lack of coordination between the Defence Ministry and the armed forces and little pro-active function-

The Second Coming?

Liz Mathew of IANS explains why George Fernandes can be compared with Krishna Menon

THE media and some opposition politicians are describing him as the 'new Krishna Menon.' It is a tag that is not likely to please Defence Minister George Fernandes. It was Menon who, as defence minister in the early sixties, is believed to have lulled into complacency then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru even as the Chinese were preparing to invade India in 1962. After India's military debacle in the conflict, Menon stood disgraced and had to quit.

As the conflict intensified in the Kargil area of Kashmir, Fernandes was in the line of fire: he was being attacked both for the manner in which the armed forces were caught unaware by the infiltrators, as well as his surprising statement that the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) were not responsible for the intrusion across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Defence Minister came in for criticism for the failure of the intelligence agencies to detect the movement of over 600 armed intruders and soldiers across the LoC. Analysts pointed out that, from ending the infiltration in the Jammu and Kashmir sector, reports about the massive infiltration into the Kargil sector in the northern part of the state.

Some reports even said, rightly as it turned out, that a few army posts had been captured by the intruders. The army normally vacates the forward posts in winter, when the region is under several feet of snow, and recaptures them in summer, after the snow melts.

'Both the army and the Defence Minister were not aware of these movements or they simply ignored it, over-confident about the recent Lahore Declaration,' one defence analyst contended.

Sources in political parties reiterated this charge, saying that the Atal Behari Vajpayee government was 'too relaxed' after the February 1998 diplomacy and the recent dramatic improvement in India-Pakistan relations. 'History repeated itself here. Earlier, when we were saying 'Hindi Chini bhai bhai' (India and China are brothers), the Chinese Army was preparing to attack. Now, as India trusted the Pakistanis after the Lahore Declaration and the positive

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Even the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a hardline affiliate of Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), could not hide its dismay over the Defence Minister's remark. VHP general secretary Giriraj Kishore said he found it hard to believe the Pakistan government had no role to play in the military misadventure in Kargil. Openly criticising Fernandes, he reminded the Defence Minister that Pakistan was virtually waging an undeclared war against India.

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