



Victory Day SPECIAL

Operation Destination Unknown

by Habibul Alam, Bir Pratik

ENOUGH was enough, we thought the blowing up of Siddirganj Power Station would have disrupted the major part of the Dhaka's electricity. That was the third attempt that was foiled due to the fact that there were more soldiers in number than what was calculated according to the information Kazi Kamaluddin and his group had. Kazi Kamaluddin had arrived from Melaghar to Dhaka about two weeks back and came with some more recruits to destroy the power station in Siddirganj.

In the mean time Jewel came back from Siddirganj power station operation with bullet injury. He was taken overnight to our village camp in Pirulia. The next day he was brought back to 1/3 Dilu Road, one of the major shelters of Dhaka guerrillas. The house belonged to Engr. Mohamed Hafizul Alam who is my father and my folks stayed there. On arrival of Jewel in our house my sisters started taking care of him. He was forced to stay in our house for three to four nights. His three fingers were very badly hurt. Again we had seek the help of Dr Azizur Rahman to fix and provide appropriate bandage on the injured fingers of Jewel.

It seemed it was one of those jinx's that happened to Kazi and his group on that occasion. On 19th August 1971 Kazi took around ten young people in two rowboats to perform the reconnaissance job at the Siddirganj Power Station. The first rowboat consisted of Kazi, Bodhi and Jewel and two others. The second was at a little distance from the first and consisted all the specially trained other persons and Rumi was one of them. The first boat came under challenge from the Pakistani army patrol boat as it went close to the Siddirganj Power Station through the river.

Kazi and Jewel had their sten guns kept under the deck of the rowboat while Bodhi was holding his sten gun in his hand. When the Pakistan army on the speedboat challenged them Bodhi gave no chance to anyone and opened fire on the army and finished his complete magazine. The Pakistan army on the speedboat did fire back but could not do any major damage to the freedom fighters. Bodhi's fire on the army ensured immediate death of the enemy and some were drowned in the river. It was only Jewel who suffered the injury in his three fingers. While the Pakistan army retaliated the first boat could not hold and sunk. The second boat picked up the five of them that included Bodhi, Kazi and Jewel also. It was then that Jewel realized he was badly injured in his three fingers.

We were pretty perturbed because of the failure in Siddirganj and not being able to complete the task given by Major Hyder. Something was going wrong somewhere and we were simply unable to trace that out. However, the actions that continued inside the Dhaka City by the freedom fighters kept the spirit of the people alive.

It was on 24th August 1971 in our hideout at Dhanmandi Road 28 while playing a game of contract bridge at night with Shawpon, Bodhi and Kazi, that both Bodhi and Kazi Kamaluddin got hold of me and said that we should go for some serious action inside the city by tomorrow otherwise it was becoming absolutely dull. The single actions seemed not good enough for them and moreover Kazi said that his boys were fully charged and some action ought to be mounted otherwise they may get frustrated. So in-between the card game we started discussing about the type of action that we could undertake. Ultimately taking into our account our present position and the prevailing situation of the city, it was decided that a total chaos was to be created inside the city. It was around one o'clock midnight that all of them agreed with me that there would be two groups for tomorrow's action inside the city.

We also planned to create panic in the Consulate office of the People's Republic of China in Moghbar and in one of the houses in Dhanmandi Road 20 where one or more diplomats of the Chinese Consulate were staying and they were guarded by sentries. It came to our notice that in front of a house on Road 18, about six to seven army and EPCAF personnel remained on guard twenty-four hours. We understood that some high ranking official of the Pakistan army could be a brigadier, was staying in that house. Once the first group has completed its action inside Dhanmandi area it would then move towards Rajarbagh Police Lines and meet the second action group. Together we both the groups would then hit the specific targets around that place and move towards Jinnah Avenue (now Bangabandhu Avenue) to create some more panic for the army there and then come back via the University area to our destination Dhanmandi Road 28.

The responsibility of the first group fell on my shoulder and the second group's was on FF Zia. To conduct those two operations inside the city what was required from our end apart from the arms and ammunitions was two vehicles that were to be hijacked from Dhanmandi and other areas. To drive the second vehicle we

required someone, who would not panic and was good in driving. After a lengthy discussion we thought that it would be better if we could get AFM Harris, a young man from Faujdarhat Cadet College, who was of our age and pretty agile; moreover he drove pretty well. The responsibility to get hold of him fell on Kazi Kamaluddin who readily agreed to do so. At the request of Kazi Kamaluddin we decided to involve FF Rumi in our group one. That would be his first operation inside the Dhaka city after coming from Melaghar.

It was 25th August 1971, like any other day of the week. The sunshine was bright that day and humidity was at its peak. People walking in the street were sweating. Streets inside the city looked less crowded than on other days. On that day we decided to have a good lunch. And that lunch would be for the freedom fighters including those who would be going for the operation. Chullu and Shahadat Chowdhury took the responsibility to arrange the lunch and bringing all of them together. Individually and in

the vehicle and got the car documents including the driving licence of the owner.

It took some more minutes for the second vehicle to arrive at the same hideout as decided earlier. So far so good, it was going according to our plan. The second vehicle that was brought by Harris and Mukhtar was a Fiat-600. And seemed that it was alright for them and Harris could very comfortably handle it.

Harris told us how he and Mukhtar hijacked the vehicle. While they went out from Dhanmandi they found a Fiat-600 quite close to our hideout and the vehicle was absolutely a sitting duck. They did not think of other area anymore and walked out casually from Chullu's car and Mukhtar shoved the handgun into the driver's face. The young man was totally taken aback and Harris giving no opportunity signaled the driver of the vehicle to be "out!" Harris stepped into the driver's seat and tried to start the vehicle but it would not start at all. Both of them got panicked and furious

and confirmed that we would link up with them in and around Rajarbagh Police Lines after we completed the cleaning up in Road 18 and Road 20.

I took the wheel of the Mazda four-door car and gave my SMG to Bodhi who sat in the front seat with me. At the back seat immediately behind me Shawpon sat. On the left side of the back seat Kazi sat and Rumi was placed in between both Kazi and Shawpon. Before we moved out of the place I told Shahadat that this operation shall be known as "Operation Destination Unknown." He nodded his head in agreement and said he wait for our return and also said "be careful."

Thus the "Operation Destination Unknown" started around 7 to 7.30 pm at night inside Dhaka city by 10 young freedom fighters on 25th August 1971.

At around 7.25 in the evening the Mazda with five people rolled out of the hideout. We took the same route that was taken by Bodhi and myself while hijacking the vehicle. Passed the culvert on road 32 and took right turn, this

a sharp U-turn from the Satmasjid road. I said to Shawpon and Rumi to keep a watch on the road. Rumi would watch the back and Shawpon the front of the road.

The sleek and practically soundless Mazda slowly moved forward and came very close to the gate and the targets. I controlled my voice and said "Fire!"

Bodi's and Kazi's sten guns went into action immediately. Bodhi aimed and fired at the stomach level of the target and Kazi fired at the chest of the targeted enemy. Before anyone near could understand anything all the soldiers fell and dropped dead on the street in front of their gate. To complete the operation it took couple of seconds only. All five of us were now happy, at least we had something to say to the second group.

The Road 18 looked deserted now. I pressed my right foot on the accelerator and zoomed out of that place. Especially Shawpon and Rumi said they needed to practice firing and in no way I should deprive them of that. I was

them, then we are all dead meats."

Finally, I said to everyone inside the car that I would only say once "Fire!" There would be no other command, it would be our joint effort to act accordingly.

I made our move, slowed down the Mazda car and passed the vehicles standing in line. The two military police standing in front and checking the other vehicles shouted at the top of their voice "halt!" I said to myself that the game was on my friend, let's see who wins.

On hearing the shout to stop I switched off the headlights and switched on the right side indicator light. And then gave a false slow right turn, the reaction from the military police were immediate. They shouted and abused "bastards..." Where the fucks are you trying to go... roko." The little seconds that the false indicator light of the vehicle provided that was what we required till we could come close to Road 5. The trick worked and without any hesitation I sped up and took a sharp turn towards the Road 5

started and I had to use occasionally the wiper to see clearly the road.

However, we had to think how to disburse the weapons that had been used in the night's action. We asked Rumi whether his mother Mrs. Jahanara Imam could help us in taking the weapons from a nearby house that we knew could keep them for an hour or so. The reason was again to avoid any suspicion by the army while carrying the weapons. Rumi readily agreed and said don't worry I shall request my mother to help us out. We took the car very close to the lane where Rumi stayed. Kazi, Rumi and Bodhi were dropped in one lane earlier to the lane that Rumi and his folks stayed. In the last house on that lane at the first floor where Mr. Hye stayed we left the three freedom fighters along with the weapons.

It was drizzling. Shawpon and myself both left the place to dispose of the life saver vehicle Mazda. We both thought of a place in Voothor Galli. I drove for the last time and left it inside the boundary of a house that had an arch gate. It looked to us that it belonged to one of the non-Bengalis. We both left the place quietly and quickly. By then we were nearly soaked by the rain and we both decided to go to 1, Tenamant house, one of our hideouts inside the city where Chullu stayed with his brother and his family. There we cleaned ourselves and had something to eat and then left for our destination. We both went back to Dhanmandi to our hideout and found Bodhi and Shahadat Chowdhury waiting for us.

Once we were both inside the house we were told what happened with the second group. The second group became very frustrated as we the first group could not meet them according to our plan of action. The second group driving up and down the Rajarbagh Police Line got quite upset. At certain point the Fiat-600 car got overheat and they had to stop in Shahjahanpur beside a tea stall. A panic among the thin crowd could be felt by the group, when the people saw the guns in the hands of the freedom fighters. They quickly filled the radiator and left the place. They moved from Kakkrali and passed Darul Kabab restaurant and saw some military officers but when they turned around from Karwan Bazar area and drove down the road again, those officers had disappeared.

It was near Science Laboratory that they wanted to take on an army jeep. Zia understood the situation and stopped them. Zia had noticed the army truck a little ahead of the jeep with its headlights off. And that was a pretty close call. Eventually they all came back in tact at our Dhanmandi hideout and waited for us. The second group heard the news from Bodhi and the movie like action that took place about an hour back in Dhanmandi.

We were all satisfied with the action that we did on 25th August 1971. That was exactly five months from then when those Pakistani killed huge number of innocent civilians in Dhaka. We tried to give back the same taste of blood to the Pakistanis.

We on the next day felt relieved and sat together and started to talk about a bigger action to be undertaken by the sector-2 guerrillas inside the Dhaka City. I informed the freedom fighters present that there had been a promise made by our Sector Commander Lt. Col. Khaled Musharraf. He assured if we could show good performance inside Dhaka City, he would provide us with two LMGs. Similarly, Maj. Hyder also assured me that if we could continue to hit the army with proper actions then he would also provide us with one three-inch mortar.

Everyone present immediately busted out together in a shout and said, "What better performance the higher echelon expects from us then what we have done during the last two months?" Shahadat informed that he had to go back to Melaghar and report to the Sector Commander of the operations carried out during the month of August 1971.

Bodi, Shawpon, Kazi gave their reaction and said, "Then why should not Alam join Shahadat and also go to Melaghar to report and also to get fresh arms and ammunition?" That was it and it was agreed that I would be joining Shahadat and we would be leaving for Melaghar on 27th August 1971. Kazi spoke up and said, "Now that it is finalized we all know you are going with Shahadat to Melaghar. We warn you very seriously that you are not allowed to return to Dhaka without the fresh arms and ammunition as committed by the Sector Commander and Hyder Bhai."

To get everyone back to the mood that we were few minutes' back, I stood up and said, "It seems you all have forgotten that we all were invited for lunch by our friend Syed Ashraf Haque at his house today. Why the hell should miss it, let's go to his house in New Eskaton and make a raid."

The author is Freedom Fighter, Sector-2



Freedom fighters preparing for combat



- photo courtesy Drik



Freedom fighters in combat

-photo courtesy Liberation War Museum



Celebrating victory -photo courtesy Liberation War Museum

also in the mood and said "alright here we go to Road 20 again." And this time we entered road 20 from the other lane to give Shawpon and Rumi a chance to practice firing. Still there was no sign of the sentries those who were supposed to be on duty for the Chinese diplomats. We waited and waited for some more time then at one point of time we wanted to throw one or two grenades. Then again we changed our mind. It was no longer safe to wait for more than five minutes in one place, as there was a possibility of becoming a sitting target of the enemy. I carefully drove through the Dhanmandi roads and crossed the culvert that led us to Road 7.

We drove through the residential area of Dhanmandi and came out from Road 7 on to Mirpur Road. Keeping in mind that we had a rendezvous with the second group of freedom fighters near Rajarbagh police lines, the vehicle was turned towards New Market. As we drove and came near Roads 5, we could very clearly see that the Pakistan army has already made an improvised check post. They were checking every car on the street coming from both directions. It did not take time for us to understand that the news of the action of Road 18 by the guerrillas had already reached the army control room.

The Mirpur Road was properly barricaded in front. Two trucks were blocking the Mirpur road facing towards Mirpur. One C5J-jeep was facing the two trucks. There was another jeep that was parked in front of the petrol pump on our left facing towards New Market. Only one car was allowed to pass at a time from the Mirpur side. There were four to five vehicles already lined up to be checked by the army. It was only few seconds that I was scared like hell. I realized the consequences if we were trapped. The situation was such that I could not even turn the car back. I was left with no choice but to go through the drill. Therefore, I said to the rest of our group and kept my eyes focused in front towards the enemies that we have to break through the barricade and that was our only chance to survive. Shawpon and Bodhi immediately responded and said whether I was absolutely sure that I could drive through. I could see by then that two to three soldiers took a position on the roadside with their guns and one was having a light machine gun pointed towards our direction. I replied to them that "if you Shawpon could take on the soldier lying on the ground with the light machine gun, I am confident we will be able to get away from this mess. Be very sure when I take the left turn you will open fire from all three windows."

Rumi and Kazi from behind said "Alam have you noticed that there are two to three soldiers standing at the left side of the Road 5?" "Yes I have noticed, and that's Bodhi and Kazi's problem to solve if you two cannot handle the operation." The brightness in the western sky was no longer there. The sun kissed goodbye for the night to this part of the world. The streetlights were on in the main streets. However, in some of the internal roads in Dhanmandi the street lights were not lit and one of them was road 28, it was a blessing, and we needed that more than anything else at that moment. That was having to get inside the vehicle with our weapons and we needed the darkness. The car moved forward and I took a round turn from Road 4 and came back to our hideout in Dhanmandi Road 28. Bodhi said, "How about a cigarette now?" I replied "why not" and both walked out of the car leaving the vehicle parked underneath the porch. While getting out of the vehicle I thought to check whose car was it that we hijacked. The face of the gentleman looked familiar to both of us. As usual I opened the glove compartment and

time we moved towards west. We proceeded towards the southern direction leaving on our right the Abahani cricket ground and arrived at Road 20. Once we reached the Chinese diplomat's house we found that the sentries were not available. We then decided to try our luck in Road 18. The Road 20 was the only road with two lanes in whole of Dhanmandi area so the turning of the car was done very smoothly.

There on Road 18 we found seven to eight army sentries with their rifles hanging from their shoulders in a relaxed mood. Two or three were standing and the rest were sitting and were laughing out their guts. It seemed to me that the Brigadier or the big shot of the house was not at home for which those on duty were at relaxed mood.

While we fiddled around the Mazda car documents we found that the owner of the vehicle was Mr. Mahbub Anam who is the eldest brother of our common friend and freedom fighter Mahfuz Anam. He worked for Pakistan National Oil Company and resided in Dhanmandi. Mr. Mahbub Anam and Mahfuz Anam both are sons of Mr. Abul Mansur Ahmad. We all were happy and at the same time sad because Mr. Mahbub may not get the vehicle back.

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on my left. I shouted "fire!" "fire!" The car nearly overran the second military police who was standing on the left side of the car. He jumped off and saved himself from the wheels of the vehicle but couldn't save himself from the firing that came out from back window of Kazi. Shawpon and Bodhi did not wait even for a second they opened up fire with their automatic sub-machine guns on the soldiers on both side.

Two to three fired, empty and hot cartridges jumped out from Shawpon's sten gun and fell on my neck I jerked myself. The firing from Shawpon's gun must have nullified the soldier who lied on the ground with the light machine gun. There was no return fire from that LMG. Bodhi with his Chinese sten gun continued firing and emptied his magazine. Kazi got his head out of the vehicle and was firing with the killer's instinct. We escaped a tragedy and broke the barricade of the army. The smell of the gunpowder was all over inside the vehicle. The vehicle was on Road 5 a small road that linked Mirpur Road with the Green Road. The life saving Mazda car speeded on and crossed two lampposts. Rumi blocked the function of the rearview mirror of the car because of his excitement. We told him to turn around and keep looking behind. Rumi turned and concentrated at the road left behind. We were also worried whether the army was following us.

Again the indicator on the left was shown as if the vehicle would be turning towards Green Road. The headlights were still off. The car turned right towards New Market. On the verge of turning the car Rumi screamed "Look! Look! There is a jeep... those bastards are trying to follow us." While we were all satisfied with the action that we did on 25th August 1971. That was exactly five months from then when those Pakistanis killed huge number of innocent civilians in Dhaka. We tried to give back the same taste of blood to the Pakistanis.

We on the next day felt relieved and sat together and started to talk about a bigger action to be undertaken by the sector-2 guerrillas inside the Dhaka City. I informed the freedom fighters present that there had been a promise made by our Sector Commander Lt. Col. Khaled Musharraf. He assured if we could show good performance inside Dhaka City, he would provide us with two LMGs. Similarly, Maj. Hyder also assured me that if we could continue to hit the army with proper actions then he would also provide us with one three-inch mortar. Everyone present immediately busted out together in a shout and said, "What better performance the higher echelon expects from us then what we have done during the last two months?" Shahadat informed that he had to go back to Melaghar and report to the Sector Commander of the operations carried out during the month of August 1971.

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