

# Naval Commandos in the Liberation War



COMMANDO MOHAMMAD KHALILUR RAHMAN

**AUGUST 15, 1971.** On that day, after midnight, then East Pakistan's sea and river ports were attacked with mines one after the other. Occupation forces, shaken, sent out SOS signals to the whole world. The attack by the first naval force formed under the Bangladesh government operating outside the country resulted in goods and warships belonging to the occupation forces and other countries sinking one after the other. Immediately, the ego of the undefeated, mighty Pakistan armed forces was shattered. In the Liberation War, this was a surprise to the whole world. Success of the naval operation added a new momentum to the Liberation War.

On the night of March 25, 1971 when Pakistani occupation forces started carrying out genocide in this country, professional training in France's submarine was being given to 57 Pakistani naval personnel, 13 of whom were Bengalis. With the intention of freeing the country, 8 of the 13 courageous Bengalis deserted the Pakistanis to take part in the Liberation War and arrived in India with political asylum. This was the first pro-Liberation mutiny in the Bengali armed forces based abroad. These eight extremely brave sailors are: Commando Mohammad Rahmatullah, Bir Protik, Commando Syed Mosharraf Hossen, Commando Aminullah Sheikh, Bir Bikram, Commando Mohammad Badiul Alam, Bir Uttam, Commando Abdul Wahid Chowdhury, Bir Uttam and Bir Bikram, Commando Mohammad Ahsan Ullah, Bir Protik, Shaheed Commando Abdur Rakib Mia, Bir Bikram. He was mar-

tyred in a mine attack on a moving ship in Fulchhari Ghat, Commando Abidur Rahman, Bir Bikram. On April 10, these 8 Bengali war heroes, due to their indomitable passion and unquestionable patriotism, reached Delhi. Indian Naval Chief, senior officers of the Indian military and the Commander-in-Chief during Liberation War, General Osmani -- with the advice of Late Tajuddin Ahmed, the first prime minister of the interim government of Bangladesh -- accepted a plan to form a naval commando force. In order to execute the plan, these eight submariners first underwent a short-term commando training under the Indian navy in Delhi. After that, with plans to form a small but effective commando force and with the help of the Indian army and Indian navy, Bengali youths were selected from different transit camps in India. The training camp for this naval commando force was first set up at Palashi in Nodiya district of West Bengal. This was the place of the historic fight between Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah and Lord Clive by the river Bhagirathi.

commando training with extreme hard work and passion. Under high level of secrecy, 148 of the 160 were divided into four groups for the operation. Between August 4 and 6, all these commandos were dispatched to four internal ports of Bangladesh to destroy ships berthed there. The day of the first attack was August 15. This attack by the naval commandos is known as the famous "Operation Jackpot." The tremendous success of this attack encouraged and boosted the morale of the war planners who, as part of the long-time preparation for the Liberation War, formed another two State Department acknowledged the destruction caused by the shipwrecks due to the naval commando attacks. Bangladesh being a riverine country, the main motive for the commando attack was to disrupt the maritime communication between Bangladesh and Pakistan. This is when the Pakistani government tried to broadcast through the international media that East Pakistan was in a normal state, and that there was no Liberation War going on. After the fearless attack carried out by the naval commandos on August 15, the Pakistani forces were shaken up. News of the naval attack spread throughout the world.

American ship belonging to M/S Inco Shipping Corporation carried weapons and artillery to Mongla port. On August 16, the countrywide attack by naval commandos destroyed 26 ships. In the nine months of the Liberation War, the valiant suicide squad of naval commandos used mines to sink more than 100 Pakistani and other foreign ships near Bangladesh's coastal areas.

American M/S Inco Shipping Corporation, the real owner of S.S. Lightning, was contacted repeatedly (for removing their ship as a part of clearance of the river ports) but there was no response. In 1974, then Shipping and Transportation minister and Commander-in-Chief during Liberation War, General M.A.G. Osmani, declared the ship as war 'prize' (national treasure obtained during the war). Without obtaining indemnity bond from the admiralty court, on March 1976, authorities of maritime operations donated a ship worth six crores to a Pakistani, Mohammad Bhai at the address 41, Jubilee Road, Chittagong. This ship was given to M/S Ship Scrap Traders without paying the due of Tk. 20,33,542 to Khulna shipyard.

This ship, earned in the Liberation War, became a national treasure. It was a symbol of pride for the Liberation War. People of the country have the right to know why the fact that the ship was declared as war prize by the Commander-in-Chief and promised to the naval commandos by Bangabandhu was overlooked whilst an asset worth six crores was handed over to a Pakistani for free. The naval commandos want to know the fate of the other ships that were sunk within our maritime boundaries at the cost of the blood of the glorious sons of the country, our freedom fighters.



Naval commandos preparing just before an attack. PHOTO: COLLECTED

commando teams consisting of a total of 499 trainees to make up an invincible commando force. Until the very last day prior to independence, these naval commandos fought the enemy forces with extreme precision and bravery. As a result, this attack by the naval commandos was acknowledged by the international community.

The Liberation War got international attention. On the other side of the world, as the news spread, the freedom fighters were even more encouraged, and it added a new dimension to the Liberation War.

### Commander-in-Chief of Liberation War declared S.S. Lightning as war 'prize'

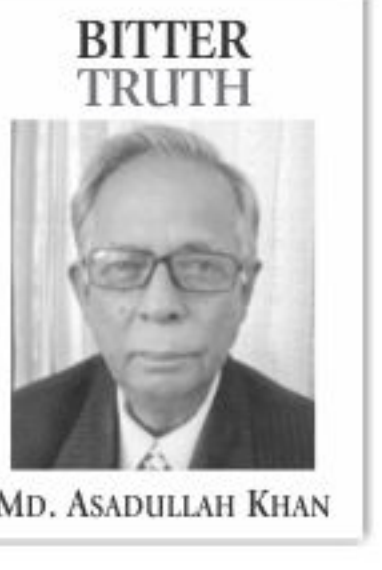
Right after independence, the first example of a pro-Pakistani attitude was set by General Ziaur by giving an American ship named S.S. Lightning to a Pakistani for free. On August 16, 1971, naval commandos had destroyed five foreign ships at Mongla. At the time, the

On October 5, 1971, in a speech to the UN, the leader of the Pakistani team Mahmud Ali, and on October 12 in a speech to the nation, Pakistani President General Yahya Khan, admitted the havoc caused by the destruction of the ships and the harmful effects on the transportation sector. Even the US

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## No time to hibernate



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

**BITTER TRUTH**  
**A**FTER a brief lull in terrorist bombing and arson attacks, the streets of the capital city and other rural places are again turning to theatres of violence and arson attacks. The attackers are now launching attacks in small groups, vandalising 53 vehicles, and the death figure has shot up to 114 till March 3, including 36 in crossfire or shootout. These bomb attacks have convinced the citizenry that other than mainstream opposition BNP, some militant groups belonging to radical Islamic factions are involved in creating an unstable situation in the country. These defeated forces in the Liberation War regrouped themselves and, after years of preparation and training, have launched an attack at the right moment when BNP and AL are feuding. The attacks during the last two months have shattered our complacency. Out there, someone had been waiting for the right moment to strike. Fear and panic have staged a comeback, even though the government claims that it will succeed in combating terrorism. Paradoxically, law enforcers had been saying so long that the problem was a law and order problem and they would defuse it in about a week. But, much to the people's consternation, the Rab DG has now admitted that radical and extremist forces are trying to creep in taking the advantage of the political instability in the country. Radical Islamic groups are operat-

ing covertly in almost all the districts, most notably in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions, as reported in newspapers. With the execution of JMB supremo Shayekh Abdur Rahman, Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai, and Ataur Rahman Sunny in March 2007, the radical group was weakened and went into hiding because of leadership crisis. But by executing some identified leaders, the administration has only treated the symptom, not the disease. The disease is fanaticism, which is inculcated into the minds of the people who are made to believe that their cause or their thinking is the just one and must prevail. The fanatics are only a handful compared to the millions believing in the interplay of ideas and opinions in most democratic countries and open societies. Because they are a minority, they resort to such terrorist methods. With several thousand operatives, as reported through several sources, and several hundreds having special training in use of arms and bomb making, they have regrouped and gained strength to create havoc as we now see in the country. We might recall that Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai set up organisational bases and militant training camps in madrasas and in remote areas of the country, mostly in the dense forests and hilly areas. They translated their plan into action with the help of huge funds from foreign countries that were meant for building mosques and madrasas. The revelation of foreign money coming into Bangladesh in the name of charitable causes and then being used to promote radicalism and terrorism is really worrying. It is the proliferation of such foreign-funded Qawmi madrasas

run by radical groups that seemingly led to fundamentalism spreading in the country, which earlier had the most tolerant Islam. The busting of a militant training camp in the hilly area of Chittagong, camouflaged as a poultry and livestock farm, and recovery of arms and ammunition as well as a huge cache of explosives and bombs from a militant hideout at Halishahar in Chittagong point to the danger lurking in the country and invisible enemies spawning like swamp mosquitoes. While the two major parties are squabbling and activists of BNP and Jamaat are killing people on the roads, clandestine radical groups inimical to the interest of the country as well as democracy are thriving in different places of the country. The rise of fundamentalism in its present form, based on a hate campaign, was inevitable when Jamaat-Islami, the reported mentor of banned

JMB and JMJB, got credibility and opportunity after two of its stalwarts were appointed ministers. After so many tumultuous events in the country during the BNP rule, when zealots destabilised the administration, the alliance between the coalition partners was so firm that religion and politics often appeared as inseparable. Even persistent media outcry in those days about the sinister rise of militant organisations with ulterior objective to destabilise the government could not nudge the government to take action for the reason that BNP-led coalition did not want its alliance with Jamaat, BNP's vote bank, to be fragmented. It is puzzling as to how the BNP-Jamaat alliance government in the past years could, despite repeated warnings about the activities of Bangla Bhai or JMB, pass it off as a creation of the media without inves-

tigation. More so, how could the administration shut its eyes to the flow of funds from foreign countries, running up to crores of taka, in the name of funding madrasa education and recovery of Islamic heritage? Now it is time for us to wake up and defend collectively, for the enemies are out there to break the nation down as a whole. It is time for shedding the legendary Bangladeshi type of complacency. The terrorists have nothing to lose but themselves, for their act is born out of blind fanaticism, but the country has a lot to preserve -- the national will, its honour, freedom and culture. All these petrol bomb attacks and murders of men with enlightened and liberal views are a message to the law enforcers, law makers and all parties that, in an environment of political bickering and heightened anxiety, no one is safe. They remind us that Bangladesh is about to face an ominous storm from zealots and adversaries of our Liberation War. The consequences are too frightening to comprehend. The finance minister, in a meeting with the Exporters Association, admitted that the situation is very alarming and there is no light at the end of the tunnel. All sectors of the economy have been severely hit. This is no time to wish it away as a law and order problem. The problem, essentially a political problem, must be solved by a dialogue between the feuding parties. It must be preceded by cessation of violence and petrol bomb attacks and BNP's sepeation from Jamaat.

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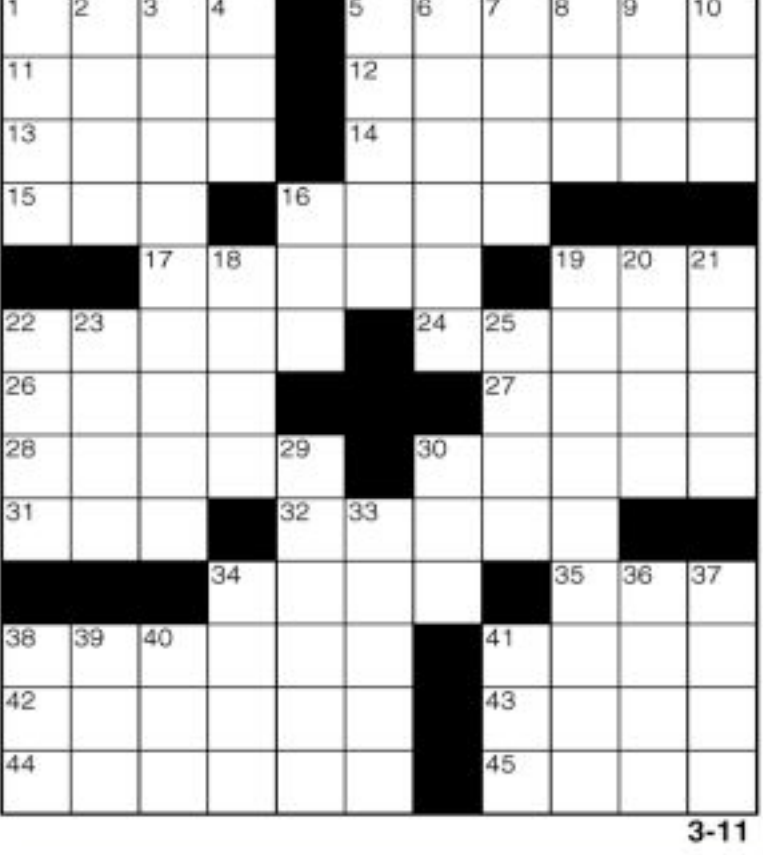
Source: Shommukh Shomore Bangali, Edited by Rafiqul Islam, Agami Prokashoni, February, 1999. Translated by Nahela Nowshin of The Daily Star.

### QUOTABLE Quote

*The best advice is this: Don't take advice and don't give advice.*  
Author Unknown

### CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- 1 Harvard rival
  - 5 Sound of delight
  - 11 Ellipse
  - 12 Dawn goddess
  - 13 Computer drive part
  - 14 Actress Laura
  - 15 Cabinet wood
  - 16 Not his
  - 17 Delete
  - 19 Beanie or beret
  - 22 Blase
  - 24 Mongrel's warning
  - 26 Nerve impulse relay
  - 27 Capital on a fjord
  - 28 W.C. Handy's music
  - 30 With zero chance
  - 31 Fixed
  - 32 Alert
  - 34 Company
  - 35 Beavers' creation
  - 38 Like cows and sows
  - 41 Matador's foe
  - 42 Warring woman
  - 43 Sci-fi award
  - 44 Radio knobs
  - 45 School near Windsor
- DOWN**
- 1 Luke's teacher
  - 2 Rara—
  - 3 Launched a verbal attack
  - 4 Antlered animal
  - 5 Company division
  - 6 There are 20 in a ream
  - 7 Fancy planters
  - 8 Long, long time
  - 9 Verb for you
  - 10 Place down
  - 16 Suffered from
  - 18 Painter Magritte
  - 19 Quit gambling
  - 20 Singer Guthrie
  - 21 Works the fields
  - 22 Pokes roughly
  - 23 Car bar
  - 25 Recess
  - 29 Mariner
  - 30 "Platoon" setting
  - 33 Small songbirds
  - 34 Disconcert
  - 36 Best Picture winner in 2013
  - 37 Earth orber
  - 38 Diet no-no
  - 39 Running bird
  - 40 Supply with crew
  - 41 Common article



**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
ESBOLOC MAHHAXFZK ZAHO PWT ROOP, KEOCO AR WZBWTR RSPQEAQU ZF XWQ MS WQM RFXOOM WK.  
— RKQJEOU EWBNAQU

### Yesterday's answer

M	E	S	A	C	H	A	R	T		
A	R	E	N	A	L	U	G	E		
G	R	A	N	D	B	A	H	A	M	A
E	A	T	D	E	N	T	A	W		
S	T	A	L	E	R	P	H	I	L	
A	C	O	R	N	I	A	N	S		
A	S	I	A	N	I	A	N			
C	H	I	N	E	N	T	E	R		
O	A	T	S	M	O	A	N	E	D	
D	I	S	O	A	R	A	G	E		
G	R	A	N	D	C	A	Y	M	A	N
E	D	G	E	D	K	E	E	L	S	
R	O	O	T	S	A	L	E	E		

**Yesterday's Cryptoquote:** PRIDE, ENVY, AVARICE — THESE ARE THE SPARKS HAVE SET ON FIRE THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN. — DANTE ALIGHIERI

### BEETLE BAILEY

### by Mort Walker



### HENRY

### by Don Trachte

