



PHOTO: SHAFIQUIL ISLAM SHOPON

Crack Platoon members entering Dhaka after independence in 1971.



PHOTO: ABU JAFAR OSMAN

Members of Crack Platoon after independence.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Three guerrilla freedom fighters after the war.

CRACK PLATOON

THE VANGUARD of Dhaka's independence

SOME VALIANT MEMBERS

- Shahid Badiul Alom Bodi, **Bir Bikram**
- Shahid Mufgar Ahmed Chowdhury Azad, **Bir Bikram**
- Shahid Shafi Imam Rumi, **Bir Bikram**
- Shahid Abdul Halim Chowdhury, **Bir Bikram**
- Shahid Abu Bakar Siddique, **Bir Bikram**
- Shahid Syed Hafizur Rahman
- Shahid Altaf Mahmud
- Shahid Sekandar Hayat Khan
- Shahid Abdullahel Baki
- Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, **Bir Bikram**
- Kazi Kamal Uddin, **Bir Bikram**
- Kamrul Huq Shopon, **Bir Bikram**
- Habibul Alam, **Bir Pratik**
- Ali Ahmed Ziauddin, **Bir Pratik**
- Abdus Samad, **Bir Pratik**
- Mohammad Tyeab Ali, **Bir Pratik**
- Golam Dastagir Gazi, **Bir Pratik**

AHMAD ISTIAK

On June 9, 1971, six guerrilla freedom fighters were on the way to the Intercontinental Hotel (InterContinental Dacca) in a hijacked Datsun 1000 car around 6:30pm. Shahidullah Khan Badol was driving, while Kamrul Huq Shopon and Masud Sadek Chullu, Habibul Alam, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, and Ziauddin Ali Ahmed were carrying three hand grenades each.

The guerrillas were informed that Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the then UN high commissioner for Refugees, and other top officials of international organisations, were staying at that hotel and would be given a tour around the city by Pakistani officials to assure that there was no war going on in East Pakistan and the situation in Dhaka (then Dacca) was peaceful and under-control.

The freedom fighters' mission was to explode grenades in the vicinity of the hotel -- five grenades on the roads leading to Sadarghat and five more on the roads that led to Kamalapur Railway Station from the hotel. Around 7:00pm, they stopped the car near the hotel, and noticed that two buses full of foreign delegates were entering the hotel premises through the main entrance that was fitted with a revolving door.

This meant only one person could enter the hotel at a time. Maya and Alom came out and took positions behind two large

towards the offices of two prominent daily newspapers of the time -- the Daily Pakistan and Morning News, threw two more grenades and fled into the alleyways of Purana Paltan neighbourhood.

On that night, BBC and Voice of America reported that eight or nine people were killed and 30-35 were seriously injured in a daredevil guerrilla attack at the Intercontinental Hotel.

Hearing the news, Maj Khaled Mosharraf, commander of Sector 2, jumped from his chair and told Captain Abu Taher Mohammad Haider, "These are all crack (crazy) people. I told them to launch the attack a few kilometres away from the hotel so that they could only hear the sound of explosions. Now, see what they have done? They threw the grenades right into the hotel. How dare they! They all are cracks."

Khaled's words soon spread all over the Melaghor camps. From then on, Dhaka Platoon number 3 came to be called Crack Platoon with much reverence.

HOW CRACK PLATOON STARTED ITS JOURNEY

In May, 1971, at Melaghor camps in India's Tripura, Maj Khaled and Captain ATM Haider were training a group of highly motivated youths, who knew the entire Dhaka city like the palm of their hands, for some special urban guerrilla operations with hit-and-run strategy.

On June 3, 1971, a group of 16 youths entered Bangladesh, armed with

rewards were announced on the guerrillas' heads.

Lured by the rewards, Badiul Alam Badi's friend Farid, who was an activist of NSF, a pro-Pakistan student group, informed the Pakistan army about Badiul's whereabouts.

TERRIFYING NIGHTS OF AUG 29, 30

On August 29, 1971, Badi was playing cards with his friends Farid, Jafar and Parvez at the residence of Jalal Uddin, principal of Dhaka College, around 11:30am when the Pakistan army surrounded the building.

The soldiers captured Badi from that home despite his attempt to

the same night.

Azizus Samad was arrested from his Purana Paltan residence, while Shamsul Huq and Abul Bashar were arrested from Malibagh and Farmgate respectively.

Syed Haizur Rahman was arrested from his Eskaton residence late at night. Composer Altaf Mahmud, Abul Barak Alvi, Linu Billah, Dinu Billah, Nuhe Alam Billah, Khairul Alam Billah and six other members of the resistance were captured by the Pakistan army at dawn.

On August 29 alone, the Pakistan army conducted raids at 44 houses in Dhaka to capture the Crack Platoon members, and arrested more than 30

Commercial Bank to collect funds for their Shimulia Training Camp.

In November, amid Pakistan army operations against them, the guerrillas launched intense counter offensives. They packed explosives in a car and drove it in between two Pakistani army trucks stationed near Baitul Mukarram mosque, and detonated it remotely, leaving 16 Pakistan soldiers dead on the spot.

All academic activities of Dhaka University were stopped after the guerrillas placed explosives in the university's buildings.

The guerrillas completely annihilated a section of Pakistani troops in a fierce battle when they went to destroy the rail tracks in Malibagh.

The guerrillas also raided the main radio centre at Shahbagh and killed some of its guards.

On December 11, they successfully raided the USIS building and Pakistani positions at Gul Textile Mill, leaving 27 Pakistan soldiers dead.

The Crack Platoon guerrillas were virtually invisible and undetectable among common people. They would vanish in thin air after their raids.

HIDEOUTS OF CRACK PLATOON

A number of buildings in Dhaka became main hideouts of the Crack Platoon guerrillas, which they also used as supply depots and communication centres. Most of these houses have already been demolished to make way for modern structures.

Addresses of some of these buildings are: 2/1 RK Mission Road, residence of Ajjus Samar; 20 Haatkholra Road, residence of Shahadat Chowdhury; 19 Haatkholra Road; 7 Bhagabati Banerjee Road; 370 Outer Circular Road, Rajarbagh, residence of Shahid Altaf Mahmud; 1/3 Dilu Road, residence of Habibul Alam; 1 Tenement House, Elephant Road, residence of Masud Sadek Chullu; 355 Elephant Road, Jahanara Imam's residence; 20 New Eskaton, rented apartment of Shahid Hafij; 1 Bhagabati Banerjee Road, residence of Nazrul Islam; residence of Dilara Hashem at Dhanmondi 28; and residence of Musleha Muslim in Dhanmondi road number 4.

Besides, renowned poet Sufia Kamal's residence at Dhanmondi 32 was used as a rallying point of the guerrillas.

During Pakistan army raids between August 29 till end of September, the Crack Platoon lost 21 of their hideouts.

In the second phase, the guerrillas extensively used Joly's home at Nawroon Colony, Nurul Rahman's residence at 11/B Dhanmondi, and Dilu's home at 162 Fakirapool.

A NEWSPAPER CALLED 'GUERRILLA'

Some Crack Platoon members had the task to publicise their operations to inform the foreign missions in Dhaka about the war. They published an English newspaper named "Guerrilla" twice a month, using a cyclostyle machine that was snatched from Shegunbagicha High School.

The newspaper, published for a total of seven issues throughout the war, featured stories and reports about the warfront, and was secretly delivered to the embassies in Dhaka by the guerrillas.

The article has been translated by **Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan**



A copy of the English newspaper "Guerrilla". PHOTO: SHAFIQUIL ISLAM SHOPON



This house in Moghbazar was one of the hideouts of the Crack Platoon members. PHOTO: COLLECTED

escape.

"Farid, son of Jalal Uddin, is the culprit who betrayed Badiul," said Linu Billah, a member of Crack Platoon.

The soldiers tortured Badi after taking him to MP Hostel, Pakistan army's torture cell. He, however, did not reveal any information about his comrades.

With Farid's information, the army arrested another Crack Platoon member Abdus Samad from Eskaton and took his wife and daughters hostage. After hours of brutal torture, Pakistan army offered Samad to release his family if he revealed information of his comrades. At one point, Samad gave in to the pressure and revealed all the information.

Samad, who played a crucial role in several Crack Platoon operations, knew almost all the members. Based on his information, the Pakistan army raided a building at Moghbazar to capture Magfur Uddin Chowdhury,

guerrillas and their relatives.

They were taken to the military torture cell at Nakhhalpara, where they were subjected to inhuman suffering. Yet, they did not disclose any information.

Some of them later managed to return, except Badiul Alam, Shafi Imam Rumi, Magfur Uddin Chowdhury Azad, Abdul Halim Jewel, Syed Hafizur, Altaf Mahmud, Abu Bakar, journalist Abul Bashar and Sekandar Hayat Khan.

2ND PHASE OF CRACK PLATOON OPERATIONS

The setbacks on August 29 and 30 could not stop the Crack Platoon members from launching new raids. In early September, more trained guerrillas joined the Crack Platoon's operations.

They raided some of the populous neighbourhoods of Dhaka including Jatrabari, Gendaria, and several areas on the outskirts such as Uttarkhan, Dakshin Khan, Basabo and Badda.

They also raided a 30km area from Savar Radio Station to Boral Bridge of Manikganj and forced 319 members of Razakar to surrender towards the end of September.

At that time, the fighters' mission was to isolate Dhaka from other districts by destroying the road communication network and disrupt the Pakistan army's logistics, while also raiding Pakistani positions in and around Dhaka city.

In the last week of September, the platoon destroyed a petrol station in Kakrail. They ambushed a convoy of three Pakistani trucks near Savar Radio Station next week and killed 37 soldiers.

On October 28, the guerrillas raided and partially demolished the DIT building. They also robbed Muslim

NOTABLE OPERATIONS

- Operation Hotel Intercontinental (three phases June 9, 24 June; Aug 11)
- Operation Farmgate
- Operation Ulon Power Station
- Operation Ganiz Petrol Pump
- Operation Destination
- Unknown Operation Jordan Tin
- Operation US Information Centre
- Operation DIT Bhaban
- Operation Baitul Mukarram
- Operation Attack on the Move

trees adjacent to the hotel, unpinned two grenades and threw them onto the roads leading to the hotel. A few minutes later, they threw two more grenades and left with the car immediately.

By then, a large crowd formed at the hotel entrance as the buses moved away. Suddenly, the entire area was rocked with the explosion of the four grenades. People, frightened for their lives, scattered everywhere. The lavish ambience of the hotel turned to a mayhem, amid the smell of gunpowder and screams of panic-stricken people.

The guerrillas then drove towards Moghbazar towards the residence of a Jamaat-e-Islami leader where a meeting of the Peace Committee was going on, and threw three grenades outside the house. They then drove fast

three grenades each and 20 pounds of explosives, and reached Dhaka on June 6. On June 9, they announced their presence with the powerful and daring attack at the Intercontinental Hotel.

From June till August, the Crack Platoon guerrillas left the Pakistan forces stunned, clueless and alarmed by launching several raids against them at highly secured locations in Dhaka, including the Intercontinental Hotel, a check post and Ananda Cinema Hall in Farmgate, several power stations and petrol depots, the Chinese embassy, and at Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan's residence in Dhanmondi.

The Pakistan forces launched combing operations, engaged spies and detectives to locate the guerrillas' hideouts and capture them. Lucrative



Abdul Halim Jewel.

Kazi Kamal Uddin, who was also there, fired at the Pakistani soldiers and managed to flee. However, Azad, Jewel, Abul Bashar, Sekandar Hayat Khan and Monwar were captured.

Masud Sadek Chullu was later arrested from a house in the Elephant Road area around 2:00am. Shafi Imam Rumi, Saif Imam Jami, Sharif Imam and all the male members of Jahanara Imam's family were arrested