



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



SUBEDAR SONAM STOPDHAN

SERVICE NUMBER	9100419N
RANK	Subedar
NAME	Sonam Stopdhan
SON OF	Tashi Wangail
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Village Thiksey, Ladhak
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	14 J&K Militia (Presently, LADAKH SCOUTS)
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	11 October 1948
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Maha Vir Chakra (Posthumous)/ 20 October 1962
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1962 Sino-India War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	



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Subedar Stopdan Sonam hailed from Ladakh and was born on 30th March 1928. Son of Shri Tashi Wangail and Smt Chhering Palzom, he joined the Army after completing his school education. He was recruited into the Ladakhi Battalion of 14 J&K Militia. By the year 1962, Subedar Stopdan Sonam had put in substantial years of service and developed into a motivated and dependable Junior Commissioned Officer. His unit 14 J&K Militia was deployed in Ladakh along the China border during 1962.¹

The Ladakh Scouts known as the “Snow Warriors” were initially raised as a Paramilitary Force formed of Ladakhi locals known as Nubra Guards to save Ladakh from intruders in 1948. It comprised of Ladakhi locals who are physically fit and attuned with the rugged terrain and hostile climate. The Ladakh Scouts was raised in 1963, following the Indo China War of 1962. It had two Wings- the Karakoram Wing, defending the Eastern front facing China and the Indus Wing facing Pakistan. The Regiment currently consists of five battalions. The Ladakh Scouts had fought in the 1965 and 1971 India Pakistan War and were also part of Operation Meghdoot in 1984. Ladakh Scouts was converted into a Regiment in the year 2000. The Ladakh Scouts played a significant role during the Kargil War of 1999 by marking one of the earliest victories and also received the Unit Citation from General VP Malik, the then Chief of Army Staff.²

Since its independence, India followed a foreign policy of maintaining cordial relations with China. It wanted to revive its ancient contacts with the people of China since both the countries shared political, geographical and cultural similarities. Therefore, soon after its establishment on 01 October 1949, India was one of the first few countries to grant diplomatic status to the People’s Republic of China (PRC). India supported the demand of state recognition of PRC on various international platforms. India took the initiative to enter into negotiations with China on the question of Tibet and entered into the Panchsheel Agreement in 1954. Within a few weeks of Chou Enlai’s visit to India, the Chinese launched a protest against the presence of Indian troops in Barahoti, three kilometers South of a border pass, Tun Jun La in Uttar Pradesh. This was the first time, the Government of China laid claim to any part of Indian territory formally. The construction of the Tibet-Sinkiang Road in 1957, marked a turning point in the Sino-India relations as the Chinese occupied a large part of the Aksai Plateau. This opened an opportunity for China to come out with territorial claims against India openly. By 1959, Chinese soldiers moved in further into Ladakh and established themselves at Chushul- Rezag La, and at Mandal, just South of Dambu Guru. On 08 September 1962, about 600 Chinese troops encircled the Dhola Post in the Eastern

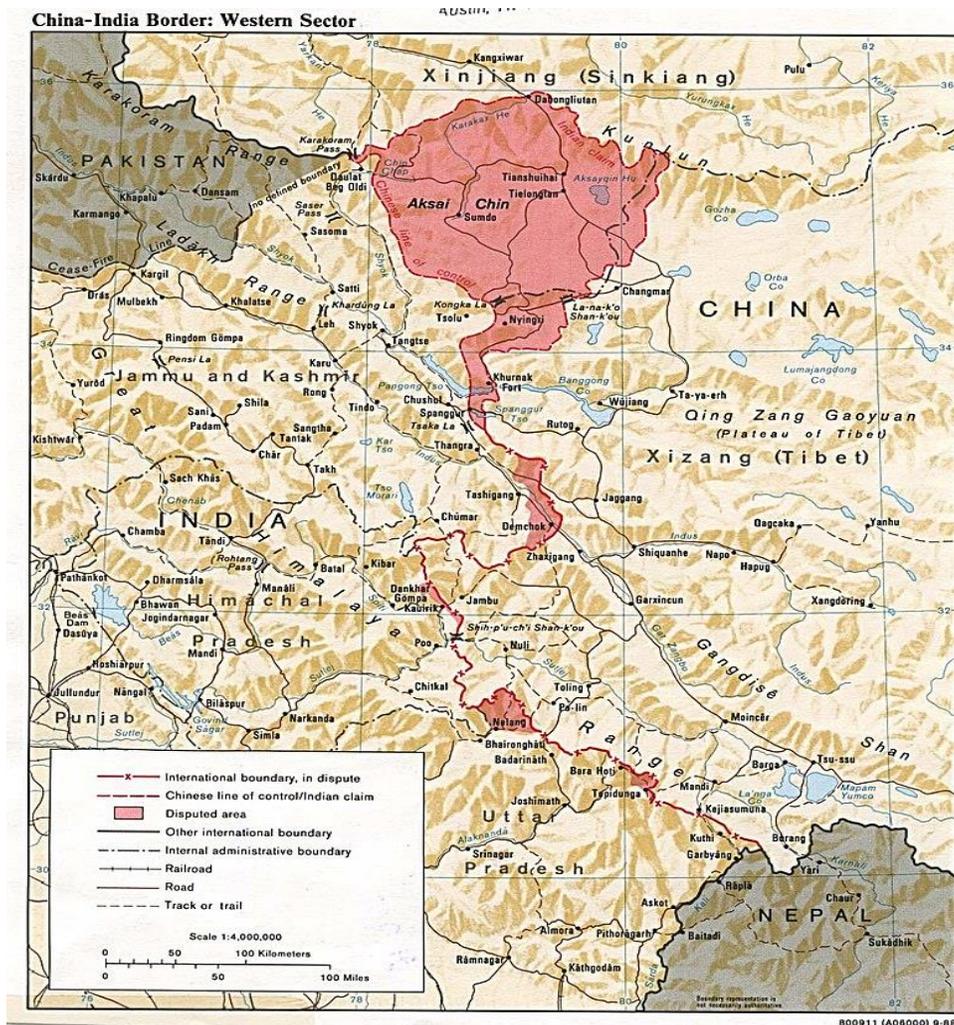
¹ The Honourpoint- An online memorial for every Indian Soldier
<https://www.honourpoint.in/profile/sub-sonam-stobdan-mvc-2/>

² Ballabh, Anand, Insights into Infantry Regiments: A Basic Factbook. Forward Books publications. New Delhi (2013)



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sector and began firing. The Chinese launched simultaneous attacks in NEFA in Namku Chu Sector as well as in Ladakh. The overwhelming number of the Chinese troops hit the Indian soldiers but they fought the enemy with grit and determination. The Chinese announced the cease-fire at midnight of 21/22 November 1962.³



Source: Wikipedia

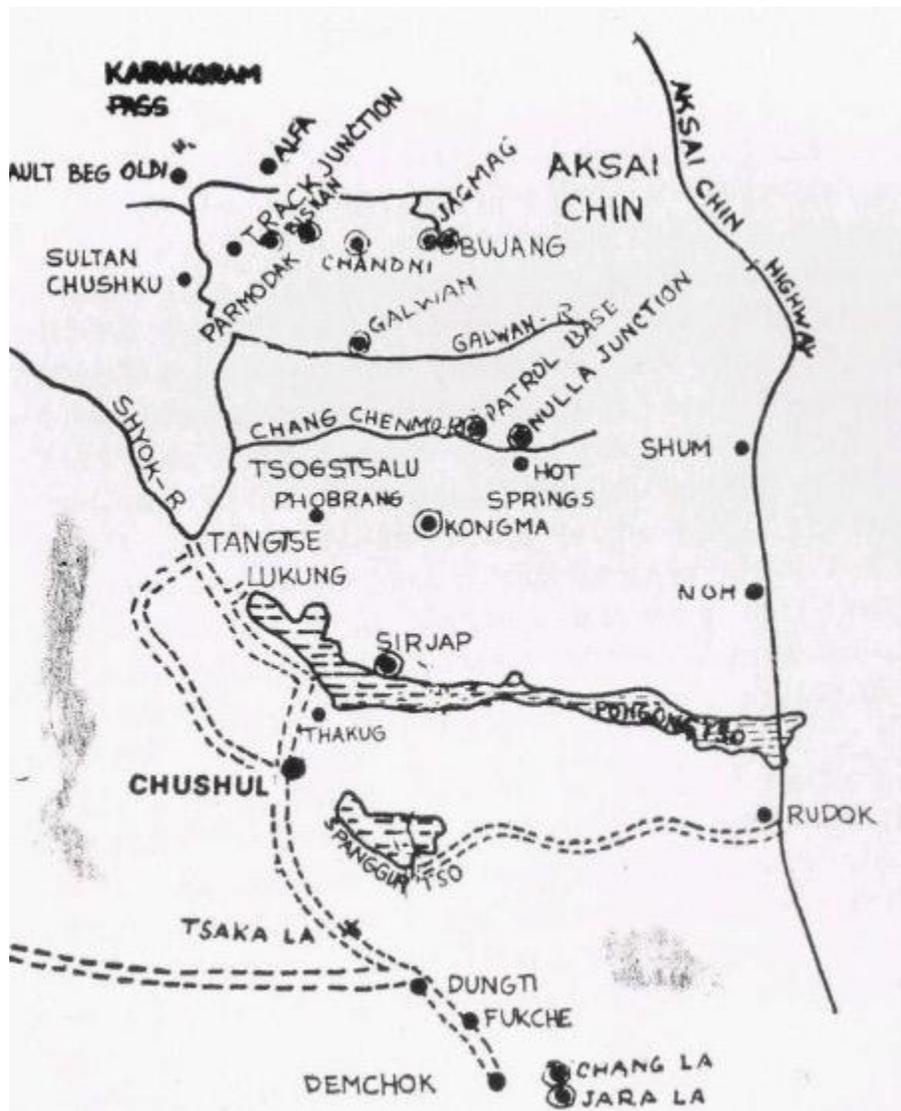
During the Sino-India War of 1962, Subedar Sonam Stobdan was deployed in Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) Sub-Sector of Northern Ladakh. DBO was a vitally important post since four tracks radiated from it. The old Silk Route went north, crossed the Karakoram Pass (5575 meters) and went on to Yarkand in Sinkiang. The other two routes connected DBO to Leh, over 200 kilometres away, and requiring at least twelve days of long and difficult marching to reach it. The Eastern or

³ History of the Conflict with China, 1962. P.B Sinha. Col A.A. Athale (1992). History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India.



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Winter route went due south from DBO crossing the Track Junction, Chip Chap River and the Depsang Plains to reach the Murgo Post. 14 J&K Militia (now LADHAK SCOUTS) was responsible to defend the DBO area and a Company of 5 JAT was deployed alongside. On October 17, 1962 reports of heavy Chinese concentration opposite our Post Chandani started coming in. This concentration of Chinese was so heavy that it posed a threat to entire area of Chip Chap and Kara Koram.



A rough map of Ladakh front in 1962 by Maj Gen Jagjit Singh.

Source: <https://www.indiasentinel.com/opinion/gateway-to-hell-the-1962-operation-in-daulat-beg-oldie-5682>

DBO itself had the Battalion Headquarters and nearly a Company strength. The rest of the available force was distributed on two possible approaches. Chip Chap River valley had a total of ten Posts.



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Chip Chap Posts 1 to 4 were located North of the river Chip Chap, while Posts 5 to 10 were to the south. Posts 10 to 14 guarded the approach from an uncharted river valley further south. In addition, there were some troops in Murgo, Sultan Chushku, Track Junction, and all the way down to Shyok village, to provide staging posts for supply as well as the columns that regularly moved between the main base at Leh and DBO. Out of these twenty-one Posts, DBO had a Company strength and also Posts 1 and 4 on the North of Chip Chap River had a Platoon each (roughly 25 to 30 men). Posts 5, 7 and 14 also had Platoon each. Rest of the Posts had Section strength (between 10 to 15). These Posts were dependent upon DBO for their supply. All the Posts were equipped only with small arms with the exception of Post 1 that had a Section of 3-inch mortars. The Posts thus were not in a position to dominate more than 500 meters distance around them, this being the effective range of the Light Machine Guns. average distance between the Posts was 2 to 3 kms and some like Post 14 were nearly 10 to 12 kms away from nearest Indian Posts. There was thus no possibility of mutual support.

The Chinese had been building up their strength In the Sector from July 1962 onwards. The vicinity of Indian Post No 4 enabled them to bring in their heavy weapons very close to our posts. On 19 October 1962, all the Indian Posts near Chip Chap were dominated by the Chinese in superior strength.



Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with troops at a forward position during the 1962 India-China war.

Source: <https://www.indiasentinel.com/opinion/1962-india-china-war-how-scholars-misled-indians-a-case-study-5846>



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Around 0230 hours on 20 October, the Chinese brought pressure against Posts 2 and 3 manned by, 5 JAT located on the Northern bank of Chip Chap River and the personnel of these two Posts were asked to fall back on Post 4. Post 1 (Chandani) manned by a Platoon of 14 J&K Militia, was now isolated. This Post was well sited on high ground and was not easy to assault. On 20 October at 0600 hours Chinese commenced shelling Post 1. The bombardment continued for nearly one hour. After this the post was attacked by the Chinese, the Commander at DBO attempted to send reinforcements to it, but the Chinese, who had by then occupied Post 5, which effectively dominated the route, made it impossible.

On the night of 19/20 October, during the battle of Post 1 (Chandani Post), Subedar Sonam Stopdan who was Commander of the Post put up a gallant fight and displayed inspiring leadership. He and his men fought to the last and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Finally, after resisting attacks by the Chinese in strength Post 1 fell. The fall of Post 1 had opened up the North Eastern, approach to DBO. The local Commander then sent two small patrols to occupy Point 18029 and Point 17911. Post 4 continued to hold in spite of incessant shelling. The situation at the end of the first day was that while the Chinese had gained important successes by eliminating Posts 1 and 9, the other Posts continued to resist.

In the battles of Daulat Beg Oldi Sub Sector, Indian troops fought valiantly despite having scarcity of resources and being outnumbered by the Chinese troops. In the fight of Post 1 (Chandani) or Post 4, Subedar Sonam Stopdan and Havildar Saroop Singh of the 14 J&K Militia made the supreme sacrifice after taking heavy toll of the enemy. Both were honored with the nation's second highest gallantry award, the Maha Vir Chakra. Major Sardul Singh Randhawa was decorated with the MVC for his inspiring leadership, courage, commitment, steadfastness and the manner in which he organized the retreat in the DBO Sub-Sector.



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CITATION

(JC-30625) SUBEDAR SONAM STOPDAN
14 JAMMU AND KASHMIR MILITIA (Now LADHAK SCOUTS)
(Effective date of Award: 20 October 1962)

On the night of 19 October 1962, when the Chinese in overwhelming numbers attacked post at Chandani in Ladakh using automatic weapons and mortars, Subedar Sonam Stopdan, who was commander of the post, put up gallant fight and displayed inspiring leadership. He and his men fought to the last and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Subedar Stopdan showed courage and devotion to duty of a high order.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No. _____ dated _____



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