



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



FLYING OFFICER NIRMAL JIT SINGH SEKHON

SERVICE NUMBER	10877 F(P)
RANK	Flying Officer
NAME	Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon
SON OF	Trilok Singh
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Ludhiana, Punjab
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	No 18 SQUADRON
SERVICE	Indian Air Force
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	04 June 1967
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Param Vir Chakra (Posthumous) /14 December 1971
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1971 Indo-Pak War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

Flying officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon was born on 17 July 1945 in the village of Issewal in Ludhiana of Punjab. He was inspired by the experiences of his father who served in the IAF and later retired as (Honorary) Flight Lieutenant. He was fascinated with aircraft and the Air Force since his childhood as his village was located in the vicinity of Air Force base Halwara near Ludhiana. He studied at Khalsa High School Ajitsar Mohie Ludhiana and later joined Dayalbagh Engineering College, Agra in 1962. However, he left the engineering course midway and joined the IAF. He was commissioned into the IAF on 04 June 1967 as a fighter pilot. After completing his rigorous training, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit joined the No 18 Squadron, known as “Flying Bullets” in Oct 1968.¹ During the Indo-Pak War of 1971, Flying Officer Sekhon flew Gnat jets also known as “HAL Ajeet” and shot down the Pakistani Sabre which attacked the Srinagar Airfield.² He was the first individual from the Indian Air Force to be awarded the highest gallantry award of India.



Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon with a fellow cadet during an excursion while undergoing training

Source: Honourpoint, <https://www.honourpoint.in/profile/fg-offr-nirmaljit-singh-sekhon-pvc/>

India gained Independence in 1947, following the partition of the country and the creation of Pakistan. The foundation of Pakistan was laid by the Muslim League based on the two-nation theory. Pakistan comprised two wings- East and West Pakistan which were geographically separated by 1600 kms Indian territory. The two wings of Pakistan were culturally and linguistically different and the diversities between the two wings could not be bridged by an

¹ The Valiants: The Martyrs of Indo-Pak War 1971. JWO Sharadchandra D Phatak, Puja Shashank Phatak, (2021)

² The Hero of 1971 War Gnat fighter Aircraft, (Accessed on 07 December 2022), <https://defencedirecteducation.com/2018/12/10/gnat-hal-ajeet/>



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

emotional appeal to religion. Consequently, fissures started erupting in the political body of Pakistan soon after the Independence and with each passing year it widened. In the absence of appropriate defence arrangements, the people of East Pakistan felt isolated and abandoned. Finally, the malfeasance of Pakistani leadership during Cyclone Bhola and the overwhelming support for the Awami League in the 1970 elections, proved the proverbial last straw on the camel's back.³ The Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (of East Pakistan) secured an absolute majority in the general elections held in December 1970. This entitled the League to form a Government in Pakistan. However, Pakistan's military rulers denied this democratic right to the Awami League in connivance with the PPP, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This arbitrary act of government caused deep resentment among the population of East Pakistan resulting in widespread protests. When the slide became unmanageable, the Pakistani rulers resorted to a midnight crackdown on 25 March 1971. The government ordered a military crackdown and repression wherein, the Pakistan army under Lieutenant General Tikka Khan unleashed a reign of terror and massacred thousands of Bengalis in a genocide code-named 'Operation Searchlight'. Pakistan launched its attack against India on 03 December 1971. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was the first war when the Indian Government engaged all three services on a large scale.



Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon with his coursemates

Source: Honourpoint, <https://www.honourpoint.in/profile/fg-offr-nirmaljit-singh-sekhon-pvc/>

As the tension mounted along the Indo-Pak borders, violations of the Indian Air Space by PAF became very frequent. In November 1971, ten major air violations had taken place in areas around Srinagar, Amritsar, Jammu, Jamnagar and Ganganagar. In the Eastern sector, on 22 November

³ The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History. S.N Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal. (2014). Natraj Publishers and Ministry of Defence, India



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

1971, three PAF F-86 Sabres were shot over Boyra. On 03 December at 1745 hrs, the PAF simultaneously attacked Indian airfields at Amritsar, Srinagar, Avantipur and Pathankot, the Advance Landing Ground (ALG) at Faridkot and the radar unit at Amritsar. In the Eastern sector, the IAF achieved total air superiority within the first 24 hours of the outbreak of hostilities. The first heli-borne operation was undertaken by the IAF in 1971 when it heli-lifted 4/5 GORKHA RIFLES and landed them at Sylhet nearly 100 kilometres behind enemy lines. IAF also helped in air bridging the innumerable water obstacles crisscrossing the countryside. The effective coordination and cooperation among the tri-services sealed the Indian victory in this war. In the Western sector, Srinagar was one of the airfields very frequently attacked by the Pakistani Air Force. No.18 SQUADRON was assigned its air defence. On 14 December 1971, the airfield was attacked by six Pakistani Sabre jets. Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon got airborne and engaged the Sabre formation.

Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon was a pilot with a Gnat detachment posted in Srinagar for the valley's air defence against Pakistani air strikes. Until the commencement of hostilities with Pakistan, no air defence aircraft were based at Srinagar, in compliance with an international agreement dating back to 1948. As a result, Flying Officer Sekhon was unfamiliar with the landscape and was unaccustomed to the altitude of Srinagar, particularly with the terrible cold and piercing winds of the Kashmir winter. Nonetheless, he and his colleagues fought consecutive waves of invading Pakistani aircraft with gallantry and commitment from the start of the conflict, preserving the Gnat aircraft's strong reputation. On 14 December 1971, a wave of six enemy Sabre aircraft assaulted Srinagar Airfield. However, Flying Officer Sekhon was unable to take off immediately due to dust clouds created by another aircraft that had just taken off. By the time the runway was ready for takeoff, six enemy planes were overhead, and the airfield was being strafed. Despite the dangers of attempting to take off during an attack and the odds stacked against him, Flying Officer Sekhon took off and engaged two of the attacking Sabres right away. In the combat that ensued, he almost held his own at tree-top height, but was eventually defeated by the sheer weight of numbers. He was killed when his plane crashed. Flying Officer Sekhon achieved his goal by sacrificing himself for the defence of Srinagar because the enemy aircraft abandoned the scene of the combat without pressing their attack against the town and the base. Flying Officer Sekhon's courage, supreme valour, flying talent, and commitment, above and beyond the call of duty, set new standards for Air Force traditions.



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



Mrs Sekhon receiving the Param Vir Chakra from the then President of India V.V

Source: <https://www.rediff.com/news/report/the-flying-hero-of-the-1971-war/20111213.htm>



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

CITATION

Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon [10877 F(P)] (Posthumous), 18 SQUADRON
(Effective date of award: 14 December 1971)

Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon was a pilot of a Gnat detachment based at Srinagar for the air defence of the valley against Pakistani air attacks. In accordance with the international agreement dating back to 1948, no air defence aircraft were based at Srinagar, until the outbreak of hostilities with Pakistan. Flying Officer Sekhon was, therefore, unfamiliar with the terrain and was not acclimatised to the altitude of Srinagar, especially with the bitter cold and biting winds of the Kashmir winter. Nevertheless, from the outset of the war, he and his colleagues fought successive waves of intruding Pakistani aircraft with valour and determination, maintaining the high reputation of the Gnat aircraft. On 14th December 1971, Srinagar Airfield was attacked by a wave of six enemy Sabre aircraft. Flying Officer Sekhon was on readiness duty at the time. However, he could not take off at once because of the clouds of dust raised by another aircraft which had just taken off. By the time the runway was fit for take-off, no fewer than six enemy aircraft were overhead, and strafing of the airfield was in progress. Nevertheless, in spite of the mortal danger of attempting to take off during an attack, and in spite of the odds against him. Flying Officer Sekhon took off and immediately engaged a pair of the attacking Sabres. In the fight that followed, at tree-top height, he all but held his own, but was eventually overcome by sheer weight of numbers. His aircraft crashed and he was killed. Thus, sacrificing himself for the defence of Srinagar, Flying Officer Sekhon achieved his object, for the enemy aircraft fled from the scene of the battle without pressing home their attack against the town and the airfield. The sublime heroism, supreme gallantry, flying skill and determination, above and beyond the call of duty, displayed by Flying Officer Sekhon in the face of certain death, set new heights to Air Force traditions.

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



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

REFERENCES

1. The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History. S.N Prasad and U.P. Thapliyal.(2014). Natraj Publishers and Ministry of Defence, New Delhi
2. The Valiants: The Martyrs of Indo-Pak War 1971. JWO Sharadchandra D Phatak, Puja Shashank Phatak, (2021)
3. The Hero of 1971 War Gnat fighter Aircraft, (Accessed on 07 December 2022), <https://defencedirecteducation.com/2018/12/10/gnat-hal-ajeet/>
4. Param Vir: Our Heroes in Battle. Maj Gen Ian Cardozo. (2003). The Lotus Collection, Roli Books Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, India.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Stories of Heroism (PVC & MVC Winner). Dr. BC Chakravorty (1995). Allied Publishers Limited and Ministry of Defence, Government of India
2. Bharat Rakshak. (Accessed on 09 December 2022) <https://www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/Database/10877>
3. Honourpoint: An Online Memorial for every Indian soldier (Accessed on 09 December 2022) <https://www.honourpoint.in/profile/fg-offr-nirmaljit-singh-sekhon-pvc/>
4. A hero for generations of air warriors: PVC Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon (Accessed on 09 December 2022) <https://www.aviation-defence-universe.com/a-hero-for-generations-of-air-warriors/>
5. The Flying Hero of the 1971 War (rediff.com) (Accessed on 09 December 2022) <https://www.rediff.com/news/report/the-flying-hero-of-the-1971-war/20111213.htm>



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

VIDEO LINKS

1. 1971 War Tales: Story of Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Ministry of Defence, (Accessed on 12 December 2022)
<https://youtu.be/U2cIRllLplY>
2. IAF Salutes Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, PVC on his 76th birth anniversary, PIB India, (Accessed on 12 December 2022)
<https://youtu.be/Y-RIVttJVhQ>
3. Winged Warriors, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Prasar Bharti Archives, (Accessed on 12 December 2022)
<https://youtu.be/K3e2p9Px42I>
4. Bravery of Airforce Against Pakistan, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Amar Chitra Katha (Accessed on 12 December 2022)
<https://youtu.be/qArtyRDTGC8>
5. Interview video of Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Gallantryinfo Awards, (Accessed on 12 December 2022)
<https://youtu.be/QegFXBwnv18>

**Disclaimer⁴

⁴ DISCLAIMER:

Photos, links to publications and videos presented here are not intended to serve as a substitute for consultation and should only be used at the user's own risk. These are primarily shared because of the extensive coverage available on the subject. No copyright infringement is intended and it is not intended to hurt anyone or make sales of any sort. All copyright belongs solely to the relevant owners/creators. Usage here is purely for Fair Usage in accordance with the Indian Copyright Act 1957.



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

MEMORIALS

1. Memorial_001: Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon's bust installed at National War memorial, New Delhi (Accessed on 12 December 2022)

<https://nationalwarmemorial.gov.in/param-yoddhas/details/16>



2. Memorial_002: A Statue of Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon has been erected at district court of Ludhiana (Accessed on 12 December 2022)

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/ludhiana/tributes-paid-to-sole-pvc-recipient-from-air-force-184588>



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

OTHER INTERESTING SOURCES⁵ BOOKS

Fig 1: Param Vir by Major General Ian Cardozo

Fig 2: The Brave: Param Vir Chakra by Rachna Bisht Rawat



Fig 1

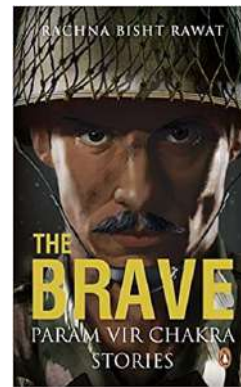


Fig 2

LEGACY

1. A marine tanker built in 1985 was named 'Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, PVC'. It is the longest ship name in the world.
2. The junction roads to Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Ambala and Ferozepur were named Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon Chowk.
3. His statue along with a decommissioned Folland Gnat fighter has been placed in the Indian Air Force Museum, Palam.

FILMS⁶

1. A Film titled Shradhanjali was released in 2021 to commemorate the life of Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon

⁵ Disclaimer: The content mentioned under the Listicles constitutes fair-use of any copyright material and is used for information and research purpose only. The content is in no way promoting or branding an individual, organisation, book or film.

⁶ Disclaimer: Films are fictional representations but the essence or idea behind each of these films have been inspired by Kargil



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

COMICS

Fig 1: Param Vir Chakra: Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon by Maj Gen Ian Cardozo and Rishi Kumar, Roli Books

<https://www.amazon.in/Param-Vir-Chakra-Narmal-Sekhon/dp/8174369244>

Fig 2: Indian War Comics: Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon

<https://hellobookmine.com/product/indian-war-comics-flying-officer-nirmal-jit-singh-sekhon-sabre-slayer/>

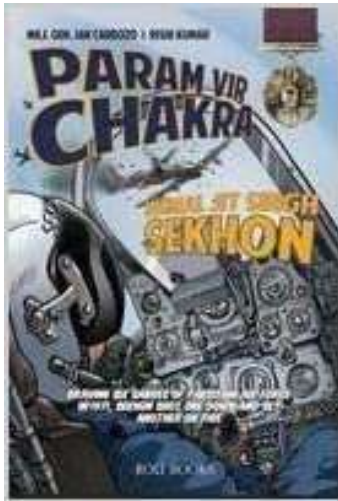


Fig 1



Fig 2