



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE



LIEUTENANT GENERAL ARJUN SINGH KHANNA (Then SECOND LIEUTENANT)

SERVICE NUMBER	IC-15511
RANK	Lieutenant General (Then Second Lieutenant)
NAME	Arjun Singh Khanna
SON OF	D S Khanna
RESIDENT OF (Village/District/State)/ DOMICILE	Multan, Pakistan
UNIT/REGIMENT/CORPS	ARTILLERY
SERVICE	Indian Army
DATE OF ENROLMENT/ COMMISSION	30 June 1963
AWARD/DATE OF ACTION	Vir Chakra / 25 April 1965
WAR/BATTLE/OPERATION	1965 Indo Pak War
OTHER AWARDS WITH DATE	PVSM, AVSM



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Lieutenant General (Then Second Lieutenant) Arjun Singh Khanna was born on 01 September 1942 in Multan, Pakistan. His father's name was D S Khanna. Second Lieutenant Arjun Singh Khanna was Commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery on 30 June 1963 at the young age of 21. During 1965 Indo Pak War, he was deployed in the Kutch area when Pakistan launched an attack on Biar Bet post on 25-26 April 1965. During the action, he was part of 17 PARA FIELD REGIMENT and displayed able leadership and conspicuous gallantry. He inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and stuck to his position till the he was ordered to withdraw. Later, he commanded 16 Corps and also served as the Deputy Chief of the Army Staff (DCOAS) from 01 April 2001 to 31 August 2002.

The Regiment of Artillery was raised on 28 September 1827. It was initially raised as Bombay Artillery and was later renamed 5 Bombay Mountain Battery. In May 1857, the mutiny by Indian soldiers started in the artillery of the Army of the Bengal Presidency. The incident prompted a complete ban on Indian artillery units, except the mountain artillery batteries in select provinces. The decision was reversed in the mid-1930s when the first of the Field Regiments of the Indian Army were raised. The Field Regiments support the formations on the field. The regimental motto of Artillery Regiment 'Sarvatra Izzat-O-Iqbal' which means 'Everywhere with Honour and Glory'. The regiment has given Indian Army five chiefs, General Paramasiva Prabhakar Kumaramangalam DSO, OBE (7 June 1966 – 7 June 1969) General Om Prakash Malhotra PVSM (31 May 1978 – 31 May 1981) General Sunith Francis Rodrigues PVSM, VSM (30 June 1990 – 30 June 1993) General Sundararajan Padmanabhan PVSM, AVSM, VSM (30 September 2000 – 31 December 2002) General Deepak Kapoor PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM (30 September 2007 – 31 March 2010).

The Indo-Pak War of 1965 was the second war fought between these two bordering countries. While India was still recovering from the damages of Sino-India war of 1962, Pakistan saw it as an opportunity to acquire Jammu and Kashmir with might, presuming India to be weak in terms of defence preparation. The war initiated on 24 April 1965, when Pakistan Army, attacked our territory in the Rann of Kutch and penetrated six to eight miles inside the Indian territory. This act of illegal occupation of Indian territory constituted violation of Indo-Pak Border Agreement 1960 and international law as per the United Nations Charter. The Pakistani forces subsequently intruded in Kashmir with the launch of Operation Gibraltar.



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Rann of Kutch as the battle ground during 1965 Indo-Pak War

Source: Photo Division DPR MoD

On 24 April 1965, the Pakistan Army attacked the Rann of Kutch and penetrated six to eight miles inside the Indian territory. The Great Rann of Kutch is a salt marsh in the Thar Desert in Kutch District of Gujarat, India. It is an 80 km wide and 515 km long stretch of land bordering on Sind in Pakistan and Gujarat in India.



Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/south_asia/2002/india_pakistan/timeline/1965.stm



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Pakistani patrols began patrolling in territory controlled by India in January 1965, which was followed by attacks on Indian posts. Initially involving border police from both nations, the disputed area soon witnessed intermittent skirmishes between the armed forces of both countries. Pakistan launched Operation Desert Hawk and captured few Indian post near the Kanjarkot Fort border area. When India moved 50 PARA to check the Pakistani intrusion, Pakistan strengthened its Brigade with a tank regiment. Successively, Pakistan again stuck on four border posts and captured Vigokot and Biar Bet.

Despite the build-up of tension, Pakistan claimed it was the creation of new Indian Posts inside the Rann that led to the first outbreak of fighting. After carrying out a reappraisal of the situation in the Rann of Kutch, a major part of Major General Tikka Khan's Division was concentrated in Diplo area, regarded vital for both defence and offence. In order to destroy Indian forces in area Chad Bet-Dharamsala-Vigokot-Karim Shahi and South of Diplo, he made a new plan. The PAF was also alerted to strike the Indian concentrations. But on 23 April, General Tikka Khan received an order to dislodge Indian post at Biar Bet at the earliest opportunity.



Map of the India–Pakistan border in the Rann of Kutch

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:India-Pakistan_Boundary_in_the_Rann_of_Kutch.jpg



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Sera Bet (Pt 84) was held by B Company of 3 PARA (about 70 men), under the command of Major PP Singh. It was supported by a Troop of 17 Para Field Regiment and a Section each of MMG and RCL. On 23 April, at 1800 hours, Major Singh sent a Reconnaissance Patrol under Second Lieutenant Sharma to Jat Talai to ascertain the enemy strength. The Patrol did not return. That night the noise of the movement of tracked and wheeled vehicles opposite the Company position could be heard. There was shelling for about an hour from 0300 hours on 24 April. At 0600 hours, Pakistanis, about a Battalion in strength, were seen advancing in assault formation, 100 meters North-West of the position. When engaged by artillery, MMG and 3 Inch Mortars, the attackers halted. But soon after at 0715 hours, Pakistani armour (Squadron plus) followed by APCs started forming up about 1400 to 1800 meters in the North-North-West direction. They were engaged by the artillery and RCL guns. Three of the Pakistani tanks appeared to have been knocked out. But tank shells kept falling into the trenches and the temporary gun positions, ahead of the Company locality.

Later, the Pakistani tanks, adopting fire-and-move tactics, advanced to within 700-800 meters of the Company position. Realising the gravity of the situation, Major PP Singh ordered his troops to withdraw under the covering fire of artillery, 3 Inch Mortars and RCL guns. In this encounter Pakistanis suffered heavy casualties estimated to be 100 killed/wounded. 6 (Pakistan) PUNJAB occupied Sera Bet by 0730 hrs, on 24 April 1965. This operation was code named Operation Desert Hawk III and was executed by Brigadier Eftikhar Khan. During this attack 15 (Pakistan) PUNJAB carried out a feint on Chhad Bet from Vingi to mislead the Indians. On 25 April, three Pakistani tanks tried to probe South-West of Point 84, under cover of smoke-screen, but the attempt was foiled.

After this, Pakistanis then turned their attention to Biar Bet, the other Indian Screen Position, about 13 km to the South-West of Point 84. On 25 April, at 1630 hours, a Pakistani patrol, mounted on 3 APCs, approached the 'A' Company's position at Biar Bet. The Company deployed there had in support a sub-unit of 17 Para Field Regiment, and a Section each of 106 mm RCL guns, MMGs and 3 Inch Mortars. Pakistani infantry in APCs, supported by twelve tanks made an unsuccessful attempt to bypass the position at 1750 hours. Apprehending another Pakistan attempt, two additional RCL guns and a Section of MMG were sent to Biar Bet on the night 25/26 April to strengthen the position.

On 26 April, the Pakistanis subjected the Indian position to heavy shelling for an hour from 0500 hours. A smoke screen was also laid by them, at a distance of 700 meters from the Post, to hide their movement. Thereafter, the infantry mounted on APCs and supported by tanks, launched a major attack. The Indian guns went into action. But due to the dust raised by the Pakistani tanks and the blast of RCL guns, the visibility was affected. In spite of this, the Indian guns set ablaze



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three Patton tanks and knocked out three others. But the Pakistani tanks, estimated at two Squadrons, kept on advancing and shooting at the Indian position. Pakistanis also subjected a 3 PARA detachment stationed nearby at Arjun Tree to heavy shelling at 0720 hours, perhaps with a view to prevent it from joining the Company at Biar Bet. At this stage, finding the enemy strength unmanageable, the Indian troops began withdrawing from Biar Bet.

During the operations against Pakistani intruders in the Kutch area, Second Lieutenant Arjun Singh Khanna was the Artillery Forward Observation Officer at Biar Bet. On 25 April 1965, when the intruders 'attacked Biar Bet, supported by Artillery and tanks, Second Lieutenant Khanna engaged the intruders with accurate fire and repulsed the attack. On the morning of 26 April 1965, when Pakistan launched a fresh and determined attack with infantry, overwhelmingly superior in numbers, and supported by Artillery and tanks, Second Lieutenant Khanna continued to direct effective fire towards the intruders and this slowed down their advance, despite accurate shelling and direct fire from enemy tanks. At one stage, when the overhead cover of his bunker was demolished by a shell fired from a Tank, he shifted to a nearby trench and continued directing fire until he was ordered to withdraw. In this action, he inflicted heavy casualties on the intruders. Under his able leadership his troops were able to withdraw without leaving a single man or any equipment behind.

Throughout the operation, Second Lieutenant Arjun Singh Khanna displayed exemplary courage and leadership of a high order. He was awarded Vir Chakra for his gallantry.



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CITATION

Second Lieutenant Arjun Singh Khanna (1C-15511), The Regiment of Artillery
(Effective date of award-25th April 1965)

Second Lieutenant Arjun Singh Khanna was the Artillery forward observation officer of a Parachute Field Regiment at Biar Bet during the operations against Pakistani intruders in the Kutch area. On 25th April 1965, the intruders 'attacked Biar Bet, supported by Artillery and Tanks. Second Lieutenant Khanna engaged the intruders with accurate fire and repulsed the attack. On the morning of 26th April 1965, the intruders launched a fresh' and determined attack with infantry, overwhelmingly superior in numbers, and supported by Artillery and Tanks. Despite accurate shelling and direct fire from Tanks, Second Lieutenant Khanna continued to direct effective fire towards the intruders and this slowed down their advance. At one stage, when the overhead cover of his bunker was demolished by a shell fired from a Tank, he shifted to a nearby trench and stuck to his duties until he was ordered to withdraw. In this action, he inflicted heavy casualties on the intruders. Under his able leadership his troops were able to withdraw without leaving a single man or any equipment behind.

In this operation Second Lieutenant Arjun Singh Khanna displayed exemplary courage and leadership of a high order.

Reference: Gazette of India, Notification No._____ dated_____



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