





Siachen conflict

Siachen conflict	
Part of the Indo-Pakistani wars and conflicts and the Kashmir conflict	
 <p>Siachen Glacier lies in the Karakoram range. Its snout is less than 50 km (31 mi) north of the Ladakh range.</p>	
Date	13 April 1984 – 25 November 2003 ^{[1][2]} (19 years, 7 months, 1 week and 5 days)
Location	Siachen Glacier, in a disputed and undemarcated region of Ladakh
Result	Indian Victory
Territorial changes	Siachen Glacier, 2,553 sq km, comes under Indian control (now part of Ladakh)
Belligerents	
 India	 Pakistan
Commanders and leaders	
 Col. Narendra Kumar	Brigadier Pervez Musharraf
Lt. Gen. P. N. Hoon	
Lt. Gen. M. L. Chibber	Brigadier TM Shaheed
Maj. Gen. Shiv Sharma	
Brigadier V. R. Raghavan	Major Muhammad Aslam
Brig. C. S. Nugyal	Khan Bangash
Brig. R. K. Nanavatty	
Brig. V. K. Jaitley	
Strength	
3,000+ ^[3]	3,000 ^[3]
Casualties and losses	
36 casualties during initial conflict ^{[4][5]}	200 casualties during initial conflict ^{[5][9][11][12]}
1,100+ dead (including non-combat fatalities) after initial conflict ^{[6][7][8][9][10]}	Casualties after initial conflict unknown (figures not available)

The **Siachen conflict**, sometimes referred to as the **Siachen War**, was a military conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed Siachen Glacier region in Kashmir. A cease-fire went into effect in 2003.^[13] The contended area is nearly 1,000 square miles (2,600 km²) of territory.^[14] The conflict was started in 1984 by India's successful capture of the Siachen Glacier as part of Operation Meghdoot, and subsequently continued with Operation Rajiv. India took control of the 70-kilometre-long (43 mi) Siachen Glacier and its tributary glaciers, as well as all the main passes and heights of the Saltoro Ridge immediately west of the glacier, including Sia La, Bilafond La, and Gyong La. Pakistan controls the glacial valleys immediately west of the Saltoro Ridge.^{[15][16]} According to *TIME* magazine, India gained control of more than 2500 km² of territory because of its military operations in Siachen.^[17]

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Causes

The Siachen Glacier is the highest battleground on earth,^{[18][19]} where India and Pakistan have fought intermittently since 13 April 1984. Both countries maintain a permanent military presence in the region at a height of over 6,000 metres (20,000 ft). More than 2000 people have died in this inhospitable terrain, mostly due to weather extremes and the natural hazards of mountain warfare.

The conflict in Siachen stems from the incompletely demarcated territory on the map beyond the map coordinate known as NJ9842 (35.008371°N 77.008805°E). The 1949 Karachi Agreement and 1972 Simla Agreement did not clearly mention who controlled the glacier, merely stating that the Cease Fire Line (CFL) terminated at NJ9842.^[20] UN officials presumed there would be no dispute between India and Pakistan over such a cold and barren region.^[21]



UN map of Siachen

Paragraph B 2 (d) of Karachi Agreement

Following the UN-mediated ceasefire in 1949, the line between India and Pakistan was demarcated up to point NJ9842 at the foot of the Siachen Glacier. The largely inaccessible terrain beyond this point was not demarcated,^[20] but delimited as **thence north to the glaciers** in paragraph B 2 (d) of the Karachi Agreement.

Paragraph B 2 (d) of 1949 Karachi Agreement states:

(d) From Dalunang eastwards the cease-fire line will follow the general line point 15495, Ishman, Manus, Gangam, Gunderman, Point 13620, Funkar (Point 17628), Marmak, Natsara, Shangruti (Point 1,531), Chorbat La (Point 16700), Chalunka (on the Shyok River), Khor, **thence north to the glaciers**. This portion of the cease-fire line shall be demarcated in detail on the basis of the factual position as of 27 July 1949, by the local commanders assisted by United Nations military observers.

Later, following the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, and the Simla Agreement in July 1972, the ceasefire line was converted into the "Line of Control" extending from the "*Chhamb sector on the international border [to] the Turtok-Partapur sector in the north.*"^[20] The detailed description of its northern end stated that from Chimbati in the Turtok sector "*the line of control runs north-eastwards to Thang (inclusive to India), thence eastwards joining the glaciers.*" This vague formulation further sowed the seed for the bitter dispute to follow.^[20] The general description of CFL given in Section 1 of Karachi Agreement is further explained at Page 38 where it states:

"thence northwards along the boundary line going through Point 18402 up to NJ-9842"^[20]

The U.N. document number S/1430/Add.2.^[22] is the second addendum to the 1949 Karachi Agreement, and shows the CFL marked on the Map of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as per the explanation of CFL in paragraph 'B' 2 (d) of the Karachi Agreement.

U.N. map of ceasefire line

Title of U.N. document number S/1430/Add.2 which illustrates the CFL as per the Karachi Agreement reads:

Map of the State of Jammu and Kashmir showing the Cease Fire Line as Agreed Upon in the Karachi Agreement, Ratified by the Governments of India and Pakistan on 29 and 30 July Respectively. (See Annex 26 to the third Interim Report of the United Nation Commission for India and Pakistan)^{[23][24]}

United Nations
SECURITY COUNCIL

Nations Unies
CONSEIL DE SECURITE

GENERAL
S/1430/Add.2
22 November 1949
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR INDIA AND PAKISTAN
MAP OF THE STATE OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR SHOWING THE CEASE-FIRE LINE AS AGREED UPON IN THE KARACHI MILITARY AGREEMENT, RATIFIED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN ON 28 AND 30 JULY RESPECTIVELY.

(See Annex II to the 1972 Simla Accord of the Secret Service Commission for India and Pakistan)

Page-1 of U.N. Map Number S/1430/Add.2 to Karachi Agreement 1949



Page-2 of U.N. Map Number S/1430/Add.2 showing the CFL



Page-3 U.N. Map Number S/1430/Add.2 showing the CFL up to Point NJ 9842

A U.N. map showing CFL alignment superimposed on a satellite image depicts the CFL terminating at NJ9842.^[25] The extension of this line "thence north to the glaciers" never appeared on any authoritative map associated with either the 1948 or 1972 agreements, just in the text.

Orotopolitics

In 1949, a Cease-Fire Line Agreement (CFL) was signed and ratified by India, Pakistan and the UN Military Observer Group that delineated the entire CFL. In 1956–58, a scientific team led by the Geological Survey of India recorded its findings publicly including information about the Siachen and other glaciers.^[26]

After Pakistan ceded the 5,180 km² (2,000 sq mi) Shaksgam Valley to China in a boundary agreement in 1963, Pakistan started giving approval to western expeditions to the east of mountain K2.^[26] In 1957 Pakistan permitted a British expedition under Eric Shipton to approach the Siachen glacier through the Bilafond La, and recce Saltoro Kangri.^[27] Five years later a Japanese-Pakistani expedition put two Japanese and a Pakistani Army climber on top of Saltoro Kangri.^[28] These were early moves in this particular game of oropolitics.



Present Map of Indian territory of Ladakh including entire Siachen glacier

In the 1970s and early 1980s several mountaineering expeditions applied to Pakistan to climb high peaks in the Siachen area due in part to US Defense Mapping Agency and most other maps and atlases showing it on the Pakistani side of the line. Pakistan granted a number of permits. This, in turn, reinforced the Pakistani claim on the area, as these expeditions arrived on the glacier with a permit obtained from the Government of Pakistan. Teram Kangri I (7,465 m or 24,491 ft) and Teram Kangri II (7,406 m or 24,298 ft) were climbed in 1975 by a Japanese expedition led by H. Katayama, which approached through Pakistan via the Bilafond La.^[29]

In 1978 a German Siachen-Kondus Expedition under the leadership of Jaroslav Poncar (further members Volker Stallbohm and Wolfgang Kohl, liaison officer major Asad Raza) entered Siachen via Bilafond La and established the base camp on the confluence of Siachen and Teram Shehr. The documentary "Expedition to the longest glacier" was shown on the 3rd channel of WDR (German TV) in 1979.

Prior to 1984 neither India nor Pakistan had any permanent presence in the area. Having become aware of US military maps and the permit incidents, Colonel Narendra Kumar, then commanding officer of the Indian Army's High Altitude Warfare School, mounted an Army expedition to the Siachen area as a counter-exercise. In 1978 this expedition climbed Teram Kangri II, claiming it as a first ascent in a typical "oropolitical" riposte. Unusually for the normally secretive Indian Army, the news and photographs of this expedition were published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, a widely circulated popular magazine.^[30]

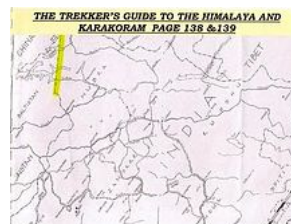
The first public acknowledgment of the maneuvers and the developing conflict situation in the Siachen was an abbreviated article titled "High Politics in the Karakoram" by Joydeep Sircar in *The Telegraph* newspaper of Calcutta in 1982.^[31] The full text was re-printed as "Orotopolitics" in the *Alpine Journal*, London, in 1984.^[32]

Historic maps of Siachen Glacier

Maps from Pakistan, the United Nations and various global atlases depicted the CFL ending at NJ9842 until the mid 1960s.^[26] United States Defense Mapping Agency (now National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) began in about 1967 to show a boundary on their Tactical Pilotage Charts as proceeding from NJ9842 east-northeast to the Karakoram Pass at 5,534 m (18,136 ft) on the China border.^[33] This line was replicated on US, Pakistani and other maps in the 1970s and 1980s, which India believed to be a cartographic error.^[30]



Map showing Siachen Glacier as part of Pakistan



Map showing Siachen Glacier as part of Pakistan

Military expeditions

control of Siachen as the terrain does not allow India to launch an offensive on Pakistan but is a big question on Pakistan's claims. 1999 Kargil war was also an attempt to restrict supply route to Ladakh and Siachen.

Both sides have shown desire to vacate the glacier as there are environmental and cost concerns. There are numerous negotiations between both parties but have shown no significant progress, the process was further complicated when Pakistan violated ceasefire line in 1999 and built bunkers on Indian side and started artillery fire on Indian strategic highways resulting in 1999 Kargil War. Even if both sides agree to demilitarize a Pakistani occupation similar to 1999 will make it extremely difficult and expensive for India to reoccupy the glacier. The steady Chinese advancement in Himalayas is also a concern since 2020 Galwan Incident as the border understanding was violated and a similar incident, though unlikely is possible inflicting heavy cost on India.

Siachen is seen as a major military setback by the Pakistani Army.^{[53][54]} Pakistani generals view the Siachen glacier as their land, which has been stolen by India.^[55] When India occupied the Saltoro Ridge in April 1984, Benazir Bhutto publicly taunted the Pakistan Army as "fit only to fight its own citizens".^[56] When, in June 1987, the Indian Army captured the 21,153 foot high "Quaid Post" and renamed it to "Bana Top", in honour of Naib Subedar Bana Singh, Bhutto once again publicly taunted the Pakistani generals, telling them to wear bangles if they cannot fight on the Siachen.^{[56][57][58]}

American observers say that the military conflict between India and Pakistan over the Siachen Glacier "made no military or political sense".^[55] An article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* stated: "Their combat over a barren, uninhabited world of questionable value is a forbidding symbol of their lingering, irreconcilability."^[55] Stephen P. Cohen compared the conflict to "a struggle between two bald men over a comb". Siachen is a symbol of the worst aspects of their relationship.^[55]

In the book *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict*, Khan, Lavoy and Clary wrote:

The Pakistan army sees India's 1984 occupation of the Siachen Glacier as a major scar, outweighed only by Dhaka's fall in 1971. The event underscored the dilution of the Simla Agreement and became a domestic issue as political parties, led by Benazir Bhutto's Peoples Party, blamed an incompetent military government under Zia ul-Haq for failing to defend Pakistani-held territory — while Zia downplayed the significance of the loss.^[59]

General Ved Prakash Malik, in his book *Kargil from Surprise to Victory*, wrote:

Siachen is considered a military setback by the Pakistan Army. That the Indians dominate the area from the Saltoro Ridge and Pakistani troops are nowhere near the Siachen Glacier is a fact never mentioned in public. The perceived humiliation at Siachen manifests itself in many ways. It is synonymous with Indian perfidy and a violation of the Shimla Agreement... In Pakistan, Siachen is a subject that hurts, just like a thorn in its flesh; it is also a psychological drain on the Pakistani Army. Pervez Musharraf had himself once commanded the *Special Services Group* (SSG) troops in this area and made several futile attempts to capture Indian posts.^[53]

The cost of presence on glacier is heavy for both countries but it account for a larger portion of Pakistan's economy. India over the years has built permanent positions on ground.

Severe conditions

A cease-fire went into effect in 2003. Even before then, more soldiers were killed every year due to severe weather conditions than enemy fire. The two sides by 2003 had lost an estimated 2,000 personnel primarily due to frostbite, avalanches and other complications. Together, the nations have about 150 manned outposts along the glacier, with some 3,000 troops each. Official figures for maintaining these outposts are put at ~\$300 and ~\$200 million for India and Pakistan respectively. India built the world's highest helipad on the glacier at Point Sonam, 21,000 feet (6,400 m) above the sea level, to supply its troops. The problems of reinforcing or evacuating the high-altitude ridgeline have led to India's development of the Dhruv Mk III helicopter, powered by the Shakti engine, which was flight-tested to lift and land personnel and stores from the Sonam post, the highest permanently manned post in the world.^[60] India also installed the world's highest telephone booth on the glacier.^[61]

According to some estimates, 97% of the casualties in Siachen have been due to weather and altitude, rather than actual fighting.^[62] In 2012, an avalanche hit Pakistan's Gayari military base, killing 129 soldiers and 11 civilians.^{[63][64]}

Kargil War

One of the factors behind the Kargil War in 1999 when Pakistan sent infiltrators to occupy vacated Indian posts across the Line of Control was their belief that India would be forced to withdraw from Siachen in exchange of a Pakistani withdrawal from Kargil.^[65] After the Kargil War, India decided to maintain its military outposts on the glacier, wary of further Pakistani incursions into Kashmir if they vacate from the Siachen Glacier posts.^[66]

Visits

On 12 June 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the area, calling for a peaceful resolution of the problem. In 2007, the President of India, Abdul Kalam became the first head of state to visit the area. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Siachen on 23 October 2014 to celebrate Diwali with the troops and boost their morale.^[67]

The Chief of Staff of US Army, General George Casey on 17 October 2008 visited the Siachen Glacier along with Indian Army Chief, General Deepak Kapoor. US General visited for the purpose of "developing concepts and medical aspects of fighting in severe cold conditions and high altitude".^{[68][69]}

Since September 2007, India has welcomed mountaineering and trekking expeditions to the forbidding glacial heights. The expeditions have been meant to show the international audience that Indian troops hold "almost all dominating heights" on the important Saltoro Ridge west of Siachen Glacier, and to show that Pakistani troops are nowhere near the 43.5-mile (70 km) Siachen Glacier and from 2019 the Indian Army And The Indian Government has allowed the tourists to visit the Siachen Glacier's Indian Army Post.^[70]

In popular culture

The Siachen glacier and its conflict was depicted in a 48-page comic book, *Siachen: The Cold War*, released in August 2012. Later its sequel, *Battlefield Siachen*, was released in January 2013.^{[71][72][73][74]}

List of post-ceasefire avalanches and landslides

2010–2011

On 11 February 2010, an avalanche struck an Indian army post in the Southern Glacier, killing one soldier. A base camp was also struck, that killed two Ladakh scouts. The same day, a single avalanche hit a Pakistani military camp in Bevan sector, killing 8 soldiers.^[75]

In 2011, 24 Indian soldiers died on the Siachen glacier from the climate and accidents.^[76] On 22 July, two Indian officers burned to death when a fire caught on their shelter.^[77]

2012–2014

In the early morning of 7 April 2012, an avalanche hit a Pakistani military headquarters in the Gayari Sector, burying 129 soldiers of the 6th Northern Light Infantry battalion and 11 civilian contractors.^{[78][79]} In the aftermath of the disaster, Pakistan's army chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani suggested India and Pakistan should withdraw all troops from the contested glacier.^[80]

On 29 May, two Pakistani soldiers were killed in a landslide in the Chorbat Sector.^[81]

On 12 December, an avalanche killed 6 Indian soldiers in the Sub Sector Hanif in Turtuk area, when troops of the 1st Assam regiment were moving between posts.^{[82][83]} In 2012, a total of 12 Indian soldiers died of hostile weather conditions.^[76]

In 2013, 10 Indian soldiers died due to weather conditions.^[76]

2015

On 14 November 2015, an Indian captain from the Third Ladakh scouts died in an avalanche in the Southern Glacier while 15 others were rescued.^[84]

2016

On 4 January 2016, four Indian soldiers of the Ladakh Scouts, were killed in an avalanche on the Southern Glacier while on patrol duty in Nobra Valley.^[85]

On the morning of 3 February 2016, ten Indian soldiers including one Junior commissioned officer of the 6th Madras battalion were buried under the snow when a massive avalanche struck their post in the Northern Glacier at a height of 19,600 feet, on the Actual Ground Position Line.^[86] Pakistani officials offered their help in search and rescue operations 30 hours after the incident, although it was declined by Indian military authorities.^[87] During the rescue operations, the Indian army found Lance Naik Hanumanthappa alive, though in a critical condition, after being buried under 25 feet snow for 6 days. He was taken to Army Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi. His condition became critical later on due to multiple organ failure and lack of oxygen to brain and he died 11 February 2016.^[88]

On 27 February, a civilian porter working with the Indian army in the Northern Glacier, fell to his death in a 130-foot crevasse.^[89]

On 17 March, two Indian soldiers from the Chennai-21 regiment were killed, and bodies recovered in 12-feet deep ice.^[90]

On 25 March, two Indian jawans died after they were buried in an avalanche in the Turtuk sector while on patrol.^[91]

On 1 April, Indian General Dalbir Singh and General D. S. Hooda of the Northern Command visited the Siachen glacier in order to boost morale after 17 of its soldiers died in 2016.^[92]

2018 - 2019

On 14 July 2018, 10 Indian Army soldiers were killed as result of Avalanche in Siachen.^[93]

On 19 January 2019, 7 Indian Army soldiers were killed as result of an avalanche in Siachen.^[94]

On 3 June 2019, Indian defense minister Rajnath Singh visited the Indian army's forward posts and base camp in Siachen. He interacted with the Indian soldiers deployed in Siachen and commended their courage. He claimed that more than 1,100 Indian soldiers have died defending the Siachen glacier.^{[7][6][95]}

From 18 to 30 November 2019, 6 Indian soldiers and 2 Indian civilians porters were killed as result of an avalanche in the northern and southern part of Siachen glacier.^{[96][97]}

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Mega Lecture