

India was caught off-guard in Kargil

Report censures intelligence agencies for lapse

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NEW DELHI: The report of the Kargil committee has confirmed the widely held belief that the Pakistani intrusion came as a "complete and total surprise to the Indian government, Army and intelligence agencies as well as to the J&K government and its agencies." But the report tabled in Parliament on Thursday, the first ever document on national security to have been made public, also says that there is no "assessment at the operational level" to justify the claim that the Lahore summit of February 1999 had caused "the Indian decision-makers to lower their guard".

Chairman of the Committee defence analyst K. Subrahmanyam has been on record in *The Times of India* earlier to state that its aim was to find out "what went wrong rather than who." But the 228-page mimeograph goes well beyond Kargil to recommend steps that will be necessary to prevent the recurrence of the event that took the lives of some 470 Indian Army personnel last summer and cost the country some Rs 2,000 crore.

The report has inveighed at length on the "inadequacies" of India's intelligence apparatus and has harsh things to say about the external intelligence agency, the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW). It calls

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RAW's inability to identify some five infantry battalions deployed across the LoC as a "serious lapse". RAW's failure to track the movement of various Northern Light Infantry (NLI) formations is termed "a sad commentary". With such poor information on the Pakistani ORBAT (Order of battle), the report admits there could be "no realistic expectation of hard intelligence of the Pakistan Army's plans..."

The report is equally hard on the inability of the various intelligence agencies to work with each other. It has criticised the director, Intelligence Bureau, for sending a report on activities across the LoC under his own signature to the Prime Minister and top bureaucrats, but bypassing the chief of RAW and the director general Military Intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Even while pointing to the "gross" inadequacies of the intelligence gathering and dissemination among the many intelligence agencies involved, the report gives high marks to the Indian Army for its prompt re-

AVOID FUTURE SHOCK

- **Thorough review of National Security System by independent body of experts.**
- **Strengthen aerial surveillance capability through use of satellite and unmanned aerial vehicles.**
- **Consolidate multiple agencies dealing with communications intelligence as well as to modernise their equipment.**
- **Set up a separate intelligence agency to focus on defence tasks.**
- **Restructure, consolidate and upgrade the paramilitary forces to take on insurgents.**
- **Reform relationship between the civil government and the armed forces.**
- **Don't physically man the border at inhospitable places, just warn the Pakistanis that India will respond at a place of its choosing.**

sponse. While the Batalik intrusion was detected on May 3 and confirmed by patrols on May 7, two additional battalions (2000 men) who were returning to peace station from their tenure in Siachen were pushed into this. By May 15, the first brigade from the Valley was ordered to move into the Kargil area and by the end of the month the entire 8 Mountain division had moved.

The report admits that Pakistan achieved "strategic surprise" by carrying out an operation considered unviable and irrational by Indian army commanders." But Pakistan paid a heavy price for this. The lowest estimate of Pakistani casualties is 700 while captured diaries reveal the hazards and privations that the intruding forces suffered even before they were detected. The committee has concluded that the first Pakistani reconnaissance parties came into Batalik at the end of November or December 1998. In February, larger groups came in and stayed in special tents. The major movement came only in the latter half of April 1999.

The Kargil committee report is a welcome break from the tradition of mindless secrecy that surrounds national security. Without compromising security, it provides enormous insight into the way India's security system functions, the kind of information that is invaluable for the functioning of any democracy.