



# Special Frontier Force: Vikas Battalion

## Why in News

The Special Frontier Force (SFF) unit, referred to as Vikas Battalion, had been said to be instrumental in preventing [Chinese occupation on the Line of Actual Control](#) (LAC) in Ladakh.

## Key Points

- **History:** SFF was established on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1962 in the immediate aftermath of the [1962 Sino-India war](#).
  - After the 1962 war, the **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Intelligence Bureau (IB)** decided to train a 5,000-strong force of Tibetans for possible missions against China.
  - The CIA had been involved in a covert programme to train Tibetan guerrillas to fight the Chinese forces in Tibet since the 1950s.
    - The Central Intelligence Agency is a civilian foreign intelligence service of the federal government of the United States of America.
    - During the 1950s, CIA and IB established Mustang Base in Mustang in Nepal, which trained Tibetans in guerilla warfare. The Mustang rebels brought the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to India during the [1959 Tibetan Uprising](#).
  - The recruits initially consisted of Tibetan refugees hailing from the Khampa community (now it has a mixture of **Tibetans** and **Gorkhas**).
  - It was previously named **Establishment-22** as it was raised by **Major General Sujan Singh Uban**, an Artillery officer who had commanded 22 Mountain Regiment.
- **About:** SFF falls under the purview of the **Cabinet Secretariat** where it is headed by an **Inspector General** who is an Army officer of the rank of Major General.
  - The units that comprise the SFF are known as **Vikas battalions**.
  - They are **highly trained special forces personnel** who can undertake a variety of tasks which would normally be performed by any special forces unit.
  - **Women soldiers**, too, form a part of SFF units and perform specialised tasks.
- **Link with Army:** The SFF units are **not part of the Army** but they function **under operational control of the Army**.
  - The units have their **own rank structures** which have equivalent status with Army ranks.
  - They have their **own training establishment** where the recruits to SFF are imparted special forces training.
- **Major Operations:** **Operation Eagle** (1971 war with Pakistan), [Operation Bluestar](#) (clearing Amritsar's Golden Temple in 1984), **Operation Meghdoot** (securing the [Siachen glacier](#) in 1984) and **Operation Vijay** (war with Pakistan at Kargil in 1999) and many counter-insurgency operations in the country.
  - **Operation Eagle:** In 1971, the SFF operated in the **Chittagong hill tracts in East Pakistan** (later Bangladesh) to neutralise Pakistan Army positions and help the Indian Army advance ahead.
- **Criticism:** Special Frontier Force was involved in a **joint operation with the CIA in 1965** to

place a **nuclear-powered device on Mount Nanda Devi (Uttarakhand) to monitor China's nuclear weapons tests**. However, the mission had to be abandoned and the nuclear-powered device was lost on the mountain.

- The **loss of the nuclear-powered sensor** was reported by Indian media outlets in 1978, prompting a response from the then Prime Minister on Indian involvement in the mission.

[Source: IE](#)

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