

# Operation Blue Star

Operation Blue Star was an Indian Army operation that was conducted in 1984 in Punjab. It was a controversial operation and one that had severe ramifications for many. In this article, you can read all about Operation Blue Star, what led to it, the course of events, and its impact on India and Punjab in particular. This is a part of post-independent India in the [UPSC syllabus](#).

## What was Operation Blue Star?

Operation Blue Star was carried out by the Indian Army from 1 to 10 June 1984 in order to capture Sikh leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his group of supporters who had lodged at the Harmandir Sahib Temple Complex (also known as the Golden Temple) in Amritsar in Punjab.

- It was the biggest internal security operation till date at that time and it was the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's decision to go ahead with the controversial operation.
- Insurgency in Punjab had begun in the early eighties and it was an armed movement largely for a separate Sikh homeland called Khalistan based out of Punjab in India.
- It is believed that there were Pakistani elements too that supported the Khalistani movement in order to weaken the country.
- Akali Dal, a regional political party in Punjab, had passed the Anandpur Resolution in 1973 which demanded more autonomy to the states, among other things.
- In 1982, Bhindranwale joined the Akali Dal and launched the Dharam Yudh Morcha to implement the Anandpur Resolution.
- Bhindranwale was a firebrand leader who was able to get support from the youth in the state, especially from the rural areas.
- Failing to get the Anandpur Resolution implemented, he declared his intention to carve out a semi-autonomous homeland for Sikhs in the Punjab region of India.
- He stoked up emotions by increasing the rhetoric on the assault on Sikh values in India.
- He and his supporters started carrying firearms at all times with them.
- The number of violent incidents also increased in Punjab during this time.
- In 1983, Bhindranwale fortified the Akal Takht in the Golden Temple complex and started hiding there to avoid arrest. He and his men led the campaign for Punjab's autonomy from the temple.
- In order to remove him from the complex, the Army launched the operation on 1 June 1984.
- In the wake of the operation, there was a total media blackout imposed by the government. Curfew was also imposed on the people.
- Operation Blue Star had two sub-components:
  - Operation Metal to flush out the militants holed up in the Golden Temple.
  - Operation Shop to mop up remaining extremists throughout Punjab.
- The actual storming of the temple occurred on 5 June 1984 under the command of Lieutenant General Kuldeep Singh Brar.
  - According to Lt Gen Brar, the army warned the militants inside the temple to surrender but their warnings were not heeded.
  - However, there are other claims from the opposite side as well. They say that the first firing was done on 1 June itself from the authorities.
- By June 7, the army had full control over the Harmandir Sahib complex.
- Bhindranwale was killed in the operation along with many of his leading men.

- The official death toll by the Army is 554 Sikh militants and civilians and 83 officers and soldiers of the military.
- By 10 June, the operation was over.

### Operation Blue Star Aftermath

There was a lot of anguish among the Sikh community in India and abroad over the storming of their most holy place. The timing of the operation was also questioned since June 3, 1984, was the martyrdom day of Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Singh and hence, a large number of devotees were present inside the temple complex.

Indira Gandhi was assassinated in October 1984 by her own Sikh bodyguards as an act of revenge for the operation. This led to the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 in Delhi and other parts of north India. In 1986, the Chief of Army Staff at the time of the operation General A.S. Vaidya was assassinated in revenge by Sikh militants. The bombing of Air India Flight 182 in 1985 is believed to have been another act of revenge for the operation.

Many Sikh soldiers in the Indian Army mutinied because of the operation. Many Sikhs resigned from administrative positions in the government.

Instead of ending Khalistani terrorism in Punjab, the operation is said to have increased militancy in the state. It was only in the nineties that insurgency in Punjab is said to have fizzled out.

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