

## Battle of Haji Pir Pass

The Battle of Haji Pir pass was a military engagement from 26 to 28 August 1965, during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 and resulted in India capturing the entire Haji Pir bulge including the 8,652 feet high Haji Pir pass in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

The battle of Haji Pir would prompt Pakistan to launch operations of its own in the western sector of the war, altering the balance of power in the conflict.

This article will further give details about the Battle of Haji Pir Pass within the context of the IAS Exam.

### Background of the Battle of Haji Pir Pass

In August of 1965, Pakistan launched Operation Gibraltar whose aim was fomenting a local insurrection through guerillas and inciting the population to overthrow the administration and pave the way for a ground invasion by the Pakistani armed forces.

The operation was a failure as the local population did not revolt. Far from it, they actively helped the Indian army in rooting out the infiltrators, which the army successfully did

In the wake of Pakistan's repeated attempts to infiltrate and destabilize Kashmir, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri asserted that "it was not merely enough to push Pakistanis off its territory, instead it was time to take the fight to the other side. Soon the 1965 Indo-Pak war would take place from 5 August

On August 15 1965, the Indian Army crossed the Ceasefire Line and recaptured three hill positions earlier occupied by Pakistan. To consolidate its gains and prevent further infiltrations, it was decided to capture the Haji Pir Bulge in the Pir Panjal range. This range was the key hub of infiltrations into India.

A pincer attack was planned - codenamed Operation Bakshi. The 19th Infantry Division was tasked with capturing Haji Pir pass and the bulge and 68 Infantry Brigade was placed under the 19th Infantry Division. The movement from the east was codenamed Operation Faulad and the 25th Infantry Division was tasked with linking up from Poonch in the south of the bulge.

### Events of the Battle of Haji Pir Pass

On 26 August 2130 hours, 1 Para battalion crossed the Ceasefire Line to the west towards Sank, which had well prepared defenses, barbed wires and minefields. The Brigade commander Brigadier Bakshi was himself part of the assaulting force. The assault was carried out in very difficult circumstances, across steep terrain and under heavy rain. However, with covering artillery fire on the Pakistani defenders, the Indian troop was able to advance and by 0415 hours the next morning, the force had attained the objective of Sank.

The Pakistan defenders were taken completely unawares, panicked and fled, leaving behind their heavy weapons.

Major Ranjit Singh Dyal requested and procured permission to press on to Haji Pir Pass. On reaching Haji Pir Pass, they encountered a counterattack by Pakistani forces. Leaving 1 platoon to engage the Pakistani forces, Major Dyal led the rest of his troop and climbed the steep western shoulder of the pass while carrying heavy loads through the rain. Out-flanked, the Pakistani defenders abandoned their weapons and fled down the hill.

Meanwhile, 19 Punjab captured Pathra on 26 August. However, 4 Rajput were unable to capture Bedori due to highly rugged and precipitous terrain and having suffered heavy casualties, was forced to pull back.

The commander of 19 Punjab volunteered to attack Bedori from a different direction and by 29 August had attained his objective in the face of intense resistance from defending forces. On 5 September, 4 Rajput captured Bisali, but had to fall back to Sank due to an intense counterattack by Pakistani forces. By 10 September, the 93 infantry brigade had linked up with the units and the entire Haji Pir bulge came under Indian control.

## Aftermath of the Battle

India's capture of the entire Haji Pir bulge and Haji Pir pass was a major strategic victory as it neutralised the logistical set up and plugged the ingress routes of infiltrators as well as brought the Poonch - Uri road under Indian control, thus reducing the road distance between these 2 towns from 282 km to 56 km.

It was a major achievement for the units involved, who had conducted assaults in extremely difficult terrain and adverse weather conditions against well entrenched Pakistani defences to capture the objectives given.

Brigadier Bakshi and Major Dyal were awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. 1 Para was awarded the Battle Honour Hajipir and Theatre Honour Jammu and Kashmir (1965).

In the subsequent Tashkent agreement, India handed back the hard-won Haji Pir bulge to Pakistan. The handing back of Haji Pir bulge has been criticised by Indian strategic planners because the majority of infiltrations by terrorists from Pakistan into Kashmir continues to happen from this area to the present day.

## Frequently Asked Question about Battle of Haji Pir Pass

**Where is Haji Pir Pass located?**

Haji Pir Pass is a high mountain pass at an elevation of 2,640m (8,661ft) above the sea level, located in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, near the Indian border. Located on the western fringe of the Pir Panjal Range in the Inner Himalayan region, the road to the summit is unpaved.

**What was the immediate aftermath of the battle of Haji Pir Pass?**

The Battle of Haji Pir Pass resulted in the Pakistani command planning an offensive to relieve the pressure in the Kashmir sector. To this end they carried out an offensive in the Indian-held sector in Chamb–Jaurian.