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DRDO's assault rifles to throw shield around Assam rhinos

By Rahul Karmakar

The indigenously developed Ghatak will be given to forest guards to combat armed poachers who killed 30 of the animals last year

An indigenous hybrid rifle, named Ghatak for 'deadly,' will protect the rhino in Assam from heavily armed poachers.

The Assam Forest Department is poised to be the first non-police or non-paramilitary force to acquire the Ghatak, a multi-calibre rifle from the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO). It placed orders for the weapon more than a year ago.

The rifle is described as a cross between an automatic close-combat weapon such as AK-47 and a more lethal long-range firearm.

Some consignments of the rifle have been delivered to Central Paramilitary Force as well as the Assam Police. The Ghatak is yet to clear the more stringent tests of the Army, such as 18 rounds of non-stop firing, but forest officials are not worried.

"Our combat situation is different from that of the Army," they say.

Dharanidhar Boro, a highly decorated green soldier who retired in 2016 after years of fighting poachers in Kaziranga National Park, is upbeat about Ghatak's induction.

"I am not sure how good it is, but it will certainly be much better than the unwieldy 0.315 rifles with which we guarded the rhino's best-known home," he said from western Assam's Manas National Park, where he is now an officer on special duty.

Poachers a step ahead

On Kaziranga, a World Heritage site established in 1905, some 230 km east of Guwahati, the veteran officer says, "We did our best to save the rhinos during our time, but the poachers are always a step ahead. It is high time our guards are equipped with weapons that deter poachers."

The national park houses more than 55% of the world's one-horned rhinos and boasts the highest density of Royal Bengal tigers.

Forest department records say 30 rhinos have been killed in the 430 sq. km. Kaziranga and other wildlife reserves such as Orang National Park and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary since January 2016. Six poachers were killed during this period. Cartridges recovered from rhino kill sites revealed the poachers were using AK-56 rifles, M16 and M4 carbines.

"The killing of a couple of rhinos last year made us realise that the archaic, single-shot bolt action rifles of our guards are no match for the sophisticated automatic weapons of the poachers.

A decision was taken to overhaul the arsenal of our department," Environment and Forest Minister Pramila Rani Brahma said.

"In March last year, we purchased an assortment of rifles from Ishapore Ordnance Factory in Kolkata. We received a few, but we are really looking forward to the Ghatak rifles," the State's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Bikash Brahma, said.

The weapons the department bought were 272 Indian Small Arms System or INSAS assault rifle, 954 self-loading rifles or SLRs, 91 Ghatak rifles, 20 pistols (9mm), and 133 pump action guns of 12-bore.

"Our men in the field are excited about Ghatak. But it will take a great deal of adjustment from the old rifles to a hybrid one," Kaziranga's Divisional Forest Officer Rohini Ballave Saikia said.

Assam's choice

Army and paramilitary forces in the militancy-hit Northeast comprising eight States do not use the Ghatak, but the Assam Police does.

On the choice of the weapon, Assam Police chief Mukesh Sahay said, "I cannot be specific about the number, but we received a small consignment a year ago. More are in the pipeline. We procure weapons based on our requirement, which primarily is counter-insurgency. We need long-range and area weapons too."

Senior police officials, however, said Ghatak tested in a field situation because militancy has ebbed over the last 15 months.

Army officials said the initiative to make the 5.56mm-7.62mm hybrid came from the Ordnance Factory Board. Of the three prototypes made by three ordnance factories, the one developed by Rifle Factory Ishapore cleared all preliminary tests. "It fell short of the Army's requirement, though," an officer said, declining to be named.

The Defence Ministry has tendered for multi-calibre rifles, officials said. Among those in contention are Beretta and Colt, the latter making M4 carbines. But the Ishapore factory is keen on upgrading Ghatak.

THE ASIAN AGE

Sun, 11 Feb, 2018

'There was no Rafale deal under previous UPA govt'

New Delhi, Feb. 10: The original deal to procure 126 fighter jet could not go through during the UPA rule despite reaching the final stage as the then defence minister A. K. Antony felt there was something wrong in the process and asked for a review, defence ministry sources claimed.

The sources talked about Mr Antony's intervention while asserting that there was no deal arrived at during the UPA regime to procure 126 medium multirole combat aircraft (MMRCA).

The Congress has been ramping up attack on the government over the Rafale issue, claiming that the deal negotiated under its rule was much cheaper than the contract signed by the Modi government to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets from France at a cost of ` Rs. 58,000 crore.

The sources said Mr Antony's apprehensions may have been genuine and he may have had bonafide reasons for such an intervention. The price negotiating committee was at that time examining the deal after initially getting approval for it from the then defence minister.

The sources also said that the Eurofighter Typhoon had offered to bring down their prices by 25 per cent after Rafale was declared L1 vendor.

"Such a proposal after declaring the winning bidder was not at all acceptable as per laid down procedure. You cannot do that," said a source. Alleging a "scam", the Opposition Congress has been asking the government whether the per aircraft price of Rafale comes to \$ 80.95 million (Rs. 526.1 crore).

Business Standard

Sun, 11 Feb, 2018

Sunjwan Army camp attack: Death toll rises to 6, two more

Security forces killed two more terrorists holed up in the Sunjwan Army camp here, while the toll in the attack by suspected JeT militants rose to six with the death of three more Army men and a civilian, a senior police official said today. The forces had killed two terrorists yesterday after a group of heavily armed men attacked the camp, leaving two Army personnel, including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) dead, the

police had said."Two more terrorists have been killed, bringing the total number to four," the senior police officer said. The top police official said three more Army men and a civilian, who was the father of an Army personnel, were killed, taking the toll to six.

The Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists had struck the sprawling camp of the 36 brigade of the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry early yesterday. The operation was carrying on, an army officer said."The operation is on and the evacuation (of people from the family quarters) is in progress," Jammu-based Army PRO Lt Col Devender Anand told PTI.He said a number of families were still in the camp and the Army's aim was to ensure their safety."There has been no firing since last night," the officer said.

The latest attack on the camp took place nearly 15 months after the Jammu region was hit by a similar attack. On November 29, 2016, terrorists had stormed the Army's Nagrota camp on the outskirts of the city, killing seven Army personnel, including two officers. Three terrorists were gunned down in the operation.

The terrorists had struck before dawn yesterday and managed to sneak into the camp from the rear end of the base after a brief exchange of fire with the sentry guarding the periphery."The terrorists entered the family accommodation complex after which quick response teams cordoned off the area and isolated the terrorists, who are holed up in a few houses (inside the camp)," an official said.

While there was no action around the main entrance and vehicles were moving along the Jammu-Lakhanpur bypass in front of the camp, Army personnel in bullet-proof vehicles were engaged in the operation to rescue people from the family quarters in the rear side of the base.

Contingents of CRPF and police were posted outside the boundary wall and were keeping curious onlookers at bay to prevent civilian casualties. A high alert has been sounded in Jammu and security beefed up in and around the city. Intelligence inputs had warned of an attack on an Army or security establishment by Jaish-e-Mohammed in view of the death anniversary of Afzal Guru, who was hanged on February 9, 2013, for the 2001 attack on Parliament House.

(This story has not been edited by Business Standard staff and is auto-generated from a syndicated feed.)



Sun, 11 Feb, 2018

TSWREIS school to help crack entry into forces

To prepare students for careers in Indian Army, Air Force and Navy

The Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS) has decided to open a school exclusively for students from the marginalised sections to prepare them for careers in the Armed forces.

The existing school at Rukmapur in Karimnagar district is being converted on the lines of the Defence Ministry's own Korukonda Sainik School in Vizianagaram. It is scheduled to become operational from the forthcoming academic year 2018-19. In the beginning, only boys would be admitted—80 of them in class V and another 80 in Intermediate first year. TSWREIS Secretary R.S. Praveen Kumar said recruitment of retired officers from the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy is currently under way and they would be given a free hand to decide the academic curricula and other activities necessary in preparing the youngsters to join the Armed forces through National Defence Academy (NDA) at Khadakwasla, Pune.

"People from the marginalised sections have very low representation in the Armed forces. A few are soldiers, but their number in the officers' category is dismal. Our effort is to prepare them to enter the NDA so that they can become officers and serve the nation," he explained.

The initiative was conceived when several attempts to get through the NDA entrance examination by the social welfare wards failed.

While the social welfare students have been making giant strides by getting admissions in reputed public and private universities such as Azim Premji and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) on merit, cracking the NDA entrance has come as a challenge for them.

Administrators and teachers from TSWREIS have visited the Sainik School to know of the facilities being provided to students there. They have also interacted with the faculty to get an insight into what goes into preparing students to gain entry into the Armed forces.

“We will also have another school for girls soon. We have been encouraging our boys and girls to do well in courses other than engineering and medicine,” said Mr. Kumar.



Sun, 11 Feb, 2018

Given by US to fight Taliban, Pak uses missile to target India at LoC

By Ajay Banerjee

Proof submitted

- The 'misuse' of missiles by the Pakistan Army was flagged at appropriate levels in the US government
- Remnants of TOW-2A missile recovered after a fire assault were collected and shifted to New Delhi as proof and were shown to US representatives

In what could further change the course of the India-US relations, India has flagged its concerns to the US, with evidence, that Pakistan was using US weapons, given to fight Taliban, against the Indian Army.

The recent attacks by Pakistan on Indian Army bunkers along the Line of Control and also on civilian population were carried out using the US-made TOW-2A anti-tank guided missiles given to Pakistan for use against Taliban.

At least nine Indian soldiers have died in 2018 due to Pakistani fire assaults directed against Indian Army positions along the LoC. In 2007, the US Congress approved the sale of 2,000 pieces of 'TOW-2A' anti-tank missiles for Pakistan purportedly for 'self-defence' and to support US operations against terrorists in Afghanistan.

In 2015, India and the US renewed a 10-year defence framework agreement. A year later, US designated India as a major defence partner. Subsequently, the US Congress voted to bring India on a par with its other NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) allies for sale of defence equipment and technology transfer.

The 'misuse' of the missiles by the Pakistan Army was flagged at appropriate levels in the US government. Remnants of TOW-2A missile recovered after a fire assault were collected and shifted to New Delhi as proof and were shown to US representatives. Flagging the misuse of the missiles is India's policy to isolate Pakistan in global arena.

US President Donald Trump, in the recent past, has accused Pakistan of deceiving the United States. He said Pakistan was harboring terrorists even as the US poured billions of dollars in foreign aid.

“The US has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies and deceit. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!” Trump said on January 1.

US defence budget this year largest in history

IT'S THE biggest budget the Pentagon has ever seen: \$700 billion. That's far more in defence spending than America's two nearest competitors, China and Russia, and will mean the military can foot the bill for thousands more troops, more training, more ships and a lot else.

And next year it would rise to \$716 billion. Together, the two-year deal provides what

Defence Secretary Jim Mattis says is needed to pull the military out of a slump in combat readiness at a time of renewed focus on the stalemated conflict in Afghanistan and the threat of war on the Korean peninsula.

The budget bill that President Donald Trump signed Friday includes huge spending increases for the military: The Pentagon will get \$94 billion more this budget

year than last — a 15.5 per cent jump.

It's the biggest year-over-year windfall since the budget soared by 26.6 per cent, from \$345 billion in 2002 to \$437 billion the year after, when the nation was fighting in Afghanistan, invading Iraq and expanding national defence after the 9/11 attacks.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Smart ways to stay anonymous and protect your online privacy

In a world of mass surveillance, here are some tips for staying nameless and hidden while browsing the internet

Some might say the internet was built on anonymity, paving the way for a place where free speech reigns. But privacy on the web is an area of concern for many of us. It's not just about government spying, but also about how much personal data big companies collect in order to serve up targeted ads. The only way to stay truly anonymous online is not to go online at all. Since that's not an option for most of us, here's a rundown of what you can do to minimise the spying and ID theft as you explore the world online.

Phone call confidentiality

If you want to be anonymous, forget the smartphone. The big-name OS makers are control freaks and ad servers. If you want to be anonymous on a phone, your choice is a prepaid phone (affordable, throwaway handsets). Even with a prepaid, call records exist, and you could be triangulated via a GPS. The upside is not having your real name associated with the device.

Build the firewall

Is your desktop or laptop connected directly to a broadband modem? That's a bad idea. Hackers are constantly bombarding IP addresses to see if they can get onto a system. You should always have a router on your home network that can mitigate that with its built-in firewall.

Ensure caution

What does your computer (or tablet or smartphone) give away about you when you visit websites? At least, the site knows your IP address. In most cases, it also knows your approximate physical location and probably your time zone and what language you speak — all good info for advertisers. So, don't forget to check out how well your browser is protecting you.

Safe surfing

Make sure your browser isn't storing too much about you. In the settings menu, turn off the ability for the browser to store the passwords you use to access

websites and services. If that's a pain, the best alternative is to use a password manager. Browsers also store things like images, surfing history, and what you've downloaded, as well as cookie files. Obliterate that info occasionally.

Proxies, VPNs and Tor

One way to ensure that outsiders don't gather information about you while you're browsing the web is to appear to be someone else in a different location. This requires a proxy server and/or a virtual private network (VPN) connection. With the right combo, you can not only be anonymous, but surf sites in other countries as if you're a native.