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Indian-Pakistani Crisis: Border Forces Strengthened

India and Pakistan had been strengthening their military forces along the borders of the two countries in recent weeks. Indian sources indicated October 14 that the buildup was begun by Pakistan in September and said Indian troops had moved in response to the buildup.

The New York Times reported October 20 that almost all infantry and armored divisions in West Pakistan had been mobilized along the Indian border. Four or five divisions were said to have been strengthened along the East Pakistani border. India was reported to have an equal number of divisions along its side of the border. Pakistan warned India October 19 that it would take "appropriate action" if Indian aircraft continued to violate Pakistani airspace.

The critical situation has been marked by charges and counter-charges on both sides. Indian Minister of Defense Jagjivarn Ram October 11 warned Pakistan that if that country launched a surprise attack, India would extend the war into Pakistani territory. As he spoke, it was reported that Pakistan had evacuated the civilian population along large areas of the western border region and that several Pakistani infantry divisions had moved up along the border.

Pakistani President Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan, in a nationwide speech broadcast October 12, said India had moved troops and artillery along the border of both East and West Pakistan. In an appeal for unity, Yahya said India's "feverish military preparations can lead to but one conclusion--she can launch a war of aggression against Pakistan at short notice."

The Washington Post reported October 15 that India was sending military supplies into the Calcutta area near the East Pakistani border as a result of the buildup of Pakistani forces along the border. The New York Times reported the same day that a large Pakistani ship had unloaded crates of North Korean small arms and ammunition at Karachi. It was also reported that Pakistan and North Korea had signed agreements for the opening of consulates in each other's country.

Indian Defense Minister Ram said October 17 that India would not withdraw from any Pakistani territory it occupied if war were to break out between the two countries. He added that India would not withdraw its forces from the Pakistani borders as long as the civil war in East Pakistan remained unresolved. Ram asserted that Pakistani President Yahya was threatening war with India to distract attention from East Pakistan where he claimed Bengali guerrillas were making important gains.

Moments before Ram made his statements, the Associated Press reported that Yahya had proposed to Soviet President Nikolai V. Podgorny during a meeting in Iran during that nation's 2,500-year anniversary celebration that Pakistan would pull its troops back from defensive positions along the borders if India would withdraw its forces and cease what he called infiltration and other hostile acts in support of the Bengali separatists.

The Washington Post reported October 19 that Yahya had received assurances from Podgorny during the meeting that the Soviet Union was not aligned with India against Pakistan as a result of the recently signed Indian-Soviet friendship treaty [See 1971 [Indian-Soviet Pact: 20-Year Friendship Treaty Signed](#)] and that the Soviets did not want to see a war between the two countries. In an interview in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, Yahya indicated that he "was ready to discuss with no matter whom no matter where, no matter when and to accept no matter what mediation" to solve the whole background of grievances with India. He added that, although the U.S., the Soviet Union and Iran had offered to mediate, India had rejected the efforts.

In New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi October 17 reportedly told Yugoslav President Tito, in India for a four-day state visit, that India did not want war, but must be prepared to defend itself. She was also reported to have told Tito that India could not continue to support much longer the estimated 9 million East Pakistani refugees in India. Mrs. Gandhi said India still hoped for a political settlement to end the fighting in East Pakistan and to create the proper climate for the refugees to return to their homes. Tito appealed October 17 to both countries to settle their differences peacefully and avert a war involving the entire subcontinent.

In an interview October 18, Mrs. Gandhi admitted that the military situation along the border was "quite grave," but added that "we certainly will do nothing to provoke an attack or to start any hostilities, but we have to be alive to our interests and safeguard our security." Mrs. Gandhi ruled out any peace talks between India and Pakistan at the present time, stating that Pakistan would first have to resolve the East Pakistan crisis.

(The London Times reported October 18 that the Indian army was placed on full alert during the weekend and that Cabinet ministers who were planning visits abroad had been instructed to remain in Delhi).

U.S. State Department spokesman Charles W. Bray 3rd October 18 expressed U.S. concern over the increased tensions and buildup of forces along the Indian-Pakistani border. He said the U.S. was urging India and Pakistan to show restraint in the situation and was practicing "a form of preventive diplomacy" with other nations, including the Soviet Union, France and Britain.

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