

## **Scenario 23**

### **Selection of Army Chiefs (1998-99):**

#### ***Gen Musharraf Selected as COAS 1998:***

Recalling good old days of Pakistan Army, the people still remember Gen Mirza Aslam Beg who could have easily occupied the seat vacated by Gen Ziaul Haq's accidental death, because of no resistance from any quarter; but he opted to take the army's depleted image to an unimaginable height by bringing in democracy. He was the first army Chief with outstanding dual qualities of professional supremacy and field dynamics. Further, he was a student leader & a devout worker of Pakistan Movement.

As per PM Nawaz Sharif's contention, Gen Jehangir Karamat had tried to influence his civil government by suggesting and then pressing hard on formation of a 'National Security Council'. Nawaz Sharif held that:

*'Gen Jehangir Karamat had placed this proposal before senior army officers during a high level conference at Naval War College, which was not mandated by the Constitution. When we curbed his demand and intriguing efforts with greater political force, he felt sorry for his un-healthy proposals and suddenly tendered his resignation. We accepted it.'*

It may be remembered that Gen Jehangir Karamat was otherwise a thorough professional soldier. The selection of a General as an army chief has always been a prerogative of the political governments. When Gen J Karamat was selected, there were other four Generals, equally competent, in the row. The other names were of Gen Tariq, Gen Naseer Akhtar and of Gen Javed Ashraf Qazi.

The *lunger gup*, however, prevailed that Army's own intelligence agency had caught documentary proof of Gen J Karamat's corruption in buying deal of armoured tanks from Karghistan. The inside pressure was built up from within army to vacate the seat of the Army Chief.

What was the truth; no body knows with certainty.

After his sent off, Nawaz Sharif appointed Gen Musharraf as Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1998 superseding three senior Generals, Gen Ali Kuli Khan being the senior most. Nawaz Sharif appointed Gen Musharraf, allegedly to gain total control of military affairs, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of the Staff Committee also, against merit due to which Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Fasih Bokhari had to resign from the Navy who rightfully was the deserved officer for this assignment.

Gen Musharraf was also responsible for the Kargil episode and he was the strategic planner to send Pakistan's army inside Afghanistan to fight against the Northern Alliance. After succeeding in military coup in October 1999 he opted to become an American ally in the War on Terror; laying down his neck on the table before them.

Nawaz Sharif, himself admitted (ref: ***Gaddar Kaun by Sohail Warroich*** pages 136-138) that he had done a blunder while choosing Gen Musharraf as an army chief by superseding

three other senior Generals. The PM has especially mentioned the name of General Ali Kuli Khan, at so many occasions and at so many times. Nawaz Sharif said that:

*'We were in utmost haste to decide about the army chief after resignation of Gen Jehangir Karamat. My colleagues advised me wrong. They told me, about each senior General, a different story of their partisanships. Secretary Defence Iftikhar Ali Khan had spoken ill of Gen Ali Kuli Khan especially so I dropped him. Subsequently I came to know that he wanted to balance his old score with the later. [PM's 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command in PML, Ch Nisar Ali Khan was real brother of that Secretary Defence]*

*The more serious blunder I did was that all the intelligence reports were against Gen Musharraf advising me that the officer was not 'fit for commanding position' but even then I posted him as an army chief; my fault. Gen Nasim Rana, the then DG ISI, had himself come to brief me that Gen Musharraf's reports were not favourable in connection with Army Chief's portfolio. '*

The intelligentsia, media and the insiders were shocked to know when Nawaz Sharif had nominated Gen Musharraf as the COAS while superseding Lt Gen Ali Kuli Khan CGS and Lt Gen Khalid Nawaz the Quarter-Master General. Very few people could guess that Nawaz Sharif's choice of Gen Musharraf was attributed to the following:

- He was strongly recommended by President Rafiq Tarar and Lt Gen Javed Nasir, the 'secret' advisor of the PM on intelligence.
- He had falsely associated himself with Nawaz Sharif by keeping the latter informed of the criticism over his Government's functioning by Lt Gen Khalid Nawaz at the Corps Commander's meetings under the chair of Gen Jehangir Karamat as COAS.
- That in Nawaz Sharif's books, Gen Musharraf did not belong to any 'Marshall Race' of Punjab or NWFP, thus was considered weak by 'connections'.
- The last one that though himself a Mohajir, Gen Musharraf disliked Altaf Hussain and his Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), it was briefed. The PM Nawaz Sharif, therefore, wanted to use Gen Musharraf to crush the MQM in Karachi.

Nawaz Sharif's choice was once hailed in March 1999 when, as per his original thinking, Gen Musharraf appointed special military courts in Karachi to try the MQM cadres on charges of terrorism. Several of them were sentenced to death and two executed in actual.

A serious blow, however, caused when the Supreme Court, acting on a petition, declared those special military courts unconstitutional. It was alleged that Nawaz Sharif was also planning to have Asif Zardari tried as a terrorist by the military courts and sentenced to death for allegedly killing Murtaza Bhutto in September 1996.

Going into details; Gen Ali Kuli Khan was not left over on the basis of such simple factors as described above. Nawaz Sharif was told, in those days of PML vs Judiciary crisis of 1997 that Gen Ali Kuli Khan used to talk in Corps Commander Meetings that Nawaz Sharif should be sent home. He had once seriously advised Gen Jehangir Karamat to work out a cogent coup plan in which he (Gen Ali Kuli Khan) was prepared to play a key role. Might be, Gen Khan was suggesting it in the expected capacity of next Army Chief.

Secondly; Gen Ali Kuli Khan had played a vital role in as DG MI during the days of Gen Abdul Waheed Kakar in 1992-93, which all had contributed a lot in ending Nawaz Sharif's first government. In those days the DG MI was actually performing all tasks of ISI, especially the bargains amongst members of various political parties, because the PM's nominated Gen Javed Nasir DG ISI had been declared '*persona non grata*' (PNG) by the GHQ.

Gen Khalid Nawaz was superseded perhaps rightly because he had nothing mentionable at his credit except the seniority. No senior officer would be happy with him. He was known for his lethargic attitudes in general but especially for making inordinate delays in taking

decisions. He used to keep files on his table for weeks wanting decisions. He himself was not mentally prepared to accept such big responsibility.

Lastly, Gen Tirmizi & Gen Musharraf were equal in all respects. Both aspiring and fighters, but Gen Musharraf was then selected on the basis of aforementioned factors, docile and yes-man as Gen Ziaul Haq used to pose before Mr Bhutto. Mr Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, both were beaten by two 'baby faced' and apparently docile Generals who were given the top slots by ignoring their seniors hoping that they would behave as they looked like; but both deceived.

Travelling back into the history: in the **'International Herald Tribune' of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1999**, one Selig Harrison, a well-known American analyst, made comments that '*recent information makes clear that the COAS Gen Musharraf, has long-standing links with several Islamic fundamentalist groups*', but the writer could not bring forward any cogent proof in support of his statement. Most concerned political community had not taken notice of it.

Gen Musharraf, a *Mohajir* of Karachi origin, had subsequently settled down in Gujranwala and preferred to project himself more as a Punjabi than as a Mohajir. He was commissioned in the Pakistan Army Artillery in 1964, went normal through 1980s but then picked up by Gen Ziaul Haq who had chosen him on strong recommendations made by his advisors and guides in the *Jama'at e Islami*.

His first notable assignment was the training of '*jehadis*' recruited by various Islamic groups for fighting against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. In those days Gen Musharraf came into contact with Osama bin Laden, then a reputed civil engineer of Saudi Arabia, who had been recruited by the America's CIA and brought to Afghanistan for constructing bunkers for the Afghan *Mujahideen* in a difficult landscape.

Osama developed his reputation in Afghanistan not as a *mujahid* or terrorist, but as a civil engineer who could construct bunkers in any terrain. He also developed the technique of constructing long tunnels to reach far off Soviet and Afghan military posts and using them as underground safe passages. The *Mujahideen* used to suddenly emerge from these tunnels, fresh and ready to attack, and surprise the Soviet and Afghan troops. The links between Osama and Gen Musharraf allegedly went strong with the passage of time.

During his days with the SSG in the Siachen and the Northern Areas (Gilgit and Baltistan), Gen Musharraf developed a close personal friendship with Lt Gen Javed Nasir, DG ISI during Nawaz Sharif's first tenure as the Prime Minister and later his Adviser on intelligence matters, Maj Gen Zaheerul Islam Abbasi, Lt Gen Aziz, Brigadier first & then promoted to Maj General and Deputy DG ISI but later called in GHQ as Chief of the General Staff (CGS), and Rafique Tarar, then a Judge and later the President of Pakistan. In 1989, Gen Abbasi (then as Brigadier) was also posted to the Siachen like Gen Musharraf.

Reportedly, Gen Musharraf had posed himself in Gen Ziaul Haq's times as '*Deobandi*'. The above mentioned were also devoted *Deobandis* having strong links with Islamic parties particularly with the *Harkat ul Mujahideen* (HUM), previously known as *Harkat ul Ansar*, which was once declared by the US as an international terrorist organisation in 1997. Drawing its strength from a Pakistan based organization *Lashkar e Toiba*, the HUM was alleged to be a member of Osama's International Islamic Front for Jihad against America and Israel.

The late Gen Asif Nawaz Janjua, the then COAS, called him to Rawalpindi back at last.

On 8<sup>th</sup> September 1995, the Pakistani Customs stopped a car carrying heavy arms and ammunition near Kohat and arrested its driver and Saifullah Akhtar of HUM. On interrogation, they reportedly told that the weapons were procured by one Brig Mustansar Billa of the Pakistan Army posted at Darra Adamkhel allegedly meant for Kashmiri extremist groups under his [informal] command.

The GHQ took over the investigation and arrested a group of 40 army officers and 10 civilians headed by Major Gen Abbasi. Benazir Bhutto, the then Prime Minister, was briefed that this group had conspired to kill her with some senior military officers, staging a coup and

proclaiming Pakistan as an Islamic state. All officers & men taken in custody were tried by a military court and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

M H Askari wrote in the '**Dawn**' of **18<sup>th</sup> October 1995** that:

*'It is said that the plotters had close links with Hizbul Mujahideen and the Harkat ul Ansar, which are known for their involvement in international terrorism. It is also said that the arrested officers wanted Pakistan to become militarily involved in the Kashmir freedom struggle and should go visible all over.'*

'The Nation' of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1995 reported that: *'Major Gen Abbasi had close contacts with the Harkat ul Ansar.* The 'Khabrain', an Urdu newspaper, alleged that two of the arrested officers belonged to the ISI and that one of them had worked as the staff officer to Lt Gen Nasir, when he was DG ISI [referring to Major Gen Abbasi]. '**The Nation**' of **15<sup>th</sup> November 1995** reported that:

*'Almost all the arrested officers are followers of the Tablighi Jamaat based in Raiwind which place [then] also considered the Punjab's HQ of Harkat ul Mujahideen (HUM).'*

Retaliating Gen Ziauddin's posting as DG ISI in 1999, and perhaps to implement his plans regarding Kargil activity, Gen Musharraf transferred Lt Gen Aziz from the ISI to the GHQ along with his assignments and control of affairs concerning with Kashmir and Afghan operations. Gen Aziz was given the post of CGS at GHQ and made responsible for implementation of all kinds of military operations through the Directorate of Military Intelligence (MI).

Lt Gen Nasir was kept in the picture about the implementation of Kargil Plans, but unprofessional Lt Gen Ziauddin, even being Chief of the ISI, could not get air of it. Officially Nawaz Sharif was not told about Kargil Operation but he could not know it un-officially even because of such ineffective & incapacitated DG ISI like Ziauddin in his team.

Media reports available on record for first quarter of 1999 had conveyed an impression that some irrational religious elements in the Pakistan army known by Gen Musharraf and his retired colleagues had encouraged adventurism in Kargil assuming that:

- The morale of the Indian army was low due to bad handling of George Fernandez, the Indian Defence Minister. Lt Gen Asad Durrani, former DG ISI, had mockingly referred to him as the *'best Indian Defence Minister that Pakistan can hope to have.'*
- The BJP was a party of paper tigers, known more for their long speeches and verbal threats than for their actions.
- Pakistan's nuclear and missile capability had ensured that India would not retaliate against Pakistan for occupying the strategic border ridges in Kargil.
- The fear of the possible use of nuclear weapons would bring in Western intervention; thus internationalising the Kashmir issue.
- Pakistan would agree to a ceasefire only if it was allowed to retain the Indian Territory it occupied; not to previous position.
- Pakistan wanted to keep the Indian army bleeding in Kashmir just as, in the past, various Afghan *Mujahideen* factions kept the Soviet troops bleeding in Afghanistan in 1980s.
- Pakistan should keep on frustrating India's ambition of emerging as a major Asian power at par with China and Japan.

In May 1999, the Indian Army started reacting vigorously to the Kargil invasion and had ordered the Indian Air Force to go into action against the invaders. It was only then that Gen Musharraf told Nawaz Sharif that he had sent in a large number of Pakistan army troops to help Kashmiri fighters at Kargil border but already there were heavy casualties till then. The

pressure from US and his allies for withdrawal of the Pakistan forces for restoration of the status quo ante came as another surprise for all in the government and away.

Besides Kargil, Gen Musharraf deceived Nawaz Sharif at another count during the same days. He ordered the movement of nuclear warheads from one place to some other but without placing it in the knowledge of the President being the Supreme Commander of the army, or the PM being the executive head of the state. The PM did not know this fact.

During Nawaz Sharif's meeting with Bill Clinton, the later asked a question regarding reasons and rationale behind that movement of nuclear arsenal where the PM was blank. It was a moment of utter humiliation for a PM that he was not aware of that serious matter whereas the CIA (of course the RAW also) knew it.

In March 1999, Gen Musharraf started coming out his upper skin. After taking over WAPDA (Water & Power Development Authority), he issued orders that the army would conduct all future negotiations with the independent power producers, thereby denying any role of the politicians and civilian bureaucrats in energy matters. When Nawaz Sharif questioned that order, he declined to cancel it.

Gen Musharraf got prepared a list of all payment defaulters of the WAPDA and leaked to the press having names of PM's industrial managers, colleagues, high profile politicians and their business concerns. One Abida Hussain, a cabinet member of Nawaz Sharif, was one of the major defaulters, thereby forcing her to resign. Gen Musharraf as COAS openly hinted to the media that the business enterprises of Sharif's family top the list of defaulters. Much humiliating it was for a sitting prime minister.

The media reports of those days also tell that Gen Musharraf's policy and handling of WAPDA affairs were appreciated by the general populace being a gesture of uprightness because the Pakistani politicians are known to be above law while eating up national levies and funds.

After military coup of 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999, Gen Musharraf ruled Pakistan from 1999 to early 2007 smoothly; was going fairly popular amidst usual criticism amongst the people at large but stumbled down while suspending his Chief Justice in March 2007 and then ordering the Lal Masjid siege in July same year. His attempt to institute emergency rule failed as calls for his impeachment escalated.

The return of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from exile had pushed the nation towards parliamentary democracy ending Musharraf's reigns in August 2008 at last.

In February 2011, a Pakistani court issued an arrest warrant for Gen Musharraf because of his alleged involvement in assassination of Benazir Bhutto. As of June 2011, he lives in self-exile in London. He has vowed to return to Pakistan on 23rd March 2012 which has been considered doubtful by all means.

### ***Gen Ziauddin selected as COAS 1999:***

Since the start of October 1999, the senior army Generals under Gen Musharraf's command, especially who were responsible of Kargil's disaster, had gone adamant to throw away the political leadership to avoid any possible incident of sudden announcement of an Enquiry Commission into their failures. It was too late then. The best time for ordering such an enquiry was the first week of July 1999 when Nawaz Sharif had returned from America after a humiliating meeting with President Clinton, generally known as Washington Accord.

Leaving aside the facts that Nawaz Sharif had ordered to keep Gen Musharraf's jet passenger plane in air or not; Gen Musharraf and his four intimate General's team had planned it since two weeks earlier or not; it was fact that Nawaz Sharif knew it that his government's send-off was on cards but he could not handle the things intelligently.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999, there were abnormal changes seen around the PM House then. Commander 111 Brigade was changed, the army men on security duty were given new

intelligence system, the visitors to the PM House were monitored and special SSG platoons were called on Dhamial base which were all unusual signs in smoothly running set ups.

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999, when Nawaz Sharif was coming back from Multan at about 2 PM, he had called Secretary Defence Ch Iftikhar Ali and Principal Secretary Saeed Mehdi at Islamabad Airport. When the PM landed, Secretary Defence was there but not the Saeed Mehdi, may be he was not able to get message from air. The PM and Secretary Defence got into the state car while Brig Javed Malik, the Military Secretary (MS) to the PM also accompanied them. During his drive to the PM House, the PM told Secretary Defence that he had decided to change the Army Chief at last.

When they reached the PM House, Saeed Mehdi was already waiting for them there. All the four officers proceeded to the PM House's lobby where Saeed Mehdi was told about the PM's decision to retire Gen Musharraf and also to bring Gen Ziauddin, then DG ISI and the next senior most General on the list, as the new COAS.

It was about 3 PM that day when Gen Ziauddin was asked on phone to attend the PM House at 4 'O'clock. In the meantime, the Principal Secretary and Secretary Defence had got ready a notification retiring Gen Musharraf and making of Gen Ziauddin as the new Army Chief. It was the notification which the same two officers had issued exactly a year earlier on 8th October 1998; only the date and names were changed. The PM Nawaz Sharif signed it.

At 4 PM, Gen Ziauddin was there in the PM House and a one to one meeting with PM was held. The two secretaries and Brig Javed Malik were later called in. All they congratulated the new COAS. The PM decorated the badges on the new COAS, which were temporarily removed from Brig Javed Malik's shoulders to honour the occasion before the TV & media staff of the PM House. Immediately after, the PM went to the President House, got the said notification approved and countersigned by President Rafiq Tarar, came back and copies issued to media & PTV for onward news release.

Gen Ziauddin, the new COAS moved in Military Secretary's office in the PM House and in descending order made hotline telephone calls to Gen Mahmood of 10 Corps, Gen Aziz the CGS, Brig Imtiaz, Gen Tauqir Zia, Gen Akram (telling him that he would be the new CGS and called him to the PM House then), Gen Saleem Hyder (telling him that he would again take over 10 Corps replacing Gen Mahmood as he had done with him a year back), Gen Yousaf of Multan Corps and lastly with Gen Usmani of Karachi Corps. Gen Usmani was asked to receive Gen Musharraf with usual protocol of a retired army chief and to keep him in a rest house till new instructions.

Later Military Secretary Brig Javed Malik had told in an interview that no instructions to delay the flight or to keep it hanging in air were conveyed; it was a subsequent concocted story.

The new CAOS was sitting in Military Secretary's room where Gen Akram, the new CGS had also arrived. Gen Salim Hyder, the new designated Commander of 10 Corps was on his way to the PM House, when at about 5 PM, Nawaz Sharif called his MS and told him worriedly that some army personnel had taken over the PTV HQ and had interrupted the news.

PTV HQ was just at 2 minutes away from the PM House. The MS did not want to go to PTV HQ under PM's orders but the new COAS was also there to instruct him. He had to proceed. Outside there was no military vehicle so he had to go in police escort car.

A scene occurred in PTV building. When the MS Brig Javed Malik reached the news room at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, one major of 111 Brigade was handling the affairs there with about 12 armed *jawans*. When the MS conveyed them the message of the new COAS and the PM, the armed persons took him at aim. After some minutes the major incharge was able to understand his viewpoint. The PTV news reinstated as normal.

When the MS reached back at the PM House, it was Ok as if the change of COAS had been normalized. But soon after there were army all around and the armed soldiers were crossing over the walls of the PM House from each side. The MS went outside and talked to the officer

on duty; made him understand that there is nobody from the PM House to resist. Take it as they had surrendered.

'No firing, no fighting, no beating; simply do what you have been instructed,' they were told. The game was over. Inside every body was told to stay in the rooms where they were. After two hours Gen Mahmud came to the PM House. The MS, though a serving Brigadier then, was abused and beaten even by *jawans*, it was learnt later.

The unlucky new Army Chief, Gen Ziauddin could survive for three hours only and was pushed to darkness of history forever with so many others; civilians and politicians.

The historians opined that Gen Musharraf was sacked on Kargil's debacle; it was PM's prerogative but every decision should have good intentioned rationale behind it. All Generals are not J Karamats.

Gen Ziauddin of Engineer's Corps was not acceptable to any. The force respects skills not 'the genes or *brotherly*' only.

Had Nawaz Sharif negotiated with Gen Mahmud at the last moment when the later himself was there in the PM House, whether his name was born on the seniority list or not, his government would have survived or Gen Mahmood would have been the CMLA; but at least Pakistan could have been saved from 'Kargil's Hero'.