



Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2011

DEFENSE

Diplomacy

by Jared M. Tracy

In August 2011, Company A, 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) and Indian Army (IA) Special Forces (SF) elements conducted a Joint-Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercise, VAJRA PRAHAR 2011, at Yakima Training Center (YTC) and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Washington. The purpose of VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 was “to prepare for future missions, improve interoperability and U.S. Army Special Forces FID [Foreign Internal Defense] capabilities.” It also helped strengthen the strategic Indo-U.S. partnership.¹ Before explaining VAJRA PRAHAR 2011, the background of U.S.-India relations and mutual security interests is necessary.

The U.S. established diplomatic relations with British India in November 1946. Nine months later, India gained independence; the U.S. immediately recognized its sovereignty. Bilateral relations warmed and cooled over time. India resented the American friendship with Pakistan, its chief territorial rival over the northern region of Kashmir. At the same time, the U.S. disliked India’s ties to the Soviet Union and its diplomatic recognition of

Communist China. Relations improved in the early 1960s, when the U.S. began to see India as a counterweight to China, supporting it during the 1962 Sino-India War. Tensions resurfaced in the late 1960s and early 1970s due to ongoing American support of India’s chief rival, Pakistan.² The U.S.-India relationship improved slightly in the late 1970s and 1980s, but remained generally lukewarm.

U.S. strategic assessments changed in the early 1990s with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union (India’s main trading partner). In the new environment, the U.S. and India “began exploring the possibilities for a more normalized relationship between the world’s two largest democracies.” However, Indian nuclear testing in the late 1990s ran counter to U.S. non-proliferation goals, leading to protests by the President William J. Clinton Administration. While efforts to “bring New Delhi more in line with U.S. arms control and non-proliferation goals . . . went unfulfilled,” the U.S. and India soon “engaged a broader agenda on the entire scope of U.S.-India relations.”³

In the 1990s, the U.S. and India “began exploring the possibilities for a more normalized relationship between the world’s two largest democracies.” — Congressional Research Service



(L) President John F. Kennedy meets with the President of India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, in the Oval Office on 3 June 1963. Despite a historically lukewarm relationship, the U.S. had firmly supported India in the 1962 Sino-India War. (R) President Barack H. Obama and Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, meet at the White House on 24 November 2009. Because of India’s tough anti-terrorist stance and ongoing role as a counterweight to China, it remains a valuable strategic ally of the U.S.



In the years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., India pledged full cooperation and support for counterterrorism operations, in which it had a vested interest. Compounding India's longstanding rivalries with Pakistan and China were direct terrorist threats from groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e Mohammed (JeM), and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI). For example, the Pakistan-based LeT led the terrorist attacks against India's Parliament in December 2001, as well as the November 2008 attacks on multiple civilian targets in Mumbai (killing some 165 people).⁴ Due to India's anti-terrorism stance and its role as a counterweight to Communist China, a growing geopolitical rival of the U.S., President Barack H. Obama called the relationship "one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century."⁵ According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the military dimension of this partnership "involves a robust slate of dialogues, military exercises, defense trade, personnel exchanges, and armaments cooperation."⁶

Overseeing U.S.-India security cooperation at the highest level was the Defense Policy Group (DPG), co-chaired by the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Indian Defence Secretary. Military training exercises further cemented that relationship. For example, in 2004, the U.S. Army began the combined annual exercise YUDH ABHYAS with India. By 2011, YUDH ABHYAS had expanded from a company-level Field Training Exercise to "battalion live fire exercises and brigade-level command post exercises." At that time, the combined defense priorities were maritime security, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and counterterrorism. In fiscal year 2011, the U.S. conducted fifty-six military exercises with India, among them VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 (the second installment of that "SOF-exclusive" JCET).⁷

U.S. elements of VAJRA PRAHAR came from Company A of the still-provisional 4th Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (SFG), specifically Operational Detachment – Bravo (ODB) 1410 and Operational Detachments – Alpha (ODAs) 1412, 1413, and 1416, totaling around thirty SF-qualified soldiers. Heading ODB 1410 were the commander, Major (MAJ) Andy R. Rice*, Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CW2) Larry J. Naulet*, and Sergeant Major (SGM) Mark L. Kloninger*. Captain (CPT) Jimmy M. Townshend* commanded ODA 1412, and was assisted by Team Sergeant Master Sergeant (MSG) Nick Dawson*. CPT Alan M. Furlow* and Team Sergeant MSG Stanley Rivacoba, Jr.* led ODA 1413. And CPT Timothy P. Worbel* and Team Sergeant MSG Cody M. Wilson* headed ODA 1416.⁸

In addition to U.S. Special Forces personnel, around twenty non-SF soldiers supported VAJRA PRAHAR 2011. These included riggers, drivers, medics, and eight enlisted Hindi interpreters. The latter had joined the U.S. Army via Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI), a program awarding U.S. citizenship to immigrants in exchange for military service and language/cultural expertise.⁹ During the exercise, the interpreters proved themselves extremely valuable in



MAJ Andy R. Rice* was the first commander of ODB 1410 (Company A, 4th Battalion, 1st SFG), the senior American element participating in VAJRA PRAHAR 2011.



1st PARA (SF) BN Commander, COL Alin Deb Saha, led the Indian Army contingent of the exercise. The Indian Army Parachutist Badge can be seen above his front-right pocket.

facilitating communication between U.S. and Indian Special Forces.

The Indian contingent came from The Parachute Regiment, the IA elite special operations unit consisting of three active duty airborne parachute (PARA) battalions (5th, 6th, and 7th) and seven Special Forces PARA battalions (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th, and 21st).¹⁰ The 1st PARA (SF) Battalion commander, Colonel (COL) Alin Deb Saha, explained both the SF and airborne battalion missions: "SF battalions are tasked for small team operations: reconnaissance, surveillance, target acquisition and designation, and direct action. The airborne PARA battalions jump in for offensive actions behind enemy lines, similar to a U.S. airborne division."¹¹ Commanded by a colonel, a typical PARA (SF) battalion consisted of four teams, each commanded by a major and equal in size to a conventional U.S. infantry company. In turn, a team consisted of four or five troops, each commanded by a lieutenant (LT) or CPT and equivalent in size to a U.S. infantry platoon.

The roughly sixty Indians participating in VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 came from the 1st PARA (SF) and 4th PARA (SF) Battalions. Heading the IA contingent was COL Saha, a Kolkata, India, native, and veteran of the 1st PARA (SF) Battalion since 1993. Other commissioned officers included MAJ Thaiba Simon (assault team leader), CPT Paras Joshi

Indian Army Parachute Regiment

A Brief History

The Parachute Regiment traces its lineage to the 50th Indian Parachute (PARA) Brigade, established by the British Army in October 1941. The 50th consisted of the 151st British, 152nd Indian, and 153rd Gurkha Parachute Battalions. The Indian airborne soldiers' combat experience in World War II included the Battle of Sangshak in the frontier region between India and Burma in March 1944. The paratroopers were later reorganized and expanded into the 44th Indian Airborne Division (subsequently re-designated the 2nd Indian Airborne Division). This division consisted of the 50th Indian PARA, 77th Indian PARA, and 14th Air Landing Brigades.¹

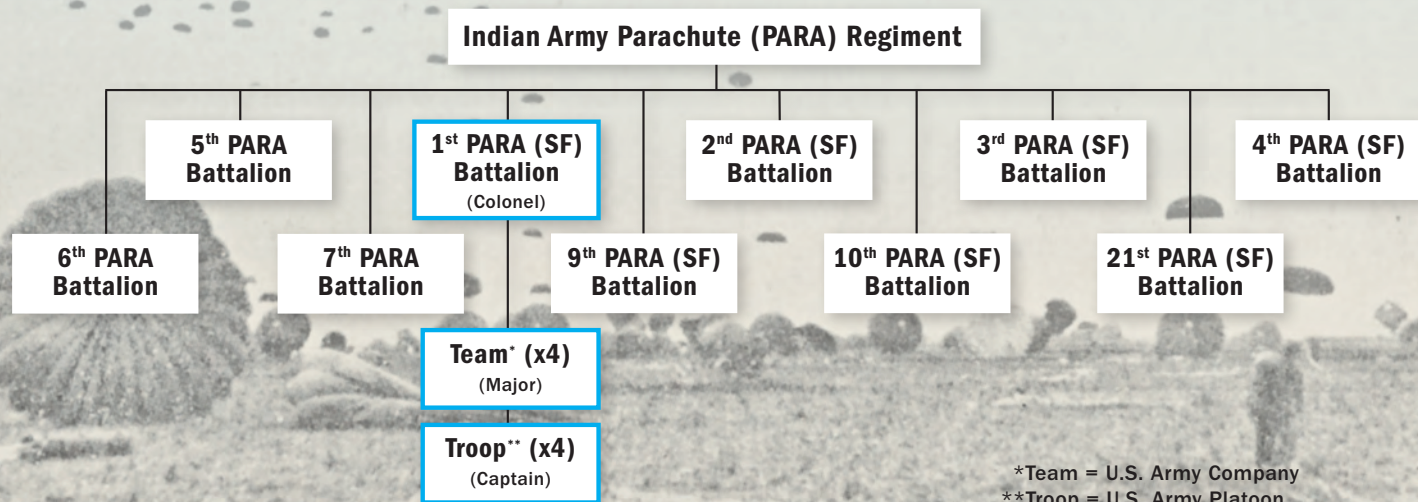
Following WWII and Indian independence in 1947, the paratrooper force was reduced to just the 50th Indian PARA Brigade, consisting of the 1st (Punjab), 2nd (Maratha), and 3rd (Kumaon) PARA Battalions. Though employed as conventional ground infantry, the airborne soldiers distinguished themselves in territorial battles with Pakistan in the late

1940s. On 15 April 1952, two months before the activation of the U.S. Army 10th Special Forces Group, the three Indian PARA Battalions were consolidated to form The Parachute Regiment. By 2011, the regiment had grown to three airborne and seven Special Forces battalions.²

In addition to its longstanding role in border disputes, The Parachute Regiment has deployed soldiers in support of overseas military and peacekeeping operations. Examples include Korea (1951–1954), which involved jumping into Munsan-ni with the U.S. Army 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team in March 1951; Gaza (1956–1958), where the 1st and 3rd PARAs supported peacekeeping efforts following the Arab-Israeli War; and Sierra Leone (2000), where the 2nd PARA (SF) supported UN peacekeeping efforts after years of civil war in that nation.³ From its inception to the present day, The Parachute Regiment has served as “the elite volunteer force of the Indian Army.”⁴



Organization: Parachute Regiment & 1st PARA (SF) Battalion



(sniper element commander), LT Yogendra Kathayat, and LT Maneet Kumar Pant from the 1st PARA (SF) Battalion. MAJ Archit Goswami (assault team leader) and CPT Rajat Chandra came from the 4th PARA (SF) Battalion.¹²

In June 2011, these and other ‘cream of the crop’ Indian SF personnel were selected to participate in VAJRA PRAHAR 2011. According to CPT Chandra, a trained sniper and 4th PARA (SF) Battalion troop commander, “We had some criteria for people to attend the training. For example, snipers had to have four or five years of experience.”¹³ “We started training in India about a month before coming here [to JBLM],” said LT Pant, a 1st PARA (SF) Battalion troop commander.¹⁴ Because of careful selection and preparation of participating personnel, VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 would offer both the Indians and Americans the opportunity to train each other.

ODB 1410 commander MAJ Andy R. Rice* had three main objectives for VAJRA PRAHAR 2011. The first was to assist the PARAs with developing a fully capable operations center which “monitors and directs its subordinate units.” The second was to “advise and assist” the IA PARA (SF) in “planning and executing the Full Mission Profile (FMP),” a term denoting the entire scope of a mission, including planning, rehearsals, infiltration, actions on the objective, and exfiltration. The final was simply to

[The desired end state was enhanced] “military-to-military relations and interoperability... leading to an increased desire to conduct future VAJRA PRAHAR exercises.”

— MAJ Andy R. Rice*



Parachute Regiment Insignia



PARA (SF) Battalion Insignia

improve combined interoperability. The desired end state was enhanced “military-to-military relations and interoperability . . . leading to an increased desire to conduct future VAJRA PRAHAR exercises” as a means to strengthen “the strategic relationship between the [U.S.] and India.” In the end, “ODAs [will] have improved their ability to conduct operations by, with, and through a host nation partner.”¹⁵

COL Saha had his own goals. He wanted his men to “understand the dynamics of joint operations, the mechanics required to operate together, and the points you can take from U.S. Special Forces. At the same time, we should impart our skills which we have gained over a period of time.”¹⁶ Both commanders’ goals would be realized over the course of five scheduled phases:

- » Pre-deployment (25–30 July)
- » Deployment (30 July)
- » Employment (1–25 August)
- » Redeployment (26–28 August)
- » Post-deployment (28–31 August)

ODB 1410 had begun preparations for VAJRA PRAHAR months before Phase I began. Company A Chief Warrant Officer, CW2 Larry J. Naulet*, a former Infantryman and SF Medical Sergeant, described the ‘big picture’ planning process for the JCET: “We had an IPC [Initial Planning Conference] in May, which included four Indian officers. It was nice to get a face-to-face with those guys to ask, ‘Hey, what do you want to do? How do you want to play this?’”¹⁷ Reporting to Company A, 4-1st SFG on the first day of the IPC was SGM Mark L. Kloninger*. Beginning his Army career as an M1 Armor Crewman, Kloninger* had been an SF Weapons Sergeant and Communications Sergeant, and had previously served in 2-1st SFG and in the 39th Special Forces Detachment (Republic of Korea). According to Kloninger*, during the IPC, “We took the Indian officers on a tour of potential training areas, lodging and mess facilities, ranges, and gave them situational awareness of JBLM and YTC.”¹⁸

The last planning conference was in June. According to CW2 Naulet*, “We presented them with our final Administrative Procedures Agreement and the training plan. When they blessed off on that, we really started pushing stuff forward.”¹⁹ Handling much of the ODB planning and coordination was Operations Sergeant MSG Leroy P. Bryce, II*, who “procured equipment and facilities, and coordinated training areas and events at YTC and JBLM.”²⁰

Ironically, many of the ODB 1410 preparations, and the publication of the VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 Concept of Operations (CONOP), occurred prior to the July 2011 assumption of command by the first Company A commander, MAJ Andy R. Rice*. The Eugene, Oregon, native and 1998 graduate of Western Oregon University served in the 1/506th Infantry in Korea and the 1/38th Infantry at Fort Benning, Georgia, before becoming SF-qualified in December 2003. He commanded ODA 012 (1-10th SFG), deploying to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

in 2004–2005. He also served as a staff officer at Special Operations Command, Europe (SOCEUR) and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). “When I got here in July 2011, they were buried in work ahead of the exercise,” Rice* said. “My job was to take some of the burden off of them and focus on the things like the POIs [Programs of Instruction] and protocol issues.”²¹

When Phase I began in late July, ODAs 1412, 1413, and 1416 were putting the final touches on their assigned areas of training. Preparations for the ‘shoot-house’ scenarios, urban assault courses, and much of the range work for VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 had fallen on ODA 1412, led by CPT Jimmy M. Townshend*. A Cleveland, Ohio, native, Townshend* earned a Field Artillery commission in 2003 after graduating from Kent State University with a degree in Justice Studies. He first served as a Platoon Leader in a 155mm Howitzer battery in the 2/8th Field Artillery Regiment. After a 2004–2005 deployment to Iraq, he served in the S-3, 1st SFG. Becoming SF-qualified in 2008, he then headed ODA 1213 (2-1st SFG) until April 2011, when he took command of ODA 1412.²²

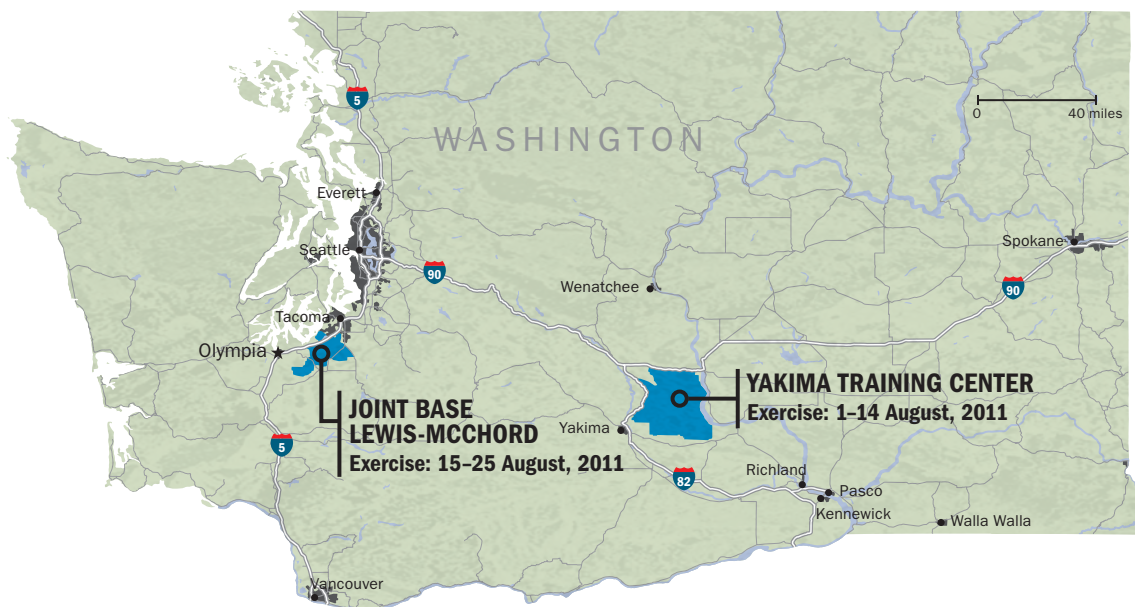
Responsible for ODA 1413 preparations was CPT Alan M. Furlow*, another Ohio native who in 2005 graduated from Ohio University with a degree in International Studies. After serving in the 173rd Airborne Brigade, he became SF-qualified in 2010, and took command of ODA 1413.²³ For VAJRA PRAHAR 2011, ODA 1413 planned for the advanced long-range marksmanship portion at Yakima. “We did quite a bit of preparation,” explained Furlow*. “On a typical SF team, you have a couple sniper-qualified individuals who have gone through official courses. That knowledge is then passed down to the team. We took our trained snipers out and went shooting for a couple of weeks. We developed a mini-POI, internal to the ODA. As a captain, you don’t always get the opportunity to conduct training like that. I was lucky enough to get

behind a weapon system and get a true understanding of sniper techniques.”²⁴

Different training responsibilities fell on ODA 1416, led by CPT Timothy P. Worbel*. The Bloomfield, New Mexico, native, 2005 U.S. Military Academy graduate, and former Engineer Officer became SF-qualified in 2011. A 2007–2008 deployment to Afghanistan heading a route clearance platoon in the 70th Engineer Battalion proved relevant to Worbel*’s training responsibility for VAJRA PRAHAR 2011: the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) lane. ODA 1416 worked with the U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group and other agencies to develop the POI. “We created a mission scenario for the IED lane, based on intel from historical precedent. Basically, what you would get in theater before you go on a route.”²⁵ By late July, Company A, 4-1st SFG had everything in place for VAJRA PRAHAR 2011.

On 24 July 2011, the Advanced Echelon (ADVON) of the IA PARA (SF) contingent arrived in the U.S. A week later, Company A leadership received the Indian main body when it arrived at the Seattle-Tacoma (SEATAC) International Airport, thus ending Phase I. The brief Phase II entailed the mass movement to YTC, procurement of vehicles and lodging for the IA, area familiarization, safety briefings, and final equipment preparations.²⁶

The bulk of the training came during Phase III, with two weeks at YTC and the rest at JBLM. Participants split into two assault troops and a sniper element. The American hosts used the ‘crawl-walk-run’ method. Reviewing emergency procedures, safety precautions, and basic skills characterized the ‘crawl’ phase. The ‘walk’ phase consisted of training with non-lethal rounds. Trainees moved into the ‘run’ phase “only when ODAs and IA PARA (SF) [were] thoroughly confident and knowledgeable with the abilities and TTPs [Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures] of the other.”²⁷



Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2011, Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Yakima Training Center, Washington



1st SFG and PARA (SF) BN soldiers load a .50 caliber rifle at Yakima Training Center on 6 August 2011. ODA 1413 oversaw the long-range marksmanship part of the training.

“We developed a mini-POI, internal to the ODA. As a captain, you don’t always get the opportunity to conduct training like that.”

— CPT Alan M. Furlow*

The run phase included weapons ranges, Close Quarters Battle (CQB) and Advanced Military Operations in Urban Terrain (AMOUT) scenarios, explosive breaching, the IED lane, and Fast Rope Insertion Extraction System (FRIES) training. Finally, there were two Full Mission Profile (FMP) events (18–19 August and 23–24 August), which involved real-time combined planning processes, FRIES insertions, clearing a mock insurgent compound under sniper over watch, treating and evacuating casualties, and exfiltration. Providing aerial support for the in-flight sniper elements, the 16 August ‘friendship’ airborne jump, and live FRIES training was Company C, 4/160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), also headquartered at JBLM.²⁸

The combined planning sessions offered both armies the forum to show how they prepared for missions. According to CPT Furlow*, “We had the Indians explain to us how they did mission planning, and we explained to them how we do it. So we’ve had a merging of planning theories come into play.”²⁹ CPT Worbel* echoed, “For the FMPs, we integrated completely with the Indians. We

initially attempted to teach the full MDMP (Military Decision-Making Process). We modified it to just troop-leading procedures, since the simpler training mission didn’t really warrant the full MDMP.”³⁰

CPT Townshend* explained the different planning styles. “They have a more battle drill-focused planning process. In real life, they often get a target or mission, and within 30-40 minutes they have to react. A lot of times, their mission is already given to them as far as how they’re going to take the target down or execute the objective. The mission stays very high up, as far as the officers are concerned. Their NCOs really have no visibility until the very last second.”³¹ MSG Nick Dawson* of ODA 1412 echoed: “The Indian Army is a lot more top-driven. They have an NCO Corps but it’s not built like ours.”³² “Sometimes, that becomes a bit of a challenge for us,” according to SGM Kloninger*. “Their officers make all the decisions, and their NCOs pretty much wait on guidance.”³³ The exercise had been valuable for exposing the different command and control styles of U.S. and Indian SF units.

After all training finished, there was a final After Action Review (AAR). In the spirit of cooperation and learning, this and previous AARs provided both armies the opportunity to assess how things went. As Townshend* said, "We tried to make AARs more positive, more of a learning experience, instead of a beat-down session. At the end of the day, you don't want to walk away from this JCET with people frustrated with one another. You want more of a learning environment instead of a morale-crushing experience."³⁴

Phase III formally ended with the 25 August 2011 closing ceremony. The Reviewing Officers were COL Saha and COL Brian Vines, Deputy Commanding Officer, 1st SFG. (The 1st SFG Commander, COL Francis M. Beaudette, was then in the Republic of the Philippines as the 'dual-hatted' commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines). The Distinguished Guest was Brigadier General Bhupesh Kumar Jain, Indian Defence and Military Attaché in the Indian Embassy. American and Indian SF participants stood in formation as MAJs Simon and Rice* exchanged their respective nation's parachutist wings for the recent combined airborne drop. After that, LTC Steven A. Warman, 4-1st SFG commander, and COL Saha made their remarks.³⁵

LTC Warman praised the conduct of the exercise, and looked forward to an enduring relationship with the IA. "The team approach was evident in everything that the Task Force executed. At the urban assault course at Yakima, I saw squads of Green Berets and PARA (SF) dismounting the helicopters together and assaulting their targets together, all under the watchful eyes of a combined sniper element. At the friendship jump, I watched both elements exit the ramp of the [MH-47 *Chinook*] together and joking on the Drop Zone afterward. And during the final FMP event at [JBLM], I watched you fast rope together from the helicopters, clear the objectives, and exfil together,

just as you would in a real-world operation . . . We must continue to share [our] knowledge with each other in future exercises, enhancing both of our capabilities and continuing to move forward . . . I truly hope we will be able to continue these exercises in the future, and build upon the solid relationship we have established."³⁶

COL Saha underscored Warman's sentiments. "The exercise has helped both armies in learning, practicing, and refining their skills and understanding their counterparts. With the completion of this exercise, the interoperability, integration, and the procedural dynamics have been refined and suitably modified to help in making operations at all levels easy and successful. Apart from the great amount of learning value gained from this exercise, one should not forget the fond memories which I hope each individual present here will carry throughout his life. In this exercise, we have been able to bond ourselves together and develop a relationship which will continue throughout our lifetime."³⁷

After the ceremony concluded and pleasantries were exchanged, Phase IV began. It consisted of inventorying, packing, and shipping back IA PARA (SF) equipment, and the departure of the Indian contingent from SEATAC. Finally, during Phase V, ODAs 1412, 1413, and 1416 conducted equipment recovery and maintenance, and submitted a consolidated AAR to 4-1st SFG.³⁸ Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 had come to a close.

The PARAs responded positively to the training. According to LT Pant, "We learned a lot from the technical expertise that the U.S. Special Forces have. In spite of the language barrier, they coordinated well with the Indian troops."³⁹ CPT Chandra seconded, "It was good exposure for my troops to get out of the country and work with U.S. Special Forces."⁴⁰ A six-year veteran of the 1st PARA



"The team approach was evident in everything that the Task Force executed . . . assaulting their targets together, all under the watchful eyes of a combined sniper element." — LTC Steven A. Warman

U.S. and Indian personnel, including CPT Rajat Chandra from the 4th PARA (SF) (standing, right) and sniper element commander CPT Paras Joshi (seated, right), conduct pre-mission planning on 17 August 2011 for the Final Full Mission Profile (FMP), beginning the next day at JBLM.

PHASE 3 TRAINING



TOP An MH-60 Blackhawk with part of the combined assault element lands in a mock town during VAJRA PRAHAR at Yakima Training Center on 10 August. ODA 1412 planned the Advanced Military Operations in Urban Terrain (AMOUT) training.

1 With a 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) crewman (L) offering guidance, COL Alin Deb Saha (center) and a 1st SFG soldier practice aerial sniping techniques and provide over-watch for combined elements on the ground.

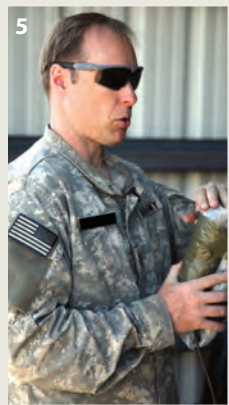
2 ODA 1413 Team Sergeant MSG Stanley Rivacoba, Jr.* demonstrates a Jumpmaster Personnel Inspection (JMPI) on a PARA (SF) soldier at JBLM on 15 August 2011. 1st SFG and PARA (SF) personnel conducted the combined jump using MC-6 parachutes the following day.

3 A 1st SFG soldier observes his Indian Army PARA (SF) counterpart during long-range marksmanship training at Yakima Training Center.

4 PARA (SF) BN soldiers train on room clearing on 6 August 2011. ODA 1412 prepared the 'shoot-house' portion of the training.

5 On 12 August, SFC David L. Faban* provided instruction on building explosive breaching charges, with follow-on practical training at Range 24 at Yakima Training Center.

6 PARA (SF) soldiers move through a mock town under the watch of a 1st SFG soldier during at Yakima Training Center on 11 August 2011.







With Indian and American flags as a backdrop, COL Saha addresses the combined U.S.-Indian formation at the closing ceremony of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2011, 25 August 2011.

At the 25 August closing ceremony, MAJ Thaiba Simon (L), 1st PARA (SF) BN assault team leader, and MAJ Andy R. Rice* (R), ODB 1410 commander, exchange their country's parachutist wings for the combined 'friendship' jump on 16 August from CH-47s belonging to 4/160th SOAR.

“It wasn’t that we were just training them, it was us working together.”

— MSG Nick Dawson*

(SF) Battalion, MAJ Simon stressed that the goal was not to have the U.S. and Indian SF mirror one another, but to understand and leverage each other's unique capabilities. “The U.S. believes in speed, volume of fire, and shock action because they have the firepower and aerial support. They can dominate the target area from the air, which we can't. So, our movement is slightly quieter, we insert in smaller teams very close to the target, and attack the enemy without losing surprise.” Because of VAJRA PRAHAR 2011, “I know that if we go out together, the U.S. will do things one way, and we will do them another.”⁴¹

American SF personnel got their own value out of the training. According to CPT Furlow*, “Our long-range marksmanship has increased 100 percent. Just from that, this exercise has been really positive.” In addition, “Some of my troops are just out of the SF Qualification (‘Q’)



Course, so it's been their first opportunity to work with a foreign force. From that perspective, it's been very valuable because it gave them a flavor of what a future FID mission might look like.⁴² SGM Kloninger* stated similarly, “We have a lot of young guys, fresh from the ‘Q’ Course. This is an easy target of opportunity for us to conduct a FID-type operation in CONUS (Continental U.S.). It's giving our guys the experience of working with foreign troops and better preparing them for future deployments.”⁴³ According to CPT Townshend*, ODA 1412 likewise gained greater understanding of “how to work with another military. They also understand that no matter how well a plan is thought out, things are always *not* going to go the way you thought they would. You have to be flexible.”⁴⁴

CPT Worbel* said, “First, this was the first time ODA 1416 had done much on the CQB/AMOUT side, so we were



ODA 1412 commander CPT Jimmy M. Townshend* (R) mingles with PARA (SF) personnel following the 25 August 2011 closing ceremony.

able to develop a lot of our SOPs. Second, it was just a great opportunity for my team to get that JCET experience. We have five new SF guys, including myself, and in the past we have only worked with Afghans and Iraqis."⁴⁵ MSG Dawson* explained how ODA 1412 adapted its training style for the exercise. "Our guys had to tone down how we operate a bit because we're used to being in the lead. But here, we are totally combined. We had to take each other's techniques and combine them to where we were interoperable with each other. It wasn't just us training them; it was us working together."⁴⁶

Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 achieved the goals of the CONOP and, in the process, bolstered U.S. and India's strategic partnership. MAJ Rice* commented on many positives of the exercise: "Obviously, deploying overseas is the ultimate test, but the miniature deployment we conducted to Yakima was very useful. The teams and company got another chance to load out and vet our own SOPs and packing lists. And working with a foreign military in any capacity is always very valuable. The rapport between us and the Indians has been excellent."⁴⁷ LTC Warman summed up VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 well: "The American and Indian Special Forces that participated in this training accomplished everything that they have because they worked together as a team."⁴⁸

EPILOGUE

Although VAJRA PRAHAR 2011 ended on a highly positive note, there were no annual VAJRA PRAHAR/JCETs from 2012 to 2015. In January 2016, VAJRA PRAHAR was reinitiated at JBLM with 2nd Battalion, 1st SFG, hosting their Indian Special Forces counterparts. In March 2017, VAJRA PRAHAR was held in Jodhpur, India, and in January 2018, the exercise returned to JBLM.⁴⁹ †

Thanks to Company A, 4-1st SFG (A), and the Indian Army 1st and 4th PARA (SF) Battalions, for their assistance with this article.

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Endnotes

- 1 ODB 1410, "CONOP-VAJRA PRAHAR 2011," 29 June 2011, 2, hereafter "VP CONOP," copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 For U.S.-India relations during the Cold War, see Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- 3 Congressional Research Service, "CRS Report for Congress: India-U.S. Relations," 12 August 2008, 14, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/109486.pdf>, accessed 18 February 2015.
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