

Special Frontier Force: The “Two Twos”...



SFF collage by Abhinav Negi

The highly motivated men and women of the Special Frontier Force or SFF has again proved the force as a well trained and highly effective force after the 2020 Eastern–Ladakh conflict, by carrying out successful Ops and capturing strategic heights. Let’s go back in time to see the rich history of the Tibetan Ghosts, who are better known as The ‘Vikasis’.

The present Special Frontier Force (SFF) traces its roots back to when the highly motivated Mustang Rebels helped the 14th Dalai Lama to escape the brutal crackdown by the troops of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) during the 1959 Tibetan Rebellion. The rebels successfully exfiltrated with the Dalai Lama to the Indian Territory and took asylum in the ‘Land of Unity and Diversity’, this small group of displaced rebels were going to be proved highly effective against the Chinese in the future. The shell–shocked Indian government after the teeth souring defeat in the 1962 Sino–Indo war, got an idea to raise a highly trained force comprising of the Tibetan



1 Archer CDO with 2 PARA SF (Photo by ADGPI)



SFF Mt Everest (Photo by ADGPI)

Guerillas to fight against the Chinese. On 14 November 1962, a secretive force comprising of Tibetan Rebels and commanded by Indian Army officers came to existence as the Establishment–22 (to be read as Two–Two).

The force was initially fielded by a joint–task force of IB of India and CIA of the United States and was trained by the US Army Special Forces known as the Green Berets at the Joint Base Kadena in Okinawa, Japan. The force was later renamed SFF and came under the Cabinet Secretariat working tandemly with the foreign intelligence wing, the R&AW of Cab–Sec. The SFF first went into combat during the 1967 Indo–Sino Conflict in the Nathu–La border district of Sikkim which was soon merged with the Republic on 16 May 1975. In 1971 the force again saw immense action when Pakistan attacked India on the western front, The Tibetans were dropped in the active combat zone of Chittagong in present Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). The SFF troops did massive destruction while operating deep behind the enemy lines, ambushing



SFF paratrooper

convoys and attacking HVTs (High Value Targets) was the new normal for the ‘boiz’ during the 13 days long war. The next time the Two–Two boys saw combat was during Operation Meghdoot on 13 April 1984 in which they operated under