

The Text of the Speech by the COAS, **Royal Nepalese Army**

2060/8/11 (27 Nov 2003)

Generals, Officers and Other Ranks

1. Two years have passed since the decision by His Majesty's Government sanctioned the deployment of the Royal Nepalese Army to control the spread of terror and violence that have challenged peace and tranquility of the nation. The selfless service, sincere commitment, outstanding bravery and heroism displayed by the rank and file of the RNA has brought positive outcome in controlling the so called 'Maoist' terrorism. There is an evident growth of self-confidence among the populace as well as optimism regarding the inevitable defeat of the Maoist terrorists. These positive results and indicators are the pure outcome of the sacrifices made by the innumerable martyrs and Nepal's finest sons and daughters. This fact reinforces our strength and determination to remain firm and dedicated to the accomplishment of responsibilities entrusted on us.

2. On Kartik 23 four brave soldiers, including Tech Brig Gen Sagar Bahadur Pandey lost their lives in a cowardly ambush set up by Maoist terrorist in Pandrang of Nibuwar VDC of Makawanpur district. Nine others were injured in the incident.

3. The whole of the Royal Nepalese Army has been stunned and grief stricken by the sad demise of Tech Brig Gen Sagar Bahadur Pandey. In his long service of 27 years he had been noted to be a very friendly, sincere, dedicated and qualified officer. RNA will always remember Gen Pandey for his contributions in the service of the Nation, people and the monarchy and will always grieve his loss. His Majesty's Government in recognition of his service and sacrifices has promoted Brig Gen Pandey to rank of Tech Maj General posthumously. I offer my hearty condolences to the bereaved family of late Maj Gen Pandey along with all those have laid down their lives in the line of duty. I also would like to wish for a speedy recovery of all the wounded, receiving treatment in various hospitals.

4. Let us all observe a minute of silence for the late Gen Pandey and all others who sacrificed their lives for our nation.

5. This event is also organized to inform you all about the grave situation regarding our National Security and provide you with guidelines on discharging of our responsibilities.

6. There are however positive signs of gradual progress in the country's security situation. The Maoist terrorists in the wake of strong criticism from the international community have by now reached a stage of utter desperation. The combined efforts of the security forces effecting operation along with the growing hatred and dislike by the population have rendered them weak. They are currently displaying their hideous dual character by giving out attractive rhetoric but on the other hand are carrying out acts of terror and merciless killings.

7. The hideous crimes of the Maoist like abducting and murdering innocent unarmed security personnel as well as terrorizing their families; forcefully recruiting school children; extorting money; killing innocent civilians in the name of informants have continued

unabated. They have murdered a 79 year old man and a 65 year old lady in Taplejung and Rajbiraj in cold blood, on charges of not providing them the money they asked and a young man in Salyan was forced to commit suicide for the same reason. The Common people are sick and tired of the Maoist atrocities. In similar manner the series of desertion from the ranks and files of the Maoist have been increasing due to the fact that they are meeting defeat at the hands of security forces everywhere. Many of their cadres are frustrated by the helplessness and the oppression of their leadership and hence are surrendering in large numbers before the security forces. The Royal Nepalese Army as always, stands ready to protect and preserve the lives and liberty of those who wish to surrender.

8. The RNA under the benevolent patronage of His Majesty the King is committed to maintaining peace and order in the country as well as safeguarding the security of ordinary citizens. All of our military operations are directed towards achieving these objectives. The rank and files of the RNA are commendable for their exceptional courage and brave performance even through adverse situations. The achievements of the military operations so far are satisfactory and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you who made it possible. I also believe that we will soon be able to restore peace and order in the country by defeating the Maoist terrorist through relentless and effective security operations. The obligation and historical responsibility entrusted on us by our motherland will need immense determination and firmness to achieve. We can be assured that efforts and sacrifices made by us today will not go to waste and then on will be recorded as the golden chapter in the history of Nepal.

9. I feel it is relevant to revisit the nobility and justness of the cause of the security campaign we are undertaking at present. Our prime responsibility is to guarantee peace and security of the Nepalese people. Since we believe that the Nation, the people and the monarchy are of the supreme importance, we must act and act firmly to protect them. We have taken this historical acid test first to protect the constitution of Nepal and the fundamental rights of the Nepalese people guaranteed under it, secondly to ensure a safe, democratic and prosperous future for our coming generations safeguarding our religious, traditional and cultural norms and values. Behind our current campaign against terrorism there is a vision of a peaceful, tranquil and prosperous Nepal. We think of a Nepal where all the Nepalese people can live peacefully in their homes, a Nepal where all children's could go to school without any fear, a Nepal where everybody can bring in their harvest in peace. A Nepal where everyone will be free to make his/her own choice of employment and a Nepal where all the Nepalese people could peacefully live under a rule of law enjoying the prosperity made possible by security and balanced development. The vision also encompasses a Nepal coexisting with high esteem among the international community with social harmony and unity among its people.

10. The RNA has been contributing troops in maintaining peace in various parts of the world and we will do whatever it takes to restore peace and tranquility to our won homeland. We remain determined to defeat the malicious antinational terrorist elements. The support and cooperation received from well wishing friends worldwide provides us with more energy and enthusiasm to pursue our goals more effectively against the global menace of terrorism.

11. His Majesty's government has adopted a strategy of unified effort in order to defeat the Maoist terrorism by having a good coordination among the government and security

forces. The Nepal Police, which had been fighting bravely on its own for the past six years now has even larger importance in the present context. Similarly the Armed Police Force since its inception within a small time span has been able to successfully carry out operations against the Maoist terrorists. The role played by the National Investigation Department throughout, is praiseworthy and full of achievements. Keeping in focus constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy I believe that we must be united to achieve the national objective of restoring peace and security in the country.

12. The Nepalese people have gained more faith and confidence in the Royal Nepalese Army due to the constructive and positive roles it played for the Nation and the people. We must preserve the respect, trust and confidence that we have developed among the Nepalese people. In order to do so all of our actions must be guided by the principle of "To serve the people, to respect the people and to defend the people". The uprising of the people against Maoist repression is very encouraging. The Maoist terrorism will be defeated sooner, if all the peace loving people and groups who have faith in constitutional process and in protecting our national interest firmly stand behind the efforts of the security forces. It is the cooperation of all such nationalists that can make the difference necessary to defeat the Maoist terrorism. We will continue our efforts to support the concept of 'mobile government service' of His Majesty's government to deliver services at the door steps of the people. I would like to convey my heartfelt appreciation to all the Nepalese people for their cooperation to the security forces. We remain committed to lessen the difficulties and hardship faced by the people without compromising security.

13. Since we believe that the security forces derive their sense of responsibility and inspiration from the very citizens we serve; we all must remain aware, cautious and committed in protecting the lives and property of the people. In order to safeguard the lives of the innocent civilians, every possible effort must be made in identifying the actual terrorist before taking any military action. Restraint of the highest order must be our guiding principal during all military operation.

14. I would like to recall an incident before you all. While I was visiting the wounded soldiers in the hospital, one of them queried me as to "why should we not target the families of the Maoist since they are attacking ours"? In response I told him that the Royal Nepalese Army has always believed in the importance of human rights and human values, so we must continue on from the higher moral ground in carrying out operations against Maoist terrorism. I also told him that, this is what has earned us the respect and confidence of the Nepalese people in the past and will do so in the future. We cannot and shouldn't even think of acting against innocent peoples in revenge. All our actions therefore must be in consonance to the law of the land and with complete respect to the protection of human rights. A small incident at the tactical level can have a large impact on the strategic level. A signal mistake committed can tarnish the image of not only an institution but that of the whole nation. These types of incidents unfortunately though, do occur in the long drawn campaign against terrorism. No body has the liberty however to make deliberate mistakes and also one cannot blame the whole institution for the mistake committed by an individual. An enquiry will be held to review such incidents and appropriate action will be taken against those found guilty, as we have done in a past. So I would like to remind you all to act with your better judgment and responsibility towards upholding the law and human rights, which I believe will enhance the image and glory of the Royal Nepalese Army.

15. Measures have been taken to update and upgrade the welfare system of the RNA as a part of its modernization. Attempts have been made to add more welfare schemes to the already existing ones, under an umbrella of an integrated welfare. One of our topmost priority has been to fulfill our obligation towards the welfare of the families of our fallen comrades. Even in the current adverse situation, we have been sending troops to countries like Sierra Leone, Congo and Liberia for peacekeeping missions. In addition, the policy of giving priority and awarding facilities to all ranks who discharge their duty with utmost sincerity, heroic bravery and ultimate courage will be continued.

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16. It is of no doubt to all of us that a true nationalist must remain completely committed and dedicated towards the nation, the people and the monarchy. During this time of national crisis our prime responsibility is to fulfill our duties in a competent and professional manner. I pray to God that our efforts be a success and wish well for the prosperity of all our personnel and their families.

17. Let us all hail to His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen.