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# Manzur made frantic bid for civil, army backing

## Troops didn't respond to rebel cause

By A Staff Correspondent

The fourth instalment of the White Paper on Chittagong mutiny and the killing of President Ziaur Rahman issued on Friday stated the post mutiny activities in Chittagong by the General Officer Commanding of the 24 Infantry Division. The White Paper said that after being briefed by Lt Col Delwar regarding the details of action at Circuit House the leader of the mutiny General Manzur went to 6 East Bengal Regiment in civil clothes and ordered Major Dost Mohammad Sikder Second-in-Command of the 6 East Bengal Regiment to send troops of platoon strength to military police gates and signals centre. From there he came to his office and ordered all available divisional staff officers Brigade Commanders Commandant East Bengal Regimental Centre Commandant Bangladesh Military Academy and Artillery Centre all divisional troops commanding officers to come to office immediately.

General Officer Commanding addressed the officers and told them that the President had been killed by some young officers and he was with them the White Paper stated. He emphasized that the country was not administered properly and a revolutionary council is to take adequate measures to correct it. He then asked every one present to touch the holy Quran which was kept in his office to take an oath of allegiance and pleading support to him and the revolutionary council. Every one present had touched the holy Quran.

The White Paper stated that from 8 a.m. on May 30, 1981 he gave similar briefing to civil and military officials. However neither Navy nor Bangladesh Airforce gave any encouraging support at any time to the rebel cause. The White Paper said that General Manzur then addressed series of meetings with the civil and military officers and also troops. The troops did not respond spontaneously to his call.

The White Paper stated that by early afternoon of May 31 the rebel leader Major General Manzur and his cohort could read the writings of the wall very clearly. At 6 p.m. on May 31 General Officer Commanding called a conference attended by senior officers in the garrison including the brigade/battalion commanders and his staff officers. General Officer Commanding asked their views whether to start negotiations or not. With the exception of Lt. Col. Motiur Rahman and Lt. Col. Delwar every one suggested that negotiations was the only peaceful answer.

Brigadier Hannan was nominated by GOC to start negotiation with Dacca at around 6.30 p.m. Brigadier Hannan started negotiations with Army Headquarters with a dictated sentence by General

Manzur "I feel there is a scope for negotiation. You have to send two negotiators to Chittagong and announce it over radio and also Radio Bangladesh should stop anti-revolutionary broadcast".

The White Paper said the negotiations over telephone continued up to around 1.30 a.m. on June 1, 1981. Ultimately the rebel leader could feel that Dacca was firm not to accept his conditions and he fled away like a coward General.

The following is the third instalment of the chapter II (two) of the White Paper on the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman.

(Post Mutiny Activities): General Officer Commanding's quick reaction: After evacuating Lieutenant Colonel Fazle Hussain and Captain Jamil to Combined Military Hospital, Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar went to Major General Manzur's house and in all probability briefed him regarding the details of action at the Circuit House. The leader of the mutiny then personally drove his staff car in civil cloth, went to the office of 6 East Bengal Regiment where he found Second-in-Command of 6 East Bengal Regiment Major Dost Mohammad Sikder and ordered him to send troops of platoon strength to the military police gates and signals centre. He ordered 2

companies of 6 East Bengal Regiment to move to Shuvapur Bridge for taking up defence against possible attack of the loyal forces from Comilla.

On further instructions from Lieutenant Colonel Motiur Rahman Major Salam, Brigade Major 203 Infantry Brigade and Captain Ilyas Lieutenant Moslehuddin of 6 East Bengal Regiment along with the troops of 6 East Bengal Regiment left for Shuvapur at around 9-30 a.m. on 30 May 81 and took position near Shuvapur Bridge and new bridge on Feni River.

Oath Taking Ceremony. General Officer Commanding went to his office from 6 East Bengal Regiment and ordered all available Divisional Staff Officers, Brigade Commanders, Commandant East Bengal Regimental Centre, Commandant Bangladesh Military Academy and Artillery Centre all available Divisional Troops Commanding Officers to come to office immediately. General Officer Commanding addressed officers and told them that the President had been killed by some young officers and he was with them. He emphasized that the country was not administered properly and a Revolutionary Council is to take adequate measures to correct it. He then asked every one present to touch a holy Quran which was kept in his office to take an oath of allegiance and pleading support to him and the Revolutionary Council. Every one present had touched the Holy Quran. From 8 A.M. on 30 May 81 Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner Metropolitan Police Commissioner Chittagong Sector Commander Bangladesh Rifles, Deputy Inspector General of Police Chittagong Range, Commanding Officer 38 Light (Continued on page 3 col. 1)

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Anti Aircraft Regiment Artillery Base Commander Bangladesh Airforce and his staff Officer (Operations) General Staff Officer-2 (Operations) arrived at the Divisional Headquarters met General Officer Commanding and similar briefing and oath-taking was repeated. However neither Navy nor Bangladesh Airforce gave any encouraging support at any time to the rebel cause.

Atmosphere in the Division Headquarters: Atmosphere in the Division Headquarters after General Officer Commanding's briefing was one of euphoria. Whispered consultation were going on in full swing between the officers. Most active were Lieutenant Colonel Mahboob, Lieutenant Colonel Motiur Rahman and Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar. Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar was irritatingly active. He made frequent visits to the General Officer Commanding's Office and passed down the orders to Lieutenant Colonel Moti and Lieutenant Colonel Mehboob. Among others who were seen very active, were Major Khaled who made frequent visits to the Divisional Headquarters and also Major Iazdani, Major Muzaffar Major Bias and Major Momin. Brigadier Mohsin was kept in the Division Headquarters while General Manzur went out to address the troops and civil officials in the Deputy Commissioner's office. Consultation were also done by the General Officer Commanding with Colonel Rashid and Colonel Nazesh. Throughout Saturday the spirit of the gentlemen seemed very high and were bursting with enthusiasm.

Deployment of Troops. At 11 M. on 30 May 81 General Officer Commanding called all Brigade Commanders, East Bengal Regimental Centre and made-1 Staff Officers of the Division in his office and gave deployment order as stated below:

- With a mission to defend own area of responsibility against any external threat, the outline of deployment was as under:
  - Deny axis Shuvapur - Sitakunda - Chittagong.
  - Deny beach Landing at Patenga, Fauderhat and Kumra.
  - Defend Chittagong Airport and Seaport.
  - Defend Chittagong Cantonment.
- 303 Infantry Brigade group was given the task to defend axis Shuvapur - Sitakunda - Chittagong and deny beach landing Kumra.
- 303 Infantry Brigade group was given the task of defending Chittagong.
- 303 Infantry Brigade was to defend Chittagong Airport and area Ka including transmission

Arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Mahfuz. Lieutenant Colonel Mahfuz, Lieutenant Colonel Mahtab and Captain Mazhar had already left the Circuit House and were staying with the Divisional Commissioner in his house. Arrangements were made to collect them along with other personnel of President's Guard Regiment and the above named three officers were brought to Division Headquarters by Major Iazdani around 11-30 A.M. on 30 May 81 and kept in 69 Infantry Brigade Mess.

**BURIAL OF PRESIDENT.** At around 9.30 a.m. on 30 May 81, Major Muzaffar, Major Shaikat Alley and Major Reza alongwith some troops left the Division Headquarters for Circuit House. Major Reza brought few members of the guard Regiment to the Cantonment at 12 a.m. on 30 May 81. Major Muzaffar alongwith Major Shaikat Alley took the bodies of the Hon'ble President, Lieutenant Colonel Ansan and Captain Hafiz, wrapping them most unceremoniously in bed sheets and took them to a village named Pathargata under Rangunia (in Kapitai Road) Police Station. There with the help of a village Moulana they perfunctorily buried the three bodies in a 8' x 4' waist deep shallow grave.

**GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING'S ADDRESS TO TROOPS.** At 12 a.m. on 30 May 81 General Officer Commanding addressed 24 East Bengal Regiment. On 31 May 81 from morning hours it was perhaps becoming apparent that troops were not as enthusiastic to the cause of the mutiny as was expected and General Officer Commanding decided to pay personnel visits to all units. From 8.30 a.m. on 31 May to 2 p.m. on 31 May 81 General Officer Commanding visited 11 and 28 East Bengal Regiment, Artillery Centre East Bengal Regimental Centre 35 Supply and Transport Battalion Base Supply Depot, 119 Field Workshop Company, 5 Signal Battalion, 31 Field Ambulance, 18 Field Ambulance and 34 East Bengal Regiment where he addressed officers, Junior Commissioned officers and troops urging them to support him and the Revolutionary Council. Troops on hearing his urge gave a very cold shoulder murmured amongst themselves in unhappy mood and did not raise their hands as expected in support of the General Officer Commanding. After delivering lectures to Artillery Centre and School, signs of unhappiness mixed with consternation was clearly visible in the rebel leader's face.

**GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING'S ADDRESS TO CIVIL OFFICIALS.** At around 11.30 a.m. on 31 May 81 General Officer Commanding addressed a cross section of civil officials of Chittagong in the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner Chittagong for about 1 1/2 hours where Commissioner, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Superintendent of Police, Bank and Port officials and others were present.

He started the meeting by ordering them not to listen the Dacca Radio and warned them that no officer should keep their feet on two boats. He bitterly criticised the government during his address. He gave directions to Port authority not to allow any ship movement and directed that 'no petrol, oil and lubricant should be sent to Dacca. He directed Regional Director, Radio Bangladesh Chittagong to comply with his instructions and maintain 24 hours service. He directed that Bangladesh Bank at Chittagong should act as reserve bank and local bank officials to carry on the banking functions.

**General Officer Commanding's Attempt to Mobilise Support.** Major General Manzur took overt and covert means to get support from different formations Bangladesh Rifle Police Mukti Joddhays Chhatra League (Hasina) by sending courier issuing signal message and sending local emissaries. It seems that except a very feeble support sending Fued eta shr ta shrd from Mukti Joddhays he did not get any moral support in his cause of the mutiny. In order to motivate the troops and gain public opinion he issued different bulletins at various time to Radio and Television.

**Defection.** Troops of 24 Infantry Division were getting increasingly alarmed of the consequences of the mutiny. They started defecting some troops. By 11 A.M. troops from 6 East Bengal Regiment 26 East Bengal Regiment and 36 East Bengal Regiment crossed the Shuvapur bridge and joined loyal forces. At 11.30 a.m. troops of Field Regiment Artillery Headquarters, 305 Infantry Brigade 119 Field Workshop Company 31 Field Ambulance and a Company of 28 East Bengal Regiment followed suit.

**Negotiation.** By early afternoon of 31 May '81 the rebel leader Major General Manzur and his cohort could read the writings on the wall very clearly. At 6 P.M. on 31 May 81 General Officer Commanding called a conference attended by senior officers in the garrison including the Brigade/Battalions Commanders and his Staff Officers General Officer Commanding asked their views whether to start negotiations or not. With the exception of Lieutenant Colonel Motiur Rahman and Lieutenant Colonel Dilwar everyone suggested that negotiations was the only peaceful answer. Brigadier Hannan was nominated by General Officer Commanding to start the negotiations with Dacca at around 6.30 P.M. Brigadier Hannan started the negotiation with Army Headquarters with a dictated sentence by General Manzur "I feel there is a scope for negotiation. You have to send two negotiators to Chittagong and announce it over Radio and also Radio Bangladesh should stop anti-revolutionary broadcast".

**Final Departure.** Negotiation over telephone continued up to around 1.30 A.M. on night 01 June 81. Firm land Army Headquarters asking for unconditional surrender of the mutineers convinced Major General Manzur that his terms and conditions could not be made acceptable to the Army Headquarters. It may be mentioned here that on previous occasions Army Headquarters had met most of his replies for men and material since he was entrusted with a great responsibility of counter insurgency Operations at the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Further it is a common practice that normally a General Officer Commanding may request men to some extent of his choosing and material as per requirements for performing a specific challenging task from higher Headquarters for successful conduct of such task. Operations assigned to him. But unfortunately Major General Manzur utilised all resources placed under his command to further his nefarious design. And that the rebel General was having sinister design at the back of his mind were subsequently detected and duly reported by Chief of Army Staff and various Intelligence agencies to the late Honourable President time and again. At around 2 A.M. on 01 June '81 he left the Divisional Headquarters saying that he was going home leaving behind every one in his office and did never come back. At one stage during the mutiny General Officer Commanding 24 Infantry Division remarked to his officers that if the mutiny failed he would die in his chair. Ironically before even 48 hours could lapse the remarks was proved to be farcically untrue as he fled so ignominiously from his office never to return. If these events receive cognizance in the history of our nation this particular remark will stand out as being the over confident claim of a vaulting ambitious and cowardly General. (To be continued)