

Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal on the contingency that India must send troops to Kabul – if invited

Afghanistan's National Security Advisor, Hamdullah Mohib, reportedly used a visit to New Delhi to privately press a request for at least a Brigade — perhaps even a Division — of Indian troops to be deployed in a peacekeeping role, ahead of a peace deal with the Taliban which is expected to lead to the final withdrawal of United States forces (*Praveen Swami, CNBC TV18, 27 January, 2020*).

The present situation in Afghanistan can be described as a strategic stalemate. Forces of the Afghan National Army (ANA), supported by the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), are not losing but the resurgent Taliban now control about one-third to one-half of Afghanistan. Even in the rest of the country, while the ANA control the towns, the

writ of the Taliban runs in large areas of the countryside, especially at night. The devastating conflict has taken a heavy toll over two decades. According to one estimate, direct war-related casualties comprise over 111,000 dead and 116,000 wounded.

President Donald Trump of the US had announced his administration's policy for the resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan in August 2017 as part of his strategy for South Asia. Contrary to his campaign promise to pull out, he had pledged continuing US support for diplomatic, military and financial commitment to peace and stability and political reconciliation. He had also reiterated that US efforts for the elimination of the al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan would continue. Trump had left the decision on the number of troops to be maintained in Afghanistan to the then

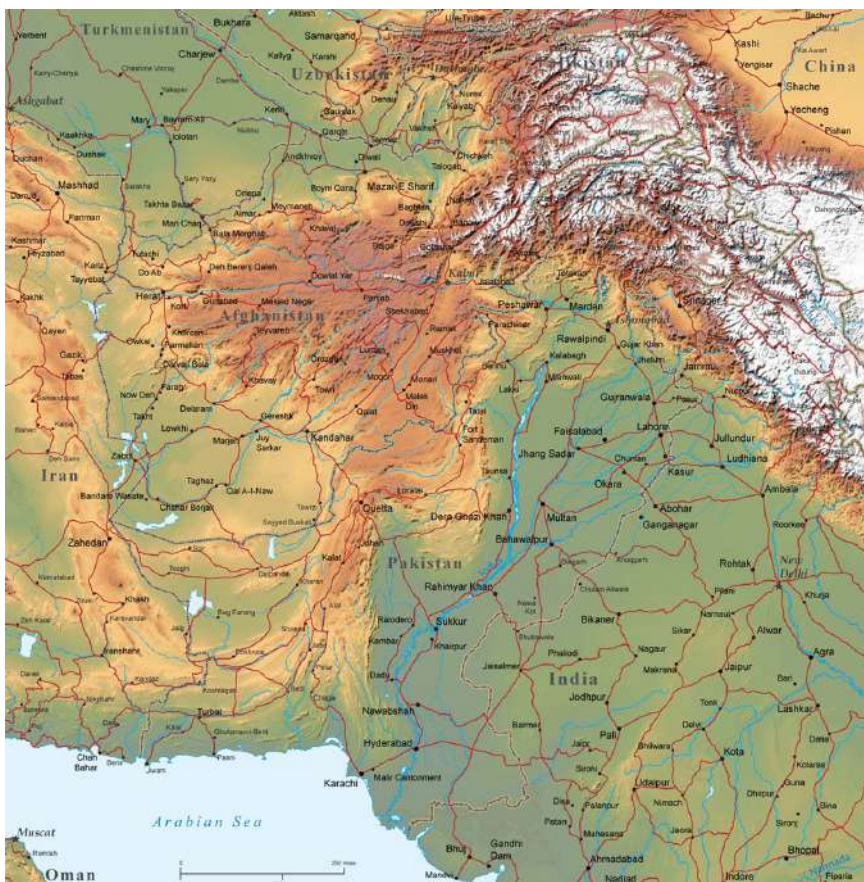


Brigadier Gurmeet Singh Kanwal, who passed away on 16 March 2020 was a noted strategic affairs analyst, an authoritative voice on strategic policy issues, in particular on issues concerning the armed forces. He was a regular writer for the *Vayu Aerospace & Defence Review*, this being his last contribution.

Commissioned on 31 March 1972 in the Regiment of Artillery, he served first with 80 Field Regiment and later commanded 150 Field Regiment, followed by an infantry brigade along the Line of Control during Operation *Parakram* (2001-2002).

After taking voluntary retirement in 2003, he became Director of the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) from 2008 to 2012 and also co-founded two think tanks: *Forum for Strategic Initiatives* (FSI) and the *South Asian Institute for Strategic Affairs* (SAISA).

Brigadier Gurmeet S Kanwal authored several books including *Nuclear Defence; Shaping the Arsenal, Indian Army: Vision 2020; Pakistan's Proxy War; Heroes of Kargil and Kargil '99: Blood, Guts and Firepower*.



Afghanistan is akin to a 'crown' on head of the sub-continent