

Facing the Dragon



(Boundaries depicted are not as per Government of India maps, image downloaded from Wikipedia for overview purposes only)

The Chinese Order of Battle: what we are up against

Just after the severe winter months, in May 2020 the Chinese were quick to reinforce their troops in the Aksai Chin area facing India's XIV Corps. Some of these additional forces had come in earlier as part of an "exercise" but was a pre-planned push to secure Indian territory, with reserves inducted to counter Indian deployment and prepared for offensive operations.

But what did the Chinese have in the area for border management before launching 'Operation Land-Grab' and what have they added? According to the *International Institute for Strategic Studies* London, before start of the confrontation, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had

three border-defence companies based close to those areas in the Aksai Chin. Two were drawn from the 362nd Border Defence Regiment, one being located at the 19th century Khurnak Fort on north bank of the Pangong Tso and the other at Spanggur Tso to the south.

The third was located at the Kongka La Pass near the Indian post at Gogra/Hot Springs, from the 363rd Border Defence Regiment. All these sub-units have patrolled the LAC, running into Indian patrols and were employed to make the initial intrusions. Border Defence Regiments are on par with regular troops in equipment (except for armoured fighting vehicles) communications and leadership. Their counterpart are our Indo-Tibetan Border Police which hold posts along the LAC and are backed by Army infantry battalions on hand and, in rotation from nearby camps.

There is also a Chinese motor boat squadron on the Pangong Lake itself. All these sub-units together would have numbered around 500–600 personnel. Reacting to the changed situation, it is likely that additional troops drawn from one or both of Chinese Border Defence Regiments' operational reserves have also been deployed to the area, raising the total PLA border forces in the area to some 1,000–1,500 personnel.

All that rapidly changed, with the PLA's 6th Highland Mechanised Infantry Division then forward deployed in the Chinese half of Depsang Plains. It consists



PLA armed forces are now deployed in Eastern Ladakh