

## Message from a Soldier Who Once Wore the Uniform

Lately, the news doesn't just inform—it unsettles. Every update about the growing tension between India and Pakistan stirs something deep within me. As a soldier who once stood on the frontlines, I can't help but feel the weight of it all. My heart is with those still in uniform—my brothers and sisters who continue to serve, while I watch from the sidelines.

I find myself restless, watching how events are unfolding. As a veteran I'd be lying if I said I don't share these emotions with my family and friends who still serve.

Life has moved on—new roles, new responsibilities, a different purpose. Yet, there's an ache that never fades. An ache to be fit as a fiddle once more, to stand tall at the border as I did during the six years I spent actively guarding it, in my thirty years of service in the Infantry.

There was always a surge of adrenaline when I wore the uniform and went on missions with my men. I felt part of something much larger—something noble: the mission to protect our nation. The men I commanded looked to me with hope, united in the belief that we were fighting for a just cause. Spending months away from home, your unit became your family. A weekly letter from your mother or wife saying all was well—that made your day.

And when you returned home after four or five months at the border, few people who truly understood what those 15 days of leave meant. To them, you were just another citizen earning a living—albeit far from home. And we accepted it with grace. Deep in our hearts, we knew the truth: for a soldier, life and death are never far apart. Seeing a brother-in-arms sent home wrapped in the tricolor didn't make us timid—it made us braver, more determined to honor and avenge his sacrifice.

No boardroom, no new project, no luxurious lifestyle can ever replace those moments in combat—when you lead your men on a mission, assuring them of success and survival, even when you're uncertain yourself.

Today, to every man and woman in uniform: you are doing what so many of us still wish we could do.

I may no longer wear the stars on my shoulders but my heart still beats the same—quietly, fiercely—with pride and a longing to serve once more.

Jai Hind.

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Col Mohinder Pal Singh, PhD

(A soldier, always at heart)