

**HIMALAYAN VENTURE 90 - MEF SUMMARY REPORT****INTRODUCTION**

1. This is an interim report on the recent RAFMA mountaineering and trekking expedition to India - Himalayan Venture 90 (HV90). This report attempts to give a concise summary of the expeditions objectives and the salient points, required by the MEF, on its execution. It is not intended to be the final, full expedition report; a comprehensive report containing complete financial, medical and equipment details will be issued later once all outstanding matters for HV90 have been finalised.

**CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVES**

2. The main objective of HV90 was to attempt an ascent of the west ridge of Kamet (7756M), a peak located in the far north of India close to the Indo/Chinese border. Had it been successful this would have been the first British ascent of this route. Due to its geographical location in a politically sensitive area, within the so called 'Inner Line' the mountain has been denied to western mountaineers for many years. For this reason the expedition was conceived as a joint expedition with mountaineers of the Indian Air Force (IAF). The RAFMA also decided to follow its tried and tested formula of sending out a trekking team with the climbers to India, thus taking advantage of the administrative arrangements and planning infrastructure already in place for the climbers, and giving the opportunity for less experienced members of RAFMA to take part in a major expedition and gain altitude experience in the higher ranges.

3. As a secondary objective Flt Lt Kirkpatrick, the expedition doctor, and Sqn Ldr Smithson intended to carry out some research into performance at altitude by HV90 climbers by collecting data on O<sub>2</sub> saturation levels, pulse rate, blood pressure and other variables during the expedition. A pulse oximeter for measuring blood O<sub>2</sub> saturation and pulse rate was taken along for this purpose. A description of their work and their results will be published in the final expedition report.

**TEAM**

4. A team of 11 climbers were selected, including and one representative from the Army Mountaineering Association. The team leader was Sqn Ldr M W Palmer the Indian Air Force co-leader was Sqn Ldr S S Purri was planned that the climbing team would be joined by up to 8 IAF mountaineers; in actuality 9 IAF mountaineers and one Indian guide took part. The climbing team included an RAF doctor and, purely by chance, an IAF doctor. By necessity the climbing team was selected from experienced and proven, high calibre mountaineers from within RAFMA. A full list of the team members is at Annex A.

**DATES**

5. The dates of the expedition and a breakdown of the timings in theatre is as follows:

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Overall dates:           | 1 September - 19 October 90.   |
| b. Access & administration: | 2 September - 14 September 90. |
| c. Dates on the mountain:   | 15 September - 12 October 90.  |
| d. Return dates:            | 13 October - 19 October 90.    |

## WEATHER CONDITIONS

6. Weather conditions during the expedition were for the most part typical post monsoon conditions and fairly stable at that. During the expedition we experienced only 2 days of heavy snowfall and one of those was during our clearance of the mountain. On most days cloud cover was minimal with a build up in the lower valleys during the afternoon. Localised cloud on the mountain was infrequent and generally accompanied by light snow showers. Temperatures were typically -7 to -15 degrees Centigrade at ABC during the night and +3 degrees (though feeling warmer out of the wind) during the day though during the final 2 weeks of the expedition temperatures became significantly colder. The winds were generally light and variable up to ABC but were stronger at Camp 1 and above with gusts up to about 70 mph experienced by the team during the first summit bid.

## REASON FOR RETREAT

7. The first summit bid took place over the period 5-7 October, before Camp 2 was actually established. This situation occurred as consequence of shortage of time and by a lack of technical experience amongst the IAF climbers negating their ability to lead on the route and reducing their effectiveness in support of the climbers on the mountain. Establishment of Camp 2 during the summit bid sapped the teams flagging resources. The summit day was clear but very cold (-20 degrees C) and very windy. Two of the summit party went back to Camp 1 when they found they could not warm their hands or feet. The final four summiteers turned back in the face of winds which threatened to blow them off the ridge at an altitude of approximately 25,000 feet. The summit party then had to carry out the rescue of the two IAF climbers who had fallen just above camp 2 ( see para 10 below ). The second bid, carried out 2 days later, also failed due to a lack of effective support and fatigue of the summiteers.

## CASUALTIES

8. During the expedition most of the team members and several of the porters experienced the classic symptoms associated with AMS. However, these soon passed and all the team members eventually acclimatised well. Diamox was used by several team members to reduce AMS symptoms.

9. During the early days on the south face one of the team suffered with minor frostbite, probably caused by tightly laced inner boots, and was confined to base camp for the rest of the expedition. Two other expedition members suffered minor frostbite during the expedition.

10. Major casualties occurred during the first summit bid, when, on the summit day, after a night above 24,000 feet, two of the IAF climbers (A K Singh and Nissam) fell approximately 200 feet whilst roping up. One of the climbers sustained a broken collar bone and the other lost his headgear and suffered frostbite of the ears and was in deep shock and a state of advanced exhaustion when discovered just below Camp 2 by the returning summit team. Both climbers also suffered minor frostbite to their hands and feet. During the subsequent rescue to bring the injured climbers back down the mountain Sqn Ldr Appleyard suffered major cold injuries to the toes of both his feet. Sqn Ldrs Singh and Appleyard were subsequently evacuated by helicopter. Sqn Ldr Appleyard was repatriated to UK where he spent 4 weeks in a military hospital culminating in the amputation of both his big toes. The current state of the IAF casualties is not known at this time.

## THE ROUTE

11. Base camp was located at a height of 5200 M on glacial moraine of the Pachmi Kamet glacier about 1 mile from Kamet. ABC was located some 500 M above BC on a flat promontory, safe from the dangers of avalanche and stonefall, just below the south face of Kamet at an altitude of 5700 M. From ABC the route lay up a series of steep gullies and ribs on the south face to join the true west ridge at a height of 6900 M. The face itself gave over 1200 M of steep snow and ice climbing ( Scottish 3/4 ) with no possibility for a camp or bivouac site. Rope was fixed on the whole of the face which took an exhausting 9 days to climb. Camp 1 was established on 1 Oct, 3 days behind schedule due to technical and logistic difficulties, on a snow ledge just below the crest of the ridge.

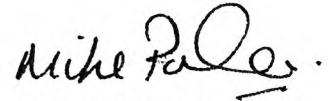
12. From Camp 1 the route became technically easier, following the true west ridge towards the summit, though variable snow conditions, extreme cold and the effects of altitude made the going tough. Camp 2 was actually established during the first summit bid as time and logistic support was running short. Camp 2 was located in a snowy col just below the crest of the ridge at a height of

7300 M, where a platform was dug for 2 tents. From Camp2 the route led up a snowslope to rejoin the ridge proper which it did via a series of steeply shelving rocks and narrow gullies. At this point the ridge became a knife edge guarded by gendarmes for approximately 100 M before broadening in a final rise to the summit snowfield. We retreated from just below the knife edge section at a height of approximately 7650 M in deteriorating weather and high winds.

### FINANCE

13. Finance for the expedition was solicited mainly from personal contributions and in service sources. The approximate cost of the expedition, including the trekking team was in the order of £20,000. When the final accounts are completed I will be able to give a figure for just the climbing element; this is not possible at this time.

14. The final detailed report for HV90 will be produced during the new year.



M W PALMER  
Squadron Leader  
HV90 Leader

|| December 1990

**LIST OF HV90 TEAM MEMBERS**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

1	MW Palmer	Mike	Sqn Ldr	HV90/Climb Leader
2	RJ Appleyard	Bob	Flt Lt	Dep Leader/Treas
3	G Stamp	Stampy	Cpl	
4	G Turner	Gordon	Flt Lt	
5	RB Kirkpatrick	Brian	Flt Lt	Doctor
6	P Smithson	Phil	Sqn Ldr	
7	C Scott	Colin	Flt Lt	
8	M Owens	Martin	Sgt	
9	P Horth	Paul	Sgt	
10	R Nelson	Rob	LCpl	
11	C Rawlins	Chris	SAC	

**INDIAN AIR FORCE**

1	SS Purri	KiKi	Sqn Ldr	Co Leader
2	A Bhagwanani	Baghu	Sqn Ldr	Doctor
3	AK Singh	AK	Sqn Ldr	
4	PH Singh	Prem	NC	
5	B Chowl	Chow	Flt Lt	
6	N Nizzamudin	Nissam	Sgt	
7	Kumar	Miami	Sgt	
8	Mandel	Mandel	Sgt	
9	Barnabus	Barney	Cpl	
10	N Norbu	Nema	Mr	Civilian guide from IMI Darjeeling