



BORDER SECURITY FORCE

Block No. 10, CGO Complex,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003
Tel No.011-24360495 (Office)
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PRESS NOTE

BSF CAMEL CONTINGENT ON RAJPATH

The Republic Day parade is a matchless display of the state of defense preparedness of the Nation as well as a showcase of its diverse and rich cultural heritage. This most eagerly watched event occurs on 26th January every year in the national capital, New Delhi.

Camelry (another name for the camel cavalry – similar to the term “Cavalry” which is associated with units of mounted horsemen) units or the Camel Contingents, that participate in the Republic Day Parade belong to the Border Security Force of India. These ceremonial contingents are not merely the pride of that magnificent force, but also that of the entire nation. Troops of the BSF on camels, holding various modern arms of combat & the BSF musical contingent on camels inspire as well as elevate the head and heart of the millions of viewers.

An introduction of BSF Camels

The BSF has on its rolls a large number of camels. A number of *Seema Praharis* and camel teams perform numerous duties in several sensitive zones of our national frontiers. A substantial number of such teams are generally stationed near the border outposts located on the India-Pakistan border, predominantly situated in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Some interesting facts about the camels of the BSF:-

- The Border Security Force has an authorized strength of more than 1200 male camels.
- Camels are acquired at 5 years of age, after a formal veterinary inspection.
- On an average, a camel serves the force for 15 years.
- Camels at BSF retire from active duty at the age of 21 years.

- BSF primarily has 3 sub types of dromedary camels: *Jaisalmeri* (sturdy build), *Bikaneri* (high speed runner) and *Nachna* (ceremonial usage).
- The camels of the BSF are allowed to stay in the open, though the Camel Training Center in Jodhpur (Mandera Road Camp) places them inside a fairly big walled enclosure. The place has ideally suitable sand based ground conditions and some tree cover. Such an arrangement suits the camels best and is also easy for the supervision of the camels in the enclosure.

Camel training Unit as Jodhpur (Rajasthan)

The Camel Training Center of the Border Security Force is located in the Frontier Head Quarters, Jodhpur and is the first permanent training center of the BSF meant exclusively for its camels.

The BSF Camel Training center has 62 camels and 70 Jawans (i.e., handlers of camels) on its rolls drawn from various units of the Jodhpur Frontier HQ. The training program is intended to enable the men to learn the art of handling camels as well as to train the animals in a successful manner. Among other things, the Camel Training Center has two specialized programmes. The first one deals with a “*Desert Course*” intended to familiarize the trainees with the use of camels. The other programme is known as the “*Camel handling and Management Course*” to train the personnel of the BSF in making them skilled in riding camels as well as taking care of them.

Evolution of standardized training of camels at the jodhpur Frontier HQ

After the BSF was established in 1965, camels were made a part of the organization. Soon after, the Jodhpur camp became the training ground for the camels. Various informal and native ideas were in vogue to keep the camels in good stead and all such ideas were pursued post 1965.

Battle Readiness of BSF’s Camel Contingent

The camel units have various patrolling and surveillance related responsibilities. Such tasks call for effective usage of camels for travel to various outposts and other border locations. The camels are specially trained to respond as per requirement in various hostile situations. Arms and ammunition are also utilized as and when needed. The camel bound Seema Prahari and his/her camel, both receive the required training and resources to safeguard the nation’s interest.

Colour and pageant of the camels & camel riders – dressed ceremonially

It may surprise many to note that there are over seventy-five different dress items that are necessary to ceremonially dress camels and riders of the BSF. The visual appeal of the ceremonial outfit of BSF camels and riders is a stunning riot colors and beauty. Though the dress order of the camel riders is similar to the uniforms and decorations worn by the erstwhile *Ganga Risala*, save the organizational and frontier identities (like the BSF logo / Rajasthan Frontier logo / badges of rank and so on), many ceremonial dress items used on camels have undergone changes over the years.

Camel Band of the BSF

The Camel Band is a creative and innovative way of presenting martial music and has gone through various stages of evolution, more particularly since 1986. Successive band masters of the Camel Band have contributed to the growth and development of this unit and they are remembered with pride, admiration and with a sense of satisfaction, that is perhaps exclusive to martial force like the BSF.

Camel musical rides of the camel acrobatic shows of the BSF are very popular and eagerly awaited events in places where such shows are organized. Besides the Republic Day Parade and the BSF Raising Day Event, camel contingents participate in various festivals and major events like the Jodhpur Sthapana Divas, Desert Festival, Thar Mahostav at Barmer, Desert Festival of Jaisalmer, Annual Camel fair & festival of Bikaner, Marwar Festival, Rajasthan Sthapana Divas and many other places on invitation.

Acrobatics on camels:

Universally riding a camel is more difficult than riding a horse. However, riders of the camel contingent of the BSF showcase their amazing riding skills and expertise with a daring display of acrobatics of various kinds. This display visibly conveys their ability and talent in the art of riding a camel.

Glorious heritage of the Camels of the BSF – the Ganga Risala

The Camel Contingent of the BSF is the proud inheritor of a great heritage of the Bikaner Royal Camel Force, Known as the Ganga Risala. Though the Bikaner Kingdom had well-developed teams of camel riding soldiers in its ranks, the use of camels in wars (on the Indian subcontinent) has a past dating back to a much earlier period. Historical records indicate that a camel army was set up in Bikaner in 1465. It

is also known that many irregular camel forces were found in various other princely states in the region.

Maharaja Ganga Singh, (1880 – 1943) who ruled the Bikaner Princely State for 56 years and was responsible for many other improvements and developments of the Bikaner State (including the steps to get precious water to the region through the Ganga Nahar). He ventured to streamline his armies and that effort merits to be remembered. One of the troops he focused intensely (and which was said to be very dear to him) was the Camel Contingent, which was named after him as the *Ganga Risala*.

About the Border Security Force of India

India's first line of defence, the Border Security Force (BSF) is one of the world's largest Para-Military forces. It has been safeguarding the India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh borders since its inception on December 1, 1965. Apart from its prime responsibility of guarding the international borders of India during times of peace and harmony, BSF continues to remain deeply involved in combating insurgency, militancy and law & order related issues across various interior regions of the country. Similarly, during an actual war or war-like situation, the BSF works as a force multiplier and contributes substantially towards the overall war efforts. It helps and enables in building a formidable front line to protect India's national interests.

V N Parashar
Public Relations Officer
9868393408 (Mobile)

Also visit us in <http://www.bsf.nic.in/>
Email: - probsfdelhi@gmail.com