

## *The Berlin Wall of Asia*

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3 June 2009

Unfortunately another conflict is going on in Pakistan..... ..we are full speed with the operation and a lot of information is flowing through the website: reports, frequency information, meeting minutes and....a nice “mission diary”.

Every two days Dane, deployed on the ground, is writing about his time in Pakistan and this gives us the opportunity to feel the atmosphere, understand the difficulties and live some of the experiences he and the other colleagues are having during the emergency operation.

Days ago one of his “little stories” made me feel particularly involved in the situation....Dane was in the Pakistani side of Punjab, the “Land of the Five Rivers”, a mile stone in the history of the British Indian Empire....and where half of my blood comes from!

The Indian state of Punjab was created in 1947, when the historical partition of India from Pakistan divided the previous province of Raj Punjab between the two countries. Indian Punjab was, and still is, mainly populated by *Sikhs* ....and this is where I pop into the story! ....I am “half *Sikh*” (PS: *Sikh* = do you know Sandokan?)

Back to the mission diary, the post was saying: “....after that delicious lunch in Lahore, I hit the road again. I visited WFP border logistics office at Wagah border point and was honoured with first row seat in "flag lowering" show!”

The Wagah border, often called the “**Berlin wall of Asia**”, is a ceremonial border on India–Pakistan border, where each evening there is a ceremony called “*Lowering of the Flags*”. At that time there is a very energetic and thrilling parade done by Border Security Force of India and Pakistan Rangers soldiers.

Troops of each country put on quite an entertaining show in their uniforms with their colorful *Turbans* and the ritual comprises a handshake between the captains of the two countries, followed by a battle of angered looks, stomping with vigour to show military strength!

Again from the post: “....Pakistan and Indian border rangers do perform in the first class military display show with approximately 5000 Indian spectators on Indian side and approximately 1000 Pakistani supporters on “this” side. Once flags are down, both gates are closed and no movement through border is allowed.”



It must be a great emotion being part of a ceremony that is actually a barometer of the controversial relations between India and Pakistan over the past years...

Emergency operations are though, stressful and sometime dangerous, but happenings like this can give the opportunity to experience something that is actually written in the "History".

PS: look at the pictures in the "Pakistan ETC Assessments" folder under Image Gallery....

Thank you

***Sonia***