

Western Front: Kargil Sector

As with the Turtok Sector, the high-altitude “moonscape” around Kargil presented both sides with enormous challenges. In this sector, however, India had a specific and important military objective: to clear Pakistani troops from the heights that dominated the Dras-Kargil-Leh road. This road, open only from May to September, served as the main supply line for the civilian population and military garrison in remote Ladakh (it continues to perform this function today, hence the Indian sensitivity to the Pakistani incursion in 1999). Pushing across the “windswept and inhospitable heights” against several companies of Karakoram Scouts, five battalions of Brigadier M. L. Whig’s 121 Independent Infantry Brigade Group successfully secured about 110 square kilometers north of Kargil between 7 and 17 December.⁹⁷ However, the brigade failed to reach its principal objective, the tiny village of Olthingthang near the confluence of the Shingo and Indus Rivers. Contending with fierce weather

