

The Kashmir Times July 4, 2001

Preposterous proposition

Dear Editor,

One cannot but agree with your editorial (June 27) in that the ex militants need to be looked after and that they and their families must be provided necessary protection against militant attacks. However, Lieutenant General Arjun Ray's assertion that it is immoral to use ex-militants for counter-insurgency operations would appear to be preposterous, to any one having the slightest knowledge of this type of warfare. It certainly would not appear to reflect the military sagacity expected of an officer of his rank. The General is known to be an "intellectual soldier". Evidently the intellectual in the General has overtaken the soldier in him.

It must be understood that counter-insurgency operations are solely dependent on accurate intelligence and the ex-militants can be a very useful source of intelligence. As a matter of fact the large number of militants that the Security Forces have been able to eliminate could be attributed to such "tip offs". Besides, they can guide the military patrols to the militant hide-outs through the country with which the Jawans might not be very familiar. In short they are capable of acting as the eyes and ears of the Armed Forces engaged in counter-insurgency. Why should the army be asked to forego this advantage when it is fighting at a disadvantage all along? There can be nothing unethical about using them, as they are doing this voluntarily and for a cause. Some of them have been armed, not for continuing the gun culture, as the General seems to believe, but because by assisting the Security Forces they have exposed themselves and their families to grave danger to their lives from militants and they need to protect themselves. While additional measures for ensuring the security of ex-militants and their families should not only be sought for but also fought for, their strong anti-militancy sentiment must be made use of, whatever the cost.

Nobody can be against the *sadbhavna* programmes launched by the Army. There is in fact, nothing new and original about it. This is known to form part of counter-insurgency operations all over the World. Only it is to be remembered that *sadbhavna* should be carried out in addition to military action and not instead of it. Fortunately the Army knows its beans.

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