

Mir Mast and Mir Dast were two Afridi (Pathan) brothers from the Tirah Valley on the North-West Frontier (now Pakistan).



The joined the Army of India to fight for the British in the 1890s despite the British having carried out expeditions in their homelands.

This was not unusual and the British recruited large numbers of Pathans even when at war with them or carrying out punitive expeditions (burning villages and crops, killing warriors, taking livestock and weapons). Pathans were a tough foe and the fighting could be brutal.



The best units of the Army were stationed on the North-West Frontier guarding against Russian invasion and keeping the various warring tribes as quiet as possible by launching punitive expeditions.

In 1897 the British carried out one such expedition 3 years after Mir Dast had joined them.



It proved a tough fight and the Army of India came away with many lessons to learn and having taken relatively large casualties.



The Army learnt these lessons - particularly the Indian troops. They become experts in frontier hill warfare - stalking, using small groups to cover each other and relying on marksmanship. Mir Mast won the India Medal for his actions in the Mohmand expedition of 1908 when he lead his section to tackle a group of tribesman firing at his unit.