

CHINA NAMES 11 XINJIANG HIGHWAY BRIDGES AFTER SLAIN GALWAN SOLDIERS

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In the Galwan Valley clash between the Indian and Chinese army men, 20 Indian soldiers had lost lives. APANONYMOUS

Beijing on Friday said it had named 11 bridges along its key Tibet-Xinjiang highway, parts of which run through Aksai Chin, after four Chinese soldiers killed in the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash.

Eleven bridges along the G219 national highway, which today runs along China's western borders and initially began as an artery through Aksai Chin linking Tibet and Xinjiang — its construction in the 1950s on land claimed by India triggered tensions eventually leading up to the 1962 war — have been named after the four PLA soldiers and their hometowns in China, the Communist Party-run *Global Times* reported.

This was done “as a way of commemorating” the soldiers, the newspaper said, adding that they had “become the epitome of Chinese people’s ever-growing patriotic sentiment.”

Aggressive moves

The June 2020 Galwan Valley clash followed the PLA's aggressive moves along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) starting in April that year. The clash led to the loss of lives of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers, marking the worst violence on the border since 1967. China only announced its fatalities in February 2021.

Tensions on the LAC remain three years on, with the PLA since dragging its feet in disengaging and de-escalating. Both sides have disengaged at five friction points but are yet to do so in Demchok and Depsang. Three years on, Chinese state media have continued to highlight the Galwan clash and the role of its soldiers, five of whom received honours, four of them posthumously. The bridges are named after the four soldiers, Chen Xiangrong, Xiao Siyuan, Wang Zhuoran and Chen Hongjun, and their hometowns.

The Galwan commander Qi Fabao, who was honoured by the PLA Central Military Commission headed by leader Xi Jinping, last month attended the Communist Party Congress, as one of the 2,296 invited party delegates — a politically significant move, observers said, that was meant to send a signal both within China and abroad.

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