**[Soldier’s boots](https://nation.com.pk/18-Jan-2020/soldier-s-boots" \t "_new)**

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Display of a Soldier’s Boot in a television show was contempt and sacrilegious. It caused angst and dismay to every soldier who wears or hung his boots after fading away. Most, it was an insult to thousands of soldiers who sacrificed their blood and lives for the country with their boots on and families that endure the hardships of parting with the bread earner. Boots are symbols of grace and should never be used to score angular political points.

The terms like ‘Boots On and Boots on Ground’ have a significant and well understood connotation. Referring them in political jargon was the first anywhere in the world. Boots are the life string of soldiers. It is an honour for every soldier, anywhere in the world to die with his boots on.

This article is written to let the Pakistani public know the significance of a soldier’s military kit to his life, family, death and military traditions. Most importantly; the boots go with him in his last journey.

Three items of military kit are very important and coveted in a soldier’s life and military tradition. He never leaves them unguarded. These are the Boots, Personal Weapon and the Steel Helmet. When a soldier falls in the line of duty, the Boots form the foundation through which the blade of the rifle bayonet pierces through the Boot into the ground and the helmet is placed on top. This is the tombstone of a soldier.

Military units prepare a visible reminder of the Shaheed. The helmet and identification tags signify the dead soldier. The inverted rifle with bayonet signals a time for prayers and tribute to the Shaheed. The combat boots represent the final march to the last battle. The helmet reminds that the soldier spent himself in the final plunge. While the weaponry is deposited in barracks, the soldier continues to wear the boots sometimes even when he is sleeping. At home there are kept is a corner, always clean and shiny. They are never discarded when old, torn or worn. They are preserved as a milestone of a soldier’s journey most significantly end of life.

In military history, boots were most important as their performance could render a soldier out of battle. Recall the poem in which for the want of a nail in a boot, a country was lost. In every army of the world there are regular boot parades. Boots and socks are inspected, and feet checked for blisters, trench foot and foot rot. Any violation is considered prejudice to good order and military discipline and punishable. All militaries take the boots very seriously.

In the old tradition, these were called Ammunition Boots and now Combat Directly Moulded Sole Boots (DMS). These boots are water proof up to the ankles and depends in what terrain they are used. They are specifically designed to protect toes, keep the foot bridge balanced and injury free and support ankles against dislocations. Soles of a soldier’s feet are very sensitive. It is a punishment for him to walk bare foot. Modern military Boots are a marvel of foot engineering and soldiers are prone to injuries after retirement when wearing normal shoes.

For snow warfare, they have multiple layers and inners to keep the foot warm. Modern ones will have a small generator in the heels to keep the foot warm and prevent frostbite at high altitude and freezing temperatures. Special GORO TEX socks keep moisture away from toes to prevent freezing. It is always better not to rinse soap out during washing to fight infections.

Desert Boots like a camel’s hoof disperse pressure to ease marching in sand. In bogs, marshes and mountains, traditional combat boots are used. The French military has stitched anklets to keep the ankles stable while the modern combat boots have increased in height up to the lower shin.

In military history, formations have lost battles because they wore the wrong boots. In the Trench warfare of World War I nearly 3,600 Canadian soldiers died at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, one way or another linked to the faulty boots they wore.

Pakistan is very fortunate to have a highly developed leather industry and developed amongst the best combat boots in the world. The army takes care of its soldiers and their boots and socks.

The Pakistani Soldier has a rich tradition in world wars, conflicts with India and the most trusted in UN Peace Missions. Over time they have endured the hardships of European, African, Middle Eastern, Arakan and Pacific theatres. Their tombstones and graves world over testify to their valour and sacrifice. They fought in trench warfare under threat of poisonous gases, marshes and wetlands of South East Asia, tropical jungles of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, scorching heat of the Sahara and Middle Eastern deserts, shorelines of Italy and France and the high mountains of the Himalayan and Karakorum ranges. Most recently, they defeated terrorism and are still fighting multi-dimensional non kinetic threats. They have played a lead role in disaster management and given a fillip to national development whenever needed. They form the core of the extended family of Pakistan and that is why Pakistan has become a hard nut to crack. They create opportunities where hope is forlorn and pulled Pakistan from the pangs of corrupt elites.

These boots have walked many a path,

they’ve definitely seen better days.

Through the desert and through the rain,

they carried him through the haze.

That night he ran for cover

with the bullets whipping by

they helped carry his wounded buddy

and were with him when he cried.

Bombs exploding, alarms sounding,

buddies falling left and right

these old boots just kept on moving

keeping his mission in sight.

Now their days in the desert are past

they’re old, and worn and don’t fit anymore.

But he can’t bring himself to throw out

the best boots his soldier feet ever wore.

–Anonymous

Pakistani soldiers covet their boots and all the values that come with their personal military kits. When the heart of a soldier and his craving for motivation dies, the country is not far behind..