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This thread is dedicated to Lieutenant Kiran Shekhawat—the first lady Naval officer to have been martyred in the line of duty.
Lieutenant Kiran Shekhawat was born on 1st May, 1988 into the family of Master chief Petty officer Vijendra Singh Shekhawat and Madhu Chauhan.

She is a notable alumni of Kendriya Vidyalaya-2 in Vishakhapatnam and after completing her schooling, she graduated from Andhra University. After that, she joined a private bank, but all she had inside was her desperate will to serve the motherland at any cost!

& she knew that working in a bank won't be of much help for that cause. So, this young girl joined a regimented honorable life in the Navy, & finally, a happy family was overjoyed to hear the news of her being commissioned on 5/7/2010 in the glorious INAS 310 Naval Air squadron.

She had the honor to join a glorious squadron like this that had once taken part in the Bangladesh Liberation war in 1971—launching air raids on Chittagong and Khulna ports right from the runway aboard the INS Vikrant—raining down fire on the Pakistanis stuck down at the port.

Popularly known as the Cobras—the INAS 310 Squadron was one of the oldest Indian Naval Air Squadrons raised on 21st March, 1961, with French Breguet Alize anti-submarine aircrafts being the first aircrafts to be inducted for the fight.

With the Naval blockade at Karachi harbor, the INAS 310 Squadron served in the vital operation of the Eastern naval blockade on the Bay of Bengal—led by INS Vikrant and her fleet, writing one of the glorious part of Indian Naval history.

And keen flyer Lieutenant Shekhawat was a part of this squadron—finally flying for her dreams!
With pride, she took part in the first-all women marching contingent of the Navy during the Republic Day parade of January 2015 in Delhi!

Long before she joined—her squadron was allotted the Dornier Do-228 aircrafts from 1991 which served the Navy's requirements for surveillance and electronic warfare roles—an aircraft that she flew not only with competence and experience but also with pride.

She was assigned as an observer in the tactical sorties on the ocean for tracking and engaging hostile ships that might potentially violate India’s maritime boundaries.

Now, the Dornier aircraft was a pretty old aircraft with technologies onboard the aircraft from the late 1980s, but still it had enough powerful radars and communication systems to detect underwater threats as well as hostile naval vessels on the water.

But it was still an old aircraft compared to the necessities of the 21st century.
On 24/3/2015, under a fine weather with calm Arabian Sea at Goa,

Lt. Shekhawat, Lt. Abhinav Nagori and their commander Nikhil Joshi flew off in their Dornier Do-228 aircraft on a routine training sortie where due to technical failures in the aircraft the unfortunate crew and their aircraft had crashed into the water!

Unfortunately, young Lt. Shekhawat and Abhinav, didn’t survive the crash. Their commander Joshi had miraculously escaped with head and leg injuries after pulling himself out from the aircraft. He had managed to get up to the water surface and had repeatedly screamed for help.

Luckily, local fishermen were around and lighting up their floodlights, they rescued the commander. It was almost an hour after the crash! He is the only survivor in the crash.

Hearing of this, the India Naval HQ in Goa moved very fast for a search and rescue mission for the two pilots—taking aid of the local fishermen as well to search for the other two pilots and the aircraft.

Luckily, the INS Makar—which was a Naval hydrographic vessel, had detected a large metallic object underwater through its sonar—which was then found to be the wreckage of the Dornier.

Lieutenant Kiran Shekhawat’s body was found inside the fuselage of the aircraft, alongside Lieutenant Nagori.
An official Court of enquiry was soon setup after the recovery of the Dornier’s onboard flight recorders to find out what happened.

It was found that the crash actually happened 25 nautical miles south-west of the Naval base at 10:08pm on the night of 24th March.

Lieutenant Shekhawat is the first lady officer to die in the tenure of duty. She is survived by her parents, her brother and her husband Lieutenant Commander Vivek Singh Chhoker—an instructor in the Indian Naval Academy in Ezhimala in Kerala.

Lt Kiran Shekhawat will always be remembered for her service to the nation and her story will continue to inspire future generations of India.
- War Book Series