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AIR DEFENCE COMMAND: TEST BED FOR JOINTMANSHIP

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A cardinal aim of creating the post of CDS was to usher in the much needed reforms and jointness in the Armed Forces enabling them to fight future wars. High degree of reliance on cutting edge technology and optimum utilisation of resources for seamless coordination between all elements of the Armed forces would be the norm in any future war. Creation of Integrated Theatres and Joint Functional Commands for optimization of budgetary resources and streamlining the higher defence organizations are some of the important charters of the CDS. As per the Govt of India notification the timeline for implementing the Integrated Theatres is three years, therefore this process will have to be initiated with speed. In order to execute this reorganization of the Armed forces, a holistic look into the future needs of the armed forces will be required which can only be premised on the future threats that the Nation will face. Visualization of the future wars based on holistic threat evaluation and primacy of National Security without ceding to Inter Service rivalry will ensure execution of these organizational changes in the correct manner and ensuring optimum use of resources while creating minimum turbulence. Creation of new org and structures should therefore be aligned with the stated aim of enabling the Armed forces to prosecute future wars with tri-service coordination.

The reorganization of the Armed forces is going to create new **Integrated Theatres and Joint Functional Commands** which will be tri services org responsible for Operations as also for combat support, logistics and maintenance. In order to throw light on the changes at the apex level, it would be pertinent to understand these terms and thereafter see how these new organisations / structures will fulfill the stated needs.

At present the Indian Defence Forces are organized into 19 Commands of which only two are tri-service commands, viz, the Andaman and Nicobar Command and the Strategic Forces Command. The Army and the Air Force have seven commands each while the Navy has three. The Commands of various services support each other in operations but their AORs are not congruous, most are not co-located, Command & Control structures are separate and there is no unity of command thereby diminishing jointness. An analysis of various studies in the past amply highlights that the existing organisations are not suited to fighting future wars. These Commands can be restructured and reduced from existing 19 to 10 Integrated Theatres and Joint Functional Commands with a tri-service mix ensuring optimum utilization of all resources.

Integrated Theatres will be an organisational structure designed to control all military assets in a theatre of war **defined by a geographical boundary** to achieve military effects. Integrated Theatre would have specific units of the Indian Army, Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) under a Theatre Commander. Each such Theatre will come under the operational control of an officer from any of the three services, depending on the primacy of function assigned to that Theatre. The Integrated Theatre Commander should train, equip and exercise his command to make it a cohesive fighting force capable of achieving designated goals. The logistic resources required to support operations in the Theatre should also be placed at the disposal of the theatre commander. It is visualized that there will be four Integrated Theatres, i.e Northern Integrated Theatre responsible for J & K, Eastern Integrated Theatre responsible for the NE India including North Bengal and Sikkim, Western Integrated Theatre responsible for Area South of J&K till Sir Creek and Peninsular Integrated Theatre responsible for the Peninsular India and the Oceanic region including ANC. These Theatres will have a well defined Area of Responsibility of Land, Air and Sea (as applicable) and will be responsible for the execution of all operations in the given AOR. Inter theatre support, coordination and resource allocation will be done by CDS (through COSC).

Apart from these Integrated Theatres, **Joint Functional Commands** responsible for **specialised functions which have a pan India applicability** should also be created. These specialized areas will have applicability to the Integrated Theatres, the three services and will also need coordination with the other branches of Govt. These will include The Cyber Command, Aerospace Command, Air Defence Command, Special Operations Command, Logistics Command and the Maintenance Command. These Joint Functional Commands would be responsible for the given domain and will lay down the policy, evolve plans and outcomes which would be executed through the Integrated Theatres within their AOR and in coordination with the Central and State Govt agencies in other areas both within and outside the country. The allocation of resources and their redistribution based on threats and emerging situations will also be done by these Joint Functional Commands. Training, Maintenance, Policy and Administration for the defined charter will be carried out by these Commands in order to optimize resources.

These Theatre and Joint Functional Commands should ideally be under the CDS (through COSC) but in the initial raising these could be given to specific Services to lead the change. The initial raising and command of The Northern, Eastern and Western Theatres should be under the COAS and the Peninsular Theatre under the CNS. The Aerospace and the Maintenance Command under the CAS, the Cyber Command under the CNS, the Special Operations and Logistics Command under the COAS and the AD Command under HQ IDS. Subsequently once the organisations stabilize the Administration, Training, Manning, Maintenance aspects would come under the Service Chiefs while the operational command should revert to the control of CDS (through COSC) as coordination between the Integrated Theatres, the three services and the govt agencies will be the main remit of the CDS.

The Aerospace and AD command need to be delineated as their functions and charter will be quite disparate. The Aerospace Command will have an increasing role in the Space segment where the future of war-fighting lies. This would include control of nominated satellites and anti-satellite warfare, all activities in the exospheric domain, control launch and execution of out of area aerial missions including hypersonic vehicles, Combat UAVs, distribution of aerial resources other than aircrafts nominated for AD tasks, redistribution of these based on threat evaluation, strategic aerial missions, strategic lift capability, liaison with Govt on these

issues etc. The reach and perspective of aircrafts and other aerial vehicles and their application is increasing manifolds thus the reach and perspective of the Aerospace Command will be in this larger context while the main charter of the Air Defence Command would be to ensure security of the Indian Airspace within the given geographical boundaries. This will also include the coordination with civil users of the airspace and cater to threats as varied as aircrafts, drones, UAVs & RPAs and some missiles. **Threats from UAVs, Drones and RPAs in the hinterland will also have to be catered** for and the AD Command would be the main authority controlling the weapons for bringing down such threats anywhere in the country.

The AD command is recommended to be raised by HQ IDS as the task of this command will encompass not just the three services but also Central and Govt agencies, DGCA, AAI and other agencies like DAE, DRDO, CAPFs etc. HQ IDS is the only suitable existing Tri-Service organization which can deal appropriately with the multiple organizations which would be involved in the raising of the AD command and defining its charter. This will also allow HQ IDS to gain the correct perspective of all Tri Service and inter agency issues which will arise and can be a test bed for running these Functional Joint Commands in a later time frame when these come under command the CDS (through COSC).

The AD Command would formulate a holistic air threat for the Country both in war and peace scenario. Resource allocation based on visualised threats would flow from the AD Command under the authority of CDS to the Integrated Theatres and other agencies. Central resources for strategic tasks should be retained under the AD Command and reallocation of resources within the Theatres based on the progress of operations and emerging situations should also be carried out by the AD Command. The AD Command would be headed by an Air Force officer with linkages to the AD elements of the three services with a deputy from the Army. The AD Command should also deal with maintenance and training in concert with the three services and the other Functional Joint Commands. These will be executed on ground by the respective services. The staffing of the Joint Functional Commands will be from all the three services and staffing norms and organisational structures will have to be worked out. Operationally the AD Command should restructure itself so that the AORs allotted to IACCS align with the boundaries of the Integrated Theatre Commands. Certain recommendations for the staffing are as follows:-

- The organisation within the AD command could be based on the operational / functional integration (FI) requirements i.e Operations, Planning, C&R, Communication, Logistics, Maintenance, Budgeting, Training, Administration etc. Another option could be to align the HQs Geographically for the whole Country i.e one branch looking after each Integrated Theatre, one for hinterland, one for major cities and another for strategic assets etc. Whichever is the org chosen, it is recommended that the structures at Integrated Theatres and other lower echelons as also the other organisations involved in this area be aligned along the same lines. The organisation structure based on FI is recommended as it will align operationally with Theatre Commands and below in a better manner.
- The HQs and executing units be staffed by personnel of all the three services as also related civil org like DGCA, AAI etc with cross attachment and joint training for all stakeholders. This will ensure commonality of thought and action.
- Training of personnel may be done in each service initially due to peculiarity of equipment held and courses for common aspects like C&R, communication, threat evaluation etc should also be conducted.
- The maintenance of equipment should be with respective service echelons and the line directorate and the maintenance command may issue policy guidelines for the same. The logistics too can be structured on similar lines. The maintenance and logistics support should be echeloned from Tactical Battlefield Area (TBA) upwards and optimized at the theatre level.
- Procurements and capability development should be done through the Service Chiefs and CDS for optimizing the budget.

Within their AOR, the Integrated Theatre Commands would be responsible for the security of Air Space. Resources of all the three services allotted to the theatre would be used in a seamless manner by the nominated AD Commander who would be responsible for the AD Battle within the theatre, of course in full synergy with the neighbouring theatres, the AD Command and other Govt agencies. The AD Commander may be part of the aerospace vertical in the Theatre HQs or a separate vertical which functions

with the general staff under the Integrated Theatre Cdr. He should also deal with airspace management, prioritisation of VA/VPs, lateral and vertical integration, surveillance and deployment of all surveillance radars, communication, liaison with all civil agencies etc. MG AAD and the nominated Naval Officer (where required) would be part of this structure at the Integrated Theatre Command and may function alongside the AD Commander for handling the AD resources in the TBA while the AD Commander looks at all other issues. However, in order to ensure **unity of command**, it is recommended that there should be one overall AD Cdr and under him separate verticals should handle all AD aspects which should have representation of all three services. Downwards structure at Corps and Divs / IBG would be similarly manned by IAF, Army AD Bdes and units as also Naval personnel (where applicable). A dedicated cadre for Air Defence warriors may be created by all three services with common operational philosophy and protocols. At present the Army is the only Service having a specialised cadre for the Air Defence Branch. This arena of operations shall become critical in times to come as the UAV, drone and RPA threats will increasingly manifest themselves in the hinterland as part of non-traditional threat spectrum and localized action in time and space will become more of a norm leading to higher states of readiness for longer periods of time as was witnessed post Balakote.

The AD resources in the theatre should be allocated based on priority of VA/ VPs which would now be done holistically by the AD Commander for all the Field Formations, Rear Areas, Communication Zone and Govt / Industrial agencies. The strategic tasks within the AOR of the Theatre would be allotted resources by the AD Command. Certain resources could be delegated to field formations based on their recommendations. The critical element of any AD battle is C&R and the elements which can be controlled directly by the IACCS node should be done so. However, in the TBA, the numbers of VA/ VPs would be so large that there may be a need to create JADC/DADC/Control Centres for enabling the IACCS nodes to control the plethora of weapons deployed and cater for frequent deployment and re-deployment of AD assets with the field formations. This is critical as IACCS nodes would prefer to retain centralised control of all assets but frequent moves and the associated communication issues may not allow this to be sustainable. This is where the AD Bdes and units will be utilised. Direct and seamless communication and integration with the IACCS air situation is essential at all the control centres. Control centres should be scaled upto Division / IBG level. The army element will be provided by AAD Bdes and

Units while the IAF and the Naval elements by their respective services. The IAF already has an organisation at Corps level (TAC) which provides the component for JADC however this may be catered for the Division/IBG at the TBA also which is presently not factored in. All elements operating in the TBA should have matching mobility with the field formations for ensuring effective AD protection as per progress of operations.

The AAD units and the Bdes will remain under command the field formations as is happening presently. This will cater for administration, discipline, operational and tactical training, greater affiliation and situational awareness. The operational control to these units in times of war/peace will be through the IACCS nodes. This will reduce the turbulence as most command arrangements of unit and AD Bde will remain as hitherto fore, with only minor changes in operational arrangements and FI. There will be changes in the staffing, organization and control of resources at HQs and also operational control arrangements. Centralised planning at Theatre level and delegated execution should be the norm.

There are a number of issues pertaining to communication, equipment deployment, C&R, training, logistics, staffing etc which will have to be deliberated in detail and solutions found by all stake holders so that the AD Command can truly secure the Indian skies.

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