

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



CENJOWS

INDARMY TOUR OF DUTY REFORMS

By

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BACKDROP

The establishment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is the first tranche of the long overdue process of higher Military and Bureaucratic reforms. Infact, between the two, the import of DMA is more far reaching as it brings the Armed Forces into the governance structure of the country for the first time in the history of independent India.

As in the first case, there is no formal announcement of the impending Tour of Duty (TOD) reforms. Nor is there any clarity of the contours that shall shape these reforms. From previous experience it may be deduced that the second tranche of the reforms in the lower hierarchy shall be equally far reaching. The TOD reforms seem to have been based on the TOD service in the US Armed Forces.

Public statements of ministers and senior officials of the Central government on the impending reforms may be summarised as:-

- Introducing three years or thereabout (TOD) service in the Armed Forces.
- Incentivising TOD by linking it to preferential quota for entry into All India Services of the Central Government and other unnamed incentives.
- Three years or thereabout deputation of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel with the Armed Forces.
- Right sizing the Armed Forces permanent cadre.
- There is no clarity on continuation of Short Service Commission for Officers.

ACHIEVING SYNERGY

These reforms aim at synergising the needs of both the Armed Forces and the Central Governance Structure.

Armed Forces Expectations

- Leaner, meaner and younger Armed Forces.
- Release from Internal Security Role to focus on new age warfare.
- Technological Upgradation of Manpower, Equipment and Combat structure in tune with requirement to fight the wars of the future.

Government Expectations

- Reduce Armed Forces Human Resource expenditure to release funds for capital expenditure.
- Professional Upgradation of CAPF to release Armed Forces from Internal Security role.
- Assure high Qualitative Requirement of Manpower for Armed Forces, in tune with combat requirements of the future.
- Assist in nation building by preparing a wide base of disciplined and dynamic manpower for lateral absorption into the Central governance structure, industry management and entrepreneur roles.

DETAILED RULES A MUST FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The government has adequate political will and capital to push through the expected resistance from entrenched interests in the Armed Forces and central bureaucratic hierarchies.

But the Devil is always in the details. Hence, more than the Government Order (GO) it shall be the accompanying Rules which shall be more important. The GO and the Rules should be well thoughtout to guard against the backdoor loopholes which may be deliberately left in place while implementing the reforms.

Rules to Incentivise TOD

The incentives for attracting the right potential for the TOD scheme must be part of the GO.

- 70% vacancies in Central Services should be reserved for TOD personnel. It should start with 10% reservation after three years of implementation of scheme and then increase by 10% every year till ceiling of 70% is achieved.
- Alternately 30% weightage be given in all categories for TOD personnel.
- On completion of TOD, selected lateral induction into CAPF should be introduced, with accrual of TOD service.
- 20% weightage for admissions to central government Universities and autonomous institutions for higher and technical education.
- Education Loan scheme for TOD veterans needs to be introduced.
- Entrepreneurship Loan schemes should be introduced for TOD personnel after discharge.
- Medical invalidation due to death/injury attributable to operational duty must be incentivised.

Rules for Incentivesto CAPF Personnel for Deputation with Armed Forces

- Only volunteers should be considered.
- Protection of promotion within CAPF must be ensured.
- There should be mandatory eight weeks reorientation cadre with the Armed Forces prior acceptance on deputation.
- Only personnel with less than 5 years' service should be eligible.

- CAPF personnel who have completed their deputation with Armed Forces should be eligible for 20 % weightage in promotion criteria towards promotion to subsequent ranks during their service.

TOD Rules for Armed Forces

- Personnel selected for TOD shall undergo mandatory basic training as applicable for Short Service Commissioned Officers (SSCOs) and Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR).
- AllTOD/CAPF personnel shall be posted to Infantry Battalions deployed on AGPL, LC, and LAC. Personnel should be reassigned to the relieving unit on turnover.
- Postings to Rashtriya Rifles and Assam Rifles units deployed on Counter Insurgency Grid may be given as priority two.
- Only two weeks leave shall be applicable on completion of each six months period. Leave on medical grounds should be counted as duty.
- Request for additional TOD to be considered only if recommended by Commanding Officer and chain of command.
- Maximum three TODs should be permissible.
- Minimum interval of three months should be there between two TODs.
- Prior service shall not accrue for subsequent TOD.
- TOD/CAPF personnel shall be subject to Armed Forces Act and Defence Services Rules.

POSTSCRIPT

Armed forces have faltered on earlier occasions by not releasing command and control manpower for CAPF and other key security organisations. There is likely to be internal discontent within Armed Forces to acceptance of TOD and CAPF volunteers. This would defeat the very purpose of the reforms and needs to be handled with tact and maturity.

Armed Forces cannot eat their cake and have it too. If release from internal security deployment is their need, then upgradation of CAPF capabilities is their responsibility. A potent CAPF is also a potent second line of defence.

Armed Forces infrastructure for recruitment and training shall need to be augmented to cater for enhanced intake. There should be no dilution in intake standards.

TOD volunteers are the right resource for the Armed Forces in the long run. They will bring in much needed technologically savvy manpower, keep its war fighting profile young, and seed the governance environment and industry with greater awareness and sensitivities to its needs.

The sloth in the Central governance structure is there to see. It needs to be refurbished with greater dynamism and discipline. TOD volunteers shall be the much needed experienced, disciplined and dynamic resource it needs to meet the governance aspirations of the new generation and new India.

Ultimately the quality of political supervision of these integrated reforms shall be the key to their successful implementation.

Disclaimer: Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.