

CIVIL MILITARY FUSION IN INTELLIGENCE IN INDIA - THE WAY FORWARD

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Introduction

Intelligence is often referred as the first line of national defence. A nation state needs an effective, loyal and evolving intelligence system, which can forewarn on all issues related to its national security. Most of the existing Indian intelligence systems trace their history to the British Indian intelligence apparatus, predominantly in their military domain under a very tight control managed by their best military officers. Post independence, the vacuum caused in these systems due to abrupt moving out of British officers were attempted to be plugged by relatively junior and inexperienced Indian officers, mostly from the civilian intelligence agencies, thus reducing erstwhile military dominance. This may be attributed to lack of faith by political leaders on military, fear of coup by military and also reluctance on part of military to Indianise itself quickly. Over a period of time, gradual downgradation of military intelligence systems occurred, while the civil intelligence systems grew exponentially and some of them were covered with statutory and regulatory provisions for their mandates and equipped with latest technology and resources. With their top leadership drawn from bureaucratic cadres, mostly from Indian Police Services (IPS), the civil intelligence agencies enjoyed easy access to political decision makers, strengthened their organisations, gained primacy over military intelligence systems and slowly became India's international intelligence face. The gap between civil and military intelligence organisations has only widened during the past 75 years.

However, in recent past, the requirement of synergy between civil and military intelligence organisations has been felt and is being attempted by efforts towards liaison, good relations, jointness and integration. The national security however demands fusion of all intelligence efforts.

India's Highest Intelligence Authority

The National Security Advisor (NSA) is the Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister on national security policy and international affairs. He receives all intelligence from various civil and military intelligence agencies, coordinates, reports and presents them before Prime Minister and advises him on all threats and opportunities and oversees strategic and sensitive issues. National Security Council (NSC) is the apex body of the three tiered structure of the national security management system, which are Strategic Policy Group, National Security Advisory Board (with experts in their field to render advise beyond realm of government working) and a secretariat from Joint Intelligence Committee (now functioning through various verticals under NSA). NSC Secretariat (NSCS) is the coordinating agency in respect of all national security issues for coordination between various ministries (which also includes National Cyber Security Coordinator and National Maritime Security Coordinator to ensure government coordination on their respective issues)¹.

Civil Intelligence Agencies in India

- **National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO).** NTRO is technical intelligence gathering agency under NSA.² It is highly specialised in multiple disciplines, to include COMINT, ELINT, TELINT, IMINT, CYBERINT, cyber operations, cryptology, monitoring launches of missile and acts as a super feeder to other agencies on all security matters.³ It controls National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre, which is the national nodal agency for protection of critical information infrastructure.⁴ It also includes National Institute of Cryptology Research and Development.⁵ NTRO is a member of US NSA led 10 member counter terrorism platform called SIGINT Seniors Pacific.⁶

- **The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW).** The R&AW is responsible to gather foreign intelligence, counter terrorism, counter proliferation, advising Indian policymakers and advancing India's foreign strategic interests and security of India's nuclear programme.⁷ Its primary mission includes intelligence collection through HUMINT, specialised intelligence and psychological warfare. Child Agencies of R&AW include the Radio Research Center, Electronics and Technical Services and Aviation Research Centre. R&AW maintains active liaison with other agencies and services in various countries.
- **Intelligence Bureau (IB).** IB is India's domestic internal security and counter intelligence agency under the control of Ministry of Home Affairs. It has employees from various Indian law enforcement agencies, mostly from the IPS.⁸ It grants the necessary security clearances to Indian diplomats and judges before they take oath. IB also passes intelligence between other Indian intelligence agencies and the police. At the national level, IB has several units to keep track of terrorism, counter intelligence, VIP security, threat assessment and sensitive areas. At the state level, the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureaus (SIBs) function, which also have their units at district headquarters.
- **National Investigation Agency (NIA).** NIA was created on 31 December 2008 on enactment of NIA Act, as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency, to be involved in counter terrorism and other investigations related to national security and prevent activities of terrorist groups and individuals.⁹ The concurrent jurisdiction of NIA empowers it to investigate terrorist attacks anywhere in India, which covers offences which include challenges to the India's sovereignty and integrity, detonation of bombs, aircraft and ship hijacking, targeting nuclear installations, smuggling in counterfeit Indian currency. It is also empowered to look into terror attacks which target Indians and Indian interests outside India and investigate human trafficking, flow of fake currency, production and transaction of proscribed arms and cyber terrorism. NIA officers have been empowered with all the powers, privileges and liabilities

entitled to a police officer to investigate any offence¹⁰. 38 Special NIA Courts have been notified for trial of cases registered at various NIA Police Stations. NIA maintains the NIA Most Wanted List. Though not a classical intelligence agency, the large mandate of NIA makes it a big stake holder in India's intelligence and security matters.

Intelligence Set Up in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) Border Guarding Forces

- **Assam Rifles.** Assam Rifles Field Intelligence Unit is responsible for collection, collation and dissemination of actionable intelligence inputs and other intelligence tasks, in area of responsibilities of Assam Rifles.¹¹
- **Border Security Force (BSF).** BSF Intelligence headed by IG (G) at BSF Headquarters¹² collects and shares information related to border activities and operational purposes.
- **Indian Tibet Border Police (ITBP).** ITBP Intelligence Wing generates information along the Sino-Indian frontier.
- **Shashtra Seema Bal (SSB).** SSB is deployed along the Indo Nepal and Indo Bhutan borders and is the nominated Lead Intelligence Agency for these areas. Intelligence Directorate at SSB Headquarters has a very effective intelligence network in the field¹³.

Intelligence Set Up of CAPF Internal Security Forces

- **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).** CRPF Intelligence Directorate functions under IG (Intelligence) at CRPF Headquarters¹⁴ and has an effective HUMINT network.
- **Central Indian Security Force (CISF).** CISF has its own crimes and intelligence wing in each PSU and they can provide reliable intelligence especially on pilferages and officers conniving, procurements and foul plays therein¹⁵.

Financial Intelligence Set Up in India

- **Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB).** CEIB functions

under the Department of Revenue of Ministry of Finance and is the nodal agency for economic intelligence and mandated to ensure effective interaction and coordination among all concerned agencies in the area of financial offences. It also functions as the clearing house of all economic intelligence and provides a platform for such exchange between various agencies¹⁶.

- **Financial Intelligence Unit - India (FIU-IND).** FIU-IND is an independent body, which directly reports to the Economic Intelligence Council headed by Finance Minister and responsible to receive, process, analyse and disseminate information relating to suspected monetary transactions to intelligence/enforcement agencies, regulatory authorities and coordinate and strengthen efforts of intelligence, investigation and enforcement agencies (both national and international) in pursuing their efforts against money laundering and terror financing¹⁷.
- **Directorate of Enforcement (ED).** ED functions under Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. It is a multi disciplinary organisation, mandated with investigation of offences of money laundering and violations of foreign exchange laws, for which it has various statutory functions including enforcement of various Acts of Parliament¹⁸.
- **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI).** DRI works under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Ministry of Finance. It is the apex anti smuggling agency tasked with detecting and curbing smuggling of contraband, including drug trafficking and illicit international trade in wildlife and environmentally sensitive items, as well as combating commercial frauds related to international trade and evasion of customs duties¹⁹.
- **Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI).** Functioning under Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Ministry of Finance, DGGI is the top intelligence and investigative agency with respect to matters relating to violation of Goods and Services Tax, Central Excise Duty and Service Tax and tasked with improvement of compliance of Indirect Tax laws²⁰.

- **Directorate of Income Tax (Intelligence and Criminal Investigation).** Located at 18 cities in the country, the core areas of intelligence related to Income Tax include deepening of tax base by providing information for proper selection of cases for scrutiny assessments, through collection, collation of information from internal and external sources and its dissemination to IT Department users and collection of information on financial transactions like investment, expenses, payment of taxes, identification and investigation of cases of tax evasion arising out of criminal matters²¹.

Other Notable Agencies

- **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).** NCB functions under Ministry of Home Affairs and is the apex coordinating and enforcement agency on matters related to drug abuse, coordination of actions for the enforcement provisions of NDPS Act 1985, implementation of responsibility of counter measures against illegitimate traffic under various international conventions and protocols, assistance to related authorities in other countries to assist in coordination and universal action for deterrence and repression of illegal traffic in drugs and substances²².
- **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).** CBI functions under the Ministry of Personnel, Pension and Public Grievances. It is the leading investigative police agency in India and nodal police agency, which coordinates investigation on behalf of Interpol member countries²³.
- **Intelligence Organisations in States.** The various state police have numerous intelligence organisations such as Criminal Investigation Department, Local Intelligence Unit, Special Cell and so on.

Military Intelligence Agencies in India

- **Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA).** DIA is the nodal agency for all military intelligence and provides and coordinates military intelligence to the Armed Forces. DGDIA is the principal intelligence advisor to Defence Minister and the Chief of Defence Staff. DIA controls Additional Directorate of Signals Intelligence, which is responsible for intelligence related to enemy communications.

- **Defence Image Processing and Analysis Centre (DIPAC).** DIPAC (presently under the control of Defence Space Agency) controls imagery intelligence capabilities.
- **Army Intelligence.** Directorate General of Military Intelligence, headed by DGMI at the Army Headquarters is the apex Army intelligence body, which undertakes human and technical intelligence activities. The Intelligence Corps constitutes Army Field Intelligence Units/Battalions, involved in intelligence acquisition, counter intelligence, prophylactic security and IMINT. Scouts, Territorial Army and other arms elements are also involved in Electronic Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisitions, UAVs and other intelligence activities.
- **Air Force Intelligence.** Directorate of Air Intelligence at Air Headquarters provides timely and synchronized intelligence support for tactical, operational needs of Air force including imagery intelligence collection through MIG-25R and Jaguar reconnaissance aircrafts.
- **Naval Intelligence.** Directorate of Naval Intelligence at Naval Headquarters undertakes various maritime intelligence activities.
- **Rashtriya Rifles Intelligence.** Rashtriya Rifles has integral intelligence resources.
- **Coastguards Intelligence.** Post 2008 Mumbai attacks, the maritime security apparatus was beefed up with increased emphasis on surveillance and intelligence gathering and sharing, leading to designation of Coastguards as authority responsible for coastal security in territorial waters including anti smuggling and narcotics control operations²⁴.

Present Status of Joint Mechanism

- **Multi Agency Centre (MAC).** Formed in December 2001, MAC functions under IB as the nodal body for sharing intelligence inputs and coordinate with representatives from 28 military, security, intelligence, law enforcement agencies of centre and state. MAC has

daily nodal officer's meetings (to discuss and devise follow up action on intelligence of last 24 hours), monthly meetings on terrorism in J&K and North East and fortnightly meetings on Naxal terrorism. MAC Headquarters has around 400 secured sites connected with it, with plans to link the system up to district level in a phased manner²⁵. The state offices are designated as Subsidiary MACs, whose fortnightly meetings are attended by state police and other agencies. MAC plans to have close to six sub groups with additional division at different levels, to help all 28 agencies understand the system easily and also widen limitations on input receiver and reach of input²⁶.

- **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID).** NATGRID operational since 31 December 2020, is the integrated intelligence master database structure under the IB for counter terrorism purpose connecting databases of various core security agencies, collecting comprehensive patterns procured from 21 different organisations (including tax and bank account details, credit/debit card transactions, visa and immigration records and itineraries of rail and air travel) that can be readily accessed by security agencies. It has access to the CCTNS, a database that links crime information, including FIRs, across 14,000 police stations in India. It enables security agencies to locate and obtain relevant information on terror suspects from pooled data sets of various organisations and services. NATGRID is planned to be implemented in four phases, accessible to 11 central agencies in first phase and to State Police in later phases with plans to integrate 950 additional organisations into it²⁷.
- **National Memory Bank (NMB).** NMB is part of MAC. It is the database of all terrorists in the country, including interrogation reports, maintained at the national level. Any police unit just needs to type the name of a terror suspect in the system and the NMB will show cases registered and under which he is wanted. The force requiring more details of interrogation and crucial investigation can request the feeder agency, which has exclusive rights on these, which are shared only after a formal request by user agency²⁸.

Why is Fusion Needed?

- Apart from the jointness of the three services, there are other vital ingredients without which the level of synergy required to successfully project our power strategically cannot be achieved. The most important of these elements is Intelligence. Accurate and readily available information/intelligence would play a vital role in making the new weapon systems effective. The compression of time and extension of space in transmitting intelligence and information, which technology now makes possible is also essential. Apart from effective collection methods, all essential ingredients of a modern intelligence apparatus are required for strategic operations. Such a capability would act as a real force multiplier. Some of our adversaries have already taken significant steps in this direction while redesigning and modernising their military and intelligence structures²⁹. China has quite effectively achieved military and civil intelligence fusion by optimising its dual use technology and intelligence structures to support the Theatre Commands. Pakistan has an effective intelligence system led by ISI. Both our adversaries have military intelligence systems in lead over their civilian counterparts.
- Intelligence is serious and competitive business and can be extremely productive. The new generation warfare needs and changing war and security environment demand a faster political decision making apparatus, which depends on outcomes of timely intelligence products created out of appropriate civil military intelligence fusion. To make our present intelligence apparatus capable of delivering the goods and becoming an effective part of a seamless organisation necessary to become a potent military power and take the Comprehensive National Power to the next level, fusion of civil military intelligence is desired.
- Fusion of civil and military intelligence agencies would mean effectively joining different agencies together through some reliable mechanism to achieve the highest level of integration to prevent the intelligence failures and achieve the desired national security objectives. The change in emphasis required is from control to

strategic productivity and to achieve this, dynamic, vibrant, energetic cultural transformation across the intelligence spectrum is essential.

- During the past 75 years, India has somehow lacked the Intelligence Culture, as the civil and military intelligence structures mostly developed in their silos, looked at their self serving domains and did not let others come in their sphere. Lack of civil and military hierarchical understanding by each other, mutual distrust, lack of coordination caused severe voids leading to few intelligence failures and gains by our adversaries.
- Demand from integration usually comes from those, who feel to have been left out. In the recent past, the military has been demanding increased integration, possibly due to less involvement in the decision making. Military power lies at the heart of state power and Military Intelligence is extremely important component of national security, which is best handled by military people and therefore cannot be left out.
- Most of the civil intelligence agencies are police centric and lack military understanding, some viewing military persons as outsiders, which further alienates Military Intelligence from the national intelligence and security resources.
- The civil intelligence involves numerous agencies having unique mandates and overlapping charters.
- **Challenges Faced by Military Intelligence Agencies.** Military Intelligence agencies have different command and control structures to meet their service intelligence requirements. Intelligence is one of the General Staff functions in the Army and not yet designated as a specialist job. Intelligence manpower below officer level is recruited based on the standard military recruitment policies and may lack the desired talent. The senior Military Intelligence hierarchy mostly has limited specialised training and exposure on field intelligence assignments and view intelligence from their operational experiences and biases, which may affect the long term Military Intelligence vision.

- **Difficulties in Information Sharing.** Information sharing among various agencies is not effective as states are often reluctant to share information on MAC and there are several gaps in sharing critical information at the right time³⁰. MAC lacks sorting process and an input gets shared with all, making the system less effective. Sometimes, agencies don't even check, as there are 200-250 inputs shared daily and no nodal officer takes the pain to read all and act on the input relevant to them. The continued threats of terrorism, terror financing, narco terrorism, organised crime terror nexus, illicit use of cyber space throws the security challenge as how to coordinate, create and act upon inputs gathered by the intelligence agencies. At times, due to lack of coordination, distrust amongst the intelligence agencies, timely actions to prevent terrorist incidents do not occur³¹.
- **Monopoly of Civil Intelligence Agencies on Communication Intelligence Resources.** Communication intelligence (be it personal or official communication interception) is the most potent means of information and intelligence, as it helps understand the thought process, ideas and intentions of individuals and organisations and subsequent planning of own information warfare campaigns. Military Intelligence agencies do not have mandates and capabilities on communication intelligence (except limited facility with Additional Directorate of Signals Intelligence specific to Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and North East states only) and therefore request for such information, including such information related to military personnel and matters from mandated civil intelligence agencies through formal, informal and personal interactions, provisioning of which is at the discretion of the concerned civil intelligence agency. With some major communication and messaging players being of foreign origin/control and selected civil intelligence agencies having exclusive mandate to interact with them, further distances the Military Intelligence agencies from required and desired military communication intelligence resources.
- **Lack of Joint Training.** If you have to work jointly, you need to train jointly. Unfortunately, there is no joint institutionalised training mechanism for intelligence personnel of civil and military intelligence

agencies, leading to ignorance about each other and cultural differences. Few minor training capsules may exist here and there, which may not be adequate.

- **Multiplicity of Agents.** In HUMINT domain, multiplicity of agents is a major trouble, as some professionals, who are deep into the intelligence business feed the same information to more than one intelligence agency, leading to corroboration of wrong information at times. We lack the system to check and counter these things at various levels.
- **Technology and Equipment.** Different software used by agencies for intelligence process and data management systems may not be able to talk to each other. Intelligence agencies, both civil and militarily rely heavily on foreign intelligence equipment, mostly from Israel and West, which may create some functional discomfort due to lack of required support and services.

CMF in Intelligence - The Way Forward

- **Apex Intelligence Authority.** We may have to segregate intelligence and security at the level of NSC and create an appointment like Director of National Intelligence (DNI) in USA (to be open to both civil and military intelligence agencies in rotation) to commence the desired fusion.
- Before attempting civil military intelligence fusion, civil - civil and military - military intelligence fusion must take effective shape.
- **Strengthening Foreign Intelligence.** Ministry of External Affairs needs to have some unique intelligence capabilities for Foreign Intelligence including some innovative ideas with R&AW. The Military Wings in Indian Embassies/High Commissions/Missions abroad can play a vital role in such endeavours.
- **Intelligence on Narco Terrorism.** Narco Terrorism is one of the serious and emerging threats to the national security. NCB needs to integrate with Military and CAPF Intelligence Agencies to meet these challenges.

- **Lead Intelligence Agencies.** There is a need to nominate Lead Intelligence Agency for various intelligence disciplines (IMINT, SIGINT, COMINT, ELINT, Measurement and Signature (MASINT), OSINT, Cyber Int, Space Int, HUMINT and so on). For instance, CISF deployed at all major airports may be designated as Lead Intelligence Agency for MASINT.
- **Strengthening Existing Sharing Mechanism.** MAC needs to bring into effect landmark changes to make it real time, swifter and more effective. Information should travel in a specified time frame manner and reach the right person at ground level. The system needs to find out details shared by different agencies without any delay to back the input and an easier way of sorting inputs with next level data encryption. The input is required to be sent directly to the concerned persons or agency to facilitate functional ease. NMB requires to be more efficient to include interrogation reports and details in addition to that of terror outfits. NATGRID, MAC and NMB should get integrated in more efficient way.
- **Integration of Local Intelligence.** It is believed that the best intelligence is available with the local Police Station. Therefore, state police and intelligence set up need to integrate with local civil and military intelligence set up at the ground level to ensure increased coordination and cooperation among all intelligence agencies at district, state and regional level, which will facilitate similar cooperation world over with friendly foreign counterparts in developing and sharing intelligence to mitigate and nullify security threats.
- **Joint Training.** Civil and military intelligence cultures need to converge. For civilians to understand military culture and vice versa, joint institutionalised education and training are essential. The joint training needs to have an integrated approach and not short duration capsules. In this regard, creation of National Intelligence College/ University at Delhi/NCR, with mandate to function under the NSC may be considered, to impart training to officer cadres of all civil and military intelligence agencies.

- **Management of Human Resources.** The way governments are modelled, they do not always attract the best talent. Therefore, the Human Resource Policy of intelligence agencies needs fast changes. Based on the evolving intelligence problem, unique talent/experts may be pipelined and inducted with liberal service conditions. Segregation of 'in service' specialists is also essential. Parent cadre personnel should have primacy over transients. Inter agency posting by deputations must be encouraged and may be made mandatory for career progression in the parent intelligence agency beyond the rank of Colonel/Deputy Secretary/equivalent posts.
- **HUMINT.** Multiplicity of HUMINT Agents needs to be handled by creating a National Agent Inventory controlled at the apex level with necessary safeguards.
- **Technology and Equipment.** The intelligence requirements, be it civil or military will only increase manifold in times to come and modes of intelligence collection will continue to evolve with infusion of evolving technology such as AI, Automation, Unmanned Platforms, Cyber, Space and their timely integration in intelligence spectrum is paramount, which need to be tapped and shared uniformly. We need to focus on indigenous production of intelligence equipment to create uniqueness in equipment. Start ups related to intelligence equipment need to be encouraged duly keeping national security in mind. Some common and interoperable software need to be created at the apex levels to handle multiplicity of software and management of data by various intelligence agencies. Agencies involved in similar mandate/intelligence discipline need to have real time interface and should compulsorily share the same software and data resources.
- **Oversight and Integration with Law and Order Components.** Political involvement in management of intelligence agencies is essential with appropriate oversight. All ministries/departments in Centre and States need to have an intelligence set up (the way it is mandatory to have Vigilance Department now) to help link intelligence at all levels with vigilance, security, operations, law and order and implement whole of nation approach in intelligence.

- **Take Aways of Effective Fusion.** Effective fusion of civil and military intelligence agencies will result in economy of intelligence effort, discarding of unreliable agents, timely intelligence sharing, corroboration, effective intelligence analysis, uniformity of technology and equipment, financial prudence, accountability of all intelligence agencies, predictive intelligence and forecasts, leading to a safer India, which can guarantee required safety and security to its citizens.

Conclusion

Salience of civil military intelligence fusion in any context involves inter agency harmonization and fusion, multi agency response which will facilitate in conflict resolution. In view of resource constraint which may be faced by us due to evolving state and non state threats, changing, social, economic, environmental and financial situations, fusion of these resources is inescapable. Transition to civil military intelligence fusion will help us move upwards from mediocrity and transform attitude of status coism to change. While the global intelligence is changing, we should not waste our time by involvement in repetitive and wasteful activities. If we have to engage well with Pakistan and China and take our national ambitions beyond LC and LAC, then intelligence fusion efforts are required. In fact, addressal of neighborhood challenge with strong intelligence can be game changing and we need to muster up such deterrence to facilitate asymmetric balancing and balance anxieties. The nation expects civil and military intelligence agencies to fight with our adversaries together.

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