

General

A Fellows' Seminar on "Role of Paramilitary and Central Armed Police Forces in India's National Security" was held at CLAWS on 19 Jul 2012. The Seminar was chaired by Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd). Mr Rohit Singh, Associate Fellow, CLAWS presented his paper on the subject. The Discussants were Mr RSN Singh, former R&AW Officer and Col MS Shergill, Senior Fellow, CLAWS. The Seminar was attended by a large number of serving officers and veterans from the strategic community.

Opening Remarks by Chairperson

There are a large number of CAPFs in India today. But the question to be asked is whether they have the cohesion, synergy and regimentation to operate with the Armed Forces. The primary criteria for a force to be qualified as 'Paramilitary' is that it should be led and officered by the Armed Forces. The BSF was raised as a Paramilitary force but today it is a CAPF.

Rohit Singh

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has designated the Assam Rifles (AR) as a Paramilitary Force. All the other forces have been labeled as Central Armed Police Forces. The combined strength of India's PMF and CAPFs almost equals that of India's Armed Forces today. Such high numbers of police personnel for internal security are generally maintained by dictatorial regimes, but in India's case it is indicative of the non-traditional security threats faced by the country. Both the defence and internal security budget cannot grow astronomically at the same time. India's internal security environment will impact the defence budget which cannot be increased drastically to match the emerging external challenges. For instance, China's defence budget will be eight times that of India's by 2017.

The recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee on 'One Border One Force' have still not been fully implemented on the ground. AR, CRPF, RPF, ITBP, BSF, CISF, NSG all guard VA/VPs and VIPs. All except RPF&GRP have been engaged in CI/CT Ops. AR, CRPF, ITBP are deployed for rear area security. Therefore, too many organisations are doing the same thing.

A substantial chunk of the BSF battalions are deployed along the Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh borders. Nearly 170 CRPF battalions are deployed in CI areas though not all of them are engaged in direct CI roles. The ITBP and SSB guard the Indo-Tibet and Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders respectively. The CISF is engaged in providing security cover to all major airports, metro stations, nuclear installations and close to 200 PSUs across the country. The NSG today is a well-oiled machine and its two strike and three support battalions are suitably poised to rapidly respond to any internal security

contingency. The expansion of the force and establishment of regional centres and hubs has enhanced its rapid response capabilities.

There are certain structural deficiencies in the basic structure and organisation of all CAPFs except the NSG which ultimately retard their operational effectiveness on the ground. At the battalion or cutting edge level these include a skewed teeth to tail ratio, overstretched grids in a CI environment, quality of junior leadership, age profile of personnel, low levels of fitness, motivation and morale, inadequate wages and hardship allowances, poor service conditions, fewer avenues for promotion and prolonged deployments in a field area. Although they are suitably equipped to face challenging tasks, inadequate training, lack of firing practice and ground experience sometimes lead to wrongful deployment of weapons in heavily populated areas. The blind duplication of the Army in uniforms, equipment and titles is also an incorrect practice which erodes the superior image and value of the Army. The CAPFs neither have the status of the police nor the benefits of a Paramilitary force.

The various operational achievements of the PMF and CAPFs were highlighted. In the end a set of recommendations for the optimum deployment and to improve the operational effectiveness of the CAPFs were illustrated. The CAPFs have to get their act together in a time-bound manner and face up to the internal challenges and relieve the Army for its primary operational responsibilities. If present security threats are not tackled in a time bound and accountable manner it will lead to alarming CAPF force accretions which are neither desirable nor financially sustainable.

RSN Singh

It is more important to manage internal security than external ones. Our adversaries have found a new way of bleeding us. There has been a tendency to create new organisations in India with every emerging internal security threat. But such high numbers have not made any material difference on the ground and there is no gain in reinforcing mediocrity and failures. Also it is undesirable for a democratic country to have such large number of internal security forces.

There is a need to co-opt the threat posed by the third front of internal security and deal with it. New security challenges will appear along the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Myanmar borders in the coming years. There is a lack of co-ordination between the various security forces which makes it difficult to handle the three front threat faced by the country. The LWE problem could have been tackled earlier but was allowed to fester. Handling it now would lead to more kills.

Col MS Shergill

India with its aspirations to be counted among the region's superpower first needs to be internally stable before it can flex its external muscles. It is to this end that the CAPFs have a major role to play in ensuring that the Armed Forces concentrate on their primary task of protection against external aggression. To achieve this internal stability these CAPFs need to have a rethink on their training, equipment, staffing and of course their primary role. These forces need to be equipped with state of the art equipment /weapons and their training should be conducted on the lines of the Indian Army training. A point for consideration is also the officer cadre of these forces which is mainly drawn from the IPS at present. These officers have no grassroots level experience and have not been baptized by fire. There is, thus, a need to ensure better promotional prospects for officers of the parent cadre of these forces. Besides, there could also be lateral induction of SSC officers of the IA quitting after five years as this is a pool of highly motivated and well trained youngsters who have served in CI environment.

The army for obvious reasons has a cap on its defence expenditure and also on the quantum of force that can be raised and deployed. It is thus well nigh impossible for the army to take on the role and task of the CAPFs. The Naresh Chandra Committee Report on restructuring of these forces is a step in the right direction and needs to be implemented in a time bound manner to ensure that these forces act as a Force Multiplier for the nation.

Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd): Concluding Observations

- China's Internal Security budget exceeds its defence budget. Are we headed in the same direction?
- The CRPF should be deployed cohesively as a battalion and deploying the force in penny packets must cease. The Battalion Commander must have complete operational and administrative control over his entire unit.
- A single organisation for procurement under a DG Acquisitions could be created to streamline purchases of all CAPFs.
- IPS cadre officers should be directly inducted as Company Commanders to learn the trade in operations.
- The issue of lateral transfer of SSC officers from the Army has often been met with resistance by the IPS and CAPF officers. Similarly, PBORs from the Army can also be inducted into the CAPFs. Therefore, there is a need to take up this issue at the National level.

- A single training academy with common drills and standards should be raised to provide centralised training to all CAPF officers.
- A task force should be set up by the government to take stock of the CAPFs and its recommendations should be implemented quickly.

Discussion

- If the Army is deployed for CI Ops, then why has the CRPF been designated as the Primary CI force of the country?
- There is a need to marry up the role and tasks of the CAPFs engaged in border guarding with the objectives of the Army. Today, the BSF has integrated BOPs which have a much wider task even in times of hostilities.
- The challenges of border guarding are different in each sector. More hostile and active borders are guarded by the Army and there is a need for CAPFs deployed along such borders to function under the MoD. There are also cultural differences in operating under different conditions and terrain.
- The Internal security forces should be integrated under a unified structure like the US Homeland Security and not termed as Central Police Organisations.
- The deficiencies in training in the CRPF have been narrowing gradually. The COBRA battalions in particular are very effective on the ground.
- A system of psychological tests should be introduced for IPS and CAPF officers as is done at the Service Selection Boards.

Concluding Remarks: Maj Gen Dhruv Katoch, SM, VSM (Retd), Officiating Director, CLAWS

Synergy is the need of the hour and there is an urgent need to get rid of the concept of 'we' and 'they'. We have to operate as 'us' and all threats have to be tackled by all the stakeholders in a cohesive manner. The earlier system of recruitment from the North Eastern states for the Assam Rifles worked well and should be restored. The present system of All-India pattern for recruitment goes against the basic objective of raising this force. Helicopters must be used for logistic support and casualty evacuation purposes only. Their utilisation for direct operations against the Maoists would be ineffective and counter-productive.

In the long term, it is essential to enable the state police forces to tackle internal threats especially Left Wing Extremism. The local forces have a better grasp over the local conditions, terrain and language. They can also acquire better intelligence and have a greater stake in the security and protection of their own people and areas. The current

structure of the CAPFs and their deployment pattern is a system which is bound to fail. The quality of junior leadership is vital for the effectiveness of any force. The absence of officers leading their men on the ground is a worrying factor and it negatively impacts upon the troop morale and outcome of any operation. The decision making apparatus at the highest level is absent and there is an urgent need to introduce accountability to the system of decision making.