

## **Reorgansing & Restructuring Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) In India’s National Security Interests**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

While it is well known that the Indian Army with a strength over Rs 14 Lakh is the second largest in the world, it seldom comes into reckoning that India also has a 15 Lakh plus strong Para Military Force (PMF)& Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) combined which again is amongst the largest in the world. While the raising of these forces are based on a threat perception & each force has specific roles, it is also true that most the primary roles have either been diverted, diluted, enhanced or reduced with the passage of time. Most of these forces were either raised to reinforce & support the armed forces or augment or enhance the State Police in their multifarious tasks. Today due to the dynamic security situation in the country, these forces are being used interchangeably & in several cases incongruent to their primary role. There is thus a strong reason to revisit the employment of these forces, especially the CAPF. The following aspects need to be analysed in detail:-

- (a) Evaluation of tasks being undertaken by the CAPF with their primary role.
- (b) Are these divergent or diverse tasks affecting their proficiency to execute their primary role? Or is there a case to revisit their primary role?
- (c) Are those forces amongst the CAPF, mandated to support the Army in operations, capable of doing so in their present employment & disposition?
- (d) Will the CAPF be able to switch focus & be ready for their role in war in an operationally viable timeframe?
- (d) Can we optimize the employment of CAPF so as to ensure internal security without compromising on its mandated wartime role?

#### **Aim**

To evaluate the present structure, role& tasks of CAPF & recommend means to optimize it, in the National Security Interests.

#### **CAPF & PMF**

The CAPF is under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and comprises of the following :-

- (a) Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- (b) Border Security Force (BSF).
- (c) Indo Tibetan Border Force (ITBP).
- (d) Central Industrial Security Force (CRPF).
- (e) SashastraSeemaBal (SSB).

The following forces are designated as Paramilitary Forces (PMF) with unique command & control arrangements:-

- (a) Assam Rifles.
- (b) Coast Guards.
- (c) Special Frontier Forces (SSF).

#### **Description & Role of CAPF**

**CRPF** From its inception as the ‘Crown Representative Police’ in 1939, this force has completed 3 years of its existence. It is presently the world’s largest Armed Police Force with a strength of over 3.2 Lakhs. The force is organized into 243 battalions operating under 43 Group Centers. The primary role of this Force is to assist States & Union Territories in maintain law & order and contain insurgency. The Force is extensively employed all over the country in tasks ranging from conduct of elections , riot control & Humanitarian Aid & Disaster Relief (HADR) to defensive role in counter terror operations the Union Territory of J & K to anti Naxal operations in several states. The challenges faced by this force are immense and it has performed credibly despite the

nebulous nature of the situations faced & the pressures from various facets of society as are prevalent in any democracy.

**BSF** Raised in 1965, the BSF today has a strength of approx. 2.6 Lakh personnel organized in 186 battalions. It has an Air Wing, Marine Wing, Artillery & Commando Forces. The battalions are organized on lines of the Indian Army & have a similar equipment profile. This world's largest Border Guarding force is meant for policing, management & security of India's borders with Pakistan & Bangladesh. BSF is also employed on the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan & Counter Insurgency (CI) in the Union Territory of J & K. Being a part of the CAPF it is also called upon to assist the Centre or the States in Aid to Civil Authority, election duties, HADR etc. It comes under the Indian Army in operations and are designated to each Sector and battalion defended area. Their border management & tasks in war involves employment in plains, deserts, hills, mountains & riverine terrain.

**ITBP.** Raised in 1962 in the wake of the Sino – Indian War, the ITBP was intended for deployment on India's border with Tibet. Today it has a strength of 90,000 personnel organized in 60 battalions under 15 Sectors & 5 Frontier HQs. The ITBP manages the Indo Tibetan Border from the Karakoram Pass in Ladhak to Diphu La in Arunachal Pradesh. This includes the Tibetan Border in the Union Territory of Ladhak, and States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Kameng & Rest of Arunachal Pradesh (RALP). Again, being a part of CAPF it is called upon to contribute for election duties, consequent maintenance of law & order & HADR. In the case of the latter it is the first respondent in most of the mountainous areas & have accredited themselves well. They also undertake tasks of guarding Vulnerable Areas (VAs) & Vulnerable Points (VPs) & VIP security. As a part of their border management function they undertake regular patrol to the passes, improve routes for inter valley movement in treacherous terrain & support several mountaineering expeditions. In war they are supposed to support & augment Indian Army in defence of the borders, for which each battalion & sector is assigned an Area of Responsibility (AoR).

**CISF.** Set up under an Act of Parliament in 1969, the CISF was conceived as a dedicated Force for security of Airports, sensitive & secret installations & establishments. It is one of the most visible Force for urban Indians who frequent Airports, big Metro Rail networks & installations. With a sanctioned strength of 1.80 Lakh it provides security to over 300 such VAs & VPs all over India. Other than those mentioned above, it includes Indian Missions abroad, Atomic Power Plants, Research Centers, Steel Plants, Dams & Barrages, Hydel & Thermal Power Plants, Refineries, Shipyards, Fertilizer Production Centers & several other PSUs. It initially offered only consultation services to nationally important private sector units. Later it was empowered by an Act of Parliament to provide security to important private sector enterprises on payment. It has a well-trained & effective fire wing with sub units located at several sensitive places. It also provides an elite force i.e. Special Security Group for persons nominated by the MHA.

**SSB.** Also known as Special Service Bureau, this Force was raised in 1963, post the Sino – Indian War, for the armed support of Research & Analysis Wing (RAW). The organization was meant to motivate & train people of North East (NE) Region of the country to resort to guerrilla warfare, in the case of a Chinese occupation of unheld territory within India. The Force played an important role in training the Mukti Bahini prior to 1971 Indo – Pak War that resulted in the liberation of Bangladesh. Subsequently the Force accredited itself in the Kargil War of 1999. It was only in 2001 that the Force was transferred from the Cabinet Secretariat to the MHA and assigned the role of Border Guarding & management of the Indo – Nepal & Indo – Bhutan Borders. Today it has a sanctioned strength of 94,000 personnel organized in 73 battalions.

### **Description & Role of PMF**

**Assam Rifles.** This is the oldest PMF in India even preceding all the earlier mentioned CAPF. Raised as Cachar Levy (Cachar is a region in Assam) in 1835, it was subsequently nominated as Assam Rifles in 1917. The experience & exposure of this Force ranges from World War I through World War II, to all Counter Insurgency operations everywhere in the NE since India's independence. Called 'Friends of the Hill People' this Force was primarily composed of locals who endeared themselves to the populace through their attitude & behavior, genuine concern, development work, impartiality & strong action during inter faction or inter tribe rivalry, rescue, relief & rehab during natural disasters. Today the Force has 64000 personnel organized in 46 battalions & 14 Sectors. The battalions are classified as Border Guarding (BG) & Counter Insurgency (CI), as per their assigned role & tasks. They are also mandated to undertake Internal Security (IS) & HADR in all Eastern States of India. Although the organization is under the MHA it is commanded at all levels primarily by officers of Indian Army, although cadre officers also support the effort well due to their experience & exposure. The battalions of this Force have been creditably employed for CI in J & K and contributed effectively during the Operation Pawan in Srilanka (1987 – 90) & Operation Vijay in Kargil (1999).

**Special Frontier Force.** Conceived post the Sino – Indian War of 1962, this Force comprises largely of Tibetans in exile. It was a guerilla force meant for covert operations in Tibet i.e. behind enemy lines, only in case of another war with China. These forces are not employed in any covert operations in peace in accordance with

international treaties & obligations on this aspect. Based in Chakrata in Uttarakhand, the force keeps itself well trained & acclimatized for employment on short notice. It is employed in conjunction with other Special Forces in anti-terror operations or along the active borders to keep their 'cutting edge' sharp for their operational tasks in war. The strength of the Force is around 12000 personnel & being an elite Force its activities are made known, on need to know basis only.

**Coast Guards.** Indian Coast Guards are primarily meant for security of India's coast line including those of Island Territories, Territorial Waters, off shore establishments & for defensive operations in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Established in 1978 vide the Coast Guard Act, it is considered an Independent PMF operating under MoD. It however works in close coordination with the Indian Navy (IN), with coastal police of states & union territories, & various departments such as Fisheries, Customs & so on. With over 15,000 personnel, 178 vessels & over 44 aircraft, the Coast Guards are a formidable defensive force securing our seas. It patrols & polices the seas to ensure our maritime interests & enforces Maritime Law where applicable. Its tasks extend to protection of our fishermen & mariners at sea, protection & preservation of marine ecology & prevention of sea pollution. It comes under the operational control of IN in war.

### **Salient Aspects**

The following aspects emerge while closely examining the role & tasks of CAPF & evaluating the same with the tasks of PMF -:

- (a) The CRPF is primarily a police force meant to augment the State Police in preservation of law & order & in extraordinary situations such as HADR, conduct of elections, riot control etc. In insurgency prone areas it undertakes defensive roles sparing the Indian Army for an active role. Its employment against Naxals, as the primary respondent, has expanded the scope of its role & tasks from beyond policing tasks to active involvement in Counter Insurgency. Its role in war is limited to maintaining law & order & combatting Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) in the hinterland & securing lines of communication along induction routes to the Operational Area. The CRPF qualifies as a Police force with no role ambiguity & has complete clarity of its tasks.
- (b) The CISF is again a Police Force whose primary role in both war & peace is to guard VAs & VPs. In war its role gets expanded to security of logistic bases both in the combat zone & in the hinterland. There is no role ambiguity & complete clarity of tasks exist in all contingencies.
- (c) The BSF, ITBP & SSB are primarily employed for border security, border management & border policing in peace time. In war these forces are required to come under the operational control of the Army & fight a defensive battle alongside. The strength, structure, equipment profile, firepower & training is in consonance with its war time role. However because they manage & police the borders in peace they are considered a Police Force. They are employed in IS Duties, including law & order & in contingencies such as election duties & area domination. It may be argued that even the Indian Army is at times involved in such tasks, however such involvement is not at the cost of their operational effectiveness. In any cases forces that have their own Artillery, Air & Marine Wings such as BSF or the ITBP that has acquired proficiency for defensive operations in mountains cannot be employed as law enforcing agencies, without a compromise on operational effectiveness.
- (d) It can thus be clearly seen that there is limited commonality or congruence between the roles of BSF, ITBP & SSB on one hand and the CRPF & CISF on the other. The grouping of all these forces under one head & making them perform similar tasks is a less than optimal arrangement. The implications of such an arrangement is that despite the experience, training, structure & equipment profile of these Border Guarding Forces, they are not considered equal partners in war, both by the Indian Army & by their own organization.

**Analysis of PMF.** While the Border Guarding Forces amongst the CAPF are considered inferior forces in war, the PMF are seen as an asset capable of meeting the aspirations of the country in war. The following aspects are pertinent-:

- (a) The Assam Rifles is also under the MHA (reiterated for emphasis) & performs multifarious tasks in the North East from Border Guarding to Counter Insurgency to HADR & also augments the State Police in critical situations. They perform the same range of tasks as the BSF & ITBP however they are designated as PMF. Whether it is confidence gained through protracted deployment on offensive tasks, or that they are officered, administrated & trained by Indian Army officers, this force is seen as more than equal to its role in war also.
- (b) The Coast Guards also have a border management role at sea. However they are dedicated to this role & although their tasks at sea may be multifarious it falls within the ambit of their role. Being under the MoD their liaison & coordination with the India Navy is at such high level that they can seamlessly integrate with former in war. This has been validated in several exercises both internally & in multinational platforms.

- (c) The Special Frontier Force is treated as an elite organization & no role ambiguity exists. They are however employed in difficult terrain & in conjunction with Commandos to enhance their operational efficiency & keep their combat edge sharp at all times. There has been no effort to dilute the effectiveness of this organization by extraneous employment. However the best employment for this establishment is as part of the newly raised Special Forces Division under the HQ Integrated Defence Staff.

**One Border One Force.** Presently the responsibility for border management of the land borders of India are as follows -:

- (a) **Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan.** Being an active border, the overall responsibility for security & defensive battle in war is that of the Indian Army. BSF is employed in less threatened Sectors under the operational control of Indian Army.
- (b) **Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.** Being a semi active border, it has extensive deployment of ITBP under the operational control of the Indian Army which is located at distances governed by the Border Area Peace & Tranquility Arrangement (BAPTA) with China. However the ITBP is fully responsible for border management per se, in Ladhak, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand & most of Arunachal Pradesh.
- (c) **International Borders (IB) with Pakistan.** BSF is responsible for border management of the Western Front, with the Army located in close proximity to assume control as & when situation aggravates.
- (d) **IB with Nepal.** All border management functions on the Indo Nepal Border are undertaken by SSB. There is no deployment of Indian Army in the proximity due to less threat perception, so far.
- (e) **IB with Bhutan.** Again the border management function with on this border are with SSB. Here however the Indian Army is in close proximity to deal with to deal with any offensive posturing or nibbling actions that the People's Republic of China may undertake against Bhutan. This is in keeping with a special agreement between India & Bhutan.
- (f) **IB with Myanmar.** The Assam Rifles has been assigned with the responsibility of border management on the Indo – Myanmar Border. Officered by Indian Army, the Force has some designated battalions solely in border guarding role, while remainder battalions remain deployed for Counter Insurgency. The Force is under operational control of Army even in peace.
- (g) **IB with Bangladesh.** The BSF is in charge of guarding the land borders, riverine borders & islands of this semi active IB, making it an extremely challenging role. People from Bangladesh infiltrate into India on a regular basis, supported by the Bangladesh Rifles (counterparts of BSF in Bangladesh). The Indian Army operates in CI operations on both sides of the borders in conjunction with Bangladesh Army, but the BSF solely prevents drug smuggling, cattle smuggling & many other illicit activities on the border. These aspects are highlighted to drive home the plethora of tasks the Force already has, without taking on IS Duties in hinterland.

**Impact of Role Ambiguity of CAPF on Conventional Operations.** The less than optimum utilization of some of the CAPF has a profound impact on strike capabilities of the Indian Army. Strike capabilities are required to preempt an enemy offensive, deny him launch pads & to create criticalities in his operational depth forcing him to employ his reserves piecemeal & destroy him. Our offensive thrusts should be capable of threatening multiple vulnerabilities across the theatre, paralyzing enemy command & control structure. To create such conditions in a short, swift war of two to three cycles India needs substantial strike forces. However Indian Army is tied down by the need to secure extended borders & for defensive deployment. The seriousness of the impact is as follows:-

- (a) Indian Army with a strength of over 14 lakhs can only produce three to four Strike Corps for meaningful cross border operations.
- (b) This is a strange situation when we have almost 5 Lakhs CAPF & PMF Forces meant for border guarding role which as per their operational mandate needs to change to an effective defensive deployment in war, under the operational control of Indian Army. However the levels of their training, coordination & integration with the Indian Army leaves much to be desired. The Indian Army assigns them their defensive role in less threatened sectors or employs them subunit wise in the defensive battle. Hence bulk of the Indian Army gets committed for defensive tasks.
- (c) 30 to 50% of the border guarding forces are employed in IS Duties & other policing duties in peace leaving very little scope for integrated training, at the battalion or sector level. Liaison & coordination with the Indian Army lasts for limited periods in a year except in the case of ITBP where they operate in conjunction with Indian Army, even in peace. In the case of SSB the levels of coordination are abysmally low & in most cases they are unaware of the operational tasks at the tactical level.
- (d) The Indian Army does not keep the CAPF abreast about their operational plans, keeps them out of most operational discussions & carries out less than optimum joint training with these forces both due to trust deficit & the latter's non availability. It is unfortunate but true that the Indian Army depends on formations

moving trans - theatre and augmenting them for defensive tasks, rather than depend on the CAPF who generally have extensive knowledge of the terrain.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Role Review.** The basic issue is whether border management is role that needs to be assigned to the PMF or CAPF. There are certainly several policing tasks undertaken on the semi active & dormant borders. However if the forces involved in border guarding have a major role to play in war, should they remain a Police Force in peace? The BSF & ITBP are equipped & organized for war. Using them as Police Forces is a sub optimal option. Which Police Force in the world would be equipped with 81mm Mortars & Medium Machine Guns & Artillery, that are undoubtedly weapons of war? The SSB was raised for wartime operations. Today they remain solely on border management activity, since the borders with Nepal are 'open' & peaceful. However with the increasing influence of China in Nepal, both overt & covert operations by the former across the Indo – Nepal Border cannot be ruled out. Hence the need to train & reorient this force to fight a defensive battle. It comes out clearly that while the CRPF & CISF should remain CAPF all other Forces discussed should be nominated as PMF.

**Structural Review.** Both the PMF & CAPF should continue to remain under the MHA. Status quo needs to be maintained regarding their structure, composition equipment profile & manning policy. However the PMF should be placed under the operational control of the Indian Army at all times. This kind of a dual control seems to be difficult proposition, but a close evaluation of the system followed in Assam Rifles & adopting the same in BSF, ITBP & SSB should be considered.

**Adequacy of Forces for IS Duties.** The apprehension with regards to the above mentioned arrangement would be the availability of forces for IS Duties and to augment requirement of states for law & order & other situations. A study group should analyse this requirement keeping the current anti Naxal deployment of CRPF, frequency of election duties, the strength & effectiveness of State Armed Police etc. If there is a need to increase the size of any of the CAPF, it should be done.

**Integration with Indian Army.** The arrangements as outlined below will enhance integration of PMF specifically the BSF & ITBP with the Indian Army - :

- (a) BSF & ITBP Sectors should come under the operational control of the infantry divisions of Indian Army Pivot Corps. They will continue to be under their respective Force HQs for administrative & departmental matters. With the maturity of these arrangements the Force HQs of these Forces could assume operational control of their Sectors while continuing under the operational control of the Pivot Corps of Indian Army.
- (b) The assessment of the company commander upwards of the PMF should have an operational appraisal carried out through the Army channels at the appropriate levels which should have an impact on their promotions & postings.
- (c) There should be deputation of officers from Army to PMF & vice versa at the company commander & Commanding Officer level. Similarly there should be appointment for Staff officers of Indian Army at all Sector & Force HQ of the concerned PMF & Staff Officers of PMF at the Brigade, Division & Corps HQs. This not only enhance the operational preparedness, but build in the desired levels of synergy.
- (d) Training of the PMF at company level & above should be validated by a combined team of the PMF & affiliated Army Brigade. Army Brigade commanders should be responsible for the training standards & operational orientation of PMF units in their Sectors. The affiliated Artillery Brigade Commander should be responsible for the training of all mortar platoons of the PMF & coordination of all PMF Artillery in the Sector.
- (e) Since the SSB is presently deployed on dormant borders, they should be assigned active or semi active borders in other Sectors for familiarization. They should be capable of deployment in company groups under the other PMF, in war.

**Impact of Recommendations.** The role review, structural review & integration of the recommended PMF with Indian Army could result in the following:-

- (a) The focus of all border guarding forces would be entirely on the borders in peacetime & a smooth transition to a defensive deployment in war would follow.
- (b) The time taken to effect the defensive deployment would reduce substantially as the troops are in location only readjustments would be required. Preparation, maintenance & coordination of defences will be continuous process since the entire PMF battalion is in location or in the proximity.
- (c) PMF would be able to occupy defences & fight a coordinated defensive battle, supported by surveillance, firepower & engineer support from the Indian Army. Initially, the holding divisional HQ would coordinate the defensive battle. Subsequently as the plan matures, the Force HQ of the PMF can be empowered to coordinate this battle.

- (d) The synergy between the Indian Army & PMF would be such that units can relieve, replace or augment the other seamlessly in war.
- (e) The training standards of the both the forces would become at par. With cross posting of officers the ethos, proficiency & aggressive spirit of the Indian Army would be absorbed by the PMF. Similarly the intricate knowledge of terrain & intelligence setup of the PMF would be available to the Army.
- (f) The above arrangement will result in the availability of at least one additional division offensive capability in each Corps Zone for the Indian Army. The offensive capability in each Theatre would increase to an extent that the enemy's critical vulnerabilities are threatened in the first operational cycle.

**Commitment Towards IS Duties.** The above mentioned recommendations do not absolve the PMF of a tertiary role in IS Duties or HADR. Pre designated columns of PMF will be assigned roles for such internal emergencies on requisition, in same lines as the Indian Army assists Civil Administration for a specific period. This will however not include planned activities such as elections, religious processions / congregations etc for which only the CRPF & CISF (only CAPF in the proposal) would be employed.

An expected reaction to this paper would be that it would be even better to merge the PMF with the Army if such kind of a synergy in employment is desired. However this cannot be considered for the following reasons -

- (a) International guidelines do not permit permanent deployment of Army at the IB & the BAPTA precludes close deployment of Army to the LAC.
- (b) Merger of PMF with Army would mean that the former is supported out of the Defence Budget which as it is falls short of expectations & any increase will meet both internal & international apathy.
- (c) The administration, procurement procedures & logistics of each PMF is unique & time tested & it does augur well to disturb this system, which is well managed under the MHA.

It is therefore established that implementation of the recommendations proposed in this paper will result in disproportionate gains both for internal & external security of the Nation.

#### **Declaration from Author**

I hereby certify that the article named '**Reorgansing & Restructuring Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) In India's National Security Interests**' is written by me and it is my original work .I have taken due care to avoid plagiarism. The article has not been previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere.

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