



Creation of Integrated Triservice Theatre Commands

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Why in News

Recently, a **high-level committee** has been formed for the consultations on the creation of **integrated triservice theatre commands**.

The committee will examine all issues and find a way forward before a formal note on their creation is sent to the **Cabinet Committee on Security**.

Key Points

- **About the Move:**
 - The move was necessitated due to some aspects like **bringing in paramilitary forces** (which is under Home Ministry) **under the purview of the theatre commands** and **financial implications** that may arise in the process of integration.
 - The **proposed Air Defence Command** plans to integrate all air assets of the armed forces while the **Maritime Theatre Command** plans to bring in all assets of Navy, **Coast Guard** as well as coastal formations of Army and Air Force under one umbrella.
 - On land, the **Army's Northern command and Western Command** would be converted into **2-5 theatre commands**.

- **Integrated Theatre Command:**

- An integrated theatre command **envisages a unified command** of the three Services, **under a single commander**, for geographical theatres (areas) that are of strategic and security concern.
- The commander of such a force **will be able to bear all resources** at his disposal — from the Army, the Indian Air Force, and the Navy — with seamless efficacy.
- The integrated theatre commander **will not be answerable** to individual Services.
- Integration and jointness of the three forces **will avoid duplication of resources**. The resources available under each service will be available to other services too.
- The **Shekatkar committee** (in 2015) had recommended the creation of 3 integrated theatre commands — **northern** for the China border, **western** for the Pakistan border, and **southern** for the maritime role.

- **Views in favour of Integration:**

- The **integrated theatre commander** will not be answerable to individual Services, and will be **free to train, equip and exercise his command to make it a cohesive fighting force** capable of achieving designated goals.
- The **logistic resources required to support its operations will also be placed at the disposal of the theatre commander** so that it does not have to look for anything when operations are ongoing.
- This is **in contrast to the model of service-specific commands** which India currently has, wherein the Army, Air Force and Navy all have their own commands all over the country. In case of war, each Service Chief is expected to control the operations of his Service through individual commands, while they operate jointly.

- **Views against Integration:**

- There has been **no occasion**, during actual warfare, **when the three services have not operated with commendable cooperation**.
- Faraway land war and medium to high intensity wars are a **distant possibility**.
- **With increased communication networks**, interaction between three organizations is easy, they can come on board, can plan without much consideration of spatial distance, so there is no need for a new organisation.
- **Domain knowledge of the integrated force commander is likely to be limited** in respect of the other two Services components under his command, thereby limiting his ability to employ them in the most suitable manner and at the appropriate time.

- **Current Situation:**

- The Indian armed forces currently **have 17 commands**. There are **7 commands each of the Army and the Air Force**. The Navy has **3 commands**.

Each command is headed by a 4-star rank military officer.

- There is one **joint command in Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

It is the **first Tri-Service theatre command** of the Indian Armed Forces, based at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India.

- The other **tri-service command**, the **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)**, looks after the delivery and operational control of the country's nuclear assets.

- **Recent Developments:**

- The appointment of the **CDS (Chief of Defence Staff)** and the creation of the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** are momentous steps towards the **integration and advancement of defence forces**.

- **CDS:** It is the **single-point military adviser to the government** as suggested by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999.

- **Department of Military Affairs:** Work exclusively pertaining to military matters will fall within the purview of the DMA. Earlier, these functions were the mandate of the Department of Defence (DoD).

- The Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat has **operationalised the third Joint Logistics Node (JLN) in Mumbai**.

These JLN's will provide integrated logistics cover to the Armed Forces for their small arms ammunition, rations, fuel, general stores, civil hired transport, aviation clothing, spares and also engineering support in an effort to synergise their operational efforts.

Source: TH