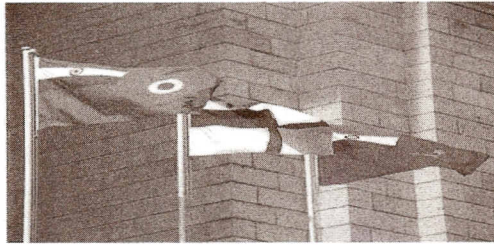


Review: By Aakrosh Editorial Board

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSIS

**NET SECURITY PROVIDER:
INDIA'S OUT-OF-AREA CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS**



Military Affairs Centre, IDSA
October 2012

 MAGNUM Books Pvt Ltd

**Net Security Provider: India's
Out-of-Area Contingency Operations**

THE MILITARY AFFAIRS CENTRE (IDSA)*

The Military Affairs Centre of the Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses (IDSA) has examined India's imperatives, and its capabilities to conduct out-of-area contingency (OOAC) operations, in keeping with national policies consistent with its interests in the evolving global environment. In doing so, the task force report has cautioned that "it is important to reinforce that India's OOAC role and responsibility is in keeping with internationally accepted norms and a benign pursuit of its economic and social interests."

The basic reasoning offered by the task force report for creating capacities for OOACs that India may have to cope with in the future has been accurately identified and analysed. The report notes "*In sum, the twin forces of globalisation and the rising geo-political importance of the Asia-Pacific region is forcing India, like never before, to increasingly look beyond its shores.*"

Timely and logically laid out, the report starts by identifying the case for OOAC operations. This is followed by a section on the conduct of previous OOAC operations wherein it outlines four areas in which India could expect to be obliged to execute such operations in the future, that is, peacekeeping under the UN flag; evacuation of Indians from troubled countries such as it was forced to do from the Middle East countries during the 1991 Gulf War; humanitarian and disaster relief operations; and military operations, either at the behest of another country or to safeguard national interests affected by events beyond its borders. As all of these have been carried out in some form or the other in the past, the task force examined each experience to draw lessons and made recommendations that would be useful to the government in formulating a comprehensive national policy for OOAC operations.

Section II is derived from this experience. It outlines current issues in planning for OOAC operations. It covers existing and future planning for OOAC operations, the role of the Ministry of External Affairs in the conduct of such operations, strategic communications and perception management of OOAC operations in keeping with the political imperatives and pressures of governance in a democracy.

As more than one ministry would be involved in all such operations, a policy document, a "mini war book" defining roles and responsibilities,

needs to be created at the centre and promulgated to all. As a sequence to this report, the task force may wish to examine this aspect and work on the framework of the suggested mini war book for the authorities to co-opt in the policy document.

While peacekeeping and military operations will be primarily carried out by the military, the primary responsibility for evacuation and humanitarian and disaster relief operations should be the responsibility of civilian ministries/organisations and not of the military. Only such assistance that is outside the capabilities of these non-military organisations should be requisitioned from the military to form part of the larger plan.

The basic planning for these non-military operations should be carried out by civilian ministries and organisations responsible for the task, and appropriate resources should be created or harnessed from various sources. Capacities outside the military should be increased progressively, especially in the case of disaster relief, where a realistic policy on creating material reserves/relief stores should be created so that military war reserves are not depleted.

The report's comments on the general lack of focus and institutional capability to plan, train and carry out OOAC operations are correct, and there is a need for concerned authorities to carry out a comprehensive analysis to create organisational structures and procedures. However, it appears that the task force study was confronted by an antiquated concept of secrecy and confidentiality and, therefore, was unable to access critical data that may have facilitated the detail such a study warrants. The government needs to review the archaic policies of secrecy and classification of information to widen the scope of access to provide a seamless yet secure environment for efficiency of governance of both internal and extraterritorial operations. That notwithstanding, the task force, which consists of members who have served in all arms of the government with a wealth of hands-on experience, seems to have shied away from exploring the limits to which prevailing secrecy policies actually curtailed access to archival reports and returns. Therefore, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) needs to consider a future study of this aspect.

Secondly, “According to the Ministry of Defence, since 1950, India has participated in 45 UN missions out of the total of 69 UN missions, across the Globe. Till date, more than 1,65,000 Indian troops have participated in various UN Missions. Tellingly India has also the largest number of fatal casualties among nations participating in peacekeeping operations – indicative of its deep commitment and sacrifices.” As these operations are mandated by the UN – the only institution that manages global peace – it stands to reason that India should have a greater say in the decision-making process. Hence, according to the task force, “India will have to re-examine this principle if it continues to be excluded from the Security Council. It does not stand to logic that the deployment of Indian troops would be at the whims and fancies, and veto power, of the five permanent members of the Security Council. This contradiction between adhering to UN norms while not being appropriately represented as the Security Council is an issue that will have to be worked through.”

The report then goes on to look at the employment of military forces in operations beyond India’s borders fashioned on case studies of Indian military operations in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1990 and the operation to prevent a coup in the Maldives in 1998. The substance of this chapter lies in identifying, very correctly, six major lessons from past experience.

1. Past experience demonstrates the inability of the government to appreciate the task and *lay out a clear political and military mandate*. This is a prerequisite to planning and executing a military operation, especially when the forces would be detached from their traditional logistics chain. Operational flexibility is limited and cannot cater to the fluctuations of political exigencies. However, the task force then back-pedals by qualifying its conclusion by acknowledging “that political developments and uncertainties mean that it is not always possible to be given an unambiguously clear mandate at all times. The Government of the day will be susceptible to public opinion, especially in a democracy, and this opinion may change according to battle casualties and political developments.” The task force appears quite content to pass the buck to “military commanders both at the apex level and in the field to have

intellectual and operational flexibility to change their missions according to political directions.” The question that they fail to address is that flexibility in battle is limited to the theatre of operations where homogenous logistics adapt with the changing tactical and operational contingency. Changing political directions must cater to the strategic limitation of overstretched and somewhat tenuous logistics chain. The first among the principles of war is *selection and maintenance of the aim*. A single, unambiguous aim is the keystone of successful military operations. Selection and maintenance of the aim is regarded as the master principle of war. And war is ordered by the national leaders and executed by the military.

2. The report opines on the “*need for focusing on robust military contingency planning*.” The flaws in the execution of Op Pawan (Sri Lanka) were a consequence of the lack of forward thinking and realistic planning at both the national and military levels. The lessons from Op Pawan are incomplete as the lack of visualisation of possible contingencies for deployment of the military, beyond the nation’s borders, was not addressed at the government level. The report makes an excellent observation: “Unlike previous decades, the institutional mechanisms to engage have now been established, chief among them being the National Security Council and its Secretariat.”

3. “Third, there is a *need for greater clarity in designating the Command and Control*.” Conspicuous was the “confusion in official minds . . . about who exactly exercised supreme command over the IPKF.” This was the most obvious lacunae as one of principles of war is *unity of command* – at both the national and military levels. This issue is still to be resolved in this era of joint planning and execution. While an integrated defence services (IDS) headquarters (HQ) has been established, the government, for reasons of its own, has not established the post of a supreme commander, that is, chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), in whom would lie the authority over all three service chiefs. OOAC operations will always be faulty unless the responsibility for planning and execution is not centralised with this authority. For reasons best known to it, the task force at the

Military Affairs Centre has avoided including this critical aspect in its report.

4. The report goes on to express an “*urgent need to enhance inter services integration*” and recommends the establishment of a tri-service command to undertake OOAC operations in order to enable seamless integration. India does not have the resources to establish a dedicated tri-service command, especially for a future OOAC operation. Force levels would have to be drawn from within existing military commands, which would be grouped under a designated task force commander, nominated by the CJCS in conjunction with the three service chiefs. Planning for possible OOAC operations would be done at the IDS based on directions from the government where a skeleton task force HQ could be established.

5. The report enumerates a long list of *deficiencies in the intelligence* available to and provided for past OOAC operations. These include, for example:

- Focus on China and Pakistan at the cost of other critical areas in and around that fall into the extended security horizon expounded by the Ministry of Defence
- Failure to establish appropriate intelligence assets uniformly in some countries with an established record of instabilities
- Minimal intelligence sharing between the three services
- Refusal of civil intelligence agencies to share information or failure to provide the type of information required
- Inability to understand the importance of political intelligence to military operations
- Denial of access to critical intelligence available at their command by states neighbouring affected countries
- And lack of suitable capabilities with the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW)

The report concludes that “the next natural step to devise a mechanism to bring about a coordination between the efforts of military and civil

intelligence services limits its findings - It is therefore imperative that civil and military intelligence resources are dedicated for the purpose of generating a constant stream of information about countries in the immediate and extended neighbourhoods." This is a vast area that forms the core on which OOAC operations would be based and, therefore, should have been addressed in much more detail.

6. The report examines "*the need to focus on civil affairs,*" including engaging with domestic and international media. These are discussed in Section II of the report.

The task force has made some far-reaching recommendations, including the following:

- The creation of an OOAC Directorate at HQ IDS
- The creation of an Emergency Directorate (ED) in the Ministry of External Affairs that would be primarily tasked with handling crises and also OOAC operations, with a list of its functions
- The creation of an organisation for interagency coordination when OOAC operations involve more than the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs

Two other recommendations touch on the need to enhance intelligence and the imperatives of training personnel.

Finally, the report recommends the creation of either an OOAC Command or a Joint Directorate, both under IDS.

The task force has limited its study on the past experience of OOAC military operations and, on the basis of its finding, has made meaningful recommendations on the employment for the future. It has, however, skirted a discussion of future military operations in OOAC operations. Since then, the Indian government has instituted numerous reforms that relate to its national security, which would mitigate most of these past problems.

Some issues fundamental to this study need to be further examined. It is the government's responsibility to define and lay down those areas where such contingencies could be expected to arise in the future, keeping in view its short- and midterm interests, and thereafter lay down priorities

so that strategic planning can be done and resources can be built to meet each contingency. In doing so, the confidentiality factor needs to be ensured and directions limited to the OOAC Directorate in the IDS.

The IDS, as it exists, is only a planning HQ that can undertake strategic planning for contingencies as prioritised and directed by the government, without the means for operational management before, during and after a mission. Neither does it have a CJCS who would exercise operational control – the authority that ensures the integrity of joint services strategic planning.

There is a need to authorise a skeleton task force HQ with a nominated task force commander (TFCDR) to carry out detailed operational planning for missions outlined in the strategic plans that the IDS evolves. The TFCDR will be responsible for making detailed operation and logistic plans, earmarking forces and logistic resources in different service commands, liaising with commands to provide direction for training and subsequently executing the mission under the aegis of the CJCS.

The IDS should also be the responsible agency that creates and continuously manages a data bank that would provide the basics for strategic and operational planning and execution of the mission. The data bank must have information on the following aspects of the possible missions: military geography, military history, political character and major players, economy, civil and military resources, surface communication infrastructure, defence and police forces and their capabilities, satellite coverage, POL resources, etc.

The study “India’s Out-Of-Area Contingency Operations” is a commendable pioneer project by an institution outside India’s defence establishment. It provides a first step to viewing the country’s potential and the necessity to project power beyond its borders – a function that will have a far-reaching effect on all aspects of the nation and needs to be studied by all elements of the government, academia and civil institutions.

Historically, India has refrained from employing its armed forces beyond its borders except for participating in UN-mandated peacekeeping operations. However, its fast-growing political, economic, technological and demographic potential; the limitation of indigenous raw materials; the

evolving global environment and the phenomenal increments in international interdependencies demand that India shift a substantial portion of its energies to integer with entities beyond its borders.

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