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IAF ready to face any eventualities: Dhanoa

Looking at the ongoing Doklam stand-off between India and China, Indian Air Force is ready to face any eventualities arising out of the conflict. Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa has asserted on Friday in Bengaluru that Air Force is ready to face any eventualities. He was here to inaugurate the 56th Annual Conference organised by the Indian Institute of Aerospace Medicine. He was replying to a question on the preparedness of the IAF to face any eventuality in the wake of a stand-off between the Indian and Chinese troops in the Doklam sector in Bhutan.

Earlier, addressing the gathering, Dhanoa said grounding of pilots on medical grounds was a tremendous loss to the IAF and also adversely affected the morale of the individuals concerned.

“Your scientific work may provide hope to the aviators, who have overcome medical ailments, to return to active flying duties,” he said. In his inaugural address, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa said, IAF’s mission is to build a modern, flexible and credible aerospace power with full spectrum capability to safeguard our national interests. “Aerospace medicine training for the aircrew is an integral part of operational pilot training. The high performance human centrifuge, disorientation simulators and the latest ejection procedure simulator at aeromedical training centres (AMTCs) have imparted quality training to pilots”, he added.

Dhanoa had, in a media interview in July, said there had been a tremendous jump in the capabilities of the Air Force from the time of the 1999 Kargil war and the ability to operate day and night and in all weather conditions had shown a significant increase in the last 18 years. He had also said the ability to keep a vigil along the border had increased, as had the IAF’s reconnaissance capabilities.

In a message to his men, Dhanoa had said they should be ready to execute operations in a very short time with whatever they had and not with what they were supposed to have.

According to an official of the Indian Defence Ministry recently the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC) comprising chiefs of the Army, the Navy and the Indian Air Force had reviewed the security preparedness of the three services including along the Sino-India border.

The stand-off between Armies of India and China in Doklam and attempts by Chinese troops to enter the Indian territory along the banks of Pangong lake in Ladakh were also discussed at the meeting. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a bitter face-off at Doklam in India-China-Bhutan tri-junction for little over two months. China has been ramping up rhetoric against India, demanding immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Doklam. The Chinese state media, particularly, has carried a barrage of critical articles on the Doklam stand-off slamming India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

After first batch of 36, IAF wants 36 more Rafales

By Rajat Pandit

They Will Be Cheaper Than Those to Be Developed With Russia

The IAF is now strongly pitching for acquiring another 36 Rafale fighters after it gets the first 36 jets under the mega Rs 59,000 crore contract (7.87 billion euro) inked with France last September, stressing that the “followon” deal will cost just over 60% of the original acquisition and induction price.

Defence ministry sources say the IAF has made “some presentations“ on the operational need to procure 36 additional Rafales as part of its long-term plans, with the force contending the French fighters will prove to be much cheaper than the proposed fifth-generation fighter aircraft (FGFA) to be developed with Russia.

“But no final decision as yet has been taken on either the 36 more Rafales or the FGFA project,” said a MoD source. Citing IAF's “critical operational necessity“, the Modi government had last year inked the deal for the 36 Rafales, with their weapon packages, associated supplies and logistics, after scrapping the long-pending and deadlocked \$20 billion MMRCA (medium multirole combat aircraft) project for 126 fighters.

As earlier reported by TOI, the first Rafale squadron (18 jets) will be based at Hasimara (West Bengal) to cater for the eastern front with China, while the second will come up at Ambala (Haryana) for the western one with Pakistan. The 36 omnirole jets, which can also deliver nuclear weapons, are slated for delivery from November 2019 to mid-2022.

IAF has told MoD that the infrastructure coming up at Hasimara and Ambala airbases can accommodate two Rafale squadrons each. “This will cut down the induction costs of the 36 additional fighters,” said the source. Grappling with just 33-34 fighter squadrons when at least 42-44 are needed to tackle the “collusive threat“ from China and Pakistan, IAF says the Rafales will be “a huge deterrent“ with their deadly Meteor air-to-air missiles (150-km range), Scalp air-to-ground cruise missiles (300-km) and other weapons.

Underlining “the primacy of airpower“ in modernday warfare, IAF has told MoD the Meteor beyond visual range missile is far superior to any air-to-air missile with Chinese or Pakistani fighters.

The original Rafale deal, incidentally , had come in for sharp criticism from certain quarters due to the huge costs involved. A single fighter in itself costs around Rs 700 crore. But the per fighter cost zooms to Rs 1,640 crore if the overall deal is taken into account, which includes a potent weapons package, all spares and costs for 75% fleet availability and “performance-based logistics support“ for five years.

While IAF is also backing the long-delayed indigenous Tejas light combat aircraft, the single-engine fighter with a limited 400-km range and 2.5-tonne weapon load can be used primarily for “air defence“ to take on incoming enemy jets.

The twin-engine Rafale, in turn, has a much longer combat range from 780-km to 1,650-km depending on the mission, and can carry a 9.3tonne weapon load. With 14 India-specific requirements, including the capability for “cold start“ from high-altitude regions, the Rafale can simultaneously perform both air defence and ground attack missions. The Rafale also has a faster turnaround time, capable of undertaking five sorties in a day. The existing fighters in the IAF combat fleet, in contrast, can do only three sorties at the most.



Sat, 26 Aug, 2017

Ex-officer alleges ‘nuclear treason’

By Josy Joseph

Writes to PM that Vice-Admiral guilty of nepotism was welcomed in Naval HQ

A Navy officer, who recently left service after proving that a Vice-Admiral manipulated the system to promote his son-in-law and in the process almost wiped out all Russian-trained nuclear submarine operators, has now written to the Prime Minister naming at least three serving officers who actively assisted in the subversion. Lieutenant-Commander S.S. Luthra has called upon the Prime Minister to deal with the conspiracy as nuclear treason.

In his case before the Armed Forces Tribunal, Lt. Commander Luthra established that Vice-Admiral P.K. Chatterjee’s efforts to promote his son-in-law resulted in the wiping out of an almost entire generation of Russian-trained nuclear submarine operators of India out of service.

In a rare judgment, the Principal Bench of the tribunal on July 31 ruled against Vice-Admiral Chatterjee, former Inspector-General, Nuclear Safety, and the Navy, and said it was disturbed by the fact that the force “does not have an in-built system” to prevent nepotism. The Bench imposed a fine of ₹ 5 lakh on the Vice-Admiral. Lt. Commander Luthra was a nuclear reactor operator aboard *INS Chakra*, the nuclear submarine India leased from Russia in 2010.

Still gets backing - In his letter to the Prime Minister, Lt. Commander Luthra said that despite the court order, the Navy “continues to assist and support the accused rather than the victim”.

Vice-Admiral Chatterjee, accompanied by a civilian, visited the Naval headquarters last week and was hosted in the office of the Inspector-General, Nuclear Safety, the letter said. “During his visit, he interviewed various officers who had rendered reports on me and held discussions with senior officers of the personnel branch. He was also shown various documentation, ACRs and board proceedings which are of confidential nature and not supposed to be shown to a retired officer, more so to a civilian,” it said.

Lt. Commander Luthra has listed at least three serving officers who have in the past assisted the Vice-Admiral in manipulating the rankings. Calling it nuclear safety treason, the retired commander alleged: “The greed for personal gains by a few senior officers has led to systematic failure of the Naval system that has not only jeopardised the nuclear safety of Indian nuclear submarines but has caused a huge loss to the nation.



Sat, 26 Aug, 2017

Chinese Navy holds rare live-fire drill in Indian Ocean

The fleet carried out strikes against ‘enemy’ surface ships and completed transverse replenishment of fuel and drinking water during an exercise that lasted for several days.

Chen Denan, chief of staff of the Chinese fleet

Beijing: China’s navy has carried out a “live fire drill” in the Indian Ocean to improve fleet performance, state media reported on Friday, the latest exercise in a maritime region near India against the backdrop of the military standoff at Doklam near the Sikkim border. The drill targeted “enemy” surface ships, the media report said. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has carried out a number of well-publicised drills in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and close to the Indian border since the standoff between border troops at Donglang or Doklam began in mid-June.

But the Indian Ocean manoeuvre is the first naval drill to be publicised by China during this period and could be seen as another signal of aggressive military posturing in a region where the Indian Navy has an influential presence.

Two of the PLA Navy’s frontline battle ships took part in the exercise that lasted several days. The location and the time of the exercise weren’t revealed in the report released by official Xinhua news agency on Friday.

“Chinese naval formation consisting of the destroyer Changchun, guided-missile frigate Jingzhou and supply vessel Chaohu conducted a live-fire drill in the waters of the western Indian Ocean,” the report said.

“The fleet carried out strikes against ‘enemy’ surface ships and completed transverse replenishment of fuel and drinking water during an exercise that lasted for several days. The drill is aimed at improving the ships’ performance under real combat circumstances,” Chen Denan, chief of staff of the Chinese fleet, was quoted as saying by Xinhua. The report said the fleet is on a half-year friendship visit to Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania and has conducted joint exercises with the navies of 10 countries since it started its voyage on April 23. Earlier this year, a Chinese fleet had conducted a similar livefire drill in the east Indian Ocean region to test combat capacity.

The latest Chinese drill follows the Malabar naval exercises held in the Indian Ocean by the navies of India, the US and Japan.