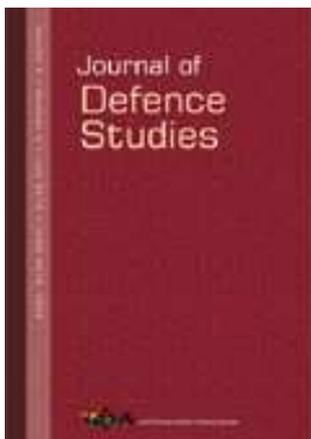


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The CRPF and Internal Security

A Perspective Analysis

*P.M. Nair**

This article critically analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), as the prime agency of the Government of India, attending to manifold matters of internal security. Many incidents, including classic achievements as well as downsides are presented here. The article highlights the need for a functional audit, urgency in professionalising the personnel, harnessing human potential in the best manner and the role of research and development. Another pertinent aspect brought out is a paradigm shift in the selection of leadership, with justification and the process involved in it. The intimate and intricate in-house aspects of the force have also been covered cogently.

INTRODUCTION

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which was born as Crown Representative's Police on 27 July 1939, underwent metamorphosis in different ways to transform itself into the largest paramilitary force in the world and, post-Independence, as the chief and prime force of the Government of India in matters of internal security. As of late, there is no task on internal security which is not assigned to the CRPF. It has indeed endeared itself as a friendly police force-cum-service not only across the country but also abroad, where the units of the CRPF are deployed as part of the peacekeeping force, with both men and women contingents excelling themselves and receiving commendations from world leaders. In

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the context of the multifarious activities that were assigned to the CRPF, the force has become a household name, unlike many other Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and Central Police Organisations (CPOs). The popular appeal of the CRPF has generated increased demand of the force not only for specialised security operations but also for providing security to the personnel conducting search operations, such as income tax raids as well as for individual and corporate security.

It is an irrefutable fact that there is no parallel to the CRPF in the country. Its strength and efficacy lies in several critical factors which are inherent and exclusive to the CRPF. It is a truly pan-Indian, national force with no comparison, incorporating personnel from almost all the states/union territories in India using Hindi as the medium of communication. The force, including officers and men who are recruited through different examinations and at different levels, displays readiness, willingness and commitment to any deployment at any point of time. The CRPF personnel are comfortable working along with other forces, such as paramilitary, defence and, undoubtedly, different state police agencies. Here lies an interesting factor: the culture of state police varies across the country, sometimes with a huge difference, for example, between the culture of police in a state down south vis-à-vis one in the extreme north-east or north-west India, but the culture of CRPF is such that it merges well with the norms, cultures and practices of the varied police agencies across the country. Therefore, the adaptability is indeed high. Further, CRPF is called upon for different types of duties at short notice. It could be for helping the local police in executing an arrest warrant where law and order issues are expected or there has been a breakdown of law and order. It could be a visit of a dignitary or a communal conflagration. Sometime the deployment time and the response time to move and be deployed is just a few hours. And yet, the CRPF moves in without grumble. This shows the dexterity of the force and its high level of versatility.

Having said that, this character is, perhaps, also a bane, in that the CRPF remains at the beck and call of all concerned, even without adequate notice or time for preparation. The resilience of the force, despite all odds, is another factor which adds to its demand for deployment and movement at very short notice, even to places where there is no genuine requirement for a force like it. At times, the state police agencies try to rush in CRPF where they do not want to venture themselves for various reasons, including lack of political and administrative will.

In the context of the existing internal security challenges in the country, with several factors creating an enabling environment for the challenges to persist, coupled with several factors that prevent peaceful resolution of the challenges, this article provides an overview of the crucial role played by the CRPF in the last decade.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CRPF

The CRPF through its professionalism, hard work and efficiency have accomplished a lot. These achievements range from successful operations against insurgents, militants and terrorists to providing assistance to the local governments in implementing various developmental works. The CRPF has also established a number of excellent research and training institutions.

Counter Militancy Operations in J&K

The role played by the CRPF, along with the Punjab Police, in retrieving the state of Punjab which had almost disappeared from the Union of India, having been taken over by militants, is a classic example. The militancy in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), which has seen ups and downs during the last three decades, has seen tremendous positive and determined contribution by the CRPF in controlling the problem and ensuring that the national flag flies high. The number of casualties in the CRPF, in comparison to other security agencies, is another indicator which highlights the prime role played by the CRPF. There is also another dimension in terms of the situation in J&K. Here, thousands of CRPF personnel have been injured in the various deployments spread across a long period. For example, in 2016, in a matter of three months' time, more than 1,100 CRPF personnel suffered injuries, many of them grievous.¹ The reason was that the CRPF was deployed and assigned the front role. Naturally, the CRPF was in the firing range of the militants, miscreants and criminals, most of them with political clout and support from various quarters. Certain sections of the J&K Police had, as is the case of some other state police too, abdicated their responsibility by pushing in the CRPF into the front role. The golden principle of deployment of the CRPF, that it is in aid and support of the state police, had been given a go-by. And yet, the CRPF never grumbled nor refused, essentially because it believes in respecting command and honouring the call of duty.

Counter insurgency Operations in the Northeast

The commendable role rendered by the CRPF in containing extremism and militancy in the north-eastern states in India is less known due to lack of publicity, especially poor media attention. The tremendous efforts by the CRPF in ensuring the supply of essential services to different parts of the North-East, like Nagaland, and maintaining balance between different contentious elements calling shots in different states, etc., have ensured some kind of normalcy despite serious challenges. The lack of development and high level of collusive corruption, a common feature in many parts of India, including the North-East, has generated a high level of resentment against the Government in several places across the latter. The deployment of the CRPF to contain these rebellions has been rather challenging as most of these were not law and order situations, but aggressive expression of deep-seeded frustrations trying to erupt, as if a volcano waiting for long. Even in these challenging terrains and situations, the CRPF has given its best, controlling the militancy and rebellion as well as paving the way for development.

Anti-Naxal Operations in the LWE areas

Regarding left-wing extremism (LWE), the challenges faced by the CRPF have always been higher than the state forces. The number of the CRPF battalions deployed in the Naxal-affected states has seen a drastic increase during the last decade. For example, from less than 30 battalions in 2008, it went up to almost 100 battalions in a matter of five years. As of 2017, the LWE states had 89 CRPF battalions, including nine Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) units.² At times, the deployments were made at such rapid speed that the force was virtually pushed in. Also, they were times when the political decision was taken and the force was asked to move overnight into the Naxal terrain. There were situations where the force had to live for days inside the buses that were carrying them, as there was no accommodation available or even a place for pitching tents due to the thick jungle. Also, imagine the plight of the personnel of a unit moving overnight from Anantnag or Rajouri in J&K to Bheji in Chhattisgarh. The call of duty in the J&K sector was completely different from the LWE sector. The functions, roles, the responsibilities as well as the challenges and responses were drastically different. Logically, it called for specific orientation, training, adaptation, acculturation and above all, orientation of the mind of the personnel. These deployments show that the number of personnel was the only

count which mattered and not the personnel themselves. Such careless and inert management was indeed fraught with serious consequences in the days to come. No wonder the CRPF had to face serious casualties in the LWE sector. The number of CRPF personnel who lost their lives in the LWE sector during the period 2008–17 is around 477.³ Of course, reasons are plenty, but the major factors remain lack of preparedness, orientation and professional training of the CRPF personnel and above all, lack of support systems from the states concerned. Despite all the challenges, the CRPF has performed in an exemplary manner to contain LWE in the country.

Miscellaneous Operations

Though the three dominant sectors mentioned here, namely, LWE, the North-East and J&K, remained and continue to remain the front line of the CRPF action, there is no less demand for the force in other parts of the country. The impact of delivery and achievement by the CRPF in these parts of the country varies in its character and intensity, ranging from containing communal violence, ensuring communal amity in several parts of the country, preventing human disasters in large congregations, especially during major festivals, undertaking security duties during general elections and so on. The successful deployment of the CRPF for security at various places of dispute is another achievement for the CRPF as peace has been restored in such places and with speed, alacrity and surety.

The CRPF and Developmental Works

Lack of development is an issue which has had an impact on the performance of the CRPF. Naxalites, militants and extremists thrive at such places where there is no development. Rather, they ensure that development does not take place so that they can thrive. Thousands of schools have been demolished by the Naxals in the interiors of LWE-affected areas, only to ensure that CRPF/CAPF does not get to stay there. However, the CRPF have been actively involved in assisting the state governments in executing developmental works. For example, when Lalgurh was liberated by Naxalites and recaptured by the CRPF along with the state police, the CRPF officers developed perfect synergy with the district collector and administration and involved themselves in ensuring the execution of the developmental schemes. There were a lot of them pending execution for years! Associating or assisting execution

of the developmental projects may not have been in the assigned charter of duties of CRPF in this hardcore Naxal area, but the officers of CRPF thought it expedient and essential so that the public support comes in and thereby the extremists are isolated.

Another example of development where the CRPF was involved was in the skilling of men and women in hardcore Naxal areas. In 2009, the CRPF, with the support of funds from the Government of India, undertook a mission of identifying Naxals and fence sitters in a hard core Naxal area with the help of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). They brought them together in groups of 30–35 and undertook skill building in a sustained and professional manner for a period of three months. Such trained personnel were then employed depending on the vocational training imparted to them. Hundreds of men and women in hard core Naxal areas of Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha were employed in different vocations like security guard, carpenter, driver, welder, receptionist, house maid and industrial stitching. This experiment initiated by CRPF in 2009 continued for three years and made a tremendous impact on containing Naxalism in the heartland of India. It appears that a successive force leader, who had no experience of the terrain as he was not acquainted with the realities on ground, decided to call off the scheme and therefore it got snapped abruptly. Such developmental schemes, with long-standing impact, are always better than short-term measures like organising medical camps or distributing clothes, food items, etc. Such schemes started by CRPF in skill building and providing employment, which have long-term impact, have to continue by involving local and competent civil society agencies, besides the local government agencies.

Establishing World Class Institutes

Innovation is imperative in the midst of challenges, or else one will perish. Specialisation, a concomitant of innovation, emerges from professionalism and makes the delivery better and impactful. An example will prove the point. During 2008 and 2009, more than 85 personnel of the CRPF succumbed to injuries from explosion of IEDs laid by the Naxals. The entire terrain in the affected areas was mined. The CRPF undertook a careful and calculated analysis of the incidents and several steps were undertaken with the full support of the Union Home Secretary.

Firstly, retired defence personnel with vast experience in handling bombs and explosives were recruited as experts into the CRPF and

attached with the CRPF personnel on duty. Second the CRPF decided to set up a specialised institution for research as well as training its personnel on IEDs. The Institute of IED Management (IIEM) was set up in Pune. Here, every IED explosion across India and several parts of world has been documented and developed as a case study. The institute has an IED park, IED lab, IED museum, IED library and so on. It is one of the best institutions on IED management across the world, attracting trainees from all over India and several countries across the globe

Simultaneously, the CRPF observed that patrol dogs (Malinois, the Belgian Shepherd) can make a difference in reducing the risk of men moving in tough areas. A dog breeding and training centre was started at Taralu, Bangalore, in 2011. This institution, which started with 10 dogs (six female and four male), produced more than 200 patrol dogs in a matter of three years' time. When the CRPF observed that jungle warfare required a specialised school, it started one in Belgaum, Karnataka, in 2013. In a matter of five years, this institution has become one of the best institutions in the country in jungle craft.

Innovation did not end here. It was observed that the Rapid Action Force (RAF), which is perennially called upon to handle riots across the county, was being imparted training in an ad hoc manner, with no professional institution, despite the fact that it had been in existence for decades. Realising the fact that the RAF and all those involved in law and order management need to be trained in professional skills, strategies and methods, a specialised training school was established in Meerut. Though it was initially named as the National Academy of Public Order Management (NAPOM), with a view to train even executive magistrates as well as police, besides RAF personnel, on all aspects of maintaining public order, it was eventually christened as the Rapid Action Force School.

The CRPF has always faced challenges in intelligence gathering. In this regard, the Government of India was moved to sanction an intelligence unit. Thus, in order to train the personnel on specific intelligence work of the CRPF, an intelligence school was also set up. All these innovations show that development has to be research based and every effort in development should be in the interest of the force. The best interest will be known only by undertaking effective, objective, neutral and professional research.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The CRPF's experiences of working with various central and state organisations have been varied. While with some organisations the force had been able to develop greater synergies leading to successful accomplishment of the task, with others the cooperation and coordination was far from being satisfactory. As a result, the force had to face several challenges even suffering numerous casualties.

The CRPF and the State Police

The issue of support from the state government to the CRPF in operational functioning is a crucial aspect. This can be amply demonstrated with two contrasting examples, one from the hardcore Naxalite area of Chhattisgarh and another from the Jungle Mahal area of West Bengal. During April 2010, in a crucial ambush by the Naxalites, 75 CRPF men were killed.⁴ The list of casualties included one more person, who was from the state police. This was sequel to a major operation planned by the state police along with the CRPF and jointly executed by them, but it had just one police person from the local police station along with the CRPF contingent. The fact was that at least 40 police personnel, including officers, were posted in the concerned police station, but this was only on paper. Only two personnel were physically available in the police station and one of them went along with the CRPF for the operation, representing the state police contribution. The avowed and accepted principle that the CRPF will work in aid and support of the state police was completely given a go-by. The entire task of Naxal management was handed over to the CRPF. The enquiry, ordered by the Government of India and conducted by an esteemed, retired senior officer, stopped short by saying that the calamity of 76 men being killed in one go was a failure of leadership.

One can debate endlessly whether it was a failure of leadership in CRPF or the state police, and as to which level of leadership failed, but the fact is that most of the losses suffered by the CRPF in Naxal operations were because the CRPF dared to venture into the 'liberated zones' of the Naxalites. And these liberated zones remain a fact on ground, with no government presence whatsoever in many parts of many of these districts.

The second example with respect to partnership of state police and the CRPF is from the Jungle Mahal area of West Bengal, usually referred to as Lalgah, which is located mostly in the jurisdiction of Midnapore and partly in Purulia district. Here, the Naxalite leaders capitalised the

opportunity of poor governance and collapse of administration, coupled with the atrocities unleashed on the local population, mostly tribals, by the local police. There was a complete vacuum of security, development and polity. In January 2009, the Naxals 'liberated' the Lalgarh area from the Government. Even the police station and block office were burnt and the Government personnel had to run for their lives. The scenario continued for a few months as the local government could not do anything to redeem the situation. By June 2009, the CRPF was called in by the Union Home Secretary who declared that any territory of India cannot be allowed to be liberated by anybody. He decided that the CRPF should study the situation and get back to him as to what needs to be done. After a short but intense field study, the CRPF gave a plan to the Union Home Secretary for deploying eight battalions to recapture the terrain with the clear and specific conditions: (a) the state government should contribute one-third contingent from their side; and (b) each company of the CRPF headed by one Assistant Commandant (AC) would have an additional component of one platoon of state police and shall also have one officer, either Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) or, as a minimum, an inspector of the state police. The West Bengal Government tried its best to wriggle out of this, stating that it could not spare so many officers and men for the operation as they were fully occupied in law and order matters, but the Union Home Secretary was firm and clear.

The operation thus launched in July 2009, jointly by the state police and the CRPF, met with tremendous success, with the complete recapture of the entire liberated zone and no major loss or injury to the force personnel in the operations *per se*. This was despite several alerts and warnings from many intelligence sources about the impending danger and high probability of severe casualties of the security personnel. The 'three-legged race' where the CRPF personnel and the state police personnel not only walked together but lived together and worked together made all the difference. The respect earned by the CRPF in the process of recapture endeared the CRPF so well to the masses that intelligence on hardcore miscreants and Naxal leaders started pouring in from the ground. The Superintendent of Police (SP) of the district was well entrenched on the ground and had tremendous reliable sources. He made strident efforts along with the CRPF personnel to capitalise on the situation. The partnership succeeded so well that within a short time, encounters with hardcore Naxals led to the decimation of not only self-styled leaders like Lal Mohan Tudu and Kishanji but also the cadres.

The result was that entire LWE got eliminated from the Lalgarth zone. The amazing work done by the CRPF as well as the district police in this process of wiping out Naxalism from this region in a short span of less than three years is a classic case of success in internal security, perhaps without parallel in India and elsewhere.

The CRPF and the Central Investigative and Intelligence Agencies

While undertaking an analysis of certain successful and failed operations, it emerged that the best delivery came in when the operations of the CRPF were intertwined with the police functioning in the state, especially investigation of crimes and incidents. When the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took over the investigation of Gynaneswari Express blast in Midnapore district, they took the support of the CoBRA of the CRPF for operations. The seamless working of CBI and CRPF for quite some time helped the CBI in investigating the case in a fool proof manner and the CRPF (CoBRA) in getting specific intelligence on the hideouts of Naxal leaders and ensuring their arrest and detention. The inputs from the CBI helped the local police in successfully prosecuting the arrested persons. Herein lies an interesting aspect of three agencies in complete convergence, which really worked wonders, perhaps unknown to the outside world and even to many in the agencies concerned. Such inter-agency cooperation and seamless convergence is the need of the hour.

The Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) was set up by the Government of India to coordinate all intelligence on national security. However, they did not have LWE in their manifesto. Hence, the CRPF leadership worked with the top echelons of the LWE-affected states and developed NaMAC, the multi-agency centre for Naxal matters. The agency did have a good start as it facilitated the integration of intelligence from several quarters. The intelligence borne out of the investigation of crimes by the states was indeed a great asset to the NaMAC.

When the militants in J&K had injured CRPF personnel in large numbers during the stone pelting and street riots in 2010, the CRPF requested the state police to identify those stone pelters and prosecute them. However, this did not happen. Eventually, after few years, when the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was tasked with the investigation of certain crimes of terrorist funding and related matters in J&K, the team undertook professional investigation and identified the stone pelters and brought them to book. Seamless integration of professional investigation

with the operations in internal security is the best model in containing and eliminating any act of anti-national activity, including militancy, extremism, communal riots, etc.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CRPF

Issue of Force vs Service Dilemma

The dichotomy of force versus service has been impacting the CRPF for quite some time. When 76 personnel were martyred in Chhattisgarh in 2010, many, including so-called and self-styled security experts, were crying hoarse especially in certain sections of the media, as to why the CRPF did not retaliate in equal measure. Some even concluded that CRPF was incapable of doing so. The brutality of the attack was a new low—where the Naxalites not only killed the CRPF personnel but also took out their vengeance against the government on the body of the martyred personnel, by gorging out their eyes, snipping their private parts, cutting off their wrists, etc. These ‘experts’ were ardent votaries of the philosophy of ‘an eye for an eye’. It required only one such commander, of any rank, at the spot to order the visibly (and rightly so) the agitated men to fire, but the result would have been catastrophic and calamitous. The entire village, which presumably was harbouring the Naxals, would have been burnt, with considerable collateral damage to the resident men and women, children, the old and infirm as well as cattle and property. Despite the fact that many villagers may have been, and in all possibility were, conniving with the Naxalites, the CRPF could not shoot down the villagers, nor treat any of them as the enemy. The law of the land demands restraint and use of minimum force. Therefore, the first task of the commander at the spot was not to excite the force to kill the villagers, but to use restraint and control. This, indeed, generates a serious conflict within the mind of the force leaders and personnel. However, that is the hallmark of the force, that despite the odds and provocations they use restraint. The question is whether the officers and men should have a ‘force orientation’ or a ‘service orientation’. Such dilemmas and conflicts will continue to haunt the CRPF personnel. Perhaps such crisis has a positive function too, in that the decision-making is done according to the facts and circumstances on the ground and not based on any tailor-made recipe or a standard operation procedure. Leadership, in such cases, is put to test and at all times.

Issues of Leadership

The top leaders in CRPF, as is the case with any similar force, make all the difference to the entire force. From example, when one leader who had less than a year's tenure was appointed by the government, he continued to criticise, sulk and complain as to what he could do in such a short time. Another leader with almost the same tenure was of the view that every day counts for him and that he should do his best for the force, and he did. Some leaders were completely focused on acquiring land and assets, with less attention on operations, whereas some were more into personnel welfare. Some were into operations, but could not focus much on the critical aspects of personnel management. Some were popularity oriented and would do anything to win and sustain popularity, whereas some leaders never cared for their popularity but insisted on doing the best for the force.

Some have ensured that the deployments, postings and deputation of personnel continues to maintain the national character of the force, whereas some other leaders have messed up with the entire system by making it regional, thereby making it more of a provincial. It is time that the selection of force leaders is recast in the best manner. The existing selection process of the force leaders, which is mostly based on the annual reports, opinions of certain persons and is finally a political decision, needs to be replaced with a meticulous and rigorous selection process, undertaken with due care and diligence, with careful and elaborate scrutiny, assessment, evaluation and consideration of the capabilities, requirements and managerial skills expected of such a leader.

The top leadership of CRPF is in the hands of the Indian Police Service (IPS). Several questions keep cropping up regarding this. Some experts opine that directly recruited CRPF officers should lead the force and some want serving defence service officers to lead the force. The reasons given are often specious and without much rational thinking. The CRPF, as a force and service, has to work along with the state police. It has to be a seamless convergence. The functioning of the systems in the state police and the CRPF have a lot of variance. A person who has served in the state at different levels, has vast experience in matters of internal security and has utilised the services of CAPF in the state can be the best in any give situation. He can bring about the best equation of the CRPF and state police and the synergy can be used as a force multiplier. Further, the CRPF works as a national security service and not otherwise. It is not a war that the CRPF is involved in and therefore,

the decisions have to be taken from the perspective of public service, which has to be in confirmation with the provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure—which an IPS officer is fully conversant with. Therefore, the present system of IPS deputationists leading the force is the best model in the given situation.

At the same time, what is also required is that officers of the CRPF and other CAPF, with vast and rich experience and expertise in internal security operations, should be sent on deputation to the state police, especially in dealing with grave issues of militancy and extremism. In the year 2009, such a system of deployment of middle-level officers from the CRPF, and eventually from other CAPF, to the state police, mostly as Additional Superintendent of Police of operations, was undertaken. The system was found to be very effective and useful. There is a need to institutionalise such deputations at different levels, including higher formations. This will ensure that the core competence of the CRPF, and other similar CAPF officers, is utilised in the best manner and best public interest.

A middle or upper middle leader in the CRPF is an officer with vast experience in different arenas of operation, but most of them are not exposed to professional managerial training because nearly all in-service trainings are technical. Many do not, or rather are not allowed opportunity to, grow and develop. The situation generates ‘bonsai managers’.⁵ Many of them get diminished or continue to remain as ‘force contractors’, as against ‘force leaders’. There is a need to harness the human potential by imparting these officers specialised training on managerial and leadership aspects, especially in prestigious management and professional institutes of excellence, which are in abundance in the country. The career planning of the CRPF officers requires detailed and immediate attention. In addition, the leadership issue at the lower level is another challenge. There are directly recruited gazetted officers and officers who come on promotion from the rank of sub-inspectors. Further, sub-inspectors are directly recruited or they come on promotion from the lower ranks. All these create simmering tensions or rivalry between different groups in the force.

Poor Quality of Training

The large-scale recruitment and lack of corresponding training facilities during the last decade has, indeed, impacted the force adversely. Auxiliary training centres have been opened in large numbers, but infrastructure

is not the only thing which counts in training. It is the trainers who make the difference. It is their professionalism, the skills, the aids, the methodology and the training process that counts. An objective assessment would show that the situation has been far from satisfactory and rather a poor show. Half-baked training is more dangerous than having no training at all. There is a need to have perspective planning in the process of augmenting the strength of the force, with corresponding attention to the requirements of all related factors of recruitment, training, etc. This perspective planning is still missing. Ad hocism is no solution. Robust and well-tested institutional mechanisms have to be put in place.

Political and Bureaucratic Interventions

The political bosses and executive bosses in the force can make or mar the effectiveness, competence and reputation of the force. There have been outstanding political masters in certain Home Ministers who have ensured that the force gets its due everywhere and every time. As an example, the Union Home Minister in 2010 made it a point to travel across the challenging terrains and hold state-wise review of the CRPF operations with the chief ministers and senior officers of the concerned states, as well as the CAPF. The review was encouraging, enriching and rewarding for the CRPF, as the Union Home Minister castigated the state government as well as officials of the central and state governments for the acts of omission and commission in respect of the management, deployment, utilisation, welfare, infrastructure provided to the CRPF as well as operational and intelligence matters. These reviews did have a tremendous impact in improving the scenario on the ground.

However, such initiatives did not last long. Things were and are not as prospective as they should have been. Deployment of the CRPF itself is a crucial point of concern. There are abundant instances when the time-tested norms have been given a go-by and the CRPF pushed into challenging areas and tasks at short notice, or rather no notice at all. The force has no option but to 'obey' the orders, which do not realise or consider the ground scenario or the challenges the force would be subjected to. The treatment of the force by the bureaucracy has also been on the same lines as the political masters. Perhaps time has come when an officer with vast experience in the CAPF holds this crucial post.

Issues of Improper Deployment

Improper use and deployment of the force can be dangerous. Presently, four battalions of CRPF are earmarked for VIP duties. The deployment for guarding personnel and corporate houses started in 2011–12. Though this was rescinded by various officials, political expediency decided otherwise. Any police officer with experience in state police will admit that men who remain continuously on personal security duty, especially with the high and mighty, do create a lot of administrative problems for the force, including discipline. Further, it is not in the character of CRPF to undertake personnel security. The cardinal rule that it is the reserve force of the Union government, to be called upon to assist and aid the state government in times of urgency and emergency only, is the core character of CRPF. This character needs to be retained and maintained. Corporate security needs to be assigned to other CAPF who have experience in individual security. If not, a special force may be created, if the situation so demands. However, CRPF personnel being deployed for personal security will not be in the best interest of the force and the nation in the long run.

Misutilisation of Funds

While funding of the CRPF is not a major problem, there is a need for rationalisation of the sanction and utilisation of funds. The golden principle should be that sanction of every major expenditure should be done after undertaking due diligence and a well-considered decision made by the concerned officials, along with neutral experts. At times, huge expenditure is incurred on projects which are not of much consequence to the force, though they may have political gains for the concerned actors. It is worth undertaking a functional audit of the major expenditures incurred in this decade and take a realistic view and bring out a system of ensuring that the expenditure is in true public interest and not based on whims and fancies of individuals. It is time a paradigm shift is brought into this aspect. Cost–benefit analysis and public interest should be the deciding factors and not personal prejudices and concerns.

Disciplinary Issues

The hire and fire system, which is very strong within the defence services, are not so rigid or effective within the CRPF. Several courts of inquiry (CoIs) are ordered for various faults and mistakes, but seldom do the officers get punished. More often, the CoIs and disciplinary proceedings

are delayed so much, by all vested interests that finally most of them end in a whimper. Any number of instances can be cited to prove this point. An officer who led his men to death in a major calamity of sorts was not only acquitted of the grave charges of dereliction of duty and failure to ensure safety of the men whom he was leading, but was also given promotion and, to top it all, was placed at a crucial post as the officer in-charge of man management. An officer who had misbehaved with a female colleague and violated her rights, perhaps after getting drunk, went scot-free, after prolonged and cleverly delayed disciplinary proceedings. These and similar examples prove the point that the system of internal discipline, disciplinary proceedings and CoIs are not seriously undertaken. It is of utmost importance that in a disciplined force, such acts of omission and commission are seriously considered and rectified. Due diligence needs to be assured and ensured by the force leaders, as letting the grave delinquents off the hook reflects their connivance or inefficiency. The responsibility is high on them because it is they who take the final decision and the buck usually stops with them.

Absence of Force-Specific Research and Analysis

Research and development (R&D) is a crucial element in any institution. The CRPF does not have a research unit despite the fact that it has 246 battalions, which is almost 3 lakh personnel, and a huge amount of government funds to spent on various activities, including establishment, development, operations, etc. The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) is expected to be the R&D agency for the police systems in the country. But it undertakes R&D on major and common issues. There are thousands of micro issues, many unique to the CRPF, which the force has to deal with and the force leaders have to attend to. Instances are plenty wherein the officers break their head to develop even qualitative requirements (QRs) for certain purchases and procurements. The entire system calls for a functional audit and introspection. This will save resources, time and manpower, and will certainly be in the best public interest. A comprehensive research unit for CRPF is very essential.

System of Commendation: A Requirement

Award and reward are very important in any system, and more so in the security forces. A tendency has been observed to pick holes even in the best of operations. Sometimes this is due to prejudices and personal dislikes. To cite an example, in an encounter with Naxals in Jharkhand

in June 2010, where 11 persons died and 14 were injured, including the operational commander who was the AC and, in fact, lost one of his legs in the improvised explosive device (IED) blast, the reports and returns were generally trying to blame the AC for having caused the death and injury of several men. When one went through the entire scenario, including a detailed study at the encounter spot, it was observed that the AC had exhibited inexplicable bravery and courage, despite losing his leg. Had he surrendered, the Naxals would have butchered the entire contingent of 111 men and would have looted all the weapons and ammunitions. Therefore, despite all criticisms and unwanted comments, the operations wing in the CRPF upheld the truth and ensured that the officer got a Shaurya Chakra, the highest medal one could conceive of. The force leaders have to be not only dispassionate and objective but also have the ability to see through the reports and returns, understand and assimilate things in the right perspective and fight out the case with determination. Such efforts are required from the top levels of the CRPF in ensuring that the officers and men do get their due. Sadly, such outgoing approach is uncommon. The force has to adopt outreach and one-step-forward approach in all its functions and deliveries.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, the CRPF is at its best when there is complete synergy of the force with the state police. Whereas the CRPF excels in operational capabilities, tactics, weaponry and operational skills, the state police excels in its knowledge of the terrain, investigating skills and intelligence. Considering the rapid and vast movements of CRPF, the weakness of CRPF includes: lack of understanding of the terrain; lack of understanding of the human potential; lack of intelligence sources; and lack of investigative skills. Once the CRPF and the state police join together, the gaps of both are bridged. Therefore, a complete partnership of the two with seamless sharing of intelligence and operational tactics can do wonders. The principle is live together, walk together and work together. Failure comes when the leaders on either or both sides fail to synthesise the two.

Demoralisation of the force comes, mostly, not from within but outside. Often, especially after any grave incident, certain sections of the media are critical of the functioning of the CRPF. Self-styled security experts cast unwanted aspersions and get away with such comments as they are often not challenged by any expert who has the experience of

CRPF. It is time that such experts and media realise that any institution like the CRPF, with its vast glory, starting from the episode at Rann of Kutch, where the CRPF defended and upheld the national territory and integrity, has to be given due respect. Institutions cannot be decried and pulled down for certain acts of omission and commission by some personnel. Castigate the individuals, but spare the institutions. The CRPF remains the pride of the nation. Odds and challenges will always be there, but CRPF, as a force, will take them in its stride, convert the challenges into opportunities and will move on. Rightly said, CRPF is '*chalte raho, pyare force*'.

NOTES

1. See Shujaat Bukhari, 'Wrath of Kashmir', *Frontline*, 19 August 2016, available at <http://www.frontline.in/cover-story/wrath-of-kashmir/article8932069.ece>, accessed on 18 April 2018.
2. See 'CRPF Reworks Strategy to Take Naxal and Militant Head on in Bastar and South Kashmir', *Firstpost*, 28 July 2017, available at <https://www.firstpost.com/india/crpf-reworks-strategy-to-take-naxals-and-militants-head-on-in-bastar-and-south-kashmir-3865431.html>, accessed on 18 April 2018.
3. See 'Mapping Death Toll in Naxal Attacks across Country over Past 10 Years', *Deccan Chronicle*, 24 April 2017, available at <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/240417/mapping-death-toll-in-naxal-attacks-across-country-over-past-10-years.html>, accessed on 17 April 2018.
4. See '75 jawans killed in Naxal ambush in Chhattisgarh', *India Today*, 6 April 2010, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/75-jawans-killed-in-naxal-ambush-in-chhattisgarh-71065-2010-04-06>, accessed on 17 April 2018.
5. R. Gopalakrishnan, *The Case of the Bonsai Manager*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007.