

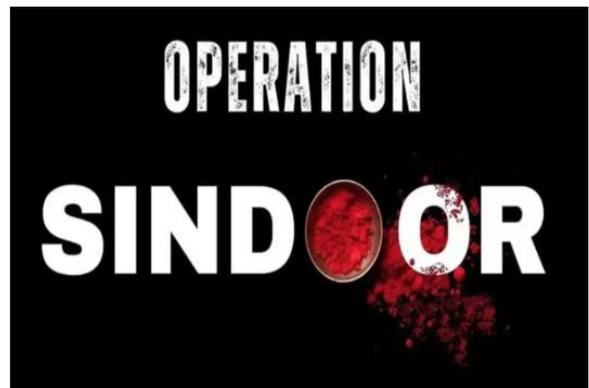
# Forging One Force

## *The Synergy of India's Armed Forces*

May 18, 2025

### Introduction <sup>1 2 3</sup>

In an age of multi-domain warfare, where threats evolve faster than borders shift, **India's national security architecture has demonstrated the strength of jointness and strategic foresight.** Operation SINDOOR, initiated on **May 7, 2025**, in the aftermath of the **Pahalgam terror attack**, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent civilians showcased a calibrated, **tri-services response** that embodied precision, professionalism, and purpose. Operation SINDOOR was conceived as a punitive and targeted campaign to **dismantle the terror infrastructure** across the **Line of Control** and deeper inside Pakistan.



**Multi-agency intelligence** provided confirmation of **nine** major camps that were eventually targeted in the operation. India's retaliatory action was based on **meticulous planning** and an **intelligence-led approach**, which ensured that the operations were conducted with **minimal collateral damage**. Operational ethics were central to the mission, and restraint was exercised to avoid civilian harm.

**In the aftermath of Operation SINDOOR**, Pakistan initiated a series of **retaliatory drone and UCAV attacks** targeting key **Indian airbases** and **logistics infrastructure**. These attempts, however, were effectively neutralised by India's **comprehensive and multilayered air defence architecture**. Central to this success was the **Integrated Command and Control Strategy (ICCS)**, which facilitated **real-time threat identification, assessment, and interception** across multiple domains. In every single domain of Operation Sindoor there was operational **synergy** between the forces and fully supported by the Government, agencies and departments.

The operation unfolded across land, air, and sea—a **seamless demonstration of synergy** between the **Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy**. The Indian Air Force (IAF) played a crucial role in delivering precision strikes against terror infrastructure across Pakistan. It conducted **high-impact air operations** on targets such as the **Nur Khan Air Base** and the **Rahimyar Khan Air Base**, with visual evidence of damage presented during official briefings. The Air Force's robust air defence environment proved pivotal in protecting Indian airspace during retaliatory drone and UAV attacks from across the border. The indigenously developed **Akash surface-to-air missile system** and legacy platforms like the **Pechora** and **OSA-AK** were deployed effectively in a layered defence grid. The IAF's Integrated Air Command and Control System enabled **real-time coordination** of air assets, allowing Indian forces to neutralize aerial threats efficiently and maintain net-centric operations throughout the conflict.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2128748>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/39482/Transcript of Special briefing on OPERATION SINDOOR May 09 2025](https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/39482/Transcript+of+Special+briefing+on+OPERATION+SINDOOR+May+09+2025)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/39474/Transcript+of+Special+Briefing+on+OPERATION+SINDOOR+May+07+2025>

**Simultaneously**, the Indian Army demonstrated its preparedness and effectiveness in both defensive and offensive roles. The Army's air defence units worked in tandem with the Air Force, deploying a wide array of systems ranging from **shoulder-fired MANPADS** and **LLAD guns** to **long-range SAMs**. These units were instrumental in countering waves of drones and loitering munitions launched by Pakistan. Despite Pakistan's unrelenting efforts to inflict damage, Indian forces succeeded in ensuring the security of both military and civilian infrastructure.

The Indian Navy played a critical role in asserting maritime dominance during Operation SINDOOR. Operating as a composite networked force, the Navy deployed its **Carrier Battle Group (CBG)** equipped with **MiG-29K fighter jets** and **airborne early warning helicopters**. This ensured persistent surveillance and real-time identification of threats across the maritime domain. The CBG maintained a **powerful air defence shield** that prevented hostile aerial incursions, especially from the **Makran coast**. The Navy's presence created a strong deterrent and effectively bottled-up Pakistani air elements along their western seaboard, denying them any operational space. Naval pilots conducted round-the-clock sorties, further demonstrating India's readiness and strategic reach in the region. The Navy's ability to establish uncontested control over the seas also validated its anti-missile and anti-aircraft defence capabilities in a complex threat environment.

During Operation Sindoor, the **Border Security Force (BSF)** also played a critical role in thwarting a **major infiltration attempt** along the International Border in the **Samba** district of Jammu and Kashmir. BSF troops noticed suspicious movement in the early hours and swiftly responded, leading to a heavy exchange of fire. In the ensuing encounter, the BSF **successfully neutralized** at least **two infiltrators and recovered arms, ammunition, and other war-like stores**. The operation underscored the BSF's vigilance, operational preparedness, and its crucial role in maintaining border security during heightened tensions.<sup>4</sup>

Operation SINDOOR was thus not just a tactical success but a **strategic statement**. It demonstrated India's capacity for **high-precision, coordinated military action across land, air, and sea**. The operation was made possible by years of investment in defence preparedness and the unwavering policy and budgetary support from the Government of India. The message was clear: when appeals to reason and diplomacy are met with continued aggression, a decisive response is both justified and necessary. In sum, Operation SINDOOR will be remembered as a **defining moment in India's defence history—a symbol of military precision, inter-service cooperation, and national resolve**. It successfully eliminated terror threats, reaffirmed India's regional dominance, and sent a strong message that cross-border terrorism would be met with a calibrated yet firm response.

## Major Government-Led Coordination Efforts Among the Armed Forces

### 1. Creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)<sup>5</sup>

On **24 December 2019**, the Union Cabinet approved the creation of the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)**, a four-star General who heads the **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** and acts as the principal military adviser to the Defence Minister on tri-Service matters.

#### Key roles of the CDS include:

- Overseeing the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Territorial Army.
- Promoting jointness in procurement, training, staffing, and command restructuring.

<sup>4</sup> <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/bsf-foils-major-infiltration-bid-along-international-border-in-samba/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1597425>

- Leading tri-service organizations, including cyber and space commands.
- Advising the Nuclear Command Authority and participating in defence planning bodies.
- Driving reforms to optimize resources, enhance combat capabilities, and reduce waste.
- Implementing multi-year defence acquisition plans and prioritizing inter-Service needs.

The CDS strengthens unified leadership and fosters integration for a more coordinated and modern Indian military.

## 2. Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs)<sup>6</sup>

To modernize the Armed Forces, efforts are underway to restructure forces through the establishment of **Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs)** and **Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs)**. These reforms aim to optimize operational preparedness by unifying the Army, Navy, and Air Force capabilities based on geography and function. Studies at the Service Headquarters level are actively exploring Theatre Commands for **Land Borders, Maritime, and Joint/Integrated Air Defence**<sup>7</sup> to enhance synergy and combat effectiveness. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Anil Chauhan has emphasized that **jointness and integration** are essential prerequisites for ITCs, which will clearly separate operational roles from administrative Raise-Train-Sustain (RTS) functions, allowing commanders to focus on security and operations. ITCs represent the start of wider reforms toward **multi-domain operations**, integrating space and cyberspace with traditional domains, and advancing digitization and data-centric warfare.

## 3. Creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA)<sup>8</sup>

**Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** with CDS as **Secretary** was created in **2020** to facilitate optimal utilization of resources and **promote jointness** among the three Services. The subjects allocated to DMA include:

- The **Armed Forces** of the Union, namely, Army, Navy and Air Force.
- **Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence** comprising of Army Headquarters, Naval Headquarters, Air Headquarters and Defence Staff Headquarters.
- **Works relating to Army, Navy and Air Force.**
- **Promoting jointness in procurement**, training and staffing for the Services through joint planning and integration of their requirements.
- **Facilitation of restructuring of Military Commands** for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint / theatre commands.

## 4. Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control & Discipline) Act, 2023<sup>9</sup>

The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control & Discipline) Act, 2023 promotes **jointness** in the Indian Armed Forces by **empowering commanders of tri-service formations with authority over personnel from all three Services**. This unifies the disciplinary chain, speeds up decision-making, and fosters operational and cultural integration. By streamlining command without affecting individual Service identities, the Act lays the legal foundation for future integrated theatre commands. Key implications of this Act are:

- **Unified command:** ISO commanders can discipline all personnel under one authority.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2021210>

<sup>7</sup> [https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR\\_0.pdf](https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=198903>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/0201202402.pdf>

- **Faster processes:** Reduces delays from inter-Service coordination.
- **Joint culture:** Encourages cross-Service cohesion and shared responsibility.
- **Legal base for theatre commands:** Supports future integrated operations.
- **Service identity retained:** Each Service's unique norms remain intact.

## 5. Joint Logistics Nodes (JLNs)<sup>10</sup>

Three Joint Logistic Nodes (JLNs) have been established and are operational since **2021** at **Mumbai, Guwahati** and **Port Blair** for **Logistics Integration** between the **three services**.<sup>11</sup> These JLNs 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 synergize their operational efforts. This initiative would accrue advantages in terms of **saving of manpower, economize utilisation of resources, besides financial savings**.

## 6. Joint Training Courses, Seminars & Exercises

- **Tri-services Future Warfare Course:**<sup>12</sup> A pioneering initiative by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, this is a **rank agnostic course** for **Major Generals** to **Majors** and their **equivalent level officers from other services**. The course intends to acquaint the officers with the **operational** and **technological** aspects of **modern warfare**. The need for a Future Warfare Course for Tri Services officers arose from the rapidly evolving nature of modern warfare, driven by technological advancements, changing global dynamics, and emerging threats. The course has been curated by Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff with the help of veteran and serving subject matter experts. The **first edition** was conducted in New Delhi from **23 - 27 September 2024** and the **second edition** was held at Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi from **April 21 to May 09, 2025**. The second edition featured an enhanced curriculum covering specialised subjects and domain-specific warfare developments in military operations.<sup>13</sup>
- **Defence Services Technical Staff Course:**<sup>14</sup> The Defence Services Technical Staff Course (DSTSC) was held on **10 June 2024** at **MILIT, Pune**, with **166 officers** from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and friendly foreign nations. For the first time, the course was conducted by **Tri-Services Joint Training Teams**, marking a significant step towards jointness and multi-domain operational readiness. Officers were trained in emerging technologies, defence strategy, and geopolitical awareness, along with exposure to live drills, defence R&D, and industrial corridors—a bold push toward techno-leadership and Atmanirbharta in military capability.
- **Parivartan Chintan Conference:**<sup>15</sup> The **Tri-service Conference**, 'Parivartan Chintan', was held in New Delhi on **08 April 2024**. The 'Chintan' was curated as a brainstorming and idea incubation discussion to generate new and fresh ideas, initiatives and reforms to further propel **Jointness and Integration in the Armed Forces**. Jointness and Integration are the cornerstones of the transformation to Joint Structures which the Indian Armed forces are progressing towards with the intention of being "Future Ready".

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1708998>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1601812>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2057584>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2122831>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2023710>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2017419>

- **Seminar on ‘Synergising Air and Naval Forces: Enhancing Combat Power in the Indian Ocean Region’:**<sup>16</sup> Headquarters Southern Air Command, in collaboration with the **Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)**, hosted a seminar on “Synergising Air and Naval Forces: Enhancing Combat Power in the Indian Ocean Region” on **25 February 2025**. The Seminar featured two sessions that brought together senior officers, both serving and retired, from **Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, Headquarters Southern Air Command, Indian Army, Indian Navy and CAPS**. Participants deliberated on synergising maritime air operations and enhancing combat power, offering valuable insights and perspectives on strengthening joint operational capabilities.



- **Joint Exercises:**

- **Exercise Prachand Prahar 2025:**<sup>17</sup> The Indian Armed Forces conducted a **tri-service integrated multi-domain exercise, Prachand Prahar**, in the high-altitude terrain of the Himalayas along the Northern Borders in **Arunachal Pradesh**. The **three-day** exercise, held from **March 25 to 27, 2025**, focused on **coordinated operations** involving the Army, Air Force, and Navy. Prachand Prahar **follows Exercise Poorvi Prahar**, conducted in **November 2024**, which focused on the integrated application of aviation assets. The exercise validated integrated planning, command and control, and seamless execution of surveillance and firepower platforms across the three services, covering the full spectrum of conflict.

- **Exercise Desert Hunt 2025:**<sup>18</sup> An integrated **Tri-Service Special Forces** exercise named Exercise Desert Hunt 2025 was conducted by the **Indian Air Force** at Air Force Station Jodhpur from 24 to 28 February 2025. The exercise involved elite **Para (Special Forces)** from the Indian Army, the **Marine Commandos** from the Indian Navy along with the **Garud (Special Forces)** from the Indian Air Force, participating together in a simulated combat environment. This high-intensity drill was aimed at enhancing **interoperability, coordination and synergy** among the three Special Forces units to ensure **swift and effective response** towards emerging security challenges.



## 7. Technology Integration & Network-Centric Warfare

- **Defence Communication Network (DCN):** The DCN is a **strategic, exclusive, secure and state-of-the-art communication network**. Implementation of DCN is a proof of strength of the Indian industry and has reaffirmed the emphasis of the Government on **Make in India**

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2106207>

<sup>17</sup> <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/indian-armed-forces-conduct-tri-services-exercise-prachand-prahar/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2107177>

program. The DCN is a major step towards ensuring **Network Centricity across the three Services**, Integrated Defence Staff and Strategic Forces Command. The network provides converged voice, data and video services to the three Services based on secured system with adequate redundancy.<sup>19</sup>

- **Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS):**<sup>20</sup> The Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) of the Indian Air Force provides the backbone for real-time coordination, enabling synchronized responses across multiple units of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This system proved its mettle recently during the tensions between India and Pakistan post Operation SINDOOR.

## 8. 'Year of Defence Reforms' – 2025<sup>21</sup>

Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, with all the Secretaries of the Ministry of Defence unanimously decided to observe 2025 as the '**Year of Reforms**' in the MoD. This would aim at **transforming the Armed Forces into a technologically-advanced combat-ready force capable of multi-domain integrated operations**. The broad areas identified for focussed intervention in 2025 include:

- Reforms should aim to further **bolster Jointness & Integration initiatives** and facilitate establishment of the **Integrated Theatre Commands**.
- Develop a shared understanding of operational requirements and joint operational capabilities through **inter-service cooperation & training**.

## Conclusion

India's ability to project strength across **land, sea, and air** is no longer theoretical—it is structured, synchronized, and deeply integrated. The nation's **tri-services architecture** now operates as a cohesive force. As modern threats blur traditional boundaries, this integrated posture ensures that whether confronting aggression on the high Himalayas, securing maritime frontiers, or neutralizing aerial intrusions, India stands **ready, resilient, and united**. The future of national security lies in jointness—and India is already charting that future with purpose and resolve.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/akash-missile-iaccs-and-drones-drive-indias-defence-success-in-operation-sindoor/>

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