



## **'Unified Commands – The Road Ahead'**

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Very soon the "formal joint proposal" of the three Services to form three new Commands will be taken up with the government. Indian armed forces are contemplating creation of three new unified commands to effectively tackle the rapidly expanding security threats and challenges in the fields of space, cyberspace and special operations.<sup>i</sup> Discussions are on for formalising the contours of Aerospace, Special Forces, Andaman Nicobar and Cyber commands which are likely to be steered by Air Force, Army and Navy while the Cyber Command would follow a rotational policy. Whenever the proposal is approved by the government, the effort will synergize assets of the three services in the critical areas of operations. As and when the formal proposal fructifies the commanders-in-chief of the three new commands (Aerospace, Special Forces and ANC) will not be rotated among the Army, Navy and IAF) unlike the existing tri-Service command - the Strategic Forces Command and the new Cyber command<sup>ii</sup>.

In our neighbourhood, China is taking giant steps on the space and cyberspace fronts where cyber warfare is becoming a top priority for the PLA. China has sizeable division sized forces in the PLA for conducting offensive and defensive cyber operations. It is also learnt that China could be employing as many as 3,50,000 cyber operators/ hackers. Even beyond our neighbourhood, United Kingdom has launched a Joint Forces Command (JFC) which has become a major milestone in MoDs Transforming Defence Programme. This is the most significant programme of defence reforms in UK for almost a generation based on the recommendations of Lord Levene's Defence Reform Unit set up in 2010 to reduce

bureaucracy and generate savings of US \$6.9 billion.<sup>iii</sup>. The JFC in the UK has been established to ensure that a range of vital military capabilities, functions and organisations - such as medical services, training and education, intelligence, and cyber - are organised and managed effectively to support success on operations. The JFC will ensure investment in joint capabilities and strengthen the link between experience in operational theatres and top-level decision-making<sup>iv</sup>.

As part of the ongoing reforms in the MoD, UK's Secretary of State for Defence Philip Hammond formally announced the launch of the much awaited JFC to be headed by Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach. The newly formed JFC is expected to provide a versatile, agile and a battle winning armed forces supported by a leaner but more professional Ministry of Defence. On April 2, 2013, the JFC was formally operationalised and now will be able to fulfil the entire range of its responsibilities in support of Defence objectives for current operations and future contingencies. The JFC brings together over 20,000 military and civilian personnel to ensure that joint capabilities are correctly prioritised and prepared for operations. In addition to thousands of personnel working in Cyprus, Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands and the British Indian Ocean Territory, the JFC also includes the Defence Academy in Wiltshire along with Defence Intelligence and cyber capabilities. The organisations transferred to the JFC include the following<sup>v</sup>:

- The Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ)
- The Permanent Joint Operating Bases in Gibraltar, Cyprus, British Indian Ocean Territory and South Atlantic Islands (PJOBs)
- The Joint Force Headquarters located at Northwood (JFHQ)
- The Joint Force Logistics Component (JFLogC)
- The Joint Counter Terrorist Training and Advisory Team (JCTTAT)
- The Directorate of Special Forces (DSF)
- The Defence Academy (Def Ac)
- The Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC)
- Defence Intelligence (DI)
- Surgeon General's Headquarters and the Joint Medical Command (SG)
- The Joint Arms Control Implementation Group (JACIG)

- The Defence Centre of Training Support(DCTS)
- The Defence Cyber Operations Group (DCOG)



*JFC and PJHQ at Northwood  
Courtesy Janes*

In the Indian context too it is becoming imperative to move in the direction of unified commands which would ensure optimum utilisation of joint capabilities and assets of the armed forces to execute a strategy aligned with the national security objective. There are more than sixty nations (including USA, Russia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) which have a similar structure and hence it is a foregone conclusion that synergy is essential for successful war fighting capabilities. An amendment in the form of a tri-service re-organisation act in India could help bring services under a single umbrella – and this could in turn become a tacit approval of the much awaited concept of jointness in the armed forces. Hence in the Indian context, formation of new joint commands to optimally manage scarce assets, reduce bureaucracy as well as costs in the aerospace and cyber-domain appears inevitable.

*(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies CAPS)*

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>i</sup> [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-24/india/34061038\\_1\\_aerospace-command-cyber-command-strategic-forces-command](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-24/india/34061038_1_aerospace-command-cyber-command-strategic-forces-command)

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>iii</sup> Janes Defence Weekly, 'UK Names First Chief of UK', September 16, 2013 IHS Global Limited

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-joint-forces-command-established--2>

<sup>v</sup> *ibid*