

# Entering the CAPF's turf

It makes no sense to appoint Army officials as advisers for anti-Maoist operations in the Home Ministry

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In recent times, whenever personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have suffered reverses, there has been an immediate hue and cry, particularly from Army veterans, that the training and skills of CAPF personnel need to be honed. They follow it up with preposterous suggestions that ex-servicemen from the Army should be inducted into the CAPF.

Unfortunately, a majority of TV channels invite Army veterans and at times even Air Force veterans to give their 'expert opinions' when some attacks by Maoists take place, as was the case in Bijapur on April 3, 2021. In that incident, five security personnel were killed and over 12 injured in an encounter with Maoists. Even senior IPS officers who may never have been involved in combating Maoists in field situations appear on channels to air their 'expert opinions'.

## On the battlefield

The allegations that CAPF personnel are not well-trained falls flat when we look into the history of these paramilitary forces. **Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were in the battlefield in the 1971 India-Pakistan war and won medals.**

As part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka, CRPF personnel fought the militants there.

Every year, CRPF personnel observe April 9 as Valour Day in commemoration of the incident at Sardar Post in the Raan of Kutch in 1965 when a small contingent repulsed a Brigade strength attack of the Pakistan Army. The CRPF contingent killed 34 Pakistani soldiers and captured four of them alive. Though six CRPF men sacrificed their lives while holding on to the post until reinforcement arrived, the incident found entry into the annals of war history wherein a paramilitary force could inflict heavy casualties on a regular Army Brigade.

If the north-eastern States enjoy peace and tranquillity these days, the credit goes in large measure to the CAPF personnel deployed in every State in the region. Though some insurgent outfits are still active in cer-

tain parts, they do not pose a very serious threat.

In the Punjab, it was the CRPF alongside the Punjab Police that brought the situation under control.

Several operations conducted jointly by the CRPF and the Kashmir Police resulted in many losses for the militants and caused little damage to the security forces. This brought a modicum of order in the region. As Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) of CRPF in the Valley, this writer along with CRPF Battalions and the Special Operations Group of the Kashmir Police was involved in several operations. In almost all these operations, the security forces emerged unscathed. The Army was never associated in any operations in Srinagar then.

## A versatile force

It is absurd to appoint Army officials as advisers for anti-Maoist operations in the Ministry of Home Affairs. What exposure and experience do they have to combat Maoists? The Army has never fought against the Maoists. What sort of advice can they be expected to render to the experts of the CAPFs in the field who have spent a major part of their lives combating insurgents and extremists?

**Trained initially by State police officers, the Greyhounds, a specialised commando outfit of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, was able to inflict heavy casualties on Maoists forcing them to migrate to neighbouring States. The elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) has played a stellar role in killing some top Maoist leaders and continue to be dreaded by the Maoists.**

**The CAPFs have well-established training centres across the country with instructors of high calibre. Let us not cast aspersions on their training or competence. The fact that they are able to tackle terrorism in Kashmir, fight the Maoists in left wing extremism-affected States, combat insurgency in the Northeast, ensure smooth conduct of elections and control riots across the country speaks volumes about their versatility.**

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