



CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

7.1 Conclusions

The Indian Coast Guard has now been in existence for over three decades as the fourth Armed Force of the nation. Its role and responsibilities have, however, been slightly different from those of the Army, Navy or Air Force as the ICG is required to play a proactive role (for coastal security) as well as an active role (for search and rescue missions and pollution, etc.). This performance audit has brought to the fore critical issues which have been persisting for decades and need to be addressed urgently if the ICG is to become a more efficient and operationally ready force.

Despite the fact that the ICG has been preparing long-term (15 years) and medium-term (five years) plans, the audit noticed that long term plans did not receive approval of Ministry of Defence. The five year ICG development plans were poorly formulated with little regard for practicality and funding and were poorly implemented. Resultantly, plan targets and achievements have been less than optimal. For instance, during the period under review (IXth and Xth Plan), the ICG could not achieve even 50 *per cent* of its targets despite funds being available.

The Indian Coast Guard operates through a network of stations and aviation units established along the coastline of India. By 2010, the ICG has managed to activate only 30 out of the 42 planned stations. Many of these stations have been suffering from shortages in terms of fleet and officers. Delays in Indian Coast Guard acquisition of vessels, aircrafts and equipments have worsened the situation. As a result, the majority of ICG's ships are either life-expired or are on life extensions. The low availability and poor serviceability of ships have been aggravated by delayed refits and maintenance routines. All in all, these stations and vessels cannot be said to be in an optimal state of preparedness. Aviation units also suffer from their corresponding problems.

In an era of heightened coastal security concerns, thus, ICG remains ill equipped to discharge its enhanced role and meet the challenges of today. Further, given the legal limitations that the ICG works under in terms of enforcement of statutory acts and operational restrictions like the absence of identification and tracking systems for vessels, ICG activities for coastal security remain largely reactive. Post 26/11, response of ICG and Government has been *ad hoc* as witnessed by increased patrolling, increased onboard operations (Indian Coast Guard) and increased funding, fast tracking procurements (Government). A flurry of coastal security measures has also been taken. In the interest of security, these initiatives need to be sustained in a well managed, result oriented manner for empowering ICG in terms of force levels and statutory powers. There is an imperative need for greater coordination and cohesion between Indian Navy and the ICG. This has to be institutionalised by the Government. Further, Government needs to urgently put in place an effective mechanism for coordination between different Ministries, Departments, States who have a stake and role in the security of the national interests of India in Maritime Zones of India and the security of Indian coasts from the threat of maritime terrorism, illegal arms trafficking and illegal inflow of both migrants and refugees from the neighbourhood.

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