

Executive Summary

Background

India is a major maritime nation with vital economic and security interests linked to the seas. Establishment of the Indian Coast Guard as a new service in August 1978 was the result of an awareness in the Government of India for the requirement to enforce National Laws in the waters under national jurisdiction and ensure safety of life and property at sea. It was also considered desirable that these law enforcement responsibilities be undertaken by a service suitably equipped and modelled on the Coast Guards of advanced nations like the United States of America, United Kingdom, etc leaving the Indian Navy to exercise the fleet for its wartime role.

The Coast Guard Act assigns Indian Coast Guard the principal task to protect the maritime and other national interests of India in the maritime zones of India. Other tasks include ensuring safety of life and property at sea, maritime law enforcement issues like smuggling, piracy etc. In the aftermath of the 26/11 terrorist attack on the Western coast, Audit sought to assess whether the Indian Coast Guard is equipped to handle its role in an effective and efficient manner in terms of enabling legislation, force levels, manpower and infrastructure, with a special emphasis on the operations of ICG with respect to coastal security. Audit also examined whether coastal security concerns in the wake of the 26/11 terrorist attacks have been appropriately addressed in terms of co-ordination between the multiple agencies operating in this arena.

Audit Approach

The performance audit covers the period 2004-05 to 2009-10. The performance audit was initiated by discussing the audit scope, objectives of audit and criteria with management level at the Ministry of Defence and Coast Guard Headquarters. Audit arrived at its conclusions and framed its recommendations based upon the audit conducted at Coast Guard Headquarters (CGHQ), three Regional Headquarters, seven District Headquarters, six stations and seven aviation units. This Report has seven chapters. Chapter 1 and 2 are of introductory nature. Chapter 3 to 6 contain audit findings. In Chapter 7, the conclusions have been summarised.

Ministry / Indian Coast Guard response

The review was issued to the Ministry of Defence in September 2010. The reply from the Ministry was awaited as of May 2011. The audit findings were updated upto December 2010 and modified on the basis of interim replies received from the Indian Coast Guard Headquarters.

Key Findings

1. Planning

The Indian Coast Guard is still operating with the 15 year Perspective Plan for 1985-2000 prepared in 1987 as subsequent Perspective Plans, i.e. 2002-17 and 2007-22, have not been approved by the Government and a Perspective Plan for the period 2012-2027 is under formulation (as of December 2010). Finalisation of the Five Year Coast Guard Development Plans (ICGDP) took an inordinate amount of time with the Plans being approved much after their expected commencement with the IXth and Xth Plans being approved 19 and 33 months after they were supposed to begin. In general, the Five Year Plans proposed by the ICG have been unrealistic and unachievable. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Finance / Ministry of Defence have curtailed the financial outlays of these plans, the Indian Coast Guard has been unable to spend the amounts approved. On the operational side, the failure to utilise capital allocations has resulted in the non-achievement of procurement plans in terms of ships and aircrafts. ICG was able to achieve only about 50 *per cent* of the targeted acquisitions in the IXth plan (1997 – 2002) and only 43 *per cent* of the planned acquisitions could be finalised in the Xth Plan (2002-07). More importantly not a single acquisition fructified in the Xth plan period, against the planned targets.

(Paragraph 3.1, 3.2 and 3.2.2)

2. Infrastructure and Assets

The Indian Coast Guard has been establishing shore stations and aviation units as per its Perspective Plan and Development Plans. Additionally, Ministry of Home Affairs has also sanctioned, in January 2005, three Coast Guard Stations for strengthening coastal security. However, only 30 out of 42 stations sanctioned have been activated till date. Post 26/11 incident, the Government has sanctioned 14 new stations, of which five have been activated till December 2010. However, even now, sanctioned/ activated stations continue to function with infrastructural/fleet deficiencies. A test check with reference to availability of Interceptor Boats (IB) / Interceptor Crafts (IC) at six stations revealed that in three stations as of December 2010, the stations did not have the vessels in adequate strength. At least 16 Coast Guard stations did not have basic facilities like jetties for berthing ships, fueling facilities etc. In other cases, ICG stations do not have their own assets and are using hired vessels. Also, some ICG stations were forced to operate out of temporary structures as the land was not owned by them.

Further, the ICG is functioning with ships which have outlived their prescribed life and were meant to be decommissioned but which have not been phased-out as replacements have not materialised. Almost half of the Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPVs) and 72 *per cent* of the Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) are on extended

life or are already due for decommissioning. Besides, newly inducted ships like the AOPVs are operating with constraints or without required role equipment like Super Rapid Gun Mount, CRN 91 guns, Helo Traversing Gear, Identification of Friend/Foe, Gyro Stabilised Horizontal Role Bar etc.

Flawed planning and deficient execution of plans has resulted in the Indian Coast Guard operating at virtually half its required strength. Compared to the force levels envisaged in the Perspective Plan for the period 1985-2000, the Indian Coast Guard, as on date (December 2010), possesses only 65 *per cent* of the required force level in terms of ships and vessels. With respect to the aviation arm, the corresponding figure is 48 *per cent*.

Indian Coast Guard acquisitions have been dogged by time and cost over-runs. While the shortages have translated into corresponding gaps in the operational capabilities of individual Indian Coast Guard stations, the abnormal delays in the commissioning of new vessels have severely impacted the decommissioning schedule of the ICG.

(Paragraph 3.2.2, 4.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2.2, 4.1.2.3 and 4.1.2.4)

3. Patrolling of Coastal / Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Since the inception of the ICG in 1978, various new threats have emerged on the Indian coasts making coastal security a critical responsibility in addition to the mandated role of the ICG like SAR, pollution control etc. The Indian Coast Guard is limited in its capabilities to effectively discharge its duties in the entire EEZ waters (upto 200 NM) on account of the deficiencies in ICG assets and infrastructure and shortages in manpower. Its operational effectiveness is also restricted on account of gaps in role equipment, for instance, even after ten years a chain of static sensors in the form of shore radar stations in areas of high sensitivity and high traffic density to provide continuous, gap free, automatic detection and tracking of targets has not been set up. Besides, the multiple agencies with their varied responsibilities with respect to coastal issues reduce the efficiency of the ICG's security-related operations.

The ICG fulfills its responsibilities towards coastal and EEZ security primarily by patrolling, on-board investigations and aerial surveillance. Operation SWAN¹, a joint operation of the Indian Navy and ICG and International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) / EEZ patrolling by ships are two vital activities for ensuring the safety of the coasts. Audit found that Operation Swan operations by the ICG suffered from insufficient / inadequate assets and absence of vital communication equipment. Besides, night patrolling capabilities were limited in view of non-availability of

¹ Aimed to prevent smuggling of Arms/Ammunition and other contraband and carry out intensive surveillance on high seas, maintain surveillance in the territorial waters and patrol the shallow waters near the shore along the Maharashtra and Gujarat coasts.

dedicated and navigational equipments. Patrolling of the IMBL / EEZ increased drastically (73 per cent) only after 26/11 terrorist attacks. Indian Coast Guard vessels on patrol duty did not undertake the prescribed boarding operations per quarter for identification and investigation of fishing boats/ships. During the period January 2004 to December 2010, the shortfall in respect of some vessels ranged from nine to 100 per cent. With respect to Maharashtra and Gujarat for the period leading upto 26/11, not a single boarding operation was conducted in 96 cases, i.e 64 per cent of LOPs checked. Poor internal controls also lead audit to conclude that the actual number of boarding operations carried out by these ships was less than the figures furnished by ICGHQ. Finally, it was observed that the night flying task was never achieved by any² of the aircraft squadrons during the last six years. The average shortfall was 32 per cent despite the fact that the night flying task was reduced.

Co-ordination on the ground level between Indian Coast Guard and other agencies leaves much to be desired, for instance, ICG has not shared data online with the Indian Navy for the Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) software which is meant to collate information from all available sources to present a comprehensive picture of the maritime situation. Also, ICG did not share its annual planning for deployment of ships with the IN to enable optimal utilisation of available resources.

(Paragraph 5.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.6 and 5.7)

4. Post-26/11 Security mechanism

Although coastal maritime security is a major concern, Government failed to issue clear-cut directions or enunciate a policy for coastal security till recently. Post 26/11, Indian Coast Guard was initially designated as the agency for guarding the coastline with support of Navy and then Navy was designated as the overall authority responsible for maritime security including coastal security with the support of Indian Coast Guard.

(Paragraph 5.8)

5. Empowerment of Coast Guard

The Maritime Zones of India are governed under the Umbrella Act of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Other Maritime Zones Act 1976 (80 of 1976) and the Maritime Zones of India (Regulation of Fishing by Foreign Fishing Vessels) Act 1981. However, there are legal and operational constraints in ICG activities. For instance, prosecution of offenders can be launched only after obtaining MEA approval under the MZI Act, 1976. Also, there is much work to be done in terms of providing the Indian Coast Guard with enabling provisions to effectively perform its role of

² AFTs in respect of ALH have not yet been promulgated except for 2005-06.

monitoring deep sea fishing vessels, environmental protection, pollution control, crossing International Maritime Boundary Line by fishing vessels and impounding vessels with invalid security clearances.

(Paragraph 5.9.1, 5.9.2, 5.11 and 5.12)

6. Operations

Audit noted that the Indian Coast Guard does not maintain a complete and comprehensive database of its operations. In all the Search and Rescue (SAR), pollution control, anti-poaching etc operations etc., ICG could not furnish information about the number of cases where the missions were not successful or could not be carried out due to inadequacy of resources or other constraints. Further, ICGHQ has not fixed any parameters or performance indicators for assessing the performance of the ICG in respect of its charter of duties.

(Paragraph 6.1)

7. Repair and Maintenance

There was shortfall to the tune of 62 *per cent* in carrying out Short Refit, Normal Refit and Medium Refit of various classes of ships against the number of refit due. There has been undue delay in completion of refits also. Of a total number of 31 refits undertaken for AOPV/OPVs between 2003 and 2010, the time taken was 27 *per cent* more than the contract. In case of FPV/IPV/SDB, a total number of 74 refits, the actual time taken was 51 *per cent* more.

(Paragraph 4.2.2 and 4.2.3)

8. Manpower

There was shortage of manpower to the extent of 57 and 43 *per cent* in the cadre of Officers and Enrolled Personnel respectively against the manpower envisaged in CGPP 1985-2000. In the aviation wing, there was shortage of 50 and 58 *per cent* in the cadre of pilots and observers against the sanctioned strength. For imparting training to Officers/EPs, the Indian Coast Guard is still dependent on Navy.

(Paragraph 4.2.5 and 4.2.6)

9. Conclusions

Though, ICG has been in existence for over three decades, it continues to suffer from shortages in the force levels. In an era of heightened coastal security concerns, ICG will have to overcome the shortages to be effective in its functioning. Though, several measures have been taken by Government in strengthening the maritime security, there is a need to sustain the initiatives, ensure greater co-ordination among ICG, Indian Navy and other stakeholders. There is a need to address the constraints faced by ICG in effective discharge of duties.

Recommendations

- *The 15 year Perspective Plans need to be formulated by ICG and approved by the Government in time so as to give clear direction towards achieving the desired force levels.*
- *Indian Coast Guard should submit realistic and achievable projections in Annual and Five year plans. Periodical review of the progress in achievement of Plans must be undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Defence and ICG to ensure time bound acquisitions.*
- *Planning, sanction and establishment of ICG stations and aviation units should be viewed in a professional manner based on project mode. It should be ensured that stations are activated with a full complement of envisaged manpower, land and other infrastructure, simultaneously, to ensure that activated stations do not suffer from limitations.*
- *Replacement procurements for ageing vessels should be timely to ensure that a reliable fleet is available to ICG.*
- *Planned coastal security measures such as coastal security operations, as approved by the Government, should not be allowed to be diluted. An institutionalised system needs to be put in place within the Ministry of Defence to monitor periodically, the efficacy and continuity of, coastal security measures.*
- *There is an immediate need for ICG to evolve norms for patrolling in maritime/ coastal zones, based on available resources. The norms so evolved should be adhered to strictly. Annual/ periodic achievements against the norms should be reported to the Ministry of Defence. Such norms should be periodically reviewed.*
- *Government should address the concerns impacting coastal security viz. need to remove legal constraints faced by ICG, the required empowerment of ICG, penal provisions for non-compliance to Pre Arrival Notification of Security (PANS) and Automatic Identification System (AIS), crossing of IMBL by Indian fishermen, in a time bound manner.*