

Addressing the demands and concerns of India's Paramilitary Forces

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Context - Last month, India observed the day of remembrance for the Pulwama attack that took place on February 14, 2019, which resulted in the death of 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel. The lesson learned is that there is an urgent need to address the grievances of paramilitary forces in terms of training, morale, and parity with regular armed forces to ensure the effectiveness of these forces in maintaining internal security.

Major Attacks on Armed Forces

- **The Forgotten Dantewada Attack:** An earlier attack on April 6, 2010, in which 76 CRPF personnel were killed by left-wing extremists in Dantewada, has faded away from public attention despite being the deadliest attack on security forces in any counter-insurgency or anti-terrorist operations in independent India.
- **The Pulwama attack:** The attack on February 14, 2019, claimed the lives of 40 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), India's largest paramilitary force. The Pulwama attack resulted in an unprecedented public outcry and evoked emotional responses across all sections of society. It is important to remember this incident to prevent a repeat in the future.

About CRPF

- CRPF stands for the Central Reserve Police Forces. The Motto of this Force is “Service and Loyalty”.
- It is the largest Central Armed Forces of the country which was established in 1939, then as the Crown’s Representative Police (CRP). It was set up in order to assist the British rulers in managing unrest and law and order issues. It became the CRPF after India’s independence in 1947.
- The CRPF is primarily responsible for maintaining internal security, counter-terrorism operations, and assisting the state police in maintaining law and order. It also assists in disaster management and protects vital installations.
- With more than 300,000 personnel, the CRPF is one of the most significant components of India’s internal security apparatus. It operates in a variety of environments, including urban, jungle, and mountainous terrain. The CRPF has also been deployed in international peacekeeping operations, such as in Haiti, Sudan, and Congo.
- The CRPF logo features a crossed rifle and a light machine gun over a map of India, with a laurel wreath and the words “Central Reserve Police Force” written in both Hindi and English. The crossed rifles and the light machine gun represent the CRPF’s role in maintaining internal security, while the map of India signifies its national duty.

Challenges faced by the Forces

- **Security threats:** Paramilitary forces are often deployed in areas where there are security threats such as terrorist attacks, insurgencies, and border conflicts. These threats pose a significant risk to the lives of the personnel, and they have to be constantly vigilant to prevent any untoward incidents.
- **Pay and benefits:** The Indian Army personnel receive higher pay, better benefits, and retirement benefits compared to paramilitary forces. The Indian Army also has a well-established pension system, while paramilitary forces have a Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).
- **Inadequate infrastructure:** These forces often operate in remote areas with inadequate infrastructure, including basic facilities such as food, water, and shelter. This makes it challenging for the personnel to carry out their duties effectively, especially during long deployments.
- **Inadequate training:** Proper training is essential for paramilitary personnel to carry out their duties effectively. However, due to budget constraints and a lack of resources, training is often inadequate, which can lead to inefficiencies and mistakes during operations.
- **De-induction of Army:** The deinduction of the Indian Army from certain areas has led to the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) and other paramilitary forces being tasked with carrying out hard duties, leading to overstretched personnel and compromised training.
- **Stress and mental health:** The nature of the job is often stressful, and paramilitary personnel are frequently exposed to traumatic situations that can have long-term effects on their mental health. Unfortunately, mental health resources are often limited, and the stigma surrounding mental health issues can prevent personnel from

seeking help.

- **Lack of modern equipment:** Paramilitary forces require modern equipment and weapons to carry out their duties effectively. However, due to budget constraints and bureaucratic red tape, acquiring such equipment is often delayed, which puts the personnel at risk.

Need for Parity and Better Treatment

- **Armed Forces of the union category:** The Delhi High Court order of December 2022 that recognised the paramilitary as a force under the category of 'Armed Forces of the union' and underscores the need to address the genuine grievances of the paramilitary personnel.
- **Service facilities:** The paramilitary force faces discrimination in matters ranging from pension to service facilities.
- **Old pension scheme:** Former personnel and their families have demanded the old pension scheme for serving members of the paramilitary force.
- **Training:** The training and morale of paramilitary personnel must be taken care of to maintain optimum performance and effectiveness.

Other Important Armed Forces

- **National Security Guard (NSG):** NSG is a federal contingency force tasked with counter-terrorism and special operations. It was established in 1984 and operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Border Security Force (BSF):** BSF is a border guarding force responsible for guarding India's land borders during peacetime and preventing trans-border crimes. It was established in 1965 and operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB):** SSB is a border guarding force tasked with guarding India's borders with Nepal and Bhutan. It was established in 1963 and operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP):** ITBP is a specialized mountain force responsible for guarding India's borders with China. It was established in 1962 and operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Assam Rifles:** Assam Rifles is a paramilitary force responsible for maintaining law and order in the northeast region of India. It was established in 1835 and operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Conclusion

The observance of Pulwama day should serve as a reminder to avoid a repeat of the tragedy and calls for analyzing the lessons learnt and taking corrective measures. It is important to listen to the genuine grievances of the paramilitary personnel to maintain their morale and enhance the security environment of the nation.