



# Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

## **11TH SUBROTO MUKHERJEE SEMINAR RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT**

### **"THE CHALLENGE OF AIR POWER"**

**November 11-12, 2014**

**Day 2: November 12, 2014**

#### **SESSION III: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE UNSUNG**

**Chairman: Air Marshal LK Malhotra AVSM VSM (Retd) (Former SASO, EAC)**

The aim of this session was to highlight the criticality and importance of human resources training and the logistical support in the IAF. In his opening remarks, the Chairman highlighted some of the key issues discussed during the first day's sessions. He also stressed on the need for ethos building as part of the formal training in the Services.

**HR TRAINING: THE BEDROCK OF OPERATIONS: Air Vice Marshal Amit Aneja AVSM VM VSM (Retd)**

As former Commandant of the Air Force Academy and Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Training) at Air HQ, the speaker had deep insights into various aspects of the IAF's human resources training. He spoke on the necessity for training and inducting inspired leaders into the IAF to meet future challenges. The following were the points the speaker stressed on: -

- The development and training of human assets is of utmost importance to sustain and enhance the technical and operational potential of the Indian Air Force.
- Quick and responsive decision-making process needs mental traits such as strategic agility of the mind, flexibility and commitment.
- There is need for greater joint-ness between the armed forces, bureaucracy & the government, which calls for inculcation of mutual respect as part of fundamental training.



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- Moving on to the challenges for the future, the speaker noted that processing power and platforms are being revolutionised, which necessitates for the IAF to find ways to effectively utilise its human resource potential.
- Producing professional officers with an embedded set of quantifiable skills is relatively an easy task. However, making of a truly inspired leader is an extremely difficult task. He further went on to assert that leaders are made and not born.
- He talked about a conceptual shift (recounting his own experiences) that has taken place, which necessitates an increased focus on imbibing a set of intangible traits like pride, team spirit (without any gender and branch insensitivities), determination and focused aggression among others in the next generation of officers.
- The speaker also underscored the need for promoting decisiveness at the training stage, remarking how the IAF cannot do with fence-sitters as its future leaders.
- He recommended greater use of technology to develop tools that could assist in the evaluation of individual commitment, pride and aptitude and other qualities. Simulation and debrief tools and their integration could assist in training.

### **GOOD LOGISTICS: THE LYNCHPIN OF OPERATIONS: Gp Capt Samir Chabra**

Group Captain Samir Chabra highlighted the need for supply chain orientation in defence and aerospace environment. The following observations were made by the speaker: -

- Good logistics is important for successful conduct of operations.
- A historical overview was made by the speaker wherein he compared the world war days when such a concept of supply chain had a narrow operational context. However, by 1960s, it was seen as a domain specialization. He pointed out that during the 1970s, armed forces around the world were vertically integrated. The focus shifted towards horizontal integration by 1980s to achieve synergy



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between various stake holders. By 1990s, logistics became a strategic business process to support operations and logistics function, and had three vital components: procurement, production and distribution. Slowly, the focus shifted towards finished products rather than on raw materials. Material flow integration concept also came in.

- The concept of supply chain also started to gain importance and importance was given not only to suppliers but also to customers. Supply chain management focused on customer integration, both horizontally and vertically, and followed process-centric approach. However, for military aviation, there remained a challenge of reverse logistics.
- Competitive strategy arising from supply chain can result in functional strategies to flow in. These functional strategies need to be harmonized involving strategic fit. Thus, there would be an opportunity for Business Production Engineering, which is important since these opportunities for large size organisations come once in a decade.
- He also pointed out three fundamental objectives of military supply chain: to be responsive to manage uncertainty in demand, supply in order to react to these changes, and cost is a decisive factor.
- Several questions will be raised which would need to be answered. These include: Is the Operational Doctrine supportive? Is the supply chain objective met? And does preparedness commensurate with investment?
- He also pointed out some of the contrasting characteristics of defence aerospace. These include product, business volume and business environment, which is in turn affected by government stakes and geopolitical environment.
- He raised concerns over the bullwhip effect, which was the gap between the demand and what is conveyed to the suppliers occurring due to faulty empirical methods which are heuristic and non-collaborative. Supplier-buyer relation is handicapped due to lack of availability of proper information.
- He also highlighted that defence aerospace supply chain is now changing its course into becoming defence aero supply networks.



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- He highlighted the importance to manage the supply and demand side in order to reduce variables, backlog and long lead time, excessive inventory, high cost, sub-optimal utilization of assets and unsatisfactory customers. This would require the creation of supply chain orientation which would involve cross functional strategy.
- Supply chain design should be a combination of being highly efficient in terms of cost and highly responsive. It would be driven by four factors: facilities, sourcing, sustaining, inventory & information.
- He also raised concern on how there is a push vs pull constraint in India's case where the pull chain is not used at the right time. He laid stress on the need to concentrate on Vendor Development Strategy to overcome this problem. He stressed on the need to move away from management of AOG (Aircraft on Ground), which he termed to be a reactionary method and called for proactive forecasting for timely maintenance and reduced on ground time.
- He also laid stress on the sourcing strategy for long term business while reviewing forecasts and give importance to Process Reference Modelling.

## **Q&A AND CONCLUSION**

The first speaker reiterated the need for developing leaders of the future and to make them decisive leaders based on sound moral and ethical foundations. He emphasised that “what wins wars... is capability”, which depends upon the quality of leaders and stressed the need for continuous evolution of the training process. The Chairman shared the sentiment of the speaker and stressed that the greatest challenge for future human resource development would be to develop Officer Like Qualities, Military discipline and ethos in the backdrop of emergence of materialistic society. He described this to be an uphill task for military trainers, and one which needs to be addressed by the Services. The second speaker highlighted the need for effective supply chain management as essential to logistic support and called for pro-active sourcing strategy to prevent/ reduce time on ground.



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