REVIEWING INDIA'S COASTAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

The Takshashila Institution and the US Consulate, Chennai, hosted a roundtable conference on reviewing India's coastal security architecture at The Hyatt MG Road, on 23 September 2016.

The roundtable discussion brought together experts who brainstormed ideas to secure India's coastline, effectively and efficiently.

The Takshashila Blue Paper
26 September 2016

KEY DISCUSSIONS

Prevention of terrorism on the coastline.

Emboldened organisational structures in Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard, Marine Police & state governments for effective management.

Plugging intelligence gaps in coastal security -- the need for new methods of intelligence gathering and information sharing.
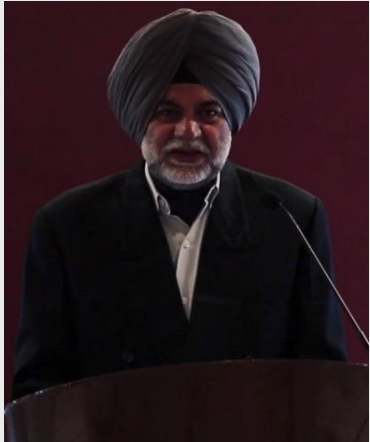
Pros and Cons of new organisations such as Central Marine Police Force (CMPF) or Maritime Indian Reserve Battalion (MIRB).

The need to address states' disinterest towards coastal security.

The impact of reforms undertaken so far on the coastal security apparatus.

Role of technology in securing the Indian coastline.

KEY SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

SPS Basra ADG, ICG (Retd.)

Cmde Udai Rao

Air Marshal M. Matheshwaran

Cdr Abhijit Singh

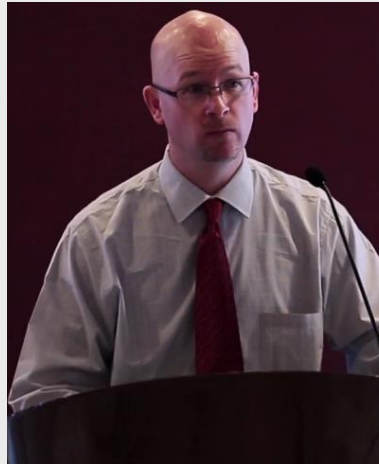Dr. Pushpita Das

KEY SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

Jon Bonnar

Dr. Jose Paul

Nitin Pai

Cdr Chaitanya Chandel

Eric Lund

Cdr Guru Aiyar

Principal Issues with India's Coastline Security

Lack of a cooperative mechanism and information sharing between multiple agencies towards coastal security.

Lack of geolocation technology and surveillance mechanisms.

Non-existent maintenance and operational mechanisms for existing naval assets.

Multiplicity of authority vested in different ministries such as shipping, fisheries, oil exploration, customs and state police forces.

Lack of suitable training in counter-terrorism for Marine Police.

Opening Remarks by Cdr. Guru Aiyar (Retd.)

26/11 revealed gaps in intelligence gathering and sharing. Main issues: Smuggling of drugs and contraband, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), and flow of migrants from neighbouring countries.

The most important issue is consolidation of various stakeholders who work in silos and often at cross purposes.

Another challenge is that of a free-rider problem. While all the stakeholders agree that coastal security is an important issue, no one wants to bear the expenses.

Need to see how technology can be used innovatively in coastal security.

Recommendations by Cmde Udai Rao (Retd.)

Coast Guard should be made responsible exclusively for coastal security.

Navy should deal exclusively with blue water and war fighting functions.

Induct more personnel from the fishermen community and provide incentives such as sea duty allowance.

Appoint technical officers from Navy/Coast Guard to marine police as technical advisers.

All coastal states & Union Territories need to set up maritime boards.

Counter terrorism structure in India is highly police-oriented. We need the induction of naval and coast guard officers to handle maritime counter terrorism.

Set up a multi-disciplinary national maritime authority (NMA) to advise NSA, Cabinet Secretary and other relevant authorities.

Recommendations by SPS Basra, Additional DG (Retd.), Indian Coast Guard

While there is improved co-ordination amongst various agencies, fishermen still remain the weakest links. This has to be rectified.

Reduce the number of landing points along the coast.

Link up diesel subsidy with compliance of fisheries regulations.

Create 'modern' fishing harbours.

Make Fisheries Department responsible for fisheries control and monitoring.

Strengthen the human intelligence (HUMINT) capability.

Maintain forward posture at International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with an aggressive outlook.

Pursue rogue elements who encourage gullible fishermen to fish across the IMBL.

Set in motion the mechanism of "Commander Coastal Command."

Recommendations by Air Marshal (Dr.) M Matheswaran, AVSM, VM

Centralise information processing.

Integrate civil aviation system and aerostats (airborne radars) in the peninsular region.

Introduce major policy change to overhaul the current process to integrate surveillance systems.

Hire people with technical expertise to oversee and head new processes.

Terrorism is not a law and order problem- terrorists on 26/11 carried out military operations. Create organisational structures to tackle terrorism as current structures reflect classic war fighting formats.

Impossible to get marine police alone to tackle terrorism.

Interoperability of multiple agencies is important to avoid another 26/11.

Recommendations by Dr. Pushpita Das, Research Fellow, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses

Hierarchical information sharing and turf wars are major issues to be addressed.

Creation of Central Marine Police Force will lead to overcrowding and coordination problem and hence shouldn't be carried out.

Indian Coast Guard should be given the overall authority for Coastal Security.

Creation of clear hierarchy of command at the national level to fix responsibility of omission and commission.

A National Commission for Border and Coastal Security Should be constituted at the apex level.

Recommendations by Dr. Jose Paul, Former Acting Chairman of JNPT, Mumbai & Former Chairman, Mormugao Port Trust, Goa

Port Security is often an overlooked theme in coastal security; responsibility is often abdicated.

50% of India's GDP is from trade, and 90% of trade is through sea routes and therefore the need for maritime security is high.

Establish observation centres in every coastal district.

Having a Central Marine Police Force may unnecessarily lead to centre - state conflicts.

India must deploy a 10-satellite constellation for its coastal surveillance. We have the capability.

Automated systems for screening the large number of containers that land on our ports.

Recommendations by Cdr. Chaitanya Chandel (Retd.) Director, Baruni Systems

Attach Marine Police to Indian Navy/Coast Guard ships for 6 months before posting to Marine Police Stations.

Raise a tech cadre and setup a logistics infrastructure for maintenance of boats used for patrolling.

Separate Marine Police from regular police and bring under coast guard.

Create a Central Coastal Sec Ops Room with Cross Functional teams from all agencies and Nodal officers with the Authority to execute plans.

Create an information grid to enable info sharing between agencies.

Fishing boats can become our eyes and ears if they are brought on information grid.

Use technology for co-operative tracking of boats in India.

Recommendations by Cdr. Abhijit Singh (Retd.), Observer Research Foundation

For the Indian Navy, the coastal security exercise is a "brownie-point" generating endeavour that primarily believes in big ticket items like Maritime Domain Awareness.

Language barrier is an impediment to gathering intelligence, even within different Indian states. Navy/CG personnel are basically proficient in English & Hindi but not the regional languages.

E-surveillance is not enough. Coastal Security is highly dependent on the men on the ground (HUMINT).

Marine police not yet integrated into the Coastal Surveillance system.

Comments by Jon Bonnar, Deputy Consul General, Australian Consulate Chennai

The Australian Perspectives On Maritime Security

Border Protection Command (BPC) is responsible for protecting Australia's interests in the maritime domain since 2005.

Layered security works very well in a multi-agency environment.

Australia's maritime policy discourages people from illegally entering the country's borders.

Irregular maritime arrivals pose a challenge because of its nexus with criminality.

Migrants must be stopped from travelling irregularly on boats. This may be controversial but is an effective policy.

Comments by Eric Lund, Cultural Affairs Officer, US Consulate Chennai

Ties between India and the USA are growing in fields from counter terrorism to women's rights.

26/11 was a turning point in the counter terrorism partnership between India and the USA.

With the Asian Rebalance, the Indo-US Maritime relations becomes even more important.

Intelligence sharing between India and the US is an important aspect of the ties.

Closing Remarks by Nitin Pai, Director, The Takshashila Institution

Coastal security in India revolves around securing targets from violent attack. However it needs to go beyond threats to life and needs to include threats to ways of life, livelihood, environment etc.

Political economy of coastal security: need to question states' ambivalence and apathy.

Political economy and sociology of the armed forces needs better understanding.

Technology could provide answers to coastal security problems- need to connect technologists and entrepreneurs to those in need of solutions.

DISCUSSION OUTCOMES

After considering the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in coastal security, key issues were identified as the lack of organisational structure of coastal security, coordination amongst multiple stakeholders and the use of technology.

Threat perceptions need to consider port security.

The state government of Maharashtra has made a strong pitch of Central Marine Police Force. A CMPF for counter-terrorism on the coast will only complicate matters.

The centralisation of coastal security was raised and the participants mooted the institution of a new organisation for the purpose of coastal security.

The strengthening of marine police is an essential component of coastal security reform.