



Maoists Menace

Addressing the socio-economic grievances of the people should be the first step

THREE DECADES AFTER EMPLOYING an army division to crush the Maoist rebellion, the elephant is stirring again. Main problem has been treating the issue as 'state subject' and categorising it under 'law and order'. This was compounded with no systemised development of affected areas to alleviate miseries of population despite yearly budgetary allocations to states. We lack focus on politico-socio-economic aspects of the issue, integrated intelligence and CPOs/Police modernisation. Maoists have already killed 3351 individuals (1,110 security personnel) since 2006 against a loss of 913 Maoist cadres and have snatched sizeable number of weapons from police forces including machine guns and 81 mm mortars. Similar impotence in varied degrees has been visible in countering terrorism in other parts of the country. Ashok Chakras cannot obfuscate our pathetic response to the attack on Parliament and 26/11. Can we now expect a synergised national will to counter the Maoist insurgency and address socio-economic grievances of the population? A package of Rs 3,400 crores for infrastructure development in affected districts is in the offing but what reaches on ground is anybody's guess.

Maoists

The Maoists empire spans over 200 districts (seven States seriously affected) has financial backup of some Rs 1500 crores, growing annually 15 per cent through drugs, ransom, looting, extortion, robbery and poppy. Organised in battalions, companies, platoons, intelligence and logistics departments and with arms and IED manufacturing capacity, they slaughter and behead opposition, employ copycat tactics of Mao's 'People's War' — guerilla and mass attacks that can gravitate to positional warfare. Explosives are aplenty including fertilizers, chemicals, loot from road construction detachments. Media and propaganda is well handled. Political patronage is ambiguous; needs ascer-

taining by intelligence agencies.

Army deployment is presently ruled out but what of the future? Is the Maoist insurgency exploitable by forces inimical to India? They will be fools not to capitalise on this readymade asymmetric battlefield. How fruitful to facilitate its blooming into a mini-Afghanistan, tie down military in the hinterland and cap our economic progress! Maoists, it must be assumed, also follow an externally manipulated agenda. ULFA bases/camps on Chinese soil have been reported in media and Chinese-origin weapons find their way into Maoists hands. Role of Pakistan's ISI/LeT in arming, funding and training of Maoists is not difficult to judge. Presently, we have an India-friendly regime in Bangladesh but existence of terrorist training camps in Bangladesh with SSG/al Qaeda instructors were reported earlier. Global terror industry has linkages that keep getting stronger.

Strategy

We need 'synergised simultaneous operations on the socio-political-economic-moral-physical planes rallying local population against Maoists organisation/activities, destroying insurgents while blending development and education to ensure legitimate government rule'. This implies: One, military solution is not the key — aim peace treaty followed by political solution. Two, population is main objective — wean them away from insurgents. Three, rallying local population requires ensuring their full protection. Four, forces need to fight simultaneously at moral and physical levels providing security/assistance to population and destroying insurgents. Five, combat threats to strengthen legitimate rule of law to alleviate pressures that lead to instability and Six, blend development and education with combat operations to win over population.

We need to crystallise top down driven command and control structures ensuring unity of command with strategy/policy executed by career specialists.

Unified HQ (UHQ) at state and district levels are required combining command and intelligence functions, integrating PMF/CPO/Police units, government and civil entities trained, dedicated and resourced to establish security, development and rule of law. An effective CI Grid (CIG) is needed delineating areas of operational responsibility to PMF/CPO/Police units synonymous with ground requirements, not necessarily same as State/District boundaries. PMF/CPO/Police units require reorientation, retraining, modernising and equipping. Effective intelligence domination through collection, analyses and exploitation derived from local knowledge/operational area needs optimisation. Proactive intelligence-led surgical special operations to target armed leadership/organisation are needed. Same would apply to psychological and media operations. Grouping villages to ensure proper protection to population should be examined and appropriate policy for surrenders announced. Most importantly, a holistic development plan needs to be drawn and executed diligently.

Operations

CI environment requires operating norms. Flouting them has adverse ramifications and avoidable casualties. These are, one, fight the guerrilla like a guerilla. Two, win hearts and minds (WHAM) of population — project human face, protect locals, avoid collateral damage and indiscriminate force. Three, acquire intimate knowledge of terrain. Four, establish effective intelligence grid. Five, acquire language proficiency/interpreters. Six, understand implications of 'kills' versus 'peace in AOR'. Seven, move tactically and cross country. Eight, avoid roads/tracks unless Road Opening Party (ROP) in position and mine proofing done. Nine, ensure flank protection and dominate high ground during move. Ten, ensure layered early warning system even during halts. Eleven, follow buddy system. Twelve, rehearse day/night reinforcements periodically. Thir-

teen, ensure Leader-Led contact. Fourteen, sustained operationally oriented training. Fifteen, train leaders at all levels — lead from front.

Incidents like Dantewada show lack of integration/coordination within PMF/CPO/Police, poor combat drills, poor intelligence, inadequate/no pre-induction/CI training. Army does not induct even Special Forces into CI operations without pre-induction training. PMF/CPO/Police have little/no anti-mine/IED training. Their combat performance, especially CRPF in comparison to AR/RR is poor. CPO cadre officers resent IPS officers with little/no CI experience holding senior positions in CPO units. Poor equipping, lack of modernisation, selection and employment pattern, faulty deployment, command and control and poor logistics have all contributed to this state. No effort to recover lost weapons including 81 mm mortars shows lack of morale and poor ethos.

Future

We need holistic development in affected areas. Can the Centre demand, approve and coordinate plans before allocating funds to States — amend Constitution? The crux is to ensure development actually happens on ground. How can we ensure this in an environment where a Supreme Court Bench headed by the CJI himself opines that an important national scheme like NREGA is not reaching intended beneficiaries? We need to define and disseminate clear political aims, strategy and policy to ensure States/everyone is on the same wavelength. Security Forces, government organisations, NGOs and civil entities must harmonise, this not being a purely military conflict. We must choke arms, funds, explosives supplies, external assistance to Maoists and destroy poppy cultivation through special operations and diplomacy.

Wider scope/responsibilities for the home minister (HM) and his responsibilities vis-à-vis the NSA have been in news. Unless the HM is strengthened by providing complete wherewithal and due execution authority, no amount of advice, strategy, and policy direction can be implemented. There are limitations to advisory capacities. This is also relevant to National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) which while combining intelligence agencies like NIA, JIC, National Crime Record Bureau, NSG etc should also have under its ambit agencies like R&AW, ARC and NTRO with-



MAN IN CHARGE Home minister
P. Chidambaram

out viewing it as loss of turf to someone else. UHQs need to be established in all affected states — chaired by chief minister, with senior representatives of PMF/CPO/Police, intelligence agencies, Services intelligence, military advisor, ministers of public works, education, health, agriculture, irrigation, forests, mines etc. Similar UHQs should be replicated at district level. Comprehensive Intelligence Acquisition Plans are required and state-level State Counter Terrorism Centre (SCTC) established under UHQ, linked to NCTC through NATGRID. NCTC and SCTCs require capacity building for automated intelligence collection (voice, data, video), automated analysis with an automated decision support system to assist short, medium, long term assessments and automated dissemination of common operational picture on need to know basis.

Periodic review of the CIG is essential taking into account ground situation, future assessment and forces available. If forces are at premium, stabilising 'warm' areas with focused operations to cool down 'hot areas' keeping latter under surveillance should be examined. Responsibilities for road opening including mine/IED proofing must be defined. Local SPOs, intelligence personnel and interpreters should be attached with PMF/CPO units. The Army could augment the intelligence grid. It is important to remember that Human Intelligence (HumInt) is the best resource in CI environment. Bottom up intelligence should come through SCTCs to ensure cohesiveness, negating one-upmanship.

Physical interrogation in Joint Interrogation Centres should be handled by local police. Provisioning intelligence equipment down to cameras with every patrol should be ensured. NGOs operating in affected areas need monitoring as some have hidden agendas. Targeting armed Maoists leaders/organisation through surgical special operations by detachments of 51 SAG (NSG) and Special Group of SFF should be planned. Raising Home & Hearth Platoons on lines of TA and attaching them with PMF/CPO/Police needs examination. A comprehensive psychological operations plan should be evolved aimed at winning over locals, weaning them away from Maoists and creating rift within Maoist ranks. Transparency with media should be maintained. Do's and don'ts should be issued to all ranks — to understand that brutalising population and hoping they identify with us cannot work — need to respect their culture, religion, women and their way of life.

Pre-induction Training must be mandatory for all ranks. All PMF/CPO units must be put through Jungle Warfare and Counter Insurgency School, Kanker, Chhattisgarh. If capacity is inadequate, army could be approached for such training. Setting up of PMF/CPO/Police CI School to cater for long term requirements should commence or facility at Kanker brought under MHA and expanded. CI/CT training capsules for PMF/CPO/Police units, deployed in peace, need to be introduced. Training facilities of NSG at Manesar and of SFF at Sarsawa and Chakrata should be exploited. Capsules/courses for mine and IED handling should be introduced. Relocation of Special Forces Training School (SFTS) of army to Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh) needs acceleration. Training of leaders should be taken seriously. PMF/CPO/Police units must ensure Leader-Led contact especially in operational areas by laying down periodicity of visits by officers at all levels. Motivation capsules should be part of training.

Modernising PMF/CPO/Police units is long overdue. Existing modernisation plans of PMF/CPO/Police forces should be reviewed including reorganisation/restructuring on lines of AR/RR taking into account earlier studies/operational experience with particular reference to fire power, surveillance, communications, night capability, survivability, mobility, mine/IED handling and battlefield management. Commando Platoon needs to be organised in all

units and patrol and sniffer dogs provisioned. Emergent weapons and equipment should be identified and procured through Empowered Committee(s). Officering pattern needs to be reviewed including time-bound expansion of CPO Cadre officers. While army cannot provision officers for CPO units induction of SSC officers on release, officers taking premature retirement, officers retiring at young age, serving JCOs/NCOs on deputation and retired JCOs/NCOs up to particular age limit may be examined. This can boost combat performance but will work only if the package is attractive enough and individuals are required to serve in exclusive army on deputation/ex-army units/sub units. PMF/CPO/Police should launch their own development projects on lines of Army's Operation Sadbhavana coordinated by MHA with proposals thrown up by PMF/CPO/Police units in conjunction local expectations.

Seeking army assistance should be restricted to advisors and intelligence representatives at state UHQ, augmenting intelligence grid, pre-induction/mine-IED training, courses of instruction, JCOs and NCOs on deputation, operational advice and logistics support. Attachment of PMF/CPO/Police officers (2/3 years of initial service) with infantry units deployed in CI environment and six months for already commissioned officers would have far reaching benefits. Use of air resources of ARC and BSF are recommended for casualty evacuation, surveillance, helicopter insertions for special operations/move of troops in emergency situations. Additional ALH helicopters to ARC ex-HAL could be considered. IAF assistance should be restricted to use of UAVs, if other agencies cannot meet requirement. The policy could be reviewed periodically including if Maoists graduate to positional warfare.

Conclusion

The Maoist insurgency provides an opportunity to comprehensively address a range of internal security challenges facing the country. Chanakya had said, "As soon as fear approaches near, attack and destroy it." The Centre and the states need to synergise their approach and resources on vital issues of national security. Security forces must operate unified, remembering overall objective is reinstatement of rule of law and winning population while destroying Maoist insurgents. ■

Bridge Over Troubled Water

Government rethinks strategy against the Maoists with less alienation of the people

SUBHASHISH MITTRA | NEW DELHI

THE PRIME MINISTER MANMOHAN Singh has described the Maoist menace as the gravest internal security challenge before the country. Yet, there is total confusion in the ministries of home and defence over handling the situation. As a result, the proposal to involve the armed forces in anti-Naxalite operations has failed to see the light of the day.

"Whether to involve them (armed forces) or how to involve them and what degree to involve them is something that the government is deliberating. It is not a matter of public debate, it is something that the government has to decide," says minister of state for defence M.M. Pallam Raju.

After the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) shot down the home ministry's plan of using military expertise in anti-rebel operations, a revised strategy is being planned by the security establishment in North Block with focus on precise intelligence, specialised training, modern equipment and faster mobility for the anti-Naxal forces.

Under the new plan on MHA's drawing board, a slew of institutional measures, including revised deployment pattern for the BSF, ITBP and CRPF, are on the anvil. Also in the pipeline are plans to pump in more resources into the affected districts to strengthen the security and civil infrastructure. For this, the Planning Commission will be engaged more actively for devising development plans for the troubled zones.

With a firm 'no' to the use of army in the fight against Naxalites, the home ministry is mulling roping in ex-servicemen on contract basis for three years and using former Sappers for specific jobs, like de-mining of Naxal-hit areas. The Sappers have professional expertise and sophisticated equipment to locate and defuse IEDs and landmines, some

of which may have been planted almost 10 years back. Central para-military forces have no such de-mining personnel men or gadgets to clear the jungles of IEDs and landmines.

"They (Maoists) are also citizens of our country. So when air raids are involved (against Maoists) there is bound to be collateral damage. It is something that needs a very, very responsible decision after considering all factors," explains Pallam Raju.

However, defence minister A.K. Antony has refuted reports that the Union Cabinet was divided over the issue of bringing in the armed forces to combat Naxal violence.

The armed forces perhaps do not want to be sucked into yet another internal security duty after being already over-stretched in Jammu and Kashmir, the northeastern states and along the unresolved borders with Pakistan and China. They also believe that the presence of army jawans in tribal-dominated areas would only alienate the local population.

With Maoists already gaining the sympathy of the tribal people, the apprehension is that the move to put military boots on the ground could widen the gap between the government and sections of the people in areas where even basic facilities are severely lacking.

Another factor is that any counter-insurgency action by the armed forces could attract greater attention by non-government organisations and other activists, along with the apprehension that the damage to the social fabric could be more serious.

The defence ministry still holds the view that the task of taking on the Naxalites belongs to the State police, which are best equipped in the form of terrain and local conditions. The Maoist insurgency is a low-intensity, guerrilla warfare. Hence, the appropriate security re-