

Indian Navy's 'CAMPING' Expeditions in the Indian Ocean Region

Author: R S Vasan

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The year that has gone by is significant in many aspects for the Indian Navy's operational deployment which has been demonstrated far and wide in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The time-tested formula of the navies of the world, namely, "Forward presence and posturing" can only be effective when it is applied continuously in a sustained manner to maintain a credible 'Command Control and Communication' architecture, which is driven by an effective information management system. The Indian Navy commissioned the Information Management and Analysis Communication (IMAC) system in November 2014, in Gurgaon, close to the capital. This has enabled information collation, analysis and dissemination in real time.

New Horizons, New Deployment Pattern

Commencing early last year, the Indian Navy has adopted a new form of extended deployment pattern by surface units which remain on patrol for up to three months before being relieved. There is a maritime surveillance architecture (MSA) led by the P8i Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti Submarine Warfare aircraft operating from INS Rajali in Arakkonam and the IL 38s operating from INS Hansa in Dabolim. These efforts are augmented by satellites, medium range surveillance platforms such as Dornier aircraft as also by UAV squadrons operated by the Navy. The requirement for such continuous deployment has been acutely felt with the increased presence of the PLA Navy (PLA-N) and also other maritime developments in India's neighbourhood. It is a matter of concern that there is a near continuous presence of PLA-N surface and sub-surface units who are on variety of missions in the Indian Ocean, including, anti-piracy off the Somali Coast since 2008.

The Navy and the Coast Guard together ensure that the entire Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the extended areas in the IOR are monitored to spot any unusual activity. The presence of the naval or coast guard units is akin to 'boots- on- the ground' in army parlance, as it is the physical presence of surface units and their ability to

contain unlawful activity that is required at sea. Interestingly, the new deployment pattern interestingly can be explained by the acronym **CAMPING**. The following are the areas which are being kept under surveillance by regular deployment of ships in the IOR:-

CENDEP

This area covers the central IOR, where patrolling in waters south of India, off Maldives and Sri Lanka, is undertaken. The developments in Maldives have been a cause of concern and hence there is a need for patrolling these areas. It may be noted that India has a trilateral agreement that includes both Maldives and Sri Lanka and conducts DOSTI a Coast Guard exercise annually. However, the recent developments in Maldives will prevent any active engagement by the Maldivian forces till the internal situation is stabilised. Maldives also did not participate in this year's edition of the biennial meet "Milan" which brings together navies from different regions to discuss the challenges in the region. Maldives quoted the internal situation as a the major factor that precluded its participation.

ANDEP

This patrol area is in the Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands (A&N) area, where patrolling between the North Andamans and South Nicobar is undertaken. This area also has witnessed poaching and illegal traffic from the neighbouring countries thus requiring a greater degree of vigil.

MALDEP

The Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) are crucial arteries of the global shipping traffic and serve the two-way traffic between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. A naval ship on patrol, in this region, which is prone to piracy and other illegal activities, provides the Indian Navy with an opportunity and the ability to coordinate and integrate its plans with the tri Services Andaman and Nicobar Command in timely and effective manner.

POGDEP

Anti Piracy patrols commenced in 2008 and has continued unabated, to ensure that piracy off the east African coast is contained. Indian Naval units have been on patrol the last decade and in carrying out operations along with other navies of the world and have been successful in contributing to enhanced safety and confidence of seafarers. This has to be seen the backdrop of PLA-N's own deployment to contain piracy. Surprisingly, the

PLA-N thought it fit to use piracy as an excuse to deploy its submarines, which clearly are unsuitable for such missions. In the bargain, however, the PLA-Navy obtained invaluable “hands-on” experience in operating its submarines, far away from its shores, and also gained local knowledge of the operating conditions. The experience led to China building and commissioning a naval base in Djibouti which will provide the requisite logistic support for its ambitions in the IOR.

IODEP

This deployment seeks to keep the South Indian Ocean, off Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar areas under surveillance. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) programmes in this region enjoy the support of the Governments of Mauritius and Seychelles. Following the visit of Prime Minister Modi, there has been a great momentum to revitalise the historical links and synergise with these island countries, most of which willing to contribute to the efforts of India to provide security and stability in the IOR by augmenting capacity and capability.

NORDEP

The Bay of Bengal has immense relevance to India’s Act East Policy and requires effective engagement with the neighbouring States in the Bay of Bengal. The NORDEP is aimed at keeping the northern Bay of Bengal and the eco sensitive waters of the Andaman Seas by effective surveillance by coordinating with the maritime security agencies of Bangladesh and Myanmar. The mass migration of the Rohingyas both by sea and over land requires close monitoring. Likewise, close coordination with neighbouring countries is needed to monitor illegal movements, human trafficking and smuggling in these areas. Coordinated patrols with Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia would augment this deployment objective by keeping the sensitive areas under surveillance.

GULFDEP

Just as a close eye is being kept over the SOMS, is being kept under watch, there is a need to pay a close attention to the goings on in the approaches to the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf which are critical to the energy security of India, China and other eastern economies. And there is an inescapable need to keep this area under constant surveillance. There is also a power play of sorts going on in this area, with the Chinese investments in Gwadar, a possible Chinese funding of a naval base at Jiwani, investments in Chabahar as also the new Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) a joint initiative of India and Japan, which is seen as a counter to the Maritime Silk Road (part of the China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India, in the recent years, has practically engaged the navies in this

region and has also been provided recently with [support facilities](#) including dry docking, in Duqm in Oman.

In conclusion, it is clear that the ‘CAMPING’ deployment pattern in the IOR by the Indian Navy serves the objective of being present and relevant in the areas of interest. The experience thus far also would have provided immense opportunities to obtain new data of the environment, shipping patterns, weather, bathymetry and oceanographic data. This also has provided an opportunity for the IN to review human and machinery limitations on such deployments and tweak operational and manning patterns. The Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with USA, France and other bilateral agreements would facilitate cross-utilisation of facilities in the IOR thereby, promoting the objective of being prepared for both armed conflicts and also for Maritime Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) including HADR.

**Commodore RS Vasan IN (Retd) is the Regional Director of the Chennai Chapter of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi. And the Director C3S. The views expressed here are his own and do not reflect the official policy or position of the NMF, the Indian Navy or the Government of India. He can be reached at rsvasan2010@gmail.com*