

CHAPTER - X

INDIAN NAVY IN THE WAR

As narrated in the earlier chapters, the 1965 War was planned neither by Pakistan nor India. One thing led to another in a process of spiralling escalation, and it became a full-fledged war between the two countries. But even then India tried to limit the hostilities, and no major operations were undertaken against East Pakistan. For perhaps the same reason, the Indian Navy was not unleashed in a total war against Pakistan.

War Approaching

Till September 1965, the Indian Navy was not given any specific task, except the general responsibility to defend the Eastern and Western Coast lines totalling about 5,600 km, the outlying islands in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, located approximately 1,280 km off the mainland(1). With the limited number of ships available to the Indian Navy at that time, it was a difficult responsibility in terms of physical distances and areas concerned, especially in view of the on-going expansion of the navies of Iran, Indonesia and China. Not only was Iran building up a blue water capability, but Chinese and Indonesian submarines were also sighted in the Bay of Bengal, especially in the vicinity of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, the Indian Naval Commanders counted Pakistan as the main potential adversary.

It should be mentioned here that during the Kutch trouble, INS Vikrant was moved to the Saurashtra Coast, and this had a sobering effect on the Pak armed forces(2). After the Kutch operations Vice Admiral Soman, the then Chief of Indian Naval Staff, thought it appropriate to concentrate the Indian fleet in the Bay of Bengal off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, keeping in view the disturbed political atmosphere in Indonesia and the likelihood of that country's naval interference in this area(3). Some Indonesian leaders had laid a vague claim to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and started calling the Indian Ocean as the Indonesian Ocean(4). He issued necessary directives to the fleet to operate in the east and put landing parties on those islands(5). Around end August 1965, he received some secret intelligence through a foreign contact and became convinced that Indonesia was not likely to interfere in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and, therefore, decided to shift the fleet to the West Coast(6).

Vice Admiral Samson, who was then commanding the Indian fleet and operating off the East Coast, recalls that on 10 August 1965, when he reached Madras on board the flag-ship INS Mysore, he realised that things were hotting up on the Indo-Pak border, and it was wrong to be away from the Western coast. He, therefore, went ashore and telephoned to the Chief of Naval Staff from the office of the Resident Naval Officer. He suggested that in view of tension developing between India and Pakistan, his fleet should be allowed to return to Bombay immediately. But the Chief of Naval Staff replied that the Fleet should continue its cruise to the Andamans and the other parts on the Eastern Coast, as it was the Government policy not to give any impression to Pakistan that India had the intention of using her Fleet in operations against the Pak Fleet or her naval bases(7).

One evening when Vice Admiral Samson was with the Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in Port Blair, a message informed him about the Pak army's advance into Akhnur, threatening to cut off Kashmir from India. He immediately sent a coded message to the Naval Headquarters for permission to return to Bombay. However, he was told to proceed according to the previously planned programme, i.e. INS Mysore and Brahmaputra to go to Calcutta and some of the remaining ships including INS Ranjit to sail to Vishakhapatnam. He had no other alternative but to do so. Nevertheless, on arrival at Sandheads (the entrance to the mouth of river Hugli), he decided with Capt D.R. Mehta, the Captain of INS Mysore, that the Cruiser should remain at anchor there itself. Meanwhile, Vice Admiral Samson went to Calcutta on board INS Brahmaputra, which being a frigate, could more easily get out of the Calcutta harbour. This was necessary as INS Mysore being a larger vessel would have taken at least two days to clear the river once she had reached Calcutta, and, in an emergency, would have virtually been bottled up there. While the battle was continuing in the West, a lot of prominence was given in the Press to the impending arrival of the Indian fleet at Calcutta on a goodwill visit. It was broadcast in the evening of 1 September that the IAF had launched its attack against Pak Armour and Infantry in the Chhamb area, and thus it became clear that the Indo-Pak conflict was not going to be a limited affair. Indian Naval HQ now realised that Pakistan was likely to extend the war to the sea as well(8). Vice Admiral Samson, thereupon, spoke to the Naval HQ and got permission to proceed to Bombay with all his ships at the earliest. Unfortunately, INS Brahmaputra was locked up in the Hugli and would take time to clear that river, and in any event, with its

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lesser speed, would never catch up with Mysore. So the Fleet Commander ordered all his ships to proceed with despatch to Bombay, and he, on his part, could rejoin Mysore by flying down to Vishakhapatnam and then boarding one of the faster Destroyers.

There was no air service at that time from Calcutta to Vishakhapatnam, but with the help of the local Air Force Commander, Vice Admiral Samson managed to get an aircraft to fly him out in the morning. The journey from Calcutta to Air Force Base Barrackpore proved very interesting. In the early morning when the Admiral and his companions were on the way to Barrackpore their car broke down, and there was no taxi or any other vehicle available on the road. Suddenly, they saw a bus running on the road, and they commandeered it, with its passengers protesting. However, the bus could not take them inside the Air Force Station and dropped them near the main gate, a fair distance from the aircraft. With a lot of luggage with them, it was a bit of a problem to walk down to the run-way. To their great relief they found a bullock-cart near the gate of the Air Force Station, and they soon dumped their luggage in it and finally got into the aircraft.

On reaching Vishakhapatnam, Admiral Samson drove to the naval jetty and embarked on board INS Ranjit and sailed immediately. Although almost a day behind the remaining ships of the fleet (less INS Brahmaputra still in the river Hugli), Ranjit proceeded at full speed and overtook the Fleet south of Sri Lanka. Despite adverse weather conditions, the Fleet Commander got himself transferred to flagship Mysore by jackstay(9).

The Rival Fleets

Compared to the Pakistan Navy, the Indian Navy was definitely larger, and had the following units, apart from training, supply and minor vessels :-

(a) Aircraft Carrier

VIKRANT (Flag Ship)

(b) Cruisers

MYSORE
DELHI

(c) 11th Destroyer Squadron

RAJPUT (D 11)
RANJIT
RANA

(d) 22nd Destroyer Squadron

GODAVARI (D 22)
GOMATI
GANGA

(e) 14th Frigate Squadron

KHUKRI (F 14)
KUTHAR
KIRPAN

(f) 15th Frigate Squadron

TRISHUL (F 15)
TALWAR

(g) 16th Frigate Squadron

BRAHMAPUTRA (F 16)
BEAS
BETWA

But a few of these ships were not fully operational when the war broke out in September 1965. The fleet had been operating in the Bay of Bengal on prolonged missions and several vessels and their equipment required repairs or over-hauling. INS Vikrant was long overdue for refit, and had disembarked her Air Squadrons (INAS 300 and INAS 310) at Goa at the end of April 1965(10). When the ship was on her way back to Bombay for docking, she was asked to sail back to Goa and reembark the Air Squadrons because of the Kutch trouble. Thus the docking of this Carrier was delayed till end June 1965. Had this delay not occurred and the ship was taken for repairs in time, she would have been fully operational in September 1965.

Several other ships were also programmed for refits and repairs as per the peace-time schedule, as there was no particular Government directive to prepare for the war. During the period of the conflict, apart from INS Vikrant, Delhi, Rana, Trishul, and Sutlej were also under refit. Even INS Mysore required immediate dockyard attention, but Vice Admiral Samson used her as the Flag ship(11). The operational state of the material and equipment of the Frigate class of ships was lower than the desired level. This was mainly due to lack of spares and carrying out repairs by tinkering, instead of repairs by replacement. Both the Destroyer Squadrons, i.e. Ganga, Gomati, Godavari, and Rana, Rajput, and Ranjit were ageing. However, compared to the Pak Navy, the

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Indian Navy was better equipped both ship and equipment-wise, excepting the fact that the Indian Navy did not have a submarine at that time. Although INS Brahmaputra, Beas and Betwa had good guns, they had some machinery problems. INS Trishul and Talwar were first-rate anti-submarine ships, but the latter, tasked to carry out patrol of Kori Creek on the eve of the war, developed boiler trouble and had to be anchored off Okha. INS Shakti, the only ship which could refuel other ships of the Fleet on high seas, was also in bad condition, and it was clear that she would not be able to steam reliably. Consequently, Admiral Samson directed her to be anchored off Diu on the Gujarat coast, where hopefully she might get some protection from the Pak submarine. However, the ships would be highly vulnerable when they would be immobile alongside Shakti for refuelling(12).

India

Cruiser Mysore, 6 Frigates,
4 Destroyers and oiler
Shakti.

Maritime Reconnaissance
(MR) Aircraft of IAF from
Pune, limited to flying one
sortie per day upto 21°30'
North Latitude, under the
control of Maritime
Operations Room (MOR),
Bombay; two Alizes and
Hawks at Bombay under MOR
(The strike range of the
Hawks was 240 km from
base).

Pakistan

Submarine Ghazi,
Cruiser Babur, 6
Destroyers, and the
oiler Dacca.

4-6 Long-range MR
aircraft with Radar and
homing capabilities;
some Sabres and B-57
Bombers based at
Karachi, with strike
ranges upto 480 km and
1,040 km respectively.

The comparison of forces indicated that while the Indian Navy was superior to the Pak Navy in gun power, enemy had greater advantage in torpedo attacks. Enemy also had distinct advantage in speed over the Indian fleet - speed of Indian naval forces while remaining concentrated was 15 knots, while enemy speed was over 22 knots. And Pakistan had better airborne maritime reconnaissance and strike capability than India(13).

Even so, the FOCIF decided to operate within the Pak air strike range (1,040 km from Karachi), which meant accepting some risks. He chose to operate upto a range of 320 km from Karachi by day, and close to Karachi at night, with the precaution that by first light the Indian ships should reach beyond the range of most of the Pak aircraft. Consequently, with the

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Indian fleet's speed limitation of 15 knots, the farthest north they could operate was in the vicinity of Okha(14).

While the main part of the Indian Fleet was steaming from the East Coast towards Bombay, the overall disposition of the major naval units as on 1 September 1965 was:-

- (a) MYSORE, RANJIT, KHUKRI, KUTHAR and KIRPAN - at Vishakhapatnam.
- (b) BRAHMAPUTRA and BEAS - at Calcutta
- (c) TALWAR had been sent to the Kutch area earlier to carry out patrol off Kori Creek.
- (d) The only operational ship at Bombay was RAJPUT with reduced speed. The other ships at Bombay were KISTNA, SUTLEJ and DARSHAK, getting ready after essential repairs, and hence not available for any operations immediately.
- (e) GODAVARI and GOMATI were available at Cochin for local defence.
- (f) Two Minesweepers - CANNANORE and KAKINADA - were at Goa.
- (g) VIKRANT, TRISHUL, BETWA and RANA were under scheduled refit at Bombay(15).

Plans and Preparations

As regards intelligence about the impending threat from Pakistan, the Navy did not have adequate early warning, as already explained. Even in mid-August 1965, the Navy had neither the knowledge of the impending conflict, nor was asked by the Government to make necessary preparations to meet the threat. It seems the Navy was asked to lie low, and plans made were for only a defensive role, and not for an offensive one.

However, the enemy threat was appreciated by the Naval HQ as under:-

- (a) Use of Pak surface ships as raiders of Indian ports and Indian Merchant Ships at sea.
- (b) Chances of Indonesia's sporadic raids on Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands could not be eliminated completely.

- (c) Pakistan's submarine Ghazi was a real threat which might cause considerable damage to the Indian ports and shipping.
- (d) Pakistan would have an impossible task of supplying East Pakistan through the sea. Indian ships were to prevent Pak supplies between East and West Pakistan.

It was planned to concentrate the majority of the fleet ships off West Coast as early as possible, while only token presence of fleet ships would be at Goa, Vizag, and Cochin. The seaward defence of ports was completely left to the local Port Authorities and the Naval Administrative Authorities concerned.

The Indian Fleet was tasked to deploy ships in the north Arabian sea in an area decided by the fleet commander to meet the requirement of defending all Indian ports along the West Coast, and to destroy Pakistani fleet ships whenever opportunity arose or the situation called for. It was also to strike Karachi if and when ordered, and provide general cover and protection to Indian merchant ships in the Arabian Sea, plying to and from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea(16).

Only essential measures for naval control of shipping were implemented, such as seaward defence by activating coastal batteries, examination of ships, seizure of Pakistani merchant ships, and diverting away the Indian ships from Pak ports. Plans were made for implementation of blockade in case of necessity. However, no blockade was imposed during this conflict. Precautions were taken to avoid unnecessary movement of ships, particularly in areas where operations were expected to take place.

One day, the British Naval Adviser called on Cmde B.K. Dang, Director, Naval Plans, at the Naval HQ in New Delhi, and asked him about the measures taken for the Naval control of shipping, with particular reference to the sinking of Pakistani merchant ships. The reply was given to him that no such action would be taken during this conflict. The Naval Adviser said that he would convey this to Pakistan(17).

The War Orders that were earlier issued were modified to suit the circumstances prevailing at that time and also the weaponry and equipment that were available then. The three coastal batteries - one at Colaba, the second at Worli, and the third at Middle Ground (Bombay Harbour) were activated. However, these batteries were ill-equipped and had old 6" guns of limited range. Manually-controlled Bofor guns

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(40/60mm) were deployed in anti-air role(18). Off-shore patrolling beyond 100 km by minesweepers and in-shore patrolling by in-shore minesweepers were carried out throughout the period of operations. Normal anti-sabotage measures, such as sending frogmen and divers to defuse mines, were taken.

There was no air cover worth the name, and Early Air Warning system was poor. The IAF Station at Bombay was responsible for taking necessary measures to counter air attacks. The security measures available were inadequate. However, contingency naval plans of 1962 were updated. The Bombay Naval Command provided logistics to the Naval Air Squadrons, but operationally they were under the Fleet Commander.

Ship Channels were arranged, convoys were formed for the safety of the merchant ships, and convoy escort ships were provided by the Fleet. Ships undergoing refit were handed back to the fleet after hasty repairs wherever possible. Maritime reconnaissance was negligible. Blackout was organised in Bombay, but fishing boats along the coast had their lights on, making it possible for the enemy to identify Bombay harbour easily. The Naval Officer-in-Charge Bombay organised body search and vehicle search in the Dock area and other vital places with the help of Naval Intelligence personnel/Provost Marshal/Military Police. Anti-limpet mine measures were taken, but Indian frogmen had very limited capabilities.

The Cochin Command also made an assessment of the possible threats from the enemy as under:-

(a) By Sea

- i. Bombardment from seaward of vulnerable points, ships in harbour, and approaches to the harbour by enemy naval vessels or armed merchant vessels. This could have serious results.
- ii. Mine-laying in the approaches to the harbour, mainly by surface vessels and aircraft, and possibly by submarine also.
- iii. Blocking the harbour by scuttling a ship in Pakistani employ, in the channel.
- iv. The possibility of the Pakistani submarine approaching the exposed examination anchorage at periscope depth and torpedoing identifiable Indian ships.

(b) By Air

- i. From intelligence available, the possibilities of an attack from air could not be ruled out, although it might not be possible for the enemy to mount a sustained attack.
- ii. Reconnaissance of the area by the enemy to determine the amount of naval forces based at Cochin.

(c) Sabotage

This was considered as the most important and major threat to the Cochin Naval Base and adjacent areas. This part of the country was reported to have some sympathisers of China and Pakistan. In view of the existing friendly ties between the two countries, a collusion between the two in letting loose saboteurs could not be considered improbable. The possibility of landing saboteurs/commandos by submarine or surface craft was, therefore, taken into consideration. Considerable damage could be caused by them in the absence of adequate defence along the coast. The enemy could well use the Lakshadweep area for refuelling and regrouping with a certain degree of concealment. To combat the threat from sabotage, strict precautionary measures were taken to guard the vulnerable points in the Base, the Naval Coast Batteries and the Naval Armament Depot, Alwaye(19).

Operations of the Fleet

In accordance with Operation Order, code-named GONDOLA, dated 13 August 1965, the FOCIF (Flag Officer Commanding Indian Fleet) was given the task of deploying the ships under his command for the protection of the ports on the West Coast. Realising that the need for such protection had arisen, GONDOLA was given effect to in the afternoon of 1 September. Naval Commands were directed to take precautionary measures against enemy attack and sabotage, the War Room at Naval Headquarters was activated, and liaison was established with Army and Air Headquarters Operations Rooms.

Intelligence on enemy naval forces received from Karachi indicated that all major Pakistani naval units had proceeded to sea on 3 September morning for exercises, and returned to harbour at night, minus PNS Ghazi, which must have proceeded to take an advantageous position for attacks on Indian ships.

On 5 September, the Flag Officer Commanding

Indian Fleet was given the freedom to hunt and destroy the enemy submarine, if detected on passage. This was necessary, as earlier directives had permitted Indian ships to hunt and attack the submarine only inside Indian territorial waters.

On the morning of 6 September, an order was issued that although no declaration of war was made, hostilities had commenced with Pakistan, and all units were ordered to be prepared for action. At noon, the President of Pakistan stated over the Pakistan Radio that a state of war existed between India and Pakistan, and a Pak Naval HQ message to the Pakistani naval units to execute "RESPONSE" was intercepted by an Indian agency.

All leave to personnel was cancelled and those on leave were ordered to be recalled. Drafts from the Fleet and appointments to commands and important appointments in the Fleet were frozen. Orders were issued for the detention of all Pakistani ships in harbour in retaliation for the detention of Indian ships by Pakistan. All Indian ships were ordered to keep clear of Pakistani ports and of the Pakistani Coast.

On 7th morning, the major Units of the Fleet (MYSORE, KHUKRI, KUTHAR and RANJIT) arrived at Bombay with FOCIF on board, and action was taken immediately in coordination with the Naval Dockyard to attend to all operational defects of the ships. On the basis of intelligence that an attack on Bombay was probable that night, the FOCIF sailed at night on board MYSORE with RAJPUT, RANJIT and BETWA in company for defensive patrol outside the harbour. However, RAJPUT and RANA were on one boiler only, and BETWA had just come out of her long refit. Alizes started search operations upto 180 km off the port, and Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft of the IAF were utilised for searches outside the ALIZE coverage.

VESCA (Vessel Calling) System of reporting was introduced with immediate effect and Reporting Officers were directed to report movements of all ships, including neutral ships.

According to Vice Admiral B.S. Soman, the then Chief of Naval Staff, when the war started, he received a Government directive that the Indian Navy was to play a defensive role and not to operate beyond the latitude of Porbandar. He was unhappy with this restriction imposed on him, and met, in turn, the Defence Secretary, the Defence Minister, the Prime Minister and even the President, and complained about this order. But the order was not changed and the

Indian Navy had no option but to play a defensive role during the earlier period of the operations(20).

Policy directive ("REBOUND"II) was issued on 7 September. According to this, Pakistani action at sea was to be anticipated and ships and naval authorities were ordered to take both offensive and defensive action as circumstances dictated.

At midnight on 7 September, some Pakistani naval ships, including cruiser PNS Babur, disguised as merchant ships, came near the minor port of Dwarka on the Saurashtra Coast and bombarded it. They were supported by Pakistan Air Force which also carried out bombing of the area. About 125 shells were fired by the Pakistani ships. However, very little damage took place, as most of the naval shells landed on the beach. A railway rest-room and a small part of a railway track were slightly damaged. One unexploded 5.25" shell and some 4.5" shells were subsequently recovered from the area(21).

On 8 September, INS Kirpan arrived in Bombay, and ships of the 11th Destroyer Squadron - Rajput and Ranjit -, along with Betwa were employed on patrolling the approaches to Bombay during the dark hours. While Talwar, after carrying out repairs to her machinery, sailed from Okha at 1600 hours at her best speed, Savitri and Sarayu were sailed from Bombay to Okha to carry out barrier patrol at the entrance to the Gulf of Kutch, INS Tir, a training ship, anchored at Madras and bound for Port Swettenham on a goodwill visit, was asked to cancel the programme and go to Port Blair to carry out patrols in the Andaman seas(22).

Air Defence of Bombay was handed over to the Navy, as the IAF at Pune did not have sufficient resources to undertake this task. The SEA HAWKS at Bombay were kept at readiness for strikes, and ALIZES were used for close reconnaissance and searches off the approaches to the port.

The following measures were taken for the control of shipping:-

- (a) All merchant ships were ordered to keep clear 60 miles off Bombay during dark hours.
- (b) Wireless silence was ordered for all Indian merchant-men at sea.
- (c) All navigational aids north of Sadashivgad and Sacramento Shoal were ordered to be switched off.

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- (d) Orders were issued to institute 'examination service' at Bombay, Goa, Cochin, Madras, Vishakhapatnam and Calcutta.
- (e) Pakistani ship AL HASAN was impounded at Vishakhapatnam, and 14 Officers including the Captain, 35 crew, the Captain's wife and son were interned, but not the Chief Officer and the Chief Engineer who were German nationals(23).

On 9 September, INS Brahamaputra and Beas arrived at Bombay from the Eastern Coast, and INS Talwar came from Okha. On their passage to Bombay, Brahmaputra and Beas had made a suspected submarine contact about 60 km south of Bombay, and Beas carried out a deliberate attack. However, contact was lost at extreme range. It turned out later that one of the merchant ships, S.S. Jalaveer, was also in radar contact with a disappearing vessel, about 60 km from the position, reported by Brahmaputra.

Another interesting thing happened that day. Telephone message was received at Bombay from INS Valsura that the Collector of Jamnagar reported that 700 heavily armed enemy paratroopers had landed at a place, 45 km away from Jamnagar, and they were proceeding towards that town. Based on this report, a battalion of troops was transported by air from Bombay to fight this menace. However, it turned out later that the report was false. Actually, a railway engine driver had seen some people near the railway tracks, and in panic he wrongly reported them as enemy paratroopers. This underlined the importance of verification of such reports by local commanders before passing them on to higher authorities.

On 10 September, as availability of naval ships on the Western Coast improved considerably, FOCIF ordered Operation GALLANT for an offensive sweep of the sea areas upto Okha. INS Mysore, Rajput, Ranjit and Talwar, 14th FS and 16th FS were available for this task; and Rana and Ganga were employed for local defence off Bombay. Liberator and Alize aircraft were ordered to carry out maritime reconnaissance searches ahead of the fleet to give early warning and anti sub-marine protection.

Stages 2 and 3 of the war-watching service were implemented on 10 September, and a Naval Liaison Officer was established at Okha to coordinate all reporting in his area.

Next day, the Indian fleet patrolled the Kathiawar Coast. In close support of the fleet, Alizes were flown under the control of MOR Bombay, and the Liberators were employed in searching sea areas to the south and south-west of the fleet's position. Six to eight Sea Hawks were positioned at Jamnagar for striking against the enemy on 12 September. At one stage, the fleet reported that it was being shadowed by enemy reconnaissance aircraft for about 45 minutes. Consequently, 2 Sea Hawks took off from Bombay for interception but no contact could be made with the enemy aircraft.

On 11 September, an order was issued in respect of the naval control of shipping. It laid down the following:-

- (a) Pakistani crews of neutral vessels should remain on board.
- (b) Indian crew bound for Pakistani ports in neutral vessels were to be permitted to remain on board as reciprocation from Pakistan was anticipated.
- (c) Pakistani export cargo was not normally to be interfered with.
- (d) Cargoes consigned for Pakistani ports would be considered on merit individually.
- (e) Cargo for Indian ports should be discharged before a neutral ship proceeded to Pakistan ports.
- (f) Detained Pakistani ships should be handed over to the Shipping Corporation for maintenance and manning. All merchant ships should keep 30 miles clear off Goa and Cochin at night.

The same day, an enemy aircraft reportedly tried to intrude into Vishakhapatnam area(24). However, it could not do any harm, and the naval coast batteries engaged it, and the enemy aircraft fled from the scene. This aircraft could have come from East Pakistan.

As the Indian fleet was running short of fuel on 13 September, and the tanker, INS Shakti was not available for refuelling, the fleet returned to Bombay at 9 a.m. on the 14th, after a successful sweep in the Arabian Sea. FOCIF reported that as a result of his operation, the enemy was avoiding action with the Indian fleet and operating north of 22°50'N. It was

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also evident that the Indian naval forces were under constant surveillance by enemy aircraft which were on call to support the Pak naval forces. Although a number of radar contacts with enemy ships were reported during the sweep, no Pakistani vessel could be intercepted. Also sonar contact was made twice and anti-submarine hunts were launched. However, there was no evidence of any damage done to the Pak submarine.

On 14 September, the Indian High Commissioner in London reported that the British Government had placed an embargo on all shipments of stores to India and Pakistan. To improve the reporting in the Kathiawar Coast, naval reporting posts were established at Sikka, Salaya, Dwarka, Porbandar, Mangrol and Veraval.

On 15 September, some jet aircraft arrived over Cochin, but did not carry out any raids. These aircraft were engaged by naval ships and coast batteries. Subsequent analysis revealed that these aircraft belonged to a British or American carrier Task Force which might have been operating off the southern coast of India.

On 17 September, in view of the likelihood of the enemy submarine Ghazi operating in the southern approaches to Bombay, FOCIF sailed the 14th F.S. for offensive anti-submarine sweep in the southern approaches to Bombay. Gun support was provided by INS Ganga and INS Rana. During 17-22 September, the Squadron carried out a thorough search of an area of about 7,500 sq. km. without finding the elusive enemy.

On 18 September, the Indian fleet (Mysore, Beas, Betwa, and Ranjit only) sailed for operation 'SPREE-I' in the general direction of the Gulf of Aden to provide support for some Indian merchant ships bringing vital defence stores from the U.K. The distance from Bombay to Aden is approximately 2,640 km. However, at the last minute the course of the fleet was diverted to cover the likely landing of Pakistani forces on the Kathiawar Coast, and the fleet rushed towards Porbandar at its maximum speed. As no contact was made with the enemy, on 22nd September, the FOCIF decided to proceed again to the Central Arabian Sea to afford protection to the Indian merchant ships bringing defence cargo from abroad. However, on receipt of signal regarding acceptance of cease-fire by the Government, he decided to return to the Kathiawar coast to forestall any attempt by the Pak Navy to create mischief in that area. Next day, the fleet returned to Bombay.

At about 0730 hours on 23 September, INS Kuthar obtained a Sonar contact, about 8 km south of Bombay.

Immediately, Kuthar alongwith Khukri launched an anti-submarine attack. Although no definite indication of damage to the submarine was noticed, on subsequent analysis it was established that Kuthar was in real contact with a submarine which might have been damaged in the action that ensued. FOCIF reported that inspite of every effort to seek the enemy and draw him to battle, he was unable to engage him, as the enemy was keeping well clear of 23°N and avoiding battle.

And thus ended the war for the Indian fleet.

The Naval Air Arm

When INS Vikrant went for docking in July 1965, Indian Naval Air Squadrons 300 (Sea Hawks) and 310 (Alizes) were disembarked at Goa. As the junior pilots of Squadron 300 required armament practice, on 1 September, 8 Hawks and 1 Vampire trainer were sent to Jamnagar via Santa Cruz for armament work-up. With the declaration of emergency, the Squadron was placed under the operational control of the Western Air Command with effect from 3 September 1965. When war appeared imminent the squadron was tasked for air defence and interdiction in Pak territory. IAF Toofanis were also given the task of air defence.

On 5 September 1965, the squadron was assigned the task to attack BADIN radar and airfield in Pakistan, about 210 km from Jamnagar. Armed with T-10 rockets and guns, the squadron remained at a high state of readiness, waiting for the order 'Go', but its task was transferred to the IAF.

At dusk, on 6 September 1965, six B-57 Bombers of PAF attacked Jamnagar air station at 1920 hrs. At first it was thought that they were Indian aircraft. The attack lasted for 10 minutes, during which the PAF bombed and rocketted the air station which was later subjected to heavy bombing throughout the night. However, the enemy failed to notice the Sea Hawks on the dispersal area, and the squadron did not suffer any damage. One Dakota, one Fighter, the ATC building and certain parts of the main run-way were damaged. But the run-way was still useable by the Indian aircraft. Early in the morning of 7 September 1965, orders were received from the Western Air Command to deploy the Sea Hawk squadron at Santa Cruz.

On 7 September 1965, the squadron with 8 Sea Hawks and one Vampire moved to Santa Cruz. The tasks assigned were:-

- a) Defence of Bombay against air attack.

b) Anti-shipping strike.

The squadron carried out dawn-to-dusk CAP sorties, and stayed in condition 1 (2 minutes notice for launch) for anti-shipping strike throughout the day-light hours. The squadron of Sea Hawks, in two divisions of four aircraft each, which had sighting problem at night, flew to Jamnagar on the night of 11/12 September 1965, and was airborne at dawn in pursuit of the enemy ships, reported off the Saurashtra coast. There was, however, no contact as the ships had withdrawn out of range. The squadron returned to Santa Cruz the same day.

But one aircraft, Sea Hawk-192, had to be left behind due to a technical snag. Lt PD Sharma stayed back to ferry this aircraft on completion of repairs, which were difficult, as workshops on the station had been damaged during the air attacks. Temporary repairs were effected by the afternoon of 13 September, and Lt Sharma got air borne for Bombay from Jamnagar. While climbing to the assigned height, he realised that his RT was not functioning. On approaching Bombay and fearing that he might be mistaken for an enemy aircraft by his squadron mates, air borne on a CAP, against an evening sky, he decided to dive down and make a low approach to land at Santa Cruz. As his aircraft approached for a landing, all the guns opened up, and Bombay experienced its first air raid alert ever(25).

On the morning of 18 September, Sub-Lt K.P. Verma lost his life in an air accident soon after take-off for a dawn CAP sortie over the sea.

During the operations, the Squadron undertook the following sorties :-

From	Under the Operational Control of	Duration	Task	Remarks
Jamnagar	HQ Western Air Command	3 Sep to 6 Sep 65	1. Air defence 2. Interdiction	8 Hawks 1 Vampire
Bombay	Flag Officer Commanding Bombay	7 Sep to 23 Sep 65	1. Air Defence 2. Anti-ship strike	8 Hawks/1 Vampire upto 13 Sep 65; 10 Hawks & 1 Vampire upto 18 Sep 65; 9 Hawks & 1 Vampire upto 23 Sep 65 due to the death of Sub Lt K.P. Verma.

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Bombay/ Jamnagar -do- 11/12 Sep 1965. Antiship strike 8 Sea Hawks

Particulars of various sorties

	<u>Period</u>	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
(a)	6 Sep to 12 Sep	30	Combat Air Patrol
(b)	12 Sep to 19 Sep	24 22	Strike sorties Combat Air Patrol
(c)	19 Sep to 23 Sep	30	Combat Air Patrol

INAS 310 equipped with Alizes was also sent to Santa Cruz for operating from there. Its main task was reconnaissance over the sea, off the Bombay coast upto 230 km, with emphasis on night reconnaissance. There were only four Alize aircraft operating from Santa Cruz. The flying range of the Alize was about 750 km from launching to landing, and it used to fly 7 to 8 hours a day in adverse weather conditions, as the South-West monsoon was still active during September 1965.

Pilots flying Alizes had only visual or radar contacts with some ships, but they could not identify whether they were Indian ships, neutral ships or enemy ships. Although during the War, black-out was observed in Bombay, hundreds of small fishing crafts, with lights on, near the Bombay coast, could be clearly seen from a distance of 75 km. As no black-out was observed by these fishing crafts, the enemy could easily identify Bombay from the air with the help of the chain of lights seen on these boats along the coast. The Alize aircraft had their own problems. At a civilian airfield it took about two hours for launching a Naval aircraft, while on the Carrier it required only half that time. Over-all, the efficiency of the aircrew operating from a Carrier was higher compared to operations from a civilian air field. Then, the influence of weather on the launching and landing of the Alize aircraft was more restrictive, i.e. in case of operation from the air-field, as compared to operation from the Carrier. Also, while operating from a civilian air field, problems were faced relating to fuelling, arming the aircraft, etc. which were, naturally, absent on the Carrier.

As aircraft availability further improved to 16 SEA HAWKS and 6 ALIZES, on 11 September, their redistribution was ordered as under:-

BOMBAY : 10 SEA HAWKS plus 3 ALIZES

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GOA : 3 SEA HAWKS plus available VAMPIRES

COCHIN : 3 SEA HAWKS plus 3 ALIZES.

On 11 September, One Alize contacted probably a group of enemy ships in position 248 Okha light - about 120 km, at 2202 hrs. The enemy ships switched on their lights on the closing Alize and fired green verey lights for identifying the aircraft. Finding no response from the Alize, they realised that this was not their aircraft, switched off their lights, and quickly retreated towards Karachi. However, unfortunately, Alize's enemy contact report was not received by FOCIF due to unexpectedly poor radio communication(26).

On 12 September, Pak aircraft bombed ATW Jamnagar, but fortunately INS Valsura did not suffer any damage. Jamnagar airfield was bombed again during the night 18th/19th by the PAF. Some damage was caused to hangars and residential buildings only.

Nothing much happened thereafter till the end of hostilities on 23 September.

Conclusion

Armed forces are mainly trained for war, and their effective strength also serves as a deterrence to the evil designs of the enemy. During the Indo-Pak War 1965, the Indian Government did not perhaps give an adequately offensive role to the Indian Navy(27). The reason might be that the Government wanted to localise the war mainly as a land war, without resorting to full-scale naval engagements, which could involve extensive damage to ships and ports of both countries. According to some naval Commanders, who participated in the operations, the Indian Navy should have played an offensive role and attacked the Pak fleet in their base as well as the port of Karachi, and this was within its capability, despite the threat of PAF intervention. Vice Admiral M.K. Roy (Retd) has observed:

It was for the Naval HQ to convince the Government that the Navy should be allowed to play its role fully during the war, and then the Indian Navy could play havoc with the port of Karachi and the Pak Navy, because in training and in morale the Indian Naval personnel were superior to their Pakistani counterpart. In all wars, some element of risk must be taken. As the Pak Air Force was busy in Lahore and Jammu Sectors, it could not have attacked Indian ships

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off the port of Karachi so easily, nor the old coast battery of Karachi could shell the moving Indian ships accurately. Indian Naval leaders did not show boldness or initiative during the 1965 War(28).

However, it is difficult to blame the Indian Navy, as it was the Government which had reportedly limited its role for political and economic reasons. Shri Y.B. Chavan, the then Defence Minister, has succinctly summed up the naval contribution:

"I greatly appreciated the silent but efficient role which the Navy played in the defence of the country. The Navy protected islands which were vital to our security, guarded our ports and the long Indian coast-line. All merchant ships destined for our ports reached safely and our international trade was not permitted to be interfered with by the Pakistan Navy. I take this opportunity to emphasise again that the Navy has done and achieved all that the Government desired of it within the bounds and compass allotted to it"(29).

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The total strength of the coastline of mainland, Lakshadweep group of Islands and Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands is 7,516 km. - India 1986 : A Reference Annual, Page 1.
2. Admiral R.K. Tahiliani's interview of 24 April 1987.
3. At that time there was only one Indian fleet looking after both the Eastern and Western Coasts.
4. Later, on 11 September, when Air Marshal Asghar Khan (Retd) of Pakistan visited Jakarta to seek military aid, Admiral Martadinata, the Indonesian Naval Chief, is alleged to have discussed attacking the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to harass India, vide The First Round, by M. Asghar Khan, London 1979, p.45.
5. Vice Admiral Soman's interview on 6 March 1987. Although it was a normal practice for the Indian fleet to operate in the Bay of Bengal during the period of South-West Monsoons, that year they especially exercised with a British submarine - Also Cmde D.R. Mehta's interview on 27 February 1987.
6. Vice Admiral Soman's interview.
7. Vice Admiral Samson's letter of 7 March 1987. This was confirmed by Admiral Tahiliani's interview of 24 April 1987.
8. From Official Records.
9. Vice Admiral Samson's letter of 7 March 1987.
10. Report of Interviews with RADM R.V. Singh, held on 7 March 1987, and with Cmde D.R. Mehta (Retd), held on 27 February 1987.
11. Cmde D.R. Mehta (Retd)'s Interview on 27 February 1987.
12. Vice Admiral Samson's letter of 7 March 1987.
13. From Official Records.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Cmde B.K. Dang's interview on 17 March 1987.
17. Interview with Cmde B.K. Dang (Retd), of 17 March 1987.
18. Interview with Cmde P.D. Sharma, IN, of 12 April 1989.
19. From Official Records.
20. Vice Admiral Soman (Retd)'s interview of 6 March 1987.
21. From Official Records.
22. According to Vice Admiral M.P. Awati (Retd), who was the Captain of that ship at that time, he had sent a signal from Madras to the Naval HQ, requesting the cancellation of the foreign trip in view of the developments then taking place on the western front, and his request was accepted.

- He was asked to patrol the area from Port Blair to Campbell Bay. He carried out the task throughout the period of operations, but no worthwhile incident took place. - Vice Admiral Awasthi (Retd)'s interview of 28 February 1987.
23. From Official Records.
 24. Ibid.
 25. Cmt: P.D. Sharma's letter No.DO/PDS/89 dated 19 April 1989.
 26. As the aircraft did not transmit the message by HFCW, the report did not reach either FOCIF or ATW Jamnagar. At about midnight, after landing at Jamnagar, the Alize sent the enemy contact report to MOR Bombay through INS Valsura. MOR Bombay then put it out on Broadcast I.N. at 0200 hrs on 12 September, but even this failed to reach FOCIF due to a complete fade-out from 2000 hrs on 11 September to 0700 hrs on the 12th. From Official Records.
 27. According to Admiral Soman, when the war began he was the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, but as the Navy was not given any offensive role, he left the Chairmanship in favour of the Army Chief, Gen Chaudhuri. There was no joint planning with the Navy by the Army or the IAF at the higher levels. - Admiral Soman's interview of 6 March 1987.
 28. Interview with Vice Admiral Roy (Retd) on 2 April 1987.
 29. From Official Records.

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