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Integrated commands structure plan looks at Vice CDS, Dy CDS with clear roles

Jaipur, Lucknow, Coimbatore likely homes for theatre commands

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EXPRESS OPINION



**Tavleen Sing
backfoot?**

The theatre commands look at integrating resources of the Army, IAF and Navy to meet threats from three fronts: China, Pakistan and via the sea routes. This should streamline planning, logistics and operations.

Ready with the organisational structure for the creation of integrated theatre commands, the Armed Forces are looking at the appointment of a Vice Chief of Defence Staff and a Deputy Chief of Defence Staff.

The Vice CDS, likely to be an officer of the rank of General or equivalent, will in all probability look after strategic planning, capability development and procurement-related matters.

The Deputy CDS, likely to be an officer of the rank of Lieutenant General or equivalent, will be responsible for operations, intelligence and will coordinate the allocation of assets between theatres. ✓

While the organisational structure plan may be finetuned after it gets government approval, sources said it entails creation of the western theatre command headquarters in Jaipur where the Army's South Western Command is located.

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The northern theatre command is likely to be in [Lucknow](#). The maritime theatre command is likely to have its base in Coimbatore and will involve the IAF's Prayagraj-headquartered Central Command and its Southern Air Command in Thiruvananthapuram. Earlier, the plans were to set up the maritime theatre command headquarters in Karwar.

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This will be alongside components of the two other services in the respective theatre's area of responsibility.

Currently, the Army and the IAF have seven commands each while the Navy has three. In addition, there are two tri-service commands – the Andaman and Nicobar Command and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) – apart from the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS).

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Post the creation of the theatre commands, three command headquarters of the services are likely to be transformed into theatre command headquarters. The overall plan is to establish three adversary-based theatre commands – one facing Pakistan, another opposite China, and a maritime theatre command to tackle maritime threats outside the coastal borders of the country.

EXPLAINED

The three fronts

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The existing Andaman and Nicobar Command may be subsumed into the maritime theatre command and the HQ IDS will operate under the CDS. The SFC, according to the plan, will continue to operate independently.

The three service chiefs will be responsible for raising, training and sustaining the individual services. It is not known yet whether they will continue to retain some operational roles – the three theatre commanders will be responsible for operations.

Sources said the organisational requirements for the long term are still being worked out, while some strategic reallocation of assets is likely to be carried out to meet immediate requirements.

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No additional manpower is likely to be enrolled for the creation of the theatre commands and readjustments within organisations will be carried out to meet the requirements of the theatre commands.

In an interview to [The Indian Express](#) last week, Defence Minister [Rajnath Singh](#) said the creation of theatre commands has taken even up to 20 years in bigger countries, adding that while the process is on, it is time-consuming.

“People do put across varying viewpoints during a discussion. We take the next step only when there is a consensus. But the purpose won’t be defeated in the process,” Singh said.

Ahead of the creation of the integrated theatre commands, the Armed Forces have been taking smaller steps to bring in jointness among the services at the lower levels. These include plans to transform [Mumbai](#) into the first tri-service common defence station, set up additional joint logistics nodes across the country to boost

integration in logistical needs and streamline their supply chains and have multiple inter-service postings of officers.

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