

The Hindu, 2 August 2005

Navy to probe information leakage

NEW DELHI: The Navy on Monday said it would probe the handling of information stored in its computers and submit a report within 10 days, while Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said news reports suggesting a major leak of confidential documents were "bunkum." "There has been a leakage and we are investigating," he said during a brief interaction with the media. The Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff Sureesh Mehta told newsmen that but for procedural lapses, no secret or operational plan of movement of warships or submarines had been leaked in an unauthorised download of sensitive matter in the Navy's war room in the South Block. Vice Admiral Mehta also said there was no reason to believe that unauthorised persons outside the Naval Headquarters may have sought the downloaded information. "All briefings in the Naval Headquarters are carried out in a briefing room traditionally designated as the war room, which has a number of computers and projection systems. No operational plans are stored on computers," he added.

The Tribune, 3 August 2005

Director of war room involved in leakage of naval data (Girja Shankar Kaura)

New Delhi, August 2: Even as the Naval Headquarters continued to reel under the load of data leak from its war room, reports emerging from the Navy said that one of the Directors of Naval Operations attached to the war room and two officers of the Commanders level had been identified as the main men behind the transfer of data. While the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Arun Prakash, yesterday held a meeting with senior officers attached to Naval Headquarters pointing out the seriousness of the breach in the war room and that all were responsible for it, sources said that the Director of Naval Operations had been identified as the kingpin behind the leak of information. The word emerged that all the three officers had now been put under house arrest. What is bothering the Navy is that it was still to ascertain for how long the information has been going out of the war room as it has recovered a pen drive with the download of at least 100 documents. There is a feeling that such pen drives could have gone out of the war room earlier also. The interrogation of the three officers is being carried out by naval officers along with officials from the IB and RAW.

The Hindu, 3 August 2005

Aircraft carrier on a friendly mission (P S. Suryanarayana)

SINGAPORE: Describing the current deployment of INS Viraat, India's aircraft carrier, in East Asia as a "friendly" mission, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Arun Prakash said in Singapore that the ship's presence "is a gesture to reach out" to the countries in this region. INS Viraat, the only full-fledged aircraft carrier with any Asian country at present, has visited Singapore and a port each in Malaysia and Indonesia. The carrier group, consisting of five ships including INS Viraat, will remain deployed along the sea-lanes of this region for about a month. The deployment reflected India's "commitment" to these countries "in the very limited sense of engaging [them] ... in the maritime sense, ... not committing forces," Admiral Arun Prakash, told The Hindu during a stop-over here on his way to New Delhi from Jakarta.

The Tribune, 3 August 2005

War room breach: Navy can't have a leaky boat

A SECURITY breach in the heart of the Naval Headquarters in South Block, in the briefing room traditionally known to officers as the War Room, is a serious matter. Attempts to play down the incident by describing the pilfered information as 'not serious' are unacceptable. The files downloaded from a computer in the war room do not have to be about operational plans and movements of ships and submarines, for the theft to be considered a breach of national security. The probe ordered by the Navy is specifically set to inquire into the motives of obtaining the files and "whether they had been made available to commercial interests." That is serious enough - the Navy's modernisation plans and specifics about the equipment that it intends to acquire can certainly compromise its interests if leaked out. In any case, the fact that such an attempt was made and information successfully retrieved from a supposedly sanitised area, is a matter of great concern. The threat is not just from high-flying spies and agents, though they exist as well. The flight of a senior RAW official from the country with a bagful of secrets to the US is still fresh in memory. There are many others who serve as information brokers, stalking the by-lanes of power looking for marketable wares. The defence sector, where high-cost capital purchases are made with the potential for massive kickbacks and bribes, is a particular attraction. Everyone has an eye now on the Rs 15,000 crore Scorpene submarine deal now being renegotiated.

The Tribune, 4 August 2005

RAW tailed Naval officer in Russia (Girja Shankar Kaura)

New Delhi, August 3: After being in the denial mode for days, the Navy today admitted that it had imposed restrictions on the movement of three top officials, including the Director of Naval Operations for the recent theft of classified documents from the war room. Even as reports emerged that the Director of Naval Operations had even

been tailed in Moscow by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) operatives for the possible suspicious movements, the Navy said the three men including two Commanders, would remain under restrictions until the four-member Board of Inquiry completes its investigations. Sources in the Navy said the Director of Naval Operations had accompanied some of the higher ranked Navy officials to Moscow recently and his movements had come under the scanner of the RAW. The intelligence agency had kept a complete watch on the naval officer after his initial suspicious movements and had also despatched a report back home.

The Times of India, 4 August 2005

Navy desperately seeks spy planes (RAJAT PANDIT)

NEW DELHI: For a country which has a 7,516-km coastline, 1,197 islands and a 2.01 million sq km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), India does not have a single modern long-range maritime patrol aircraft operating at the moment. This gaping hole in military capabilities once again exposes the lack of long-term strategic planning in the country. Incidentally, even the core 10th Defence Plan (2002-2007) is yet to be finalised despite the lapse of over three years. But coming back to the void in long-range maritime snooping capabilities for a country which aspires to be a superpower: The Navy has been crying hoarse for quite some time but its quest to acquire eight long-range "spy" planes -- the US is aggressively hawking its P-3C Orions for this -- is still a long way off. "Request for Proposals are now being issued to four-five countries. But even if we decide on the Orions, it will take at least three years to induct them in an upgraded condition," said an officer. The Navy has only three Ilyushin-38 long-range reconnaissance aircraft but all three are in Russia for mid-life upgrades with new 'sensor and weapon suite'.

The Indian Express, 23 August 2005

This year, Navy to focus on fight against terror (SHIV AROOR)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22: In a break from conventional manoeuvres over the last five years, the Navy will focus on anti-terror exercises this time. Three top-level exercises scheduled over the next three months-with the US, Russia and France-will have the Navy testing indigenously developed methods to destroy terrorist bases, rescue hostages, intercept transport of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and even liberate a country from terrorists. "The nature of these exercises is undergoing a transformation from conventional to unconventional, from known to unknown. Countries now recognise India as an imperative partner against terror on the high seas," an officer said. Next month, the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, a destroyer, missile cruiser and Los Angeles-class attack submarine will arrive off the coast of Goa for exercises. The two navies will simulate engagements with "rogue vessels", and work on procedures to deal with biological or chemical threats.

The Tribune, 24 August 2005

Barthan new Vice-Chief of Naval Staff

New Delhi, August 23: Vice-Admiral Venkat Barthan, who is presently Chief of Personnel at the Naval Headquarters, was today named as the new Vice-Chief of Naval Staff. Vice-Admiral Barthan will take charge from Vice-Admiral Yashwant Prasad who retires on October 31. There have also been other changes in the Navy with the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Sureesh Mehta, being appointed as the new Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, at Vishakhapatnam on promotion. Vice-Admiral Mehta replaces Vice-Admiral O.P. Bansal. An official announcement here said the Controller of Warship Production, Vice-Admiral J.S. Bedi, has been appointed Deputy Chief of Naval Staff and Vice-Admiral D.P.S. Verma named Chief of Material at the Naval Headquarters here.