

India Tests its New Integrated Battle Groups

OE Watch Commentary: The governments of India and China have worked to improve their relationship over the past few years, particularly following the Doklam standoff in the summer of 2017. The accompanying excerpted articles report on how this is playing out as the Indian government continues its efforts to modernize its army.

The article from *The Print* reports on an Indian army exercise in the state of Arunachal Pradesh for several days in mid-October, noting that it included “15,000 soldiers backed by tanks, medium artillery, helicopters and transport aircraft” and that it was the “Mountain Strike Corps’ maiden exercise.” While the exercise took place in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China, the article mentions how it was planned to “be away from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.” In addition to utilizing the Mountain Strike Corps, the exercise was important “because the Army... for the first time [saw] in action its integrated battle groups (IBGs).” The article notes how Indian officials believe the IBGs will become the “mainstay of future operational strategies in the Western, Northern and Eastern theatres” and that each one “will be sector and terrain specific.”



The shield (emblem) of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army.

Source: Sumanch via Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Command_\(India\)#/media/File:IA_Eastern_Command.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Command_(India)#/media/File:IA_Eastern_Command.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0

The article from *Live Mint* discusses Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to India during the exercise and the hope among Indian officials that the visit would “give fresh momentum to ties bedeviled by a string of irritants in recent weeks.” Specifically, the Chinese government has been “backing Pakistan on the Kashmir issue after India scrapped the temporary provision in its constitution that gave Kashmir special status” on 5 August. The article mentions how Chinese officials have “been upset by India’s military exercise,” but that the two sides have been working in “recent days to ensure the atmosphere ahead of the summit remains calm.” Regardless of China’s response, the first test of India’s new IBGs is an important milestone in the Indian government’s efforts to upgrade military infrastructure in northern states along the border. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Gen Rawat wanted to create integrated units for the border that will be self-sufficient with artillery, armoured, combat engineers and signal units.”



Continued: India Tests its New Integrated Battle Groups

Source: Snehesh Alex Philip, “Army to debut its Mountain Strike Corps next month, at HimVijay exercise in Arunachal,” *The Print*, 11 September 2019. <https://theprint.in/defence/army-to-debut-its-mountain-strike-corps-next-month-at-himvijay-exercise-in-arunachal/289902/>

Over 15,000 soldiers backed by tanks, medium artillery, helicopters and transport aircraft will be part of the Mountain Strike Corps’ maiden exercise, ‘HimVijay’, at over 10,000 feet in Arunachal Pradesh next month.

The exercise will be held away from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. It will coincide with the expected visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping next month.

The exercise assumes greater significance because the Army will for the first time see in action its integrated battle groups (IBGs) — the brainchild of Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat.

Sources said three mountain IBGs carved out of the Panagarh-based 17 Corps’ (Mountain Strike Corps) 59 Mountain Division will be in action.

The exercise will be keenly watched by the top security czars of the Narendra Modi government and the Army chief as the IBGs are touted to be the mainstay of future operational strategies in the Western, Northern and Eastern theatres...

Asked if China has been informed, the source said, “The exercise is being held a little further from the LAC.”...In a bid to ensure faster punitive and defensive operations, Gen Rawat had envisioned the IBGs, which are brigade-sized self-sufficient agile formations.

...Gen Rawat wanted to create integrated units for the border that will be self-sufficient with artillery, armoured, combat engineers and signal units.

As such, each corps is to have three divisions, with each division to have three brigades. The overall idea is to break down the divisions into IBGs with all essential elements.

The IBGs are primed to strike in less than 24 hours. They will be sector and terrain specific — in effect, the IBGs in the North will not be the same as the IBGs in the Western sector...

Source: Elizabeth Roche, “India, China may formally announce visit for Chinese President today,” *Live Mint*, 9 October 2019. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-china-may-formally-announce-visit-for-chinese-president-today-11570590178842.html>

India and China on Wednesday are expected to formally announce the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India for the second informal summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, scheduled for this weekend in the coastal resort town of Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu.

...Xi is expected to arrive in Chennai on 11 October and leave about 24 hours later which means that the duration of the second summit could be less than the first...

The interactions with Modi — there are several planned over the space of a day — are expected to give fresh momentum to ties bedeviled by a string of irritants in recent weeks.

India has reacted strongly to what officials described as China’s “pro-active stance” backing Pakistan on the Kashmir issue after India scrapped the temporary provision in its constitution that gave Kashmir special status.

The two countries also postponed talks between Special Representatives on the boundary dispute which had in turn resulted in speculation about whether the informal summit would be held or not.