

JOINT ORDERS – DEFENCE

NEWS: The **Defence Minister** has empowered the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** and **Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** to issue **Joint Instructions and Joint Orders** for all three services (Army, Navy, and Air Force).

- **Previously**, orders involving **two or more services** were issued **separately** by each service.
- This initiative **aligns with ongoing efforts to modernize the Indian military**, emphasizing **inter-service collaboration and integration**.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Year of Defence Reforms – 2025: An Overview

- **Strategic Declaration:** The Ministry of Defence has designated 2025 as the 'Year of Defence Reforms' to accelerate transformation in India's defence architecture.
- **Core Objectives:** The focus is on enhancing jointness among the Army, Navy, and Air Force, establishing Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs), and improving inter-service cooperation to address complex security challenges.

Key Highlights of the Initiative

- **Joint Orders Introduced:** The issuance of joint orders is aimed at reducing redundancy, streamlining decision-making, and improving coordination across the services.
- **First Joint Order (June 24, 2025):** This order lays down procedures for the approval, numbering, and promulgation of joint instructions across services.
- **Efficiency and Resource Optimization:** Joint orders are expected to lead to better resource utilization, reduced duplication of effort, and more cohesive operational planning.
- **Strategic Integration:** The reform paves the way for aligning both operational and administrative structures, facilitating the creation of joint commands and logistics systems.

Understanding Jointness and Integration

- **Definition of Jointness:** Refers to seamless cooperation among the Army, Navy, and Air Force to act as a unified force, maximizing operational effectiveness.
- **Definition of Integration:** Goes beyond cooperation by structurally reorganizing command, procurement, logistics, and operations to ensure that each service contributes optimally to joint objectives.

Key Aspects of Jointness

- **Synergized Resource Utilization:** Encourages efficient use of personnel, infrastructure, and equipment, thus reducing duplication and lowering operational costs.
- **Service-Specific Strengths Retained:** While aiming for integration, the uniqueness and specialized capabilities of each service are preserved to maintain domain excellence.
- **Improved Operational Outcomes:** Enhances real-time coordination, intelligence sharing, and multi-domain combat readiness.
- **Elimination of Duplication:** Identifies and removes redundant structures and roles to channel resources toward critical capabilities and missions.

Need for Jointness and Integration

- **Complex Multi-Domain Threats:** Modern warfare spans land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace, demanding an integrated military response.
- **Efficient Resource Allocation:** Integration ensures optimal use of defence resources, eliminating waste and improving cost-efficiency.
- **Higher Operational Effectiveness:** Unified forces improve command and control, speed of response, and synergy in joint missions.
- **Faster Response to Emerging Threats:** Integrated decision-making enables agility in countering rapidly evolving geopolitical and technological threats.

Challenges to Jointness and Integration

- **Cultural Differences:** Distinct traditions and doctrines of the Army, Navy, and Air Force may resist unified command structures.
- **Rigid Organizational Structures:** Existing service-specific hierarchies complicate integration, requiring deep reforms in command and administration.
- **Resource Competition:** Equitably allocating budget and assets among services poses challenges due to competing needs.
- **Inter-Service Rivalry:** Disputes over command roles, funding, and credit can lead to distrust and reduced cooperation.
- **Lack of Standardization:** Inconsistent training protocols, equipment types, and operational doctrines delay interoperability.
- **Technological Barriers:** Integrating legacy and advanced systems across services is complex, especially for secure communication and data exchange.
- **Logistical & Bureaucratic Delays:** Differences in supply chains and bureaucratic resistance slow down implementation of joint reforms.

Key Roles of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

- **Top-level Oversight:** Supervises the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Territorial Army for joint planning and resource allocation.
- **Promoting Jointness:** Leads reforms in joint procurement, training, staffing, and command restructuring.
- **Tri-Service Leadership:** Heads organizations such as cyber and space commands to boost multi-domain capabilities.
- **Strategic Advisory Role:** Advises the Nuclear Command Authority and supports long-term defence planning.
- **Driving Reforms:** Implements acquisition plans and drives inter-service integration to optimize defence outcomes.

Government Initiatives for Jointness and Integration

- **Creation of the CDS (2019):** Introduced to institutionalize jointness, enabling unified leadership across services.
- **Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs):** Ongoing efforts to develop regionally based commands that unite all three services under a single commander.
- **Department of Military Affairs (DMA, 2020):** A dedicated department under CDS to implement structural reforms and ensure joint planning and procurement.
- **Inter-Services Organisations Act (2023):** Legally empowers tri-service commanders to command personnel from all services, strengthening unified command and discipline.
- **Joint Logistics Nodes (JLNs):** Operational in Mumbai, Guwahati, and Port Blair, JLNs streamline supply chains, reduce costs, and improve readiness.
- **Joint Training and Exercises:** Initiatives like the *Tri-services Future Warfare Course* and *Exercise Prachand Prahar 2025* enhance interoperability and readiness.
- **Technology Integration & Network-Centric Warfare:** Platforms like Defence Communication Network (DCN) and Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) support real-time multi-domain coordination.

Global Best Practices and Comparisons

- **U.S. (Goldwater-Nichols Act, 1986):** Enabled creation of Unified Combatant Commands such as CENTCOM, demonstrating rapid success in joint operations during the Gulf War.
- **NATO (Allied Joint Doctrine – AJP-01):** Ensures doctrinal consistency for combined air, land, and sea operations; successfully applied in Libya during Operation Unified Protector (2011).
- **Australia (Talisman Sabre, 2023):** Integrated joint training involving 30,000 personnel across all domains, including cyber warfare.
- **China (Theatre Command Reform, 2015):** War Zone Campaign doctrine created five theatre commands with integrated C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) systems for real-time coordination.

Conclusion: Future-Ready Indian Armed Forces

- **Transformation Underway:** The focus on jointness and integration is reshaping India's military structure for the 21st century.
- **Operational Synergy:** Eliminating redundancies and fostering cooperation will lead to more agile, efficient, and effective military operations.
- **Reforms to Sustain Progress:** Continued emphasis on joint commands, technological integration, and institutional restructuring will ensure long-term preparedness and combat capability.
- **Strategic Goal:** A future-ready, unified Indian Armed Forces capable of responding decisively to conventional, asymmetric, and emerging threats across all domains.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/rajnath-singh-empowers-cds-to-issue-joint-orders-for-all-3-services-125062500090_1.html

