As is well known, Pakistan had been committing violations of the Indo-Pak border throughout the summer months of 1965 and the frequency of these violations had increased further during the first week of August culminating in a large number of armed infiltrators crossing the Ceasefire Line in Kashmir on August 5, 1965. In spite of continued efforts made by India to ensure peace, the situation soon aggravated and the Indian Army had to take preventive measures in Kashmir to plug the entry points of these infiltrators. Since Pakistan was likely to extend the war to the Arabian Sea as well, Karachi being its main naval base, the Indian Navy decided to initiate necessary actions to prepare the fleet for the probable war.

The Indian Navy’s role was the maritime defence of the Western and Eastern Coasts and the island territories. The tasks envisaged were: first, to carry out sweeps off the West Coast of Pakistan to disrupt the Port of Karachi and inflict heavy damage on port installations; next, the destruction of Pakistan Naval Forces if ordered; third, provision of general support for the defence of the major ports on the West Coast; and fourth, the provision of general cover and protection to our merchant ships in the Arabian Sea, especially those plying to and from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

India’s policy, however, was not to escalate the conflict by a direct confrontation at sea. Given the Government’s determination to limit the scope of the conflict as much as possible, the role assigned to the Navy during the war
was mainly a defensive one.

Nevertheless, the Indian Navy remained vigilant to ensure the safety of Indian ports, guard the country’s entire coast line and above all protect India’s shipping from interference by the Pakistan Navy. Whereas most of Pakistani shipping was carried on neutral bottoms, India’s shipping was largely borne by Indian ships – 250 of them were owned by India, while only 30 merchant ships belonged to Pakistan.

Intelligence on the disposition of the Pak naval forces had indicated that the Pak submarine Ghazi was at sea and was likely to have been deployed off Bombay (now Mumbai) for anti-shipping operations and the Pak Fleet had been proceeding to sea every day for exercises and returning to its anchorage in the evening.

The Indian Fleet was led by the Flagship Mysore - a sleek cruiser powered by an 80,000 shaft horse power steam plant with state-of-the-art command and control facilities. Mysore’s nine 6-inch guns, controlled by the latest fire control equipment, could deliver two and a half tonnes of explosives a minute on the target. Mysore also had eight 4-inch guns for surface and anti-aircraft operations and twelve 40 mm Bofors AA guns. In fact her punch and looks were legendary and she was popularly referred to as the ‘Queen of the Orient’.

Flying the flag of Rear Admiral BA Samson, Mysore sailed for offensive patrols on the West Coast, accompanied by Brahmaputra, Beas, Betwa, Khukri, Kirpan, Kuthar, Talwar, Rana, Rajput, Ranjit and Ganga. The Fleet carried out intensive patrols and sweeps in the Arabian Sea, in conjunction with the Navy’s aircraft, throughout the duration of the war. On one occasion, the Navy’s Alize aircraft sighted two Pakistani ships 60 miles off India’s west coast. The Ships of the Indian Fleet at once pursued the enemy, who without giving battle, scurried back to Karachi. In fact, for most of the duration of the war, Pakistani Navy was ensconced in Karachi, seeking safety behind heavy shore defences.

The Indian Navy’s anti-submarine task-force was keeping constant vigil and was particularly searching for the Pakistani submarine Ghazi, which was known to have closed to within 12 miles off Bombay (now Mumbai) harbour. On two occasions, INS Kuthar, Commanded by Commander DS Paintal, detected an
underwater sonar contact of a possible submarine and launched attacks with full salvos from her anti-submarine mortars. The hide and seek went on for five continuous days and Ghazi was kept under continuous pressure by the Indian Navy’s ships and aircraft. Because of this relentless anti-submarine action, Ghazi, which was the only submarine in the entire sub-continent (the Indian Navy only acquired its first submarine in 1967), could not make any impact on the war.

NAVAL AIR OPERATIONS IN THE ARABIAN SEA IN SEPTEMBER 1965

Seahawk aircraft of Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 300, then located at Jamnagar in Gujarat, were placed under the operational control of the Indian Air Force on September 2, 1965 for offensive action against the enemy. All Naval Air Squadrons – INAS 300 (Seahawk fighter squadron), INAS 310 (Alize anti-submarine aircraft squadron), INAS 550 (Seahawk and Alize trainer squadron) and INAS 551 (Kiran jet trainer squadron) were deployed for reconnaissance and anti-shipping roles and for the air defence of Indian seaports.

On the eve of the ceasefire on September 23, 1965, a false statement broadcast by the Pakistan Radio claimed that an Indian frigate, INS Brahmaputra had been sunk in the Arabian Sea, by the Pakistani submarine Ghazi. After the war, the Indian Navy invited the world press and Naval Attachés of all countries accredited to India, to have a cup of tea on board Brahmaputra at the Naval Dockyard, Bombay (now Mumbai), which was hosted by the Fleet Commander, Rear Admiral BA Samson.

In his letter to the Navy, the then Defence Minister Mri YB Chavan expressed the Government’s appreciation for the role played by the Navy during the war as follows:

“I greatly appreciate 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”.
India is now reaching a critical mass where it makes sense to have a strong MRO space not just for the domestic fleet but also for international airlines. You would be glad to learn that India's only International Networking Conference & Exhibition on Aviation Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO), IndiaMRO - Aerospace & Defence, will be held annually to address the needs of the growing Indian MRO industry and give it the necessary fillip. The Government of Karnataka is whole heartedly supporting the event. It is the first Indian State to have a Aerospace Policy 2013 -2035 to enable environment for investing in the Aerospace sector by Indian & International Aerospace Organisations.

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