

Raising Young Platoons: The Jharkhand Experiment 2018



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Central Reserve Police Force has emerged as the premier trouble shooter over the years in curbing raging law and order instances, across the vast dimensions of the nation. It was always a feather in the cap, even since independence, but its omnipresent nature in recent times has made it a force to reckon with. Being the mainstay of the internal security, no other Central Armed Police Force has played its role with such gusto and efficacy while countering the most pre eminent challenge of Red Terror.

Brush with Maoism

A quintessential illustration where CRPF has played defining role in crushing this menace is from the State of Jharkhand. Since its formation in 2000, Jharkhand being one of the leading breeding grounds of violent Maoism and has been a witness to numerous horrifying incidents leading to weapon looting escapades, gruesome killings, IED blasts and rampant levy collection over the years. In initial years, CRPF had a meager presence with just couple of battalions. The bloodshed reached its zenith around 2009 and at this moment in order to liberate the shackles, more CRPF Battalions were deployed in a phased manner. This was also the time when 2 elite CoBRA units made their entry in the State.

Breaking their Backbone

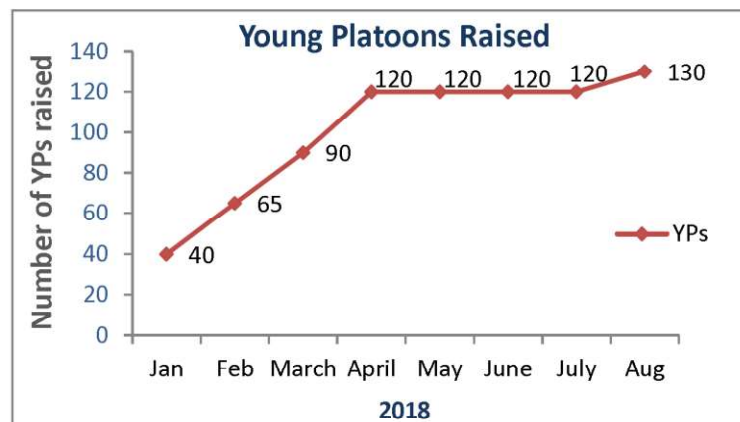
By the end of 2013, State had 20 GD and 02 CoBRA Bns of CRPF. They along with Jharkhand Police took the crisis head on by launching relentless counter offensive operations and were able to tame this wild beast to a great extent in next few years. Maoist related incidents which were at an all time peak of 742 in 2009 were reduced to just 198 in 2017. Maoists strength depleted to smaller groups began changing their modus operandi to be more mobile, targeting police informers and started avoiding direct confrontation with forces and mainly restricted themselves to security voids. Bugged down by constant neutralization, apprehension and surrenders, they were now on absolute back foot. With continuous flow of intelligence generated by synergy of all agencies, conspicuous dent in their morale with many of the cadres deserting the party has been noticed.

Resurrecting Young Platoon Concept

Now the need of the hour was to launch offensive with more prowess, so as to strike the final nail in their coffin. Owing to vast age differences among the personnel in GD units, there were usual constraints in launching swift operations with stealth at a short notice on real time intelligence. With just couple of CoBRA battalions, there was a serious necessity to augment their efforts on the field. A need was perceived to have relatively young troops from the available lot who could be trained and gelled together to be transformed into a special entity with better tactical capabilities. The old concept of *Young Platoons*, eroded over the years, was felt necessary to be rejuvenated.

Marshalling Resources

With 20 GD battalions in the State and 140 Coys at its disposal (including 20 training Coys), the idea was to train at least one platoon per coy, thereby raising 140 Young Platoons spread across the demography, in a time bound manner. Relatively younger personnel, preferably freshly posted were segregated at coy levels. To ensure smooth imparting of training, additional nodes were established at 203 CoBRA HQ, Barhi and 209 CoBRA HQ, Khunti, augmenting the efforts of existing ZTC. Training staff, administrative logistics and other prerequisites were pulled in from the available resources of the Sector. 4 weeks long Curriculum



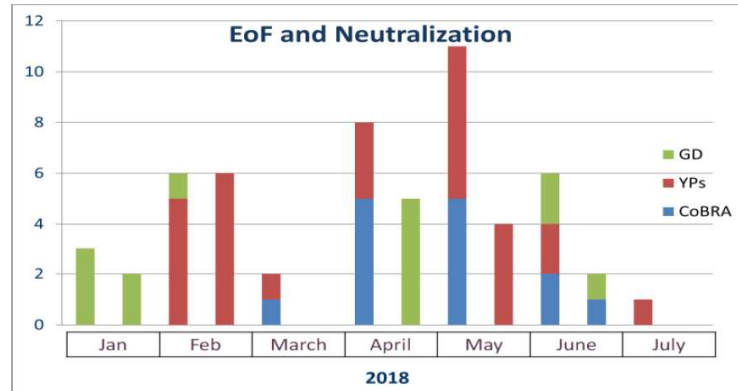
was designed with extensive brainstorming to incorporate contemporary jungle warfare tactics, negating changed modus operandi of Maoists, proficiency in handling of operational gadgets with special emphasis on GPS and Orux, know-how of radio interceptors, improving firing and night navigation capabilities, heli slithering and developing physical endurance of the troops.

For the first batch, 04 Young Platoons at ZTC Musabani and 08 YPs each at 203 HQ & 209 HQ were earmarked to undergo the training of 04 weeks with effect from 8th November 2017. Weekly assessment was conducted and special attention was paid to brush up mediocre performance of the personnel who were lagging behind in events. Polishing individual abilities coupled with nourishing team spirit was the objective of the training. By the conclusion of training on 9th December 2017, welcome transformation was noticed. Be it evolving tactical acumen or developing physical stamina, results were simply astounding. 20 Young Platoons, one each of every battalion, were raised to fight the Maoist challenge. They were reverted back to their respective Coys with direction to carry out pursuit of targets in their AOR. They were also directed to abstain from routine & camp security duties and to focus on active Ops, maintaining compactness & integrity of the platoons to nurture esprit de corps & a sense of camaraderie amongst the troops.

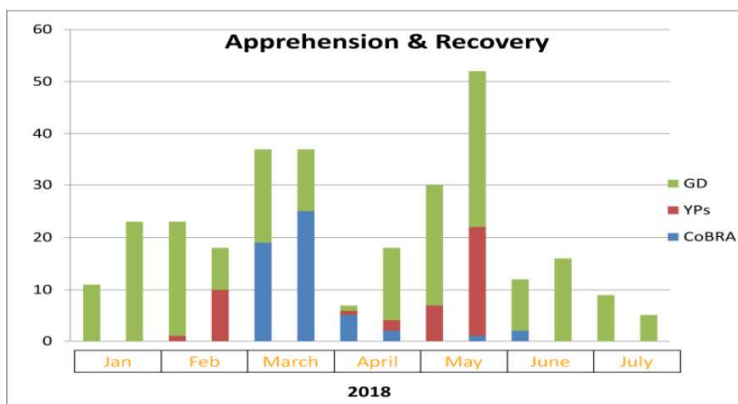
For timely raising of YPs at all 120 Ops Coys, one more training node at GC Ranchi was developed by the end of December 2017. At these 04 training nodes, 06 batches with a total of 130 Platoons (one per coy & 10 training Coys) have been successfully imparted the said training till date. It will be the endeavor of Jharkhand Sector to train remaining 10 YPs in next few days so as to accomplish the target of raising well trained 140 Young Platoons of each of the GD Coys deployed in the state.

Crossing Swords

What was apparent here was that more than the training itself, it was exuberance of the young blood to achieve prowess over the craft which was noteworthy. It was just a matter of time when their professionalism and valor was against a litmus test on the battle field. Reverberations on the front from field were highly promising and fulfilling. One of these newly raised young platoons of 157 Bn had an encounter on 7th Feb 2018 in Khunti district forcing Maoists to run for their lives.



The colossal moment was in store on the very next day itself on 8th Feb 2018. On specific information, Young Platoon of 134 Bn had a run in with Maoists around 1415 Hrs in Palamu district. Maoists were simply outclassed against the superior acumen of our team and had to abandon the ground zero to safeguard themselves. Not pacified by the outcome, troops embarked upon offensive to chase the ultras in the direction of retreat. Within couple of hours, another

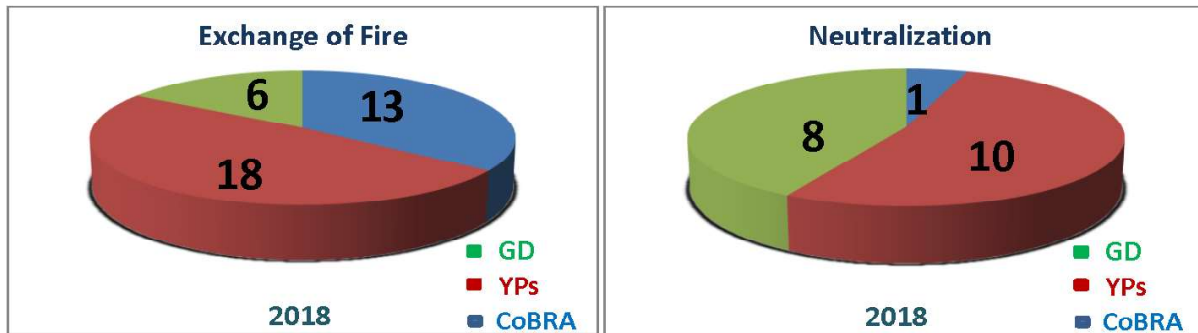


exchange of fire broke out with the same group wherein 02 Maoists got neutralized and an injured female Maoist was apprehended. Mammoth stock of arms and ammunitions were also recovered. This speaks not only volumes about their steel character, but also the grit and perseverance, as they were mentally prepared to accept the challenge of long drawn battle.

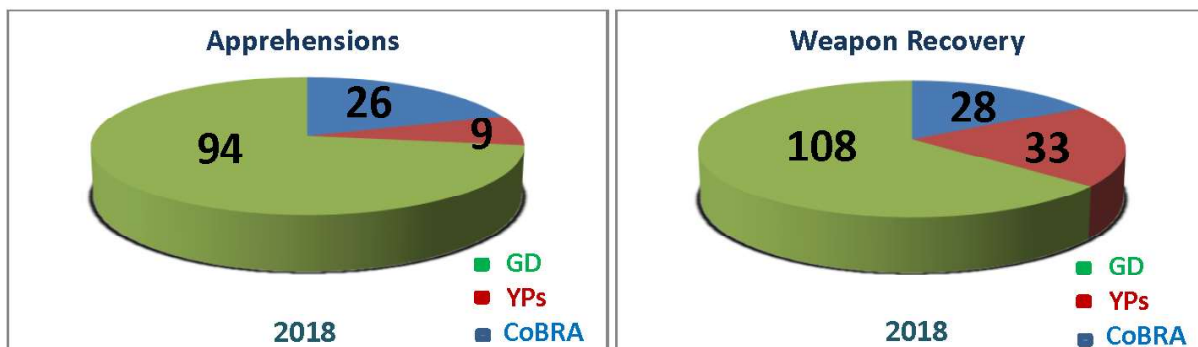
Another opportunity came crashing down on 26th Feb 2018 before another Young Platoon wherein 04 Maoists got neutralized including Sub-Zonal commander Rakesh Bhuiyan while 02 SLRs along with 387 rounds were recovered in Palamu district. Further on 28th May 2018, one more Young Platoon neutralized 03 TPC cadres including Area Commander Amarjeet, apprehended 03 others (including an injured naxal) along with recovery of massive arms and ammunitions.

Striking Resonance

It is worth to mention that of the total 37 exchange of fire which broke out in 2018 with CRPF troops, 18 were established by these newly raised Young Platoons. Out of total 19 Maoists neutralized, 10 were by these YPs, accounting to more than 60% of success rate.



These battles fought by YPs have been characterized by superior IED negotiating skills; better weapon handling traits attained through exhaustive and uncompromising training schedule, but what stood out emphatically in these operations was relatively better fire control & improved fighting ability in times of life and death. These troops have been operating in tandem with Radio Operators which has led to exceptional handling of communication equipments in multiple hands.



Resolute Conjecture

Correspondingly, not only the ops caliber of units has expanded but also ops preparedness as a whole has got strengthened. Feedback received from field formations regarding viability of YPs has been uplifting. The Field commanders have expressed strong conviction on the capabilities of their YPs. The young guns are acting as an ideal catalyst in mitigating Maoist influence in recent times and they do deserve every bit of accolades coming their way. They have a challenge of maintaining peaceful fabric of the State in days to come & we hope that our endeavor of raising Young Platoons at all Coys may lead to better operational Performance of GD Bns in days to come.