

## **Army Aviation Corps**

### **Why in news?**

The Army Aviation Corps (AAC), the youngest Corps of the Indian Army, celebrated its 35th Corps Day on November 1, 2020.

### **How did Army Aviation Corps originate?**

- The origin of the AAC can be traced back to the raising of the Army Aviation wing of the Royal Air Force in India in 1942.
- Its origin is also linked to the subsequent formation of the first Indian Air Observation Post in August 1947.

### **What are Air Observation Post units?**

- The Air Observation Post units primarily acted as artillery spotters.
- These are the elements that help the artillery in directing the fire and also giving air support to ground forces.
- In the wars of 1965 and 1971, the Air Observation Post helicopters played a key role in the battlefields by flying close to the enemy lines and helping ground assets spot targets.

### **When did the Corps raise separately?**

- The Corps was raised as a separate formation on November 1, 1986.
- The AAC now draws its officers and men from all arms of the Army, including a significant number from the artillery.
- Immediately after raising, the units of the Corps were pressed into action in Operation Pawan by the Indian Peacekeeping Forces.
- Ever since, AAC helicopters have been a vital part of fighting formations in all major conflict scenarios and a life-saving asset in peace times.
- Over the years, the Corps has grown by additions of new units, equipment and ground assets.
- Along with this, its roles and capabilities too have grown.
- In 2019, the President's Colours were presented to the Army Aviation Corps in a ceremonial parade.

### **What is the President's Colours?**

- The President's Colours is a ceremonial flag.
- It is awarded to military units or institutions as symbol of their excellence.
- It is awarded to recognize their contributions during war and peace.

### **What is the role of AAC helicopters?**

- Their main roles include reconnaissance, observation, casualty evacuation, essential load drops, combat search and rescue.
- The AAC helicopters also participate in Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in peace times.
- In some scenarios, Army helicopters can also act as Airborne Command Posts, replacing the ground command posts if needed.
- The Indian Army has further sharpened the AAC edge by adding dedicated aviation units along with the various operational Corps and Command formations.

### **What helicopters does ACC operate?**

- The AAC operates Chetak, Cheetah, Lancer, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv, and ALH Weapon System Integrated (WSI) Rudra.
- Acquisition of new helicopters is in the pipeline, in the backdrop of concerns over the fleet of the ageing Cheetah and Chetak helicopters.
- Initially, AAC operated non-weaponised helicopters and attack helicopters were only with the Air Force.
- But post 2012, the government has allowed induction of weaponised choppers in the AAC.

### **What is its role in modern day battlefield?**

- In the modern-day battle formation, elements like infantry, short and long artillery, armoured formations and Army helicopters are closely linked with each other.
- These use information and data points collected from ground and airborne surveillance assets and satellites.
- Helicopters are a key element of this battlefield, which is going to become even more technology-intensive in the future.

### **What is its role in counter insurgency-terrorism ops?**

- These battle machines can perform both observation/recce and attack functions.
- So, they are an ideal choice for Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorism (CI-CT) operations to tackle difficult terrains.
- They are also avoiding ground-based threats like Improvised Explosive

Devices and ambushes.

- Having said this, use of air assets in CI-CT operations is always done with caution because of the possibility of collateral damage.

### **What is needed?**

- With the motto Suveg and Sudridh, the youngest corps of the Indian Army is set to further grow in its tactical importance in the battlefield.
- There is a need for a stronger push of modernisation and enhancement of assault capabilities to take further its role of 'force multiplier.'

**Source: The Indian Express**

