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Yudh Abhyas — Indo US joint exercise

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Exercise Yudh Abhyas 09 is finally over. Its closing ceremony was attended by Indian Army Director General Military Operations, Lieutenant General A.S. Sekhon and US Army Lieutenant General Benjamin R. Mixon. The exercise ended with a happy note, leading to signing of a number of security agreements between the two countries. In fact Yudh Abhyas exercises were mere partnership exercises between armies of India and US, which commenced from 2004. Yudh Abhyas 09, however, attained significance because of the prevailing situation in the neighbourhood including China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran as well as certain expectations from the new partnership between India and US. It was multi-echelon brigade-cum-battalion-level exercise between the two countries. As expected, it was biggest ever exercise between the two countries in which Indian and US troops got a chance to learn more about each other. From Indian side 7th Mechanized Infantry Battalion, ex 94th Armored Brigade, ex 31st Armored Division participated, which beside other equipments, used armored vehicles including the Boyevaya Mashina Pekhoty (BMP), and the T-90, Main Battle Tank (MBT). On the other hand, the US Army troops from 2nd Squadron, ex-14th Cavalry Regiment, ex-2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, ex 25th Infantry Division were using Strykers and Javelin Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) system. This exercise focused on a multi-echelon combined operation in which in general new defined role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operation was practiced. The overall aim of the exercise was to conduct a joint Indo-US training for coordination in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian, disaster managements and relief operations under UN Mandate but the proactive aggressive hostile scenario and the way use of live-fire was carried out which indicated that something else has been exercised. It seemed that the peacekeepers efforts were mere symbolic while whole concentration was made on active attacks and demonstration to sell military armaments to the Indians. The exercise failed to achieve its objectives and could not impress upon its audiences, mainly China, Iran and Pakistan.

Overall the exercise was a success; however, there were some observations. If we compare the blue print of the exercise with on-ground activities, there were some deviations and a lot of observations. Where the Indian and US troops got an opportunity to work in close cooperation and use each other's military equipment, mistrust and miscoordination was noticed at various occasions. US troops made some objectionable remarks during a raid mission in which attempt was made to sneak through Indian security; they found Indian security level very low. Although both, the US Strykers Squadron and Indian mechanized battalion were under overall command of an Indian Brigade headquarters during the exercise but difficulty was faced due to language barrier as US troops were totally blank about Hindi while the Indian troops were not well conversant with English. However, still they managed to communicate some how. The US troops also got first hand opportunity to use Russian made BMPs but due to heavy armour loads on their bodies they could not fit in the vehicles. Where eight to ten Indian troops could easily fit in the back of the BMP, not more than five US troops could fit in the same vehicle. For the first time US command realized that there was problem with the load which average soldier carry during a mission. US soldier's basic body armour alone weighing about 45 pounds, without firearms, ammunition, radio equipment, food, tools and other accessories. On the other hand Indian soldier was quite light and comfortable in carrying out his mission. One of the main purposes of US in bringing high-tech equipment and sophisticated vehicles during the exercise was to market them in India. The US took full benefit of the opportunity to market its defence commodities by making the Indian middle career and high ranking officers to realize the importance of the stuff US troops brought along with them. The Indian authorities were offered sale of Strykers Armoured Vehicles, Javelin ATGM systems, M113 APCs, PVS-14s (advance version of night vision monocular) and other stuff including avionics. During the exercise, the intelligence inputs provided by US to the Indian authorities, against adversaries including China, Pakistan and Taliban elements in Afghanistan bear significance. Due to these threats highlighted by US, India was pressurized to conclude certain agreements at the end of the exercise. US attempts to sell Indian Army light tanks for high altitude has been successful as New Delhi has shown interest in the same. US intelligence has realized India that it would need at least 250 light weight tanks which could be put up on high altitude at the disposal of Indian 3 Infantry Division, Karu to counter Chinese threat. It seems that US is also successful to sell portable ATGM Javelin missiles. Indian 3 Infantry Division which is mainly deployed against China overlooks China and is in desperate need of light armoured vehicles which can be airlifted in the IL-76 aircraft held by Indian Air Force. India has plans to deploy these vehicles ahead of Zoji-La, Chumar area of Chushul. India is celebrating its collaboration and cooperation with US and feels elevated in dreaming to become a regional superpower, bypassing countries like China and Australia. India has right to choose new partners and reject the old friends like erstwhile Soviet Union but one thing India should never forget that US betrayed Pakistan in the past despite agreements of SEATO and CENTO with Washington. Pakistan did not get any help from US during 1965, 1971 wars and Kargil skirmishes. Later, US stopped spares of various high-tech equipments and also stopped the spares of F-16 Fighter aircraft during escalation with its immediate neighbour in 2002. India would be living in fool's paradise to expect a different treatment from US. India is being used as to counter the threat of growing Chinese influence and to neutralize Islamic growth in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asian Republic, Middle East and Africa. India believes that by winning US to its side it would be able overpower Pakistan's Army and blind Pakistan Air Force (PAF). At least this is what US told Indians during latest Indo-US joint air exercise codenamed 'Cope India-09'. The on-ground facts, however, are leading to an opposite direction. To quote an example the Indo-US deal for eight Boeing P-8I long-

range Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti-Submarine Warfare (LRMRASW) aircrafts has already been struck early this year but what India is not realizing at this moment is that during the hour of need these aircraft would not work at all and each time the smart transmitters would share all data with the Washington without the knowledge of authorities at New Delhi. US has cleverly included the end user monitoring (EUM) clauses in all the agreements. This is not the case with mere recent deal but stands good for other Indo-US contracts signed during last few years. As an illustration Section 6.1 under Article 28 of the contract between the two Indian and US governments, the US will not be liable for any penalties in the event that any Malicious Code is detected in the software that governs the P-8I's sensors and systems. In other words all equipments are likely to be having hidden gadgets and encrypted software and in case of even detections there will be no penalties for US. One wonders that how India claims that to have edge over Pakistan, China and other adversaries. Even today it is not late; we should look for the partners within our region and preferably in our neighbourhood. No one has ever been benefited from the West as those who believe that in international politics there are no friends and foes while things govern on vested interests, can never be long time friends and partners.