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Spectrum, Telecommunication Network for Spectrum, and Defence Communication Network of the Indian Armed Forces

Air Marshal (Dr) Rajeev Sachdeva, AVSM (Retd)

Introduction

Think of the radio spectrum as an invisible highway surrounding us, where different lanes represent various frequencies. These lanes are used by wireless communications like mobile phones, Wi-Fi, and TV broadcasts to send and receive information. As a natural resource, like air or water, the spectrum supports everything from routine phone calls to critical emergency services and military operations. The radio spectrum is crucial for modern telecommunications but is a finite resource that requires careful management to prevent interference and ensure efficient use. Regulatory bodies, such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), oversee this 'Invisible Highway' to maintain fairness and order in its usage. As technology advances, the demand for smarter and more efficient use of the spectrum grows, shaping developments like 5G and satellite communications. This spectrum forms the backbone of our interconnected world, driving global communication and fostering technological innovation across industries.

Radio Spectrum[1]

Imagine the radio spectrum as an invisible highway in the air all around us. This highway is divided into many lanes, and each lane is a different frequency. Just like different types of vehicles use different lanes on a real highway, different types of wireless communications use different frequencies on this invisible highway.

It is a natural resource, like air or water but one cannot see it, it ranges from very low frequencies to very high frequencies and different parts of this spectrum are suitable for different uses.

Mobile phones use specific lanes (frequencies) on this invisible highway to send and receive calls, texts, and data. Wi-Fi or the home internet router uses another set of lanes to connect your devices wirelessly. TV and Radio broadcast stations use other parts of this spectrum to send their signals to your devices. Even communications with satellites use certain frequencies in this spectrum. Military, emergency services with police, fire departments, and ambulances have their own reserved lanes for critical communications.

Spectrum and Telecommunications[2]

The spectrum is the medium through which all wireless communication travels. Different services require different amounts of this spectrum (wider or narrower lanes). There is a limited amount of usable spectrum, so it needs to be carefully managed and allocated. As technology advances (like from 3G to 4G to 5G), it often requires new or different parts of the spectrum.

In essence, the radio spectrum is the foundation of all modern wireless telecommunications. It is what allows us to communicate wirelessly across the globe, from simple radio broadcasts to complex internet data transfers on smartphones.

Just like traffic laws govern real highways, governments and international bodies regulate this invisible spectrum highway to prevent interference and ensure fair and optimal use.

International Telecommunication Union[3]

The ITU is a specialised agency of the United Nations, with 193 member countries, responsible for issues that concern information and communication technologies. Established in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union, it is the oldest existing international organisation. It plays a critical role in the global management of the radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbits, developing technical standards, and striving to improve telecommunications infrastructure in the developing world. Its influence is particularly notable in the realm of mobile telecommunications, a sector that has experienced rapid growth and technological advancement.

International Telecommunication Union is a specialised agency of the United Nations, with 193 member countries, responsible for issues that concern information and communication technologies.

This union allocates the International Radio Frequency (RF) Spectrum, registers frequency assignments and coordinates the resolution of interference. Upon ratification by member nations, the ITU regulations have treaty status. Each ITU member nation imposes regulatory measures within its jurisdiction. These measures must comply with the current Radio Regulations (RR), unless expressly excluded by either footnotes or by special arrangements.

The ITU, specifically its Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R), plays a crucial role in global spectrum management and wireless communications. Here is an overview of the ITU-R's role:

- **Global Spectrum Coordination**.[4] ITU-R manages the international RR is the international treaty governing the use of radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbits.
- **Frequency Allocation**. It allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, aiming to prevent interference between radio stations of different countries.
- **Standards Development**. ITU-R develops and maintains international standards (recommendations) for radiocommunication systems.
- **Technology Advancement**. It fosters the development of new wireless technologies and services.
- **World Radiocommunication Conferences**.[5] ITU-R organises these conferences every three-four years to review and revise RR and international frequency allocations.
- **Study Groups**. It conducts studies on technical, operational, and regulatory issues through various study groups.
- **Developing Countries Assistance**. ITU-R provides special assistance to developing countries in spectrum management and wireless technology adoption.
- **Interference Resolution**. It helps in resolving cases of international radio interference.

- **Database Maintenance**. ITU-R maintains the Master International Frequency Register, which records all frequency assignments made by different countries.
- **Information Dissemination**. It publishes regulations, recommendations, and reports on radiocommunication matters.

Wireless Planning and Coordination Wing (WPC), Government of India[6]

The WPC is a wing of Department of Telecommunications (DoT) which comes under the Ministry of Communications of the Government of India headed by the Wireless Advisor (WA) of India.[7] The department is responsible for issuing amateur radio licenses, allotting the frequency spectrum and monitoring the frequency spectrum. The WPC is headquartered in New Delhi and has regional branches in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Guwahati.

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Wireless Planning & Coordination (WPC)
Government of India

The Wireless Planning and Coordination is a wing of Department of Telecommunications which comes under the Ministry of Communications of the Government of India headed by the Wireless Advisor of India.

The WPC is divided into major sections: Licencing and Regulation, New Technology Group and Standing Advisory Committee on Radio Frequency Allocation (SACFA).

Standing Advisory Committee on Radio Frequency Allocation[8]

SACFA makes recommendations on major frequency allocation issues, formulation of the frequency allocation plan, making recommendations on the various issues related to ITU, to sort out problems referred to the committee by various wireless users, siting clearance of all wireless installations in the country.

SACFA also plays a crucial role in managing Radio Frequency Spectrum (RFS) in India and is responsible for making recommendations on major frequency allocation issues, wireless installations and other related matters. It is an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Secretary, DoT. It includes members from various ministries and departments like Defence, Home Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, Space and others who use spectrum.

The committee advises on the allocation of frequencies to various services and users in India and ensures optimal utilisation of the RFS. All site clearances for wireless installations, including mobile towers and broadcast transmitters are given by SACFA, checking on factors like aviation safety, RF interference and national security aspects.

It coordinates between different agencies and ministries on spectrum-related matters and helps resolve conflicts in frequency usage between different sectors. All policy recommendations are given for formulating national policies on spectrum management. The body also evaluates technical aspects of wireless deployments to prevent harmful interference.

SACFA assesses the impact of new technologies on existing spectrum usage and ensures that frequency allocations and wireless installations comply with national and international regulations.

It is also mandated to consider national security implications in frequency allocation decisions, therefore, coordinates with defence and security agencies on spectrum-related matters. It also provides inputs on India's stance in international forums like the ITU.

The committee's role is critical in ensuring efficient use of the RFS, which is a valuable and limited national resource. Its decisions impact various sectors including telecommunications, broadcasting, aviation, space, and defence.

Wireless Advisor to Government of India[9]

The WA of India heads the WPC and offers expertise in wireless technologies, such as cellular networks (4G, 5G), Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and emerging wireless technologies. For a WA in India, understanding the ITU-R's role is crucial as it influences national spectrum policies and international coordination efforts.

The Wireless Advisor of India heads the Wireless Planning and Coordination and offers expertise in wireless technologies, such as cellular networks (4G, 5G), Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and emerging wireless technologies.

The Advisor assists telecommunication companies and organisations in designing and optimising wireless networks for better coverage and performance.

He also provides guidance on Indian telecom regulations, spectrum allocation and ensuring adherence to government policies. He also assesses new wireless technologies and their potential applications in the Indian market. The selection of equipment vendors and negotiation of contracts for wireless infrastructure also fall under his responsibility. He troubleshoots, diagnoses, and resolves complex wireless network issues and also offers guidance on best practices for wireless network security and threat mitigation.

Providing rural connectivity solutions to extend wireless coverage to remote and rural areas, in line with India's digital inclusion initiatives, is also part of his responsibility. He offers expertise on wireless solutions for Internet of Things (IoT) deployments and smart city initiatives.

In all these areas he conducts workshops and training sessions to build wireless technology capabilities within organisations.

Spectrum allocation is indeed an important part of WA's role in India and he would be involved in spectrum allocation:

- **Understanding the Regulatory Framework**. The WA needs to be well-versed in India's spectrum allocation policies, which are primarily governed by the DoT and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.
- **Spectrum Analysis**. Available spectrum bands, along with their characteristics and potential uses for different wireless technologies, would be analysed by the WA.
- **Advising on Auctions**. When the government conducts spectrum auctions, the WA would provide guidance on which bands to bid for, based on an organisation's needs and financial capabilities.
- **Efficient Utilisation**. Once spectrum is allocated, the WA would advise on how to use it efficiently, including network design and technology choices.
- **Compliance Monitoring**. Ensuring that spectrum usage complies with regulatory requirements and licensing conditions.
- **Reframing Strategies**. Advising on strategies for reframing spectrum (repurposing it for new technologies) as older technologies are phased out.
- **Sharing and Trading**. Providing guidance on spectrum sharing and trading opportunities within the regulatory framework.
- **International Coordination**. Advising on cross-border spectrum coordination, particularly for operators in border areas.
- **Future Planning** Analysing trends and advising on future spectrum needs for emerging technologies, such as 5G and beyond.

- **Policy Advocacy**. Representing organisations in discussions with regulators on spectrum-related policies and allocation strategies.

National Frequency Allocation Plan (NFAP)[10]

The Indian NFAP is a key central policy roadmap document that outlines the allocation, utilisation of the radio-frequency spectrum and defines future spectrum usage by all bodies in India. Managed by WPC Wing of the Ministry of Communications, the NFAP is essential for the orderly development and management of wireless communications, including mobile telecommunications. The plan is designed to align with international regulations and standards set by the ITU while addressing the specific needs of the Indian telecommunications sector.

The NFAP is updated periodically to reflect changes in technology, demand, and international agreements. The latest version, NFAP-2022, provides a comprehensive framework for the allocation and use of the radio-frequency spectrum for various services, including mobile, broadcasting, satellite and defence. NFAP of the Govt of India specifies as to which set of frequencies will be used for which service. These frequencies are termed as 'Spectrum' and are a collection of various types of Electro Magnetic radiations of different wavelengths. NFAP covers frequency range from 9 kilo hertz to 3000 giga hertz being used for different types of services like fixed communication, mobile communication, broadcasting, radio navigation, radiolocation, fixed and mobile satellite service, aeronautical satellite service, radio navigational satellite service etc.

The Indian National Frequency Allocation Plan is a key central policy roadmap document that outlines the allocation, utilisation of the radio-frequency spectrum and defines future spectrum usage by all bodies in India.

The RFS transcends boundaries such as the International Border, Line of Actual Control, or Line of Control and is susceptible to overlapping interference. Unlike finite resources, RFS does not get consumed once used, but if not optimally and efficiently managed, it can be wasted. As a shared resource, it must be allocated and utilised effectively among various operators to avoid interference and ensure maximum efficiency.

Key Features of National Frequency Allocation Plan

- **Spectrum Allocation**. The NFAP delineates frequency bands for different services to prevent interference and ensure efficient spectrum use. It identifies bands for exclusive and shared use across various sectors. For mobile telecommunications, specific frequency bands are allocated for technologies such as GSM, CDMA, LTE, and 5G.

- **Alignment with International Standards**. It is aligned with ITU regulations and recommendations to ensure that India's spectrum management is consistent with global practices. This alignment facilitates international cooperation and ensures the compatibility of Indian telecom systems with global standards, promoting seamless international communication and roaming services.

Flexibility and Future Readiness. The NFAP incorporates provisions for emerging technologies and services, ensuring flexibility to adapt to future needs. This includes provisions for the introduction of new technologies such as 5G and potential future developments, such as 6G and the IoTs.

Impact on Mobile Telecommunications. It has a significant impact on the mobile telecommunications landscape in India. By ensuring the availability of spectrum and preventing interference, the plan supports the deployment and expansion of mobile networks. This has facilitated the widespread adoption of mobile services, contributing to India's status as one of the largest mobile markets globally.

Challenges and Future Directions. Despite the NFAP's comprehensive nature, several challenges remain:

- **Spectrum Scarcity**. The increasing demand for mobile broadband and new services like IoT and machine-to-machine communications is putting pressure on the available spectrum. The NFAP must continuously adapt to allocate spectrum efficiently and meet the growing demand.

- **Interference Management**. As more services share the spectrum, managing interference becomes increasingly complex. Effective regulatory measures and technological solutions are needed to minimise interference and ensure the quality of service.

- **Technological Advancements**. The rapid pace of technological change requires the NFAP to be forward-looking and adaptable. The plan must accommodate new technologies and services while ensuring the efficient use of the spectrum.

The Indian NFAP is a cornerstone of the country's telecommunications infrastructure, providing a structured framework for the allocation and use of the RFS. Its alignment with international standards and adaptability to future technologies ensures that India remains at the forefront of mobile telecommunications. As the demand for mobile services continues to grow, the NFAP will play a crucial role in shaping the future of mobile telecommunications in India, supporting economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.

The Indian National Frequency Allocation Plan is a cornerstone of the country's telecommunications infrastructure, providing a structured framework for the allocation and use of the Radio Frequency Spectrum.

Essentials of a Highspeed Networks for Military[11]

High-speed networks are crucial for modern battle management for several key reasons[12]:

- **Real-Time Situational Awareness**. Rapid sharing of battlefield intelligence, including enemy positions, troop movements, and terrain information, is enabled with high-speed networks. This capability allows commanders to make informed decisions based on up-to-date information.

- **Faster Decision-Making**. It reduces the time between observation, orientation, decision and action (loop) and enables forces to outpace the enemy's decision-making process.

- **Improved Coordination**. Seamless communication between different units and branches of the military is facilitated, enhancing joint operations and combined arms tactics.

- **Data-intensive Applications**. It is necessary to support high-bandwidth applications like live video feeds from drones or satellites and enabling transmission of high-resolution maps, imagery and sensor data.

- **Network-centric Warfare**. Integration of sensors, decision-makers, and weapon systems is allowed, facilitating a more efficient use of military assets.

- **Remote Operations**. It supports unmanned systems and remote-controlled vehicles, enabling real-time control and data retrieval from these platforms.

- **Precision Targeting**. Rapid transmission of target data to weapon systems is facilitated, improving the accuracy and timeliness of strikes.

- **Adaptability to Changing Conditions**. It allows for quick dissemination of new orders or tactical changes and enables forces to respond rapidly to evolving threats or opportunities.

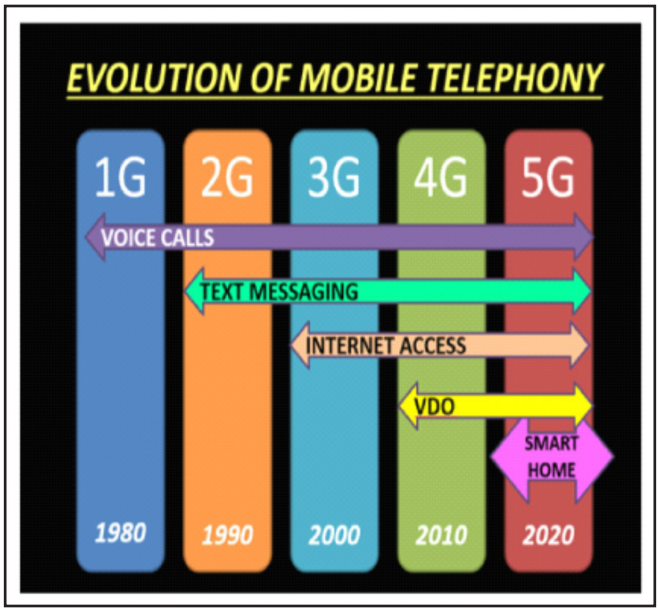
- **Medical Support**. Telemedicine and rapid coordination of medical evacuations are enabled, improving survival rates for injured personnel.

- **Logistics Management**. It facilitates real-time tracking of supplies and equipment and enables more efficient resource allocation and resupply operations.

High-speed Networks essentially serve as the nervous system of modern military operations, enabling forces to act as a cohesive, responsive entity rather than isolated units. This significantly enhances overall combat effectiveness and operational flexibility.

Evolution and Growth of Mobile Telephony

The mobile telephony sector has seen a technological change every decade.[13] With each new invention of this small hand-held device, spectrum was required.



Most of the spectrum for centuries has been used and consumed only by the Armed Forces. NFAP of 1982, promulgated by the Government of India, designated the Indian Armed Forces as the major user for most of the bands and spectrum.

The radio-frequency spectrum is a limited resource used for various communication services, including mobile telephony, broadcasting, and defence communications. In India, the rapid growth of the mobile telecommunications sector has led to an increasing demand for spectrum to support new technologies resulted in an increasing demand for surrender.

Economically, 5G promises a USD 1.0 tn contribution out of the USD 5.0 tn vision and also aims for a USD 100.0 bn foreign direct investment, contributing 3 to 4 per cent of the total goods and services tax.

Growth Necessitating Surrender

If we put the 5G capability on a scale of 100 (depicted in red), then the 4G capability falls back to a very low level as marked in Blue.

5G fuels artificial intelligence, social, health, agriculture, education, smart cities, smart energy, smart warehousing, smart farming, smart manufacturing, transport networks, augmented reality, cloud computing, big data analytics, drone patrolling, surveillance, road safety, holography, remote robotic healthcare, humanitarian assistance disaster relief (example of Odisha), indigenous test beds, and machine vision.

Economically, 5G promises a USD1.0 tn contribution out of the USD 5.0 tn vision and also aims for a USD 100.0 bn foreign direct investment, contributing 3 to 4 per cent of the total goods and services tax. It is expected to create 2.2 million direct jobs and 1.8 million indirect jobs. India's mobile sector has been growing at a very fast pace, with mobile internet subscribers increasing by 400 per cent in the last decade, and the entire ecosystem accounting for nearly 5 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, with a data consumption of 24.1 GigaBytes (GB) per capita per month in 2023, reflecting a 5.0 GB rise year on year.[14]

Necessity for the economic and technological growth for a nation has led to the need for a surrender of the Defence Band by the Armed Forces for the tele and mobile communication networks.

Mobile Telephony and the Indian Armed Forces[15]

When mobile telephony started growing in India, the requirement for spectrum to support the communication networks arose, and most of that specific spectrum was being used by the legacy systems of the Indian Armed Forces for national security.

The decision-makers were in a dilemma because the mobile telephony growth was necessary for the developing nation, and it was possible only by infringing upon the systems used by the Armed Forces for national security.

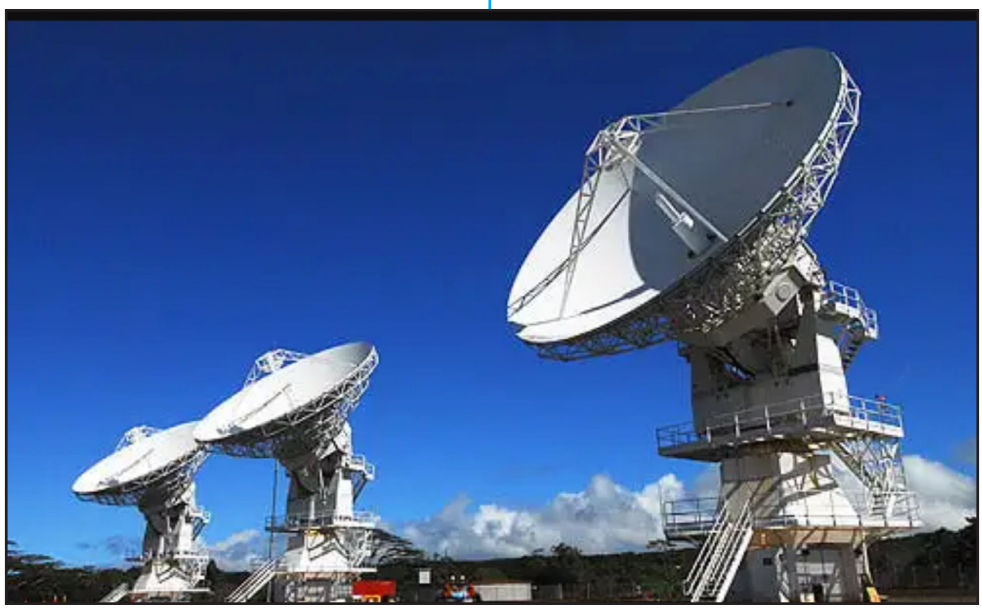
The solution came about by promising a new modern network to the Armed Forces in exchange for the spectrum which they were to release for the growth of Mobile Telephony in India. Thus, the name: 'Network for Spectrum' (NFS).

Network for Spectrum Project[16]

The NFS project is a significant initiative by the Indian government to modernise and optimise the communication infrastructure of the Indian Armed Forces. The project involved the release of spectrum by the defence sector to the DoT in exchange for the development of an exclusive, modern and secure communication network for the Armed Forces. This initiative has had a profound impact on mobile telephony in India, freeing up valuable spectrum for commercial use while ensuring the defence sector's communication needs are met.

Spectrum Allocation and Demand

Historically, significant portions of the spectrum were allocated to defence services, limiting the availability of spectrum for commercial mobile services, which were yet to innovate. This led to a need for a strategic reallocation of spectrum to balance the requirements of both defence and commercial sectors.



Objectives

The NFS project was conceived with two main objectives[17]:

- **Enhance Defence Communication.** To build a dedicated, secure and high-capacity communication network for the Indian Armed Forces, ensuring reliable and advanced communication capabilities.
- **Release Spectrum for Commercial Use.** To free up spectrum held by the defence sector for commercial mobile telephony, thus facilitating the expansion and enhancement of mobile services in India.

The Network for Spectrum project has four distinct components: firstly, establishment of an exclusive Optical Fibre Cable network owned and managed by the Indian Armed Forces.

Implementation

The NFS project[18] has four distinct components: firstly, establishment of an exclusive Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) network owned and managed by the Indian Armed Forces. This network spans approximately 60,000 kilometres across the country and connects various military installations and establishments. The second component is an exclusive access system for Indian Air Force, with all the hardware and the software, which is known as Air Force Net and is functioning for a decade and a half. The third and the fourth components is that of a similar and exclusive access systems with hardware and software for the Indian Navy and the Indian Army respectively. The project is implemented by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited and is fully funded by the DoT, which could recover this cost through the auction of the spectrum so released by the Armed Forces for mobile telephony.

The project is executed in multiple phases, with each phase covering different regions and segments of the network. The NFS network is designed to provide high-speed, secure and reliable communication services, supporting the operational and strategic needs of the defence forces.

Impact of Spectrum Release on Mobile Telephony[19]

Spectrum Release. As part of the NFS project, the defence sector agreed to release over 150 Mega Hertz (MHz) of spectrum, out of a possible 300 MHz in the 1700-2000 MHz band, for commercial use. This spectrum, originally known as the 'Defence Band', was identified for reallocation to support the growing needs of the mobile telecommunication sector.

Enhancing Mobile Services. The release of spectrum by the defence sector has had a significant positive impact on mobile telephony in India. The additional spectrum has enabled telecom operators to expand their network capacity, improve service quality and support the deployment of advanced technologies in mobile telephony.

Auction and Allocation. The released spectrum was auctioned by the DoT, generating substantial revenue for the government. Telecom operators that acquired the spectrum were able to enhance their service offerings, providing faster data speeds, better coverage and improved overall user experience.

As the telecommunications landscape evolves, there is a continuous need for the technological upgradation of the Network for Spectrum network to keep pace with advancements in communication technologies.

Challenges and Future Direction[20]

Implementation Delays. The NFS project has faced several challenges, including delays in implementation due to technical complexities, logistical issues, and coordination among various stakeholders. These delays have impacted the timeline for the release of spectrum and the development of the Defence Communication Network (DCN).

Technological Upgradation. As the telecommunications landscape evolves, there is a continuous need for the technological upgradation of the NFS network to keep pace with advancements in communication technologies. Ensuring the network remains secure, reliable and capable of supporting future defence communication requirements is a critical challenge.

Impact on Defence and Commercial Communications. The NFS project is a landmark initiative that addresses the dual needs of enhancing defence communication capabilities and supporting the growth of mobile telephony in India. By creating a dedicated communication network for the Indian Armed Forces and releasing valuable spectrum for commercial use, the project has contributed to the modernisation of both defence and commercial communication infrastructure and has significantly contributed to the growing economy.

Advancements in Mobile Services and Defence Communications. The successful implementation of the NFS project has paved the way for the expansion and enhancement of mobile services in India, benefiting millions of users and driving economic growth and upgrading defence communications to the latest standards. As the project progresses and technological advancements continue, the NFS initiative will play a crucial role in shaping the future of telecommunications in India, ensuring that both defence and commercial sectors can thrive in an increasingly connected world.

Is Defence Communication Network the Same as NFS?

NFS, as mentioned above, is the Network which will have four components; the 60,000 km long OFC owned and managed by the Armed Forces and Communication systems of the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force respectively. These communication systems would operate over the NFS OFC.

The DCN of the Indian Armed Forces is a strategic, secure communication system designed to enhance the operational capabilities of India's military. It provides seamless communication between all branches of the Indian Armed Forces and enables secure and real-time information sharing for command and control. It has a nationwide, high-speed, digital communication network and utilises fibre optic cables as its primary medium. It is a pan-India network connecting all major military installations, including difficult terrains and remote border areas.

Defence Communication Network[21]

The DCN is a pivotal infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing the strategic communication capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces. Launched in Jul 2016, the DCN provides a robust, secure, and integrated communication system to support the operational requirements of the Indian Armed Forces. The network is a critical component of India's defence strategy, enabling real-time information sharing and coordination across various military branches and locations.

Objectives of the Defence Communication Network

The primary objectives of the DCN are:

- **Secure Strategic Communication**. To provide a highly secure communication platform that safeguards sensitive military information from cyber threats and unauthorised access.
- **Integrated Operations**. To facilitate seamless communication and coordination among the Army, Navy, and Air Force, enhancing joint operations and interoperability.
- **Real-time Information Sharing**. To enable real-time data transmission and sharing, improving situational awareness and decision-making capabilities.
- **Reliability and Redundancy**. To ensure reliable and continuous communication, even in adverse conditions, through redundant and resilient network infrastructure.

The Defence Communication Network is a pivotal infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing the strategic communication capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces. Launched in Jul 2016, the Defence Communication Network provides a robust, secure, and integrated communication system to support the operational requirements of the Indian Armed Forces.

Features of the Defence Communication Network Security

The DCN incorporates advanced security features to protect against cyber threats and ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of military communications. These features include:

- **Encryption.** All data transmitted over the DCN is encrypted to prevent interception and unauthorised access.
- **Access Control.** Strict access control mechanisms are in place to ensure that only authorised personnel can access the network and its resources.
- **Intrusion Detection and Prevention.** The network is equipped with intrusion detection and prevention systems to monitor and respond to potential cyber threats in real-time.

Integration and Interoperability

The DCN is designed to integrate communication systems across the three branches of the Armed Forces. This integration facilitates interoperability, enabling joint operations and coordinated responses to various scenarios. Key aspects of integration include:

- **Unified Communication Platform.** The DCN provides a unified communication platform that supports voice, video, and data transmission.

- **Interoperable Systems**. The network ensures that communication systems from different branches can interoperate seamlessly, allowing for efficient information exchange and collaboration.

- **Real-time Data Transmission**. The DCN supports high-speed, real-time data transmission, which is crucial for modern military operations. Features supporting real-time data transmission include:

- **High Bandwidth.** The network provides high bandwidth to accommodate large volumes of data, including multimedia content.

The Defence Communication Network is designed to integrate communication systems across the three branches of the Armed Forces. This integration facilitates interoperability, enabling joint operations and coordinated responses to various scenarios.

- **Low Latency.** The DCN is designed to minimise latency, ensuring timely delivery of information and reducing delays in decision-making.

- **Reliability and Redundancy**. To ensure continuous and reliable communication, the DCN incorporates redundant network paths and resilient infrastructure. Features enhancing reliability and redundancy include:

- **Redundant Links.** Multiple communication links are established to provide backup in case of a failure in the primary link.

- **Resilient Infrastructure**. The network infrastructure is designed to withstand physical and cyber threats, ensuring uninterrupted communication.

Impact on the Armed Forces

Enhanced Operational Efficiency.

- The DCN significantly enhances the operational efficiency of the Indian Armed Forces by providing a secure, integrated, and reliable communication platform. This improvement in communication capabilities allows for more effective coordination and execution of military operations.

- The DCN represents a significant leap forward in the communication capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces. By providing a secure, integrated, and reliable communication platform, the DCN enhances operational efficiency, improves decision-making, and strengthens cyber defence. As the network continues to evolve and adapt to new technological and security challenges, it will play a crucial role in supporting the defence strategy and operational readiness of the Indian Armed Forces.

- **Improved Decision-making**. The ability to share real-time information across different branches of the armed forces improves situational awareness and supports better decision-making. Commanders can access up-to-date information, assess situations accurately, and make informed decisions swiftly.

- **Strengthened Cyber Defence**. The advanced security features of the DCN strengthen the cyber defence capabilities of the armed forces. By protecting sensitive information and communication channels, the network helps mitigate the risk of cyber-attacks and ensures the integrity of military operations.

Challenges and Future Directions

Technological Advancements. As technology evolves, the DCN must continuously upgrade to incorporate new advancements and maintain its effectiveness. Ensuring compatibility with emerging technologies and integrating new capabilities will be essential for the network's continued success.

Cybersecurity Threats. The dynamic nature of cybersecurity threats requires ongoing vigilance and adaptation. The DCN must continually enhance its security measures to address evolving cyber threats and protect against potential breaches.

Infrastructure Development. Expanding and maintaining the network infrastructure, especially in remote and challenging environments, poses logistical and technical challenges. Ongoing efforts are needed to ensure comprehensive coverage and reliability across all regions.

DCN and a Tactical Battle Space Network

Network Architecture.

- **DCN**. Typically, a Wide-Area Network (WAN) designed for strategic communications.
- **Tactical Battle Space**: A more localised, mobile network optimised for combat operations.

Expanding and maintaining the network infrastructure, especially in remote and challenging environments, poses logistical and technical challenges.

Bandwidth and Capacity.

- **DCN**. Often has higher bandwidth due to fixed infrastructure.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. May have limited bandwidth due to mobile nature and reliance on wireless links.

Security Levels.

- **DCN.** May operate at multiple security levels, including top-secret.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. Often operates at secret or below due to operational constraints.

Latency.

- **DCN**. Can have lower latency due to robust infrastructure.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. May experience higher latency due to mobile nodes and environmental factors.

Reliability.

- **DCN**. Generally, more reliable due to redundant fixed infrastructure.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. Subject to environmental factors, jamming, and physical threats.

Interoperability.

- Protocols and standards may differ between strategic and tactical systems.
- Data formats and encryption methods might not be fully compatible.

Mobility.

- **DCN**. Largely static infrastructure.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. Highly mobile, requiring frequent network reconfiguration.

Quality of Service (QoS).

- DCN: Can often guarantee QoS.
- Tactical Battle Space: QoS can be variable and situation-dependent.

Network Management.

- DCN: Centralised management is more feasible.
- Tactical Battle Space: Requires distributed, often automated management.

Information Flow.

- Bridging information between strategic and tactical levels can be challenging.
- Different classification levels may impede smooth information transfer.

Technology Refresh Cycles.

- **DCN**. Longer upgrade cycles.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. More frequent updates to meet evolving battlefield needs.

Environmental Factors.

- **DCN**. Less affected by immediate environmental conditions.
- **Tactical Battle Space**. Highly influenced by terrain, weather, and enemy actions.

Bridging these disconnects often requires specialised gateway systems, careful network planning, and standardised protocols to ensure seamless information flow between strategic and tactical levels.

The Defence Communication Network represents a significant leap in India's military communication infrastructure, providing a robust, secure, and efficient backbone for information exchange across the armed forces.

The DCN represents a significant leap in India's military communication infrastructure, providing a robust, secure, and efficient backbone for information exchange across the armed forces. It is a critical component of India's efforts to modernise its military and enhance its strategic communication capabilities, alongside the DCN, which is a strategic communication system linking the three Armed Forces at the strategic level.

Conclusion

The RFS is a finite, global natural resource that has the potential to provide significant economic, social and cultural benefits. All countries, under the ITU convention, have equal and unfettered sovereign right of access to the RFS. Assignment of frequencies is governed by an international treaty formulated under the aegis of the ITU, which is signed and ratified by Government of India. In accordance with the international treaty, the ITU allocates frequencies to different radio services at World Radio Conferences. Allocations are made on a regional basis and for different types of services. It is mandatory for all administrations to adhere to these allocations.

For the purpose of spectrum allocation, each member country submits its proposals to the ITU, based on their requirements and priorities for the opening of the bands. During the conference, all the proposals are discussed and decisions are taken for opening of the bands for new services or extension of the existing bands. These decisions are reflected in the International Frequency Allocation Table of radio regulation and other regulatory provisions for use of bands, which forms the basis for further assignment/ allotment by the respective member countries.

In the national context, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 and rules and procedures made there under provide the legal basis for spectrum management. The WPC under DoT in Ministry of Communication and Information Technology is responsible for frequency spectrum management and caters to the needs of all wireless users (government and private) in the country.

The NFAP forms the basis for development and manufacture of wireless equipment and spectrum utilisation in the country. It contains the service options in various frequency bands for the country and also provides the channelling plan in different bands. The NFAP was first established in 1981 as a classified document, based on the recommendations of the ITU. These plans do not confer any ownership rights to any user of the spectrum, but are meant for development and planning purposes by the industry and users.

The NFS[22] project is a landmark initiative that addresses the dual needs of enhancing defence communication capabilities and supporting the growth of mobile telephony in India. By creating a dedicated communication network for the Indian Armed Forces and releasing valuable spectrum for commercial use, the project has contributed to the modernisation of both defence and commercial communication infrastructure and has significantly contributed towards the growing Indian economy.

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About the Author

Air Marshal (Dr) Rajeev Sachdeva, AVSM (Retd) was Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Informationand Communications Technology) at Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) and was a member in attendance at the Empowered Group of Ministers Meeting of Mar 2012, where the Network For Spectrum (NFS) Project was finally cleared by the group of Ministers. Later he was Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations) at HQ IDS, when projects like the NFS and Defence Communication Network were being operationalised.

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