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Central Armed Police Forces of India

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The Central Armed Police Forces are not the Army and not the state police. This article covers the seven organisations that work under one ministry, each with its own distinct job.

> **Ministry** Home Affairs.
> **Border forces** BSF, ITBP, SSB, Assam Rifles.
> **Internal forces** CRPF, CISF.
> **CRPF size** About 3.25 lakh personnel.

CAPF: Central Armed Police Forces.

LAC: Line of Actual Control.

NSG: National Security Guard, the “Black Cats”.

GD: General Duty.

1 Chapter 1: What CAPFs Are

Must Know

The basics

- The Central Armed Police Forces work under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- They are distinct from both the Armed Forces and individual state police forces.
- They split into two broad groups.
- Border Guarding Forces: BSF, ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifles.

- Internal Security Forces: CRPF and CISF.

Force by force

- The CRPF is India's largest CAPF, with about 3.25 lakh personnel.
- It is deployed in aid of civil power for law and order, internal security and counter-insurgency.
- The BSF guards the India–Pakistan and India–Bangladesh borders.
- It is often called the country's "First Line of Defence".
- The ITBP guards the India–China border along the high-altitude Himalayan LAC.
- It is a mountain-trained force built for hazardous terrain.
- The CISF protects industrial undertakings and vital installations, like airports and power plants.
- That is a different mandate from border guarding or general internal security.

Remember: One force, one job: BSF = Pakistan/Bangladesh. ITBP = China. SSB = Nepal/Bhutan. CRPF = internal security. CISF = installations.

> **Quick check 1.** The CRPF is India's largest CAPF. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 Chapter 2: SSB, NSG and Assam Rifles

Good to Know

SSB and NSG

- The Sashastra Seema Bal guards the open India–Nepal and India–Bhutan borders.

- The National Security Guard handles specialised counter-terrorism operations.
- It is often called the “Black Cats”.

Assam Rifles: dual command

- Assam Rifles is a Border Guarding Force, administratively under the Home Ministry.
- During counter-insurgency deployments it is operationally controlled by the Army.
- That is a genuine dual-command arrangement.
- See Assam Rifles.

Why two categories

- Guarding a fixed international boundary needs different training and equipment from flexible internal deployment.
- CISF’s narrow, infrastructure-specific mandate contrasts with CRPF’s broad, general-purpose one.
- Protecting an airport needs a different skill set from counter-insurgency, even under one ministry.
- One force per border lets each build deep, border-specific expertise.
- A single unified border force would lose that.

Read more

- Border Security: Management, Organizations and Regional Challenges
- Border Security Force (BSF)
- Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)
- Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

> **Quick check 2.** The Assam Rifles is controlled only by the Army. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 Chapter 3: Scale and Visibility

Great to Know

Quiet giants

- Together, the CAPFs form one of the world's largest paramilitary structures.
- They work with far less public visibility than the Armed Forces.
- Yet their counter-insurgency and internal-security work is constant.

> **Think it through: Think it through: why not one big border force?**
>
> Mountains, deserts, rivers and open borders all need different training. A force built for the Himalayas would be poorly placed on the Bangladesh plains. So India gives each border its own force.

4 Chapter 4: Past Papers

Exam Point of View

The pattern examiners keep testing

- Exams mix up which force guards which border.
- They also test founding dates and numbers.
- A common trap swaps ITBP (China) with SSB (Nepal/Bhutan), or BSF (Pakistan/Bangladesh) with the others.
- Anchor each force to its one border, and to its founding decade.

CDS (I) 2018: the ITBP numbers

- The question asked which statements about ITBP are correct. The answer was all four.
- ITBP was raised in 1962 and is mountain-trained.
- It replaced Assam Rifles in Sikkim and Arunachal in 2004–05.
- It had 52 battalions at the time.
- The “One Border, One Force” policy behind that expansion followed the 1999 Kargil War’s Group of Ministers review.
- (Source: CDS (I) 2018, Q102.)

Quick check 3. ITBP guards the India–China border and was raised in 1962. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

5 Chapter 5: Current Affairs

Current Affairs

A new CISF headquarters

- On 22 June 2026, the government laid the foundation stone of a new CISF headquarters at the CGO Complex, Lodhi Road.
- The nine-storey, ₹75.78 crore building will house the Director-General's office, a control room and an auditorium.
- The same event dedicated ₹136.03 crore of CISF infrastructure in total, including training buildings and quarters. (Source: PIB.)

NSG's first women's commando course

- On 24 August 2026, the NSG launched its first Mahila Commando Conversion Course at its Manesar academy.
- The 12-week course runs to 12 November 2026.
- It trains women from state police and CAPFs in weapons handling, tactical intervention and hostage rescue.
- It aims to build a wider pool of women trained in counter-terrorism and to improve central–state interoperability. (Source: Assam Tribune.)

Recruitment drives

- The Staff Selection Commission opened applications for 25,487 Constable (GD) vacancies across BSF, CISF, CRPF, ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifles, from 1 to 31 December 2025. (Source: Careers360.)

- Separately, UPSC opened 349 CAPF Assistant Commandant vacancies for 2026, across BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP and SSB.

> **Quick check 4.** The NSG launched its first women's commando conversion course in August 2026. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

- **CAPFs work under?** Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Largest CAPF?** CRPF.
- **ITBP raised?** 1962.
- **SSB borders?** Nepal and Bhutan.
- **NSG nickname?** Black Cats.

Practice MCQs

1. The Central Armed Police Forces function under which ministry?

A. Ministry of Internal Security

B. Ministry of Home Affairs

C. Ministry of Defence

D. Ministry of External Affairs

See answer ↓

2. Which force is deployed in aid of civil power for law and order and counter-insurgency operations across India?

A. CRPF

B. ITBP

C. BSF

D. CISF

See answer ↓

3. Which force guards the India-China border along the high-altitude Line of Actual Control?

A. CISF

B. BSF

C. SSB

D. ITBP

See answer ↓

4. Which Central Armed Police Force is specifically responsible for protecting industrial undertakings and vital installations?

A. CRPF

B. CISF

C. BSF

D. SSB

See answer ↓

5. Which Border Guarding Force, though administratively under the Home Ministry, comes under Army operational control during counter-insurgency deployments?

A. BSF

B. ITBP

C. Assam Rifles

D. SSB

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The answer is **the Ministry of Home Affairs**. Its page on Central Armed Police Forces lists seven forces: AR, BSF, CISF, CRPF, ITBP, NSG and SSB. Why the others fail: the Ministry of Defence runs the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Ministry of External Affairs handles foreign policy. There is no Ministry of Internal Security. Memory hook: seven forces, one Home Ministry. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** The CRPF is deployed in aid of civil power for law and order, internal security and counter-insurgency. ↑ Q2
3. **D.** The ITBP guards the India-China border along the high-altitude Himalayan Line of Actual Control. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** The answer is **CISF**. The Central Industrial Security Force was formed under the 50th Act of Parliament in 1968. The Home Ministry's charter says it began by securing public sector undertakings and government installations. Why the others fail: the CRPF is the large force used in law and order and counter-insurgency. The BSF guards borders. The SSB is also a border-guarding force. Memory hook: I in CISF is for industrial. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** The answer is **the Assam Rifles**. The Home Ministry's 1991-92 annual report said most of the force worked in the North-East. It was in a counter-insurgency role under the Army's operational control. The Assam Rifles is on the MHA list of seven forces. That report is old, so treat this as a dated fact. Why the others fail: the BSF, ITBP and SSB are border-guarding forces that this report does not place under Army operational control. Memory hook: Assam Rifles has a double chain, MHA on paper and the Army in the field. ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3
4. **True.** ↑ 4

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