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By B. Raman

The Government of India needs to be complimented for its reported decision to appoint Shri Nehchal Sandhu, who will be retiring as the Director of the Intelligence Bureau on December 31, 2012, as Officer on Special Duty in the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) to be in charge of internal security. It has been reported that he will be ultimately taking over as the Deputy National Security Adviser on March 21 when the current incumbent Ms Lata Reddy completes her tenure.

2. Shri Sandhu, who is from the Bihar cadre of the IPS, is an officer in the mould of Shri M.K.Narayanan and Shri Ajit Doval, both of whom headed the IB with tremendous distinction. Like them, he is a clandestine operative par excellence and a brilliant analyst.
3. Shri Doval and Shri Sandhu built up the counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism capabilities of the IB in difficult years and contributed immensely to the fight against terrorism and insurgencies of various hues. Their names should figure prominently in any official account of the role of the IB in counter-terrorism.
4. When I was in service, I had an opportunity of working closely with Shri Doval and Shri Sandhu, then a young officer, in the case relating to the kidnapping of Liviu Radu, a Romanian diplomat posted in New Delhi, by some Khalistani terrorists in 1991. The credit for getting the diplomat released without conceding any of the demands of the terrorists should go to these two officers and to Shri Narayanan, the then DIB, who co-ordinated an excellent, copybook counter-terrorism operation.

5. Shri Sandhu is a very pleasant officer, who has enjoyed a consistent reputation as a good team player with no trace of service or institutional parochialism. He got along well with other agencies of the intelligence community and the Multi-Agency Centre of the IB, which co-ordinates the counter-terrorism operations across the country, came of age under him.
6. Many, including me, had a feeling that under Shri P. Chidambaram, as the Home Minister, the internal security role of the NSCS tended to get diluted. Shri Sandhu, with his vast experience in intelligence and physical security, is the right choice to restore to the NSCS its due role as a co-ordinating centre in internal security strategizing.
7. Shri Sandhu will be an asset to Shri Shivsankar Menon, the National Security Adviser, in the processing and implementation of the recommendations of the Naresh Chandra Task Force on the modernization of our national security set-up. Its flagship chapters relate to internal security, intelligence revamp and cyber security and an experienced officer like Shri Sandhu should be of immense assistance to the NSA and the Government in ensuring effective implementation.
8. The appointment of an outgoing DIB as the Deputy NSA should facilitate the current exercise to create the concept of an intelligence community in our country on the pattern of that in the US.
9. Shri Sandhu will be succeeding Ms. Lata Reddy, an officer of the IFS, who had played a commendable role in counter-terrorism as the Indian Ambassador to Portugal. Her tenure as the Deputy NSA was marked by the initiation by her of an exercise to strengthen our TECHINT and cyber security capabilities. Credit should also go to her for steering successfully the work of the Naresh Chandra Task Force.
10. Shri Satish Chandra, another IFS officer, who held charge as Deputy NSA under the late Shri Brajesh Mishra and the late Shri Mani Dixit, was the moving spirit behind the successful work of the Group of Ministers of the Atal Behari Vajpayee Government for the revamping of the national security set-up.
11. Ms Lata Reddy, under Shri Menon, played a similar praiseworthy role in respect of the Naresh Chandra Task Force for the modernisation of our national security set-up. Shri Sandhu will be a worthy successor to her.
12. Shri Sandhu had accompanied the Home Secretary on his visit to Islamabad earlier this year. This should have given him an opportunity to get to know senior officers of the Pakistani Intelligence Bureau and Internal Security Ministry. This should facilitate his interactions with them in his new role

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