

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE STANDARD TO
119 HELICOPTER UNIT AND COLOURS TO 28 EQUIPMENT
DEPOT OF INDIAN AIR FORCE**

Jamnagar, Gujarat: March 04, 2016

1. It gives me immense pleasure to be here today at Air Force Station Jamnagar, one of the oldest and premier air bases of the Indian Air Force, to award the 'President's Standard' to 119 Helicopter Unit and Colours to 28 Equipment Depot. These distinguished Units have a glorious past and rich traditions of professional excellence. Since their inception, they have rendered illustrious service to the Nation and done us proud. Their rich heritage and stellar efforts in the pursuit of excellence have set a benchmark for others to emulate. For their selfless devotion, professionalism and courage in the face of adversity, the Nation honours them today with a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation.

2. The Indian Air Force has been fulfilling its role of protecting the Indian skies and safeguarding the sovereignty of our Nation and also provided aid to the citizens during natural calamities. The resilience and tenacity displayed by the Air Warriors is a great source of encouragement and a matter of pride for the Nation. The massive relief operations undertaken by the Indian Air Force during many natural calamities in the past is all etched in our memories. Such operations are shining examples of the fortitude and determination of its gallant air warriors. The Nation is immensely proud of the Indian Air Force and remains eternally indebted to the air warriors for their selflessness and sacrifice.

3. India is firmly committed to peace and equality for which we need an effective deterrence and a strong defence force. The nation is striving hard for all-round economic growth and social empowerment of its citizens. However, we remain equally focused on building capacity to defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity. Our Armed Forces give us confidence in the Nation's ability to face any aggression and safe guard its interests. The Air Warriors, who stand before us today, epitomise the grit and the determination in fulfilling their responsibilities by upholding the highest standards of service ethos. I take this opportunity to also congratulate all the Air Warriors on parade for their impeccable smart turnout.

4. **119 Helicopter Unit** was raised in Guwahati in Mar 1972 as '**Angels of Mercy**' with Mi-8 helicopters. In the initial years of its formation, the Unit flew extensively in support of counter insurgency operations in Nagaland and

'Op Falcon' in Arunachal Pradesh. The Unit moved to AF Stn Sullur in Feb 1988 and was immediately drawn into the battlegrounds of Sri Lanka in 'Op Pawan' and subsequently the Helicopter Unit was rechristened as '**The Stallions**'. The Unit took part in 'Op Cactus' in Nov 1988 and played a major role during the 'Atlantique Crisis' of Aug 1999 and 'Op Black Tornado' after the terrorist attack on Mumbai in Nov 2008. The unit now operates the newly acquired Mi-17 V5 helicopters. 'The Stallions' have time and again undertaken rescue and relief missions living up to the motto of "Apatu Mitram" meaning "Friends in Distress" and continue to be the harbingers of hope and happiness to distressed people. The recent Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief Operations undertaken by the Unit in Gujarat and Nepal stand testimony to this fact. The commendable performance of the personnel of the Unit during various operations has been recognised and appreciated in the form of gallantry awards. I am sure 'The Stallions' will continue to excel in the times to come.

5. **28 Equipment Depot** has completed 62 glorious years in service of the Nation. This is the only kind of unit in the Indian Air Force which deals with all facets of air armament stores. Established at Amla, on 24 Sep 1953, the Depot has come a long way in transforming and projecting itself as one stop solution for armament issues. The Depot played a significant role in the operations of 1965, 1971 and 1999 by providing huge quantity of explosive stores in serviceable condition to the units engaged in the operations. It would not be wrong to say that this Depot provides the lethality to the fighter and bomber squadrons of the Indian Air Force. In the years gone by, the depot has been a trend-setter in innovation and has successfully modified the life-expired live missiles into its training version. I am sure the expertise gained by the Depot in the field of armament will go a long way in meeting the operational requirements of the Indian Air Force.

6. In acknowledgement and recognition of their outstanding performance, I am pleased to award 'Standard' to 119 Helicopter Unit and 'Colours' to 28 Equipment Depot. On this occasion, I take the opportunity to compliment the personnel and families (both past and the present) of 119 Helicopter Unit and 28 Equipment Depot, for their selfless service and dedication to the Nation. The Nation is indeed proud of you. I wish you and your families all the very best for a glorious future.

JAI HIND.