

SIXTY-EIGHTH REPORT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (1986-87)

(EIGHTH LOK SABHA)

CONSTRUCTION OF A SUB-STANDARD AIRFIELD

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

[Action Taken on 45th Report (Eighth Lok Sabha)]



Presented in Lok Sabha on.....

Laid in Rajya Sabha on.....

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

February, 1987/Phalguna, 1908 (Saka)

Price : Rs. 1.60

CORRIGENDA TO 68TH REPORT OF THE
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (8TH L.S.)

<u>Page</u>	<u>Para</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Read</u>
CONTENTS			APPENDIX	APPENDIX II
-do-			18	20
- do-		last on 9.2.1987 line		held on 9.2.1987
v	2	8	weakness	weaknesses
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CONTENTS

		PAGE
COMPOSITION OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE	...	(iii)
INTRODUCTION	...	(v)
CHAPTER I	Report	1
CHAPTER II	Recommendations and Observations which have been accepted by Government	8
CHAPTER III	Recommendations and Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in the light of the replies received from Government	13
CHAPTER IV	Recommendations and Observations replies to which have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration	14
CHAPTER V	Recommendations and Observations in respect of which Government have furnished interim replies.	17
APPENDIX	Conclusions and Recommendations.	18
PART II		
	Minutes of the Sitting of Public Accounts Committee on 9-2-1987.	25

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

(1986-87)

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(iv)

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1. Shri K. H. Chhaya—*Joint Secretary.*
2. Shri S. M. Mehta—*Senior Financial Committee Officer.*

INTRODUCTION

1, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, as authorised by the Committee, do present on their behalf this Sixty-Eighth Report on action taken by Government on the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee contained in their 45th Report (Eighth Lok Sabha) relating to construction of a sub-standard air-field.

2. In their 45th Report the Committee had expressed dismay over complete lack of supervision and failure to enforce quality control in the construction of an air-field which was declared hazardous to flying till completion of resurfacing of runway at a cost of Rs. 32.15 lakhs. The Government have now issued remedial instructions to all concerned. In this Report the Committee have viewed that mere issue of instructions is not sufficient and have suggested proper study of the lapses and weakness of the inspection and control procedures with a view to spelling out detailed instructions for macro and micro planning, inspection and monitoring procedures so that such failures are avoided in future. The Committee have expressed unhappiness that despite the fact that the Commander Works Engineer and the Zonal Chief Engineer were found to have failed to exercise proper supervisions, the Ministry of Defence have not initiated action against those responsible for such casual supervision. The Committee have suggested initiation of appropriate action against officials responsible for casual supervision and dereliction of duty.

3. The Committee have expressed surprise over the variations prevailing in the procedures and time frames governing the Courts of Inquiry in different services and have suggested rationalisation of existing procedures/time frames and evolution of a common set of rules for all the three services.

4. The Report was considered and adopted by the Public Accounts Committee at their sitting held on 9 February, 1987. Minutes of the sitting form Part II of the Report.

5. For facility of reference and convenience, the recommendations and conclusions of the Committee have been printed in thick type in

(vi)

the body of the Report and have also been reproduced in a consolidated form in Appendix II to the Report.

6. The Committee place on record their appreciation of the assistance rendered to them in the matter by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

NEW DELHI ;

February 20, 1987

Phalguna 1, 1908 (S)

E. AYYAPU REDDY,
Chairman,
Public Accounts Committee.

CHAPTER I

REPORT

1.1 This Report of the Committee deals with the action taken by Government on the Committee's recommendations/observations contained in their 45th Report (8th Lok Sabha) on paragraph 18 of the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 1983-84, Union Government (Defence Services) relating to construction of a sub-standard air-field.

1.2 The Committee's 45 Report (8th Lok Sabha) was presented to Lok Sabha on 29 April, 1986. It contains 10 recommendations/observations. Action taken notes on all these recommendations/observations have been received from the Ministry of Defence. These recommendations have been broadly categorised as follows :

(i) Recommendations and observations which have been accepted by Government ;

Sl. Nos 1,3,4,5,6 and 10

(ii) Recommendations and observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in the light of the replies received from Government ;

-Nil-

(iii) Recommendations and observations replies to which have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration ;

Sl. Nos. 2,7,8 and 9

(iv) Recommendations and observations in respect of which Government have furnished interim replies ;

-Nil-

1.3 The Committee will now deal with action taken on some of their recommendations/observations.

Serious defects noticed on Preliminary Inspection (Sl. No. 2—Para 1.52)

1.4 Commenting upon serious defects noticed on preliminary inspection of the air-field the Committee had, in para 1.52 of their 45th Report recommended as under :

“As per contract conditions the contractor was responsible for rectifying any defects noticed during one year after the date of completion of the work in November, 1975. On completion of the work, a Board of Officers was convened for taking over the air-field from the contractor. The air-field was handed over to the users in March 1976 and was put to use only in October, 1976. The aforesaid Board of Officers had noticed a number of serious defects even on preliminary inspection of the air-field. One of the defects they noticed was that flexible pavement had started pitting over almost all the areas requiring surface treatment/dressing. According to the Ministry of Defence, these defects were then got rectified by the contractor. The Committee are deeply concerned to note that inspite of the fact that quite a number of serious defects were noticed even on preliminary inspection of the air-field, the air-field was not put to use until October, 1976 by which time the stipulated period of one year for rectification of the defects by the contractor had almost expired.”

1.5 In their Action Taken Note dated 9 December, 1986 the Ministry of Defence have stated as follows :

“All IAF Commands have been directed by the Air HQrs. Vide letter No. Air HQ/S. 37532/125/W (P&C) dated the 2nd July, 1986 to issue instructions to all the Stations under their control to avoid the recurrence of such situations in future.”

*Approval and Implementation of the findings of the Court of Inquiry
(Serial Nos. 7 and 8-Paras 1.57 and 1.58)*

1.6 Commenting upon the delay in approval of the findings of the Court of Inquiry, the Committee had in para 1.57 of their 45th Report recommended as follows :

“As if to surpass this long series of acts of commission and omission, the Air Headquarters took 3 long years to consider and

approve the findings of the Court of Inquiry. Whoever was responsible for such dilatoriness should be taken to task.”

1.7 In their action taken note dated 9th December, 1986 the Ministry of Defence have stated as follows :

“To prevent recurrence of delay in finalising Courts of Enquiry, all IAF Commands have been directed by the Air HQrs. vide their letter No. Air HQ/S. 37532. 125/W (P&C), dt. 2.7.86 to issue necessary instructions to all the Stations under their control. Observations of PAC have been highlighted therein. As regards fixing responsibility for the delay, it is not possible at this stage since a number of officers of Air HQ/E-in C's Branch who dealt with the case have since retired/gone on release.

This has the approval of RRM (A).”

1.8 With regard to the implementation of the findings of the Court of Inquiry, the Committee had in para 1.58 of their 45th Report recommended as follows :

“The Committee note that three Supervisory Officers, a Lt. Col., a Captain and a Subedar were punished on finalisation of the Court of Inquiry proceedings as they were responsible for carrying out the obligatory tests and maintain proper records. In the aforesaid cases, the punishment awarded was “Severe Displeasure of Chief of the Army Staff”, “Severe Displeasure to be recorded by GOC-in-C Southern Command” and “Severe Displeasure to be recorded by GOC-in-C Southern Command” respectively. The Committee do not consider this punishment to be at all commensurate with the gravity of the offence. There were no extenuating circumstances and therefore, deterrent punishment should have been more appropriate.”

1.9 Action taken note dated 9th December, 1986 furnished by the Ministry of Defence reads as follows :

“This Ministry considers that harsh punishment to all the three Service Personnel has already been given. The Garrison Engineer could not get promotion and he has gone on premature retirement which is considered to be a severe punishment for a uniformed officer. All the three persons who were found guilty in the matter

either directly or indirectly have been punished adequately since displeasure of COAS, GOC-IN-C is a stigma in the carrier of Service Personnel.

It may also be mentioned that it is not possible to review the penalty already given to them at this stage as the case has become time barred. Moreover Garrison Engineer has already retired.

This has the approval of RRM (A)"

Lack of Supervision by Senior Officers
(Sl. No. 9—Para 1.59)

1.10 Commenting on the lack of supervision exercised by the hierarchy of the Military Engineering Service Officers, which resulted in the construction of sub-standard airfield in operational area, the Committee had observed as under in para 1.59 of their 45th Report :

“The Senior Engineers of the Military Engineer Services cannot be absolved of their responsibility for their failure to exercise satisfactory supervision. Their responsibility was the greater having regard to the fact that the air-field in was the forward area and needed in the event of hostilities.”

1.11 In their action taken notes dated 9th December, 1986, the Ministry of Defence have observed as under :

“Noted In this connection, E-in-C’s Branch letter No. 2 7039/BO/Engr. 2 Air.) dated 23rd September 1986 refers” (Appendix ‘I’).

1.12. In their earlier report the Committee had found that there was complete lack of supervision and failure to enforce quality control in the construction of an airfield which was required to be used as a forward base for supporting air operations during hostilities. Due to lack of adequate supervision by the Engineers and the executive staff, work which was sub-standard was taken over. Though the air-field was completed in November, 1975 and Handed over to users on March, 1976, it was not put to use until October, 1976 by which time the stipulated period of one year for rectification of the defects by the contractor had almost expired. Non-use of the runway either by aircraft or by simulated

vehicular traffic for about a year after its completion caused age hardening of bitumen and resulted in early deterioration of the airfield. Under these circumstances the airfield had to be declared hazardous to flying till completion of resurfacing of the runway at a cost of Rs. 32.15 lakhs. Under orders of the Air-Headquarters a Court of Inquiry was held to investigate into the circumstances under which the air-field had become unfit for operations and also to ascertain whether the construction of the air-field and material used therefor were as per provisions specified in the contract agreement.

1.13. The Committee had expressed deep concern over the fact that even though a number of serious defects had been noticed even on preliminary inspection of the air-field, the air-field was not put to use till October 1976 by which time the stipulated guarantee period of one year for rectification of defects by the contractor had almost expired. The Committee have been informed that remedial instructions have been issued to all concerned. The Committee, however, note that these instructions are a mere direction to all the IAF command to issue instructions to all the stations under their control to avoid the recurrence of such situations in future. Mere issue of an exhortive directive does not seem to be sufficient in a matter of great importance involving national security. The Committee feel that proper study of the lapses and weaknesses of the inspection and control procedures should have been undertaken with a view to spelling out detailed instructions for macro and micro planning, inspection and monitoring procedures to avoid recurrence of such failures in future. The Committee would urge the Government to initiate appropriate action now under intimation to the Committee. The Committee would also like to stress the need for extra caution and abundant care in the planning of such work in future.

1.14. The Committee had adversely commented upon the period of 3 long years taken to consider and approve the findings of the Court of Inquiry. The Committee had recommended that whosoever was responsible for such dilatoriness should be taken to task. In their action taken note the Ministry of Defence have stated that it is not possible at this stage to do the needful since a number of officers of Air Headquarters/Engineer-in-Chief's Branch who dealt with the case have since retired/gone on release. The Committee had also observed that the punishment given to the three Supervisory Officers, a Lt. Col., a Captain and a Subedar on finalisation of the Court of Inquiry proceedings was not at all commensurate with the gravity of the offence. According to the

Committee, deterrent punishment would have been more appropriate. On this aspect also, the Ministry of Defence have stated in their action taken note that it is not possible to review the penalty already given to them at this stage as the case has become time barred and the concerned Garrison Engineer has already retired. The Committee are constrained to observe that timely steps have not been taken to enforce responsibility for the aforesaid abnormal delay of 3 years in considering the findings of the Court of Inquiry and for complete lack of supervision even in such a serious matter affecting the security of the country. The Committee cannot but express their strong displeasure at this attitude of helplessness by the Ministry of Defence, They also recommend that timely and prompt action should invariably be initiated in such cases. In pursuance of the recommendations made by the Committee in their earlier Report, Government have issued instructions on various aspects to avoid various acts of omission and commissions noticed in this case. The Committee hope that adequate supervision will be kept by all concerned to ensure the implementation of all these instructions.

1.15. While commenting on the various lapses that have taken place in this case, the Committee had referred to the lack of supervision by the senior Engineers of the Military Engineer Service, and had observed that their share of responsibility was greater. The Committee are unhappy to note that despite the fact that the CWE* and the Zonal Chief Engineer were found to have failed to exercise proper supervision, the Ministry of Defence have not initiated action against those responsible for such casual supervision, and have merely "noted the observations of the Committee." The Committee are, to say the least, astonished at such an indifferent attitude towards their carefully considered recommendation. The Committee would like the Ministry of Defence to initiate appropriate action against those found wanting in the performance of their duties with due care and caution.

1.16. In this connection, the Committee are surprised to note the variations prevailing in the procedures and time frames governing the Courts of Inquiry in different services. For example, in the Army it is about 2 months from the date of discovery of the loss to completion of the proceedings vide Army Order dated 1st June 1981, while in the Air Force it is 12 months from the date of detection of the loss vide Air Force Order dated 21st July 1984 and in the Navy 3 months from the

*Commander Works Engineer

date of happening of the incident or event vide Special Navy Order of 1982. Even within the Army, there appears to be a different set of rules regarding Courts of Inquiry in Military Engineer Services. The Committee recommend that the existing procedures/time-frames may be rationalised and a common set of rules framed for all the three services. The best features of the different regulations could be integrated and a common set of regulations framed.

The Committee further recommend that the progress of such Courts of Inquiry should be monitored by the three Service Headquarters once every fortnight. It should be ensured that there is normally no delay over the time-frame prescribed and that, if any, delay is anticipated, prior approval of the Service Headquarters should be sought and secured.

CHAPTER II

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT

Recommendation

In December 1973, a contract, for Rs. 1.98 crores was concluded with firm 'X' for execution of work pertaining to runway, taxi-tracks linked tracks and dispersal tracks of air-field 'C'. The air-field was constructed for the purpose of a forward base for supporting air operations during hostilities. The work which was to be completed by January 1975 was actually completed in November 1975. The Military Engineer Service was the executing agency for the project. It is unfortunate that due to lack of adequate supervision by the Engineers and the executive staff, work which was sub-standard was taken over. The various problems arising out of this lapse are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

[Sl. No. 1 (Para 1.51) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

Being factual no action is required.

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86— D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

Recommendation

According to the Ministry of Defence due to general unfavourable weather conditions during summer followed up by monsoon during April to September 1976 and the lack of ground equipment such as recovery/Nav aids and communication facilities, the activation of this base was planned for October 1976 in the interest of flight safety and other operational reasons. But originally it was to have been completed in January 1975 and the con-

tract for the work was concluded in December 1973. It is surprising that during all this time ground equipment etc. were not planned to be made ready. Careful planning might well have expedited matters. In fact the delay has been adversely commented upon by the Court of Inquiry held in 1978-79. It has opined that non-use of the runway either by aircraft or by simulated vehicular traffic for about a year after its completion caused age hardening of bitumen and resulted in early deterioration of the airfield.

[Sl. No 3 (Para 1.53) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC (8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

In this connection, please refer to E-in-C's Br. letter No. 27039/BO/Engr. 2 Air dt. 23rd September 1986 (Appendix I). To avoid recurrence of such case (s) suitable instructions have been issued by Air HQ vide letter No. Air HQ/S. 37532/125/W(P&C) dt. 2-7-1986.

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86—D (Air—II) dated 9-12-1986].

Recommendation

The Committee are told that roughness of the runway and presence of small pebbles were brought to the notice of local Military Engineer Service authorities by the users, in June 1977. Strangely enough even without undertaking any investigation to ascertain the reasons for the development of these defects, it was stated by these authorities that the runway surface, would improve with use. Earlier when these problems were discussed by the Base Commander with the Chief Engineer and the Commander Works Engineer when they visited the Base in November 1977, no reference appears to have been made to these defects or that they would disappear with use. It was left to the users to point out to the Zonal Chief Engineer in December 1977 that the flexible pavement had started showing signs of disintegration to such an extent that they had to declare the air-field as hazardous to flying. the Committee can only deplore such a casual approach and

complete lack of seriousness on the part of the concerned Engineers to their duties.

[Sl. No. 4 (Para 1.54) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

In this connection, please refer to E in-C's Br. letter No. 27039/BO/Engr. 2 Air dated 23rd September 1986. (Appendix I). Disciplinary action has already been taken against the official concerned.

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86—D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

Recommendation

It appears that certain obligatory tests to ensure quality control as prescribed in the contract were not carried out and records were not maintained properly. The fact was also later corroborated by the Chief Technical Examiner in his report for the period October 1980/ March 1981. These obligatory tests were wear test, tests for finding out flakiness content of bitumen, asphalt, concrete and tests regarding control bay for safety etc. The Committee cannot but conclude that non adherence to these tests led to sub-standard workmanship.

[Sl. No. 5 (Para 1.55) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

Disciplinary action against the officer blamed in Court of Inquiry has already been taken. Necessary further instructions to all Chief Engineers have been issued vide E-in-C's Br. letter No. 27039 BO/Engr. 2 Air, dated 23rd September 1986 (Appendix I).

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86—D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

Recommendation

The Committee note that under orders of the Air Headquarters a Court of Inquiry was held to investigate into the circumstances under

which the air-field had become unfit for operations and also to ascertain whether the construction of the air-field and material used therefore were as per provisions specified in the contract agreement. The findings of the Court of Inquiry were as follows :

- (i) Surface of bituminous portion of the runway including the over-run was pitted, abraded, revelled etc.
- (ii) Work of asphaltic concrete done from 25 April 1975 to 10 May 1975 was below the contract specifications.
- (iii) Non-use of the runway either by Aircraft or by simulated vehicular traffic for about a year after its completion caused age hardening of bitumen and resulted in early deterioration of the air-field.

The Road Research Institute, Roorkee to which the matter was subsequently referred, observed in their report that there was lack of quality control during the execution of the project. The longitudinal and cross profile of the runway was not properly maintained ; as against surface tolerance of 3mm and 6mm stipulated on asphaltic concrete and bituminous macadam surface respectively on A.C. surface these were as high as 1.5 cm. In short there was complete lack of supervision and failure to enforce quality control.

[Sl. No. 6 (Para 1.56) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

Detailed instructions for establishment of laboratory and carrying out tests have been issued vide E-in-C's Branch letter No. 27039/BO/Engr. 2 Air dt. 2nd January 1984 & 10 July 1985.

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86—D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

Recommendation

The Committee have found this entire case most depressing. So many have failed to discharge their duties with the devotion and care expected of them, particularly where the country's security is concerned. The Committee indeed feel that everything was not above board.

The Committee would like Government to take serious note of the various acts of omission and commission in this case and take appropriate steps to ensure that they do not occur again.

[Sl. No. 10 (Para 1.60) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

Necessary instructions to safeguard Government interest and to avoid various acts of omission and commission have been issued *vide* E-in-C's Branch letter No. 27039/BO/Engr. 2 Air, dated 23rd September 1986 (Appendix I).

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86-D (Air II) dated
6-12-1986].

CHAPTER III

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE
COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN THE LIGHT
OF THE REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENT**

- NIL -

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS REPLIES TO WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION

Recommendation

As per contract conditions the contractor was responsible for rectifying any defects noticed during one year after the date of completion of the work in November, 1975. On completion of the work, a Board of Officers was convened for taking over the air-field from the contractor. The air-field was handed over to the users in March 1976 and was put to use only in October, 1976. The aforesaid Board of Officers had noticed a number of serious defects even on preliminary inspection of the air-field. One of the defects they noticed was that flexible pavement had started pitting over almost all the areas requiring surface treatment/dressing. According to the Ministry of Defence, these defects were then got rectified by the contractor. The Committee are deeply concerned to note that inspite of the fact that quite a number of serious defects were noticed even on preliminary inspection of the air-field, the air-field was not put to use until October, 1976 by which time the stipulated period of one year for rectification of the defects by the contractor had almost expired.

[Sl. No. 2 (Para 1.52) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

All IAF Commands have been directed by the Air HQrs. *vide* letter No. Air HQ/S. 37532/125/W(P&C) dated the 2nd July 1986 to issue instructions to all the Stations under their control to avoid the recurrence of such situations in future.

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86-D (Air II)
dated 6-12-86].

Recommendation

As if to surpass this long series of acts of commission and omission, the Air Headquarters took 3 long years to consider and approve the findings of the Court of Inquiry. Whoever was responsible for such dilatoriness should be taken to task.

[Sl. No. 7 (Para 1.57) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

To prevent recurrence of delay in finalising Courts of Enquiry, all IAF Commands have been directed by the Air HQrs. *vide* their letter No. Air HQ/S. 37532/125/W(P&C), dt. 2-7-86 to issue necessary instructions to all the Stations under their control. Observations of PAC have been highlighted therein. As regards fixing responsibility for the delay, it is not possible at this stage since a number of officers of Air HQ/E-in-C's Branch who dealt with the case have since retired/gone on release.

This has the approval of RRM(A).

[Ministry of Defence. O.M. No. F (2) 6/86-D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

Recommendation

The Committee note that three Supervisory Officers, a Lt. Col. a Captain and a Subedar were punished on finalisation of the Court of Inquiry proceedings as they were responsible for carrying out the obligatory tests and maintain proper records. In the aforesaid cases, the punishment awarded was "Severe Displeasure of Chief of the Army Staff" "Severe Displeasure to be recorded" by GOC-in-C Southern Command and Severe Displeasure to be recorded" by GOC-in-C Southern Command" respectively. The Committee do not consider this punishment to be at all commensurate with the gravity of the offence. There were no extenuating circumstances and therefore, deterrent punishment should have been more appropriate.

[Sl. No. 8 (Para 1.58) to Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

This Ministry considers that harsh punishment to all the three Service Personnel has already been given. The Garrison Engineer could not get promotion and he has gone on premature retirement which is considered to be a severe punishment for a uniformed officer. All the three persons who were found guilty in the matter either directly or indirectly have been punished adequately since displeasure of COAS, GOC-In-C is a stigma in the career of Service Personnel.

It may also be mentioned that it is not possible to review the penalty already given to them at this stage as the case has become time barred. Moreover Garrison Engineer has already retired.

This has the approval of RRM(A).

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86—D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

Recommendation

The Senior Engineers of the Military Engineering Service cannot be absolved of their responsibility for their failure to exercise satisfactory supervision. Their responsibility was the greater having regard to the fact that the air-field was in the forward area and needed in the event of hostilities.

[Sl. No. 9 (Para 1.59) of Appendix to 45th Report of PAC
(8th Lok Sabha).]

Action Taken

Noted. In this connection, E-in-C's Branch letter No. 27039/BO/Engr. 2 Air, dated 23rd September 1986 refers (Appendix D).

[Ministry of Defence O.M. No. F. 2 (6) 86—D (Air II)
dated 6-12-1986].

CHAPTER V
RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT
OF WHICH GOVERNMENT HAVE FURNISHED
INTERIM REPLIES

—Nil—

NEW DELHI ;
February 20, 1987

Phalguna 1, 1908(S)

E. AYYAPU REDDY,
Chairman,
Public Accounts Committee.

APPENDIX-I

No. 27039/BO/Engr.
2 Air

Date of Works/Engr. 2 Air Engineer in
Chief's Branch Army Headquarters
DHQ PO New Delhi-110011
23rd September, 1986

EXECUTION OF RUNWAY WORKS BY MES

1. A case has come to the notice of this HQ where in the engineers on ground have shown complete indifference/casual approach and lack of seriousness in executing a runway resurfacing work. There was also inadequate advice to the users for the use of the runway at all levels.

2. The above, resulted in substandard work which has been severely deplored by the Public Accounts Committee.

3. With a view to ensure that planning and execution in completion of overlay works is undertaken in an exemplary manner, and also considering the importance that the poor workmanship can be hazardous and against the national interest, the following points must be meticulously followed :—

- (a) If for any reason, on completion the runway cannot be brought into use, it should be subjected to vehicular traffic loading to prevent deterioration of flexible runway surface.
- (b) Advice to airforce authorities at all stages should be appropriate, technically sound and continuous at appropriate levels. This must be ensured by the Zonal Chief Engineers. Further Chief Engineer Zone, during this inspections/visits must thrash out all the points with the users that may be projected on site condition and due record of all decisions taken must be maintained and progressed.
- (c) Chief Engineer Zone, with his specialist staff should study

and analyse day to day technical problems and ensure proper control over the execution of work.

- (d) Substandard workmanship in the case under reference appears to have taken place due to non-performance of certain obligatory tests to ensure quality control as prescribed in the contract agreement. It is, therefore, imperative that the execution of work is done strictly as per the laid down instruction/contract agreement by executives on ground. This aspect should be checked both by CE Zones and concerned CWEs during their inspections to the sites and appropriately recorded, more so when the tender documents issued by this HQ.
- (e) During the investigation of this particular case, GE and his staff were blamed for the poor quality of work. This could have been avoided, had the CE Zone and CWE taken appropriate and timely action and issued suitable inspection notes based upon their visits to site. There is, therefore, a definite requirement of intimate and serious involvement in handling/executing work of this nature right from the level of Zonal CE, his staff/advisers to CWE's concerned who are there to ensure that engineers on ground, execute the work properly. It has, therefore, been decided by the E-in-C's that in future for lapses of this nature, CE, Zone and CWE concerned, will have to share the responsibility for substandard workmanship.

Sd/-

(Y.P. Beotra)

Brig.

Dy DGW (AF)

for Engineer in Chief

APPENDIX II

Conclusions and Recommendations

Sl. No.	Para No.	Ministry concerned	Conclusions/Recommendations
1	2	3	4
1	1.12	Defence	<p>In their earlier report the Committee had found that there was complete lack of supervision and failure to enforce quality control in the construction of an air-field which was required to be used as a forward base for supporting air operations during hostilities. Due to lack of adequate supervision by the Engineers and the executive staff, work which was sub-standard was taken over. Though the air-field was completed in November, 1975 and handed over to users in March, 1976, it was not put to use until October, 1976, by which time the stipulated period of one year for rectification of the defects by the contractor had almost expired. Non-use of the runway either by aircraft or by simulated vehicular traffic for about a year after its completion caused age hardening of bitumen and resulted in early deterioration of the airfield. Under these circumstances the airfield had to be declared hazardous to flying till completion of resurfacing of the runway at a cost of Rs. 32.15 lakhs. Under orders of the Air-Headquarters a Court of Inquiry was held to Investigate into the circumstances under</p>

which the air-field had become unfit for operations and also to ascertain whether the construction of the air-field and material used therefor were as per provisions specified in the contract agreement.

2 1.13 Defence

The Committee had expressed deep concern over the fact that even though a number of serious defects had been noticed even on preliminary inspection of the air-field, the air-field was not put to use till October 1976 by which time the stipulated guarantee period of one year for rectification of defects by the contractor had almost expired. The Committee have been informed that remedial instructions have been issued to all concerned. The Committee, however, note that these instructions are a mere direction to all the IAF commands to issue instructions to all the stations under their control to avoid the recurrence of such situations in future. Mere issue of exhortive directive does not seem to be sufficient in a matter of great importance involving national security. The Committee feel that proper study of the lapses and weaknesses of the inspection and control procedures should have been undertaken with a view to spelling out detailed instructions for macro and micro planning, inspection and monitoring procedures to avoid recurrence of such failures in future. The Committee would urge the Government to initiate appropriate action now under intimation to the Committee. The Committee would also like to stress the need for extra caution and abundant care in the planning of such works in future.

3 1.14 Defence

The Committee had adversely commented upon the period of 3 long years taken to consider and approve the findings of the Court of Inquiry. The Committee had recommended that whosoever was responsible for such dilatoriness should be taken to task. In their action taken note the Ministry of Defence have stated that it is not possible at this stage to do the needful since a number of officers of Air Headquarters/Engineer-in-Chief's Branch who dealt with the case have since retired/gone on release. The Committee had also observed that the punishment given to the three Supervisory Officers, a Lt. Col., a Captain and a Subedar on finalisation of the Court of Inquiry proceedings was not at all commensurate with the gravity of the offence. According to the Committee, deterrent punishment would have been more appropriate. On this aspect also, the Ministry of Defence have stated in their action taken note that it is not possible to review the penalty already given to them at this stage as the case has become time barred and the concerned Garrison Engineer has already retired. The Committee are constrained to observe that timely steps have not been taken to enforce responsibility for the aforesaid abnormal delay of 3 years in considering the findings of the Court of Inquiry and for complete lack of supervision even in such a serious matter affecting the security of the country. The Committee cannot but express their strong displeasure and dismay at this attitude of helplessness by

the Ministry of Defence. They also recommend that timely and prompt action should invariably be initiated in such cases. In pursuance of the recommendations made by the Committee in their earlier Report, Government have issued instructions on various aspects to avoid various acts of omission and commissions noticed in this case. The Committee hope that adequate supervision will be kept by all concerned to ensure the implementation of all these instructions.

4 1.15 Defence

While commenting on the various lapses that have taken place in this case, the Committee had referred to the lack of supervision by the senior Engineers of the Military Engineer Services, and had observed that their share of responsibility was greater. The Committee are unhappy to note that despite the fact that the CWE* and the Zonal Chief Engineer were found to have failed to exercise proper supervision, the Ministry of Defence have not initiated action against those responsible for such casual supervision, and have merely "noted the observations of the Committee." The Committee are, to say the least, astonished at such an indifferent attitude towards their carefully considered recommendation. The Committee would like the Ministry of Defence to initiate appropriate action against those found wanting in the performance of their duties with due care and caution.

*Commander Works Engineer

5. 1.16 Defence

In this connection, the Committee are surprised to note the variations prevailing in the procedures and time frames governing the Courts of Inquiry in different services. For example, in the Army it is about 2 months from the date of discovery of the loss to completion of the proceedings vide Army Order dated 1st June 1981, while in the Air Force it is 12 months from the date of detection of the loss vide Air Force Order dated 21st July 1984 and in the Navy 3 months from the date of happening of the incident or event vide Special Navy Order of 1982. Even within the Army, there appears to be a different set of rules regarding Courts of Inquiry in Military Engineer Services. The Committee recommend that the existing procedures/time-frames may be rationalised and a common set of rules framed for all the three services. The best features of the different regulations could be integrated and a common set of regulations framed.

The Committee further recommend that the progress of such Courts of Inquiry should be monitored by the three Service Headquarters once every fortnight. It should be ensured that there is normally no delay over the time-frame prescribed and that, if any, delay is anticipated, prior approval of the Service Headquarters should be sought and secured.

PART II

MINUTES OF THE 40TH SITTING OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH FEBRUARY, 1987

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1630 hrs.

PRESENT

Shri E. Ayyapu Reddy—*Chairman*

Members

2. Shri J. Chokka Rao
3. Shri Amal Datta
4. Smt. Prabhawati Gupta
5. Shri G.S. Mishra
6. Shri Vilas Muttemwar
7. Shri Rameshwar Neekhra
8. Shri Rajmangal Pande
9. Shri H.M. Patel
10. Smt. Jayanti Patnaik
11. Shri Girdhari Lal Vyas
12. Shri Nirmal Chatterjee
13. Shri M.S. Gurupadaswamy
14. Shri Virendra Verma

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri K.H. Chhaya—*Joint Secretary*
2. Shri Brahmanand—*Senior Financial Committee Officer*
3. Shri S.M. Mehta—*Senior Financial Committee Officer*

REPRESENTATIVES OF AUDIT

1. Shri M. Parthasarthy—*Addl. Dy. C&AG (Report-Central)*
2. Shri M.M.B. Annavi—*Director of Audit (DS)*

3. Shri Baldev Rai—*Director (Report)*
4. Shri P.K. Bandyopadhyay—*Director of Receipt Audit-II*
5. Shri N.R. Rayalu—*Joint Director (R-C)*
6. Shri N.L. Chopra—*Joint Director of Audit (DS)*
7. Shri S.K. Gupta—*Joint Director (C&CX)*
8. Shri K. Krishnan—*Joint Director (Direct Taxes)*

The Committee considered and adopted the following draft Reports with certain modifications as shown in* Annexures I, II and III :

(i) Draft Report on action taken on recommendations contained in 45th Report (8th Lok Sabha) regarding Construction of a sub-standard airfield.

(ii) × × × × × × × × × × × ×

(iii) × × × × × × × × × × × ×

2. The Committee also approved the modifications/amendments suggested by Audit as a result of factual verification of the aforesaid Reports.

3. The Committee also authorised the Chairman to present these Reports to the Lok Sabha.

4. × × × × × × × × × × × ×

The Committee then adjourned.

Annexures II and III not printed.

ANNEXURE II

AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATIONS MADE BY THE PUBLIC
ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE IN THE DRAFT REPORT ON ACTION
TAKEN ON THEIR 45TH REPORT (EIGHTH LOK SABHA)
RELATING TO CONSTRUCTION OF A
SUB-STANDARD AIRFIELD

<i>Page</i>	<i>Para</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
1	2	3	4	5
6	1.13	2-3	were noticed	had been noticed
6	1.13	4	<i>Delete</i> "action rectified was"	"to get the defects not initiated"
6	1.13	10	directions	direction
6	1.13	11	<i>Delete</i> "further"	
6	1.13	13	directive do not	an exhortive directive does not
6	1.13	17	to spel out	with a view to spelling out
6	1.13	20	incidents	failures
6	1.13	20-22	<i>Delete</i> "The Committee are unhappy at the cryptic manner in which attempt has been made to pass on the buck"	
6	1.13	25	in planning	in the planning
7	1.14	4	whomsoever	whosoever
7	1.14	14	should	would
7	1.14	22	approval of	considering
7	1.14	24	relating to	affecting
8	1.14	1	<i>Delete</i> "and dismay"	

1	2	3	4	6
8	1.14	1-2	Self inflicted helplessness of	helplessness by
8	1.14	4	all such cases, so as to eliminate such situations in future	such cases
8	1.14	8	constant watch	adequate supervision
8	1.15	2	noticed	referred to the
8	1.15	8	for bringing to book	against
8	1.15	9	but	and
8	1.15	10	stated that they have noted the observations of the Committee	"noted the observation of the Committee"
8	1.15	11-13	Substitute the existing lines by "The Committee are, to say the least, astonished at such an indifferent attitude towards their carefully considered recommendation."	
8	1.15	13-14	Delete "deprecate such a casual approach in enforcing public accountability and"	
8	1.15	16	in performing	in the performance of
9 Add the following new paragraph			"1.16 In this connection, the Committee are surprised to note the variations prevailing in the procedures and time frames governing the Courts of Inquiry in different services. For example, in the Army it is about 2 months from the date of discovery of the loss to completion of the proceedings vide Army Order dated 1st June 1981, while in the Air Force it is 12 months from the date of detection of the loss vide Air Force Order dated 21st July 1984 and in the Navy 3 months from the date of happening of the incident, or event vide Special Navy Order of 1982. Even within the Army, there appears to be a different set of rules regarding Courts of Inquiry in Military Engineer Services.	

1

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The Committee recommend that the existing Procedures/time-frames may be rationalised and a common set of rules framed for all the three services. The best features of the different regulations could be integrated and a common set of regulations framed.

The Committee further recommend that the progress of such Courts of Inquiry should be monitored by the three Service Headquarters once every fortnight. It should be ensured that there is normally no delay over the time-frame prescribed and that, if any, delay is anticipated, prior approval of the Service Headquarters should be sought and secured.