

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESIDENT'S STANDARD
PRESENTATION TO
21 SQUADRON AND 116 HELICOPTER UNIT**

Jodhpur, Rajasthan - March 4, 2015

1. It gives me immense pleasure to be here today at Air Force Station Jodhpur, one of the oldest and premier air bases of the Indian Air Force in the Rajasthan Sector, to award Standards to 21 Squadron and 116 Helicopter Unit. These distinguished flying Units have a glorious past and a rich tradition 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 has also provided aid to its 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 in the past is etched in our memories. The nation is immensely proud of Indian Air Force and remains indebted to the air warriors for their selflessness and sacrifice.

3. As a responsible nation, India is firmly committed to peace and stability for which we need an effective deterrence and a strong defence force. While the nation is striving for an all-round economic growth and social empowerment of its citizens, we remain equally focused on building our defence capability that safeguards our sovereignty and territorial integrity. Thus, the confidence inspired by the Armed Forces, for the nation to progress resolutely on the path of development is really praiseworthy. The Air Warriors, who stand before us today, epitomize grit and determination in fulfilling their responsibilities towards the Nation by upholding the highest standards of service ethos. I take this opportunity to congratulate all the Air Warriors on parade for their impeccable drill and smart turnout.

4. **21 Squadron** known as the "**Ankush**" was formed in Ambala in October 1965 with Gnat Mk-I aircraft. The Squadron has actively participated in the **1971 Indo-Pak** war carrying out 108 Air Defence missions and was decorated with three Vayu Sena Medals. During "Operation Safed Sagar" in 1999 the squadron was handed over the

responsibility to guard the Srinagar Valley. The commendable performance of the personnel of the squadron during various operations has been recognised and appreciated in the form of gallantry awards. Over the years the squadron has successfully operated **Gnat Mk-I** and **MiG 21** aircraft, from nine different locations. The squadron has always lived up to its motto of “**Siddhirvasti Sahase**” which translates into ‘**Success Lies in Courage**’ and I am sure they will continue to excel in the times to come.

5. **116 Helicopter Unit** has had a glorious operational record. It was formed in Sarsawa in August 1967 with Mi-4 Helicopters. Later, the Unit has operated Chetak and recently, the Dhruv helicopter with distinction and accomplishment. This was also one of the first helicopter units to be equipped with Anti Tank Guided Missiles, thus assuming the name of ‘Tankbusters’ that the unit bears proudly till date. The unit undertook various operations in different roles like Casualty Evacuation, Logistic Support, Armed Reconnaissance and also operations in support of the Army. The Unit has carried out extensive flying on numerous occasions to bring relief to the stranded people and saved innumerable lives. Hence their motto “**AAPATSU MITRAM**” meaning “**Friends in Distress**” truly reflects the Unit’s noble and gallant involvement towards the conduct of relief and rescue operations. I am confident that the ‘Tankbusters’ will continue to grow from strength to strength in the years to come.

6. In acknowledgement and recognition of their outstanding performance, I award Standards to 21 Squadron and 116 Helicopter Unit. On this occasion, I take the opportunity to compliment the personnel and families of 21 Squadron and 116 Helicopter Unit, both past and present, for their selfless service and dedication towards the nation. The nation is indeed proud of you. I wish you all the very best for a glorious future.

JAI HIND
