



OPS PANDEMONIUM

As reported by the DAO (Lt S. Edwin Jothi Rajan)

An undisclosed Maritime Operations Centre in the Eastern sea board in the winter of 2001.

The MOC was bustling with activity as usual, with the duty personnel watching TV, reading through every bit of information in the news papers and gossiping about service exigencies that keep them busy throughout. The quietness of the evening received a jolt, with the entry of the duty LRO wearing a confused look and carrying a signal folder. That meant 'All hands to Action Stations'. The Duty LRO handed over a signal released by the C-in -C, to the Duty Commander. The LRO was doubtful about the spelling of a particular word that was corrected by the C-in-C.

The Duty Commander diplomatically drew lots about the spelling, but the votes stood divided. Another bright head suggested that the spelling had to be cross checked. Immediately, the big, beautiful dictionary of yore, at the MOC was summoned and referred to. To everybody's dismay and disbelief, the LRO was correct. There was a suggestion that the C-in-C might have used the American spelling instead of the British and discussions ensued whether it would be right to use American spelling when the nation follows the British spelling. The LRO was dispatched to bring the latest dictionary from Duty Signal Communication Officer

(DSCO). The LRO still stood correct.

Then came the million-dollar question, 'who can correct the spelling?' The combatants drew arms in defence. The Duty Commander vowed that it is beyond his official power to make a correction in the draft of the C-in-C and decided to pass the ball into the court of the DSCO. The DSCO, a Special Duty List Officer, understood the plot to butcher him and returned the same with an official note, that the powers vested in him do not rise above the correction of technical snags in a signal and the correctness of spelling and grammar was beyond his purview. The only person who could do something was the CSO(Ops) and as luck would have it, he was not available to give a ruling on the issue. Next, the Command Operations Officer(COO) was consulted and he strongly felt that the Command, Communications Officer(CCO) was the authority on signals. Unaware of the approaching storm, the CCO had gone out.

As the issue gained momentum and since quality time was being wasted, the LRO was dismissed and the young Duty Administrative Officer(DAO) was pressed into action. The service gypsy roared to the residence of NA to C-in-C with the DAO, the signal folder and dictionaries flagged for ready reference. The DAO heaved a sigh of relief, as if a great war exercise was over, when the NA corrected the spelling without batting an eyelid, completely unaware of the havoc the signal has caused in the MOC.

The Duty Administrative Officer(DAO), a young lieutenant, who was doing his first duty at MOC had a small doubt, "Will the C-in-C ever know about the brainstorming at MOC?" and after all, "who is the right authority to correct a spelling?"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author Lt Edwin J Rajan (70381-F) is an Education Officer with a Master of Philosophy degree in English Literature from Manonmanium Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu. He was commissioned in Feb 1996. He has served as instructor in INS Chilka and INS Mondovi. He also had a tenure as Staff Officer (Education) in Eastern Naval Command. He is presently borne in the books of INS Circars. Anecdotes of similar nature can be shared with the author at sejr@rediffmail.com.

