

## Operation Trident

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This article will give full details about Operation Trident within the context of the IAS Exam.

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### Background of Operation Trident

Hostilities between India and Pakistan had broken out on 3 December 1971. While the Indian army pushed forward deeper into East Pakistan (Later Bangladesh) it took steps to ensure that West Pakistan would not provide any assistance whether by land or sea.

The port of Karachi was the headquarters of the Pakistani Navy and its entire fleet was based in Karachi Harbour. Karachi was the hub of Pakistan's maritime trade as well. Blocking Karachi port would cripple its shipping and inadvertently cause an economic crisis in Pakistan.

The Western Naval Command along with Indian Naval Headquarters in Delhi planned an attack on Karachi port. A strike group was formed for this purpose consisting of these Vidyut-class missile boats already developed off the coast of Okha. Since these boats had radar and operational restrictions, support vessels like submarines and an oil tanker were assigned.

The following were the Vidyut-class missile boats:

1. INS Nipat
2. INS Nirghat
3. INS Veer

All three were armed with Styx missiles, courtesy of the Soviet Union. The task force was under the command of Babru Bhan Yadav

## Events During Operation Trident

On December 4, the strike group reached 460 kilometers south of the coast of Karachi, staying out of the radar range of the Pakistan navy and Air Force. Pakistani Aircraft lacked night attack capability and hence it was decided that the operation would be carried out between dusk and dawn

Identifying Pakistani ships at port INS Nirghat fired its Styx missiles, a PNS Khaibar, a destroyer. PNS Khaibar mistakenly activated its anti aircraft system thinking it was a missile from an aircraft. Upon being hit by the Styx missile, Khaibar took enormous damage being flooded both by water and smoke. A second missile from INS Nirghat sunk the Pakistani destroyer killing 222 sailors

INS Nipat fired two Styx missiles at a cargo vessel MV Venus Challenger and PNS Shah Jahan, a C-class destroyer. Both were damaged badly and the Venus Challenger sank following an explosion of ammunition it was carrying. INS Veer targeted and sank PNS Muhafiz, killing 33 sailors.

INS Nipat continued its operations at Karachi port by targeting the oil storage tanks. Emptying its payload of missiles, one of them hit the oil tanks which completely destroyed it. This loss would lead to a fuel shortage for the Pakistan Navy. Having completed its task, the Indian Naval force returned to the nearest ports.

Following their departure, the Pakistani Naval HQ deployed rescue teams to search and recover any survivors of its downed vessels. Since Muhafiz sank before any distress signal could be sent, its fate was learned when its survivors were rescued .

## Aftermath of Operation Trident

The Pakistani Air Force responded by carrying out an attack on Okha Port. But the Indian Navy had already moved its assets like missile boats to prevent any damage. However, a destruction of a large specialized fuel tank did prevent any incursion.

Operation Trident put the Pakistan Armed Forces on high alert and . There was a case of friendly fire when a reconnaissance aircraft misreported Pakistani frigate as an Indian Navy missile boat. Fighter jets scrambled strafed the vessel and caused some casualties and damage. It was later discovered the supposed missile boat was the frigate PNS Zulfiqar

The operation was a resounding success as there were zero casualties on the Indian side. It was regarded as one of the most successful naval operations since World War II. Three days later following the end of Operation Trident, another naval offensive would be carried out - Operation Python