

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF
STANDARDS TO 117 HU AND 223 SQUADRONS OF
INDIAN AIR FORCE**

Adampur, November 16, 2017

1. This is my first visit to Punjab after taking over as President of India. I am honoured to be in a state with such a rich heritage. This is the land of sainiks and sants, of soldiers and spiritual leaders. I am especially fortunate to come here in November, a month in which we are marking the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev ji and the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji. I bow to those great nation builders from Punjab.
2. The contribution of Punjab to our armed forces, and of our armed forces to our nation, has been enormous. That is why, in my role as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, I am truly glad that my first visit to Punjab has brought me to the Air Force Station in Adampur to award Standards to the 223 Squadron and the 117 Helicopter Unit of the Indian Air Force.
3. Air Force Station Adampur is among the oldest and best-known bases of our Air Force. It has grown from a small airstrip to a fully operational base, hosting a variety of weapon systems. The airbase has remained operational since inception. It was the setting of great heroism during the wars of 1947, 1965 and 1971.
4. Both units being honoured today have a history of professional excellence. The nation honours them with a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for dedication and courage in the face of adversity. I compliment the air warriors on parade for their impeccable turnout and smart movement.
5. India's rise in the international system has many dimensions to it. But it draws heavily from the capabilities and valour of our Armed Forces. Though we remain firmly committed to peace, we are determined to use all our might to protect the sovereignty of our nation. Each time we have had to do so, our valiant men and women in uniform have risen to the occasion. Every citizen of India sleeps securely because he or she knows that you are there to protect them. Our armed forces, exemplified by the air warriors

who stand before us, reflect our national resolve. And they secure the values, traditions and beliefs embodied in our democratic Constitution.

6. The 223 Squadron or the Tridents was formed on May 10, 1982, right here in Adampur. It was initially equipped with MiG-23 MF aircraft. Whether flying the MiG-23 or the formidable MiG-29 upgrade aircraft today, the squadron has a remarkable operational record. This squadron is one of the few that remains alert 365 days a year. It truly lives up to its motto of Vijaya Amogh-astraha, which means the Ultimate Weapon for Victory.
7. The 117 Helicopter Unit, or the Himalayan Dragons, was raised on February 1, 1971, at Air Force Station, Bareilly. The unit gained its initial experience in the India-Pakistan War of 1971, in the Eastern theatre. It moved to Hasimara in 1983 and flew extensive air maintenance and casualty evacuation missions in the Northeast. The unit moved to its present location, Air Force Station Sarsawa, in January 1988.
8. In Operation Rahat, Operation Megh Rahat, and numerous other humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions, the unit has worked tirelessly in helping civilians. It has an appropriate motto: Aapatsu Mitram, which means Friend in Distress. That is exactly what it is to so many of our fellow citizens.
9. In acknowledgement and recognition of their outstanding performance, I am pleased to award Standards to the 223 Squadron and the 117 Helicopter Unit. I compliment the personnel, veterans and families of the 223 Squadron, the 117 Helicopter Unit, and the Air Force Station Adampur for their devotion to the nation. India is proud of you.

Jai Hind!