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AFSPA: Army chief Bipin Rawat asks why officers, soldiers filed plea in SC

Nearly 700 Army officers and soldiers have approached the Supreme Court against the so-called dilution of AFSPA, which shielded them from prosecution without the central government's nod.

By: **Express News Service** | New Delhi | Updated: September 4, 2018 10:14:37 am



Army Chief Bipin Rawat is learnt to have pointed out that most of the signatories had never participated in counter-insurgency operations. (Express photo by Prem Nath Pandey)

Army Chief [General Bipin Rawat](#) is learnt to have questioned the need for serving officers and soldiers to approach the Supreme Court in their personal capacity against the alleged dilution of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA).

“The Army was fighting these cases, the government is aware of these cases, and AFSPA is a very strong law which provides protection to the soldiers. Now, if these guys (the petitioners) lose the case, what will happen,” sources quoted Rawat as saying during a three-hour-long interaction with Colonel-rank officers and their wives Sunday.

Nearly 700 Army officers and soldiers [have approached the Supreme Court](#) against the so-called dilution of AFSPA, which shielded them from prosecution without the central government’s nod. Rawat is learnt to have pointed out that most of the signatories had never participated in counter-insurgency operations.



He was particularly scathing in his remarks on officers of the JAG branch, saying that these lawyers had misled the officers and soldiers to ensure cases after retirement. Such an interactive session by the Army Chief is rather unusual.

Read | [AFSPA: 107 petitioners from unit whose CO is named in Manipur 'fake encounter' FIR](#)

Explaining the controversial decision to induct two types of rifles in the Army to replace the INSAS weapon system, Rawat said the Infantry would get better quality weapons while the remaining arms and services could do with less potent rifles, since they do not need to fight actively on the frontline.

The rifles with higher specifications will cost about Rs 2 lakh per weapon, whereas the other version will cost one-fourth that amount. This will ensure a saving of about Rs 6,000 crore, he said, which can be used to procure Apache helicopters. Rawat also assured the officers that with increased spending on ammunition, the Army would soon achieve self-sufficiency in production and supply of ammunition.

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He reiterated his earlier argument that the Army was fighting for Non-Functional Upgrade (NFU), on par with civilian officers, but it did not make monetary sense and was being sought for status equivalence. He also spoke about enhancement of military service pay for JCOs and restructuring of Army Headquarters and cadre