

## **The Islamic terror in Kashnir and the threat of war**

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An attack on April 22, 2025, targeting Hindu tourists in Indian Kashmir that killed 26 men has triggered a conflict between India and Pakistan. India blamed Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, but Islamabad rejected backing the group and any involvement in the April 22 attack.<sup>1</sup>

India has responded to the terrorist attack by expelling Pakistani nationals from the country, suspending the Indus waters treaty, shutting down airspace, and exchanging fire across the Line of Control. On May 7, 2025, Indian armed forces carried out missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (Operation Sindoor).

After four days of cross-border strikes, India and Pakistan have agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire deal following US mediation. U.S. President Donald Trump said on his Truth Social platform, that he was pleased to announce that India and Pakistan had agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire.<sup>2</sup>

The UN's Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, said that the ceasefire agreed between India and Pakistan is a "positive step toward ending current hostilities and easing tensions" and hopes the agreement will lead to addressing long-standing issues between the two countries.

### **Background**

India and Pakistan have each laid claim to Kashmir since 1947, when both gained independence. India and Pakistan have fought multiple times since 1947 and border skirmishes have created instability in the region for decades. Each country controls a part of Kashmir, which is divided by a heavily militarized border.<sup>3</sup>

Since the 1990s, an armed separatist insurgency against Indian rule in the region has claimed tens of thousands of lives, including those of civilians and security forces.

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On February 14, 2019, a suicide bombing in Pulwama in Kashmir killed at least 46 soldiers and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), a Pakistan-based Islamic terror group, has claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing. On February 26, 2019, the Indian Air Force launched Operation Bandar in which Indian Airforce attacked a terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan.

The Indian government claims the security situation has improved and violence has come down since PM Modi revoked Kashmir's partial autonomy in 2019, although there are still incidents of violence.

The last major attack on civilians occurred in June 2024 when 9 people were killed and 33 injured after militants opened fire on a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims to the base camp of the famed Hindu temple Mata Vaishno Devi. The Resistance Front (TRF) claimed responsibility for the ambush but later denied involvement, while the Jammu Kashmir police believes that the ambush was carried out by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, of which the TRF is considered an offshoot.

### **The Pahalgam shooting and operation "Sindoor"**

Several characteristics can be identified in the latest conflict between India and Pakistan:

- The April 22 attack was carried out in Indian-controlled Kashmir by a terrorist organization based in Pakistan.
- Shortly thereafter, border incidents began along the line of contact in Kashmir.
- The Indian military's response was directed against targets of Islamic terrorist organizations operating in Pakistani territory, thereby expanding the arena of conflict beyond the disputed Kashmir region.
- The air battles, the firing of missiles, and the use of drones further expanded the scope and intensity of the current conflict.
- A ceasefire agreement brokered by the US.

### **The Pahalgam shooting**

Pahalgam is a picturesque town in the Himalayas often described as the "Switzerland of India" and a popular tourist destination, both domestically and internationally. The attack took place in Baisaran, a mountain-top meadow 5km from Pahalgam.

On April 22, 2025, three terrorists armed with automatic rifles shot dead 26 tourists in the Baisaran meadow of Pahalgam in Kashmir.<sup>4</sup> The murdered victims were Indian civilians.<sup>5</sup>

Immediately after the terror attack the terrorist group known as The Resistance Front (TRF) claimed responsibility for the attack on social media, voicing discontent at “outsiders” who had settled in the region and caused a “demographic change.”<sup>6</sup>

A few days later, TRF then reversed its public stance by denying organizational involvement in the attack. On its website, TRF issued this credit claiming denial: “In the Name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. The Resistance Front (TRF) unequivocally denies any involvement in the Pahalgam incident. Any attribution of this act to TRF is false, hasty, and part of an orchestrated campaign to malign the Kashmiri resistance.”<sup>7</sup>

Founded in 2019, The Resistance Front may be understood as a close offshoot—or even just a front—of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the more well-known Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist organization.<sup>8</sup>

India blamed the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba for the Pahalgam shooting. A spokesperson for the Indian Embassy in Washington told Reuters that evidence pointed “towards the clear involvement of Pakistan-based terrorists in this terror attack.” India said two of three suspects in that attack were Pakistani nationals. Pakistan denied that it had anything to do with the April killings.<sup>9</sup>

#### **“Operation Sindoor”<sup>10</sup>**

On May 7, 2025, Indian armed forces carried out missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad stronghold of Bahawalpur and Lashkar-e-Taiba’s base Muridke. The military strikes were carried out under Operation Sindoor two weeks after the massacre of 26 civilians in Jammu and Kashmir’s Pahalgam.<sup>11</sup>

The banned Jaish-e-Mohammed’s terror group’s two ‘Markaz’ (centers) – its Bahawalpur headquarters and Narowal in Pakistan’s Punjab – functioned as a breeding ground for suicide attackers, were among the nine targets hit by missiles launched by the Indian Air Force (IAF). According to officials, the Bahawalpur center of JeM, spread over 15 acres, is run by de-facto chief Abdul Rauf Asgar and the area has residential houses of JeM founder Masood Azhar and other family members.<sup>12</sup>

India's most wanted terrorists Abu Jundal, Hafiz Muhammed Jameel, Yusuf Azhar, Abu Akasha and Mohammad Hassan Khan were killed in Indian strikes on terror launch pads in Pakistan's Muridke, the headquarters and training camp of Lashkar-e-Taiba, under Operation Sindoor on May 7. The terrorists who were killed included Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad commanders operating from Pakistan.<sup>13</sup>

India’s military said the strikes destroyed “nine terrorist camps” belonging to those it blames for an attack last month in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 26 people.<sup>14</sup> “India has demonstrated considerable restraint in selection of targets and method of execution,” the Indian defense ministry said in a statement.<sup>15</sup>

India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said on May 7, 2025, that missile strikes against Pakistan were a "carefully planned" operation that exercised New Delhi's "right to respond". Singh said the operation was aimed solely at "terror infrastructure", describing it as a calibrated response that reflected India's restraint and professionalism. "The targets we had chosen were destroyed with great precision and sensitivity, ensuring that no civilian population or area was affected. We only targeted terror camps, exercising our right to respond to the attack on our soil." Singh told reporters in New Delhi.<sup>16</sup> According to sources, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh in an all-party meeting said that the strikes have killed at least 100 terrorists.<sup>17</sup>

Pakistan said six Pakistani locations were targeted, and that none of them were militant camps. Eight people killed and 21 civilians were killed in the strikes, with five more deaths reported in cross-border gunfire that followed. A military spokesperson told Reuters five Indian aircraft had been shot down, a claim not confirmed by India.<sup>18</sup>

Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif accused Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi of launching the strikes to "shore up" his domestic popularity, but said that Islamabad had struck back.<sup>19</sup>

Islamabad called the assault a "blatant act of war" and said it had informed the UN Security Council that Pakistan reserved the right to respond appropriately to Indian aggression.<sup>20</sup>

On May 8, 2025, Indian and Pakistani soldiers exchanged small arms and artillery fire overnight along the de facto border in Kashmir. A Pakistani military spokesperson said eight people had been killed in the Indian strikes, 35 were injured and two were missing. The Pakistani army's shelling across the frontier in Kashmir killed seven civilians and injured 35, Indian police there said.<sup>21</sup>

### **Fighting for air superiority**

The defense ministry of India said its military had "targeted air defense radars and systems at a number of locations in Pakistan, adding it had been "reliably learnt that an air defense system at Lahore has been neutralized." Aviation authorities in Lahore briefly shut down operations at the main airport there and in the capital, Islamabad. Karachi airport was also closed and remained so on May 8, 2025, evening.

Pakistan's military said on May 7, 2025, that five Indian jets had been downed across the border, but New Delhi has not responded to the claims. An Indian senior security source said three of its fighter jets had crashed on home territory.

Pakistan's Defense minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told Reuters on May 8, 2025, that the J-10 was used to shoot down three French-made Rafale planes, which were newly acquired by India. Altogether, Pakistan says it downed five Indian planes in air-to-air combat. There was high confidence that Pakistan had used the Chinese-made J-10 aircraft to launch air-to-air missiles against Indian fighter jets – bringing down at

least two. At least one Indian jet that was shot down was a French-made Rafale fighter jet.<sup>22</sup>

Delhi has not acknowledged the loss of any of its planes and instead said it carried out successful strikes against what it said was “terrorist” infrastructure inside Pakistan.

India also claimed that a Pakistan AWACS was shot down inside Punjab province and three Pakistani fighter jets, F-16 fighter jet and two JF-17 fighter jets, were downed.<sup>23</sup>

### **The drone attacks**

India and Pakistan accused each other of carrying out waves of drone attacks. On May 8, 2025, Pakistan’s military said in a statement that it had “shot down 25 Israeli-made Harop drones” at multiple locations across the country. “Last night, India showed another act of aggression by sending drones to multiple locations,” Pakistan’s military spokesman Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said from the army’s headquarters in Rawalpindi, where a drone was downed. India said its air defenses had stopped Pakistani drone and missile attacks on military targets.<sup>24</sup>

### **Summary**

Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have fought two major wars, as well as numerous smaller conflicts since independence in 1947 over Muslim-majority Kashmir, which both sides claim in full and control in part.

The current theater of fighting before the ceasefire has been far broader than in previous rounds of fighting, with both sides striking deep into the other’s territory and the fighting before the ceasefire was also marked by claims, counterclaims and disinformation from both sides. Now that the conflict has paused, India and Pakistan are both claiming victory and both sides are ramping up their efforts to shape perceptions of what the fighting achieved and how it ended.<sup>25</sup>

The ceasefire agreement reached through American mediation removes the immediate danger of further escalation and the fear of a deterioration into an all-out war between India and Pakistan, but does not solve the problems that led to the current conflict.

Shortly after the ceasefire went into effect, India accused Pakistan of repeatedly violating the ceasefire agreement and Pakistan also accused India of committing violations and it remains to be seen whether the ceasefire will hold.

Pakistan's support for extremist Islamic terrorist organizations, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad and the attacks carried out by these organizations in the Kashmir region and in other areas of India (such as the attack in Mumbai in 2008), constitute the main source of armed conflicts between Pakistan and India.

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*As long as Pakistan does not cease its support for radical Islamic terrorism, the conflicts between the two countries will continue, as India will not be able to accept terrorist attacks on its territory.*

*The US, which brokered the current ceasefire agreement, the UN and other Western countries should put pressure on Pakistan to stop its policy of supporting terrorism. Only after a Pakistani commitment, it will be possible to achieve a permanent solutions to the disputes between the countries.*

### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> India says strikes on Pakistan were 'right to respond', Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> India accuses Pakistan of 'repeated violations' after ceasefire deal, BBC, May 10, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> India says troops exchanged overnight gunfire with Pakistan, Al Arabiya, May 8, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Dozens killed as gunmen massacre tourists in Kashmir beauty spot, CNN, April 22, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Max Abrahams, The Pahalgam attack in Kashmir: Why we should expect a forceful response from India, PacNet #35, May 2, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Dozens killed as gunmen massacre tourists in Kashmir beauty spot, CNN, April 22, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Max Abrahams, The Pahalgam attack in Kashmir: Why we should expect a forceful response from India, PacNet #35, May 2, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that this group is a known front for a well-known Pakistan-based organization Lashkar-e-Taiba.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>9</sup> India launches missile fire at Pakistan, Pakistan says Indian jets downed, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Sindoor is the Hindi language word for vermilion, a red powder that Hindu women put on the forehead or parting of their hair as a sign of marriage.

<sup>11</sup> Operation Sindoor highlights: India hits back after intercepting Pakistan strikes, the Hindu, May 23, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> JeM's Pak centers: Breeding ground for Fidayeen, links to Hamas, stockpiled NATO arms, the Hindu, May 23, 2025.

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<sup>13</sup> Abu Jundal, Mohammad Hafiz among wanted terrorists killed in Indian strikes on terror camps in Pakistan, Indian TV, May 10, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> India says strikes on Pakistan were ‘right to respond’, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>15</sup> India launches missile fire at Pakistan, Pakistan says Indian jets downed, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>16</sup> India says strikes on Pakistan were ‘right to respond’, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> At least 100 terrorists killed in Indian strikes under Operation Sindoor: Rajnath Singh, the Hindu, May 8, 2025.

<sup>18</sup> India launches missile fire at Pakistan, Pakistan says Indian jets downed, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>19</sup> India says strikes on Pakistan were ‘right to respond’, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>20</sup> India launches missile fire at Pakistan, Pakistan says Indian jets downed, Al Arabiya, May 7, 2025.

<sup>21</sup> India says troops exchanged overnight gunfire with Pakistan, Al Arabiya, May 8, 2025.

<sup>22</sup> Pakistan’s Chinese-made jet brought down two Indian fighter aircraft: US officials, Al Arabiya, May 8, 2025.

<sup>23</sup> India shoots down Pakistan Air Force's AWAC: All about the surveillance jet, India today, May 9, 2025.

<sup>24</sup> Pakistan, India accused each other of waves of drone attacks, Al Arabiya, May 8, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> Reha Mogul and Aditi Sangal, India and Pakistan are both claiming victory after this week’s clashes. Will cooler heads prevail? CNN, May 9, 2025.