



Brief

OPERATION SINDOOR:

India's justified calibrated kinetic strikes against terror

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Brief

***Operation Sindoor: India's justified
calibrated kinetic strikes against terror***

1 Context

An unbroken thread links India's 21-year struggle against cross-border terrorism, from the 2001 Parliament attack to the 2016 "surgical strikes" and the 2019 Balakot air strikes, into the present moment. On 22 April 2025 five Lashkar-e-Taiba gunmen slaughtered twenty-six mostly Hindu tourists at Baisaran meadow near Pahalgam, Anantnag district, after segregating the victims by religion.¹ Within twenty-four hours New Delhi's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) validated "cross-border linkages," suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and ordered a graduated response "to bring the perpetrators and their sponsors to justice."² Economic and diplomatic screws turned first: a blanket ban on Pakistani imports (2 May)³ and reciprocal port closures (4 May)⁴ reduced bilateral trade to zero and shrank the two High Commissions to skeletal staffs. Yet Pakistan army mortar fire persisted across the Line of Control, and Indian intelligence traced the Pahalgam cell to Lashkar training clusters in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK). With public outrage mounting, the government authorised a *justified* calibrated kinetic strike, Operation Sindoor.⁵



¹ Mukesh Singh Sengar, '5 Killers, 3 Spots, 10 Minutes Of Heavy Fire: How Pahalgam Attack Unfolded' NDTV (24 April 2025) <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pahalgam-terror-attack-baisaran-meadow-5-killers-3-spots-10-minutes-of-heavy-fire-how-pahalgam-attack-unfolded-8242547> accessed 7 May 2025.

² Ministry of External Affairs, 'Statement by Foreign Secretary on the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security' (23 April 2025) <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/39442> accessed 7 May 2025.

³ India bans all imports from Pakistan amid escalating tensions after Pahalgam attack 'The Economic Times' (2 May 2025) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-hits-pakistan-hard-new-delhi-bans-all-imports-from-pakistan-amid-escalating-tensions-after-pahalgam-kashmir-terrorist-attack/articleshow/120843557.cms> accessed 7 May 2025.

⁴ Pakistan shuts ports for Indian ships after New Delhi bans imports 'The Economic Times' (4 May 2025) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/pahalgam-attack-pakistan-shuts-ports-for-indian-ships-after-new-delhi-bans-imports-from-islamabad/articleshow/120862838.cms> accessed 7 May 2025.

⁵ Indian Armed Forces Launch 'OPERATION SINDOOR' 'On Nine Terror Targets Of Pakistan & Pakistan-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir' <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/indian-armed-forces-launches-operation-sindoor/>

Symbolism and Codename

The name “**Operation Sindoor**” was chosen with explicit cultural intent. *Sindoor* (vermilion) is the bright red powder that married Hindu women traditionally apply to the parting of their hair; it signifies that a woman is married.⁶ The widow of a husband does not wear sindoor. In the Pahalgam attack, several young wives were grievously widowed (for example, officer Vinay Narwal's bride lost her husband on their honeymoon). Media reports and officials explained that PM Modi personally codenamed the strike “**Operation Sindoor**” to honour these widows and highlight their loss⁷. Government sources said the Prime Minister was “clear-eyed about the human cost of the terror attack” and invoked the image of *sindoor* (the vermilion of marriage), a symbol of grief, memory and resolve.⁸ As Hindustan Times noted, the codename was meant to “humanise the victims and survivors...ensuring that their sacrifices are remembered”⁹

2 Timeline

Date	Event
22 Apr 2025	Mass-shooting of tourists at Pahalgam (26 dead, 20 injured).
23 Apr 2025	CCS meeting chaired by the Prime Minister: IWT suspended; diplomatic downsizing; travel curbs on Pakistani nationals.
2 May 2025	Directorate-General of Foreign Trade notifies total import ban on Pakistani goods “in the interest of national security.”
4 May 2025	Islamabad bars Indian vessels: both sides restrict port access.
6 May 2025 23:45 IST	Final green-light issued from South Block; tri-service strike force moves to launch positions.
7 May 2025 01:05–01:22 IST	<i>Operation Sindoor</i> —nine precision engagements against JeM/LeT/Hizbul sites in Pakistan & PoJK.

⁶ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/why-was-indias-strikes-on-pakistan-pok-named-operation-sindoor-pahalgam-terror-attack-101746581049394.html#:~:text=Sources say that the name, killed in front of them>

⁷ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/operation-sindoor-name-by-pm-modi-to-avenge-pahalgam-attack-death-men-widow-women-india-strikes-pakistan-terrorists-2720743-2025-05-07#:~:text=Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally, April 22 Pahalgam terror attack>

⁸ <https://www.businesstoday.in/india/story/operation-sindoor-narendra-modi-indian-army-navy-air-force-air-strike-pakistan-pahalgam-terror-attack-474993-2025-05-07#:~:text=Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally, the April 22 Pahalgam attack>

⁹ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/why-was-indias-strikes-on-pakistan-pok-named-operation-sindoor-pahalgam-terror-attack-101746581049394.html#:~:text=Sources say that the name, killed in front of them>

7 May 2025
03:15 IST

Ministry of Defence press release: strikes “focused, measured, non-escalatory.”

7 May 2025
Morning

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar urges “zero tolerance for terrorism” and briefs key partners.

7 May 2025
Daylight

Reuters photographs show damage in Muzaffarabad; Pakistan allegedly reports 8 dead, 35 wounded. Misinforms international media on Fighter jets being involved.

7 May 2025
10:30 AM

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, Col. Sofiya Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh addressed the media on Operation Sindoor.



3 The Operation

According to official statements, Operation Sindoor was carried out solely with long-range precision munitions – effectively, a naval/missile strike – and no *Indian fighter aircraft were involved*. The MoD’s 01:44 AM statement made clear that “Indian military assets had not

targeted any Pakistani military installations” but struck only jihadist infrastructure.¹⁰ Defence officials confirmed that missile strikes hit five camps in Pakistan’s Punjab (e.g. Jaish-e-Mohammed HQ at Bahawalpur, Lashkar-e-Taiba base at Muridke) and four in PoJK¹¹. Independent reports noted that the weapons included long-range air-launched cruise missiles (SCALP/Storm Shadow) and stand-off bombs (HAMMER), as well as loitering munitions (suicide drones)¹². The action was consistent as a **“missile strike” against terror targets**¹³. In fact, claims circulating on Pakistani media that India’s Air Force was engaged or had lost aircraft were dismissed by Indian authorities as misinformations.¹⁴

Targets struck. According to battle damage assessments released by the Indian Army, all nine objectives were neutralised:⁷



1. Markaz Subhan Allah, Bahawalpur (JeM HQ, 15 acre complex).
2. Markaz Taiba, Muridke (LeT flagship camp).
3. Sarjal/Tehra Kalan launch pad, Narowal (JeM infiltration node).

¹⁰ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-india-pakistan-pm-modi-monitoring-operation-sindoor-throughout-the-night-sources-8348929#:~:text=Operation Sindoor, sources said, was, border terrorist operations>

¹¹ [https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-india-pakistan-pm-modi-monitoring-operation-sindoor-throughout-the-night-sources-8348929#:~:text=The Ministry of Defence confirmed, Taiba \(LeT\) in Muridke](https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-india-pakistan-pm-modi-monitoring-operation-sindoor-throughout-the-night-sources-8348929#:~:text=The Ministry of Defence confirmed, Taiba (LeT) in Muridke)

¹² <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-india-targets-terrorist-training-camps-in-pakistan-pok-revenge-for-pahalgam-8349461#:~:text=What Weapons Did India Use, In 'Op Sindoor>

¹³ [https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-after-indias-op-sindoor-success-flood-of-misinformation-from-pakistan-8349280#:~:text=Following the April 22 terror, Taiba \(LeT](https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-after-indias-op-sindoor-success-flood-of-misinformation-from-pakistan-8349280#:~:text=Following the April 22 terror, Taiba (LeT)

¹⁴ [https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-after-indias-op-sindoor-success-flood-of-misinformation-from-pakistan-8349280#:~:text=Following the April 22 terror, Taiba \(LeT](https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/operation-sindoor-after-indias-op-sindoor-success-flood-of-misinformation-from-pakistan-8349280#:~:text=Following the April 22 terror, Taiba (LeT)

4. Mehmoona Joya school compound, Sialkot (HM training wing).
5. Markaz Ahle Hadith, Barnala (LeT logistics hub).
6. Markaz Abbas, Kotli (JeM cadre camp).
7. Maskar Raheel Shahid, Kotli (HM sniper & BAT school).
8. Shawai Nallah/Bait-ul-Mujahideen, Muzaffarabad (LeT recruit depot).
9. Markaz Syedna Bilal, Muzaffarabad (JeM forward transit camp).

Indian officials emphasised that no Pakistani military facilities were engaged and that strike windows were chosen to minimise civilian presence.¹⁵ Initial imagery shows primary structures collapsed or aflame; collateral damage assessments are continuing.

4 Aftermath

Battlefronts and casualties. Reuters corroborated fires at Muzaffarabad and Kotli; Pakistan tallied eight civilian deaths and 35 injuries, alleging mosque that shielded terrorist training camps and centers were damaged, while India reported the loss of three civilians to retaliatory shelling in Poonch.¹⁶ Both armies exchanged heavy artillery through the morning, but air activity subsided after dawn.

Diplomatic ripples. Islamabad branded the raid an “act of war” and sought an emergency UN Security Council meeting. New Delhi’s stance, *framed by Jaishankar’s call for zero-tolerance*¹⁷ and the MoD’s *non-escalatory* operation, secured statements of understanding from the US, France and Israel. China expressed “regret” but urged dialogue. Regional air-routes over northern India and eastern Pakistan were temporarily rerouted, stranding thousands of passengers; the DGCA placed Srinagar, Amritsar and Pathankot airports on high alert.

¹⁵ Operation Sindoor: No Pakistani civilian, economic or military targets have been hit, says Indian Embassy in Washington DC <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/operation-sindoor-no-pakistani-civilian-economic-or-military-targets-have-been-hit-says-indian-embassy-in-washington-dc/articleshow/120943846.cms?from=mdr>

¹⁶ ET Online, ‘Operation Sindoor: From Bahawalpur to Sialkot—here’s all about the nine sites destroyed by India in 1 AM strike’ *The Economic Times* (7 May 2025) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/operation-sindoor-from-bahawalpur-to-sialkot-heres-all-about-the-nine-sites-destroyed-by-india-in-1-am-strike/articleshow/120949126.cms> accessed 7 May 2025.

¹⁷ Business Today Desk, “World must show zero tolerance for terrorism”: Jaishankar backs India’s strikes under Operation Sindoor’ *Business Today* (7 May 2025) <https://www.businesstoday.in/india/story/world-must-show-zero-tolerance-for-terrorism-jaishankar-backs-indias-strikes-under-operation-sindoor-474992-2025-05-07> accessed 7 May 2025.

Economic and legal follow-through. The Directorate-General of Foreign Trade signalled that the import ban “shall remain until Pakistan credibly abjures terror,”¹⁸ while India’s water-commissioners suspended routine IWT data-exchange. New Delhi also circulated dossiers on JeM/LeT leadership to the FATF and Interpol, seeking fresh listings under UNSC Resolution 1267.

5 Story Is Still Unfolding

By evening on 7 May sporadic artillery duels persisted along the LoC, Pakistani airspace south of Lahore remained closed, and both countries had recalled high commissioners for consultations. Intelligence sources warn of possible proxy retaliation against soft targets basis their Hindu faith on the Indian mainland. Whether Operation Sindoor marks a decisive deterrent or a prelude to further escalation will hinge on Islamabad’s next move, and on New Delhi’s resolve to pair kinetic action with sustained diplomatic isolation of Pakistan-based terrorist networks.

¹⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, ‘Statement by Foreign Secretary on the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security’ (23 April 2025) <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/39442> accessed 7 May 2025.

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- ⁵ Indian Armed Forces Launch 'OPERATION SINDOOR' On Nine Terror Targets Of Pakistan & Pakistan-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/indian-armed-forces-launches-operation-sindoor/>
- ⁶ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/why-was-indias-strikes-on-pakistan-pok-named-operation-sindoor-pahalgam-terror-attack-101746581049394.html#:~:text=Sources say that the name, killed in front of them>
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- ⁸ <https://www.businesstoday.in/india/story/operation-sindoor-narendra-modi-indian-army-navy-air-force-air-strike-pakistan-pahalgam-terror-attack-474993-2025-05-07#:~:text=Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally, the April 22 Pahalgam attack>
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¹⁷ Business Today Desk, "'World must show zero tolerance for terrorism": Jaishankar backs India's strikes under Operation Sindoor' *Business Today* (7 May 2025)

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¹⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, 'Statement by Foreign Secretary on the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security '(23 April 2025) <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/39442> accessed 7 May 2025.

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