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Operation Sindoor — One Year On: India's New Deterrence Doctrine and the Changed Strategic Landscape

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Operation Sindoor — One Year On: India's New Deterrence Doctrine and the Changed Strategic Landscape

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

WHY IN NEWS

The **first anniversary of Operation Sindoor falls on May 7, 2026** — a watershed event in India’s national security history. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh (April 30, 2026) stated: Operation Sindoor “demonstrated a shift from old mindset of issuing diplomatic statements on terror attacks” and reflected PM Modi’s “unwavering commitment through decisive action.” Newspapers across the spectrum have published anniversary analyses examining India’s changed **deterrence posture**, the ongoing **Indus Waters Treaty abeyance**, and the **still-fragile ceasefire** with Pakistan.

THE PAHALGAM ATTACK — THE TRIGGER

DETAIL	FACT
Date	April 22, 2025
Location	Baisaran Valley (meadow), near Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir
Killed	26 civilians — mostly Hindu tourists; one Christian tourist; one local Muslim pony-ride worker
Weapons used	M4 carbines and AK-47 rifles
Responsibility	The Resistance Front (TRF) — a proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) — claimed responsibility twice
Mastermind	Sajad Ahmad Sheikh alias Sajad Gul, based in Pakistan
Significance	Deadliest attack on civilians in India since the 2008 Mumbai attacks

OPERATION SINDOOR — THE STRIKE

DETAIL	FACT
Date	Night of May 6–7, 2025
Duration	Approximately 25 minutes
Targets struck	Nine terror infrastructure sites linked to Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and Hizbul Mujahideen
Historic significance	First time since the 1971 war that India struck deep inside Pakistan’s Punjab province

Target Locations

SITE	LOCATION	ORGANISATION
Muridke	Pakistan Punjab — LeT’s headquarters (Markaz Taiba)	LeT
Bahawalpur	Deep Pakistan Punjab — JeM’s HQ (Markaz Subhan Allah)	JeM
Muzaffarabad	PoK capital	JeM/TRF
Kotli	PoK	LeT
Bhimber	PoK	JeM
Sialkot	Pakistan Punjab	LeT
Others	Various PoK locations	Mixed

Weapons Used (Confirmed)

WEAPON	DETAILS
SCALP (Storm Shadow) cruise missile	Fired from Rafale jets; range ~250 km; 450 kg warhead; GPS + terrain mapping + infrared terminal guidance
AASM HAMMER	Modular air-to-ground precision weapon; range up to 70 km; jam-resistant; made by Safran (France)
Rafale aircraft	Struck from within Indian airspace — stand-off strike capability
Sukhoi Su-30MKI	Also reported to have participated

India's stated outcome: Over **100 terrorists killed**; all nine launchpads destroyed (Rajnath Singh, May 8, 2025).

ESCALATION AND CEASEFIRE

EVENT	DATE	DETAIL
Pakistan drone/missile retaliation	May 8–9, 2025	Attacks on Indian military installations; cross-border shelling
India's counter-retaliation	May 8–9, 2025	Reportedly destroyed radar installations near Lahore and Gujranwala
Ceasefire	May 10, 2025 (5:00 PM IST)	Pakistan DGMO contacted Indian counterpart; ceasefire announced; US claimed facilitation role (India officially disputes third-party mediation)
Talks scheduled	May 12, 2025	No confirmed outcome
Status (May 2026)	Ceasefire nominally holding but assessed as shaky and fragile (Chatham House: “unlikely to return to status quo”)	

Aircraft losses (disputed): Pakistan claimed to have shot down Indian aircraft; India never officially confirmed losses. Independent assessment (AirForces Monthly) suggested possible loss of aircraft, but India's position is no pilots were lost.

INDIA'S POST-SINDOOR STRATEGIC DOCTRINE

New Deterrence Posture

OLD APPROACH	NEW APPROACH (POST-SINDOOR)
“Strategic restraint”	“ Proactive Deterrence with Calibrated Coercive Capability ”
Diplomatic statements after terror attacks	Military strikes as a default response to state-sponsored terror
Nuclear deterrence constrained India	India demonstrated it can act below nuclear threshold despite Pakistan’s nuclear threats
Avoided deep strikes into Pakistan	Deep strikes inside Pakistan Punjab — first since 1971

PM Modi’s Declarations (Confirmed)

- India will **by default respond militarily** to terrorism sponsored by Pakistan.
- Pakistan’s **nuclear threats will not deter India** — India “exposed Pakistan’s nuclear bluff.”
- Terrorists and **their military backers are equivalent targets**.

Military Capability Advancements (Post-Sindoor, confirmed)

- Accelerated integration of **S-400** air defence squadrons into multi-layered defence.
- Indigenous **loitering munitions** and precision-guided drones entering service.
- **Tri-service synergy** (Army-Navy-Air Force joint operations) institutionalised.

INDUS WATERS TREATY (IWT) — STATUS

FEATURE	DETAIL
IWT signed	1960 (brokered by World Bank) — divides Indus river system between India and Pakistan
India's action	Placed IWT in “ abeyance ” (suspension) on April 23, 2025 — one day after Pahalgam attack
Current status (May 2026)	IWT remains in abeyance — India has reiterated this at the UN (World Water Day, March 2026)
India's condition	IWT stays suspended until Pakistan takes “credible and irreversible steps to end support for terrorism”
Amit Shah's statement	“No, it [IWT] will never be restored.”
Pakistan's position	Treaty is “fully operational and effective”; India's suspension is illegal
Legal development	Permanent Court of Arbitration: ruled IWT has no provision for unilateral abeyance; India disputes jurisdiction
Infrastructure impact	India fast-tracked Ratle dam and other hydropower projects on western rivers after IWT constraints lifted

OTHER PUNITIVE MEASURES (REMAINING IN FORCE, MAY 2026)

- Suspension of bilateral trade
- Attari-Wagah border crossing closed
- Suspension of visa services (both directions)
- Mutual airspace closure
- No diplomatic engagement or bilateral talks

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — IR	India-Pakistan relations, IWT, bilateral crisis management, nuclear deterrence
GS3 — Security	Counter-terrorism, precision strikes, India's military doctrine, SCALP/HAMMER weapons
GS2 — Governance	National security architecture, Cabinet Committee on Security, NSA role

Mains Keywords: Operation Sindoor, Pahalgam attack, TRF (Resistance Front), Lashkar-e-Taiba, JeM, SCALP missile, AASM HAMMER, Indus Waters Treaty abeyance, proactive deterrence, calibrated coercive capability, nuclear bluff, ceasefire May 2025, India-Pakistan doctrine

Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Pahalgam attack	April 22, 2025; Baisaran Valley, J&K; 26 civilians killed; TRF (LeT proxy) claimed responsibility
Operation Sindoor date	Night of May 6–7, 2025; ~25 minutes
Sites struck	9 terror sites — Muridke (LeT HQ), Bahawalpur (JeM HQ), Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Bhimber, Sialkot + others
Historic significance	First deep strike in Pakistan Punjab since 1971 war
Weapons	SCALP cruise missile + AASM HAMMER; fired by Rafale from within Indian airspace
Ceasefire	May 10, 2025, 5:00 PM IST; Pakistan DGMO contacted India; US claimed facilitation (India disputes)
IWT status	In abeyance since April 23, 2025; still in abeyance (May 2026)
India's condition	Pakistan must end terror support for IWT restoration
New doctrine	Proactive Deterrence; military response as default to state-sponsored terror
IWT signed	1960; brokered by World Bank; divides Indus river system

Source: Operation Sindoor — One Year On: India's New Deterrence Doctrine and the Changed Strategic Landscape — [Ujyari.com](https://ujyari.com) | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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