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One Year of Operation Sindoor: Tri-Service Integration and Technology Lessons

11 May 2026 · **SECURITY & DEFENCE**

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One Year of Operation Sindoor: Tri-Service Integration and Technology Lessons

11 May 2026 · 5 min read · 1 tag

WHY IN NEWS

On May 11, 2026, the Indian Armed Forces held an **anniversary press conference in Jaipur** to mark **one year since Operation Sindoor (May 7-10, 2025)**. Unlike the May 9 anniversary review that focused on the strategic doctrine shift, this assessment by the three services highlights what has been **institutionalised** in a year – specifically the lessons in **tri-service integration, electronic warfare, drone-and-counter-drone warfare, and intelligence-strike kill chains**.

BACKGROUND: FROM PAHALGAM TO SINDOOR IN 15 DAYS

The trigger, as historical background since 2025, was the **Pahalgam terror attack of April 22, 2025**, in which **26 civilians** were killed at the **Baisaran meadow** above Pahalgam in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir. The Resistance Front (TRF) – a Lashkar-e-Taiba front – claimed responsibility. Indian intelligence traced planning to Pakistan-based outfits with ISI handlers.

After a 15-day diplomatic and operational build-up, India launched **Operation Sindoor**, launched in 2025 on the night of **May 6-7, 2025**.

PHASE	DATES	ACTION
Phase 1	May 7, 2025	Strikes on 9 terror infrastructure sites in Pakistan + PoJK
Phase 2	May 8-9, 2025	Pakistan counter-strikes (drones/missiles); India's air defences engage
Phase 3	May 9-10, 2025	India strikes 11 Pakistani military airbases
Phase 4	May 10, 2025 (17:00 IST) – since 2025 a key reference date	Ceasefire via DGMO hotline

THE STRIKE TARGETS: DECAPITATING TERROR HEADQUARTERS

The 9 sites struck on May 7, 2025 (launched in 2025) were chosen explicitly to hit organisational HQs rather than peripheral training camps:

SITE	SIGNIFICANCE
Bahawalpur (Punjab, Pakistan)	HQ of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) – Markaz Subhan Allah
Muridke (Punjab, Pakistan)	HQ of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) – Markaz Taiba
Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Bhimber (PoJK)	LeT/JeM logistics and training
Sialkot district sites	Forward staging
Gulpur, Bagh (PoJK)	HuM and LeT camps

Hitting **Bahawalpur** and **Muridke** – both deep inside Pakistan’s Punjab heartland – was the operation’s most striking signalling element.

THE TECHNOLOGY STACK: WHAT WAS USED

WEAPON / SYSTEM	ROLE
Rafale + SCALP	Stand-off cruise strikes from beyond Pakistani air defence range
HAMMER PGM	Modular precision-guided munitions on Rafale; high accuracy at medium range
BrahMos cruise missiles	Supersonic stand-off (Mach 2.8+) strikes
Akashteer integrated air defence	Networked battle management for Army air defence
S-400 Triumph	Long-range SAM cover against Pakistani aerial counter-attacks
Akash and MR-SAM	Medium-range air defence
Loitering munitions (SkyStriker, Harop)	Anti-radiation and precision targeting
Indigenous drones + counter-drone systems	Surveillance, kinetic effects, and intercepts
EW suites (Tarang, Samyukta upgrades)	Jamming, deception, suppression of enemy air defences
Space-based ISR (RISAT, EMISAT)	Real-time targeting and damage assessment

ONE-YEAR INSTITUTIONALISATION: WHAT HAS CHANGED

1. Tri-Service Integration – Towards Theatre Commands

Operation Sindoor was executed by **all three services** under a synchronised plan. In the year since, the move towards **integrated theatre commands** – long debated but stalled – has accelerated. The **Department of Military Affairs (DMA)** under the CDS has fast-tracked common doctrine documents, joint logistics, and harmonised C4ISR.

2. Electronic Warfare and Network-Centric Warfare

The operation validated **Akashteer** as a network-centric air defence success. The Army has expanded **Tarang** EW deployments along the Western front. The Air Force has accelerated procurement of indigenous **SEAD/DEAD** (suppression and destruction of enemy air defences) capabilities.

3. Drone-and-Counter-Drone Warfare

Pakistan’s counter-strike relied heavily on Turkish-origin Asisguard Songar and Chinese-origin systems. India’s response validated the **CAATS (Counter-Aerial Attack on Terror Sites)** doctrine. The **DRDO indigenous counter-drone system** has been mainstreamed across forward bases.

4. Intelligence-to-Strike Kill Chain

The 25-minute Phase 1 strike window required **real-time fusion** of HUMINT, SIGINT, IMINT, and SATINT. The **Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA)** is being restructured to formalise this fusion under a joint architecture.

5. Sub-Threshold Doctrine

A standing operational template has been issued for **calibrated, precise, stand-off strikes** against terror infrastructure – below the threshold of full conventional war but above the previous restraint baseline.

DIPLOMATIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE ANNIVERSARY

- **P5 outreach** continues; India’s case rests on the documented terror infrastructure at Bahawalpur and Muridke
- **Indus Waters Treaty** remains in operational suspension; revival contingent on Pakistan-side terrorism action
- **FATF** scrutiny of Pakistan revived in the wake of Sindoor evidence
- India’s narrative: a precise, proportionate, sub-threshold response – not aggression

CONCERNS RAISED DOMESTICALLY

CONCERN	DESCRIPTION
Civilian casualty risk in deep strikes	Bahawalpur and Muridke are populated; precise PGMs mitigated but did not eliminate the risk
Escalation control	A future strike must again manage the risk of full-spectrum response
Theatre command rollout	Inter-service turf battles still unresolved
Budgetary trade-offs	Capital procurement vs. operational readiness

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3 – Internal Security and Defence

- Cross-border terrorism and India's counter-terrorism doctrine
- Modernisation of armed forces; theatre commands and tri-service integration
- Indigenous defence technology and the Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence pillar

GS Paper 2 – International Relations

- India-Pakistan relations; FATF and counter-terror financing
- Role of Indus Waters Treaty in bilateral leverage

Mains Angles

- ❶ One year on, has Operation Sindoor produced structural changes in India's defence architecture, or is it a one-off? Discuss.
- ❷ Examine the role of indigenous technology in shaping the outcomes of Operation Sindoor.
- ❸ "Integrated theatre commands are an operational necessity, not a political choice." Comment.

FACTS CORNER – KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
OPERATION SINDOOR (MAY 7-10, 2025) – LAUNCHED IN 2025, ONE-YEAR REVIEW (MAY 11, 2026):

Trigger, as historical context since 2025: Pahalgam attack, April 22, 2025; Baisaran meadow; 26 civilians killed; TRF (LeT proxy) claim

Phase 1 (May 7): 9 terror sites struck; key HQs hit – Bahawalpur (JeM) and Muridke (LeT)

Phase 3 (May 9-10): India strikes 11 Pakistani military airbases

Ceasefire since 2025: May 10, 2025, 17:00 IST – via DGMO hotline (Pakistan-initiated)

Weapons: Rafale + SCALP and HAMMER PGMs; BrahMos; loitering munitions; tri-service execution

Air defence: Akashteer + S-400 Triumf + Akash + MR-SAM

Anniversary press conference: Jaipur, May 11, 2026

KEY INSTITUTIONAL MOVES POST-SINDOOR:

Accelerated theatre command discussion under DMA (CDS)

Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) restructured for fusion

DRDO counter-drone system mainstreamed

Akashteer scaled across Western Command

Sub-threshold strike doctrine formalised

KEY TERMS: SEAD/DEAD (SUPPRESSION/DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY AIR DEFENCES); C4ISR (COMMAND, CONTROL, COMMUNICATIONS, COMPUTERS, INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, RECONNAISSANCE); CDS (CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF); DMA (DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS).

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