

# Terrorists' Modus Operandi in Jammu and Kashmir

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## Abstract

*Terrorism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has completed almost 15 years. It marked its arrival with blasts in Srinagar city in 1988 and subsequently expanded to other parts in a well-planned and organised manner. It has the ingredients of a professionally run movement. Initially, majority of the terrorists were locals who had crossed over to Pakistan in large groups in 1987 and returned after obtaining training, but gradually the foreigners, mostly Pakistanis, replaced them. Locals or foreigners, terrorists depend fully on the public support—obtained voluntarily or through coercion. For their success terrorists adopt unconventional methods in their operations. Though their masters guide them from across the border, yet terrorists follow strict discipline to maintain secrecy of their operations, movements, and other activities. They are highly motivated for survival against all odds and with the desire to succeed in their mission. Whereas terrorists' modus operandi have undergone change over the years, the vastness of the area, mountainous terrain and widespread population makes it difficult for the security forces to achieve complete grip on the terrorists. This paper looks into some of the facets of terrorism that help it to continue despite the overwhelming presence of security forces in the state.*

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## Pakistan's Designs

Pakistan's *raison d'être* was based on the two-nation theory that the Hindus and Muslims cannot stay together under one umbrella and it led to the partition of India and the birth of Pakistan. It thinks of Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of partition and considers that Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), being a Muslim majority state, contiguous with its territory, should be a part of Pakistan and not of India (notwithstanding the Instrument of Accession signed by the

then Maharaja Hari Singh that Pakistan considers invalid and illegal). It questions India's secular credentials and always propagates that Muslims are not safe in India. Fired by this ideology it made attempts thrice in 1947-48, 1965 and 1971 to annex J & K through wars against India, but failed. It felt humiliated when its eastern part became an independent nation (now known as Bangladesh). This questioned the very basis of two-nation theory on which Pakistan was created. Further, its failure in India's Punjab where it supported the terrorists to carry on a secessionist movement made the Pakistan Army and political leadership suffer from a sense of desperation and frustration. Eventually, post-1989, Pakistan having gained the confidence and capabilities that it derived from the successful Afghan Jihad, started low intensity conflict in an effort to capture J&K. For a very long time Pakistan has given an impression to the world community that it is only providing diplomatic and political support to the mujahideens in Jammu and Kashmir and not infrastructural support—despite overwhelming evidence against its claims. Post-9/11, Pakistan obliquely conceded that terrorist training camps were flourishing on its soil and made tall promises to the international community of closing all such camps (sometimes within a day). But nothing happened and terrorists continue to operate from their bases in Pakistan with full support from the Pakistani establishment particularly its Army and the ISI. Its strategic goal remains to annex Jammu and Kashmir and also cause further disintegration within India. Pakistan's ulterior design is further corroborated by the fact that the stated objective of almost all the terrorist organisations remains merger of J & K with Pakistan with the second option of independence, while the internationally acknowledged free and fair elections conducted by India saw a democratically elected popular government for the people of the state. To achieve its strategic goals, Pakistan initiated low intensity conflict against India and began to motivate, recruit, train, finance, and provide weapons and explosives to terrorists and influenced them to carry out activities against India. Many facets of terrorists operating in J&K have emerged over the years with linkages in Pakistan.

### **Motivation to Join Militancy**

What motivates a young person to join such a hard life and remain away from his family? A terrorist knows fully well that he has to be prepared to face death. Is it only for so called jihad? How many of them really understand the meaning of jihad? The official version (cover) given by Pakistan in favour of the youth joining militancy is—*To liberate the land of Jammu and Kashmir from the*

*infidels, mujahideens are fighting the illegal occupation by India, and to seek revenge against the atrocities committed by the security forces against the locals.*

Interrogation of the apprehended terrorists has revealed a mixed picture. There have been many a youth who have joined militancy to wage jihad. Ask them the meaning of jihad and they reply—to kill as many Hindus (though the statistics speak more Muslims having been killed) and security personnel as possible. A few others state adventure as the motivating force. This is corroborated when one seizes photographs of terrorists holding Kalashnikovs and wireless sets with flowing beards. It makes them feel powerful, respected and feared among masses.

If adventure is not a good enough reason, intimidation takes over. Senior terrorist commanders (Area, Divisional) visit villages or such houses where children are in the age group of 15-17 years and the parents are motivated (read threatened) to hand over one child for the cause of jihad. After a child joins the militants, parents neither disclose the whereabouts of the child nor report the matter to the police. Such information takes time to come to the notice of security forces and on being questioned, parents attribute it to their wards missing from home or visiting their relatives. Terrorists also keep looking out for children who drop out of school and are no more interested in studies. Terrorism provides them with an easy alternative. Such children are easy to be motivated. There have been many occasions where children left for school and ended up as terrorists. False propaganda plays an important role. Youth are either shown some make-believe documentaries supplied by Pakistan or atrocities of security forces against civilians are overplayed. The young minds get psychologically influenced very soon and their journey begins towards terrorism.

The educated youth are motivated through literature, films, documentaries and fiery speeches by the likes of Maulana Masood Azhar who specialise in indoctrinating the young minds. A vision and roadmap for a Pan-Islamic movement and its objectives is laid out. Recorded speeches of Osama bin Laden and fundamentalist leaders in Pakistan are played to convince the youth of the magnitude and reality of the movement. ISI officers visit training camps to indoctrinate and spread false propaganda against India-*kafirs*.

Money, name and fame remain prime motivating factors. It has also become a way of gaining employment and supporting the families. The family of a terrorist in the village is respected. Some of the boys who have joined militancy

belong to very poor families with a disturbed childhood and a bleak future. The more fundamentalist a village is, the more vulnerable its youth are towards terrorism. Initially, a large number of young people joined militancy from the urban areas but subsequently, when they realised the futility, the urban intake declined. The rural contribution gained momentum to make up for the deficiency and at present majority of the terrorists belong to rural areas. There have been a few well educated youth who have taken up militancy but their numbers are still marginal. There was a terrorist who had obtained training in USA and was certified as a pilot. He was killed in an encounter in the remote area of Gool in Udhampur<sup>1</sup> district. Educated terrorists indulge more in indoctrinating the youth through propaganda and provide ideological basis to the movement. They work mostly behind the scenes.

Most of the foreign terrorists, or those who come from Pakistan have invariably a criminal background. They are sent by Pakistan with the promise that criminal charges against them would be dropped on their return after fighting Indian security forces in Kashmir. These terrorists are given money before they enter and after they return from India. If they do not return alive, their families receive the payment. These terrorists come for a specific duration, normally for two years. If they return safely, such terrorists are then used as examples to motivate others and their exploits are shown as proof of their sincerity towards Pakistan and the ISI.

Many join terrorist organisations to secure their life after death. They are under the illusion that they will be embraced by 72 *houries (fairies) in heaven if they embrace martyrdom while fighting for jihad*. This seems to be a great motivating factor for most of them. For a few others money is important. They join militancy and surrender after collecting enough funds to start a lucrative business. Such terrorists also extract promises from the government that no action will be taken against them after they surrender.<sup>2</sup> It is a win-win situation.

Love for the girls is another reason for some youth to join militancy. There are many instances where the boys became militants to impress their girlfriends or a youth to win a girl who would otherwise turn down his advances. Such youth are under the illusion that after becoming a terrorists they would be treated like a heroes. In one instance in 1998 in a village between Verinag and Kokarnag in Kashmir valley, a boy became a terrorist to settle scores with the father of a girl who refused to give the hand of his daughter to him. While in another case, boy joined the militants to impress the girl with whom he had fallen in love and thus he wanted to win her by becoming a mujahideen.<sup>3</sup> The

girls' parents, on realising the truth, send their daughters to safer places in Jammu or outside the state to their relatives. Some of the girls also do believe in helping the terrorists in any possible way as their contribution to jihad.

It is a safe deduction and pertinent to mention that lack of development only acts as a catalyst to distance the youth from the mainstream. Neglect by the administration of the problems of the people only adds to the widening gap. Initially it is the lack of development that causes youth to turn towards acts of terrorism; subsequently terrorism becomes the reason for lack of development. At certain places funds are released and spent every year, but no development takes place. People with vested interests ensure that the fear of terrorism continues to haunt the people and more funds are extracted from the government and the vicious cycle starts. The same goes for the government employees who do not attend their offices in the remote areas for fear of terrorist activities but make sure that their tenure is counted. The remote areas remain neglected and youth there have no other option but to join militancy because only terrorists visit them and villagers need no other proof of neglect by the administration.<sup>4</sup>

### **Communication and Intelligence Gathering**

Communication is the backbone for survival of terrorism. Formal channels of communication with links across the Line of Control (LoC) are well established. Communication stations across the border/LoC act as control stations and give instructions to the terrorist leaders. Terrorists give daily evening reports to their masters across, which are then amplified, exaggerated and transmitted by Pakistan on radio and television in the form of propaganda. Misuse of formal means of communication by Pakistan becomes apparent when as a part of its propaganda strategy it exaggerates the incidents to an extent that even a minor incident which damages the reputation or morale of security forces or of civil administration is shown as a major achievement by the terrorists (mujahideen) and any setback to terrorists is underplayed and depicted as atrocities by the security forces. Mass killings of innocent civilians are always attributed to the Indian intelligence agencies. The killings of security personnel are termed as *halak* (killed) whereas terrorists killed are eulogised as *shaheeds* (martyrs). This is one of the ways by which Pakistan gives its often-claimed diplomatic and political support to terrorists. Most of the transmitting/relay stations are located in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) while some are located inside Jammu and Kashmir. These transmitting stations are powerful with longer range whereas the groups of terrorists in the field carry small

portable hand-held sets with secrecy devices fitted in them. Terrorists have also been extensively using the Internet for communication. An interesting method of communication came to light at the time of interrogation of one of the captured terrorists where he revealed that if he puts a 'dot' at the end of his name in the e-mail message, the recipient must know he is in a very difficult situation and can be captured and no further contact should be made with him.<sup>2</sup>

Terrorists sometimes deliberately surrender and speak in plain language about their movements to mislead or lure the gullible security personnel into their trap. Terrorists have seldom been trapped on the basis of their open conversations; rather the opposite has happened many a time. Also, terrorists intercept the plain conversations about the activities of security personnel and lay IEDs or ambushes. There have been many such unfortunate incidents. Terrorists maintain a high standard of communication discipline. Kenwood sets with hopping frequency and telephone facility are also being used particularly by the commanders. Divisional Commanders and Area Commanders are also given Satellite phones (Inmarsat). During the operation conducted in the general area of Hill Kaka (a safe haven in the 100 square km area) in Surankot in Jammu and Kashmir at an altitude of about 4,004 metres terrorists were found to have used satellite phones to keep in touch not only with their mentors across the LoC but even with their associates in Aligarh, Mallapuram (Kerala), Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, Kanpur and Salem.<sup>5</sup> They even made calls from STD/ISD booths at Surankot town to Gujarat one day prior to the attack on Akshardham temple. This gives an indication of the extent of their network in the country and abroad.

Besides formal modes of communication, terrorists rely on informal channels to a great extent while operating in the field to maintain secrecy and mislead the security forces. Though communication sets used by terrorists are of high quality and their monitoring is very difficult, yet they ensure that whatever conversation takes place is in coded form. For example, in Gandoh area of Doda district, it was found in one of the search operations, that terrorists had formulated a system by which they had written the names of security personnel officers and codes regarding their movements. It also contained code words allotted to some of the items needed by the terrorists for example, *Atta* (flour) for explosives, *Aloo* (potato) for grenades, etc. The written code document also contained the code numbers for different high-ranking officials or for carrying out different activities for example, 24 for

laying the IED, 34 for laying an ambush, 44 for the brigade commander, *Chidiya* (bird) for helicopter and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Terrorists mostly rely on the villagers or their sympathisers for giving them information about the movement of security forces. Methods adopted are usually very innocent and common e.g., occupants of a house located near a security post used to burn the dry Chinar leaves in the fields and the smoke so generated could be seen by the terrorists from a distance. The smoke so emitted was an indication to the terrorists about the movement of security forces in that area. Burning of dry leaves is a very common activity carried out in Kashmir valley and does not raise any suspicion under normal circumstances.<sup>6</sup> But if the smoke emitted is from a designated house, that has a message for the terrorists.

Even religious places like mosques are also used for giving information about the movement of security forces by way of premature sound of *Azaan* (call for prayer) or *Ulti Azaan* (reverse order) thus giving an indication of movement of the security forces. In one instance, whereas the time of *Azaan* was 4 o'clock in the morning, the Imam on seeing the movement of security forces, would start it at any time or read *ulti Azaan*.<sup>6</sup>

Connivance of bus drivers has also been noticed in communicating with the terrorists. In the mountains, there are very few buses that operate on a particular route and normally only one particular bus operates. It picks up the passengers from a village in the morning and returns in the evening. In that instance, the bus driver used to blow the horn a fixed number of times on seeing the security forces and the same was a communication with a message to terrorists.

Girls are extensively used as messengers, or for giving early warning. Such girls are either accomplices of terrorists or girlfriends. Sometimes they just sit outside their houses at vantage points and keep a watch on the movement of security forces or carry written messages from one place to another. Security forces, if not accompanied by lady police officers, do not search ladies/girls and in remote areas lady police officers are invariably not available for search purposes. This method is safe and secure for terrorists. In November 2000, during patrolling in a remote area of Kishtwar some terrorists detected the movement of security forces. These terrorists were staying in a *bahek* (house located in remote areas normally used during summers when *gujjars* or *bakerwals* move into them) along with a lady. On questioning the lady

the security forces found that she belonged to UP and was being used by the terrorists for preparing food for them and also provide early warning<sup>6</sup>.

Terrorists also adopt primitive informal methods of communicating like reflection through mirrors. The reflection can be seen from a distance and this is again a very common and innocent method. During the night, *mashals* (deodhar wooden sticks lighted at one end) are extensively used by villagers in remote mountainous areas for moving from one place to another. These *mashals* also become means of communication at night. Even kerosene lamps hanging on the poles are used to intimate the movements of security forces.<sup>7</sup>

In all such instances houses are selected after a careful study by terrorists and reliable persons are tasked to do the job. Such houses are the ones that can normally be seen from a distance and are located near the camps of the security forces from where camp activities can be seen easily without raising any suspicion. In villages many houses normally meet such requirements. There have been many instances where people have been arrested for possessing wireless sets given by terrorists for giving information about the movements of security forces.

## **Funding**

Funding is an important aspect of terrorism. It serves two purposes. Firstly, it takes care of the long-term well-being of the organisation, and secondly, it ensures logistic and operational preparedness. Funds attract youth to join militancy. Local and foreign terrorists are paid according to their status in the organisation and the severity of the act performed by them. Payments are also made to the families of the terrorists killed in encounters with security forces and to guides/couriers. They are made at the time of recruitment, as monthly payments to terrorists, for purchasing land for settlement, for sponsoring education and making bases, for hiring accommodation, for marrying local girls, for leveling false allegations against the security forces, and so on.

As per our calculations 75 per cent of the funding is done by Pakistan's ISI and political wings of various terrorist organisations based there, 15 per cent from abroad, and 10 per cent from within the valley.<sup>8</sup> Ninety per cent of the payments are received through the Hawala channels from destinations as far as Dubai, UK, USA, and European countries.<sup>13</sup> Payments are also made by the Pakistan High Commission in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Funds are collected openly in the name of jihad in Pakistan, UK and other countries by

the radical elements and Kashmiri diaspora. Funds are also collected through extortion of timber contractors and shopkeepers in J&K, by sale of narcotics, as collections in the mosques in India and abroad and as charities. Some officials are believed to be on the payroll of terrorists while a few contribute to the kitty. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is the largest beneficiary. It is difficult to estimate the exact amount in circulation but terrorists do maintain their accounts of expenditure and receipts. During the recently carried out operation in Surankot area a seized lashkar book revealed accounts of Rs 1.83 crore (about US \$ 4,00,000) spent during the last one year.<sup>5</sup>

### **Connivance and/or Coercion**

It is impossible for any terrorist group to survive without support from the local population, whether obtained voluntarily or under duress. Various dimensions of support include funding, shelter, information, functioning as guides/couriers, food, etc. Pakistan ensures that adequate funds, arms, ammunition and equipment are available to the terrorists to carry on with their activities. Terrorists carry money, arms, ammunition and some of their basic requirements along with them during infiltration operations. Subsequently, funds are made available to them and their sympathisers through Hawala channels. Terrorists also resort to extortion, and other modes of collection in the villages, etc. People either cooperate voluntarily or under threat. Though they do not have much choice, people in remote areas prefer to be on the good books of terrorists or prefer to remain neutral for fear of dire consequences. The cooperation is not by any affection or jihad but due to compulsion which the terrorists exploit, as the security forces cannot be present everywhere and all the time. People do not inform the security forces even after terrorists leave their houses after extortion, for fear of being branded as sympathisers of terrorists. Though the security forces maintain the confidentiality of the source and information, yet the confidence has been lacking.

Foreign terrorists mainly plan operations which are executed by local terrorists. Better trained foreign terrorists operate with the assistance of local terrorists. Local terrorists have knowledge of the terrain, deployment of security forces and culture of the area. They identify potential sources for funds in the villages and the administrative set up. It has also been noticed that terrorists who are in jail continue to operate through their contacts or partners who have been released when they come to meet them in the jail on

*mulaqat* (meeting of relatives) days. The jail has been identified as one of the safest places to run the show without the fear of being caught. Terrorists make plans while in jail and the instructions are issued on fixed days through the contacts.

Mere funds, arms and ammunition are not sufficient to carry out the business of terrorism. The terrorists need classified information about the functioning of the government and its agencies. For this purpose, terrorist organisations have been able to penetrate, though to a small extent, some of the important government establishments, and have motivated or coerced the officials to help them. There have been instances where some lower level police officials had connived with the terrorists. According to a report in *The Hindustan Times*, a Station House Officer (SHO) and another policeman were arrested after it was established that they had connived with terrorists who had carried out two fidayeen attacks.<sup>10</sup>

Some policemen take the extraordinary step of deserting their comrades and join terrorist ranks. On joining the terrorist groups these elements pass the information according to their calibre to terrorists. Though their percentage is negligible and inconsequential, yet it is a matter of great concern. There were reports sometime back that Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials in remote areas allegedly supply rations, doctors supply medicines and even attend to the terrorists, forest officials act as terrorists' eyes and ears. Some do it under threat while others do it willingly. One such case of FCI connivance in Matai-kokarnag came to the notice of the security forces.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, there have been instances where some others also connived and provided inside information. A bomb blast in the office of the Director-General of Police in Srinagar in the early 1990s was also attributed to the leakage of information of an impending meeting and that an insider was instrumental in planting the bomb.

Terrorists accept the dole in cash and kind. Shopkeepers in remote areas cannot function unless they cough out '*hafta*' (weekly payment) to terrorists. Some of the shopkeepers admit openly of having made payments to terrorists in the past and it was claimed to have stopped after deployment of security forces.<sup>7</sup> (But one cannot be sure on this as such shopkeepers don't mind paying to continue to survive and be in the good books of terrorists. Also, one never knows when the security forces would be withdrawn). The obedience/confidence level is so high that terrorists merely write their requirement (rations

or money) on a piece of paper and the shopkeepers oblige through agreed courier. Both get paid more than the normal price without inviting any attention of the security forces; it makes good business sense. Such shopkeepers also act as the eyes and ears of the terrorists as the security forces also invariably buy some items of daily use from these shopkeepers in remote areas—being the only source available. Some of the shopkeepers came under the scanner when items stored in the shops either turned out to be too costly beyond the reach of poor locals or out of culture, e.g., Action Shoes costing Rs 800 to 1,000 ( US\$ 20 to 25 ) normally worn by terrorists for greater mobility, dry cells used for sets by the terrorists for laying IEDs stored in far greater quantity or dry fruits which normally do not go with the culture and habits of the common people. In one instance a group of terrorists was killed when a source watched a little girl purchasing pencil cells from a shop in a remote village in large quantity while her father's economic condition hardly afforded them. The source followed the girl and informed the security forces. On searching the house terrorists were found to be hiding there.<sup>11</sup>

Terrorists store rations, medicines, etc., in the jungle or inaccessible terrain for consumption when they are not involved in any activity or during winters and bad weather. There have been many recoveries of stored rations by the security forces which is quite common. A report in *The Hindustan Times* speaks of a terrorist safe haven in the 100 sq km jungles of Surankot. Terrorists used to procure rations from Surankot town; about 7,000 kgs of rations were recovered, besides huge stockpiles of weapons and ammunition. Such huge recoveries could not have taken place without the connivance and knowledge of shopkeepers and the carrier.<sup>5</sup>

Stocking of rations is a secondary option and is carried out normally if the terrorists want to give permanency to their presence at a particular place. It comes with its own advantages and disadvantages. Most of the terrorist groups operate in small groups of 3-4 persons and do not stay at one place for long. Small groups have their own advantages in terms of management, concealment and at the same time are strong enough to inflict casualties on security forces. Their requirement of rations being less, they normally do not store it. Such terrorists depend to a large extent on the locals for support and to survive in the high mountains. These floating groups prefer to eat wherever they are, in a known and tested acquaintance's house. They would resort to stocking ration, and use it only in case of emergency. They prefer to walk into a known house where food and shelter are readily available. It has been reported

that terrorists nowadays pay for their food to earn the goodwill of the villagers.

These groups operate in a given area of operation/responsibility and are well versed with the terrain and the deployment of forces. They operate through their sympathisers (also known as Over Ground Workers—OGWs). Teachers, nursing assistants, agriculture representatives, *patwaris*, Imams, shopkeepers, forest guards and others who are suspected to be in connivance with or are known to have collaborated with terrorists are known as OGWs.<sup>12</sup> Normally, these people are socially active and come into contact with a wider cross-section of the local population quite frequently. By virtue of this, these people are able to collect more information for the terrorists. Such people are more respectable and being government employees, come into contact with security forces also. They are used by terrorists in many ways and even to get provide shelter for them.

In summer months nomads like *Gujjars* and *Bakerwals* who migrate along with their livestock to higher mountains, become a source for terrorists. During winters terrorists either move down to villages or continue to stay in caves where rations are stored. Ration stockpiles are carried on mule-backs to the mountains. Normally, people in the hills are so widely dispersed in tough terrain that almost everyone carries winter rations on muleback. So, even when security forces notice ration being carried on the mules it is normally presumed to be legitimately meant for the villagers or *Gujjars/Bakerwals*.

People in the medical profession also help injured terrorists either voluntarily or under duress. If they respond under threat they seldom report the matter to security forces.

Summer gives terrorists freedom of movement and most of the infiltration and terrorist activities take place during this season. *Gujjars*, who move to higher reaches during summer along with their livestock become the best help to terrorists as they move along with sufficient ration. They also produce milk products that attract the terrorists. These *Gujjars* also provide early warning to the terrorists and at times mislead the security forces by identifying these terrorists as part of the family, if the security forces carry out surprise checks. But one can always identify them—the terrorists may not know the *Gujjar's* language or dialect; some of the *Gujjars* have now been given identity cards. It is surprising that in the remotest locations where an ordinary person would dread to venture, *Gujjars* move freely without fear of any danger. Even ration for the terrorists is carried on the mules as part of the consumption require-

ment of the *Gujjar* families.

*Bakerwals* also play a similar supportive role for the terrorists. Sometimes reports are received that they part with some of the livestock in lieu of passage and a guarantee of security to stay. The survival strategy of the *Gujjars* and *Bakerwals* in the remote areas—an excuse normally given to security forces—is to be on the right side of the terrorists and do whatever they ask for without any questions lest they lose their lives.

Some sections of the local people cooperate with the terrorists to level false allegations against security forces. This is a common phenomenon and puts the security forces on the defensive, at least, temporarily. Normally, false allegations are leveled when security forces are on the offensive and terrorists, in order to gain time, pay money or threaten some local to do so. Allegations vary from rape, molestation, and searching women without the help of lady police officers, extortion, ill-treatment, and theft. The media highlights such false incidents without knowing the truth. Cases are registered in the police station against a particular member or members of the search party and such persons are then subjected to investigation. Invariably, nothing substantial is revealed but the harassment caused to an individual is enormous and lowers the morale of the rest of the members. No action is taken against the persons who level such allegations at the behest of the terrorists as it is difficult to prove the allegations one way or the other.

In the terrorist-prone areas, the security forces carry out scrutiny of the identity cards. These cards are issued by the civil administration and have to be produced on request. Terrorists are also found to be in possession of such cards—either issued by some functionaries in the civil administration who are helping the terrorists, or forged ones. Terrorists keep stamps and letter pads of such issuing authorities to prepare forged identity cards or other documents. Even ration cards and other documents required to purchase property like are acquired through dubious means. The terrorists procure these official documents and move freely like bonafide citizens. Many a time, fake identity cards have been found in possession of terrorists who have been killed or arrested. Recovery of the magistrate's stamp of Kulgam during the operation on Hill Kaka in Surankot district of Poonch (J&K) bears testimony to this fact.<sup>5</sup>

Foreign terrorists who infiltrate with an aim to operate in the area for a longer period try to gain social acceptance. For this, they either marry within a

local community or purchase land. Funds for this purpose are provided by the ISI and forged documents are procured through officials for a payment. Cases have come to light where Pakistani terrorists have purchased land in Jammu and were in the process of settling down to convert these places as hideouts in 'respectable' localities after acquiring documents. In all probability, a few such hideouts have already been established.

### **Operational and Coercive Terrorist Methods**

Historically, terror is the aim of terrorists and nothing can spread terror more than killing of innocent people by adopting one or a combination of methods. Killing of innocents sends a message to the administration, the establishment and the people. It is aimed at attracting the attention of the domestic and international audience. In Jammu and Kashmir, though security forces are the obvious targets, killing of innocent people is carried out for a variety of reasons like instilling confidence in the minds of young terrorists, ethnic cleansing of minority Hindus and Sikhs, killing of informers, revenge for refusal to cooperate with terrorists or join militancy, for warning the people against becoming informers of security forces, for non-payment of extortion money, and so on. The message seems to be clear—terrorists' way of 'justice' is fast and harsh. Killing using sophisticated weapons like AK-47 remains the most common and preferred method but terrorists adopt other methods as well, which are equally effective, like:

Slitting the throats	Hanging
Strangulating with thin wire, toggle, etc.	Impairing
Burning the houses and their inmates	Lynching
Blowing up of vehicles using IEDs	Torture before assassination
Firing	Slicing
Bombing	Dismemberment of the body

In one instance, the heads of girls were tonsured because they provided assistance (water and shelter) to the security force personnel when they visited the area for an operation.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes a victim is released after a good beating.

The terrorists have carried out many massacre to force Hindus out of the Kashmir valley and the remote areas of Doda, Udhampur, Poonch and Rajouri districts. Some of the major massacres like the ones in Parankot, Prem Nagar, Nadimarg, Jammu, Chhatisinghpura, and Kaluchak killed more than 25 people at a time. These massacres are aimed at terrorising the people of the minority

community and forcing them to leave the state. It serves the two purposes of the terrorists (and Pakistan)—first, by carrying out ethnic cleansing terrorists aim to ensure that if plebiscite takes place at any given time there is no one left to vote for India (at least in the valley and the upper reaches of Doda, Poonch, Rajouri and Udhampur districts) and second, it ensures that the information sources for the security forces dry up. It is pertinent to mention that though major massacres have taken place either of Hindus or Sikhs, the Muslims far outweigh the total casualties as a result of terrorism in the state. This negates the indigenous freedom movement theory propagated by Pakistan. Table-1 gives details of the number of killings of different communities in Jammu and Kashmir since 1990.<sup>13</sup>

**Table-1: Community-wise Killings by Terrorists from 1990 to May 2003**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Hindus</b>	<b>Muslims</b>	<b>Sikhs</b>	<b>O thers</b>
1990	177	711	6	16
1991	45	768	12	12
1992	67	916	10	35
1993	87	877	7	40
1994	95	856	5	73
1995	99	983	2	55
1996	110	1,177	3	30
1997	55	920	0	9
1998	152	767	1	0
1999	98	790	0	0
2000	158	708	41	0
2001	135	859	19	0
2002	169	739	3	0
2003	42	272	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,489</b>	<b>11,343</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>270</b>

*Source* - Jammu and Kashmir Police

Destruction by terrorists is not confined to casualties of men, women and children. The terrorists have not spared even public and private properties. The figures in Table-2 reveal that during the period 1990-95, the maximum destruction of property took place, which reduced in the second half of the decade. During the first half, maximum destruction of private property of Kashmiri Pandits took place under a well thought out strategy to force them to migrate from the valley. The reduction in the second half was due to effectiveness of the operations of the security forces and casualties among

terrorists, better intelligence under the counter-insurgency grid and decline in public support as a protest against the destruction of property. Post-1995, though the houses of minority community and suspected informers continued to be destroyed, there has been a sharp reduction in the destruction of public property like bridges and government and educational buildings. The vastness of the area, mountainous terrain and wooden houses afford advantage to the terrorists to carry out destruction. There have been instances (though very few) where some people carried out destruction of their own abandoned property to extract compensation from the government by labeling it as an act of terrorism.

**Table-2: Destruction of Property by Terrorists**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>Government Buildings</b>	<b>Educational Buildings</b>	<b>Private Houses</b>	<b>Bridges</b>	<b>Shops</b>	<b>Hospital</b>
1990	646	501	129	1,242	172	202	0
1991	391	45	24	819	24	83	0
1992	564	65	57	2,312	28	200	0
1993	662	98	46	1,110	34	400	0
1994	606	172	119	666	46	162	4
1995	688	127	133	1,814	16	402	2
1996	482	52	68	602	2	161	3
1997	259	13	11	437	5	67	1
1998	177	13	15	273	1	66	0
1999	136	7	9	284	2	6	0
2000	129	14	6	330	1	107	0
2001	274	30	16	419	2	77	1
2002	255	14	10	421	4	20	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,268</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>10,729</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>1,953</b>	<b>11</b>

*Source:-* Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

While government property was the primary target, the 1990s remained a period of intense activity for the security forces who were trying to gain ascendancy over the terrorists and establish the CI grid while the state was under Governor's rule. Pakistan was pushing in large quantities of arms, ammunition and explosives with a view to maintain the momentum of destruction, internationalise the Kashmir issue, and force the Government of India to come to the negotiating table and concede concessions over Kashmir. Pakistan failed to achieve its objectives and the security forces immediately

gained control over the situation and made a significant recovery of arms, ammunition and explosives, besides inflicting casualties on terrorists.

Tables 3 and 4 give an ideas of the recovery of explosives and arms and ammunition from the terrorists, over more than a decade, explains the destructive potential of these terrorists.<sup>14</sup>

**Table-3: Recovery of Explosive Materials**

Year	RDX (in Kgs.)	Explosives	IED (Improved Explosive Device)	Grenades	Rockets
1990	0	231	0	2,502	296
1991	0	274	18	1,784	286
1992	0	285	86	2,395	245
1993	0	2,950	136	4,363	135
1994	0	1,342	126	2,603	395
1995	0	1,484	811	2,870	170
1996	166	2,381	245	3,949	378
1997	342	6,448	1020+13 boxes	5,124	479
1998	769	2,922	514	5,883	375
1999	886	2,182	466	4,093	332
2000	1,508	1,798	718	4,807	555
2001	2,547	1,009	450	4,152	392
2002*	148	205	26	510	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,366</b>	<b>23,511</b>	<b>4,616</b>	<b>45,031</b>	<b>4,080</b>

Source:- Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

\* Upto February 2002

**Table-4: Recovery of Arms**

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002*	Total
AK-47 Rifles & Pistols	1,991	3,169	4,260	3,130	3,136	3,020	3,202	2,749	2,104	1,629	1,887	2,016	351	<b>32,644</b>
UMGs	77	130	164	142	127	67	84	64	71	28	21	10	0	<b>985</b>
Rocket Launchers	108	29	62	36	31	36	43	81	140	42	59	39	1	<b>707</b>

Source: - Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

\*Upto February 2002

## **Concealment - Men and Material**

The people, houses, terrain and culture of Jammu and Kashmir provide a convinient ground to terrorists to either conceal themselves or their belongings in a manner that challenges the acumen of the security forces. In Kashmir it

has been observed that terrorists have extensively used basements of houses, false ceilings, cowsheds, bathrooms, etc., for concealing arms and ammunition. To confuse the search parties, entrances to such places are covered by placing certain common household utility items. If the security forces do not have specific information, such places normally go unnoticed and terrorists continue to escape the dragnet. There are numerous instances of such nature where terrorists have continued to remain inside a house while the security forces conducted their search. Normally, such oversight occurs when the search of many houses is carried out in a particular locality. The security forces also conduct searches in a hurry to avoid inconvenience to owners.

In one instance, it was reported that some terrorists were hiding in a house. Initially, search operations revealed nothing. A lady was sitting on a small low wooden stool and busy cooking food. She was behaving normally to the extent of cooperating with the forces in the house search. Under the wooden stool was a small carpet. When the lady was asked to move the wooden stool and the carpet, she objected. This created suspicion and the removal of the carpet under the stool led to an underground opening where about 10-12 terrorists were hiding.

In another instance, two members of the family occupied an old house. It was reported that some terrorists were regular visitors to the house. When the search commander looked into the kitchen, he became suspicious on seeing the quantity of cooked food. It was more than the required amount for two members. On further search, a hollow wall was seen in the bathroom. A break in the wall, led to a room in a basement through an underground passage where 5 terrorists were hiding.<sup>15</sup> There have been many such instances. The point is, terrorists have seldom been found through conventional search methods. Wooden houses in Kashmir afford an opportunity to infiltrate them for storage and to escape cold weather. Similarly, many a time, a large cache of arms and ammunition was found in such houses where hollow spaces had been used for hiding.

Rural areas are more difficult to search for the caches of arms and ammunition. The vastness of the area, inadequate intelligence, inclement weather, and inhospitable terrain compound the problems. Dense jungles, hollow tree trunks, and uninhabited houses in remote areas are ideal sites to conceal. In mountains and jungles unless freshly dug earth is found, it is virtually impossible to locate the sites. After rains, which are very frequent, the earth gets covered leaving no traces of digging. Moreover, the material is concealed

at a place where a sane person would not visit under normal circumstances. Items are wrapped in polythene bags before dumping. At certain places wooden underground bunkers are constructed to hide the rations and arms. Some terrorists who enter Jammu and Kashmir without weapons get them after they are retrieved from these sites. These caches are also made with an intention to retrieve them if the supply from across the border completely dries up. In this way, the caches of arms and ammunition are intended to give the movement an indigenous touch and continuity.

Messengers recruited by Pakistan bring consignments of arms and ammunition from across the border and carry it to the required site or to the concerned contact. In case of greater distance these consignments are transported to remote areas in vehicles from where these are further taken to jungles and mountains loaded on mules of *Gujjars* and *Bakerwals* as a part of their belongings. Care is taken to avoid unwanted attraction. Such messengers are paid handsomely.

Remote mountains are ideal sites for storage due to their inaccessibility and being unsafe for a common man. In the initial years, a few people who inadvertently visited remote areas were either killed or were abducted. This serves the terrorists' purpose. Articles are retrieved at a stage when the supply gets disturbed. In one of the instances, in a very remote area of Dudu-Basantgarh of Udhampur district, terrorists had hidden arms, ammunition, wireless sets underground, packed in polythene bags and the same were retrieved with the help of '*khojis*' (person who find hidden things). In another instance, terrorists had hidden weapons, arms and rations in a cave which could be accessed with the help of a long rope.<sup>7</sup> Mountains provide ample scope for caves that become ideal sites for hiding the consignments. Local shepherds keep moving around in the areas in search of grass, or for grazing their goats and sheep. They know such caves and local terrorists are acquainted with them. A few people are even tasked with constructing underground bunkers with proper wooden planks for storing weapons, rations, etc., for retrieval during winters or emergency. A carpenter narrated this episode after he was taken blindfolded and made to make planks. Search by the security forces for such consignments continues in the mountains but normally the areas selected by terrorists to hide the weapons and other items are so remote and hazardous that it becomes virtually impossible to locate them.

## **Fidayeen Attacks**

For the last four years terrorists have resorted to fidayeen attacks when they have entered the highly fortified camps of the security forces with the intention of causing maximum casualties and damage to the security forces. Whereas in case of suicide attacks, the terrorist commits the actual act, single handedly, comes laden with explosives on his body, is otherwise unarmed, and the possibility of his survival is zero. Such attacks have occurred more in the urban areas than in the rural, and in most cases terrorists have come in either police uniform or Army fatigues.

*Fidayeen* is not something new. There was the Japanese *Kamikaze* during the Second World War and the *Intifada* movement in Palestine. In *Fidayeen* attacks, the terrorist, highly armed, breaks into the target area and inflicts destruction and random casualties and tries to escape. In this, there is a chance, though remote, of the attackers escaping. The attack on Akshardham is an example of *Fidayeen* attacks. It is there among the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In Kashmir, it is being resorted to only by the foreign elements; none of the locals have much taste for it. But the *Fidayeen* is highly motivated and really goes after the target. In Kashmir approximately 70 *Fidayeen* incidents have taken place so far. Fidayeen attacks started after the Kargil operations and the beginning was made with the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters at Bandipura in Kashmir in 1999. Subsequently, such attacks took place against army and police headquarters. In most of these incidents terrorists were killed after inflicting casualties and damage but in a few cases they managed to escape in the hours under cover of darkness. While the attack on J&K State Assembly and the Raghunath Temple in Jammu are some of the high profile *Fidayeen* attacks in the state after September 11, the attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001, in New Delhi and on Akshardham Temple in Gujarat are the ones carried out outside J&K. Through these attacks terrorists were able to achieve a strategic objective because the security forces were preoccupied in protecting the camps and its surrounding areas.

## **Conclusion**

Terrorism in J&K has caused enormous destruction to private and government property in the last 15 years. Terrorists have continued to survive and operate despite serious setbacks to them in terms of casualties and seizure of arms, ammunition and funds by the security forces. Their capability to recuperate is boosted by the favourable terrain, public support and vastness of

the area as these give them the advantage to disperse and reassemble at places of their choice. Vastness of mountainous terrain is a serious handicap for the security forces as it leaves troops fatigued and wanting logistical support more frequently which is difficult to come by at short notice. What is disadvantageous to security forces is obviously advantageous to terrorists as their administrative requirements are met through the local population. A lead-time of even one hour between security forces and terrorists on a hot chase in the mountains cannot be made up due to mobility restrictions. Notwithstanding the disadvantage of terrain, security forces have been able to predict the modus operandi of the terrorists with considerable accuracy and certainty. The security forces have been able to penetrate the strongholds of terrorists and eliminate them due to planning based on correct information. Yet, to overcome the operational dilemmas caused by topographical constraints and a widespread population, more serious thought is required to be given to further strengthen the intelligence network, which must provide timely, accurate and reliable information. Intelligence is what makes a difference between a hardworking but unsuccessful security force and a successful one. It is a specialised job and must be handled with care. It is a known fact that terrorists survive and operate from within the public domain as they heavily rely on them for food, shelter, information and recruitment. They use human shields to level false allegations against security forces, demoralise them and gain time. They hide their weapons in houses and jungles. They collect funds, rations from villages. There is a need to choke the communication network of the terrorists, particularly the use of communication equipment where the locations of radio stations across the LoC are known. With the existing technology available it should not be difficult to jam the communication network of terrorists. Terrorists also have been able to survive due to connivance of the civil population. The public supports terrorists either due to fear or voluntarily. As long as public support is available, terrorists would find it easy to operate and evade the security forces. To dry up the public support, it is necessary to win over the public through public contact programmes, to be carried out by the civil administration in the remotest parts. Let the administration visit these remote areas rather than waiting for the aggrieved person to come to the district headquarters. Security forces can play a major role in making the civil administration function in the remotest parts by providing them security and other infrastructural requirements. Already the security forces have undertaken many small-scale developmental projects in these remote areas, thus infusing a sense of security and a feeling of welfare in the minds of the people.

## References/End Notes

- 1 Discussion of the author with the officer who was involved in the operation
- 2 Discussion of the author with the officials involved in interrogation of terrorists
- 3 Discussion of the author with officers of Indo-Tibetan Border Police at ITBP Academy, Mussoorie (Uttanchal) on April 26, 2003.
- 4 Based on author's personal observation while serving in remote parts on counter-insurgency operations in J&K from 1999-2001.
- 5 Thapar, Vishal, Hilkaka: A Terror enclave that flourished unchecked. *The Hindustan Times*. May 25, 2003.
- 6 Discussion of the author with officers of Border Security Force at BSF Academy, Tekanpur (Gwalior), on April 4, 2003
- 7 Author's personal experience while deployed on counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir from 1999-2001.
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- 9 Jamwal, N. S., Hawala-The Invisible Financing System of Terrorism. *Strategic Analysis*. April-June 2002, **26** (2).
- 10 Ahmad, Rashid, J&K cops colluding with terrorists held. *The Hindustan Times*. June 9, 2003.
- 11 Discussion of the author with the officer who conducted the operation in 1999 on June 30, 2003.
- 12 Discussion of the author with senior Police officer of J&K Police.
- 13 Discussion of the author with senior police officers of Jammu and Kashmir Police in Srinagar
- 14 <http://www.mha.nic.in>
- 15 Author's discussion with a BSF officer who had personally carried out the operation and was subsequently awarded the President's Police Medal for gallantry on completion of this operation.

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