



J&K Security Review-2017: State of Conflict Continues



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The Security Situation

While recovering from a sense of acute betrayal in 2016 (Pathankot and Uri attacks) by Pakistan, to the various positive overtures and the NDA government, there still was a faint ray of hope that, with concerted efforts at repairs, the much-needed mend could take place. However, that was not to be, particularly after New Delhi decided to re-inforce its kinetic measures to restore peace and order in the State, a prime concern and responsibility.

The year 2016 thus ended with the post-Uri Surgical Strike that stunned the militants and their principal backers alike. Local mischief of stone-pelting and others ducked for cover while search started for a new strategy to keep the 'pot boiling'. The end-of-the-year demonetisation and measures to choke the flow of funds to the militants and the separatists, further confirmed government's inter backbone of militancy. *

In this back-drop, there was some expectation, admittedly limited, that 2017 could witness some progress in terms of improvement in security, leading eventually to at least limited political engagements within the Valley and possibly even with Pakistan, if the latter could sort out its civil-military power sharing conflict. These did not happen as the security situation in the State, militant violence, infiltration through Border (IB) and the Line of Control (LoC), and cross-border ceasefire violations remained similar to what was witnessed in 2016. Cross-border violations and infiltrations remained on the rise, although the overall situation was brought towards some degree of normalcy by the inclusion of women self-help groups, youth, civil society and various other stake-holders.

The demonetisation drive had a profound impact not only on the flow of counterfeit currency coming from across the border for fin related incidents inside Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), but also affected the incident of daily protests and stone pelting in the disturbed d availability of cash.

Ceasefire Violations

There was a significant rise in the ceasefire violation in 2017, both along the LoC (Army) and IB (BSF) which stands at 771 and 110 (u respectively, as compared to 228 and 221 seen in 2016. ¹

No.	Year	Along the LoC (Army)	Along the IB (BSF)
1	2016	228	221
2	2017 (Dec 10)	771	110

Causalities in Ceasefire Violations

The Table below indicates the number of causalities incurred on civilian and security personals due to the ceasefire violations, both along

Year	Civilians		Army Personnel		BSF Personnel	
	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
2016	13	83	8	74	5	25
2017 (Upto 10 December)	12	79	14	58	4	13

The J&K Police in its annual report to Union Home Ministry informed that 91 militants were arrested as compared to 79 in 2016.

Major Developments in 2017

The major development for the Indian security forces was the neutralisation of 213 militants, including some prominent Hizbul M commanders, thanks to pinpointed intelligence and coordinated efforts among intelligence agencies and forces of the Central and the S. On other security parameters, available data reveals increase in the number of terror related incidents and higher level of militant activis 337 (up to Dec 10) terror related incidents were recorded as compared to 322 in 2016, the year Hizbul Mujahideen Commander Burhar an encounter and leading to unrest in the valley.

The year 2017 also saw a much higher number (40) of civilians being killed in the Valley as compared to 15 in 2016; the near three-folc causalities was primarily due to the rising level of public mobilisation to protest at encounter sites. However, during the year 2017, secu targeted intelligence driven coordinated action, eliminated 213 terrorists (recent media reports) compared to 150 killed in the previous the forces lost 75 personals in various encounters and ambushes compared to 82 in 2016.

The Table below also indicates a slight rise in the number of terror incidents and the number of militants/terrorists arrested in 2017. ³

Table: Terror Incidents/Fatalities/Arrests

Year	No. of Terror incidents	Civilians		Security Personnel		Terrorists	
		Killed	Injured (Civilians+ Security Personnel)	Killed	Injured	Killed	Arrested
2016	322	15	285	82	NA	150	79
2017 (up to Dec. 10)	337	40 *57	321	75 *83	NA	207 *218	91

(Figures marked by * in the three columns above are form SATP for the entire year 2017)

NIA Investigations

Apart from the higher intensity of kinetic action, the year 2017 witnessed an aggressive and relentless campaign against the top sec choke the flow of funds that has been critical to their activities. For the first time, the Central Government took a bold initiative under Investigation Agency (NIA), on 30 May, 2017, registered cases and conducted series of searches at various locations spread across

Haryana and Delhi. During the course of investigation, over 950 incriminating documents and more than 600 electronic devices were seized. Investigation charge sheeted important leaders and their associates namely:-⁴

- Hafiz Muhammad Saeed r/o Lahore, Pakistan, the head of proscribed terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Toiba and Amir of Jamaat-ud-Daw
- Syed Salahuddin, the head of proscribed terrorist organisation Hizbul Mujahideen and Chairman of United Jihad Council.
- Aftab Ahmad Shah r/o Srinagar, Media Advisor and strategist of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Mirwaiz Umar Farooq faction).
- Altaf Ahmad Shah r/o Srinagar, Public Relations Officer at Tehreek-e-Hurriyat as well as Secretary and strategist in the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Geelani faction).
- Nayeem Ahmad Khan r/o District Baramulla, Chairman, National Front, a secessionist outfit of J&K and also a constituent of the Hurriyat Conference.
- Farooq Ahmad Dar r/o Srinagar, Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (R), a secessionist outfit of J&K and also a constituent of the Hurriyat Conference (Geelani faction).
- Mohammad Akbar Khanday r/o Parimpora, Srinagar, Spokesperson/Media Advisor of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Geelani faction).
- Raja Mehrajuddin Kalwal r/o Rainawari, Srinagar, office-bearer of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat and a fund-raiser for the Hurriyat.
- Bashir Ahmad Bhat r/o Pulwama, Personal Assistant of Syed Ali Shah Geelani as well as Secretary of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat.
- Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali r/o Handwara, J&K, a Hawala conduit.
- Kamran Yusuf r/o Pulwama, J&K, a stone-pelting.
- Javed Ahmad Bhat r/o Kulgam, J&K, a stone-pelting.

NIA's analysis of documents and electronic devices and statements of 300 witnesses during the investigation revealed the identities of those orchestrating violence, civil unrest and subversive and secessionist activities. These reconfirmed the involvement of the Hurriyat leaders with the active support from Pakistani agencies and terrorist organizations, as participants of the conspiracy to achieve the objective environment of fear and terror. The NIA charge sheet brought out the role of the separatist leaders belonging to Hurriyat Conference, the throughout Valley, the identity of their handlers etc. These networks were being used to incite the youth to attack Indian security forces issuing 'protest calendars' released through newspapers, social media and religious places (One India, Jan 20, 2018). The investigation revealed that money used to be transferred via hawala transactions and channeled through bogus and shell companies floated abroad to be remitted to the Valley.

Commenting on these developments, Director General of J&K Police (DGP) S P Vaid said, "There are many factors responsible for the law and order situation and decrease in stone pelting. The impression that NIA raids have improved the situation... of course, that (NIA however, also gave credit to the people of Kashmir who, "probably realized the futility of damaging their own property and targeting belongs to their own society, besides the fatigue factor and action against top commanders", he added. He further lauded the demonetisation helped in the arrest of terror supporters. "Besides the role of demonetisation and many other factors, including the administrative action and slapping cases against those who were involved in sabotaging peace has also contributed to it. There was no single factor responsible were instrumental in (in dip in stone-pelting and improvement in situation in Kashmir)", he added. Apart from these, detention under the Prevention of Subversion Act (PSA) also helped in bringing normalcy back to Valley (The Hindu, Nov 12, 2017).

Political Initiatives

The possibility of initiation of some political process was hinted at by the Prime Minister in his Independence Day address on 15 August. In reference to J&K, he said that the problem of Kashmir cannot be solved, "*na goli se na gali se, baat banegi galle lagne se*".⁵ In a follow up, Home Minister Rajnath Singh paid a series of visits to the State and held wide ranging consultations. He lauded the efforts of the State Government in significantly stabilising the situation, adding that government was ready to talk to anyone who interested in resolving problems in Kashmir. In his interactions, he also told reporters that permanent solution to Kashmir problem lies in 5 C's: Compassion, Communication, Co-existence, Building and Consistency (Indian Express, Sep 11, 2017).

Simultaneously, the Central govt. decided to fast track the developmental projects under Prime Minister's Development Package (FDP) for infrastructure building, road construction, education, health etc. It may be recalled that under the PMDP for J&K, the Centre has made available Rs. 80,068 crore covering 63 developmental projects coming under 15 Central Ministries; an amount of Rs. 22,042 crore have already been released by the State Government. Emphasis will be on the border areas embroiled in daily violence, their security, construction of bunkers and transit routes in Kashmir.⁶

New Dialogue Initiative and Political Response

To follow up these initiatives, the Central Government, on Oct 23, 2017, appointed Dineshwar Sharma, former chief of Intelligence Liaison Representative (SR) for Kashmir to engage with all the stakeholders in J&K (Indian Express, Oct 25, 2017). Mr. Sharma said he will meet Hurriyat leaders and those who believe in non-violence. The State Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti welcomed the Center's initiative to start a dialogue process. "Dialogue is the necessity of the hour and the only way to go forward," wrote Ms. Mufti on her Twitter handle. However, the State Government (Muzaffar Mir told reporters that the Center should make the dialogue public and not restricted to four walls of a room. "For the last three years, the Government) have been saying that there will be no talks with those who do not want to talk under the ambit of the Constitution. This is the Kashmir policy" he added. J&K National Conference President Omar Abdullah said his party has 'little' expectations from Mr. Sharma's initiative.

As expected, the Joint Resistance Camp comprising three separatist organizations – Syed Ali Shah Geelani led hardline and Mirwai moderate factions of the Hurriyat Conference, and Yaseen Malik's JKLF announced that they would not be taking part in the dialogue. Hurriyat spokesman said, "We reject the dialogue offer... It is mere rhetoric and wastage of time and no section of Hurriyat or g designated interlocutor or participate in this futile exercise," the spokesman added (The Hindu, Nov 6, 2017).

Despite these reactions on the expected lines, Sharma has made a number of visits to the State where he reportedly pitched for the political prisoners from Kashmir. The suggestions have been taken seriously by the Central and the State Governments and possibly at h amnesty for the first-time stone-pelters was announced by the Government. It is also likely that the state authorities would take up revie detention.

Prognosis for 2018

The prospects for early restoration of peace in the State do not appear bright in the year 2018, primarily because the entire terror app the State is managed and controlled by the Pak Deep State, which only tinkers with the tactics but refuses to change its strategic appr as a tool of its policy towards India. Therefore, the security situation is likely to remain as grim as in 2016 and 2017, with increase in militancy, more youth picking up guns, sponsored protest demonstrations, continuing ceasefire violation, attempts of infiltration along t targeted attacks on security forces. Existing level of disconnect between the youth and the State Government is also likely to remain ur of these trends are in fact, already discernable in the limited statistical details available from a variety of media reports.

Table: Data Showing the approximate no. of Terror Incidents, Ceasefire Violations etc. in 2018

Year	Terror Incidents in J&K	No. of Ceasefire Violations		Killings			
		Along LoC	Along IB	Civilians	Army Personnel	Terrorists Killed	Cross-Border Firing
2018	Approx. 15	Approx. 240 ceasefire violations		Approx. 7	Approx. 16	Approx. 17	Approx. 23

(Compiled from Indian Express, Economic Times, satp.org, India Today, DGP's Twitter)

It must be clarified here that these figures are yet to confirmed and have been cited on as indicative of the current trend of showing no security situation.

In a significant development, the US Government designated the Pakistan based Chief of Hizbul Mujahidin, Syed Salahuddin, as a glob decision was hailed by India and was seen as a blow to the Pakistani establishment who support his terror outfits and provide safe l impact of this and of the two other developments across the borders is yet to be assessed. These are: (1) pressure from JeM leader Ma Chief Hafeez Saeed for Hizb chief Syed Salahuddin to relinquish leadership of the tanzeem and the United Jihad Council on account (Times of India, Feb 16, 2018); and (2) Punjab Government order on taking over all the moveable and immovable assets of the Jamaat Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) and JuD's famous Muridke Markaz, along with its various schools, seminaries and health facilities, ordinance issued by President Mamnoon Hussain last week to amend the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 in the backdrop of a plenary meet Action Task Force (Dawn, Feb 15, 2018).

Internally in J&K, one of the important challenges in 2018 will be holding the upcoming Panchayati elections. Panchayati elections accompanied by attacks on the candidates and threats to voters, posing law and order challenges to the State security apparatus. Mil threatened to pour acid in the eyes of the candidates rather than killing them this time. This has aggravated the situation in the ground has been spread. However, J&K DGP S P Vaid remained optimistic, stating that 'Operation All-Out' – launched by the security forces to t will remain in place till the dawn of normalcy is seen. "The next year (2018) will be better", he said.

As regards the dialogue process led by SR Dineshwar Sharma, there is a growing perception that the exercise 'is going nowhere'. This due to a combination of factors: that people try to look at this imitative as an 'interlocutor' mechanism of the past, which it is not; publicity around the activities of the SR; and the quiet manner in which the SR is carrying out his task. However, following the recent dec 'first time stone-pelters', welcome as it is, has sent the word around that it was done at the SR's recommendations, based on his discus people. There is an expectation that more action-oriented measures would follow in the months ahead. It may be noted that the SR has just over three months and would need more time to do what is expected of him. There is need for the real stakeholders to extend efforts.

(* Our assessment of the developments in 2016, refer: (<http://www.vifindia.org/article/2017/may/18/jammu-and-kashmir-on-the-pat...>).

End Notes

1. Ceasefire Violations: Unstarred Questions No. 679 Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Charge Sheet filed in NIA case NO. RC-10/2017/NIA/DLI (J&K Terror Case).
5. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Speech .
6. Development plans in Jammu and Kashmir URL: <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/271017/developmen...>

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Image Source: <https://risingkashmir.com/news/loc-firing-three-residential-structures-d...>

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