



INDIA'S OFFENSIVE MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AGAINST PAKISTAN: A THREAT TO REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



Despite taking into account Pakistan's efforts to normalize bilateral relations and promote peace and cooperation, the Indian military and government officials are constantly threatening it with the options of launching 'surgical strikes' and waging a 'limited war.'

It is important to note that at this point in time, the Indian military establishment is taking a lead by reflecting their preparedness to dictate their own terms to Pakistan. It also points to another interesting debate that either the Indian military establishment wants to play a more assertive role in their national security decision-making process, or they want to justify their annual defense spending on India's ageing war machine. However, considering the face value of these threatening postures, it is obvious that India wants to pursue its hegemonic intentions through military means. Preparedness for a stronger defense is the right of every sovereign nation to safeguard its national security; however, preparing for a military offensive would always be detrimental to peace and security. Therefore, any misadventure or imposing of a limited war against a nuclear Pakistan would have devastating consequences not only for India, but for the entire South Asian region.

Recently, the Indian military establishment, on several occasions, has highlighted their offensive military intentions against Pakistan. On October 5, 2017, the Indian Air Force Chief Marshal, B. S. Dhanoa, stated that "the Indian Air Force (IAF) can target Pakistan's nuclear sites and has the capability to help the army in carrying out surgical operations."¹ He said "men and women under my command (are) fully prepared to undertake full spectrum of air ops and respond to any challenge in

¹ "IAF Chief BS Dhanoa Asserts India's Capability to Fight Two-front War, Acknowledges Chinese Presence in Chumbi Valley," *First Post*, October 6, 2017, www.firstpost.com/india/indian-air-force-capable-of-targeting-pakistan-nuclear-sites-fighting-two-front-war-says-air-chief-bs-dhanoa-4112203.html

a befitting manner.” He also pointed out that the IAF would reach its mandated strength of 42 squadrons by 2032 as compared to 33 squadrons at present. The Indian Army Chief, General Bipin Rawat, has also repeatedly threatened Pakistan with a surgical strike. On September 25, 2017, he threatened to repeat the claimed Indian surgical strikes against Pakistan.²

These remarks come at a time when India, in an attempt to materialize its Cold Start doctrine, deployed nuclear-capable infantry division near Pakistan. According to a media report, India has revived its decades-old combat division, the 10th Infantry Division, comprising tanks and armored vehicles near the historically significant Akhnoor sector in Jammu and Kashmir.³ The division is mandated to counter any action of Pakistani troops in the Chamb-Jaurian sector – the area where the 1971 war between the two countries broke out. The 10th Infantry Division of the Indian Army, which is now being converted into RAPID (Reorganized Army Plains Infantry Division), will hold around 100 T-72 tanks and the same number of Russian made mechanized armored vehicles. The RAPID formation has infantry assets to reasonably conduct significant offensive operations and is easily adaptable to nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.

There are other reports that India is planning to arm its Pinaka rockets with nuclear weapons to counter Pakistan's tactical nuclear weapons.⁴ The Pinaka rocket has a maximum range of 40 km for Mark-I and 75 km for Mark-II. It can fire a salvo of 12 rockets in 44 seconds and can destroy a target area of four square km. Earlier in January 2017, it was also reported that according to the Indian defense officials, the Indian Army is set to deploy over 460 new T-90SM main battle tanks (MBTs) along India's border with Pakistan.⁵ This shows that India is not interested in promoting peace with Pakistan, but is bent on embarking on a military adventure against Pakistan.

In addition to this, the Indian military has been regularly carrying out ceasefire violations across the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary (WB). According to a October 4, 2017 press release by Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “in 2017 to date, Indian occupation forces have carried out more than 900 ceasefire violations along the LoC and the Working Boundary, resulting in the

² “Army chief Bipin Rawat Warns Pakistan: Second Surgical Strike if it is Required,” *Indian Express*, September 26, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/army-chief-bipin-rawat-warns-pakistan-second-surgical-strike-if-that-is-required-4861237/>

³ “India Deploys Nuclear-capable Infantry Division Near Pakistan Aimed High Tension,” *Sputnik*, September 27, 2011, <https://sputniknews.com/asia/201709271057743374-india-infantry-division-pakistan/>

⁴ “Indian Army Plans to Arm Pinaka Rockets with Nuclear Weapons to Counter Pakistan,” *India*, September 27, 2017, www.india.com/news/india/indian-army-plans-to-arm-pinaka-rockets-with-nuclear-weapons-to-counter-pakistan-pms-threat-2500366/

⁵ Franz-Stefan Gady, “Cold Start: India to Deploy Massive Tank Army Along Border with Pakistan,” *Diplomat*, January 20, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/india-to-deploy-massive-tank-army-along-border-with-pakistan/>

casualty of 45 innocent civilians and injuries to 155, as compared to 382 ceasefire violations in 2016.”⁶

Pakistan has responded carefully to all these Indian provocations and has repeatedly urged India to permit the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) to play its mandated role as per the UN Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan views the Indian intentions as threats to regional peace and stability. On October 5, Pakistan Army's spokesman, Major General Asif Ghafoor, responded that threats from India are perpetual and Pakistan is a peace loving country and do not war with India.⁷ He assured that Pakistan will defend itself and have the capability to do so. Earlier in September 2017, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, in response to a question at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, made it clear that the Pakistan has developed short-range nuclear weapons to counter the Cold Start doctrine adopted by the Indian Army.⁸

Pakistan is a nuclear weapon state and it is well aware of its threat perceptions vis-à-vis India. To avoid any conventional blackmail by India, it has developed its tactical nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, to achieve a lasting peace in the South Asia region, Pakistan is willing to settle all its outstanding issues with India through dialogue. However, India's irrational behavior and its reliance on military means to settle its issues with Pakistan could result in a limited war leading to a full-scale conventional war involving a nuclear response at any level of the spectrum of conflict. Consequently, a nuclear exchange would be catastrophic not only for India and Pakistan, but it will also impact the entire region. The window of dialogue between Pakistan and India is always open and by building trust, both states can create enough space to accommodate all pending and emerging issues. Pakistan is already flexible enough to come to a negotiation table; India too needs to show some flexibility in order to promote regional peace and stability.

⁶ Press Release by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, "Ceasefire Violations by India on 4th October 2017, Strong Protest Lodged by Pakistan Foreign Office," October 4, 2017, www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?mm=NTQ2OA,

⁷ "Pakistan Army says India Poses 'Perpetual Threat' to Pakistan," *Economic Times*, October 5, 2011, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/pakistan-army-says-india-poses-perpetual-threat-to-pakistan/articleshow/60959864.cms>

⁸ "Short-range Nuclear Weapons to Counter India's 'Cold Start Doctrine': Pakistan PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi," *Hindustan Times*, September 21, 2017, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pakistan-pm-says-have-developed-short-range-nuclear-weapons-to-counter-india-s-cold-start-doctrine/story-LAZUtNffLIT33Q02WEaKJL.html>