

My compliment goes to government and also to the Air Force for the way they have carried out this strike

Lt Gen DS Hooda (Retd)
SURGICAL STRIKE ARCHITECT



By this heroic action, IAF has restored the prestige and morale of the Indian people and our forces

AK Antony
EX-DEFENCE MINISTER



IN HIGH-SPEED PURSUIT OF AZHAR, GOVT PLANS NEXT UNSC MOVE

Diplomatic Offensive Continues

DECLARING JEM CHIEF GLOBAL TERRORIST

France to Move UNSC With More Info Against Azhar

Dipjan Roy Chaudhury @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: France, armed with fresh information on Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and his family members who are active in the group, is planning to move a new proposal in the UN Security Council (UNSC) to designate the terror mastermind with support from the European bloc in the UNSC.

ET has learnt that France has gathered fresh information on Azhar and the role of his family members in the group to counter Chinese attempts to block the JEM chief's UN listing on the ground that he is no longer associated with the proscribed group. The proposal will be moved in the UNSC soon.

France is moving as a bloc in UNSC with the two other members being the USA and UK. This is being backed by Germany, Poland and Belgium — three non permanent members in the UNSC from Europe.

France is leading the effort like it did last week in getting the UNSC to issue a statement condemning the Pulwama attack and naming JEM. ET has learnt that India is assisting France to gather evidence on Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar. Last week's UNSC statement on JEM was not without roadblocks created by China to the draft initiated by France.

In 2017, the US, supported by the UK and France, moved a proposal at the UN's Sanctions Committee 1267 to ban the chief of the Pakistan-based terror outfit, but the proposal was blocked by China. After the recent Pulwama attack, China has again reiterated its position. Since 2010, China has been blocking efforts in the UNSC to list the Jaish-e-Mohammed.

The Balakot JEM facility which the Indian Air Force targeted in the wee hours of Tuesday was headed by Maulana Yusuf Azhar (alias Ustad Ghouri), brother in law of Azhar. Last week's UNSC statement on JEM was not without roadblocks created by China to the draft initiated by France. Beijing objected to the description of Jaish-e-Mohammed as 'Pakistan-based'. It has also desisted that Jammu and Kashmir be referred as 'Indian-administered' Kashmir.

OMAR ABDULLAH
@OmarAbdullah

A number of frsts from Balakot, the first time air power has been used to strike inside Pakistan during peace times... & first time visible, acknowledged use of force to preempt a perceived terror strike

MEHBOOBA MUFTI
@MehboobaMufti

Official communique by FSC aims terror training camps were bombed while Pak denied this & said the planes made a hasty retreat after being spotted. Hope objective of both sides has been served



French Support

France on Tuesday said it recognises India's legitimacy to ensure its security against cross-border terrorism and asked Pakistan to put an end to the operations of terrorist groups established on its territory

Pak Opposes OIC's Invitation to India

Islamabad: Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Tuesday that he has spoken to his UAE counterpart and "expressed reservations" about invitation to India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj to attend the OIC meeting scheduled later this week. India has been invited to the inaugural plenary of the foreign ministers' confab of OIC in Abu Dhabi from March 11 to 2.

Qureshi briefs Pompeo, Others

Islamabad: Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi spoke to US secretary of state Mike Pompeo and other foreign diplomats on Tuesday and apprised them about the Line of Control "violation" by the Indian jets. In his telephonic conversation with Pompeo, Qureshi said India is "jeopardising the peace in South Asia for its political purposes and elections". Radio Pakistan reported he said that Pakistan is desirous of peace, but will not compromise on its territorial integrity.



A Border Security Force soldier keeps vigil during patrol along the LoC with Pakistan in Ranbir Singh Pura sector near Jammu - Reuters

Support Flows as Govt Briefs Global Powers

Assures nations there is no intention to escalate the matter

Dipjan Roy Chaudhury @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The Indian government briefed global powers, including the US, Russia and China, on Tuesday on the Indian Air Force's strike on JEM-run terror camps in Pakistan and assured them there was no intention to escalate the matter and that actions will be taken in a restrained and responsible manner.

The government urged the international community to impress upon Islamabad to dismantle the terror infrastructure and called on the UN Security Council members to take strong action against cross-border terror. ET has learnt that Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj held a telephonic conversation with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to brief him on the airstrikes. She also spoke with her counterparts from

China, Singapore, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale, besides top secretaries in the Ministry of External Affairs, met the envoys of the permanent and non permanent members of the Security Council as well as representatives of countries from Europe, Southeast Asia and the Gulf to brief them about the pre-dawn strikes. Officials informed ET.

ET has learnt that top MEA officials spoke to envoys in the Indian capital about the operation, which was targeted against the JEM and not civilians. It has been learnt that India has received support, in keeping with the objective of garnering

SUSHMA CALLS US SECY

Swaraj spoke with US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, and her counterparts from China, Singapore, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The maximum global backing for the counter terror move. The government informed the foreign envoys that "it was a direct attack with a limited and specific objective, with no civilian or military casualties." The Heads of Missions will convey the message to their respective governments.

"The diplomatic corps feels very satisfied at the rapid and organised manner in which the MEA has briefed all Heads of Missions accredited in Delhi simultaneously and by the highest of the authorities within the ministry," a senior diplomatic official told ET, speaking on condition of anonymity. It is understood that India has called on countries to urge Pakistan to dismantle terror camps and infrastructure. It urged UNSC members to take a strong position on counter terrorism, without double standards.

Diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity indicated that it was expected that India would undertake strong counter terror actions after the February 14 Pulwama attack, in which 40 CRPF soldiers were killed. Since the incident, India has been on a diplomatic offensive, briefing ambassadors across continents.

Rajasthan the ruling party's resolve to convert the election campaign into an emotive patriotic discourse. They expect BJP to unleash a blitzkrieg — as done by the Vajpayee regime, post Kargil — to build up nationalist fervour and shield it from incumbency issues. The Opposition privately acknowledges its immediate challenge would be to tactically deal

with the emotional outpouring and work to bring back the focus on bread and butter electoral issues such as farm distress, unemployment, issues of socially backwards even while building state-wise alliances. Determined not to gift an opportunity to the ruling front to blame it, the Opposition gave wholesome backing to the government and the

China Cautious, Australia Urges Pak to Act Against Terror

Dipjan Roy Chaudhury @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: China on Tuesday adopted an nuanced approach after the IAF airstrikes on Jaish-e-Mohammed camps across the LoC and just ahead of the Russia-India-China (RIC) foreign ministers' meeting which it is hosting on Wednesday.

China was the first country to issue a statement after the airstrikes even before its envoy was briefed in Delhi. Beijing called for restraint and urged India to try out its fight against terrorism through international cooperation.

"I want to say that India and Pakistan are both important countries in South Asia. A sound relationship and cooperation between the two serves the interest of both the countries and peace and stability in South Asia," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Gao Qiang.

Over the years, China has vetoed India's requests in the United Nations to designate JEM chief Maulana Masood Azhar a global terrorist, and even after the Pulwama terror attack on February 14. China stuck to its stand on Azhar. China extended support for the UN Security Council statement on JEM, with certain changes to the text.

Foreign minister Sushma Swaraj will be visiting China to participate in the Russia-India-China trilateral meeting. While she is expected to raise the issue of cross border terrorism in her talks with her Chinese and Russian counterparts in the meeting in Wuzhen, she talks assume greater significance in the wake of Tuesday's airstrikes. All eyes are now on Wednesday's RIC meet which will be India's maiden international outreach after the cross LoC airstrikes.

While the USA is yet to issue any statement on the airstrikes, US ally Australia came out in Delhi's support. "India's foreign secretary has stated that India has now conducted



SUSHMA HEADS TO CHINA

Foreign minister will be visiting China for Russia-India-China meeting. She is expected to raise cross-border terrorism issue with her counterparts

operations targeting terrorist groups based in Pakistan. Pakistan must take urgent and meaningful action against terrorist groups in its territory, including Jaish-e-Mohammed which has claimed responsibility for the February 14 bombing, and Lashkar-e-Taiba," said Australian foreign minister Marise Payne. "Pakistan must do everything possible to implement its own prescription of Jaish-e-Mohammed. It can urge groups to leave the physical space to operate from its territory. These steps would make substantial contribution to easing tensions and resolving the underlying causes of conflict," Paynesaid with outbidding words.

Opposition Backs Government But Cautious on Pre-Poll Discourse Twists

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New Delhi: After extending full support to the government and the Indian Air Force for the anti terror air strike in Pakistan's Balakot, Opposition parties have begun evaluating the potential fallout of the high profile strike on the Lok Sabha polls less than two months away.

A Congress core committee meeting will review the merger in political situation on Wednesday morning, many Opposition parties will also discuss the post-Pulwama situation at their joint meeting later in the day even as they will choose to go slow on the Trinamool Congress/TDP sponsored 'common minimum agenda'. Opposition parties have clearly read in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post air strike speech in



Rajasthan the ruling party's resolve to convert the election campaign into an emotive patriotic discourse. They expect BJP to unleash a blitzkrieg — as done by the Vajpayee regime, post Kargil — to build up nationalist fervour and shield it from incumbency issues. The Opposition privately acknowledges its immediate challenge would be to tactically deal

STRONG SENTIMENT

Opposition privately acknowledges its immediate challenge would be to tactically deal with the emotional outpouring

with the emotional outpouring and work to bring back the focus on bread and butter electoral issues such as farm distress, unemployment, issues of socially backwards even while building state-wise alliances. Determined not to gift an opportunity to the ruling front to blame it, the Opposition gave wholesome backing to the government and the

IAF at a briefing called by the external affairs minister. All Opposition leaders congratulated the government and IAF and projected national unity on the issue. Leaders such as Ghulam Nabi Azad, Bhartruhari Mahtab, Omar Abdullah, Sitaram Yechuri and D Raja urged the government, "not to let the guard down" against possible retaliation and stressed the government must ensure "national unity, not whip up jingoist feelings and prevent targeting of Kashmiris".

What many Opposition leaders were privately hoping was however summed up by Omar Abdullah's tweet: "For all those looking at today's air strikes through a political/electoral prism, it might be worth remembering that PM Vajpayee went into the 1999 elections with nuclear tests and victory in Kargil under his belt but still only returned to power with a coalition."

Entire Oppn Stands With Government

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New Delhi: The entire opposition stood firmly behind the government on the airstrike on terror camps inside Pakistan, and congratulated the Indian Air Force for its precise attack on terror without any civilian casualties at an all party meeting in Tuesday

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj briefed leaders of opposition parties about the pre-dawn air strikes. Home minister Rajnath Singh, Finance minister Arun Jaitley and minister of state for parliamentary affairs Vijay Goel were present in the meeting. Other leaders included Ghulam Nabi Azad, Praful Patel, Omar Abdullah, Sitaram Yechuri, D Raja, PC Gupta, Randeep Athawale, Naresh Gujral, S C Misra, Derek O'Brien and Bhartruhari Mahtab.



KANWAL SIBAL

India's aerial strikes at terrorist camps in PoK and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have significance in many ways India has overcome some critical self-imposed inhibitions in dealing with Pakistan. During Pakistan's Kargil aggression, our air force was instructed not to cross the LoC, framing India's response as purely self-defensive within Indian territory. The 2016 surgical strikes across the LoC broke this cub and warned Pakistan that the LoC will no longer be considered sacrosanct.

A Warning! LoC May No Longer Be Sacrosanct

The Pulwama attack showed that Pakistan has ignored this warning. It has continued to protect JEM chief Masood Azhar with China's support from being designated as an international terrorist, besides allowing Hafiz Saeed to continue fomenting jihad against India. Despite its precarious financial situation and grey listing by the Financial Action Task Force, Pakistan has not felt compelled to act meaningfully and credibly against the jihadist organisations targeting India.

While having the capacity to strike at terrorist targets in Pakistan, Indian leaders have been unwilling to use aerial power because of escalation concerns. Aerial strikes have a political resonance different from cross LoC limited operations or fire exchanges that have actually become a common place whether publicised or



not. Air strikes cannot be ignored because an absence of reaction may encourage more strikes and deadlier ones. Use of aerial power by its very nature is therefore escalatory. In

Pakistan's case, our concerns about its nuclear capability has dissuaded us from taking strong retaliatory action. Using air power in a combined manner to achieve a limited anti ter

IN SELFDEFENCE

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ported the statement, taking into account no doubt the damage its position in the UNSC would cause to India. China ties. China has, however, made it known that the reference to the JEM does not alter its position on designating him an international terrorist by the relevant UN committee. Besides this, Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE have strongly condemned the Pulwama attack, knowing its linkage to the JEM based in Pakistan. India now intends to put

the ball back once again in China's court by seeking a strong language on terrorism and condemnation of the Pulwama attack in the joint Russia-India-China communique this week.

"Two aspects of our air strikes need highlighting. One, that no Pakistani military installation or economic asset has been attacked. Second, we seem to have had credible information that the JEM was planning car bomb attacks at places outside J&K and we had brought this to Pakistan's attention in the past 14 days without Islamabad taking any action. Which explains why we are describing our strikes as pre-emptive against terror and are briefing the foreign governments accordingly. Clearly, India is seeking to contain the fallout of the action, make it more difficult for Pakistan to respond and put the onus on it for any further escalation.

The author is former foreign secretary