



TERROR TRACKER

Newsletter by Counter Terrorism Centre



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान



TOP JeM COMMANDER NEUTRALISED IN KATHUA

SYRIA'S FRAGILE PEACE & PRISON TIME BOMB

EU LABELS IRGC AS A TERROR OUTFIT

+ MORE NEWS & ANALYSES

Top JeM Commander Neutralised In Kathua

On January 23, 2026, security forces killed a top Pakistani Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorist, Usman alias *Abu Maviya*, in a joint Army-J&K Police-CRPF operation in the Billawar area of Kathua district. Acting on specific intelligence, the forces cornered the terrorist in Parhetar village, where he opened fire during a raid and was shot dead in a brief close-combat encounter. A large cache of arms and ammunition, including a US-made M4 automatic rifle, was recovered.

Usman was among the most-wanted JeM commanders operating in the Udhampur-Kathua belt after infiltrating from across the border and had previously escaped multiple encounters earlier this month. Security officials termed his killing a major operational breakthrough, even as search operations continue in the area. Parallel anti-terror operations are also underway in Kishtwar's Chatroo belt under

Operation Trashi-I, despite harsh weather, following recent gunfights with holed-up terrorists.

The recovery of the M4 rifle has once again highlighted the recurring presence of sophisticated Western weapons in the hands of Pakistan-backed terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. Experts link this trend to arms left behind after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, alleging that such weapons have since been routed to terror groups with support from Pakistan's handlers.

Officials note that this is not an isolated case: M4 carbines have been recovered repeatedly over the past few years and used in several deadly attacks across the Jammu region. The pattern underscores growing concerns about the increasing firepower available to terror outfits and the heightened risks faced by both security forces and civilians.

[The Hindu](#), [Times Now](#)

Syria's Fragile Peace & Prison Time Bomb

Ceasefire talks between Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commander Mazloum Abdi failed to make progress on Monday, despite an announcement of an immediate truce a day earlier. Kurdish sources told AFP and Reuters the meeting "didn't go well," with Abdi dissatisfied over ceasefire terms and seeking more time to consult his commanders. He reiterated demands that the SDF be integrated into Syria's army as cohesive units rather than individual fighters.

Clashes nonetheless erupted on Monday around Raqqa, with heavy bombardment reported near Al-Aqtan prison, which houses Islamic State (IS) detainees. The SDF and Syrian government forces traded blame for the violence, even as Damascus claimed hostilities had later subsided. The government has recently seized large parts of Raqqa and Deir el-Zour from the SDF, areas once controlled by IS before being retaken by Kurdish forces with US-backed coalition support.

Amid the instability, around 1,500 IS fighters reportedly escaped from a prison in Shaddadeh, according to the SDF. Each side accused the other of responsibility, prompting curfews and renewed security operations. The SDF continues to guard more than a dozen detention facilities holding an estimated 9,000 IS members, long considered a major unresolved security risk in northeastern Syria.

Compounding concerns, the US Central Command has begun transferring nearly 7,000 IS detainees from Syria to Iraq, citing fears of prison collapses amid political and military upheaval. While US and Iraqi experts argue the move reduces the risk of mass escapes, it has sparked legal, ethical and security debates—particularly over Iraq's use of the death penalty and the reluctance of foreign governments to repatriate their nationals. The detainee issue is now seen as a critical test of regional and international efforts to prevent an IS resurgence.- [DW](#), [MBN](#)

EU Labels IRGC As A Terror Outfit

The European Union has agreed to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation after securing unanimous political backing, with the legal adoption expected in the coming weeks.

EU officials framed the move as a response to Iran's handling of recent protests, which rights groups say killed thousands of civilians. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said the IRGC would now be treated on par with groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the decision "long overdue."

Alongside the terror designation, EU foreign ministers imposed new sanctions on 15 individuals and six entities linked to Iranian government. These include senior government

officials, judges, IRGC commanders, police leaders, and state-linked bodies reportedly involved in censorship, internet shutdowns, and online disinformation. The measures include asset freezes, EU travel bans, and restrictions on access to funds.

Tehran strongly condemned the decision, calling it illegal, hostile, and a "major strategic mistake," warning it would worsen regional tensions.

Iranian leaders accused the EU of hypocrisy and of escalating risks amid heightened US military pressure and threats from President Donald Trump, who has warned of possible military action if Iran refuses nuclear talks. The designation marks a sharp escalation in EU-Iran relations, even as European officials insist diplomatic channels will remain open.[DW](#), [FDD](#), [Al Jazeera](#)

ISKP Suicide Bombing Strikes Chinese Nationals in Kabul

An ISKP suicide bombing at a Chinese-run restaurant inside a hotel in Kabul's Shahr-e-Naw area on 19 January 2026 killed at least seven people, including a Chinese national, and wounded 13 others. The blast targeted Chinese citizens in a relatively secure commercial district, prompting swift condemnation from China, the United Kingdom, Turkey, the UAE, Qatar, Iran and Pakistan, as well as Afghan political figures. Islamic State Khorasan Province later claimed responsibility, saying the attack was aimed at Chinese nationals and threatening further violence.

China strongly denounced the attack, urged the Taliban to bring the perpetrators to justice, and warned its citizens against travel to Afghanistan. Pakistan's president criticised the Taliban for failing to prevent militant activity, while Britain, Turkey, Iran, the UAE and Qatar expressed solidarity with the victims and reaffirmed opposition to terrorism. The attack has intensified concerns over security in Afghanistan and the Taliban's ability to curb ISKP's growing threat.

—[Kabul Now](#)

ISIS-Backed ADF Massacres around 25 in DRC

An attack by the Islamic State-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo killed at least 25 people on 25 January 2026, according to a local rights group. The assault struck the village of Apakulu in Ituri province, where 15 men were burned alive inside a house and seven others were shot, with three additional deaths reported nearby. Rights activists described the attack as a “massacre,” and there was no immediate claim of responsibility from the group.

The violence underscores worsening insecurity in eastern Congo, where armed groups including the ADF and Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have intensified attacks in recent months. Originally formed as an insurgent movement in Uganda, the ADF was pushed into Congolese territory and has since carried out repeated mass-casualty attacks, including assaults that killed more than 100 people last year. Ugandan and Congolese forces are currently conducting joint operations to counter the group. —[ABC News](#)

India-Saudi Arabia Review Counter-Terror Ties

India and Saudi Arabia on 28 January, 2026, held a high-level security dialogue in Riyadh, reviewing ongoing cooperation and discussing regional and global terrorist threats. The 3rd India–Saudi Arabia Security Working Group was co-chaired by India’s Joint Secretary (Counter Terrorism) Vinod Bahade and Saudi Interior Ministry official Ahmed Al-Eissa. The talks focused on counter-terrorism priorities, including tackling extremism and radicalisation, terror financing, misuse of technology by terrorist groups, and links between transnational organised crime and terrorism.

Both sides condemned recent terror attacks in India, including the 22 April, 2025, Pahalgam terror attack and the 10 November, 2025, act of terrorism near the Red Fort. Officials also explored ways to strengthen bilateral legal, judicial and law-enforcement cooperation. Indian officials described the dialogue as a key component of the India–Saudi Strategic Partnership Council. – [*The Hindu*](#)