Defence & Security · GS - III

The terms ‘Hot Pursuit’ and ‘Surgical Strikes’ are often used in connection with armed action against terrorist attacks. Discuss the strategic impact of such actions.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - III	Defence & Security

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
12.5	~200 words

Answer Hint

Hot pursuit; surgical strikes; counterterrorism; deterrence; cross-border operations; escalation risks; intelligence; strategic signalling

Model Answer

Introduction

Hot pursuit and surgical strikes refer to forms of targeted military action associated with responding to security threats. Their strategic impact depends on operational objectives, legal context, proportionality and the adversary's response.

Strategic Impact

1. Deterrence

Targeted operations may raise the perceived cost of supporting or conducting terrorist attacks and discourage further hostile activity.

2. Operational Disruption

Accurate intelligence and limited strikes may disrupt militant infrastructure, command networks and planned attacks.

3. Strategic Signalling

Such actions communicate political resolve and demonstrate a willingness to respond to major security threats.

4. Domestic Confidence

Visible responses can reassure citizens that the government is addressing security threats, although public expectations must remain realistic.

5. International Signalling

Operations may draw international attention to cross-border terrorism and influence diplomatic discussions.

Risks and Limitations

- **Escalation:** The adversary may retaliate, creating a cycle of military action.
- **Intelligence failures:** Incorrect targeting can cause civilian casualties and undermine credibility.
- **Legal and diplomatic concerns:** The legality of cross-border force depends on the circumstances and applicable international law.
- **Limited long-term effect:** Tactical success does not necessarily eliminate terrorist networks or their underlying support systems.
- **Information warfare:** Competing narratives and unverified claims can intensify tensions.

Way Forward

Military action should be supported by intelligence cooperation, border security, diplomatic engagement, financial disruption of terrorist networks and effective internal security measures. Clear objectives and credible assessment of outcomes are essential.

Conclusion

Targeted operations can contribute to deterrence and disruption, but they are not a substitute for a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. Their effectiveness depends on proportionality, strategic clarity and management of escalation risks.

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