

WRAPUP-India loses planes, lashes out at Pakistan.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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NEW DELHI, May 27 (Reuters) - India suffered a sharp reverse on Thursday in its air strikes against high-altitude intruders in Kashmir but lashed out angrily at Pakistan for its "hostile and provocative" act of downing two Indian jet fighters.

The bitter foes stood close to a wider conflict one year after both tested nuclear weapons, and Pakistan warned of "incalculable consequences" if the fighting worsened.

But Islamabad also said it wanted to defuse the situation, and sought U.N. intervention in Kashmir.

India said it remained committed to February's Lahore Declaration that pledged to solve the dispute over the Himalayan region amicably.

Brijesh Mishra, a key adviser to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, told a private television station India had no intention of escalating the conflict.

"There is no need for any panic at all. When we went in for the air strikes we knew that there could be some damage to our aircraft. We went into it with open eyes," Mishra said.

But New Delhi said it would continue air strikes against infiltrators in Indian Kashmir's Kargil sector.

"We are resolute in our determination to complete this task. Pakistan will be responsible for any escalation. Pakistan should realise that such foolhardy ventures against India cannot succeed," an Indian foreign ministry statement said.

India underlined its goal by launching fresh strafing raids on Moslem guerrillas dug in on its side of Kashmir's ceasefire line.

Major world powers reacted with alarm to Thursday's sharp rise in hostilities.

The United States, China and Germany expressed worry over the mounting tension between the rival nuclear powers and urged calm, and Russia drew a parallel between Kashmir and Kosovo.

"Events in Kashmir again show just how dangerous is the precedent of force in international relations created by NATO's military actions in Yugoslavia," Russia's foreign ministry said.

Before news of the downed planes, India took a hard line in a morning briefing in New Delhi. "This is war," Air Commodore Subash Bhojwani said. "Until the objective is met there is no intention of a let-up in the air strikes."

As fears of a widening conflict grew, authorities imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew along the Pakistan border in the Amritsar area of the northern Indian state of Punjab.

Shares in both countries declined sharply for the second consecutive day on fears that the violence could spread. The Bombay index fell 2.79 percent, while Karachi stocks fell 4.38 percent after sinking nearly seven percent earlier in the day.

The two countries provided conflicting accounts of the downing of India's MiG-21 and MiG-27 attack aircraft.

Pakistan said it shot down the planes after they violated its airspace and both crashed six to seven km (3.7 to 4.3 miles) inside its territory. It said one of the pilots was killed and the other was captured and would be treated as a prisoner of war.

India confirmed that it had lost two aircraft.



But it said one of them developed engine failure and the pilot ejected. The other flew low to locate the pilot and was hit by a surface-to-air missile from across the Line of Control dividing the Indian and Pakistani zones in Kashmir.

"There has been no violation whatsoever of the LOC (Line of Control) by India. Our aircraft were flying on our side," the Indian foreign ministry statement said.

India says that more than 500 militants, including Afghan mercenaries and Pakistani army regulars, have pushed up to six km (four miles) into Indian-held territory.

On Wednesday India launched two waves of strafing by helicopter gunships backed by jet fighters and warned Islamabad of "appropriate action" if its armed forces retaliated.

India and Pakistan have gone to war twice over Kashmir since they won independence from Britain in 1947. Since 1990, they have been locked in a diplomatic tussle over a Moslem revolt in the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India.

Press Trust of India said 160 people had been killed in operations to oust the intruders which began on May 14, five days after they were noticed on northern Kashmir heights. India said its dead had risen by three to 20 in the past 48 hours.

Major General J.J. Singh said extra troops had been moved into the area and some had taken up positions to the rear of the militants to block their channel of logistical support.

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