

First time in decade, militant number crosses 300 in Valley

Of 327 ultras listed, 211 locals; 181 active in south Kashmir, 129 in north

MAJID JAHANGIR

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 2

For the first time in nearly a decade, the number of listed militants in Kashmir has crossed 300.

For the last 10 years, the number of militants hovered around 200 except in 2013 when only 78 militants were active in the Valley — this was the lowest figure since militancy erupted in the state in 1990.

“There has been a significant increase in the number of militants,” a senior police officer said. “The main reason for the high number of militants has been local recruitment since 2017. Last year, 126 Valley youths picked up guns — which was the highest number since 2010 and this year over 130 have been inducted into militancy.”

According to an official document exclusively accessed by *The Tribune*, all 10 districts in the Valley have the presence of mili-



Militants (with ammo) at an ultra's funeral in Kulgam. FILE PHOTO

TOP MILITANTS

The Valley has 14 A++ ultras. They include:

Riyaz Naikoo (Pulwama)

Zakir Musa (Pulwama)

Zeenat-ul-Islam (Shopian)

Mehraj Halwai (Sopore)

Javeed Muttoo (Sopore)

Naveed Jutt (Pakistan)

tants. In 2017, security forces had launched Operation All Out against militants and killed over 200 militants and this year, over 130 militants have been killed so far.

The report compiled by the J&K Police in early August

reveals that 327 militants are active, of which 211 are locals and 116 are foreigners. Of the listed militants, 181 are active in the volatile south Kashmir districts, which have been on the edge ever since the killing of militant commander

Burhan Wani in July 2016. In four districts of south Kashmir — Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Shopian, there are 166 local militants.

While south is dominated by local militants, the scene is different in north Kashmir districts of Baramulla, Kupwara and Bandipora, which share the Line of Control with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. According to reports, of the 129 militants active in north, 94 are foreigners and 35 are locals.

There are also 17 militants in central Kashmir's districts of Srinagar, Budgam and Ganderbal. These districts have at least nine local militants.

Two militant groups Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Toiba continue to remain dominant. While the Lashkar has the highest cadre with nearly 141 militants, Hizb has over 128 listed militants. The Jaish-e-Mohammed has also strengthened its base in Kashmir this year.