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## Pakistan Rejects U.S. Claims Tying Banned Group to Pahalgam Attack

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Pakistan has dismissed U.S. allegations linking The Resistance Front (TRF), a militant group tied to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), to the April 22, 2025, terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), which killed 26 civilians. Islamabad calls the claims baseless, accusing India of manipulating international forums to defame Pakistan while tensions escalate between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

The U.S. State Department, under Secretary Marco Rubio, designated TRF a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) on July 17, 2025, citing its role in the Pahalgam massacre, the deadliest civilian attack in India since 2008. The assault in Baisaran Valley targeted Hindu tourists, with TRF initially claiming responsibility before retracting. Pakistan's Foreign Office, through spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan, rejected any link to LeT, a banned group it claims is "defunct," insisting its investigation into the attack remains inconclusive. "India exploits such designations to push anti-Pakistan propaganda," Khan told reporters, referencing India's alleged human rights violations in what Pakistan calls Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

India, however, points to digital evidence and intelligence intercepts suggesting Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) supported TRF operatives. The attack, involving M4 carbines and AK-47s, sparked outrage, prompting India to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty and expel Pakistani diplomats. Pakistan's denial of TRF's involvement echoes its historical rejection of ties to militant groups, despite U.S. and Indian assertions. "Pakistan has dismantled these outfits and prosecuted their leaders," Khan claimed, highlighting the arrest of Sharifullah, linked to the 2021 Abbey Gate bombing, as proof of its counterterrorism efforts.

The U.S. designation has intensified scrutiny on Pakistan's role in regional militancy. Critics argue Islamabad's zero-tolerance terrorism stance lacks credibility, given LeT's past operations, including the 2008 Mumbai attacks. "Pakistan's denials don't hold up against the evidence," said Indian security analyst Arzan Tarapore, noting the attack's planning bore hallmarks of Pakistan-based networks. As India pursues justice, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowing to punish perpetrators, Pakistan's rejection of U.S. claims risks further isolating it diplomatically, fueling a volatile standoff in South Asia.