

# IRIDIUM PHONES, THERMAL IMAGERS DETECTED

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Fifteen signatures of Iridium satellite phones, used by the U.S.-led allied forces in Afghanistan, and Wi-Fi-enabled thermal imagery devices that help terrorists to escape security cordons have been found in the militancy-hit Kashmir Valley, officials said here on Sunday.

They said some of the signatures of Iridium satellite phones have been found in cyberspace since February.

It started from north Kashmir and now there have been some spots in parts of south Kashmir as well, they said. These satellite phones could be part of the consignment dumped by the allied forces while leaving Afghanistan or may have been snatched by the Taliban or terrorists fighting there, the officials said.

Bodies such as the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and the Defence Intelligence Agencies (DIA) have been tasked with finding and giving out real-time information about the presence of these satellite phones in the Kashmir Valley, they said.

In the aftermath of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) first restricted the use of Iridium and Thuraya satellite phones and infrastructure, and in 2012 completely banned them under the provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act.

Passengers importing satellite telephone as baggage are required to declare them to the Customs on arrival at immigration and customs checkpoints. Also, the satellite phone declared by Customs can be allowed clearance subject to production of permission for use from the Department of Telecommunications. The officials said that signatures of thermal imaging devices which can be connected to Wi-Fi have also been found from some of the encounter sites. This device may possibly have found its way into Kashmir from Afghanistan.

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