

# INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

## Govt's successful measures against terrorism

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By Waqar Mehdi

Pakistan has made some gains in its resolve to tackle the threat of terrorism. The present government adopted a two-pronged strategy to counter the threat of terrorism emanating from the Taliban advanced to within 100 kilometers (60 miles) of Islamabad in early April. A determined military operation was launched in Swat whereas security measures were made especially stringent after a suicide attack on the Rescue 15 building killing two policemen in early June 2009. The night-time assault had come in the same week as another suicide blast killed 38 people during Friday prayers at a mosque in Upper Dir, near three northwest districts hit by the military offensive aimed at crushing Taliban fighters. The Rescue 15 suicide blast was the first such attack in Islamabad in more than two months, after a suicide bomber killed eight paramilitary police at a camp on April 4.

Realising the gravity of the situation Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani addressed the nation on 7 May wherein he summoned the military to crush militancy and terrorism in Swat and Malakand with an iron hand and vowed to establish the writ of the government at all costs. The northwest offensive had broad public support and despite the consequences of the operation especially on the locals, the government persevered. The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees announced that between 150,000 to 200,000 civilians had fled the war zone. By early June 2009, most of Swat was freed from Taliban and Mingora, the main town of Swat, was in complete government control. According to reports around 1200 militants were killed in the operation.

Then on August 5 Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud was reportedly killed in a CIA missile strike. On 14 August Pakistan urged Taliban militants recovering from the apparent slaying of their leader Baitullah Mehsud to surrender, promising that those who did would be treated fairly. 'Say goodbye to terrorism and start a new life,' Interior Minister Rehman Malik appealed to the militants in televised comments to the media. 'This is a new day.' He said those surrendering would be treated on case-to-case basis, with authorities deciding between 'leniency' and prosecution.

Within Islamabad the Traffic Police as well as the Islamabad Police have established security stop checks all over the city ensuring that no unauthorized or suspicious vehicle enters parts of the city especially the constitution avenue which opens into the diplomatic enclave home to foreign diplomats as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Embassy. Taxis are not allowed to enter the so-called 'red zone'. Though the measures are said to have caused some inconvenience to commuters inside Islamabad, they seem to have benefited the security situation in the city, as there has been no attack since the Rescue 15 incident in June.

On 13 July Interior Minister Rehman Malik said that militants in Swat had been defeated and security forces were in control of the region, several militant commanders had been killed and Swat Taliban chief Maulana Fazlullah killed. He also disclosed that a man named Zubair, a suspect in the attack on Sri Lankan cricket team belonged to Dera Ghazi Khan but he and his accomplices had been traced in Makeen area of Waziristan. Some arrests had also been made in Buner and Rawalpindi division. "All roads lead to South Waziristan," he added.

Meanwhile, Islamabad police claimed on 13 July to have arrested two terrorists who were allegedly involved in four suicides attacks and were planning more terrorist activities in the capital. Mohammad Ovais, 34, of Adyala Road, and Obaidullah Khan, 30, of Westridge were picked up from Sector I-11 on July 5 by a joint team of city police and intelligence agencies. According to sources, they were traced when they contacted another alleged terrorist, Fidaullah, in Adyala jail and delivered Rs100,000 and a mobile phone to him.

They and their accomplices were involved in planning suicide attacks on personnel of the special branch on March 23 and Frontier Constabulary on April 4. There was also information about a suicide attack on a lawyers' rally. The alleged terrorists had close links with militants of Miranshah, Batagram and Buner and were trained in operating modern weapons and making explosive devices. They were also involved in recruiting teenagers for suicide attacks on security forces.

According to the sources, the accused have confessed to having sent over a dozen youth to militant training camps from Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Azad Kashmir. The suspects also had links with one Shoaib of Lahore who arranged funds for terrorist activities. Owais, hailing from Poonch district and Obaidullah of Attock worked for one Tipu who was affiliated with a militant group named Ghazi Force. Owais had earlier received militant training as a member of Harkatul Mujahideen. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operation) Bani Amin said Owais was an expert in electronics and communication technology and he had got a diploma in navigation from Karachi, but he drove a taxi in the twin cities. He also worked for the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan to scan communication of security forces. Obaidullah had a diploma in associate engineering and taught in a computer college in G-9/3. The DIG said that police had arrested dozens of people allegedly affiliated with the Ghazi Force, Baitullah Meshud's TTP, Buner group, Momin Khan group, Ilyas Kashmiri group and Al Qaeda. Both the accused were handed over to Aabpara police for interrogation in connection with suicide attacks in Aabpara Market, Islamabad in July 2007 and at Special Branch headquarters on March 23 this year.

The above arrests show that close monitoring by Islamabad Police of the local security situation and intelligence gathering against terrorists have resulted in averting terrorist attacks in the city.

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