

TERRORIST ATTACK PROFILE

OVERVIEW:

Suicide bombings were extremely rare in Pakistan but have increased dramatically since the Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP) took control of Swat in the aftermath of government crackdown on extremists in 2007. The third major terrorist strike in Lahore in three months was perhaps not unexpected given the state's push against the militants on three fronts: in the Malakand division, Pakistan has launched its most serious counterinsurgency operation to date against the militants; in South Waziristan, ground forces are on the move backed by tanks and helicopters; in Punjab, the detention of some Jihadi leaders following the Mumbai attacks has generated resentment against the state.¹ The TTP have stepped up their attacks in cities around the country since the government launched its military offensive against insurgents in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in late April 2009. More than a dozen bomb blasts have killed more than 100 people, with serious attacks in the NWFP provincial capital, Peshawar, the country's cultural capital, Lahore, and Islamabad. The strikes, combined with the Taliban's steady march towards the capital, appear to have shifted public sympathy away from the insurgents.

The terrorist attacks on 28 May and 06 June, 2009 were directed specifically against Law Enforcement/Police Personnel. It is pertinent to mention that a possible terrorist attack on Inter Services Intelligence's (ISI) Headquarters Islamabad was jointly averted by the police and agency personnel on 27 May, 2009 by arresting three suspects along with a suicide jacket and explosives near the agency's building. The attacker intended to take part in a simultaneous attack on Rescue-15 Police building at Lahore. The suspects in Lahore attack were between the ages of 21 to 28 years and came from Buner, where military operations are being carried out against militants. Preliminary investigation revealed that they belonged to a group having affiliation with Baitullah Mehsud's Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The suspects were arrested in the morning from different parts of the capital and some their accomplices, including a suicide bomber, are still at large. Security agencies have had the suspects under surveillance for sometime. Investigations are underway.²

Moreover, on 07 June 2009, an alleged member of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Naeem ur Rehman, was arrested and 10 suicide jackets, five of them packed with explosives were recovered from his possession in Karachi,. He was in direct contact with Hussain Mehsud, a close aide of TTP chief Baitullah Mehsud. The Afghan trained Naeem ur Rehman had a considerable arsenal, 60 kilograms of explosive material, 10 hand-grenades, two Kalashnikov rifles, 10 detonators and as many fuses and 200 bullets, which he was intending to uses against politicians and law enforcement officers.³

Nevertheless, again on 08 June, 2009, terrorists blew up a police van, killing one police personnel and wounding another in Hazarkhwani area of Peshawar within the jurisdiction of Yakatut Police Station where police had cordoned off the area. 40 to 50 kilogram of explosives, planted in cylinder, were blasted through remote control. The explosion made a four feet deep and 10 feet wide crater.⁴

Continued attacks can be expected as the TTP is escalating their efforts to undermine the government's resolve to root out militancy, particularly in Swat. There can be more of such attacks on government offices and security forces in the coming days in various parts of the country and security has been beefed up throughout the country.

INCIDENTS:

Suicide attack on Rescue 15 Offices in Lahore and Islamabad.

¹'Lahore Attacked Again' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

²Munawer Azeem 'Police Arrest Three Terrorists In Islamabad' DAWN, 28 May 2009

³'Mehsud Aide Arrested In Karachi, Explosives Seized' DAWN, 08 June, 2009

⁴Ali Hazrat Bacha 'Bomb Blast Kills Policeman In Peshawar' DAWN, 09 June, 2009

DATES:

Thursday, 28 May, 2009 (Lahore) and Sunday, 06 June, 2009 (Islamabad).

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LOCATIONS:

Rescue 15 Building, Near CCPO Civil Lines and ISI Offices, Lawrence Road, Lahore (The incident took place at a heavily guarded entry point to the offices of Rescue-15 and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) as well as to the official residences of police officers at the Plaza Cinema Square. The buildings are adjacent to the offices of Lahore's police chief and are only yards away from the old Freemason's Hall where the Punjab chief minister has his secretariat).⁵

Rescue 15 Building, G-8/4, Islamabad.

PERPETRATED BY:

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attacks in Lahore.⁶

The attack in Islamabad was also perpetrated by TTP (Investigations are underway)

TARGETS:

Police/Security/Intelligence Personnel.

TACTICS:**Lahore Attack**

An explosive laden van, white Toyota Hiace, reached the entrance security checkpoint of the ISI and the CCPO office around 1010 am. Two of the attackers came out of the van, hurled a grenade at the police and another one in the direction of a nearby petrol station, and opened indiscriminate fire. The third accomplice rammed the explosive-laden van into the barrier when the security officials returned their fire. The driver of the van managed to break the first barrier and blew the vehicle up at the second after failing to penetrate the police defence.⁷

Islamabad Attack

The attack on the Rescue 15 building, 10 days after the one in Lahore, took place around 8.35pm. The suicide bomber, wearing a vest filled with three or four kilograms of explosives entered the premises through space in a wall that was under-construction behind the building.⁸ He was spotted by security and asked to prove identity, whereupon he ran towards the office when he was shot and the explosives detonated when the attacker fell.⁹

IMPACT:**Lahore Attack**

The security personnel deployed at the ISI building and police installations resorted to aerial firing after the explosion. The explosives, weighing 100 kg, razed to the ground the office of the police service,

⁵Muhammad Faisal Ali 'Death Toll From Lahore Car Bomb Attack Rises To 26' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

⁶Isambard Wilkinson 'Terrorists Launch Second Wave Of Revenge Attacks in Pak' Telegraph, 28 May, 2009

⁷Muhammad Faisal Ali 'Death Toll From Lahore Car Bomb Attack Rises To 26' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

⁸Munawer Azeem 'Lahore-Style Strike On Islamabad Rescue 15' DAWN, 07 June, 2009

⁹'Police Thwart Suicide Bomber' LA Times, 07 June, 2009

besides tearing the facade of the ISI building. The explosion was intense and caused a 15-foot-deep and 17-foot-wide crater at the site and its sound was heard up to 15 kilometres away. The explosion shook buildings within a 2 km radius of the blast.¹⁰ Three of the five attackers were killed by Police¹¹ and two were arrested.¹² 26 people were killed in all, including ISI Colonel and 15 Police officials and 400 were injured.¹³

Islamabad Attack

The suicide attack resulted in the death of two police personnel and injured six.¹⁴ Some shots had been fired by accomplices of the suicide bomber to enable him to reach his target. Police guards fired back at the terrorists. They said that a suspect was rounded up with weapons used in the shooting shortly after the blast.¹⁵

¹⁰‘26 Killed In Lahore Car Bomb Attack-ISI Colonel,15 Cops Among Dead;400 Injured’The News,28 May,2009

¹¹‘Muhammad Faisal Ali ‘Death Toll From Lahore Car Bomb Attack Rises To 26’ DAWN, 28 May, 2009

¹² <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/05/27/lahore.blast> 28 May, 2009

¹³‘26 Killed In Lahore Car Bomb Attack-ISI Colonel,15 Cops Among Dead;400 Injured’The News,28 May,2009

¹⁴‘Kashif Ali Abbasi ‘Suicide Attack In Islamabad Kills Two Policemen’ The Nation, 07 June, 2009

¹⁵‘Munawer Azeem ‘Lahore-Style Strike On Islamabad Rescue 15’ DAWN, 07 June, 2009

ATTACK DETAILS

VISUAL AIDS:

Lahore Attack



Islamabad Attack



WITNESS ACCOUNTS:

Lahore Attack

'I saw a white van parked near the barriers. A young man, who appeared to be in his 20s, disembarked and opened fire in all directions. The firing continued for a couple of minutes and then there was a big explosion. We were left benumbed.' Khalil ur Rehman, a cleaner at a car show room at Queen's Road.¹⁶

'I ran out of the building and saw a surreal huge ring of white smoke rise into air.' Matthias Gattermeier.¹⁷

Islamabad Attack

'It was a huge blast that jolted the area and shattered everything into pieces in front of my eyes.' An eyewitness.¹⁸

ATTACK ANALYSIS:

TARGET ASSESSMENT:

Lahore Attack

The Rescue 15 attack in Islamabad refutes the assumption that it was the ISI Chief who was targeted when the Rescue 15 headquarters in Lahore was attacked by a suicide vehicle, implying that the TTP had finally extended its reach to this extent. The attack was actually related to disabling the system of advance warning and reaching the area of attack on time. Pakistan's ability to face terrorist attacks is improving by the day¹⁹ but the target, although hardened, was strategic as it is located in the busiest and most important area of the city and created the stir and damage it intended to.

Islamabad Attack

Rescue 15 unit works in two shifts, accommodating 25 police personnel. Offices of the SP (City) and (Industrial Area) and the DSP are also located there. At the time of the incident, there were 10 police personnel performing duty.²⁰ The Islamabad strike was the first attack on the capital in more than two months.²¹ The target was vulnerable due to ongoing construction on the wall which yielded advantage to the attacker. Despite the fact that casualties were lower, as compared to attack in Lahore, the aim of attacking police personnel was served nevertheless.

TACTIC ASSESSMENT:

Lahore Attack

The terror operation started at 10:21am and ended at 10:24 am and within these three minutes the attackers accomplished their task.²² CC TV footage, before the explosion destroyed the camera, greatly helped in examining the tactics used by the terrorists. First, there appears to have been a breakdown in security in what should have been a high-security area. When the terrorists opened fire and lobbed grenades, there was no return of fire for the security forces. Only after the bomb detonated did the security forces take up positions on the rooftops of neighbouring buildings. Given that the modus operandi used by the terrorists was not new and that the neighbourhood they struck was a logical target,

¹⁶ Muhammad Faisal Ali 'Death Toll From Lahore Car Bomb Attack Rises To 26' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

¹⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8070408.stm

¹⁸ Imran Asghar '2 Killed In Suicide Attack At Rescue 15 Building In Islamabad' 07 June, 2009

¹⁹ Possible Changes In Taliban Tactics' Daily Times, 08 June, 2009

²⁰ Munawer Azeem 'Lahore-Style Strike On Islamabad Rescue 15' DAWN, 07 June, 2009

²¹ Amanda Hodge 'Pakistan Capital Hit By Taliban Bomber' The Australian, 08 June, 2009

²² Asif Chaudhary 'Terrorists Attack Lahore ISI Office' The Nation, 28 May, 2009

the security forces should have planned better for such an eventuality. A quicker and fiercer response could possibly have saved some lives.²³

Islamabad Attack

The tactics adhered to the recent pattern of combating and detonation. The suicide bomber, who was around 22 to 23 years old, was helped by accomplices and another potential suicide bomber by engaging police personnel in exchange of fire so that the blast occurs at distance that ensures maximum damage. However, the explosives detonated after the bomber was shot and the suspects and accomplices were arrested.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Lahore Attack

The impact was immense. The Rescue 15 Building which housed the city's rapid response team, which is dispatched during emergencies collapsed. 50 people were thought to have been inside the two-story building at the time. The Police Headquarters that sits adjacent to the building was also damaged. The roof of four operating rooms caved at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, with 40 medical staff members suffering minor wounds.²⁴ No less than 70 vehicles and motorcycles and dozens of adjacent and nearby buildings, mostly used for shops and offices, were damaged.²⁵

Islamabad Attack

Intelligence agencies had warned that some terrorists, including suicide attackers and five explosives-laden vehicles, had entered the capital.²⁶ Important national and military points have already been under tighter security because of threats of attacks on them by terrorists. After the recent incident, the Islamabad police have been directed to increase patrolling of city roads and keep a vigilant eye on suspected movements of persons or vehicles.²⁷

Consolidated

Attacks provoked fears that Taliban insurgents had teamed up with local militants. According to Farahnaz Ispahani, Pakistani presidential spokeswoman, the public will have to stand united because of powerful and ideologically driven enemy. Gen. David H. Petraeus, head of the US Central Command, was in the capital, Islamabad, to meet Pakistani leaders when the Lahore attack happened.²⁸ and US special envoy Richard Holbrooke was in Pakistan visiting IDPs when Islamabad attack happened. The impact catering to the specific militant agenda of anti-law enforcement and anti-US was significant.

GROUP ASSESSMENT:

Lahore Attack

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attacks in a Turkish-language statement posted on Turkish Jihadist websites through an organization called Elif Media. The Islamist monitors SITE cited the group as saying the attack targeted the 'nest of evil' in Lahore, and was a 'humble gift' to the Mujahideen who suffer the attacks of Pakistani forces in Swat.²⁹ Hakimullah Mehsud, an aide of Pakistan's Taliban chief, Baitullah Mehsud, said the attack was retaliation for the operations in Swat, and also warned the citizens of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Multan to leave as they plan major attacks against government facilities in coming days.³⁰ He has asserted that they have secured assigned positions for suicide attacks. Fazlullah-led

²³ 'Lahore Attacked Again' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

²⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/05/27/lahore.blast> 28 May, 2009

²⁵ Muhammad Faisal Ali 'Death Toll From Lahore Car Bomb Attack Rises To 26' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

²⁶ Munawer Azeem 'Lahore-Style Strike On Islamabad Rescue 15' DAWN, 07 June, 2009

²⁷ 'Amir Yasin 'Suicide Attack On Rescue 15' Daily Times, 07 June, 2009

²⁸ Salman Masood 'At Least 23 Die In Huge Bombing In Pakistan' Reuters, 28 May, 2009

²⁹ http://geo.tv/important_events/2009/lahoreblast/pages/english_news.asp

³⁰ Isambard Wilkinson 'Terrorists Launch Second Wave Of Revenge Attacks in Pak' Telegraph, 28 May, 2009

Swati Taliban had been urging Baitullah Mehsud and his commanders to send suicide bombers for attacks in the main cities of the Punjab as they are upset over heavy losses of their people in the ongoing military operation and are desperate for suicide attacks on senior military officials and important government locations across the country.³¹

Pakistan's government has rebuked the Taliban attacks to avenge military offensive against them in Swat valley. Religion is no longer working for Baitullah Mehsud as the national consensus in Pakistan is against TTP. Reportedly, after the Razmak College cadets were taken to Makin, Baitullah Mehsud's headquarters in South Waziristan, they were asked if there were any non-Pashtuns among them. This was immediately taken by the students to mean that the Taliban had planned to kill any Punjabi cadets. Although Punjabi auxiliaries from the Jihadi militias are being used by the Taliban in their suicide missions, the aim could be exploring the ethnic vector in the affected region.³² It is possible that the combatants are from Punjabi Jihadi groups, loosely affiliated with TTP whereas the suicide bombers are from tribal areas

Islamabad Attack

A telephone intercept of Muslim Khan, a Taliban spokesman in Swat, was released in which he urged attacks on the families of soldiers. "Strikes should be carried out on their homes so their kids get killed and then they'll realize," he said.³³ Although it is evident that the attack has been carried out by Taliban, specifically against Law Enforcement Personnel, investigations are still underway and suicide bomber arrested along with other suspects are being interrogated.

ATTACK INVESTIGATION

POST-INCIDENT:

Lahore Attack

The Lahore Bomb Disposal Squad disclosed a highly explosive substance without ball-bearings was used in the attack. The explosive material contained RDX, TNT and CR, which produced a huge fireball. Two Russian hand-grenades were also recovered.³⁴ Reportedly, police on 03 June, 2009 arrested a suspected terrorist allegedly involved in attack on Lahore Rescue-15 Building. He was identified as Beram Khan s/o Jhurai Khan, resident of Badmir, who is being interrogated to trace links to the network. Another major suspect was arrested, as disclosed by police authorities on 02 June, 2009, from Dirya Khan (District Bhakkar), an engineer by profession. Moreover, the vehicle used was snatched from Faisalabad.³⁵

Moreover, Capital City Police Office (CCPO) Lahore disclosed that a suicide bomber of Lahore attack has been identified as Iftikhar who was resident of Mandi Bahauddin, and was associated with a banned outfit, who was missing from his house for six years. 18 suspects have been arrested in connection with the attack³⁶ and are being interrogated. Commissioner Lahore Division further disclosed that investigation team was conducting probe and it is too early to say that the blast was similar to the one that had hit FIA office in Lahore on 11 March, 2008.³⁷

Islamabad Attacks

³¹ 'TTP Claims Lahore Attack, Threatens More' Pak Tribune, 29 May, 2009

³² 'Possible Changes In Taliban Tactics' Daily Times, 08 June, 2009

³³ Nick Meo 'Taliban Recruits Teenage Suicide Bombers For Revenge Attacks' Telegraph 30 May, 2009

³⁴ '26 Killed In Lahore Car Bomb Attack-ISI Colonel, 15 Cops Among Dead; 400 Injured' The News, 28 May, 2009

³⁵ 'Arrests Made In Rescue 15 Attack Case' SAMAA, 03 June, 2009

³⁶ 'Indian Terrorist Suspect Involved In Rescue 15 Attack Arrested' Pak Tribune, 04 June, 2009

³⁷ http://geo.tv/important_events/2009/lahoreblast/pages/english_news.asp

Another suicide bomber, around 20, has been arrested from the main gate of the building soon after the blast along with three other suspected accomplices of the suicide attacker including a woman in front of the building. The police sources said that two of the arrested suspects had been identified as Ibrahim Rabbani and Fatima Lodhi. After the arrest of the suspects, Rangers, Anti-Terrorist Squad and police commandos cordoned off the area to avoid more attacks.³⁸ Investigations are underway.

CASE FINDINGS:

According to a tape released by Pakistani authorities of an intercepted telephone call between the Taliban spokesman in Swat, Muslim Khan, and an unidentified militant, the former stresses on the need 'to strike soldiers in Punjab so that they can understand and feel pain. Strikes should be carried out on their homes so their kids get killed and then they'll realize.' The unidentified man said militants had been ordered to strike wherever they could.³⁹

ISI office adjacent to the Rescue 15 building should have been relocated some time ago. ISI offices have been targeted before, in Lahore and Rawalpindi, and they remain very high on the terrorists' list of potential targets.⁴⁰ Moreover, Police have so far arrested more than 30 suspected Taliban in refugee camps, but there was concern that many more may have used the chaos to slip into Pakistan's cities. Fears of suicide bombers striking crowds are running high in Peshawar and gatherings of more than 10 people have been banned.⁴¹

Although it is evident that the targets of the attack are generally police and law enforcement personnel to avenge military offensive in the northwest against Taliban rebels, the attacks in urban centres are likely to occur in future. The explosive laden vehicle used in blast at Pearl Continental Hotel Peshawar on 10 June, 2009 at 10 pm, like Marriott Hotel blast and Rescue 15 Lahore attack, reflects the fluidity and variety of tactics and is a proof enough of gradual increase in terrorist incidents in future.

³⁸Kashif Ali Abbasi 'Suicide Attack In Islamabad Kills Two Policemen' The Nation, 07 June, 2009

³⁹Isambard Wilkinson 'Terrorists Launch Second Wave Of Revenge Attacks in Pak' Telegraph, 28 May, 2009

⁴⁰'Lahore Attacked Again' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

⁴¹Nick Meo 'Taliban Recruits Teenage Suicide Bombers For Revenge Attacks' Telegraph 30 May, 2009

ATTACK RESPONSE

GOVERNMENT:

Rehman Malik, Pakistan's Interior Minister said the attack in Lahore, one of the largest in Pakistan in 2009, was in retaliation for an army offensive against Taliban militants in northwestern Swat Valley.⁴² He further revealed that attack at Islamabad was also in reaction to the Swat operation, adding that security agencies were fully alert.⁴³ President Asif Ali Zardari condemned the suicide bombing and said that such acts of barbarism would not deter the government from going after the militants. Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has directed the concerned authorities to investigate the incident.⁴⁴

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:

Politicians from around the world have condemned the attack and offered condolences to Pakistan. US ambassador Anne Patterson said the attacks 'show the lengths extremist elements are willing to go to as they attempt to force their agenda on to a people who only wish to go about their daily lives in peace.'⁴⁵ United States strongly condemned the bombing in Lahore as 'totally abhorrent and unacceptable' and voiced solidarity with Pakistani nation in its fight against violent extremism and State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly offered condolences and reiterated US resolve to support the Government of Pakistan. US consulate is functioning normally in the city and has also provided some emergency medical supplies. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon issued a statement condemning the bombing⁴⁶ The international community has condemned the incidents and assured the country of its supporting in rooting out the menace of terrorism.

SOCIETY:

Lahore is seen as a stable home for Pakistan's Punjab-dominated army, which stepped up serious operations against Taliban insurgents in the Swat valley and adjacent areas, where more than 1,000 militants have been killed so far.⁴⁷ By taking the fight to Pakistan's cities, the Taliban aim to terrify civilians in order to pressurise leaders to call off the army offensive. They are trying to demoralize the public through massive casualties. For shopkeepers and residents who had been through FIA explosion in March 2008, it was a case of déjà vu.⁴⁸ It is important that International Community and Government of Pakistan take appropriate measures to assure Pakistanis about their support and keep the confidence of nation unshaken by possibility of very frequent attacks in future.

⁴²Mark Magnier-Alex Rodriguez 'Car Bomb Kills 30 Near Pakistani Security Offices' LA Times, 28 May, 2009

⁴³Munawer Azeem 'Lahore-Style Strike On Islamabad Rescue 15' DAWN, 07 June, 2009

⁴⁴PM Gilani Slams Attack On Rescue 15' The News, 07 June, 2009

⁴⁵http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/8070408.stm

⁴⁶26 Killed In Lahore Car Bomb Attack-ISI Colonel, 15 Cops Among Dead; 400 Injured' The News, 28 May, 2009

⁴⁷'Taliban Blamed For Lahore Attack' BBC News, 28 May, 2009

⁴⁸Issam Ahmed 'Déjà Vu As Terror Revisits Lahore' DAWN, 28 May, 2009

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

This is the third attack in Lahore since early March, 2009, raising fears that attacks are spreading well beyond the frontier and tribal areas near Afghanistan. Lahore, Pakistan's second-largest city, was an obvious target because it is politically influential and is the capital of Punjab state, where 70% of the nation's soldiers are recruited. The blast came a day after General David Petraeus, head of US central command, was in Islamabad for meetings with government and military leaders.⁴⁹

The attack was generally expected, if not at an exact time and place. Army forces stationed at the ISI building at the time of the attack were part of beefed-up security. Farrukh Saleem, Executive Director, Center for Research and Security Studies in Islamabad opined that the fact that it took this long for the Taliban to mount a major attack in a Pakistani city reflects their capability has been exaggerated. ISI has not been directly involved in the Swat offensive, but it is a symbol of state power and is credited with providing intelligence for the operation.⁵⁰

Interior Minister Rehman Malik said eight of the 50 would-be suicide bombers sent by the chief of the outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Baitullah Mehsud, had been arrested.⁵¹ There have been growing signs in the past week of increased intensity in the battle between the Taliban and the Pakistan government. The price on the head of Maulana Fazlulla was increased to 50 million rupees (£372,000) alive or dead, ten times the original bounty that was offered for him. In return, the Taliban have threatened new revenge attacks. The army appears to have been successful in driving Taliban back in large areas, and has had regained control of Mingora, the capital of Swat. However, the battles have resulted in an exodus of 2.4 million refugees. In turn this has created a new security problem and hundreds of terrorists are feared to be hiding among those who have fled.⁵²

Around 60 soldiers have been killed in the fighting in the Swat region. Lt Gen Kamal Matinuddin, a retired army officer and military analyst, said: 'I don't believe the terrorists' claim that they can mount attacks across Pakistan but they will certainly target the major cities. The requirement at the moment is that the intelligence agencies must effectively penetrate their training facilities.'⁵³

A bomb has exploded at a mosque in north-western Pakistan during Friday prayers on 05 June, 2009, killing at least 38 people and wounding dozens more in the village of Hayagai Sharki, about 15km from the town of Upper Dir.⁵⁴ Earlier, five policemen and an army officer were killed when a roadside bomb ripped through a security forces convoy near the Mardan district, home to a large proportion of the 2.4million people displaced by fighting between Taliban and government troops.⁵⁵

Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden issued a new message on 03 June, 2009 citing the fighting in Swat and Pakistan's tribal areas and blaming the US Government for sowing "new seeds to increase hatred and revenge on America".⁵⁶ Evidently, the militants retaliated not only for the government war against the Taliban but also due to a visit by US special envoy Richard Holbrooke on 04 June, 2009.

On June 10, 2009, the seventh deadly bombing in a month in Peshawar further demonstrated that Taliban militants are extracting revenge for a punishing six-week military offensive against them in three northwest districts.

Since the government offensive began more than a dozen bomb blasts have killed over 100 people, with Peshawar, Lahore and Islamabad all hit. The attack on the Pearl Continental echoes a suicide truck

⁴⁹Isambard Wilkinson 'Pakistan Suicide Bombing Kills 23 In Taliban Revenge Attack' Telegraph, 27 May, 2009

⁵⁰Mark Magnier-Alex Rodriguez 'Car Bomb Kills 30 Near Pakistani Security Offices' LA Times, 28 May, 2009

⁵¹Munawer Azeem 'Lahore-Style Strike On Islamabad Rescue 15' DAWN, 07 June, 2009

⁵²Nick Meo 'Taliban Recruits Teenage Suicide Bombers For Revenge Attacks' Telegraph 30 May, 2009

⁵³Isambard Wilkinson 'Terrorists Launch Second Wave Of Revenge Attacks in Pak' Telegraph, 28 May, 2009

⁵⁴'Pakistan Mosque Bomb Kills Dozens' BBC News, 05 June, 2009

⁵⁵Amanda Hodge 'Taliban Bombs Shake Pakistan' The Australian, 06 June, 2009

⁵⁶Amanda Hodge 'Taliban Bombs Shake Pakistan' The Australian, 06 June, 2009

bomb attack on the luxury Marriott Hotel in Islamabad in September 2008 that killed 60 people. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and another foreigner was among the 11 people killed when a suicide truck bomb hit carrying 500 kilogram explosive material.⁵⁷

The Government of Pakistan is taking all possible security measures to thwart terrorist threats by beefing up security but the retaliation by Taliban is inevitable. More threats are likely to occur in the future, as mentioned earlier, to break the resolve of nation. However, Government must ensure that the public does not lose confidence this time and that appropriate security measures are taken to ensure minimum damage and casualties. Action against Taliban must continue at increased pace to root out the evil, without giving them respite to strengthen themselves. Government needs to go for enhancing capabilities of its intelligence agencies to 'second-guess future moves' of the terrorists with authority.⁵⁸

⁵⁷'UNHCR Official Killed In PC Explosion' GEO Pakistan, 10 June, 2009

⁵⁸Aamir Yasin 'Suicide Attack On Rescue 15' Daily Times, 07 June, 2009