Twin Suicide Attack in Quetta, Pakistan

The Incident

On 13 December 2007, two suicide bombers struck a security check post in the military cantonment area in Quetta, provincial capital of the Balochistan Province in quick succession. According to reports, 11 people, including five security personnel, were killed and 18 others were injured.

The target of the suicide attackers was a security check post of the Military Police (MP) at Kach More in the Quetta military cantonment. The check post was located on a main road that connected the Cantonment to Hanna village situated in the suburbs of Quetta. There are conflicting reports with regard to the tactics used by the suicide bombers. According to some reports, the suicide bombers used explosive-laden vehicles in both the attacks, while others point towards human-borne suicide attackers involved in the terrorist incident. However, the evidence points to a likelihood of the suicide attacks being human-borne.

According to details, around 1705 hrs (PST), a young bearded man approached a military check post from the direction of Hanna village, and blew himself up. The suicide bomber and three security personnel were killed in the attack. Soon after the attack, the security forces halted the traffic on the main road in order to take the injured to the hospital and pick up the bodies of the dead security personnel as well as to inspect the attack. This resulted in traffic jams on both sides of the road. In the meantime, inquisitive civilians also gathered in the vicinity of the check post to view the activity. According to reports, another suicide attacker having a beard conducted the second attack while emerging from within the civilians.

The law-enforcement agencies have launched a probe into the bombings. According to police officials, the heads of the two suicide bombers have been found. They were aged between 22-25. The face of one of the bombers was intact and a sketch could be easily made, while the face of the other suicide bomber was partially damaged, but a plastic surgery would make it recognizable.

Analysis

The Balochistan Province has remained comparatively safer in terms of suicide attacks. Since 2002, only three suicide attacks were reported in the province: the suicide attack against a Shia Imambargh (place of worship) in Quetta in 2003; a suicide attack on Shia procession outside Imambargh in Quetta (2004); and a suicide attack in a civil court room in Quetta (2007). All the three attacks were attributed to terrorist sectarian outfits, such as

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1 “Ten Killed in Quetta Cantt Suicide Attack”, The News, 14 December 2007
2 According to a police official of the Quetta district, the attacks were vehicle-borne suicide attack. See “Twin Suicide Explosions Leave 11 Dead in Quetta, The Frontier Post, 14 December 2007
3 “Suicide Blasts Rock Quetta: Seven Killed”, Dawn, 14 December 2007
4 Ibid.
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). This attack is the first of its kind in which two suicide bombers have specifically targeted security installations.

Similarly, the Balochistan Province is witnessing a low-intensity conflict due to the insurgency by Baloch nationalists in the Province. Led by Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the insurgents have targeted security installations and economic infrastructure with impunity since 2003. However, the BLA has never indulged in suicide attacks in their history. Although there is little chance of BLA’s involvement in the two suicide attacks, however if they claim it, then it would be a significant change of tactics in the group’s armed struggle.

The highest possibility of involvement in the two suicide attacks could be attributed to the Pakistani Taliban militants, who have been conducting suicide attacks throughout the country since 2006. While the Pakistani security forces are maintaining maximum vigilance in other parts of the country, the Taliban could have decided to target Balochistan Province. Similarly, Balochistan Province also borders the South Waziristan Agency (SWA) of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, and Baitulllah Mahsud, the supreme commander of the Mahsud Taliban militants is based in SWA. The Pakistani government has frequently blamed Baitullah for recruiting, training and selecting targets for suicide attacks in the entire Pakistan.

The Pakistani Taliban based in South Waziristan Agency are also using Balochistan’s Zhob district to infiltrate into Afghanistan to conduct attacks against ISAF/NATO troops in Zabul and Helmand provinces. Recently, a leading Taliban commander, Abdullah Mahsud, was killed in Zhob district in a counter-terrorism operation in July 2007.

Pictures

![Image](courtesy_urdudaily_express_lahore_14december2007)
Targeted Check post (Courtesy Urdu Daily “Waqt” Lahore, 14 December 2007)