Twin Suicide Bombings in Rawalpindi, 4 September 2007

The Incident

On 4 September 2007, two separate suicide attacks in different locations in Rawalpindi killed at least 30 people and injured another 70. The first suicide attack at about 7:10 am near the Qasim Market, targeted a bus carrying 35 employees of Pakistan’s premier external intelligence agency, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). This left 20 persons dead. Five minutes later, another suicide attack targeted civilians near the R.A. Bazaar Police Station and 10 people were killed. Apart from human losses, damage was also caused to private vehicles and nearby buildings.

Location of Attacks

According to eyewitnesses, the bus of the Ministry of Defence stopped at the turn of Askari 11 area near the Qasim Market to pick some employees. Five persons were waiting at the stop to board the bus. The suicide bomber is believed to be among those five persons. As they boarded the bus, it blew up. According to some witnesses, a young man in white clothes boarded the bus when it was about to leave. Shortly thereafter, they heard a powerful explosion, which ripped through the bus.

---

1 “30 Die as Terrorists Hit Pindi Cantt” The News, 5 September 2007
2 www.news.bbc.co.uk
3 The News, 5 September 2007
As for the second blast that took place in the R.A. Bazaar, eyewitnesses said that a young man riding a motorcycle blew himself up in front of a shop near the police station. They said that the suicide bomber was riding a motorcycle, and struck a private vehicle of army officer, before blowing himself up.  

---

4 The News, 05 September 2007  
5 www.bbc.co.uk/urdu last visited 5 September 2007  
6 www.bbc.co.uk/urdu
Analysis of Attack

The targets of both the suicide attacks were apparently security and law enforcement personnel. Since October 2006, attacks against security and law enforcement agencies have intensified. There are strong indications that the suicide bombers belonged to the local Taliban militants from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan.

Recent suicide bombings in Rawalpindi carry utmost significance given the fact that it took place at a distance of 300 yards from Pakistan military’s General Head Quarter (GHQ), which is frequently visited by President Musharraf, being the Chief of Army Staff himself. The recent terrorist incidents in Rawalpindi come at a time when Pakistan is witnessing political turmoil. A leading Urdu daily, Nawa-i-Waqt, quoted in its editorial:

“Terrorist attacks near the General Headquarters of Pakistan Army and inside the bus carrying ISI officials, signify the fact that our agencies have failed to maintain peace in the country due to their involvement in political issues”7

Post-Lal Masjid military operation in July 2007, which followed an initiation of military operations by Pakistani security forces in North Waziristan Agency (NWA) in FATA, local Taliban militants have intensified their attacks against security personnel. The main purpose of the attacks are to instil fear in the security and law enforcement agencies, which could force them into submission, and make them inactive in Musharraf’s drive against extremism in the country. Such attacks, the militants believe, could demoralise the security and law enforcement personnel, who could in turn question the efficacy of Musharraf’s fight against extremism and militancy in FATA and North Western Frontier Province (NWFP).

Since July 2007, there has been a spate of suicide attacks in Islamabad. The government has also claimed that they have arrested a number of would-be-suicide bombers in recent days. This signifies that the local Taliban militants are taking their fight to the urban centres located deep in the territory of Pakistan.

The present suicide bombings is similar in terms of strategy to the ones employed by the Afghan Taliban, which have intensified their attacks in Kabul and its adjoining provinces since early 2006. It is noteworthy that a similar nature of suicide attack in Kabul in June 2007, targeted a bus carrying police officials, left 35 people dead and 52 injured.

7 “Daily Nawa-i-Waqt” Editorial, 05 September 2007