

Scenario 60

PAKISTAN ITSELF ATTACKED BY W O T:

Since about six years successively, the al Qaeda and militants supported by Afghani Taliban had hit several military and police bases near Pakistani nuclear facilities in northern Punjab and the Khyber PK province [previously known as NWFP]. These attacks had taken start soon after Nine Eleven of 2001 but had gradually gained momentum when **on 8th November 2006** a suicide bomber attacked an Army base in Dargai near Malakand Division; mechanized infantry, armour and artillery were stationed in the garrison.

Over 45 Pakistani Army trainees were killed and 20 got seriously injured when the bomber, wrapped in a *chadar* around his body, came running into the training area and exploded him where recruits had gathered for exercise.

Dargai village otherwise was stronghold of militant group *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* [TNSM] so al Qaeda and TNSM were the primary suspects. The attack was considered a likely retaliation for the air-strike on Maulvi Faqir Mohammed's *madrassa* in Chingai, Bajaur in which about 84 children were killed.

In fact that air-strike on Faqir Mohammad's religious school was [perhaps] the first American drone attack on Pakistan considering that *Madrassa* as the 'terrorist's training camp' which was not a correct assessment. Gen Musharraf's military government had declared that air-strike was done by the Pakistan Air Force [PAF]; as per secret deal done by the General with the Americans.

On the same day, Governor NWFP [now Khyber PK] Ali Jan Orkazi [*himself a retired Lt General and Pashtun*] became target of a rocket attack in Wana, South Waziristan; three rockets were fired at him during his *jirga* [meeting] with tribal leaders. The governor was there to seek peace deals in the tribal regions to fetch support for the Pakistani military and Gen Musharraf.

The fact remained that attacks against al Qaeda and Afghani Taliban infrastructure, designed to 'prove' Pakistan an ally in the war, only served to enrage the pro-Islamist elements within the military, increasing the likelihood of more attacks and coup attempts.

ATTACKS IN LAST YEARS OF MILITARY RULE:

In March 2007, the Kharian Cantonment [*House of 17th Infantry Division of the Pak-Army*] was attacked by a suicide bomber killing two recruits while eight were injured as they were on their training exercises. In July 2007, a suicide bomber attacked the Police Recruitment Centre in D I Khan killing 20 recruits and leaving about 50 wounded. Another similar suicidal attack during the same day was launched at Police Training College Hangu killing eight recruits there.

During December 2007, the militants went more aggressive, perhaps, due to Gen Musharraf's proclamation of Emergency of 3rd November a month earlier. The militants thought that due to 'Constitution held in abeyance'; the army would go more offensive. Thus **on 10th December 2007** they launched a stern attack on Kamra Air Base in Khyber PK province.

Those were the days when the Pakistani military was consolidating to regain control of the settled district of Swat. Though during the same days a suicide bomber had hit a police checkpoint at Matta [*near Swat's capital Mingora, where the Pakistani Army had just marked their presence*] killing ten people including two children and three policemen, but the area remained under control.

However, the attack at PAF base in Kamra, though only injuring seven people, had far more serious implications being a likely location for Pakistan's nuclear missiles and weapons. The suicide bomber had targeted a school bus carrying 35 children of PAF officers; the driver, a conductor, and five children were wounded in the strike.

While al Qaeda suicide bombers were targeting secure military facilities since 2006, the nuclear arsenals remained their focal points. For instance, two suicide bombing events in R A Bazaar Rawalpindi **on 4th September 2007** killing 25 and leaving 48 seriously injured, including military and intelligence officers as the direct target, were noted by the Pakistan Army very seriously.

Then on **30th October 2007** another suicide bomber launched attack in the same garrison town [outside GHQ's main gate] killing eight persons including two police officers and leaving about fourteen injured; it was a loud alarming signal.

On 1st November 2007, a suicide bomber killed eight and injured 27 at Sargodha Airbase too; the bomber had driven his motorcycle into a bus carrying military and intelligence officers to the airbase for duty. [*The Sargodha PAF Base serves as the HQ of the PAF's Central Air Command and home of F-16 fighters and ballistic missiles.*]

On 23rd November 2007, two suicide bombers targeted the military and intelligence personnel in Islamabad and in Rawalpindi; one at a check post near GHQ Rawalpindi and the other was on a bus carrying ISI officers near Faizabad. Both these suicidal attacks were apparently aimed to erode the Pak-Army's capacity to defend nuclear installations if al Qaeda could aspire to seize nuclear weapons.

The intelligentsia had a strong view that attacks on military and PAF installations were aided and sponsored by the covert NATO intelligence officials posted around; they were testing the grounds in fact and miserably failed. Though there was a colossal loss to Pakistan but, with such failures of enemy attacks, the poisonous propaganda against '**Pakistan's ability to save their nuclear arsenal from Taliban & Al Qaeda**' went slow and ultimately died.

Since the first day of 2008, the security situation in Pakistan's Tribal Areas [FATA] had deteriorated as the militants had taken control of certain key points. In mid January, a militant group had taken away Pak-Army's supply convoy into hostage in Orakzai Agency. The Pakistani military launched an operation after two *jirgas* had failed to get the foreign and internal militant forces surrender the army vehicles; however, the soldiers were got freed.

Earlier, besides the references given above, on 6th July 2007 an un-identified group had attempted to shoot down Gen Musharraf's airplane as it left the PAF Base at Rawalpindi; he was travelling with senior military and political leaders.

The militants had conducted attacks on numerous mosques of the Khyber PK Province as well. The most high-profile attack occurred **on 20th December 2007** in Charsadda, where a suicide bomber detonated in the mosque in an attempt to kill former Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Sherpao while attending the Eid prayers. More than 50 were killed and about a hundred wounded.

The most drastic attack in that series was of **27th December 2007** in which PPP's leader and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was eliminated along with 23 of her security guards

including some members of the regular police. Taliban Commander Baitullah Mehsud had claimed credit for the assassination.

[Details of this episode has been given in earlier Volumes of this book]

ATTACKS IN 1ST YEAR OF PPP REGIME:

On 10th January 2008, a suicide bomber targeted the police contingent posted on duty outside the Lahore High Court Lahore killing 22 policemen and civilians; more than 70 were wounded.

On 16th January 2008, the militants attacked a check post at a fort in Northern Pakistan manned by the Frontier Corps [FC] in the town of Sararogha; more than 20 troops were captured.

On 17th January 2008, the same group of fighters took control of another check post at Saklatoi fort; about 40 paramilitary soldiers were on duty but they had to leave the post and fled to avoid clash.

On 25th January 2008, in the same Orakzai agency of Tribal Areas at Pak-Afghan border, near Darra Adam Khel village [*a well known bazaar for open sale of illegal hand-crafted firearms*], the radicals hijacked a military convoy carrying supplies and ammunition for Pakistani troops deployed near the border posts; at least six soldiers were captured during the hijacking.

34 militants and two Pakistani soldiers were killed after the Pakistani military cordoned the Darra Adam Khel region and launched an assault to take back their vehicles and ammunition and clear the area of fighter forces mostly belonging to the Central Asian States. Heavy shelling took place with artillery and gunship helicopters while militants claimed to have taken control of Zarghoon-khel check post.

The militants, in another parallel move, had abducted 14 Frontier Corps [FC] troops from a checkpoint in Kohat. The locals informed the media secretly that the militants had paraded the whole contingent of 14 hostages through the main bazaar of Darra Adam Khel.

In the same evening perhaps, eight FC men were slaughtered by that aggressive group; their bodies were dragged through the same main bazaar to expose the heads of the beheaded personnel. The militants were wearing Army and Frontier Corps uniforms while conducting that task to make the residents believe that more FC and military troops had been beheaded in their back yard.

During that siege, the militants took over the Kohat Tunnel Mountain also, a strategic link along the Indus Highway that connects Peshawar to the southern tribal agencies. The Pak-military declared a cease-fire in Darra Adam Khel next day while the local religious leaders formed a peace *jirga* to resolve the situation.

Maulvi Omar of the Baitullah Mehsud faction though formally denied the claim; but urged that 25 Pakistani soldiers and seven fighters were killed in the said encounter. The fact remained that the fighters loyal to Baitullah Mehsud were bravely resisting the military across the whole belt. Also that entrance to Waziristan was easy but maintaining writ there was a difficult task for any enforcement agency or army; whether from Pakistan or America or NATO.

A day after, **on 27th January 2008**, the military recaptured the Japanese built Kohat Tunnel after fierce fighting. As reported by the military media channels, 24 miscreants were killed; many had fled leaving behind huge quantity of arms and ammunition. However, the fighters

had damaged the tunnel and attempted to demolish it to make the areas independent of Pakistan's control.

On 4th February 2008, the city of Rawalpindi was hit with another suicide attack after a bomber on a motorcycle rammed into a bus carrying military personnel, killing ten security personnel at least. The blast took place during rush hour on a road passing through much crowded market in Rawalpindi. The bus was carrying personnel from the Army Medical Corps; six soldiers and four civilians were killed and 25 more were wounded.

On 9th February 2008, a suicide bomber launched an attack in the settled district of Charsadda at an election rally held by the Awami National Party [ANP], a Pashtun political party; 25 civilians were reportedly killed and more than 35 were left wounded.

This was the third major suicide bombing in Charsadda since April 2007. The prior two attacks were directed at former Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao [*who was targeted while he was addressing his party workers on 28th April 2007*]; killing more than 28 and leaving tens wounded, including Sherpao's son who was a minister in the NWFP assembly, and several other lawmakers and security officials.

Taliban commander Abdullah Mehsud had claimed that assassination attempt; later Abdullah was reportedly killed by Pakistani security forces in July 2007, however, doubt prevailed.

On 11th February 2008, the militants struck another office of the ANP but this time in North Waziristan. Eight Pakistanis were killed, including two senior party leaders, and 13 were critically wounded after a car bomb slammed into the party office near Miranshah.

On the same day, Pakistan Army had arrested Mullah Mansoor Dadullah [*Taliban's former military commander in southern Afghanistan*] along with five other non-Pakistani fighters in Zhob district of Baluchistan province. Mullah Mansoor was fired after he was alleged for some activities which were against the rules of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; as per later statement from Mullah Omar.

Next day **on 12th February 2008**, the group retaliated by kidnapping Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Tariq Azizuddin; local Taliban immediately claimed responsibility for Azizuddin's kidnapping and demanded the release of Mansoor Dadullah as a pre-condition to set the ambassador free.

Ambassador Azizuddin was kidnapped near Jamrud in the Khyber Tribal Agency while traveling from Peshawar to Kabul without taking a security escort. The event was a troubling development as the Afridi tribe, which had control over the region, was considered friendly to the Pakistani government.

It was a disturbing situation for the Pakistan Army too, as the Taliban had negotiated with Pak-Army a cease-fire in the tribal regions and the settled district of Swat just a few days earlier and formal negotiations with Taliban were on the way through a *Jirga*.

On 24th February 2008, a prominent Taliban leader Mullah Obaidullah Akhund was arrested in Lahore. He was in Lahore in connection with raising money to fund their operations in Pak-Afghan border areas.

Next day **On 25th February 2008**, taking revenge for their arrested leader, the Taliban launched a suicidal attack on Lt Gen Mushtaq Ahmed Baig, the Surgeon General of Army Medical Corps [*by ramming an explosive loaded car into the General's staff car*] on the busy Mall Road at the GPO square in Rawalpindi. He was the senior-most officer killed since the Nine Eleven 2001's War on Terror. Eight others, including the driver and the accompanying guard, were also killed in the attack and 20 wounded.

On 28th February 2008, in a drone attack near village Azam Warzak of South Waziristan, over 13 Arabs and fighters from Central Asia [*Daily Dawn reported four Arabs, two Turkmen, and two Pakistanis from Punjab province*] were killed, reportedly including an al Qaeda fugitive from Egypt, but NOT Ayman al Zawahiri as was widely rumoured in the media.

[Several senior Egyptian members of al Qaeda were known to operate in Pakistan's tribal areas. These included Abu Khabab al Masri, Abu Ubaidah al Masri, Abdul Rahman al Masri al Maghribi, Abu Ikhlas al Masri, and Sheikh Essa. Abu Khabab, Abu Ubaidah, and Maghribi were once believed to be killed in the January 2006 Damadola air strike, but the reports were false.]

The militants belonged to the Abu Hamza group whose leader was said to be a follower of local commander Mulla Nazir, often characterized as a pro-government Taliban leader. The attack occurred at residential premises of Shero Wazir, a follower of Mulla Nazir who had rented it out to an Arab. Local Taliban cordoned the area and immediately buried those badly burnt and mutilated.

Many media reports indicated that a large number of Arabs and other foreigners had been living and doing business on Pak-Afghan border for years with local tribal names. Mulla Nazir, however, denied al Qaeda's presence in his territory, and instead claimed 'peace loving' Afghans were living there.

*[An Egyptian cleric named **Sheikh Essa** was their ideologue, based in North Waziristan, who used to advocate expanding the Taliban's jihad in Pakistan. Former members of jihadi outfits such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Laskhar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) had reportedly gathered in North Waziristan under his command and guidance.]*

Next day **on 29th February 2008**, just to take revenge for their humiliation and loss, a suicide bomber struck in the neighbouring settled district of Lakki Marwat in the Khyber PK Province. More than 40 Pakistanis were killed and scores more were wounded, many of them critically, in a suicide bombing at a policeman's funeral.

The suicide truck bomb was detonated at the funeral of a policeman who was killed a day earlier along with two other officers in an explosive attack. The attack was designed to inflict a large number of casualties as well as insult the service by teaching them a lesson. The blast occurred when police contingent were presenting the last salute of honour to their martyred fellow police officers.

The then media reports indicated that the Pakistan's military was chasing Baitullah Mehsud, the commander of the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan but not to defeat Baitullah or necessarily capture or kill him; not at all. It was no easy. The military only wanted to influence his policy of killing innocent people for no fault of them; thus essentially to marginalize him as a player.

On 1st March 2008, a suicide bomber attacked a vehicle of the Bajaur Levies; two paramilitary soldiers were killed and 24 wounded.

On 2nd March 2008, the militants executed [another] major suicide attack, fourth one in one week, in Kohat killing more than 40 persons and leaving behind about 40 wounded when a suicide bomber detonated his vest during a tribal meeting in a small town named Zargoan. A tribal *jirga* was being attended by over 1,500 members of five local tribes.

The *jirga*, mainly attended by Mehsuds, Orakzais and Wazirs was called to discuss the security situation in troubled Darra Adam Khel on instance of the government of Khyber PK and the military agencies. It was being held to suggest ways and means to flush out the foreigner militants from Kohat and its adjacent areas. The suicide bomber struck as the tribal leaders

were leaving the meeting and most of the victims were local tribesmen and tribal elders; the father of one Pakistani senator was also killed amongst others.

On 3rd March 2008, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, landed in Islamabad to talk with embattled Gen Musharraf and Pakistan's military leadership in a changed political scenario after general elections of 18th February. The 2nd trip in one month's time to Pakistan reflected the US concern that a growing insurgency by Al Qaeda militants in the tribal areas, near the border with Afghanistan had posed an increasing threat.

Evidently, the threat of religious extremism was growing in Pakistan and the country's leadership was aware of the challenge facing the nation. Admiral Mullen met with Gen Musharraf, Chief of the Army Staff Gen Kayani and Gen Tariq Majid, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Admiral Mullen discussed US plans to send 22 American personnel to train elements of the Pakistani military and the Frontier Corps to be expert in counter-insurgency and intelligence gathering techniques later that year. The plan called for the US training to last two years and to be passed on to about 8,500 Frontier Corps troops. The said American offer was kept in waiting for the time being as the new PPP government was just finding space to stand upon.

On 4th March 2008, the militants targeted the Pakistan Navy War College in Lahore killing seven military and Navy personnel whereas 21 were wounded. The suicide bomber entered the college by following a minibus, and detonated his vest shortly afterward. Some media reports indicated that there were four explosions with short intervals; meaning thereby there might be more militants around.

On 10th March 2008, two suicide bombers hit two buildings almost simultaneously in Lahore, killing at least 28 and wounding over 160 Pakistanis. One of the suicide car bombers struck an office building housing Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency [FIA] headquarters and a US counter-terrorism team.

FIA Lahore office mainly used to deal with immigration and people smuggling but the building also housed the offices of a special US-trained unit created to counter terrorism; however, no death of any US citizen was reported in the blast that tore apart the 8-story office building.

The second bombing occurred outside an advertising firm, but the motive for this attack was not clear. At least six Pakistanis were killed and scores wounded in the bombing. That day's dual suicide bombing in Lahore was the sixth major strike inside Pakistan since the general elections held on 18th February 2008.

On 15th March 2008, the al Qaeda militants attacked an Italian restaurant in Islamabad killing one civilian and leaving 15 wounded. The said premises, known as Luna Caprese restaurant, used to be frequently visited by foreigners where the bomb was planted and detonated remotely.

The dying person was identified as a female Turkish nurse who worked at the US Embassy whereas seven US citizens, one Chinese national, one Briton, one Canadian citizen, two Japanese journalists and three Pakistanis were wounded.

On 1st June 2008, a bombing near the Danish embassy, situated in a secured region of Islamabad, killed eight people and wounded more than 30, some seriously; an al Qaeda affiliate group was suspected. The bomber had driven a car with diplomatic license plates through security, and parked it in a parking lot next to the Danish embassy. The car bomb, containing about 35 kg of explosives, was then either detonated remotely or by timer.

The blast left a crater about four feet deep and nine feet wide, and damaged the wall of the Danish embassy as well as the nearby offices of the United Nations Development Program. Later reports indicated that a foreign national was also killed in the blast.

In nut shell, till the end of 2008, suicide bombings in 2008 surpassed the last year's figures, with 61 attacks till then killing at least 889 people and injuring 2072 others, a source in the investigation agencies disclosed.

The total number of suicide blasts in Pakistan since 2002 had risen to 140 till June 2008 while 56 bombers had struck the previous year [2007]. At least, for 29 times, suicide bombers struck in Khyber PK while 16 others hit their targets in FATA. Swat topped the list of districts where 11 suicide bombers hit targets, killing 101 people and injuring 294 others.

ANP Chief, Asfandyar Wali Khan, had survived a suicide attack at his Hujra **on 2nd October 2008**, where three of his guests and a guard were killed. The Koocha Risaldar blast in Peshawar in December 2008 was considered the worst terrorist attack in the provincial capital of Khyber PK wherein 34 people were killed and around 120 wounded. A loss to private buildings had reached millions of rupees. Four suicide bombers struck in Peshawar city in 2008, killing 99 and wounding 226 others.

Punjab witnessed 10 suicide blasts in 2008 with five in Lahore city alone.

Three suicide bombers hit their targets in the federal capital Islamabad during that year including one of these targeting the Danish embassy. The Marriott Hotel blast at Islamabad was considered as Pakistan's worst-ever act of terrorism, occurred during the year when **on 22nd September 2008**, about sixty people were killed and over 200 wounded.

Leaving aside Karachi where three bomber attacks were reported, no suicide attack took place in other part of the Sindh province. One incident was reported in Balochistan [**on 23rd September 2008**] when a suicide bomber had blown himself up, killing one girl student and injuring 22 persons in Quetta.

During the year 2008, only twelve people could be caught by the security agencies before hitting their targets; nothing was heard about their fate.

In fact not even a single case had been investigated during the whole decade of War on Terror. Or if worked out by some investigation agency, police or FIA, the respective judiciary could not punish even a single culprit or accused through the whole decade; they were released Scot free on one pretext or the other.

ATTACK ON SRI LANKAN TEAM:

On **3rd March 2009**, the **Sri Lankan cricket team** was attacked when a bus carrying their cricketers was fired upon by about 12 gunmen, hiding around at the Liberty Square near the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. The cricketers were on their way to play their third day of the second test against the Pakistani cricket team.

When the bus was crossing the Liberty rounabout the militants started firing, targeting the cricketer's bus. The police contingent escorting the team returned fire. In the ensuing fighting, six policemen, and two civilians died. After about 20 minute's operation, the militants fled, leaving behind rocket launchers and grenades. Six members of the Sri Lanka national cricket team were also injured.

Player Samaraweera sustained shrapnel wounds to his thigh, and Paranavitana to his chest and were hospitalised following the incident; the others had sustained minor injuries. The team's Assistant Coach Paul Farbrace was also injured.

The gunmen had first targeted the wheels of the bus, and then fired at the bus and its occupants. A rocket was also fired at the bus, which missed and hit a nearby electric pole. The

bus driver, Khalil, told later that a white car had swerved in front of the bus, forcing him to slow. Television images showed gunmen emerging from the large grassy traffic circle and shooting at the bus from crouched positions. The players ducked to the floor of the bus and driver Khalil drove through the gunshots and whisked them to the stadium.

Later, the Lahore police found weapons stashes near the scene including 10 rifles, two rocket launchers, a 9-millimeter pistol, and detonator cable. The militants had also thrown a grenade under the bus, which exploded after the bus had passed over it smoothly.

A minivan following the team bus carrying the match referee and umpires was also fired upon; its driver was killed and an umpire Ahsan Raza got serious bullet wound on his chest.

Security cameras captured footage of several gunmen carrying automatic weapons and backpacks, firing on the convoy from the Liberty Square roundabout; later seen escaping on motorcycles. The attackers were armed with AK-47 assault rifles, hand grenades, RPG launchers, claymores, and explosives.

The Sri Lankan team were then taken to the stadium and airlifted from the pitch via Pakistan Air Force MI-17 helicopters, and immediate arrangements were made for the team to return to Colombo on the next available flight. The second Test, which was the last scheduled fixture of the tour, was abandoned as a draw. Earlier, in May 2002, New Zealand had abandoned their Test series in Pakistan after a suicide bomb attack outside their hotel. However, they returned in the 2003-04 season to fulfil their commitments.

The Sri Lankan team was particularly welcomed because it had agreed to play in Pakistan after other major world teams had refused to come, citing Pakistan's poor security. A year earlier, the Australian, British, and South African cricket teams said they would not take part in the Champions Trophy, a major world cricket event then scheduled in Pakistan. After the Mumbai attack, the Indian team had refused to come for matches planned in 2009.

In order to persuade the Sri Lankan team to visit, the Pakistan government offered to arrange "presidential-style security" but it was all the sham arrangements.

In 2004, a religious faction of Pakistan had issued a fatwa against playing Cricket calling it against Islam. The attack on Sri Lankan team was believed to have been carried out by *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [LeJ] or some other militant group close to Al-Qaeda. Contrarily Interior Minister Rehman Malik, told the NA Standing Committee that '*sufficient evidence has been surfaced pointing to involvement of a foreign hand*'; making Pakistan a laughing stock for the whole world.

The series was the first test tour of Pakistan since South Africa's visit in October 2007. It was the first attack on a national sports team since the Munich massacre of Israeli athletes by Palestinian militants in 1972. Most major cricket teams had refused to risk playing in Pakistan, making the country more isolated from the rest of the world.

The most alarming aspect was that the event took place in the heart of Lahore, the cultural capital of the country. None of the attackers were shot or caught while they were seen coming to the scene with big bags; that was ridiculous and it was a total security lapse.

The foreign press propagated that militant's attack on Sri Lankan team had some similarity to the attack of November 2008 in Mumbai, in which 10 militants attacked hotels and other targets over three days, killing 163 people. The attackers appeared to be in their 20s; wearing sneakers and loose pants; walking casually as they fired; carrying backpacks loaded with weapons and high-energy snacks of dried fruit and chocolates; like the Mumbai gunmen.

On 5th March 2009, Salman Taseer, the then governor of Punjab province [as CM Shahbaz Sharif's government was suspended for a month or so], offered a reward of 10 million rupees (\$125,000 USD) for information leading to the capture of the militants responsible for the attack.

The Punjab Police arrested over 250 suspects, including 4 'prime suspects' and declared one Muhammad Adil [*who was running a sports bikes business in Islampura*] as the mastermind

behind the attack. Reportedly he had received a call from one of the militants at 9:05 am on the morning of the attacks asking for instructions. One Shahzad Babar of Rahim Yar Khan and Aqeel of Kahuta were also arrested later.

Further investigations revealed that the attack was planned at a house rented for this purpose in Madina Colony, Walton Road Lahore. The auto rickshaws used in the attack were purchased by one Samiullah. As often happens with high profile militant attacks in Pakistan, a number of suspects were arrested but released later due to lack of evidence.

Imran Khan had criticised the security arrangements and said that *'the security provided was 10 times less than what was being provided to government officials like Rehman Malik'*.

After that bad occurrence, the Sri Lankan team was despatched to Colombo same evening. The New Zealand team cancelled its December 2009 tour of Pakistan. Bangladesh also put off a scheduled tour for Pakistan due to security concerns after this attack. T20 league matches with India, due to be held over 45 days from 10th April to 24th May 2009 in 9 Indian cities were re-considered. Former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly said *'after these attacks Pakistan is not a safe country to play cricket'*.

The 2011 Cricket World Cup was to be co-hosted by Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India, but in the wake of this attack the International Cricket Council (ICC) were forced to strip Pakistan of its hosting rights. The headquarters of the organising committee were originally situated in Lahore, but were then shifted to Mumbai. Pakistan was supposed to hold fourteen matches, including one semi-final. Eight of Pakistan's matches were awarded to India, four to Sri Lanka and two to Bangladesh.

ATTACK ON MOSQUE IN JAMRUD:

On 27th March 2009, more than 70 people were killed and over 120 injured as a suicide bomber blew himself up inside a mosque during the Friday prayers in Jamrud town of Peshawar, situated near the main route to Kabul, starting point of the Khyber Pass. Such was the impact of the blast that the mosque was almost decimated. The congregation was attended by around 250 persons, including many security personnel from a nearby security check post, and truckers carrying NATO supplies.

In February 2009, a bridge at 15 miles northwest of Peshawar was blown up by radicals presumably sympathetic to or sponsored by the militants from across the border. This attack came a day after when at least 11 people were killed at a restaurant in the same northwest region in the Jandola district of South Waziristan. The next day a supply base for NATO troops was attacked and 12 containers were damaged.

The attack occurred just after the muezzin's call to prayer. As a result of the attack the upper floor of the mosque collapsed on the worshippers below; three columns supporting a beam connected to the Mosque's Minarets at either side of the structure were all that remained left with the Mosque.

The bombing of the Jamrud mosque came at a time of increased uncertainty in Pakistan following a high-profile attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team. There was also talk of an increased American drone bombing campaign into other areas of Pakistan.

Though there was no immediate claim of responsibility, but other details had pointed towards raised speculations for the local Taliban. Commander Nazir Afridi of TTP's Khyber Agency chapter had warned of attacks if the security forces did not vacate the FC's check posts in Jamrud and Landikotal by 20th February. They were not allowing the Peshawar-Torkham route to be used by vehicles carrying supplies for NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Asfandiyar Wali Khan, Chief of the ruling party ANP commented that:

"The bomber and his operatives have once again demonstrated that this is not a war for Islam and Shariah. This is not jihad, but war against humanity..... If foreigners are allowed to live in tribal areas without passport and proper documentation, it will only lead to this kind of consequences."

The bombing took place hours before US President Barack Obama had unfolded a new strategy for the Afghan war, which recognised Pakistan as key to eliminating Al-Qaeda and Taliban havens along the Pak-Afghan border.

ATTACK ON POLICE ACADEMY LAHORE:

On 30th March 2009, at 7.30am local time, a terrorist assault on Police Training School in Manawan, the eastern part of Lahore was launched by about 14 militants in which 34 police recruits [*official figures stayed at 9 policemen & 3 civilians*] were reportedly killed and more than 90 were seriously wounded during the fighting. The attack was the latest in a series of military-styled terrorist attack on civilian and government installations in Pakistan.

The school had more than 750 trainees on campus, plus scores of police officers as the teaching and support staff. The attackers were well armed with automatic rifles, hand grenades, and rocket-propelled grenades. They carried packs loaded with ammunition and other supplies on their backs. Some of the attackers were dressed in police uniforms, while others were in civilian clothes.

The armed militants entered the compound after killing the security guards at the back entrance of the police academy. The team then fanned out into the compound mainly to strike at the parade grounds, where recruits had gathered for morning exercises. The attackers lobbed grenades from three sides, then entered the parade grounds and opened fire on the survivors. The attackers then moved into a building and took more than 35 recruits and officers hostage.

Pakistani police cordoned the police academy and aimed for a counter-assault to dislodge the terrorists. Commandos from the Punjab Police as well as the Pakistan Rangers, backed by Army helicopters, launched an attack on the compound. Armoured personnel carrier was sent into the compound, the terrorists dealt with the forces but were overwhelmed after commandos air-assaulted the academy.

Police captured six [out of 14] of the attackers; one was carrying an Afghan passport in the name of Hijratullah from Paktika but was surprisingly speaking in Punjabi accent. Out of the remaining eight attackers, five were killed during the fighting whereas three had killed themselves by detonating suicide vests. One of them arrested from just outside the building when he tried to blow up an Army helicopter. That was the end: the terrorist blew themselves after wrecking hell upon the policemen and sending the whole nation once again into the awful feeling of helplessness, anger, and frustration.

Next day, *Fedayeen-e-Islam*, a little-known group, claimed responsibility; the same group had claimed responsibility for the bombing at the Marriott Islamabad on 20th September 2008. The same day, Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of TTP called the Associated Press [APP] and Reuters to claim responsibility.

The attack on police training facility was the latest in a series of military-styled terror assaults that were launched by the al Qaeda and their allied terror groups. These groups had conducted similar strikes in India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. Reportedly, Al Qaeda had revived its paramilitary army, formerly known as the 055 Brigade and then renamed as the *Lashkar al Zil*, or Shadow Army.

Those days al Qaeda and their allied terror groups had stepped up their attacks on Pakistani security forces nationwide, despite a peace agreement that had surrendered more than 1/3 of the Khyber PK province to the Taliban; the media had urged.

On the same day, in Bannu a suicide car bomber rammed into a military convoy, killing four soldiers and wounding several others. The suicide attack marked the ninth this month [of March 2009] as a day earlier, **on 29th March 2009**, Taliban surrounded a police outpost in Khyber Agency and had taken 12 policemen hostage who were reportedly beheaded later. **On 28th March**, a large Taliban force had attacked a trucking terminal outside Peshawar and had destroyed NATO vehicles and equipment while setting them on fire.

Going further back, **on 27th March**, the Taliban had destroyed a bridge in Khyber PK. That same day, a suicide bomber killed more than 70 people after detonating in the middle of a mosque in Jamrud [*details have been mentioned above*] The al Qaeda leadership had openly urged the Pakistani public and military to turn on the government and join the jihad.

Three scenarios were built on the basis of the then available information:

Was there any chance of Indian involvement?

Bahukutumbi Raman – the former head of the counter-terrorism division of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) and also a former member of the Special Task Force [India] for the Re-vamping of the Intelligence Apparatus – within hours of the Mumbai tragedy (on 26th November 2008) presented his recommendations to the Government of India. B Raman had proposed that:

'When Ashok Chaturvedi [then Director RAW] retires on 31st January 2009, he must be replaced by someone from outside RAW preferably a top-notch covert operator to re-energize RAW's covert capabilities to undertake operations inside Pakistan.'

On 25th January 2009, K C Verma, a career officer of the Intelligence Bureau of India, was named as the new chief of the Research & Analysis Wing. K C Verma's appointment came as a surprise to India's bulging intelligence bureaucracy because P V Kumar was the senior-most RAW officer after Ashok Chaturvedi's retirement.

B Raman, who enjoyed a trusted association with India's official security and intelligence apparatus, in an earlier paper, had raised the question of **"how to make Pakistan pay a price..."** and recommended:

'Through covert action, which is deniable para-political and para-military action meant to make Pakistan's sponsorship prohibitively costly to it. Such a covert action would be directed against the Pakistan State and society and not against terrorists.'
[Paper no; 1893 at www.saag.org is referred]

Dr C Raj Mohan, widely acknowledged as one of 'India's leading foreign policy analyst', had argued that: **'If Pakistan is not willing or is unable to deliver an end to cross-border terrorism then perhaps India ought to execute alternatives.'**

Earlier, on **10th December 2008**, the **Hindustan Times** carried a column by Gurmeet Kanwal, head of the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, recommending that:

"To achieve a lasting impact and ensure that the actual perpetrators of terrorism are targeted, it is necessary to employ covert capabilities against Pakistan."

Moreover, Christine Fair, Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation, suspected that the Indian involvement in Balochistan increased with encouragement from Kabul [**'the News' dated 6th April 2009** is referred]. It was an awful assessment as most of the militant organiza-

tions operating in Pakistan had their ideological and financial bases operating from Afghanistan.

ATTACK ON PAK ARMY'S GHQ:

Before Pakistan could recover from a suicide bombing at a UN office in Islamabad and a massive bomb blast in a Peshawar market a week earlier, the brazen attack targeting Pakistan's most secure military complex – the Army Headquarters [GHQ] -- jolted it further.

On 10th October 2009, a deadly terrorist attack was launched on Pakistan army headquarters [GHQ] in Rawalpindi. During the operation four terrorists who launched the assault with sophisticated weapons were killed whereas six soldiers including two senior army officials were martyred at the spot.

GHQ attack, the biggest terrorist attack on army in the history of Pakistan, was planned in Miranshah, North Waziristan, by those militants who were encouraged after a broad daylight attack on the Sri Lankan team in Lahore.

Later the confessional statements of Aqeel alias Dr Usman [also alias Kamran alias Nazir Ahmed] to the military court revealed that *'they were planning to make hostage the high officers like army Brigadiers and Generals in order to get their detained militants released.'* The heads of TTP Amjad Farooqui Group, Ustad Aslam Yasin and Ilyas Kashmiri had tasked him to launch an attack on GHQ.

The deadly weapon for the attack was brought by [another] Usman alias Ishfaq alias Gul Khan hiding them in a CNG cylinder of a Suzuki vehicle number FDV 3530. The total ammunition to be used here was comprising nine rifles, one rocket-launcher, around 50 loaded magazines ammunition pouches, fly liver-grenades, six AP Claymore mines, six rockets, six expelling charges, eight hand-grenades, eight detonators, and nineteen 40mm grenades of Gp-25 for the said attack on GHQ.

As per details published in **'PULSE' Weekly of 30th September 2011**, all the weapons mentioned above were brought from Dera Ismail Khan, Jhang, and Toba Tek Singh; stored in a house in Faisalabad, owned by Babar Shabbir and transferred it to Rawalpindi in four time consignments.

The idea of GHQ attack was floated by Ustad Yasin in the Miranshah meeting. Dr Usman claimed that he was reluctant to attack the army but the other two men argued and convinced him that the Pakistan Army, as an ally of the United States, was a legitimate target.

In that meeting, Ilyas Kashmiri said the plan was to hold army Generals hostage at the GHQ till they could get detained militants released in exchange. Yasin gave Dr Usman a list with 115 names on it; these were the men whose release was to be demanded. He also assured Dr Usman that he would be accompanied by a team of trained warriors.

Dr Usman and his accomplices used Google Earth to download the maps of GHQ on the basis of which they planned their attacks. The team, **according to the court documents**, took months for arranging and transporting the weapons to Rawalpindi and Dr Usman made multiple exploration trips to the GHQ during the summer of 2009. However, it was Wajid Mehmood, another accused from a non-military background, who pointed out the locations where high-ranking army officials like Brigadiers and Generals could be found.

Aqeel @ Dr Usman had been involved in a number of high-profile attacks, including those on Gen Musharraf, had joined Harkatul Jihad Al Islami [HJI] in 1999 after completing his studies and went to Afghanistan twice. After 9/11, he returned to Pakistan after being injured, and joined the Army Medical Corps (AMC) as a nursing assistant and was posted to the CMH in

Rawalpindi. He was still in touch with *Jihadi* 'friends' then. It was here that he developed friendship with another accused, Imran Siddique, who was then a soldier in the army.

Aqeel @ Dr Usman deserted the army in 2005 and became involved with the Amjad Farooqui group. By August 2009, the GHQ Attack plan was in full swing. Aqeel rented a room at Bilal Boys Hostel, Rawalpindi, and started surveillance of GHQ's surroundings. In September, he rented a house near Defence Housing Rawalpindi Cantt phase II. He also acquired a van which he got fitted with army number plates and spent Rs: 30,000 for buying Pak-Army uniforms for eight of his accomplices.

From October 1st to 9th of 2009, Aqeel, along with his accomplice Ali, carried out surveillance of the area and also briefed others on the attack by using "distance measuring tool" on Google Earth. Initially, the attack was planned for 6th October, but this was delayed to 10th October as one of the participants fell ill.

At the time of attack, the 10 attackers reached the GHQ via Murree Road and dispersed in different directions. The audacious attack as the men broke past the check post resulted in the death of four of them. The rest were able to make it in. However, on the court record, there is little information on what happened at the check post because the real guards who had faced the initial moments were also martyred at the spot.

It was on the court record that the militants made hostage five officers and 20 civilians. Before they took the men hostage, Aqeel shot dead the driver of a jeep who had refused to tell the locations of the Generals. Aqeel had claimed before the court that **'by 11am [mistakenly he wrote 11 Am; it was not correct], they had taken over the GHQ and the entire area was within their firing range'**, though admitting that they were surrounded by the army.

The negotiations continued all night; at six in the morning, the SSG attacked and entered the building. They killed the four other militants who were watching over the hostages. Aqeel @ Dr Usman survived this attack as he was holed up in a separate room from where he was carrying out negotiations over the phone. He then hid in an office, coming out only to join the men carrying out the rescue work; a building had collapsed and men were trying to rescue those trapped beneath the rubble.

Aqeel nearly escaped scot-free, but a security officer identified him; perhaps he was injured too. One Maj Akhtar Qamar, Security Officer [Technical] at GHQ, who witnessed the whole episode on CCTV, identified him. Maj Qamar stated before the court that:

"I saw the whole incident on CCTV and observed that 10 terrorists had dismounted from a Suzuki van near the Tank Chowk picket. Here they attacked the picket as well as some security staff and five of them were hit, whereas other five managed to enter into the GHQ premises. I reported this whole incident to my superiors.

Later I assisted SSG persons and troops in planning the counterattack and recognition of the attackers since features & figures of accused number 1 [Aqeel @ Dr Usman] were very clear in the footage."

Major Gen Athar Abbas DG ISPR gave the official version that some terrorists, wearing fake army uniform, equipped with automatic heavy weapons, riding in a white coloured Suzuki carry-van and bearing army number plate reached a check post near GHQ where the army personnel on duty engaged them when they tried to enter the gate No 1 at 11:30am. They tried to move to another check post when security guards intercepted them and security forces retaliated effectively and killed four terrorists during an hour long exchange of fire.

Simultaneously, at second check post near Hilal Road square, the vehicle was stopped for identification by security officials. The terrorists left the vehicle and took their positions within a moment and opened firing on army personnel. They also threw some hand grenades on the check post due to which six army personnel including Brig Anwar-ul-Haq and Lt Col Waseem were martyred.

Soon after the attack, security personnel cordoned off the whole area and search operation started while air surveillance, with a view to locate the fleeing militants, was also commenced in the surroundings of GHQ. It took about 22 hours to end the operation because five terrorists had taken positions to squeeze and corner the hostages inside the GHQ.

Eye witnesses told that the militants hurled hand-grenades; five explosions rang out amid the gunfire. The situation went tenser while the firing was still going on; continued till next day morning. After the attack on GHQ, soldiers sealed off roads leading to the GHQ and an army helicopter remained hovering over the area to locate the escaped terrorists.

Albiet; effective military operations in Swat had taught the army that '*a stitch in time saves nine and that without public support no military campaign can succeed*'. The army and police commandos cordoned off the whole area and traffic was diverted from Mall Road to other routes in Rawalpindi city. The educational institutions were closed; security of all sensitive places in the city was beefed up and extra contingents of police were deployed at places.

The government knew that the Taliban [Amjad Farooqi Group of the TTP], had made this move to avenge the death of their leader Baitullah Mehsud in a US drone missile attack in August 2009. The links between Amjad Farooqi, the old Harkatul Mujahideen fighter, and Al Qaeda were well known to the establishment till then.

In a telephone call made to a private TV channel, a member of TTP Group demanded halt to operation in northern areas, accountability of former President Gen Musharraf, sending off the '**Black-water**' back and closure of Western NGOs.

Later it was revealed that the Crime Investigation Department of Punjab had once shared its information with relevant government departments that "*terrorists belonging to the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in collaboration with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), were planning to attack the GHQ.*"

It even warned the local army intelligence on 5th October that the terrorists could be clad in military uniforms and while riding a military vehicle or a vehicle designed to pass as one belonging to the military; but their report was simply thrown in the bin being '**bloody civilian's bull**** paper**'.

GHQ is the nerve centre of the Pakistani military and is guarded by an Infantry battalion, along with a similar number of defence security guards (DSG). Over a thousand military officials work at the GHQ and they are responsible for running Pakistan's military apparatus. Alarming thing was that ten terrorists created mayhem for around 22 hours, disrupting normal operations within GHQ. Then SSG commandos were brought in from 70 kilometres away to end the stand-off after the terrorists took hostages in a block within the GHQ.

Liaquat Baloch of Jamaat e Islami [JI] on a special debate, just next day, at a local TV channel stated that '*the jihadis killing Pakistani civilians and the military were **misguided** and were only doing so because the Americans were in Afghanistan*'.

The phrase "*if the Americans were not in Afghanistan...*" gave the impression that otherwise those militants were peace-loving people who were only killing and maiming Pakistani citizens because they were **misguided**..., attacking mosques and killing prayer attending Muslims because **the Americans were in Afghanistan...** What an innocence the Pakistani politicians used to express.

Those '**misguided**' cold-blooded killers had executed four high-impact attacks in the earlier ten days, which had taken a total of 140 lives. This was not the work of "**misguided**" people. The symbolism of the attacks had not been lost on anyone either. See the details:

- The UN Food Programme was targeted to let the '**goras**' know that they're not safe.
- The suicide bombing in Swat was launched to let everyone know that it was still vulnerable.
- There were attacks on Peshawar, to let everyone know who the boss was.
- And then, of course, one of the most heavily-guarded installations in the country, the GHQ, to let the army know that even their headquarters wasn't safe.

Ordinary Pakistani were helpless but to ask that if ten '**misguided**' civilians could tie up two battalions for 22 hours, then how safe were they?

The episode concluded with the arrest of the Operation Commander [Aqeel, alias Dr Usman] and the killing of his nine associates who had coordinated their attack on the GHQ from at least two directions. Dr Usman hailed from Kahuta near Rawalpindi; he was a nursing assistant with the Army Medical Corps before he joined local militant groups in 2005; later he became a member of the TTP and remained a close associate of Ilyas Kashmiri, Al Qaeda's Chief of paramilitary operations in Pakistan.

One Shakir Husain in '**the News**' of **15th October 2009** had opined:

'Even if the TTP and its friends are being "handled" by the "foreign hand" as the nutters would have us believe on a regular basis, the bulk of the fighting is being done by Pakistani citizens. Sure we have a smattering of Uzbeks and Arabs running around in the North; but the bulk of the recruits are Pakistani kids recruited from all over the country.'

'We have the intelligence assets and systems in place to find out who, when and what – it's time to change our collective mindset and handle the enemy seriously before they inflict more damage to an already battered state.'

On 11th August 2011; Aqeel @ Dr Usman along with his seven accomplices was convicted by a military court. However, the news got the media coverage on 14th August after the relatives of some of the convicts visited them at Adiala jail. The military court had sentenced Aqeel to death while his accomplice, former soldier Imran Siddique, was sentenced to life in prison.

Three civilians — Khaliqur Rehman, Mohammad Usman and Wajid Mehmood — were given life terms while two others, Mohammad Adnan and Tahir Shafiq (both civilians), got eight and seven years jail sentence respectively.

The trial by the military court, which was headed by a Brigadier, lasted over five months at an undisclosed location. Colonel (R) Inamur Rehman, a defence lawyer for Wajid — one of the convicts — had challenged the military court's decision before the appellant authority.

Under article 199 (3) of the Constitution, verdicts handed down by military courts cannot be challenged in a high court. However, a Supreme Court ruling provides that those convicted by a military court can petition a high court within 40 days if they could prove that the verdict was *malafide*.

On 7th December 2012; the military court of appeal, by rejecting appeals of convicted ex-army men in the GHQ attack case, maintained the punishments awarded on 11th August 2011. Eleven soldiers had lost their lives.

Under the normal process, a mercy petition could be filed with the Chief of Army Staff after the appeal rejected; the convicts could also approach the President. However, nothing heard afterwards.

ATTACKS EVERY WHERE IN THE ROW:

List of significant attacks on Pakistani security forces was long but some of the mentionable events in the first half of 2009 were:

On 6th January 2009, four policemen were killed during an attack on a checkpoint in Hangu.

On 11th January 2009, thirty People were killed after a suicide truck bomber detonated at a checkpoint in Peshawar's outskirts.

On 7th February 2009, An estimated 600 Afghan and other Al Qaeda fighters crossed the border from Afghanistan and joined hands with local fighters in the Mohmand tribal agency to attack a military outpost killing ten Pak-Army soldiers.

On 7th March 2009, a car bomb exploded at a checkpoint in Peshawar killing seven policemen and one civilian.

On 9th March 2009, the militants either killed or captured 17 members of the FC personnel, a lightly armed paramilitary police unit, along with three government officials from a civil department.

On 29th March 2009, a large group of militants captured 12 policemen after surrounding their outpost in Khyber Agency near Peshawar; their fate was not known till the end of the year at least. Probably they were butchered later.

On 30th March 2009, a terror assault team stormed a police academy in Lahore; more than 30 recruits and officers were killed [*the details have been given separately*]. On the same day, four security personnel were killed in a suicide attack in Bannu.

On 4th April 2009, the militants targeted yet another security installation killing eight policemen in an attack on the Frontier Constabulary Camp in the F-7/3 Sector in Islamabad. Five other paramilitaries were also wounded in the attack. The bomber detonated his vest after entering the back of the camp situated in protected location, near the UN Human Rights Council. One suspect involved in the attack was caught from around.

On 18th April 2009, a suicide bomber killed 25 men in uniform and two civilians in an attack on military convoy in Hangu.

On 20th April 2009, a local militant group kidnapped six Frontier Constabulary personnel in Swat; they were later got released but two of them were seriously injured. A week later they again took hostage of 60 security personnel in Buner and five more in Swat.

On 4th May 2009, five security officials lost their lives in a suicide attack in Khyber Agency and one policeman was killed in a cross fire shooting in Hangu.

On 5th May 2009, fifteen militant fighters and 2 troops were reportedly killed in a cross fire ambush. On the same day six Pak-Army soldiers were captured by a militant group after an attack on an outpost in Mohmand Agency border area.

On 10th May 2009, the militants destroyed the Camp HQ of the Dir Levies, killed one officer from Malakand Unit and captured three others.

On 14th May 2009, three Pak-Army soldiers and five militant fighters were killed in a cross fire ambush in a border village of North Waziristan.

On 20th May 2009, a suicide truck bomber attacked a fort in Tank and killed nine people including five policemen.

On 25th May 2009, the militants killed three policemen in Kohat and in another event killed three more in Haripur.

On 27th May 2009, a terrorist assault team killed 16 policemen and seven intelligence officials [totalling 23] in a complex suicide and conventional attack in Lahore while more than 300 were wounded. A team armed with assault rifles, machine guns, and hand grenades crashed their van through security barriers near the Emergency Police HQ and of the ISI and opened fire on security guards.

When the security guards retaliated, the militants detonated their van which was rigged with hundreds of pounds of explosives. The blast levelled a building used by rescue units and damaged the other police and ISI buildings. One gunman had entered the ISI building and fire-fighting lasted for nearly one hour.

The assault took a heavy toll on the police and the ISI whereas three of the attackers were captured and the rest were killed.

On 31st May 2009, more than 25 militant fighters and seven Pak-Army soldiers were killed during fighting in a South Waziristan's village.

On 1st June 2009, near Bakka Khel in North Waziristan, the militants carried out a brazen daylight operation that resulted in the kidnapping of about 350 cadets, teachers, and college staff as they travelled from their college. The said area of North Waziristan was under the command of one Hafiz Gul Bahadar with overall control of Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud.

While the militants were escorting the hostaged cadets to an undisclosed location, one bus driver and more than 40 students had escaped hijacking. The militants were armed with rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns, and assault rifles. They halted the convoy of 29 minibuses travelling from the Ramzak Cadet College to the settled district of Bannu.

Just a day before, the police had detained one Asmatullah, a deputy of Baitullah Mehsud, along with 39 other group fighters in Mianwali district; they were to mine the region to slow any potential military offensive around. That capture of the cadets was an effort to secure the release of those 39 fighters then in custody. Then it was a prevailing practice to get exchanged the militant prisoners for captive soldiers, policemen, and government officials.

After getting confirmed the hijacking and kidnapping, negotiations went underway to secure the release of the captive cadets and teachers. Later, the cadets and staff left the college after being threatened by the militants, the reports confirmed.

Earlier, in August of 2007, Baitullah's forces were able to pull off the brazen capture of an entire company of regular Army troops as they moved through the same area; more than 300 soldiers had reportedly surrendered.

After that serious blow, the militant fighters continued their attacks on the security personnel and especially the police members who remained target for the whole month of June 2009. A brief detail is given here.

On 4th June 2009, six policemen and a paramilitary trooper were killed in Mardan city of Khyber PK.

On 5th June 2009, five soldiers were killed in attacks in South Waziristan.

On 6th June 2009, two policemen were killed, while four were injured in a suicide attack on a Rescue 15 Office in Sector G-8 Islamabad. The attacker attempted to enter the office by scaling a wall behind the building bordering a residential area, but was spotted by a guard who opened fire on him. Next moment he exploded himself.

On 9th June 2009, eleven troops were wounded in Mohmand Agency and eight policemen were seriously hurt in Dera Ismail Khan.

On 12th June 2009, four policemen were killed in an attack in Hangu and another in Kohat.

On 22nd June 2009: a suicide bomber killed two policemen in Shangla.

On 23rd June 2009, three policemen were killed in Peshawar city while an FC *jawan* lost his life in Khyber.

On 26th June 2009, three army troops and a civilian were killed in an attack in North Waziristan village area.

On 28th June 2009, eighteen militant fighters and 10 soldiers were killed during an ambush in North Waziristan; two soldiers were also killed in another ambush in South Waziristan terrains.

On 3rd July 2009, a Pakistani Army helicopter crashed in north-western tribal area; a known Taliban stronghold, killing at least 26 Pakistani soldiers and paramilitary fighters. The military held that the helicopter had technical problems and moreover it was carrying too many people, but the media had confirmed that the insurgents had shot it down. Information to be kept on record was that although the official number of those killed was 26, but in fact 41 people had died.

The crash — which the authorities said killed three officers too — was grim news for the army, whether militants were involved or not. The event occurred when the military was locked in renewed struggle with the militants; going full-scale offensive in South Waziristan.

The shooting down of the military chopper was perhaps an immediate response of the Taliban as in the earlier hours of that day; a drone attack on a militant training camp had killed at least 13 insurgents. The official note of the Pakistan army had confirmed the attack in Mazarai Nara but said that eight people had died.

Much of South Waziristan, as well as the area of the helicopter crash, in Chapri Ferozkhel, near the border of the Orakzai and Khyber tribal regions, was being controlled by forces loyal to Baitullah Mehsud, a mastermind of suicidal attack series of that time. The helicopter was being used for transportation purposes since a few weeks and on that fateful day it was flying low in an area of high mountains.

The crash could either be due to bad weather or because of excess weight; nothing was definite. As per manual, the MI-17 helicopter could carry 24 troops while there were 41 people aboard. The flying low could have made the helicopter vulnerable to being hit by militant fire.

On 9th July 2009, five security personnel were killed in Jaccobabab of Sindh province and wounded six.

On 27th August 2009, a suicide bomber entered a barrack of Pak-Afghan Border Guards at the Torkham crossing in Khyber Agency and detonated him, killing 22 guards as they gathered for an *iftari* meal at sunset in the month of holy Ramadan. The Taliban took credit for

the attack saying that it was conducted to avenge Baitullah Mehsud's death at the hands of the US.

Just a day earlier, **on 26th August 2009**, the Pakistani military had taken notice of a militant camp in Swat that was responsible for three other smaller-scale suicide attacks in Swat over the past several weeks. Pakistan army helicopters attacked that training camp near Mingora claiming that 12 fighters, including six teenage suicide bombers, were killed in the attack.

After their retreat in January 2008, the Swati Taliban were attempting to reassert control in the valley; the military sources told that the Taliban strength in Swat had been estimated at between 5,000 to 7,000 fighters.

On 30th August 2009, a suicide bomber killed 15 policemen during an attack on the cadets when they were exercising at Parade Grounds of Special Police Training Centre in Mingora, capital town of Swat.

The militants had been targeting security forces since after Nine Eleven 2001 but during those years of ending Gen Musharraf's rule and beginning of PPP's government in 2008, they conducted scores of significant attacks against the police, the Army, the Frontier Corps, and other Pakistani security and intelligence services since July 2007 when Gen Musharraf's government had launched the operation to clear out radicals from the Lal Masjid [Red Mosque] in the heart of Islamabad city.

Referring to the book '**The Fall of North Western Pakistan**' compiled by **Bill Roggio** appeared on line at '**The Long War Journal**' site:

'There were hundreds of smaller attacks in Pakistan that occurred on a daily basis. These attacks included suicide strikes and military assaults against checkpoints, training centres, and bases; ambushes against convoys; beheadings and executions of captured security personnel; and targeted assassinations against military leaders.

No region of Pakistan had been spared. These attacks had taken place in Pakistan's major cities, including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi, as well as in the rural areas and Pakistan's lawless tribal areas.'

On 18th September 2009, a suicide bomber killed 33 persons after detonating a jeep laden with explosives at main market in a large town of Ustarzai in district Kohat where the people from surrounding villages had come to purchase supplies for the upcoming religious festival of *Eid al Fitr*. More than 300 pounds of explosives were packed into a jeep, which was then driven into the bazaar and detonated.

The blast had levelled nearby buildings and more than 50 civilians were wounded. The militant group named *Fedayeen-e-Islam* had claimed its responsibility. The same group had already claimed credit for the deadly 22nd September 2008 suicide attack on the Islamabad Marriott Hotel and the 30th March 2009 storming of a police Training School in Lahore.

On 26th September 2009, a suicide bomber detonated vehicles packed with explosives in the cities of Peshawar and Bannu simultaneously killing 20 people and causing serious hurts to more than 100.

In Bannu, a settled town and gateway to the tribal agency of North Waziristan, a suicide bomber rammed his truck into a police station, killing 10 people and wounding about 75 citizen. A senior Taliban commander, Qari Hussain Mehsud, who used to run a religious school for children there, had claimed credit for the Bannu attack.

Two days earlier, the militants had killed seven pro-government tribal leaders in village Jani Khel who had raised a militia force to oppose the extremists. Al Qaeda's executive Shura, the

decision making Council, was also based in Jani Khel and their bank transactions were managed in the same sub-town.

*[The Taliban had announced that they would launch attacks in Pakistan if military operations in the tribal areas were not halted. Hakeemullah Mehsud, the leader of the TTP, conducted a press conference **on 4th October 2009** to dismiss reports of his death and Taliban infighting, and said the attacks would begin again.]*

Over the past three years, the Taliban have conducted major suicide attacks and assaults in the cities of Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar, as well as FATA and other settled districts of Khyber PK province like Kohat & Bannu.]

On 5th October 2009, a suicide bomber killed five United Nations workers in an attack at the UN office in Islamabad. The bomber penetrated the security barricade at the World Food Program offices and detonated him inside the building, killing four Pakistanis and an Iraqi national; six were wounded also. Astonishing was that how the bomber was able to get through strict security arrangements.

On 9th October 2009, a Taliban suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives in a busiest place named Khyber Bazaar in Peshawar, the capital of the Khyber PK Province, killing 49 people and causing more than 100 wounded. In this attack about 100 kilograms of explosive was used. Uniquely, the device was planted in the door panels of the vehicle and included machine gun ammunition, designed to cause maximum casualties. It was the second terrorist attack after Mehsud's press conference of 4th October.

On 12th October 2009, a suicide bomber had detonated his car packed with explosives when a military convoy passed through a checkpoint in a market town of Alpuri in Shangla [Swat]. Forty-one people, including six security personnel, were killed in the attack; twelve of the persons were injured seriously.

Earlier this year, the Pak-Army had launched an offensive against militant forces led by Mullah Fazlullah, the radical leader of Swat and the surrounding districts of Dir, Buner, and Shangla. Six of the 21 top fighter leaders wanted by the government had been killed or captured, but Fazlullah and some key military commanders had fled to Afghanistan in early 2008.

Since April 2009, the Swati militants had established their bases again nearly in all the districts of Swat and surrounding Mardan, Mansehra and Swabi; because of poor ANP government's control over Swat. Pak-Army did not take interest because action in civil areas was not its responsibility nor were they mandated for that.

Three days later, **on 15th October 2009**, a suicide bomber rammed a car into a police station in Kohat, killing eight people, including policemen and children.

On 15th October 2009 again, four unidentified gunmen fired gunshots on FIA building situated on Temple Road in Lahore; four government workers, four terrorists, and one civilian were reportedly killed during the fighting.

Militant assault teams launched simultaneous attacks against three police buildings in the eastern city of Lahore. Twenty-six people were killed in the attacks; a follow up of the assault on the Army GHQ in Rawalpindi. Different groups had attacked and tried to enter three police facilities simultaneously.

A large blast was also heard at the Elite Force Headquarters [*the Punjab police's specialized unit assigned to counterterrorism and VIP protection missions*] at Bedyan Road Lahore; one policeman and one terrorist were reportedly killed in the attack.

The attacks on FIA offices in Lahore had attracted special attention of the militants; perhaps on two counts. Firstly that the American team of interrogators had their camping seats here and secondly, the detained militants from Punjab were kept in the FIA lock-ups of Lahore whereas in all over Pakistan they used to be kept in respective police stations.

That was why the attacks on FIA Offices of Lahore continued even after. **On 7th March 2010**, a suicide bomber killed 11 people and wounded 37 more in an attack on FIA Punjab's HQ in Model Town Lahore.

The suicide bomber rammed his car packed with more than 1,300 pounds of explosives into an FIA Office premises used as a safe house and Interrogation Centre by the Pakistan military's Special Interrogation Unit. The blast had levelled the FIA building which had more than 70 people working there at the time of the attack; many were believed to be trapped in the rubble.