

Beat: News

Suicide Blast, Gunmen Kill 8 People in Pakistan

Global Security Update

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AFSData Research & Analytics International - "North Waziristan, Pakistan

ISLAMABAD —

Pakistani officials said Sunday militant attacks in the country's northwest had killed at least eight people, including security force members, children and members of the minority Sikh group.

The deadliest attack occurred in North Waziristan, a volatile district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing three soldiers and three children, according to a military statement. It said the children were aged between 4 and 11 years.

The Pakistani district borders Afghanistan and was a hub of terrorist groups until recently.

"Intelligence agencies are investigating to find out about suicide bomber and his handlers / facilitators," said the military's media wing, the Inter Services Public Relations.

Separately, police and witnesses said unknown gunmen shot dead two Sikh shopkeepers in a drive-by shooting in the provincial capital, Peshawar. The assailants managed to flee after the shooting.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility for either attack. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the militant violence in a statement.

The Islamic State group has previously claimed attacks on the minority Sikh community.

The outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, known as the Pakistani Taliban, routinely claims attacks against security forces in the Waziristan district and elsewhere in the country.

Pakistani authorities say fugitive TTP leaders direct deadly raids from their sanctuaries across the Afghan border.

Islamabad has been urging Afghanistan's ruling Taliban to rein in the terrorist group's activities.

Pakistan and the United States list the TTP as a terrorist organization.

TTP attacks have spiked in Pakistan since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August. The violence has killed scores of Pakistani security forces, straining relations between the two countries.

Islamabad has held talks with the TTP in recent months, mediated by the new rulers in Kabul, in a bid to end the militant challenge but the dialogue has failed to produce any tangible outcome.

Pakistani officials say there still is a lack of policy clarity on the part of the Afghan side about how to deal with the TTP and other terrorist groups operating out of Afghanistan, despite their repeated assurances to the outside world that they would not allow Afghan soil to be used against other countries.

"They [the Afghan Taliban] tell us again and again to be patient and say they need more time to sort this [TTP] issue out," a senior Pakistani Foreign Ministry official involved in bilateral talks told VOA.

"But when there are deadly attacks against Pakistani security forces almost on a daily basis, we fail to comprehend as to what do they practically mean by patience," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to publicly talk to media.

He added that TTP leaders live with their families in Afghan “hideouts” close to the Pakistani border.

“The Taliban say they are refugees from Pakistan and want us to encourage them to return home. But some of these so-called refugees are actually behind cross-border attacks and refuse to negotiate peace with the Pakistani government.”

Critics say the Taliban government is reluctant to forcefully evict the TTP from Afghanistan because both share the same ideology. For years, the TTP sheltered the Afghan Taliban on the Pakistani side and provided them with recruits to wage insurgent attacks against the now-defunct Western-backed Kabul government and its U.S.-led foreign military partners.

“The Taliban, however, have a genuine fear or apprehension that if TTP fighters are forced to leave Afghanistan they may instead join Islamic State ranks to pose even a bigger security challenge to the nascent government,” the Pakistani official said.

Islamic State group attacks in Afghanistan have increased since the Taliban returned to power there, killing scores of people, mostly Hazara Shi'ite community members.

Source: ARAC International media partner, VOA

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