

Incident Update

Successive Blasts Cause Casualties in Kabul

September 6, 2016

Factual updates

On Monday afternoon, September 5, 2016, Ministry of Defense Compound in Kabul was attacked in two bomb explosions which killed at least 30 people, including senior employees of Ministry of Defense, and wounded around 103 others. The first explosion took place when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off near government buildings, a market, and a main intersection.¹ The second explosion, triggered by a suicide bomber, took place when people in the vicinity rushed to the spot. The targeted area is included among the busiest localities in the city. Afghan Taliban claimed responsibility for the blasts. Later, in the night, another explosion occurred when a vehicle packed with explosives blasted in Shahr-e-Naw area of the city. Subsequently, the militants stormed in the building of an international non-governmental organization – Care.² Reportedly, no casualty took place in the blast. The Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi claimed that Afghan Special forces eliminated all assailants involved in the attack in Shahr-e-Naw locality. Afghan Taliban, while claiming the responsibility, avowed that a secret intelligence center was targeted in the attack.

Situational Background

The first two explosions took place in the afternoon – a time when the locality is likely to be the most crowded. These were followed by another attack in the midnight which might be implicative of being a coordinated activity. The capital city have repeatedly been targeted by militant elements in the past. On August 25, 2016, militants ambushed the campus of American University in Kabul.³ The attack had left 13 dead and 53 wounded. Apart from the casualties, the militants had terrorized the university by bringing in a vehicle full of explosive material.

¹ Khaama Press, “30 Killed, over 90 Wounded in Twin Explosions in Kabul,” *Khaama*, September 05, 2016.

² Khaama Press, “Late Night Explosion Rocked Kabul as Twin Blasts Left 30 Dead,” *Khaama*, September, 06, 2016.

³ Mujib Mashal & Mohamad Fahem Abed, “Attack at University in Kabul Shatters a Sense of Freedom,” *The New York Times*, August 25, 2016.

Moreover, in July 2016, two suicide bombers affiliated with Islamic State - Khurasan (IS-K) targeted a protest staged by Hazara Community members killing about 80 people while wounding 231 others.⁴

Analysis

Afghan Taliban have been carrying out their summer offensive under the name of Operation Omari since April this year. The recent attacks were coordinated quite craftily. At first, an IED exploded in a busy area which attracted the civilians towards the scene of the incident; a few moments later, a suicide bomber detonated his explosive jacket causing maximum casualties. The attacks were shortly followed up by another car explosion and subsequent gunfire attack in Shahr-e-Naw locality. The successive terror attacks not only highlight the fragility of the security situation in capital city but also indicative of the fact that Taliban militants have escalated their terror maneuverings in Kabul. Moreover, they have also intensified their activities outside the capital, for instance in Lashkargah and Kunduz.⁵

Although the enduring military operations across the country have hampered the operational capacities of militant outfits; however, it seems that, in order to counter the relatively strict security conditions, the militants have developed their muscles to carry out better maneuvered and strategically planned attacks. The targets in these attacks were high officials of the Ministry of Defense which indicated the excessive infiltration of militant elements inside the capital. On the other hand, the attack on an international charity group building forged terror among the staff and residents in the vicinity. These attacks are further suggestive of greater strength of Taliban as compared to the IS-K militants who have, in the recent past, intensified their activities in the militancy ravaged Afghanistan.

Implications

The back to back terrorist attacks are likely to raise the alert level in the capital city. Resultantly, the intensification in counter-terrorism activities by the Afghan Security forces is predictable. The foreign allies of Afghanistan are also expected to extend their support to Afghanistan in the upcoming years, at the Brussels Conference, in the run up to recent escalation in terrorist

⁴ Dawn, "80 Dead, 231 Wounded as Twin Blasts Strike Hazara Demonstration in Kabul," *Dawn*, July 24, 2106.

⁵ Mirwais Hoorani, "Afghan forces end siege after suicide attacks in Kabul," *Reuters*, September 6, 2016.

activities. These developments might, in turn, provoke militants to retaliate and further escalate their activities.

Location map



Photo Gallery



Security Forces Inspecting the Site, BBC, September 6, 2016.



Explosion Site near Defense Ministry, BBC, September 6, 2016.



Site of Attack at Shahr-e-Naw, BBC, September 6, 2016.