

Incident Update

Police Training Academy Attacked in Quetta

October 25, 2016

Factual Updates

In the midnight on Monday, October 24, 2016, at least four terrorists, equipped with suicide vests and heavy arms, stormed the police training center located at Sariab road in the outskirts of Quetta, killing about 61 new recruits while wounding some 165 others.¹The terrorists, after invading the New Sariab Police Training College from different spots, started indiscriminate firing and headed toward the hostel where 250 students were sleeping.² In four hours long operation conducted by police, army and Frontier Corps (FC), four assailants were killed and around 200 police recruits, who had been held hostage at a hostel by the militants, were rescued.³ In addition to police, FC and army troops also reached at the scene and took control of the area. According to Inspector General (IG) FC, Major General Sher Afgan, the communication intercepts highlighted that the strike was carried out by Al-Alimi faction of the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). On the other hand, the terrorist Islamic State has also claimed responsibility of the attack.⁴

Situational background

The police training college is located at Sariab Road, about eight kilometers away from Quetta, which is included among the most sensitive areas of the provincial capital as militant elements have repeatedly targeted civilians as well as the security forces in the locality. According to Balochistan Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri, Quetta had been on high alert for past many days as intelligence agencies had issued a warning that some terrorists, including suicide bombers, had entered the city and that as they did not get a chance to strike in the city, they carried out this

¹ Muhammad Zafar, "61 Killed, at least 165 Injured as Militants Storm Police Training Centre in Quetta," *The Express Tribune*, October 24, 2016.

² Dawn, "60 Killed in Twin Suicide Attacks as Terrorists Storm Police Training College in Quetta", *Dawn*, October 25, 2016.

³ The express tribune, "Terror revisits Quetta", *The express tribune*, October 25, 2016.

⁴ Dawn, "60 Killed in Twin Suicide Attacks as Terrorists Storm Police Training College in Quetta", *Dawn*, October 25, 2016.

attack in the outskirts of the city.⁵ The militants held security forces for about four hours during which heavy exchange of gunfire took place between security agencies and the militants. According to a security official, two of the assailants exploded their suicide vests before being targeted by the security forces while two of them were killed by the security personnel.⁶

Analysis

During the past few months, the militancy prone Baluchistan province has, once again, become a center of terrorists' activities in Pakistan. It seems that operation Zarb-e-Azb and formal inauguration of CPEC has changed the epicenter of terrorism in Pakistan. Though military has regained the control of north western tribal areas – a hub of Islamist militants in the past – and the security situation in rest of the country has become comparatively better, Baluchistan has repeatedly been targeted by the radical elements in the recent past. Both military and civil leadership condemned the attack while masses showed strong support for the affected people. Militants chose a sensitive target which put a question mark over the competence of law enforcement agencies regarding their capacity to curb militancy within the province. It would be an exaggeration to say that before CPEC, Baluchistan was a safe and secure place. Nevertheless, the intensity of militants' strikes and the magnitude of destruction have swelled during the recent militant maneuverings. Following the attack on lawyers, which took away almost a generation of advocates, who were political activists and social workers as well, this assault was also an attempt to crush a new generation of police community. Although both civil and military leaders are on the same page with reference to the security situation of Baluchistan as they are endeavoring to secure the CPEC related projects; nonetheless, the recent wave of terrorism indicates that there is need to adopt concrete measures to ensure peace in the province. It is also important to take the people of Baluchistan on board and involve them in peace building process by winning their confidence over the state apparatus.

Implications

Baluchistan is enjoying an important geostrategic position in the region. It cannot be denied that foreign hands are operating in Baluchistan and security agencies have proofs of their involvement. The recent controversial speech by Indian Prime Minister also points toward the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Indian involvement in Baluchistan. Regardless of the fact that security has been intensified across the country as part of National Action Plan (NAP), the recent surge in militant activities in Balochistan province, particularly in Quetta, highlight its vulnerability to planned terrorist attacks. Keeping in view the spike in militant activities and resolve of governmental authorities against militancy, an escalation in security swoops, both by military and civilian law enforcement agencies, cannot be ruled out.

Location Map

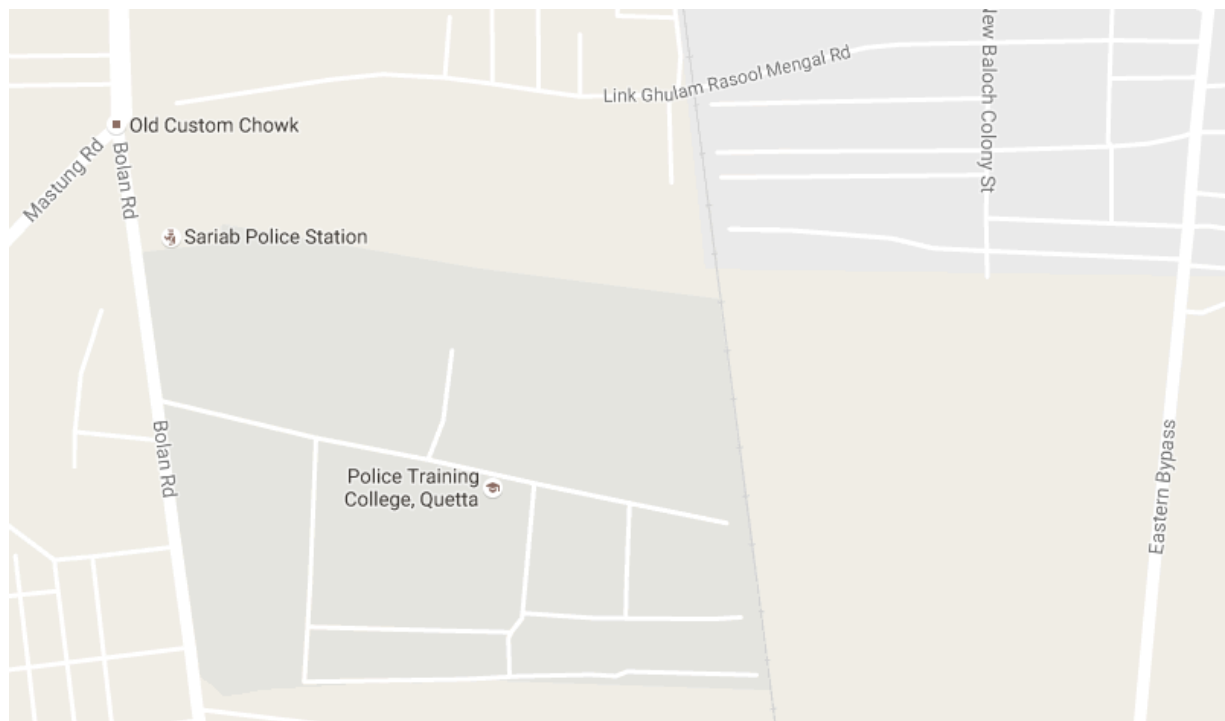


Photo Gallery



Volunteers and security personnel helping the victims of attack, Dawn, October 25, 2016.



A victim of Police Training College attack is being taken to hospital, Dawn, October 25, 2016.



Security personnel rushing to attack scene, The Express Tribune, October 24, 2016.



Relatives of Quetta attack victims mourning, The Express Tribune, October 24, 2016.