

## **Pakistani Taliban Release Video of Six Hostages of Polish Oil & Gas Company**

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The FATA Research Centre has received a four-minute video of the six Pakistani hostages who were employees of the Geofizyka Krakow, a Polish oil and gas surveying company, operating in Pakistan since last decade. The six hostages were kidnapped on 26 November 2016 from Drazinda area in Dera Ismail Khan (D.I.Khan) district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, while they were at work. The D.I.Khan district adjoins the South Waziristan Agency (SWA) of FATA. The video has been released by the Mahsud Taliban group led by Khan Said aka Sajna Mahsud aka Khalid Mahsud.

In the video footage, all the six hostages are shown to be seated in two single rows, with a gun-trotting masked Taliban standing over their head. The video is in Urdu language and all the hostages belong to district Attock of Punjab province. All the hostages recorded their messages one by one, and requested the government and officials of Geofizyka Krakow to secure their release.

It is pertinent to mention that earlier in September 2008, the Pakistani Taliban led by Tariq Afridi (now deceased), belonging to Darra Adamkhel, had kidnapped a Polish engineer, Peter Stanczak from Attock district, who was also working for Geofizyka Krakow. Stanczak was subsequently beheaded in February 2009, purportedly due to intra-Taliban rivalry over ransom amount and issues relating to his custody.

### **The transcription of the video is as follow:**

We, the six people kidnapped by mujahedeen, strongly appeal the Government of Pakistan that it should make efforts for our immediate release from [the Taliban] detention.

[Hostage No. 1] I am Abdul Khaliq, son of Qadir Bakhash. I am a resident of Dhok Marangda near Noshehra Chungi in tehsil Pindi Gheb of district Attock. I worked for a Polish company. We were kidnapped by mujahedeen on 26 November 2016, at about 11 am, from Line No 12, in Darazinda tehsil of district Dera Ismail Khan. The kidnappers belonged to Khalid Mahsud aka Sajna group of South Waziristan. We are at the time in their custody.

[Hostage No. 2] My name is Sher Bahadur, son of Sher Jan. I belong to Mohallah Hari Wala, Ward No 7/5 of Pindi Gheb tehsil. I worked for the Polish company. We were kidnapped from Line No 12, in Darazinda tehsil. We are now in the custody of Khalid Mahsud Sajna and we are to abide by his orders.

[Hostage No. 3] My name is Muhammad Riaz, son of Muhammad Ramzan. I belong to Pindi Gheb tehsil of Attock District. I worked for the Polish company in Drazinda tehsil of Dera Ismail Khan. I was kidnapped by mujahedeen from Line No 12. Now, I am in custody of Khalid Mahsud Sajna group.

[Hostage No. 4] My name is Muhammad Hassan, son of Gul Badshah. I belong to Dhulian Shehad in Pindi Gheb tehsil of Attock district. I worked for the Polish company. We were kidnapped by mujahideen near Darazinda tehsil. We are now in the custody of Khalid Mahsud Sajna group.

[Hostage No. 5] My name is Muhammad Amin, son of Muhammad Aslam. I belong to Bakpala village in Pindi Gheb tehsil of Attck district. I worked for the Polish company in Darazinda tehsil from where I was kidnapped by mujahedeen. We are now in custody of Khalid Mahsud Sjana group.

[Hostage No. 6] My name is Amjad Shehzad, son of Muhammad Khan. I am a resident of tehsil Pindi Gheb in district Attock. We were working for the Polish company in Dera Ismail Khan. We were kidnapped by mujahedeen from Darazinda on 26 November 2016. We are now in custody of Khalid Mahud aka Sajna of South Waziristan.

[Hostage No. 1 again] I am Abdul Khaliq, son of Qadir Bakhsh. I was working for the Polish Company Geofizyka Krakow. We were kidnapped by Khalid Mahsud aka Sajna group of South Waziristan on 26 November 2016. We, the six kidnapped people, are vehemently appealing our seniors, including Mr. Shahid and Malik Tasaddaq, and Government of Pakistan that they should make efforts for our immediate release because our lives are in danger. We are in custody of Khalid Mahsud Sajna group who, about a few years ago, kidnapped a foreigner and slaughtered him as their demands hadn't been complied with. I am again appealing to the Government of Pakistan and my company to kindly make efforts for our immediate release.

### **Analysis**

This is the first video released by Pakistani Taliban concerning the six hostages. The video comprises of the statements of the hostages and the Taliban did not give any message nor did they lay out any demand in the video. The video has been released after a span of two months of the kidnapping incident. It is expected that more videos would be released in which the Taliban would spell their terms for their safe release. In most cases, the Taliban demands include ransom money and release of their associates from Pakistani jails. It is also important to mention that Khan Said group claimed responsibility for the said kidnapping through its spokesman, Azam Tariq.

There is a strong possibility that these hostages are kept in the southeastern provinces (Paktia, Paktika and Khost) of Afghanistan across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. This is because the Mahsud Taliban fled across the border due to military operation "Zarb-e-Azb" which was launched in North Waziristan Agency in June 2014.

The Khan Said group is infamous for involvement in previous kidnapping incidents. In July 2011, the group kidnapped a Swiss couple (Olivier David Och and Daniela Widmer) from Loralai district of Balochistan province.

Other high profile kidnappings by the group include that of Professor Ajmal Khan, Vice Chancellor of Islamic College University Peshawar, who was taken at gun point in Peshawar in

September 2010, Ali Haider Gillani, son of former Prime Minister, Yousaf Raza Gillani, who was kidnapped in 2013, and held hostage by Khan Said group until his release in 2016. Similarly, nine officials of the FATA Development Authority (FDA) were also kidnapped by the same group in March 2016 from South Waziristan Agency.