

Incident Update

Deputy Chairman of Senate Attacked in Mastung

May 12, 2017

Factual Updates

On 12 May 2017, a bomb explosion next to the convoy of Deputy Chairman Senate, the upper house of Parliament, left at least 25 people killed and about 40 others wounded in Mastung district of Balochistan province. However, Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidri sustained minor injuries, while the Director Staff of Senate was reportedly killed in the blast.¹ The police personnel who were escorting the Senator were also injured in the blast. The explosion took place near a local religious seminary shortly after the Jumma prayers and was followed by continuous firing. According to an eye witness, the blast took place when Haidri's convoy was leaving the seminary. The local police officials claimed that it was a suicide attack. Following the explosion, the security personnel cordoned off the explosion site. Some of the injured were transported to the Civil Hospital Mastung, while those who were in critical condition were shifted to Quetta. The terrorist outfit Islamic State (IS) has claimed responsibility of the attack.² President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif strongly condemned the incident and reiterated their resolve to end terrorism from the country. Jamiat-Ulma-e-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman expressed condolences to the families of the victims and asserted, "Such incidents will not stop us in our cause."³

Situational Background

Senator Haidri, who belonged to JUI-F, was invited to attend an investiture ceremony at the seminary. A day before the attack, the Senator asserted during a press conference in Quetta that JUI-F would make the provincial government in alliance with national nationalist parties in Balochistan in the next general elections.⁴

¹ Syed Ali Shah, "25 Killed as Deputy Chairman Senate Haideri's Convoy Hit by Explosion in Mastung," *Dawn*, May 12, 2017.

² Zafar Baloch, "20 Killed as Bomb Hits Ghafoor Haidery's Convoy in Mastung," *The Express Tribune*, May 12, 2017.

³ Muhammad Ejaz Khan, "25 Killed, Deputy Chairman Senate Injured in Mastung Blast," *Geo News*, May 12, 2017.

⁴ Syed Ali Shah, "25 Killed as Deputy Chairman Senate Haideri's Convoy Hit by Explosion in Mastung," *Dawn*, May 12, 2017.

Analysis

Balochistan province, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, has been marred with separatist insurgency, Islamist extremism and sectarian violence for past couple of decades. On the other hand, Mastung district has been remained a sight of sectarian violence as it witnessed a number of sectarian leaning attacks in the past. Likewise, the IS who claimed responsibility of this attack has also been remained involved in a number of sectarian assaults in the past in Balochistan province. On 12 November 2016, a suicide attack claimed by IS left 52 people dead and over 100 others wounded at Shah Noorani shrine, located in the distant mountainous region of Khuzdar district in the restive Balochistan province. However, the sectarian linkage of this attack seems unlikely as JUI-F has been remained a negotiator between the government and the militants involved in sectarian attacks across the country.

JUI-F has repeatedly been targeted by militant elements in the past as well. In 2014, Maulana Fazlur Rahman was also wounded a in a suicide attack targeting his vehicle in Quetta. Although the violence prone Balochistan province witnessed a short period of lull following the successive security operations in the recent past; however, the Mastung attack again highlighted its vulnerability to the militant elements. Regardless of the persistent counterinsurgency operations involving all the national security agencies, the successive militant attacks underscore that the radical elements remain a potent threat to the national security, particularly in Baluchistan province.

Implications

Following the incident, Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri has directed the security authorities to submit a report regarding the suicide attack. The repeated militant attacks claimed by the IS also highlight the terrorists outfit's operational capacity in the province. Hence, there is a need to tackle this issue on immediate grounds. Considering the mounting maneuverings of the militant groups and the government's resolve to wipe out terrorism, further militant attacks and subsequent security operations cannot be ruled out.

Location Map



Photo Gallery



Blast Site, Dawn, May 12, 2017



Volunteers rescuing the victims at blast site, Dawn, May 12, 2017



Vehicles damaged in blast, The Nation, May 12, 2017