

FATA ANNUAL SECURITY REPORT 2017



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Map of FATA



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About FATA Research Centre

The FATA Research Centre (FRC) is a non-partisan, non-political and non-governmental research organization based in Islamabad. It is the first ever think-tank that specifically focuses on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan in its entirety. The purpose of establishing the FRC is to create a better understanding about the conflict in FATA among the concerned stakeholders through undertaking independent, impartial and objective research and analysis. The FRC endeavors to create awareness among all segments of the Pakistani society and the government to jointly strive for a peaceful, tolerant and progressive FATA.

FATA Annual Security Report

The FATA Annual Security Report reviews recent trends in conflict in FATA such as the number and type of terrorist attacks, tactics and strategies used by the terrorists and the resultant casualties. The objective of this security report is to outline and categorize all forms of violent extremism, role of terrorist groups and the scale of terrorist activities in the area. This report is the result of regular monitoring of terrorist and counter-terrorist activities by employing primary and secondary sources. FRC collects data from the field through its field researchers working in FATA, and also consults reliable secondary sources to ensure the quality and veracity of its research. However, it also faces certain limitations since the area under discussion is undergoing counter-insurgency operations and imposition of curfews. Hence, terrorist and counter-terrorist attacks sometimes restrict the mobility of our field staff. Thus, the number of actual occurrences of violent acts may be greater than those being reported here.

Methodology

The FRC research team collects information and data from both primary and secondary sources and presents its analysis on the security issues. FRC's internal database prepared through daily monitoring of more than a dozen English and Urdu newspapers, periodicals, magazines, monitoring and reviews of locally distributed literature in the area and data collected from political administration in FATA Agencies contributed to the compilation of this report. Additionally, an up-to-date archive system at the FRC is consulted for authenticity and reference to important events and incidents. FRC correspondents, based in all the seven Agencies of FATA, provide information and data verification from concerned political administration offices and locals of the area.

Acronyms

FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FRC	FATA Research Centre
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
ISPR	Inter-Services Public Relations
TTP-JuA	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan Jamaat-ul-Ahrar
NAP	National Action Plan
NWA	North Waziristan Agency
SWA	South Waziristan Agency
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
CT	Counter-Terrorism
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
LeJA	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Almi
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device

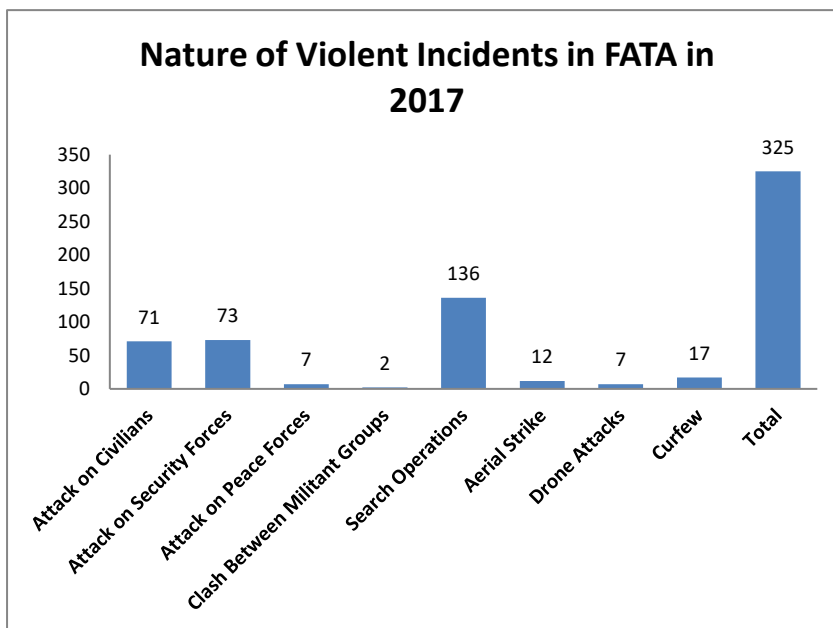
Glossary

Terrorist Attacks	Indiscriminate use of violence by local, non-local, and foreign terrorist outfits.
Counter-Terrorist Attacks	Large-scale military operations launched by security forces and para-military troops against terrorist in FATA in order to restore law and order and to establish the writ of state.
Amn Lashkar (Urdu for Peace Militias)	Volunteer tribal militias formed by tribes, clans, and sub-clans living in FATA to aid the Pakistani government and security forces in their battle against terrorists of all shades.

Security Overview of FATA 2017

The security situation in FATA remained volatile from January to December of the year 2017. Although targeted and intelligence based operations (IBOs) continued all over FATA, terrorist belonging to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan-Jamat-ul-Ahrar (TTP-JuA), Wazir Taliban, Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), Laskhar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) stepped up their activities in FATA during the reporting year. However, the ratio of counter terrorism (CT) operations remained higher in comparison to the terrorist attacks during the year 2017.

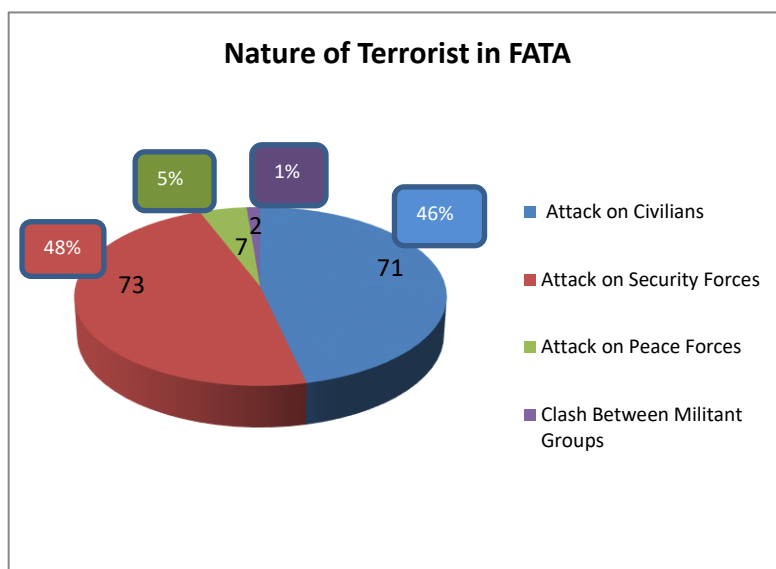
The following graph gives a bird's eye view of the nature of incidents during this quarter in entire FATA:



The graph to the left shows that a total of 325 violent incidents (153 terrorism and 172 counter-terrorism) incidents were recorded during the year 2017 compared to 219 (131 terrorism and 88 counter terrorism incidents in 2016. This shows an increase of 16 percent in

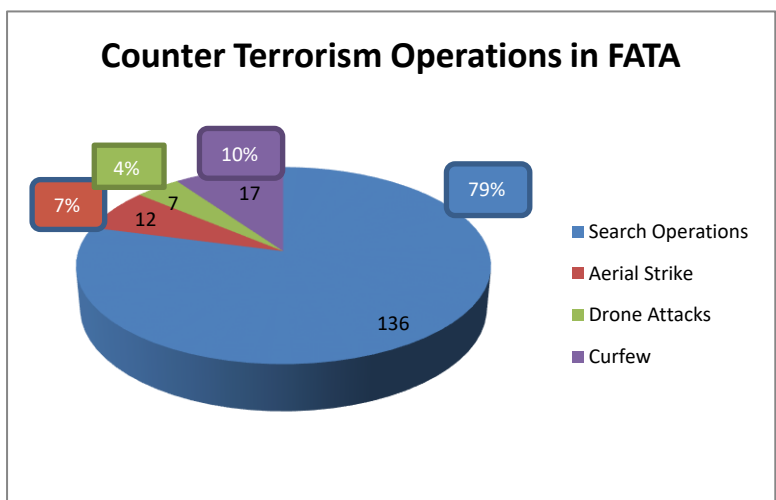
terrorism incidents while 95 percent in counter terrorism incidents in 2017 as compared to the previous year.

A Further breakdown of terrorism incidents shows that of the total 153 terrorist incidents in



2017, 73 terrorist attacks (48 percent) targeted the security forces while 71 attacks (46 percent) were directed against civilians. Seven terrorist attacks (five percent) targeted members of civil militia or *Amn Lashkar*. Two incident of infighting between terrorist groups was also report during the year 2017.

On the other hand, to combat the resurgence of Taliban led violence in FATA, Pakistani security forces also intensified counter terrorism (CT) operations during the year 2017. In total 165 CT operations during the reporting year were carried out compared 86 such incidents in 2016, marking a significant increase of 92 percent. According to the graph given



below, of the total CT operations during the year 2017, 136 (79 percent) were search operations while 12 were aerial strikes (seven percent) conducted by Pakistan Army in Wachu Bibi area of North Waziristan and Rajgal area of Khyber agency.

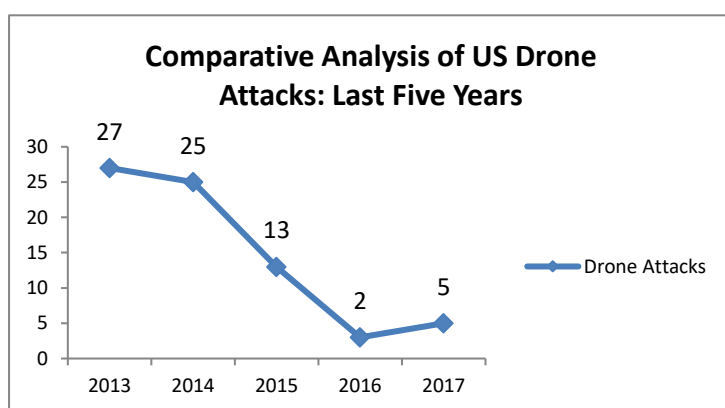
Although intelligence based search operations (IBOs) were conducted across FATA region, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Khyber and Kurram Agencies remained the prime focus of these CT operations. A full-fledge military operation code named “Khyber IV” was conducted in Rajgal area of Khyber Agency. Likewise, several aerial strikes as a part of ongoing operation “Rad-ul-Fassad” were also carried out in Wachu Bibi area of North Waziristan agency. Hundreds of terrorists affiliated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar, Laskhar-e-Islam (LI) and Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) were killed

and their hideouts were destroyed in these operations. Terrorist outfits based in Afghanistan had established their bases in Wachu Bibi area of North Waziristan and Rajgal area of Khyber agencies. By using these bases, they were carrying out terrorist attacks FATA and other parts of Pakistan, particularly during the first half of 2017. However, these bases were destroyed in after intensive military operation in Khyber and North Waziristan agencies in the reporting the reporting year. Likewise, more than 200 families, largely women and children were forcefully displaced when a military operation, as part of ongoing operation “Rah-e-Nijat” was launched in Shaktoi area of South Waziristan Agency¹.

In July 2017, to combat the growing threat of Islamic State of Khroasan (IS-K) and other affiliated groups in Kurram agency, a part from intelligence based operations, Pakistan Army announced to establish Safe City in Parachinar area of Kurram agency. The project includes the installation of closed-circuit television cameras throughout the city, which are linked to a command and control centre and which police officers monitor live².

Amid the ongoing counter terrorism activities by Pakistani security forces in FATA, US authorities also carried out five drone attacks against terrorist outfits in North Waziristan, Kurram and Orakzai Agencies during the year 2017. Compared to two drone strikes in 2016, five such strikes were conducted in different areas of FATA region.

The graph given below illustrates the number of US drone strikes in FATA during the past



five years. Compared to 27 drone strikes in 2013, only 5 such attacks were reported in the year 2017, which accounts for a remarkable decrease of 440 percent in the frequency of drone strikes during past five years. However, in the year 2017 the

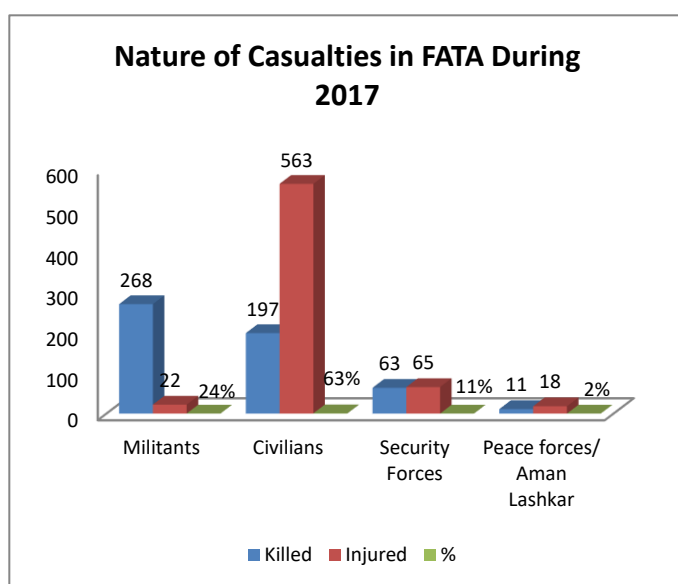
number of drone attacks again increased considerably. The first drone strike of the year under the US new President Donald Trump took place on 3rd March 2017, in which Qari Abdullah Sabari, a commander of Afghan Taliban was killed in Lower Kurram. In another such

¹ “Over 200 Families Displaced As Military Operation Launched In Shaktoi”. Radio TNN. November 2017. <https://www.radiotnn.com/over-200-families-displaced-as-military-operation-launched-in-shaktoi/>

² “Eight-day sit-in: Army chief helps end Parachinar protest”. The Express Tribune. June 30, 2017 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1447232/parachinar-protest-ends-successful-talks-army-chief/>

attack, Abu Bakar, a commander of Haqqani Network along with other terrorist were killed in Spin Tal area located in the confluence of Hangu district and Orkazai agency. It is important to mention here that the drone attack carried out days after Afghan security officials accused the Haqqani network and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence of being behind the suicide truck bombing in Kabul on May 31 that killed at least 150 people. Although the allegation was strongly rejected by the Pakistan government at all levels. However, the killing of important commanders of Haqqani signifies the presence of member of Haqqani Network in FATA. It is therefore believed that under the Trump administration drone strikes against suspected terrorist will not only increase in FATA region but also in the settled areas of Pakistan.

The violent incidents both terrorist and counter-terrorist, resulted in a total of 1207 casualties – 539 killed and 668 injured – across FATA, marking an increase of 37 percent in overall casualties. The following graphs provide an overview of these casualties.



According to the graph, civilians remained the main target of terrorist organization during the year 2017. Of the total casualties, 760 (138 Killed and 437 Injured) were that of civilians, accounting for 63 percent of the overall casualties. 128 casualties (63 Killed and 65 Injured) were inflicted upon security forces which makes 11 percent of the overall casualties. Similarly, 29 casualties (11

Killed and 18 Injured) of civil militia were also reported during the year 2017.

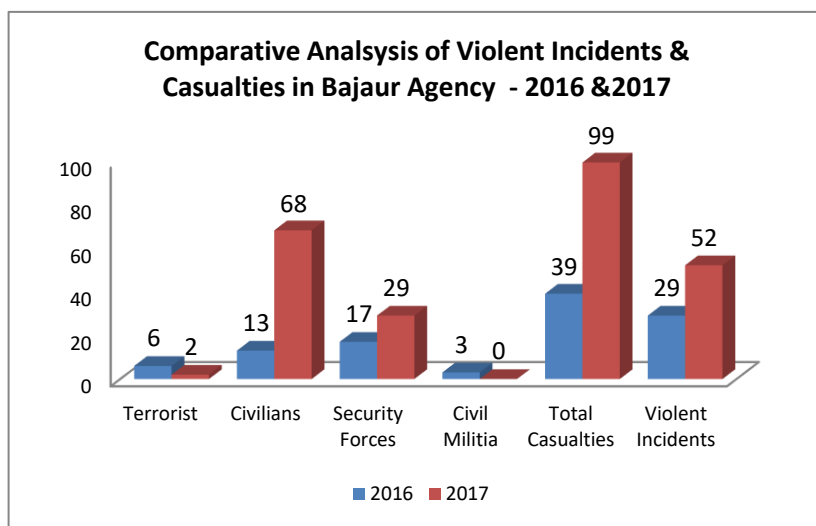
To combat the rising tide of terrorism incidents during the year 2017, security forces also intensified counter terrorism operations. Resultantly 268 terrorist were killed while 22 other were injured, which accounts for 24 % of overall casualties during the year 2017. However, the main reason for the surge in overall casualties, particularly those of civilians, were the four high profile, coordinated and complex terrorist attacks in Kurram agency during first half (January to July) 2017. The growing number of IED (improvised explosive devices) also contributed in the in hike of overall casualties during the year 2017.

Chapter 2

Agency wise Comparative Analysis - 2016 & 2017

Bajaur Agency

During the year 2017, Bajaur Agency witnessed an upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties. Compared to 29 violent incidents in 2016, 52 such incidents were

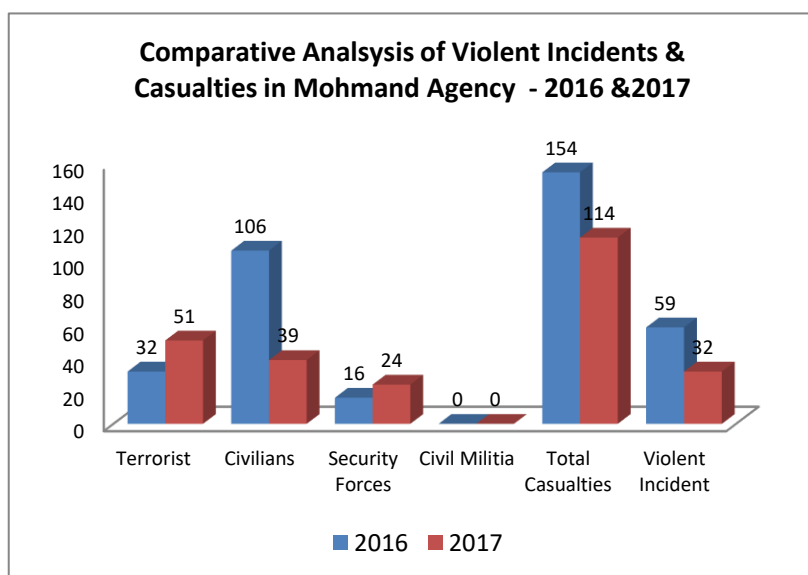


reported in Bajaur Agency, marking an increase of 79 percent. A similarly trend was also observed in the number of casualties index. Compared to 39 casualties (17 Killed and 22 Injured) in 2016, 99 casualties (31 killed and 68 injured) were reported during the year

2017, accounting for a remarkable increase of 153 percent in overall casualties.

Mohmand Agency

Although Mohmand Agency disturbed during the year 2017, an incremental decline in

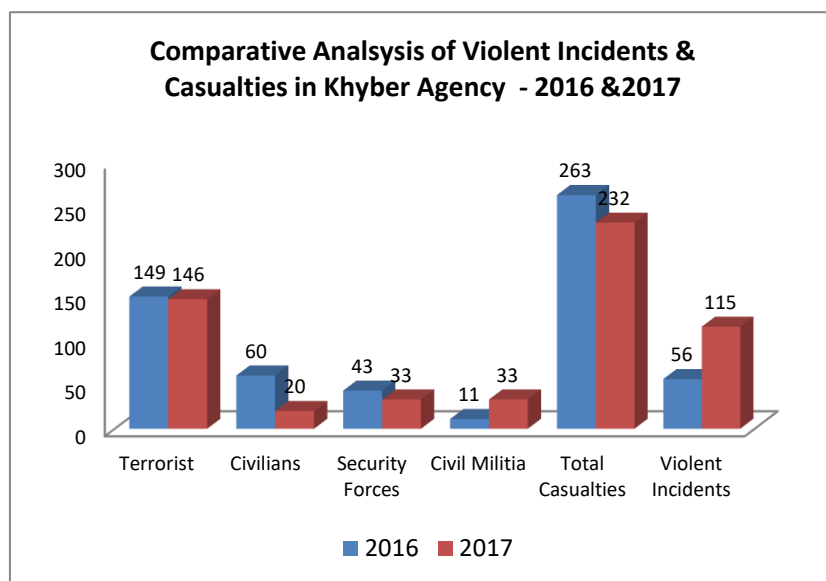


violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the reporting year. Compared to 59 violent incidents in 2016, 32 such incidents were reported in Bajaur Agency, marking an increase of 45 percent. A similarly trend was also observed in the number of

casualties index. Compared to 121 casualties (113 Killed and 87 Injured) in 2016, 200 casualties (66 killed and 55 injured) were occurred in Mohamand agency during the year 2017, accounting for an incremental decrease of 40 percent in overall casualties.

Khyber Agency

During 2017, Khyber Agency witnessed an upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties. The graphs to the left shows that compared to 56 violent incidents in 2016, 115

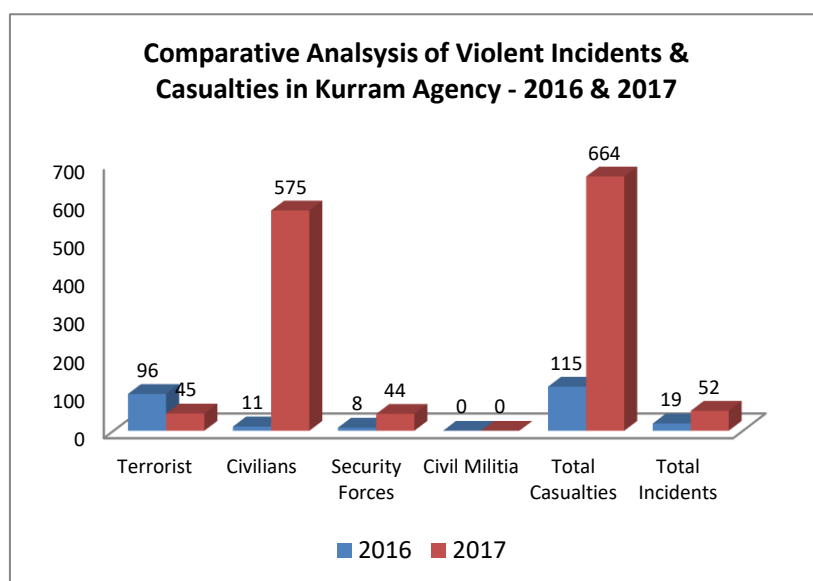


such incidents were reported in Khyber Agency which accounts for an increase of 105 percent. A similarly trend was also observed in the number of casualties index. Compared to 205 casualties (153 Killed and 52 Injured) in 2016, 287 casualties (177 killed and

52 injured) were reported during the year 2017, accounting for a significant increase of 40 percent in overall casualties.

Kurram Agency

In the backdrop of Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) growing influence inside Afghanistan, Kurram Agency, which shares border with Nargarhar, the primary strong hold of IS-K, remained volatile during the year 2017. According to the graph given below, Kurram agency



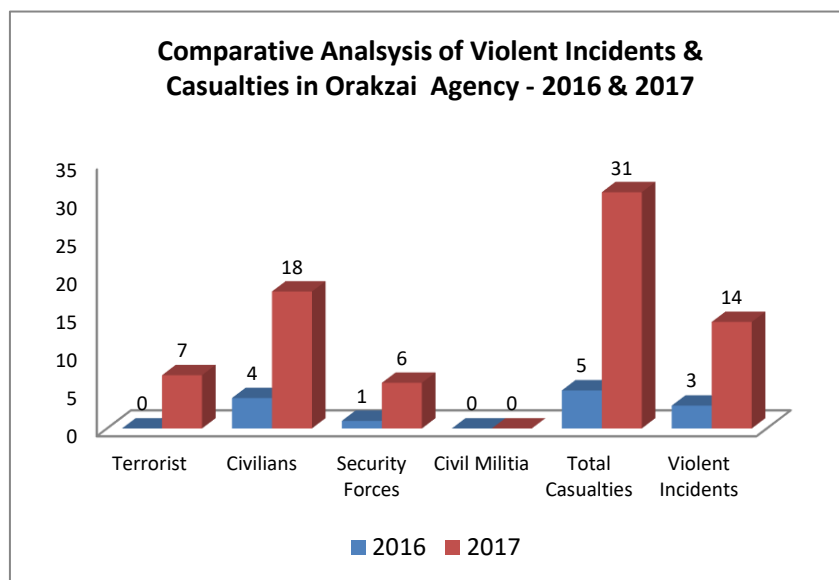
witnessed a significant upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the year 2017. Compared to 19 violent incidents in 2016, 52 such incidents were record during the year 2017, marking a significant increase of 173 percent in

violent incidents. A similar trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to 115 casualties in 2016, 664 casualties were observed in the year 2017, which accounts for a

remarkable surge of 477 percent in overall casualties in 2017. Civilians remained the prime target of terrorist outfits. Of the total casualties, 575 casualties (138 killed and 437 injured) were of that of civilians, accounting for 76 percent of the overall casualties in Kurram Agency. The main reason for the incremental surge in overall casualties, particularly that of civilians were the four high profile attacks carried out by Islamic State of Khorasan and other affiliated groups. The growing number of IED (improvised explosive device) attacks carried out by terrorist groups also contributed to the spike in overall casualties during the reporting year in Kurram agency.

Orakzai Agency

Orakzai Agency after witnessing relatively peaceful during the past few years, witnessed an upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties. According to the graph given

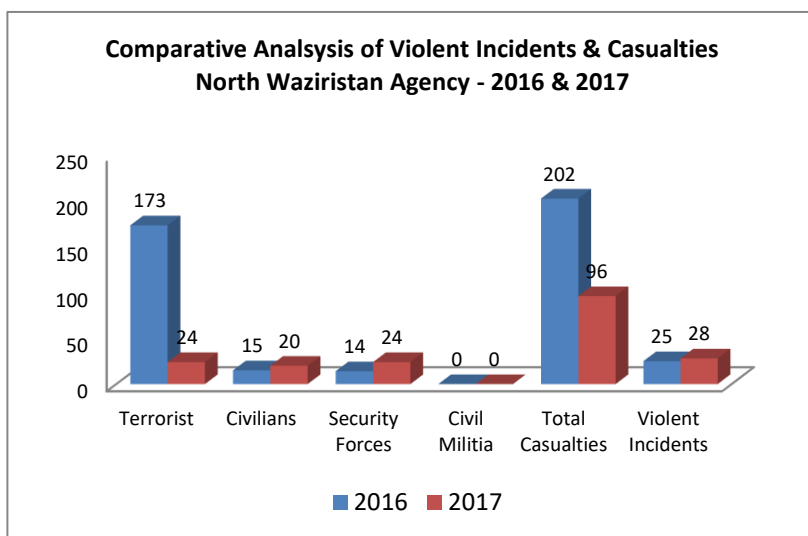


below compared to three violent incidents in 2016, 14 such incidents were reported in Orakzai Agency during the year 2017, which accounts for an increase of 367 percent in violent incidents. A similarly trend was also witnessed in the number of casualties index.

Compared to five casualties (one killed and four injured) in 2016, 32 casualties (15 killed and 17 injured) were reported from Orakzai agency during the year 2017, marking a significant surge of 540 percent in overall casualties.

North Waziristan Agency

The security situation in North Waziristan Agency after the full-fledge military operation “Zarb-e-Azb” initiated in June 2014, has improved remarkably. The below table provides

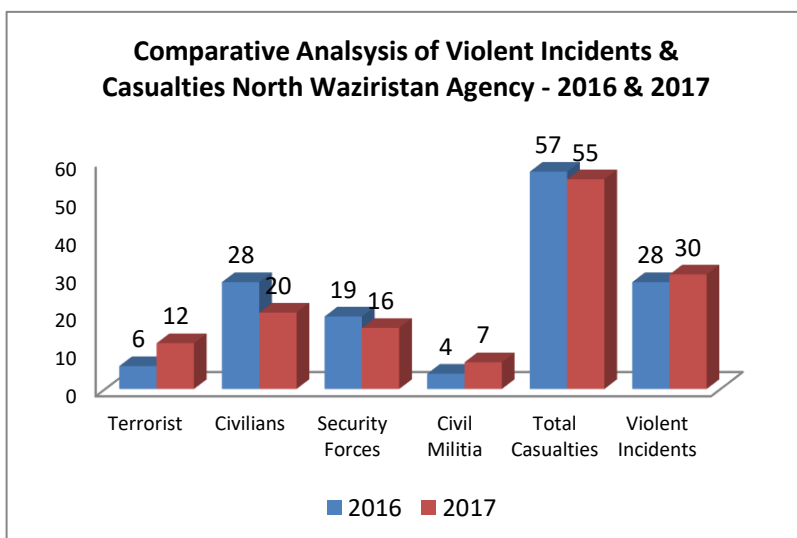


comparative analysis violent incidents and resultant casualties in the year 2016 and 2017. According to the graph given in the left, despite a slight increase in violent incidents a significant down trend has been observed in overall

casualties during the year 2017. Compared to 25 violent incidents, 28 such incidents were recorded during the year 2017. Conversely, compared to 202 casualties (175 killed and 27 injured) in 2016, 72 casualties (48 killed and 24 injured) were occurred in North Waziristan agency, accounting for a significant decrease of 64 percent in overall casualties.

South Waziristan Agency

South Waziristan Agency, where military operation “Rah-e-Nijat” is in process, witnessed an upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties during the year 2017. Compared to



28 violent incidents in 2016, 30 such incidents were reported in agency during the year 2017, marking a slight increase of seven percent violent incidents. Conversely, with exception to casualties related to terrorist and civil militias, a slight downward trend was

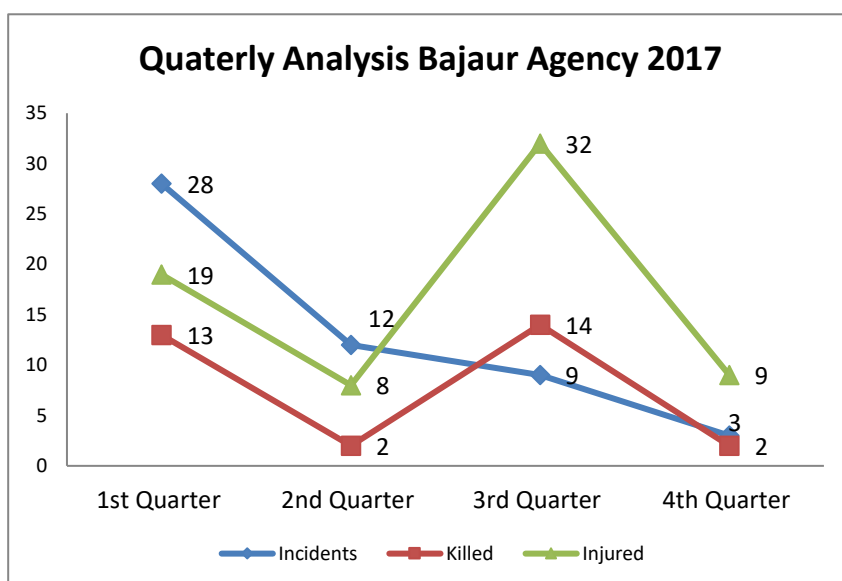
observed in overall casualties. Compared to 57 casualties in 2016, 55 casualties were reported during the year 2017, marking a decline of four percent in overall casualties.

Chapter 3

Agency Wise Quarterly Analysis - 2017

Bajaur Agency

During the year 2017, the security situation in Bajaur Agency remained disturbed. The graph given below provides a detail of violent incidents and resultant casualties against each quarter of 2017 in Bajaur Agency.



According to the graph during the first quarter (January-March) 2017, the security situation in Bajaur Agency remained volatile as 28 violent incidents were recorded across the agency. Out of these, 15 were terrorist attacks while 13 were counter terrorism

operation conducted by security forces. The terrorist attacks caused 30 casualties (11 killings and 19 injuries) in total, while two terrorists were killed in counter terrorism operations. The dead included two security personnel and nine civilians, while the injured included six security personnel and 13 civilians.

During the first quarter of 2017, the most affected areas included Mamond, Salarzai, Arang, and Khar tehsils of the Agency. Terrorists associated with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and TTPJamaat-ul-Ahrar (TTP-JuA) remained the major actor of instability in the area during the said period. The terrorists conducted two IED attacks against security personnel – both attacks took place in the Mamond tehsil of the agency. Moreover, terrorists belonging to the TTP and TTP-JuA, who have established their sanctuaries in adjoining Kunar province of Afghanistan, restored to cross-border attacks on two occasions to target security forces deployed along the Afghan border. On the other hand, terrorists carried out six IED attacks targeting the civilians. The civilians were also targeted in target killing incidents on five

occasions during this quarter. During search operations, security forces also demolished the house of Anwarul Haq, a facilitator of Lahore suicide attack, on 13 February 2017. The house was located in Barkalan area of Mamond tehsil.

However, a significant downward trend was observed in violent incidents and resultant casualties during the second quarter (April-June) 2017 as compared to the first quarter (January to March) 2017. Compared to 28 violent incidents, 12 such incidents, both terrorism and counter terrorism were recorded in the agency during the second quarter, marking an incremental decline of 133 percent in violent incidents. Out of these, three were terrorist attacks carried out by terrorist belonging to TTP and TTP-JuA while nine were CT incidents. A similarly trend was observed in casualty index. Compared to 32 casualties (13 killed and 19 injured), 10 casualties (two killed and eight injured) was reported during the second quarter of 2017, accounting for remarkable decrease of 220 percent.

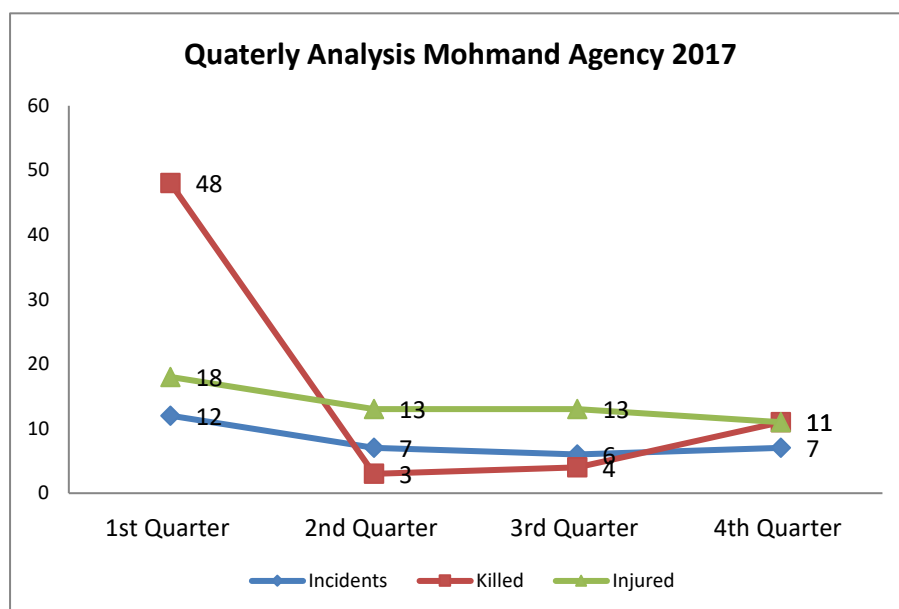
The number of violent incidents further declined in during the third quarter of 2017. Compared to 12 violent incidents only nine such incidents were recorded in the third quarter, marking a slight decline of 25 percent in violent incidents. Conversely, an upward trend was observed in casualty index during third quarter. Compared to 10 casualties (two killed and eight injured) in the second quarter, 48 casualties (14 killed and 32 injured) were reported from the agency during the third quarter, accounting for significant increase of 60 percent during this quarter as compare to the preceding one.

Shagoo, Gat Agra, Garigal area of Mamond, Tangi Badda area of Salarzai tehsil and Charmang area of Nawagai tehsil remained the most vulnerable areas to terrorist attack during the third quarter. On 17 September 2017, a political tehsildar of Momand tehsil and four Levies personnel lost their lives when their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device (IED), planted by terrorists in Bajaur Agency. Similarly, in another such incident, at least three people were killed and 26 others injured in Charmang area of the agency.

During the fourth quarter (October- December) 2017, with exception to three violent incidents, Bajaur agency remained peaceful. Two members of security were killed while others were injured in these attacks.

Mohmand Agency

During the year 2017, the security situation in Mohmand Agency remained disturbed. The graph given below provides a detail of violent incidents and resultant casualties against each



quarter of 2017 in Bajaur Agency. In total, 12 incidents of terrorism and CT were recorded across the agency during the first quarter of 2017 which resulted in 66 casualties (48 killings and 18 injuries).

Olai, Michni,

Pandialay, Daudzai, Safi and Ghallanai are remained the most disturb area of the agency during the first quarter. Terrorists launched four ambushes on security check post in Olai, Safi, Maxhni and Ghallanai areas of the agency. An IED attack against security forces was carried out in Daudzai area which left three security personnel and eight civilian wounded.

On the other hand, the security forces foiled a suicide bid in Ghallanai, the headquarters of Mohmand Agency. Two suicide bombers who tried to forcefully enter the political administration office were intercepted and killed by the security personnel on 15 February 2017. However, three security personnel were killed while suicide vest of an assailant exploded following the retaliatory firing by security forces. TTP-JuA claimed responsibility for the suicide attack.

However, with exception to number of people killed in third and fourth quarter, a steady downward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed from January to December of the year 2017. During the second quarter of 2017, Mohmand Agency witnessed a downward trend of 71 percent in violent incidents in comparison to the last quarter, i.e., April to June 2017. Similarly, with reference to casualties, an incremental decline of 312

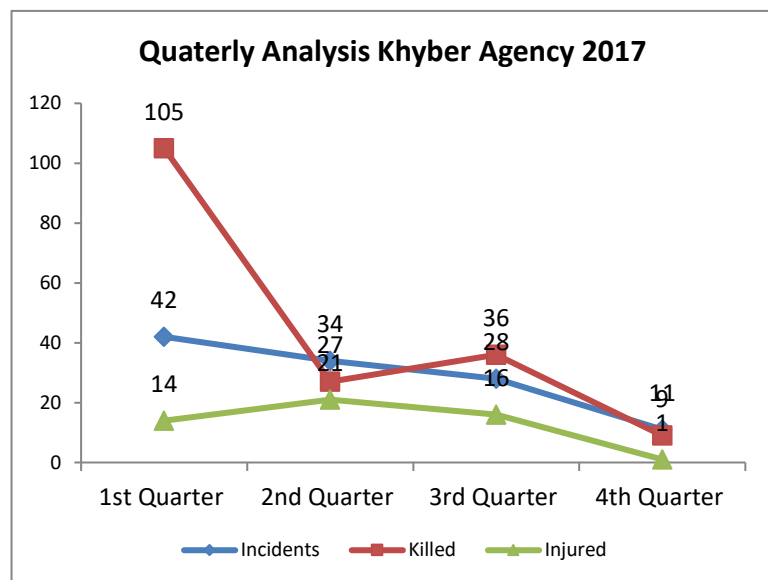
percent was witnessed during the second quarter of 2017 as compared to the preceding quarter of 2017. The Shani Khel area of Haleemzai tehsil and Ghalanai, the headquarters of Mohmand Agency, remained the most disturbed area of the agency during the second quarter (April-June 2017). As part of security measures the political administration also imposed curfew in all parts of the district Mohmand except Prang Ghar tehsil after two mortar-shells and a missile fired from unknown location by some miscreants landed at Government College of Management Sciences Ghalanai near the agency headquarters Ghalanai during the second quarter.

Similarly, in total, six incidents of terrorism and CT were recorded across the agency, marking 14 percent decline in violent incidents as compared to the preceding quarter of 2017. Ajdari area of Anbar tehsil and Baizai tehsil remained the most disturbed area of the agency during this quarter. On July 09, 2017, one soldier was killed and another sustained injuries, when terrorist targeted security forces via IED (Improvised Explosive Device) in Soran Dara village adjacent to Baizai tehsil of the agency. In another such incident, five members of security forces were injured when a convey of security forces came in contact with an IED planted by terrorist along the roadside in Koda Khel area of Baizai tehsil of the Agency. On August 25, 2017, five people were injured when terrorist fired rockets at the house of a pro-government Amn Lashkar (Peace Committee) member in Ajdari area of Anbar tehsil in Mohmand Agency.

Conversely, a slight upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the fourth quarter of 2017. In total six violent incidents were recorded during the last three months of 2017 in which three members of security forces were killed while six others were injured.

Khyber Agency

During the year 2017, the security situation in Khyber Agency remained disturbed. The graph given below provides a detail of violent incidents and resultant casualties against each



quarter of 2017 in Bajaur Agency. In total, 42 incidents of terrorism and CT were recorded across the agency during the first quarter of 2017 which resulted in 56 casualties (42 killings and 14 injuries). To combat the terrorists, security forces conducted 18 search operations and four aerial strikes during this

quarter. Moreover, security forces also carried out artillery shelling in Tirah valley of the agency. The most disturbed areas of the agency during the first quarter included Rajgal area of Tirah Valley, Sur Kamar, Torkham, Rena, Lala Kandao, Rakha Laman, Shin Po, Pera Khel, Jamrud, Bara and Landikotal.

However, a steady downward trend was observed in violent incidents during the second, third and fourth quarter of 2017. During the second quarter (April to June) 2017 in total, 34 incidents, both of terrorism and CT were reported in the agency, making a decline of 19 percent in violence incidents as compared to the preceding quarter of 2017. The violent incidents occurred in Rajgal, Nare Baba and Maidan of Tirah Valley, Torkham Bazaar, Bacha Mena Kalli, Jamrud, Zakakhel, Kamberkheland Shekhan Pulareas in Bara and Landikotal resulted in 48 casualties (28 killed and 21 injured).

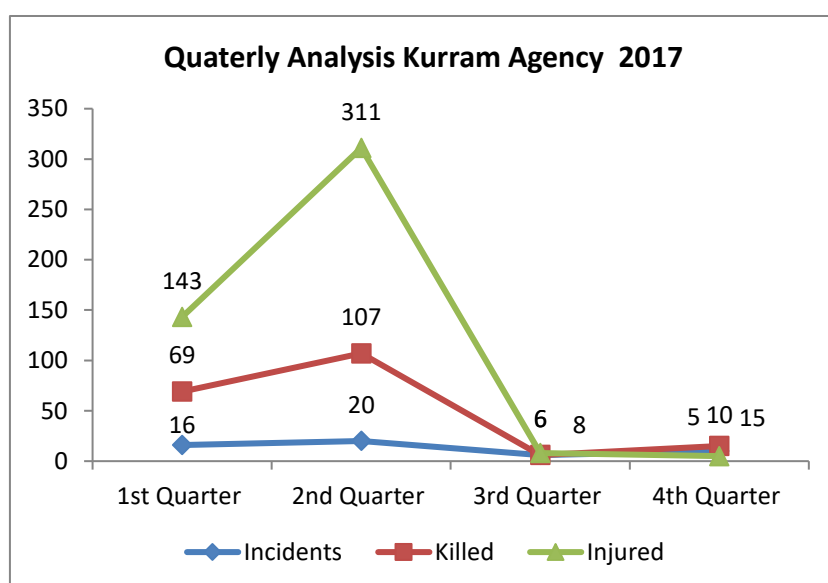
A similar, trend was observed during third quarter (July to September) of 2017. In total, 28 incidents, both terrorism and CT were reported in the agency, making a decline of 18 percent in violence incidents as compared to the preceding quarter of 2017. These violent incidents which occurred in Brekh Muhammad Kandao, Speenkai top, Saparay top and Sattar Kalay areas in Rajgal, and Jarobi check post of Tirah Valley, Shah Kas area of Jamrud teshil, Malikdin Khel, Malagori and Spin Qabar Chowk in Aka Khel area in Bara and Loishalman

and Ghaibi Khel-Peero Khel of Landikotal resulted in 56 casualties (39 killings and 17 injures) compared to 48 casualties (27 killings and 21 injuries) in previous quarter of 2017.

An important security development during the third quarter was the launch of military operation code named “Khyber IV” on July 16, 2017. The operation was launched to clear 250 square kilometers of the Rajgal Valley of militants belonging to various groups, including Islamic State (IS). 10 CT operations, (two aerial strikes and eight search operations), were carried in the areas as part of the operation. On August 21, 2017, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor announced the successful completion of Operation “Khyber IV”³.

Kurram Agency

The security situation in Kurram Agency, which is considered one of the most sensitive agencies of FATA due to its sectarian nature of conflict and its borders with three insurgency-stricken provinces of Afghanistan, remained disturbed during 2017.



The graph given to the left illustrates an upward trend in violent incidents and resultant casualties during first two quarters of the year 2017. Compared to 16 violent incidents, both of terrorism and counter-terrorism, 20 such incidents were recorded during the year second quarter (April to June) 2017, marking an increase of 25 percent in violent incidents. A similar but significant upward trend was observed in casualty index during the second quarter of 2017. Compared to 212 (69 killed and 143 injured), 418 (107 killed and 311 injured) were reported during the second quarter, accounting for a significant surge of 97 percent in overall casualties.

to June) 2017, marking an increase of 25 percent in violent incidents. A similar but significant upward trend was observed in casualty index during the second quarter of 2017. Compared to 212 (69 killed and 143 injured), 418 (107 killed and 311 injured) were reported during the second quarter, accounting for a significant surge of 97 percent in overall casualties.

During first and second quarter of the year 2017, Sperkat, Ghwaz Gari, Ahmadi Shaman,

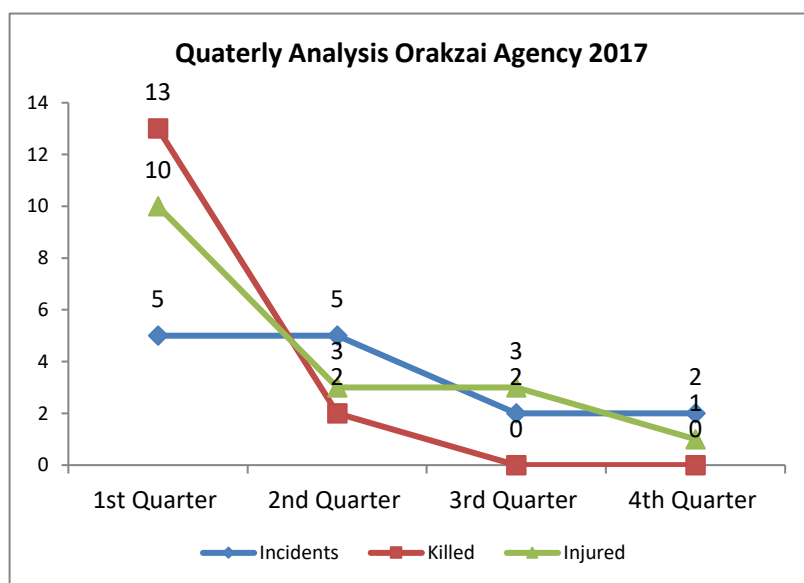
³ “Operation Khyber 4 Completed: ISPR”. The News, August 21, 2017.
<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/224980-Operation-Khyber-4-completed-effectivelyISPR>

Borki Gwanda, Khwana Kandao, Katwao kalachi area Gudar, Punjabi Bazaar and Hazara Colony in Pachinar, Mundan, Yakha, Chormi Dara areas remained the most disturbed areas of the agency.

IS-K, TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), TTP, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi-Almi on 18 occasions carried out terrorist attacks against civilians and security forces during the first six months of 2017. Four high profile attacks, claimed by IS-K were the major reason behind the high number of casualties during the first half of 2017 in the agency. However, a nose dive in violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the second half (July-December) of 2017. Compared to 36 violent incidents in the first six months on 2017, only 16 such incidents were recorded during the second half (July-December) of the year 2017, marking a remarkable decline of 55 percent in violent incidents.

Orakzai Agency

Security situation in Orakzai Agency remained relatively peaceful as compared to other agencies of Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA). With exception to the



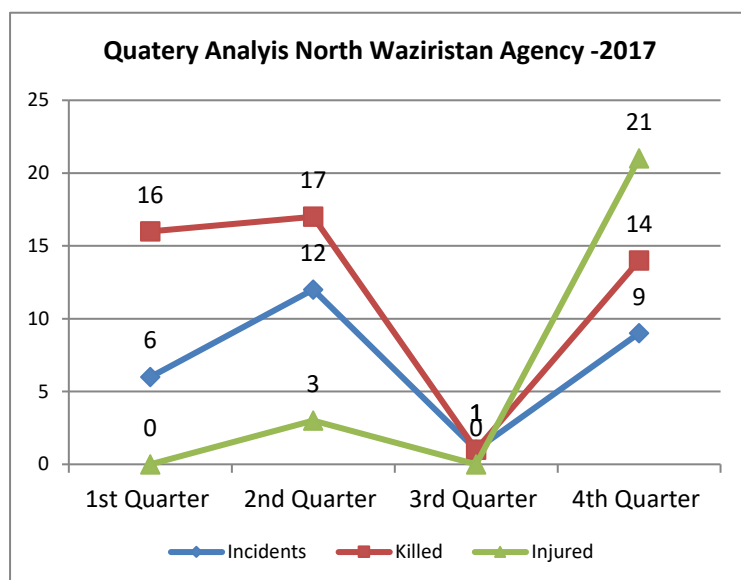
first quarter of 2017, a downward trend violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the year 2017. The graph given to the left provides an overview of the nature of incidents and resultant casualties that took place in Orakzai Agency during the year 2017.

During the first quarter (January to March) of 2017, in total, five violent incidents, both terrorism and counter-terrorism took place in the agency, which resulted in five casualties (two killings and three injuries) in Darand, Sheikhan and Uttman Khel areas of the agency. However, during the second quarter (April-June) 2017, Orakzai agency witnessed a significant decline of 360 % decline in casualty index, as compared to first quarter (January-March) 2017. In total 5 casualties (two killings and three injuries) were recorded during the second quarter as compared to 23 casualties (13 Killings and 10 injuries) during the

preceding quarter of 2017. Violent incidents and resultant casualties in Orakzai Agency further declined during second half (July-December) 2017.

North Waziristan Agency

North Waziristan Agency witnessed a downward trend both in violent incidents and resultant casualties during first quarter 2017, as compared to fourth quarter 2016. Compared to nine



violent incidents during the fourth quarter (October-December) of 2016, six such incidents reported during first quarter 2017, marking a decrease of 33% in violent incidents. Similarly, the casualty index dropped to 15% during this quarter as compared to the previous one. Dara Zinda, Shewa, Sherani, Wucha Bibi and Miran

Shah areas of the agency remained disturbed during the first three month of the year 2017. The terrorists carried out an IED attack targeting civilians in Dara Zinda area on March 16 which left three people dead. The attack also led security forces to impose curfew in the locality on 17 March 2017. Terrorists also ambushed a security check post in Shewa area of the agency on 19 March 2017, which left three security personnel dead. On the other hand, in order to countervail the terrorist activities, security forces conducted two search operations in Sherani and Miran Shah. Moreover, an aerial strike in Wucha Bibi area left ten terrorists dead who were trying to regroup their cadres in NWA.

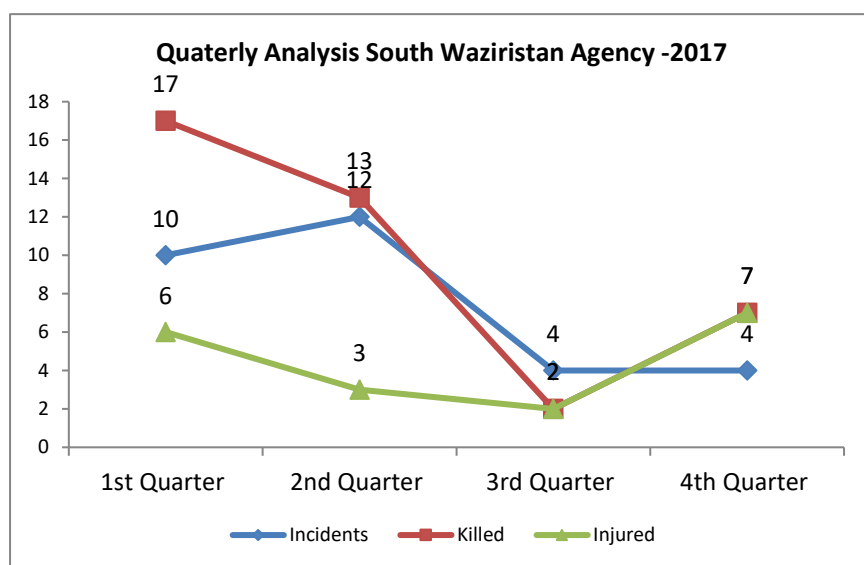
However, during the second quarter (April-June) 2017, an upward trend in violent incident and causality indexes was witnessed in NWA as compared to first quarter (January-March) 2017. Compared to six violent incidents in the first three months of the year 2017, 12 such incidents were recorded second quarter (April-June) of the reporting year, marking a surge of 50 percent in violent incidents. Similarly, the casualty index also witnessed a slight increase of 6 % during this quarter as compared to the previous one.

A significant downward trend was observed in violent incidents resultant casualties during the third quarter of 2017 in NWA. Compared to 12 violent incidents in the preceding quarter,

only one such incident was recorded during the third quarter (April-June) 2017. Conversely, again a surge in violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the last three months of the year 2017. Compared to one violent incident during the third quarter, nine such incidents were recorded during the fourth quarter (October-December) of 2017 which resulted in 35 casualties (14 killings and 21 injuries).

South Waziristan Agency

During the first quarter (January to March) 2017, the security situation in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) remained disturbed as compared to (October-December) 2016. Compared to



six violent incidents in the preceding quarter, 10 such incidents were recorded during the first quarter of 2017. A further break down of the violent incidents showed that seven were terrorist attacks and three were search operations.

During first quarter (January-March) 2017, Sararogha, Zarmilan, Angor Ada, Kotki, Mangrotai, Tor Mazdik and Wana remained the disturbed areas of the agency. The terrorists carried out two IED attacks against civilians in Sararogha and Kotki areas which left two people wounded. The civilians were also targeted by terrorists in a target killing incident in Wana which left four people killed.

On the other hand, the terrorists attacked security personnel while employing the IEDs on three occasions in Zarmilan, Angor Ada and Wana. In an IED attack, three Frontier Corps soldiers were killed when their vehicle struck an implanted explosive device in Zarmilan area; the attack was claimed by TTP. Moreover, the terrorists also ambushed a security check post in Mangrotai area leaving a soldier wounded. The terrorists associated with different factions of TTP, including that of Khan Said Sjana group, actively operated in the agency during this quarter.

During second quarter 2017, the incident index witnessed an upward trend as compared to the first quarter 2017. The incident index rose by 20% during this quarter as compared to the previous one. Conversely, the casualty index observed a decrease of 43 percent during the second quarter of 2017 as compared to preceding quarter. In total, 12 violent incidents caused 16 casualties (13 killings and three injuries during second quarter 2017, while ten such incidents resulted in 23 casualties (17 killings and six injuries) during the same time period in 2017.

Maidankai, Pangi Parikhel, Kaniguram area in Ladha tehsil, and Wana tehsil remained the disturbed areas of the agency during the second quarter of 2017. On 25 April 2017, six children were killed when a toy bomb detonated in Speenmark village of the agency. On the other hand, the terrorists attacked security personnel while employing the IEDs and cross border attacks. On May 2, 2017, three militants were killed as the security forces foiled cross border attacks on two check posts in South Waziristan Agency on Monday night. According to the ISPR, militants based in Afghanistan targeted two security check posts in South Waziristan. The security forces retaliated promptly and foiled the attacks. Three militants were killed and several injured in retaliatory firing of the security forces.

However, during third quarter 2017, the incident index witnessed a down ward trend as compared to the second quarter 2017. The incident index declined by 67 percent during the third quarter as compared to the previous one. A similar trend was observed in casualty index. The casualty index observed a significant decrease of 75 percent during the third quarter of 2017 as compared to preceding quarter.

Tangrai and Bibizai Ragzai area of Ladha tehsil, and Zara Leta area of Wana tehsil remained the most disturbed areas of the agency. On August 14, 2017, a soldier was killed when he stepped on a roadside planted IED while bringing water from a nearby tube well. Later on September 09, 2017, in another such incident a man was killed in Bibizai Ragzai area in Ladha tehsil Agency. Similarly, on September 20, 2017, one person was critically injured when an IED planted by unknown militant went off in Tangrai area of Ladha tehsil. However, a slight upward trend was observed in violent incidents and resultant casualties in South Waziristan Agency during the fourth quarter (October-December) 2017.

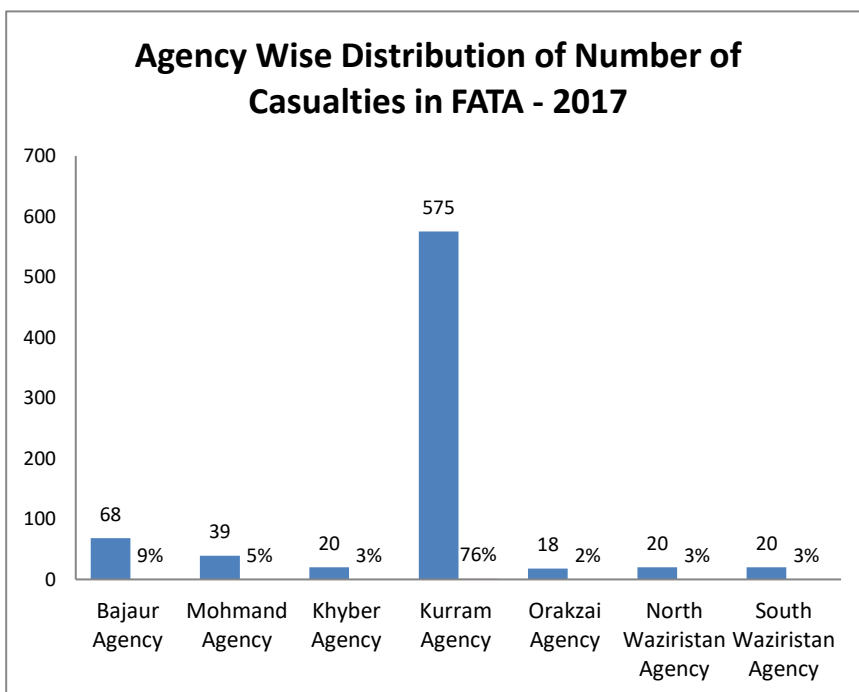
Chapter 4

Trend and Analysis - 2017

After witnessing relative calm since the launch of military operation code named “Zarb-e-Azb” in June 2014, FATA witnessed an upscale of violence during the year 2017. A total of 317 violent incidents – including 153 terrorism and 171 counter terrorism actions - were recorded during 2017, which marked a 16 percent increase in terrorism incidents, compared to the preceding year.

The civilians remained the prime target of terrorist during the year 2017. On 63 occasions terrorist targeted civilians which resulted in 760 casualties (197 killings and 563 injuries) accounting for 63 percent of the overall casualties during the year 2017.

The graph given below illustrates agency wise distribution of civilian casualties in FATA



during the year 2017.

The civilian casualties were particularly high in the Kurram Agency, which borders Nangarhar Province of Afghanistan on its west. A total of 575 civilian casualties - 138 deaths and 437 injuries - were recorded from Kurram Agency, which accounted for three-

quarters of the overall civilian casualties. Bajaur Agency remained second in terms of civilian casualties in which 18 terrorist attacks resulted in 68 civilian casualties (16 killings and 52 injuries), making up nine percent of the overall all civilian casualties.

Similarly, 39 casualties (seven killings and 32 injuries) were reported from Mohmand Agency, while South Waziristan, North Waziristan and Khyber Agencies with around 3%

each follow the list. Orakzai Agency remained the most peaceful agency with least number of civilian casualties. Only 18 civilian casualties (five killings and 13 injuries) were reported from Orkzai which accounts for two percent of the overall civilian casualties.

The main reason for the high number of civilian casualties during the year 2017 was the three high profile terrorist attacks in Kurram Agency during 2017. The improvised explosive device (IED) attacks also contributed to a high number of civilian casualties. In total 88 IED attacks were recorded during 2017.

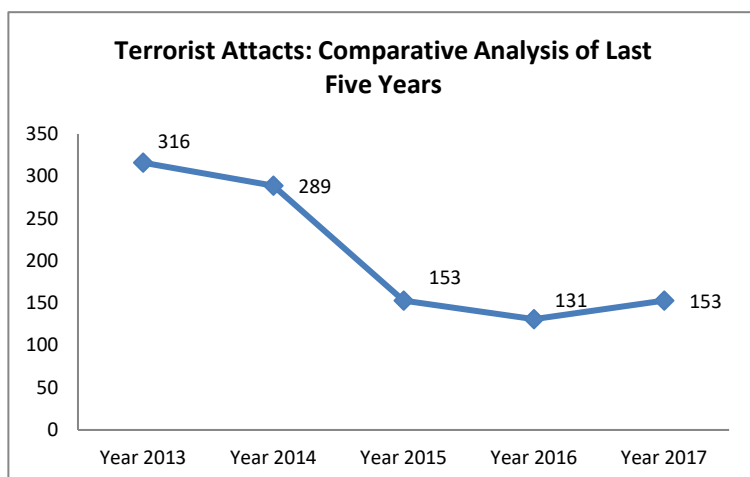
Although, majority of these IED attacks were carried out by terrorist outfits to target civilians, security forces and member of civil militias in all the seven agencies of FATA, however, a very low percentage of these IED incidents were the consequence of landmines left behind by security forces after military operations in these areas. The security forces during military operations in the tribal areas, particularly in Mahsud area of South Waziristan agency, had planted IEDs to stop militant infiltration. Prior to the repatriation of Mahsud IDPs (Internally Displaced Person), according to government authorities cleaning operation was conducted to clear those areas where IED were planted, however, landmines remained the major concern for the repatriated displaced. The growing number of IED attacks, particularly in Mahsud area of South Waziristan Agency have made life miserable for the repatriated population. Free movement is still a big challenge for displaced persons due to large number of scattered landmines.

In September 2017, the tribal elders of the South Waziristan agency held a Jirga in Tank district in which they strongly denounced the political administration for not clearing the area of landmines. They also threatened to hold a protest in front of the Parliament in Islamabad if tangible steps were not taken to address the issue of scattered landmines in FATA.⁴

⁴ "Scattered Landmines Pose Threat to Peoples Life in FATA Pose Threat to People's Lives". RadioTNN September 2017. <https://www.radiotnn.com/scattered-landmines-in-fata-pose-threat-to-tribesmens-lives/>

Comparative Analysis of Terrorist Attacks: Last Five Years

Although a surge in violent incidents and resultant casualties was observed during the year

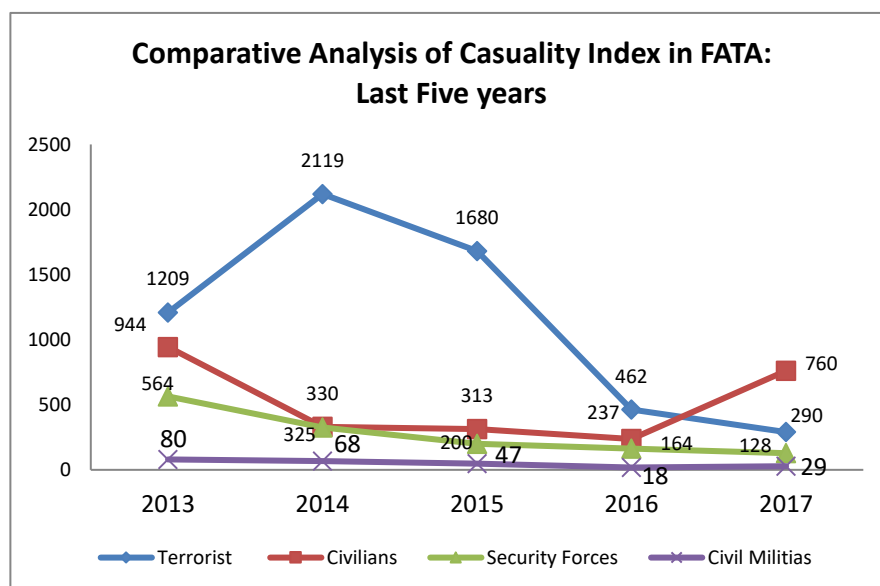


2017, the overall security situation in FATA has remarkably improvement in the tribal areas during the past four years. The graph given in the left shows that the number of terrorist attacks in FATA have witnessed a steady downward trend during the past five years

(2013-2016). Compared to 316 terrorist attacks in 2013 only 131 such attacks were recorded from January to December 2016, marking a sharp decline of 59 percent in terrorism incidents. However, there is a slight increase in 2017 compared to the preceding year.

Comparative Analysis of Number of Casualties: Last Five Years

There has been a considerable upward trend in casualties during the year 2017, which had seen a remarkable decrease from 2013 to 2016. Compared to 994 civilian casualties in 2013,



a total of 760 casualties were recorded in 2017, which is still 20 percent lower than 2013.

Similarly, casualties of security forces have also decreased considerably during the past five years. In

2013 the number of casualties of security forces stood at 564 however, in 2017 it decreased to 128, marking an incremental decline of 77 percent. A similar but steady downward trend was

also observed in the casualties related to civil militias. Compared to 80 casualties from January to December of the year 2013, only 29 casualties were reported during the year 2017, marking a significant decrease of 64 percent.

However, a mix trend was observed in terrorist casualties. After witnessing an incremental increase in the year 2014, terrorist casualties steadily declined over the past three years. In 2013 the overall militant casualties were 1,209 while in the year 2014 it increased to 2,119.

Despite the steady decline in violence the threat of resurgence of Taliban remains potent. Firstly, majority of the senior leadership of the Pakistani Taliban are still alive and they are currently stationed in Khost, Paktika, Nangarhar, Paktia, Qandarhar, Helmand, Nuristan and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan. According to FRC (FATA Research Centre) sources, with the help of hostile agencies, these terrorist outfits have regrouped and re-established their networks in the above mentioned provinces of Afghanistan.

During an in an in-depth interview with FRC Field Researcher, Ishtiaq Mahsud, Khan Said Sajna, the head of Mahsud faction of Tehreek-e-Taliban Paakistn (TTP) from an unknown location in Afghanistan asserted that they had not been ousted; rather, they had performed “Hijrat” (migration) as a tactical strategy in the wake of military operations against their group in South Waziristan Agency⁵. Responding to question regarding Pakistani government claim of “breaking terrorist backbone in Pakistan” Sajna replied *“I would say that this claim of Pakistan government is fallacious and is far from reality. Our Mujahids (fighters) are carrying out activities inside Pakistan on daily basis, and these activities indicate the presence of Taliban on Pakistani soil....However, we owing to our strategy have shifted to Afghanistan. This is what we call a tactical withdrawal. If somebody claims that Taliban have been ousted from Pakistani soil, he must realize that this necessary tactical retreat is what our religion calls “Hijrat” and “Hijrat” has been practiced by our Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) and his companions long before our time. The history has witnessed that Muslims have always defeated their enemies whenever they have performed “Hijrat”*⁶.

Although the chances of re-emergence of Mahsud Taliban in South Waziristan are meager, nonetheless, it illustrates the resolve and determination of these terrorist groups to challenge the writ of state in FATA in post military operation context. Already during the year 2017,

⁵ Sajna, Khan Saeed. Interview by Ishtiaq Mahsud. *FATA Research Cente*. 2017

⁶ Ibid.

the terrorists affiliated with TTP attempted to regroup and re-establish their network in Wucha Bibi area of North Waziristan Agency; however, security forces cleared the area by conducting aerial strikes. According to military sources, a number of TTP terrorist were killed while their hideouts were destroyed in the operation.

Secondly, amid the regrouping of Pakistani Taliban in Afghanistan, the growing cooperation between these terrorist outfits has further compounded the threat. Although, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Islam (LI), and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Jamat-ul-Ahrar (TTP-JuA) were already cooperating for conducting terrorist activities inside FATA, with the rejoining of Khan Saeed group of Mahsud Taliban with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the growing tactical cooperation of some of the factions of TTP with Islamic State of Khorasn (IS-K), the operational capacity of these terrorist outfits has increased by many folds, particularly in areas close to the Afghan border. A breakdown of terrorist attacks in FATA during the year 2017 also reveals that majority of these attacks took place in areas close to the Afghan border.

Major Actors of Instability in FATA

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), Khan Said and Hakeemullah group of Mahsud Taliban, Wazir Taliban, Haqqani Network, Lask-e-Jhangvi Almi and TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar remained the major actor of instability during the year 2017. These terrorist groups currently based in Afghanistan by forming new alliances and re-invigorating the old ones were managed to carry out terrorist attacks against security forces, civilians and member of Amn Lashkar from January to December 2017.

TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar

TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar (TTP-JuA), remained the most virulent and dominant group during 2017. The group remained active in Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand and Bajaur Agencies of FATA region. The TTP-Jamaat-ul-Ahrar in 2017 announced “Operation Ghazi.” As part of the Operation Ghazi and with close coordination with Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), the group conducted high profile, coordinated and complex attacks, in Kurram, Khyber and Mohmand agencies, particularly during the first nine months (January-October) of 2017.

On 31 March 2017, Jamat-ul-Ahrar claimed responsibility for a high profile terrorist attack on “Imambargah” (Shitte Mosque) in Shendak bazar in Parachinar of Kurram Agency in

which 22 people were killed while 100 others were injured⁷. Earlier, TTP-JuA also claimed responsibility for a terrorist attack on 15 February 2017, in which two suicide bombers who tried to forcefully enter the office of political administration, were intercepted and killed by the security personnel. However, three security personnel were killed while a suicide vest of an assailant exploded following the retaliatory firing by security forces⁸.

The group also employed improvised explosive device (IED), cross border attacks and ambushes as tactics to target civilians, security forces and members of civil militias, particularly in areas bordering Afghanistan. On 17 March 2017, in a cross border attack, two Pakistani soldiers lost their lives while the six terrorists were killed when a terrorist belonging to TTP-JuA attacked on the Pakistan military border post in Khyber Agency⁹. An IED attack against security forces was carried out in Daudzai area which left three security personnel and eight civilians wounded¹⁰.

Growing Rifts and Divisions in TTP-JuA: Impact on Security Situation in FATA

Although TTP-JuA remained the most dominant terrorist outfit during the first half of 2017, however, the influence of the group degraded significantly towards the end of the outgoing year. According to FRC field researchers, divisions and rifts are on the rise in the TTP-JuA over the future policies of the group since early 2017. On 17 April 2017, Ehsanullah Ehsan, former spokesperson and a prominent leader of TTP-JuA surrendered to the Pakistan Army¹¹. Earlier on April 05, 2017, eight hard-core terrorists from the same group laid down their arms and surrendered to the Pakistan Army in Boideh areas of Mohmand Agency¹².

The divisions and rifts among ranks of TTP-JuA further widened after Omar Khalid Khorasani, head of TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar was critically injured in a US drone strike in Afghanistan. Although Khalid Khorasani survived the US drone attack, he is believed to be ill and incapacitated. Therefore, Dost Mohammad Afridi alias Asad Afridi, was named as the new Amir (leader) of the group¹³. Afridi belongs to the Zakakhel tribe of Khyber Agency and was

⁷ "22 killed in explosion outside imambargah in Parachinar market". Dawn. March 31, 2017.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323973>

⁸ FATA Research Centre. "FATA Security Report First Quarter 2017". Islamabad. 2017

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Former TTP spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan has turned himself in: Pak Army". Dawn. April 17, 2017.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327567>

¹² "Eight JuA members surrender in Mohmand Agency: ISPR". The Nation. April 04, 2017.

<https://nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2017/eight-jua-members-surrender-in-mohmand-agency-ispr>

¹³ "Dost to head militant group amid Khorasani death reports". Dawn. October, 2017.

earlier the deputy of TTP-JuA. Since majority of TTP-JuA fighters come from Mohmand Agency, it is very unlikely that majority of the group's senior commanders and foot soldiers would accept Afridi as their new Amer (leader). Resultantly, it will further intensify the existing rifts among the ranks of TTP-JuA.

On 12th November 2017, Mukharam Khan, senior commander of TTP-JuA, along with the several key commanders of the group's Shura formed their own group. Similarly, on 14th November 2017, Abdur Rauf, an important commander and cousin of Khorasani was killed after he decided to surrendered to Pakistani security forces¹⁴. Earlier, in a video, Mukaram claimed that he had been attacked and injured, confirming the growing rifts within the group¹⁵.

Mahsud and Wazir Taliban in South Waziristan Agency

Khan Said Group and Hakeemullah Group of Mahsud Taliban remained active in Mahsud area of South Waziristan Agency while Wazir Taliban (Pro-government Civil Militia) was reported to be operating in Wanna area of the agency. The terrorists belonging to the above mentioned groups carried out several IED attacks against civilians and security forces during reporting year.

On 13th February 2017, three Frontier Corps soldiers were killed when their vehicle struck an implanted explosive device in Toikhola area of the agency¹⁶. The terrorists associated with different factions of TTP, including that of Khan Said alias Sajna group, actively operated in the agency during the year 2017. While on 31 March 2017, a high-ranking terrorist commander Mahmoodul Hassan aka Khwaja Muhammad, associated with Khan Said Sajna faction of TTP, was killed during an intelligence based operation in Tor Mazdik area of SWA¹⁷ which is also indicative of presence of high profile commanders of the group in Mahsud area of the agency.

Although Wazir Taliban are considered as pro-government civil militia, comprised of 120 elders of Ahmadzai tribe, according to reports since signing of peace accord with government

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364933>

¹⁴ "Khorasani's cousin Rauf killed in Afghanistan, says police". The Express Tribune. December 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1590080/1-khorasanis-cousin-rauf-killed-afghanistan-says-police/>

¹⁵ ibd.

¹⁶ "Three FC Personal Killed in South Waziristan IED Explosion". The Express Tribune. February 13, 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1325200/three-injured-south-waziristan-ied-explosion/>

¹⁷ "TTP's High Profile Commander Killed in Army Action in South Waziristan". FATA Research Centre. March 31, 2017. <https://frc.org.pk/breaking/tpps-high-profile-commander-killed-in-army-action-in-south-waziristan/>

authorities in 2007, have been helping the security forces in fighting the TTP and other local and foreign terrorist groups previously operational in Wazir area of South Waziristan Agency. However, on May 23, 2017, member of Wazir Taliban abducted Azizullah, President of Awami National Party (ANP) from Wana tehsil of South Waziristan Agency¹⁸. Later, on 15 November 2017, the same group placed a ban on cultural and social activities and put restrictions on movement of women outside their homes without male members of their family¹⁹.

According to news reports, the so-called peace committee issued tough guidelines through pamphlets in Wana town and warned local people to abide by these rules otherwise violators would face repercussions, according to sources²⁰. Right after the incident, the human right commission of Pakistan (HRCP) expressed serious concern over the incident and called upon the relevant government authorities to take tangible action against the Talibanization in the South Waziristan Agency²¹. However, the re-emergence of Wazir Taliban in the area was rejected by the elders of Ahmadzai Wazir tribe. During a press conference on 18 November 2017, elders, political representatives and other notables not only denied the resurgence of Taliban in the area but also invited media to visit the area to witness the peace in the agency²².

Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) and other Affiliated Terrorist Groups

Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Lashkar-e-Islam (LI) with limited operational capacity also showed their presence by conducting terrorist activities, particularly in areas close to Afghan border in Kurram and Khyber Agencies of the FATA region. Although Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), currently based in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, has very limited operational capacity in the tribal areas of Pakistan, the threats of IS-K has exacerbated by many folds with its growing influence and operational capacity inside Afghanistan. Likewise, on January 21, 2017, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) claimed responsibility for terrorist attack in Parachinar area of Kurram Agency in which 25 people

¹⁸ "Security Situation in South Waziristan Deteriorates". The News. April 27, 2017.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/201006-Security-situation-in-South-Waziristan-deteriorates>

¹⁹ "Re-emergence of Taliban in South Waziristan Agency Denied". The Express Tribune. November 18, 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1561576/1-re-emergence-taliban-south-waziristan-denied/>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "HRCP's alarm over attempt towards the revival of Talibanisation of South Waziristan". HRCP. November 21, 2017. <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/hrcps-alarm-over-attempt-towards-the-revival-of-talibanisation-of-south-waziristan/>

²² "South Waziristan elders rubbish reports of reemergence of Taliban in Wana". Khyber News. November 17, 2017 <http://khybernews.tv/south-waziristan-elders-rubbish-reports-of-reemergence-of-taliban-in-wana/>

were killed while more than 87 were injured²³. TTP-JuA also claimed responsibility for the IED attack which signifies the growing tactical cooperation between these groups²⁴.

Regional Security Implications of the Growing Influence of IS-K in Afghanistan

In the backdrop of resurgence of Afghan Taliban and weakening of the National Unity Government in Afghanistan (NUG), the growing control, influence and operational capacity of Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) in Afghanistan during the year 2017 has not only complicated the situation of conflict inside Afghanistan but has significantly escalated the threat of the IS-K to regional peace and security by many folds.

Prior to 2016, Achin, Kot, Nazyar and Chapahar districts of the volatile Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, which borders the tribal areas of Pakistan, was the primary stronghold of the group in the country. According to the Afghan President Dr. Ashraf Ghani, the intensive operations conducted by Afghanistan's security forces, with the help of U.S. and NATO ground and air support against IS-K have significantly weakened the group and the network is on the run²⁵.

On 13 April 2017, 82 terrorist affiliated with IS-K were killed when the United States military dropped its most powerful conventional bomb, referred to as "mother of all bombs" on caves used by Islamic State-K in Achin district of Nangarhar province of Afghanistan²⁶. The strike was a part of the ongoing military operation against IS-K and targeted a set of mountain tunnels in the Achin district, the primary stronghold of the IS-K in the region. Later, on 24 August 2017, General John Nicholson also claimed that the IS-K influence has been degraded in the ongoing military operation against the group. However, the facts on ground largely invalidate these claims as in the year 2017, after braving the government operations and surviving Taliban onslaughts, IS-K has not only been able to regain the lost territories in Nangarhar but has further spread its tentacles and wrest more territories in the country's northern and eastern provinces during the year 2017.

²³ "Over 20 Killed in Parachinar Blast". The Express Tribune". January 21, 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1302381/six-dead-20-injured-parachinar-blast/>

²⁴ "Over 20 Killed in Parachinar Blast". The Express Tribune. January 21, 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1302381/six-dead-20-injured-parachinar-blast/> .

²⁵ "Head of Islamic State in Afghanistan killed". The Express Tribune. 2017.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1403910/head-islamic-state-afghanistan-killed/>

²⁶ "US releases of footage of 'Mother of All Bombs' dropped on ISIS in Afghanistan". Khaama. April 14, 2017.

<https://www.khaama.com/us-releases-of-footage-of-mother-of-all-bombs-dropped-on-isis-in-afghanistan-02567>

Furthermore, according to FRC field researcher Ishtiaq Mahsud, IS-K has established new bases in Jawzjan, Faryab, Balkh, Kunduz, Takar, Badkshshan, Nuristan, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Khosht and Paktika provinces of Afghanistan. “To further entrench its network in these areas IS-K is offering 1,000 US dollars for fresh recruits and disgruntled Taliban fighters, particularly in areas close to the North Waziristan, Kurram and Khyber Agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA)”, says Mahsud. The arrival of huge number of the group’s fighters from Iraq will further help IS-K in buttressing its network and intensifying its activities in region.

The growing influence of IS-K in the above mentioned provinces can not only jeopardize the already fragile security situation in Afghanistan but can also trigger a massive wave of terrorism in Pakistan, China and other Asia countries. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan are in particular more vulnerable to IS-K threat. Already the group has claimed responsibility for several high profile, complex and coordinated attacks in FATA and other parts of Pakistan. On 7 April 2017, the political administration of Kurram Agency, which borders the Nangarhar provinces of Afghanistan, issued a `red alert` and beefed up security in the agency after receiving reports that suicide bombers and fighters of the militant Islamic State group had sneaked into Kurram Agency from across the Afghan border²⁷. Later on 24 June 2017, the same group claimed responsibility for a high profile attack in Parachinar in which 45 people belong to Shia community were killed while 110 others were injured²⁸.

Despite intensive operation by Afghan security forces and US-led NATO forces against the group, the increasing influence of IS-K in the country’s east and north have raised serious questions on the military operation conducted by US-led NATO forces and NUG the group inside Afghanistan. On 19th April 2017, the former Afghan president Hamid Karzai accused United States of financing and supporting the IS-K network by transporting plane loads of the group’s activists to the country’s eastern provinces²⁹. Now more political leaders, jihadi commanders and political analysts have joined the former president and questioning the role of the US-led NATO forces and the NUG in IS-K emergence and expansion inside

²⁷ “Red Alert in Kurram Tribal Region”. Dawn. April 07, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1325386>

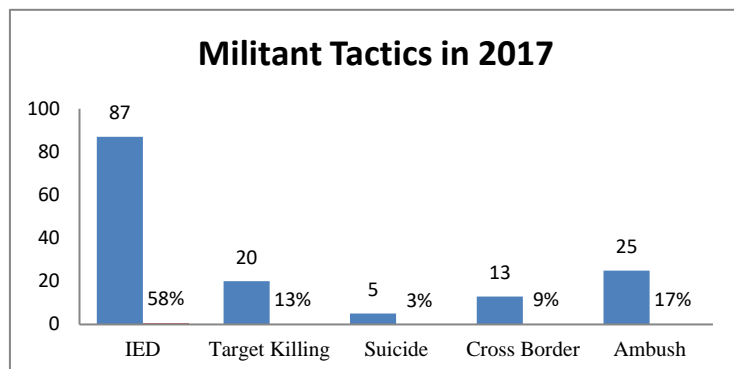
²⁸ “45 Shoppers killed in Parachinar Twin Blasts”. The Nation. June 24, 2017. <https://nation.com.pk/24-Jun-2017/45-shoppers-killed-in-twin-parachinar-blasts>

²⁹ “Former Afghan President Call IS-K a Tool of US”. Voice of America. April 19, 2017. <https://www.voanews.com/a/former-afghan-president-hamid-karzai-callms-islamic-state-tool-us/3817463.html>

Afghanistan.

Militants Tactics in 2017

During the year 2017, IEDs remained the most preferred tool of terrorists for carrying out



attacks against civilians and security forces. On 87 occasions, terrorists employed IEDs to target civilians, member of security forces and civil militias, which accounts for 58 % of total terror attacks during this year. On 25

occasions, terrorists ambushed security forces which account for 17 % of the total terror attacks. On 20 occasions, terrorists opted for target killing which accounts for 13 % of the total terrorist attacks. The terrorists also staged cross border attacks to target security check posts on three occasions. In total 13 cross border attacks were recorded in which terrorist belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), IS-K, TTP-Jamt-ul-Ahrar etc targeted security forces and civilians Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand and Bajaur agencies of FATA.

Counterterrorism Measures: Impact on Security Situation in FATA

Military Operation “Rad-ul-Fasad

In the backdrop of resurgence of terrorist activities, security forces in February 2017 launched military operation code named “Radd-ul-Fasaad” meaning “elimination of discord” across the country. According to ISPR (Inter Service Public Relation), the mouth piece of Pakistan Army, the main aim of the operation is to indiscriminately eliminate the "residual/latent threat of terrorism", consolidating the gains made in other military operations, and further ensuring the security of Pakistan's borders³⁰.

As a part of operation “Rad-ul-Fasad” to counter the growing activities of terrorist outfits, particularly during the first six months of 2017, security forces stepped up counter terrorism activities across FATA. In total 164 counter terrorism operations (136 search operations, 12 aerial strikes and 17 curfews) were carried out in all the seven agencies of FATA. In these counter terrorism offenses security forces claimed to have killed 268 terrorist and destroyed

³⁰ “Press Release-87/2017”. Inter Services Public Relation. February 22, 2017.

https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&cat=army&date=2017/2/22

hideouts of terrorist belonging to Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K), Lashkar-e-Islam, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar across FATA.

The high number of militant casualties on one hand signifies the effectiveness of counter terrorism operations while on the other hand it is indicative of presence of terrorist's sleeping cells and hideout across FATA. The presence of sleeping cells and training camps is also obvious from the growing number of high profile and coordinated attacks across FATA. Given their near simultaneous occurrence and geographical spread it is clear that a lot of planning and coordination went into them. These sleeping sells and training camps provide logistic support to terrorist groups currently based in Nangarhar, Khost, Paktika, Paktia, Helmand, Qandahar and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan to carry out terrorist incidents inside Pakistan.

Operation Khyber IV

To counter the growing terrorism and to deny space to Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K) in Khyber Agency, Pakistan Army on 16 July 2017 launched a full-fledged military operation code named “Khyber IV” in Rajgal area of Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency³¹. According to ISPR, security forces launched the operation “Khyber IV” to clear 250 square kilometers in the Rajgal Valley of militants belonging to Tehreek-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Laskar-e-Islam (LI), TTP-Jamat-ul-Ahrar and Islamic State of Khorasan (IS-K).

The area is considered as the last hideout of terrorists in Khyber Agency. On August 21, 2017, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor announced the successful completion of Operation “Khyber IV”. While brief the press, Mr. Gafoor said that in over a month-long campaign supported by Pakistan Air Force, the army gained full control of the Valley that shares border with Afghanistan’s Nangarhar province, known as a hotbed of Islamic State of Khorasan³².

On September 02 Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Khyber Agency where he was briefed that 90 percent of the objectives of military operation “Khyber IV” were achieved. According to ISPR, security forces, including personnel of Special Services Group, backed by heavy artillery and air force took control of Kanduh Gharebai,

³¹ “Army Launches Operation Khyber 4 in Rajgal Valley”. Dawn. July 16, 2017.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345690>

³² “Operation Khyber 4 Completed: ISPR”. The News. August 21, 2017.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/224980-Operation-Khyber-4-completed-effectivelyISPR>

Sattar Kalay and Speena Norga hilltops from the Kurram Agency side. They also established their trenches and security posts in Brekh Muhammad Kandaw, Sattu Kandaw and Thora Teega areas in the volatile valley. According to military sources with effective control of Brekh Muhammad 20 Kandaw and Thora Teega, security forces had plugged the entry of the terrorist from Afghanistan into Pakistani territory. Previously, the terrorist had been secretly using Kandu Gharebai and Sattar Kalay routes while crossing the border from Speena Murga height from the Kurram Agency side to carry out terrorist activities inside Pakistan.

Rah-e-Nijat

Pakistan Army since 2009 has been conducting military operation code named “Rah-e-Nijat” in Mahsud area of South Waziristan Agency. As a result of the military operation around 107,091 families; majority of them from the Mahsud tribe were displaced³³. Most of the IDPs were living in host areas where they rent houses or are staying with relatives and extended families in DI Khan, Tank, Peshawar and Kohat. Between 2010 and 2015, a number of organized and spontaneous returns took place³⁴. As a result, a total of 47,081 registered families remained displaced on 31 January 2016. After clearing the area from the terrorist, the remaining IDPs were repatriated to their ancestral lands.

In the post repatriation period, although search operations as part of Rah-e-Nijat are regularly conducted in the agency, however, a full-fledged operation in the first week of November 2017 in Shaktoai area in South Waziristan Agency. The operation was conducted in Bobar, Smull and Krashti villages of the Mahsud inhabited Shaktoai area of the agency³⁵. As a result around 200 families, largely women and children were forced to leave their area and were directed by government authorities to take refuge in Bakakhel IDP camp³⁶. Forced to vacate their villages in extremely short notice, the displaced person from Shaktoai had to walk for several days through the rugged and mountains to reach the IDP camp.

³³ FATA Research Centre. “Crisis of IDPs in FATA: Issues, Challenges and way forward”. Islamabad. FATA Research Centre. 2014. <http://frc.org.pk/reports/crisis-of-idps-in-fata-issues-challenges-and-way-forward/>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Over 200 Families Displaced As Military Operation Launched In Shaktoai”. Radio TNN. November 08, 2017. <https://www.radiotnn.com/over-200-families-displaced-as-military-operation-launched-in-shaktoai/>

³⁶ Ibid

Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

To avoid the consequences of intensive military operations majority of the terrorist groups shifted to Afghanistan while others were either killed or surrendered to Pakistan Army. According to FATA Research Centre data base on terrorism, more than six senior commanders of Shehryar group of Mahsud Taliban of TTP along more than 1200 mid-level commanders and fighters surrendered to Pakistan Army during the past one year. In April 05, 2017, eight hard-core terrorist belonging to Jamat-ul-Ahrar also laid down their arms and surrendered to Pakistan Army in Boeideh areas of Mohmand Agency. Similarly, Ehsan Ullah Ehsan, the spokesperson of TTP-Jammat-ul-Ahrar also surrendered to Pakistan Army in 2017. Three important commanders of Hafiz Gulbadar group of North Waziristan Agency along with hundreds of fighters also surrendered to security forces from November to December 2017.

The surrender of these commanders along with their fighters is without any doubt an important achievement in degrading the influence and operational capacity of terrorist outfits in FATA and signifies the effectiveness of counter terrorism operations. However, there are serious questions marks on the model of reintegration adopted by security forces to re-integrate the ex-combatants back into the society. The unannounced policy of re-integration of terrorist was criticized by several senators during a meeting of the Senate's Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics. Senator Maulana Saleh Shah of JUI-F who belongs to South Waziristan Agency for instance said that rather than disarming, demobilizing and then re-integrating the surrendered hardcore Taliban fighters, who previous fought the government and killed thousands of innocents civilians, are allowed to regroup and form pro-government militias³⁷. Like, the Wazir Taliban, Wana based pro-government group, the surrendered terrorists, who previously fought the government and killed civilians, are now helping security forces and local administration in fighting anti-state elements in the area.

This approach is although effective in short run for it will encourage others members of Pakistani Taliban currently taking refuge in Afghanistan to give up arms and surrendered to security forces. For instance, Ehsanullah Ehsan, the former spokesperson of TTP-Jammat-ul-Ahrar, who has recently surrendered to Pakistan Army, revealed that many fighters in Taliban ranks are willing to give up their arms and surrender to security forces. Similarly, the ISPR

³⁷ "TTP splinter groups 'allowed' opening offices in KP". The Nation. May 23, 2017. <https://nation.com.pk/23-May-2017/ttp-splinter-groups-allowed-opening-offices-in-kp>

chief, during a press conference considered it as a major achievement and said it will help restoring the writ of state in FATA region as hardcore Taliban commanders have now realized that they are on the wrong side and surrendering to the security forces. This is indicative of the success of military operation in weakening the terrorist networks in FATA region.

However in long run the re-integration of former Taliban fighters without disarming and demobilizing will not only lead to militarization of the society but will further intensify the existing level of militancy and extremism in the FATA region. Already, during 2017, a number of terrorist incidents came to surface where these pro-government groups were involved. For instance, on May 23, 2017, member of Wazir Taliban, a so called pro-government civil militia, abducted Azizullah, President of Awami National Party (ANP) from Wana tehsil of South Waziristan Agency³⁸. Later, on 15 November 2017, the same group placed a ban on cultural and social activities and put restrictions on movement of women outside their homes without male members of their family. In another such incident on May 28, 2017, two people were killed while one other was injured when fierce armed clash erupted between two rival factions of Tauheedul-Islam, a pro-government militia in Zakakhel area of Khyber Agency. Following exchange of fire between two factions in the Tauheed-ul-Islam, the Ameer (leader) of the outfit was been replaced and Haji Baraat Khan was nominated as the new Ameer (leader) of the group³⁹. The incidents signify the growing threat these pro-government groups can pose to the already fragile state of security situation in the FATA region.

Fencing the Pak-Afghan Border

Due to the porous nature of the Pak-Afghan border, the Pakistani Taliban currently based in Afghanistan with help of local sympathizers stepped up terrorist activities against civilians and security forces by infiltrating into the tribal areas and via cross border attacks during the year 2017. On May 19, 2017, Lieutenant Colonel Haroon while briefing Peshawar-based journalists in Miramshah, blamed Afghan government for facilitating Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Khan Said Group of Mahsud Taliban and Islamic State of Khorasan in establishing training camps in Parchow area in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan⁴⁰. From these training

³⁸ FATA Research Centre, "FATA Security Report Second Quarter 2017". Islamabad. 2017. <http://frc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/FRC-book.pdf>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

camps terrorist groups are able to plan and carry out terrorist activities inside Pakistan. According to FRC data base, between January to December 2017, terrorists based in Afghanistan carried out 19 cross border attacks in FATA region.

Besides, after regrouping inside Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban are also carrying out high profile and complex attacks by infiltrating inside Pakistan with the help of local sympathizers. Therefore, to combat the growing threat of terrorist groups based in Afghanistan, the fencing of 2, 611 km long and porous border was started at the end of April 2017.

This is a huge challenge for Pakistan as it requires enormous resources, manpower and above all the mutual consensus over terms of both neighboring countries. So far the government has allocated Rs12 billion for the fencing and border management of Pak-Afghan border. According to the ISPR the fencing will be done in phases and already in the first phase 50 of the 237 km long high infiltration zone in Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber agencies has been completed while in the second phase, fencing of the remaining border areas in KP and Balochistan will be done⁴¹.

Besides fencing, Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps in KP were also constructing new forts and border posts to improve surveillance and defensibility. So far more than 43 border posts and forts have been constructed, whereas another 63 are under construction. The army plans to build another 338 border posts and forts by 2019⁴².

⁴¹ FATA Research Centre, "FATA Security Report Second Quarter 2017". Islamabad. July 2017.
<http://frc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/FRC-book.pdf>

⁴² Ibid.

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