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COI QUERY RESPONSE

PAKISTAN - INFORMATION ON THE TPP TALIBAN GROUP IN PAKISTAN; THE ESTABLISHMENT ARRESTS OF MEMBERS OF THE TPP GROUP IN PAKISTAN; THE TPP TALIBAN GROUP IN PAKISTAN TREATMENT OF CIVILIANS

In October 2024 *ABC News* points out that: “Pakistani security forces killed nine insurgents in a shootout overnight in a former stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban in the volatile northwestern region that borders Afghanistan, the military said Thursday. Troops also seized weapons and ammunition from the insurgents’ hideout after the shootout in Bajur, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The military’s statement provided no details about the slain militants, including their affiliation.”¹ The document further notes that: “However, such operations often target the Pakistani Taliban, who are known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP. Bajur was a base for the militants until many were killed or forced out in multiple operations by security forces. The TTP are a separate group but a close ally of the Afghan Taliban, who seized power in neighboring Afghanistan in 2021. The Taliban takeover next door has emboldened the Pakistani Taliban who have stepped up attacks on Pakistani forces.”²

In October 2024 *Pakistan Today* notes that: “The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) investigation unit has arrested three suspected operatives of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) linked to the killing of a police officer in Karachi.”³

¹ ABC News (24 October 2024) Pakistani security forces kill 9 militants in a raid in the restive northwest near Afghanistan

² ibid

³ Pakistan Today (21 October 2024) CTD arrests three TTP operatives linked to police officer's murder in Karachi

The *Human Rights Council of Balochistan* in October 2024 mentioned that: “On 07 September, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) engaged five members of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in an operation, resulting in their deaths.” [...]”⁴

The *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in September 2024 notes that: “The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) extremist group has regained a foothold in northwestern Pakistan, imposing its brutal rule on hundreds of thousands of people. Those who live under the TTP say the hard-line Islamist group has severely curbed freedoms and rights, including those of women. Assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, and harassment dominate daily life in some areas, they say. The TTP was ousted from its bases by a major Pakistani military offensive in 2014. But in recent years it has reestablished its control in pockets of Pakistan's northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where it is currently active in 10 of the 34 districts. The TTP often rules during the night. After dark, government forces frequently retreat to their posts and bases, and many civilians refuse to venture outside for fear of the militants, locals say.”⁵ The same document mentioned that: “The return of the TTP to the region has triggered an exodus that has seen thousands of professionals, businesspeople, and wealthy landowners flee the region. “No one is safe, and no place is immune from their presence,” said Humayun Mehsud, who recently fled the district of South Waziristan. “They have returned in strength.” Mehsud said he escaped his village after the TTP, also known as the Pakistani Taliban, kidnapped and killed his brother, a government worker. Mehsud, who now lives in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, said the TTP has established its own government in South Waziristan, which is home to around 900,000 people. The militants, he said, control the local economy and have established makeshift courts to settle disputes among locals.”⁶

This document also points out that: “The TTP has imposed its extremist version of Islam in areas they control, locals say. Listening to or playing music is banned. Barbers are barred from shaving or trimming men's beards. Some girls' schools have been shut or destroyed and restrictions have been placed on women leaving their homes in some areas. “They want to limit our lives here the same way the Afghan Taliban did in their country,” said Saleem, a resident of the district of Lakki Marwat. The TTP and Afghan Taliban have close ideological and organizational ties. Pakistan has accused the Afghan Taliban, which seized power in 2021, of sheltering the Pakistani militants. Saleem, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, said the TTP has replaced the local authorities in Lakki Marwat, which is home to around 1 million people. The police, he said, have abandoned their posts after coming under constant TTP attacks and locals are fleeing by their thousands. Mohsin Tabeer Khan, a political activist and former university lecturer, is among those who have stayed in Lakki Marwat. Critical of the TTP, he has received threats from the militant group. The atmosphere of fear is pervasive,” said Khan. “Everyone locks themselves up after sunset.” Khan said the TTP has targeted local government workers and security personnel in the district. “If they catch you carrying a government ID card, you have to worry about your life,” he said. Abubakar Kurmiwal said the TTP has recently made inroads in the district of Kurram. He said the TTP on August 14 kidnapped his cousin,

⁴ Human Rights Council of Balochistan (10 October 2024) Balochistan: 52 killed, 43 disappeared in September 2024

⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (10 September 2024) 'No One Is Safe': Life Under The Rule Of The Pakistani Taliban

⁶ ibid

who was accused of being a government spy. Four days later, his body was found on the side of the road, he said.”⁷

In September 2024 the *Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)* states that: “As many as 29 terrorist attacks took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claiming 25 lives and wounding 80 others. The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, Lashkar-e-Islam, Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) and few local Taliban groups were reportedly involved in these attacks.”⁸

The *South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR) of the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)* in August 2024 reported that: “On April 27, 2024, a judge of the South Waziristan District, Shakirullah Marwat, was abducted by terrorists from the Garah Mohabaat Adda area under Hathla Police Station in Kulachi *tehsil* (revenue unit) of Dera Ismail Khan District in KP. Later, in a video clip he was heard saying that he was abducted by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and his release was only possible if the militants' demands were accepted. On April 28, however, the Dera Ismail Khan Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) stated that the abductee reached home safely after being released 'unconditionally'.”⁹

Another document from the *South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR) of the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)* in August 2024 points out that: “UNSC report highlights TTP-Afghan Taliban collaboration in Pakistan attacks: A new United Nations Security Council (UNSC) report has highlighted the severe threat to Pakistan's security from the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), noting increased collaboration between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban in cross-border terrorist attacks, primarily targeting Pakistani military posts. "With Taliban acquiescence, and at times support, TTP has intensified attacks inside Pakistan primarily targeting military installations," said the report from the UNSC's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIL (Daish), Al-Qaeda and associate groups. The Express Tribune, August 1, 2024.”¹⁰

In July 2024 *Voice of America News* reported that: “Authorities in northwestern Pakistan said Monday that a suicide bomber drove an explosive-laden vehicle into a military compound, followed by several armed insurgents storming it, resulting in the death of at least three soldiers and injuries to 12 others.”¹¹ The same document further states that: “A spokesperson from the military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), told VOA they are waiting for further details. Militants linked to the globally designated terrorist group, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP, took responsibility for staging Monday's assault. Bannu and surrounding districts have routinely experienced TTP attacks, mostly targeting military and police forces. Pakistan maintains TTP leaders and fighters orchestrated the violence from their sanctuaries on Afghan soil and are being increasingly facilitated by the neighboring country's Taliban government.”¹² This document also mentioned that: “TTP, also known

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) (2 September 2024) Balochistan plunges into terrorist violence in August 2024

⁹ South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR) of the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) (19 August 2024) Pakistan - Judiciary: Justice in Terror

¹⁰ South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR) of the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) (5 August 2024) At least 1,215 Pakistanis killed in more than 2,000 terrorism incidents in 16 months, Federal Ministry of Interior inform National Assembly

¹¹ Voice of America News (15 July 2024) 3 killed in car bomb-and-gun attack on Pakistan military compound

¹² *ibid*

as the Pakistani Taliban, is known to have publicly pledged allegiance to Afghanistan's Taliban leaders. It has provided shelter and recruited for the Afghan Taliban to help them wage insurgent attacks against the U.S.-led NATO troops for years until U.S. and international forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. A new United Nations report released earlier this month described TTP as "the largest terrorist group" operating in Afghanistan and noted it had intensified its terrorist activities in Pakistan since the return of the Taliban to power in Kabul three years ago. "TTP continues to operate at a significant scale in Afghanistan and to conduct terrorist operations into Pakistan from there, often utilizing Afghans," said the report by the U.N. sanctions monitoring team. It estimated that TTP had "6,000-6,500" fighters based in Afghan territory. "Further, the Taliban have proved unable or unwilling to manage the threat from Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan...Taliban support to TTP also appears to have increased," the U.N. report stated. "The Taliban do not conceive of TTP as a terrorist group: the bonds are close, and the debt owed to TTP is significant," the report added."¹³

The *Financial Daily* in July 2024 mentioned that: "The CounterTerrorism Department (CTD) has arrested Hidayatullah alias "Abdul Hakeem", a member of a banned Tehreek E Taliban (TTP) organisation, during an operation in the site area of Karachi. CTD spokesperson stated that the arrested terrorist is affiliated with the TTP's Swat faction and was involved in fundraising for the terrorist group. The CTD reported that Hidayatullah was apprehended along with 6,000 rupees in donation funds."¹⁴ The same document further states that: "Previously, CTD of Sindh Police claimed on July 10 that they have arrested a commander of the banned Tehreek-eTaliban Pakistan (TTP) during a raid in Ittehad Town."¹⁵

A report issued by the Office of the *Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Belgium)* in June 2024 notes that: "Since 2004, the Pakistani army has carried out a series of military operations against TTP and their affiliated organizations in KP, mostly in the tribal districts. Although the military campaigns broke TTP's hold of the territory, human rights violations and the destruction of civilian infrastructure displaced hundreds of thousands of residents. In the long run, however, the army's counterinsurgency contributed to a higher level of security in the province, forcing militant groups to relocate across the border to Afghanistan."¹⁶ The report further points out that: "In August 2019, Gandhara reported that members of the TTP had returned to Buner district and established checkpoints in the area. In response, the military and the police conducted search and strike operations in the district. In Bajaur and Mohmand districts, TTP forced local businesses to pay protection money. In October 2020, Gandhara reported the TTP's return to some districts of Malakand Division. Local residents, cited by Gandhara in October 2020, mentioned that several locals received death threats from the Taliban."¹⁷ The report also states that: "In August 2022, residents of Swat district protested against the return of TTP militants in the region. As a consequence, threats of violence and extortion demands surged in the region. In a September 2022 report, ICG observed that ever since its post-2021 resurgence TTP 'has focused its attacks on security and law enforcement personnel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa'."¹⁸ "On election day, 9 February 2024, an IED explosion hit a police

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ The Financial Daily (14 July 2024) CTD arrests TTP terrorist Hidayatullah in raid

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Belgium) (25 June 2024) Pakistan: Security situation (June 2024) [3.2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (including former FATA)]

¹⁷ ibid, p.3

¹⁸ Ibid, p.4

vehicle patrolling the Gara Aslam area of Kulachi, Dera Ismail Khan district. Hereupon militants opened fire on the vehicle. Five policemen were killed and two more sustained injuries. On 26 March 2024, five Chinese nationals and a Pakistani driver were killed after a suicide attacker rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into their convoy near Besham city, Shangla district. On 22 April 2024, armed assailants opened fire on a vehicle near Bannu Road in Dera Ismail Khan. Two customs officials and a civilian were killed.”¹⁹

The *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in June 2024 reported that: “Pakistan's military said at least five soldiers in a troop convoy were killed by a roadside bomb in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province near the Afghan border in an attack claimed by the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a longtime ally of the Afghan Taliban. The attack comes after the group announced a unilateral cease-fire on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr holiday from June 17-19. The region has seen an increase in the number of deadly attacks in the past year attributed to the TTP. Relations between Afghanistan's Islamist rulers and Pakistan have been tense since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, with Islamabad blaming the Taliban for sheltering the TTP. Residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have protested against the lack of security provided by Islamabad and against the actions of extremists.”²⁰

The *UK Parliament House of Commons Library* in May 2024 mentioned that: “While terrorism is a long-standing issue in Pakistan, the country has been experiencing an upsurge in terrorist violence over the last few years, as explained by the US-based think tank the Stimson Center: Since 2022, Pakistan has confronted a persistent spike in terror attacks. Militant and terror attacks increased by 69 percent, peaking in 2023, the highest they've been since 2017. While various groups ranging from religious extremists to ethno-nationalist separatists conducted terror attacks during 2023, three groups alone mounted over 82 percent of these attacks: Tehreek-e- Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).”²¹

The *Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS)* in February 2024 points out that: “As part of security operations, a significant number of outlaws, including militants and insurgents, were apprehended during the year. Surprisingly, over 80% of militants were arrested in the Punjab and Sindh regions, where the casualties from violence were comparatively low i.e. just over 8%, as per Table 01. As many as 142 TTP terrorists were arrested, the highest among the terrorist and militant groups.”²²

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¹⁹ *ibid*, p.8

²⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (21 June 2024) *Pakistani Security Forces Killed In Bomb Attack Claimed By Tehrik-e Taliban*

²¹ UK Parliament House of Commons Library (28 May 2024) *Pakistan: 2024 general election*

²² Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) (12 February 2024) *Annual Security Report 2023 | Pakistan*

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