

Troops kill 7 Taliban in NW Pakistan

AFP, Khar

Pakistani troops killed seven Taliban militants and destroyed 25 hideouts in a troubled northwest tribal area near the Afghan border yesterday, a security official said.

Troops and militants clashed in the Mamoun area of Bajaur, where the Pakistani military has been battling to flush out Islamist extremists.

"Troops backed by tanks and artillery pounded militant hideouts in Mamoun, killing seven rebels and destroying 25 of their hideouts," senior security official Mustaqeem Khan told AFP.

A teenage girl was also killed when a missile slammed into a local civilian's house, Khan said, adding that it had been fired by rebels.

Pakistan's semi-autonomous northwestern tribal belt has become a stronghold for hundreds of extremists, who fled Afghanistan after the US-led invasion toppled the hardline Taliban regime in late 2001.

Unrest possible in Tibet, warns Dalai Lama

AFP, Baden Baden

Exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama warned yesterday that the situation in his homeland was "very tense" and that an uprising was possible.

"Today there is too much anger. (The) situation is very tense," he said during a visit to the western German city of Baden Baden. "At any moment, an outburst could happen."

"This is my worry because with more uprising, there will be more crackdown," he continued. "Things are very sad."

"As soon as people are arrested, they use torture, and sometimes they kill them. Since public execution is difficult, they use torture when Tibetans are detained."

"In many places, schools are closed, especially private funded schools."

'UN envoy had good talks in Myanmar'

AP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Tuesday his envoy to Myanmar had good talks in the military-ruled Southeast Asian country, and the world body's chief again urged the government and opposition to quickly resume talks.

Ban said at a news conference that he looks forward to building on special envoy Ibrahim Gambari's recent visit "with a view to further promoting national dialogue and reconciliation."

Gambari met with Myanmar's prime minister, Gen. Thein Sein, as well as detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi during a four-day trip that ended earlier this month. But he did not meet with the junta's chief, Senior Gen. Than Shwe, as he did on three previous visits.

Azerbaijan air force head shot dead

BBC ONLINE

The commander of Azerbaijan's air force has been shot dead outside his house in the capital, Baku, officials have said yesterday.

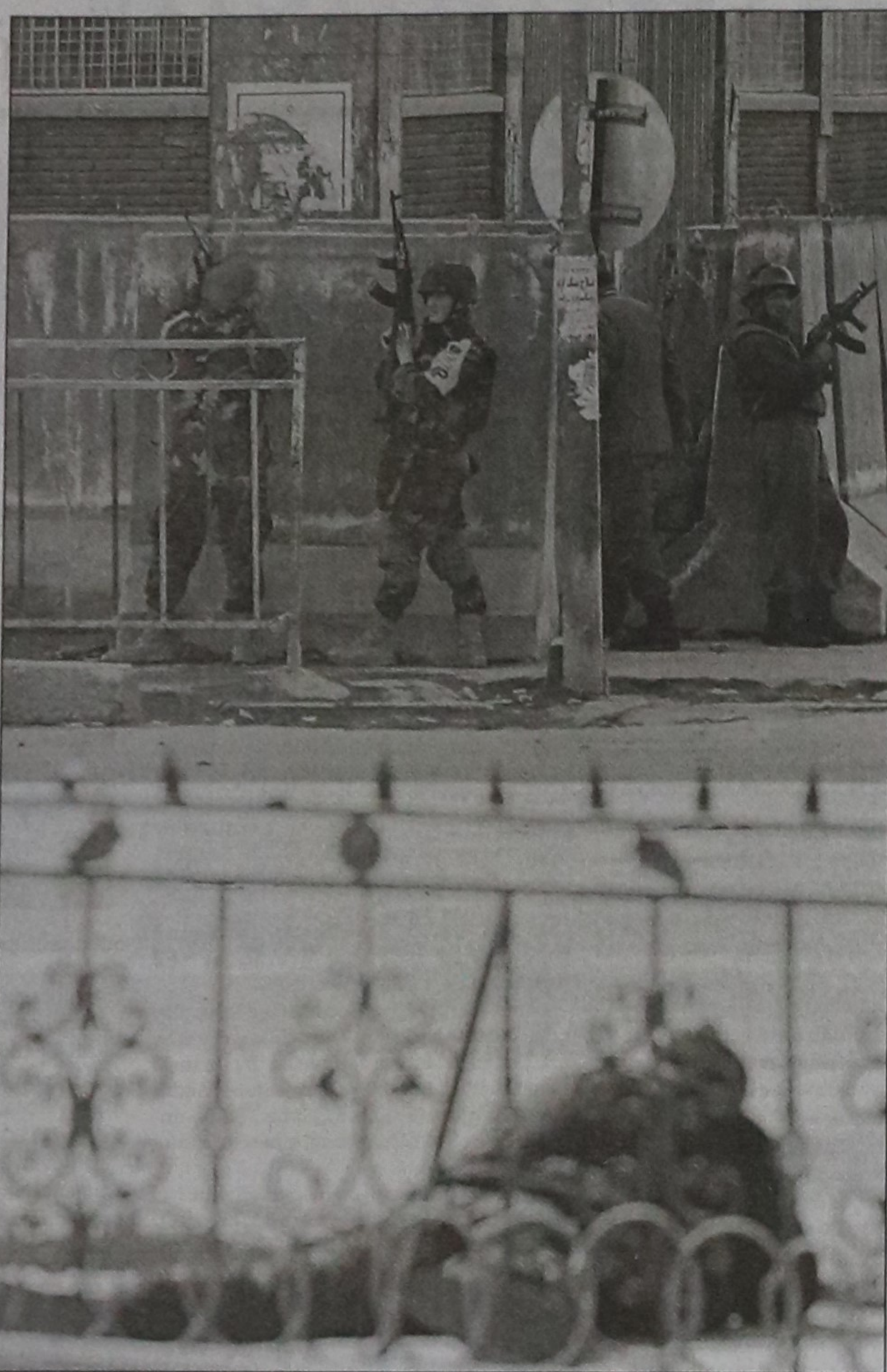
Lt-Gen Rail Rzayev, 64, was shot in the head by an unknown gunman while getting into his car at around 0800 (0400 GMT), the private Turan news agency reported.

Defence ministry officials said the general was taken to a military hospital, but died shortly afterwards.

The authorities say they have launched an investigation into the murder, but they do not know what the motive was.

Nijmedin Sadykhov, the head of the Azeri military general staff, told Lider TV that security cameras near Gen Rzayev's home might help catch the perpetrator.

"There was a single shot. According to preliminary information, Rzayev's car had been under surveillance for several days," he said.



Security forces move into position outside the Justice Ministry in Kabul yesterday. Three near-simultaneous Taliban assaults on government offices in the Afghan capital left 27 people, according to officials.

Bomb kills lawmaker, wounds 6 in Pak city

AP, Peshawar

A bomb killed a secular lawmaker and wounded six other people yesterday in a Pakistani city close to the Afghan border increasingly under attack by Islamist militants.

The bombing in Peshawar in northwest Pakistan took place as US envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard

showed Holbrooke arriving at the governor's house in Peshawar sometime in the morning. There was no suggestion he was close to the site of the attack. The report said Holbrooke had visited a Pakistani military base near the Afghan border.

Holbrooke was on the third day of a visit to Pakistan to help President Barack Obama



Pakistani security officials push a stretcher carrying an injured Provincial lawmaker Alam Zeb Khan at a hospital after a bomb blast in Peshawar yesterday. He later died.

Holbrooke visited the city, local TV reports said.

Police said it appeared the bomb was hidden in a motorcycle and was detonated by remote control when a vehicle carrying Awami National Party lawmaker Alam Zeb Khan passed by. The lawmaker, his body guard and two of his staff were hit by the blast along with three passers-by, said police officer Hamid Khan.

The lawmaker later died at a hospital, said Wajid Ali Khan, a minister in the provincial government.

Footage on Dawn TV

chart a new strategy to beat the insurgencies raging here and in Afghanistan. US officials provided no details of his agenda as is customary with most high-level foreign visitors because of security reasons.

Islamist militants based in the tribal regions close to Afghanistan are fighting Pakistan's pro-American government. Peshawar, a bustling city with a history lawlessness, has seen regular attacks. The city lies on the main supply line for Western troops in Afghanistan.



This picture released by Sri Lanka's ministry of Defence yesterday shows war displaced Tamil civilians taking shelter under an umbrella after escaping from Tamil rebel-held areas. International concern for the safety of civilians has mounted.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Pakistan Army again caught in 1971 like situation

HAMID MIR
From Pakistan

The Taliban have become a threat for Pakistan Army like Mukti Bahini fighters were during the 1971 liberation war of Bangladesh.

Furious Taliban leadership has decided to send their fighters to Islamabad as a reaction of Army operation from Darra Adamkhel to Swat valley. Taliban have already started chalking on the walls of Islamabad and the capital administration is quickly white washing this chalking in the different sectors of Islamabad.

Many religious scholars in Islamabad have received messages from Taliban that they have only two options. They must support Taliban or leave the capital otherwise they will be considered as the collaborators of "Pro-American Zardari government" which is not different from previous Musharraf regime.

It is also astonishing that Taliban of Swat and Bajour have included the names of some religious and Jehadi leaders in their hit lists who are not ready to fight inside Pakistan against their own countrymen.

Taliban have accused that some militant leaders of tribal areas and some leaders of banned Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, Harkatul Mujahideen and Hizbul Mujahideen are trying to stop youngsters to fight against Pakistani forces. Taliban have declared all these "Pro-Pakistan" Jihadis as their enemies.

It is learnt that the names of Maulvi Nazir from South Waziristan, Hafiz Gul Buhadar from North Waziristan, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, Maulana Farooq Kashmiri and Syed Salahudin have been included in the hit list of Taliban. Taliban have threatened some Hizbul Mujahideen leaders in Swat and Dir to leave the areas as soon as possible.

Another Taliban leader in Mehand agency Maulvi Omar Khalid have threatened boys belonging to banned Lashkar-e-Tayyaba to leave the tribal agency otherwise they will be killed. Omar Khalid have accused that these boys are only interested in fighting against foreign troops in Afghanistan or against India which means that they don't want Islamic government in Pakistan.

This complicated situation has forced government to take some extreme steps against Taliban in Darra Adamkhel and Swat. Taliban killed a Polish engineer as a reaction of big operation in the area. Some diplomatic sources have revealed that initially Pakistan was ready to release some arrested Taliban fighters in exchange for Polish Engineer and Chinese engineer but US authorities raised some objections and that was why a deal between Taliban and Pakistani authorities was not finalized.

Pakistani authorities successfully negotiated the release of a kidnapped Pakistani diplomat Tariq Azizudin in 2008 and release of kidnapped Army personal in 2007 by releasing some Taliban fighters. This time US pressure complicated the situation.

Pakistan Army is facing another East Pakistan like situation after 38 years from Darra Adamkhel to the mountains of Swat but this time Army is not ready to surrender despite the fact that India is once again trying to exploit the situation by using threatening language against Pakistan.

Foreign office in Islamabad is under lot of diplomatic pressure after the brutal killing of kidnapped Polish engineer Piotr Stannczak to "do more" for the release of another kidnapped Chinese engineer, one Afghan diplomat, one Iranian diplomat and one kidnapped UN diplomat in Quetta but civilian and Army leadership have decided not to bow down.

Reliable sources have revealed that kidnapped Chinese engineer Mr. Long Xiao is badly sick in the custody of Taliban in Swat. He was kidnapped in August 2008 with another colleague Zhang Guo. Both of them tried to escape but Xiao was injured during the escape attempt and he was again arrested by Taliban but Zhnag Guo successfully escaped.

Taliban have made it clear that they will only exchange the injured and sick Chinese engineer after the release of their two dozen arrested fighters but Pakistani authorities are not ready to accept this demand.

Afghan Ambassador in Pakistan Abdul Khaliq Farahi was kidnapped last year but still not recovered. Some sources claimed that he was kidnapped from the house of his girl friend and his in laws are involved in his kidnapping

but even then Pakistani authorities are conducting a big search operation not only for Afghan Ambassador but also for an Iranian diplomat Heshmatollah Attarzadeh who was also kidnapped from Peshawar last year.

The Army has intensified its operation in Swat and half a million people out of the estimated population of 1.5 million have left Swat in last one month.

A top Army official linked with operation in Swat described that "situation in Swat is much more complicated than East Bengal in 1971 where we were fighting against Indian sponsored secular insurgents."

"The ground reality of Swat is very different from East Bengal. We are no more fighting with secular insurgents, we are fighting with Taliban and they are demanding the enforcement of Islamic law in Swat and all the local secular political leaders are supporting this demand under public pressure," he said.

ANP Chief Minister of NWFP Ameer Haider Hoti, Governor Awais Ghani and Army high command have strongly recommended to enforce long pending Shariaa regulation which will be called "Nafaz-e-Adal regulation". District Police Officer of Swat Dilawar Khan Bangash said that Taliban will have no justification to fight against the state after the enforcement of Islamic law in Swat.

Swat was a princely state till July 28th 1969. Islamic State of Swat was established in 1849 by Sayyed Akbar Shah. State of Swat was in abeyance from 1863 to 1926 but Sharia law

was working through Qazi courts during this period. State of Swat was restored by the British government in 1926 and Qazi courts were operating till 1969 when the State of Swat was finally became part of Pakistan.

Residents of Swat think that it was easy to get justice before 1969 through Qazi courts but after the imposition of English law poor people of Swat are not getting justice.

Taliban have exploited the delay in justice and also instigated poor people of Swat to rise against the big land lords. Awami National Party swept the valley of Swat in 2008 election with the slogan of peace and justice and now this party is ruling NWFP in collaboration with PPP. Reliable sources have claimed that ANP leadership have convinced President Asif Ali Zardari to promulgate the Shariaa regulation in Swat and President will announce the promulgation in coming few days.

It is learnt that Maulana Sufi Muhammad of Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat Muhammadi have assured ANP leadership that he will start a long march from Dir to Swat valley after the imposition of Sharia law and he will appeal his son in law Maulana Fazalullah and other Taliban leaders to surrender arms.

He assured that he will try his best to open all girls schools in Swat because education is must for every male and female Muslim. He told ANP leaders that if Taliban will not surrender the arms after the imposition of Sharia regulation then he will also support Army operation against them.



Myanmar pro-democracy activists hold placards and shout slogans during a protest in New Delhi yesterday. Burmese democracy supporters held a demonstration against alleged detention of freedom fighters in Indian jails for the past eleven years and also demanding the immediate release of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

76 sentenced in China for Tibet riots

AP, Beijing

China has sentenced 76 people and detained more than 950 since last year's deadly anti-government riots in Tibet, state media said yesterday.

The government has released few details of the aftermath of the March 14 violence, the largest uprising against Chinese rule in nearly 50 years. Beijing says 22 people died, but Tibetan supporters say many times that number were killed in the protests and subsequent military crackdown.

The report by the official Xinhua News Agency attributed the latest figures to Nyima Tsering, a Tibetan Communist Party official, but did not elaborate on what the sentences were, what charges they faced, or what happened to those detained.

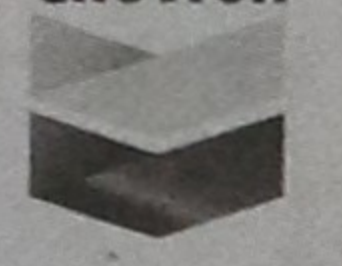
N Korea moves missile parts to launch pad

AP, Seoul

North Korea has been moving missile equipment to a launch pad, an indication that the country is taking steps toward conducting a test launch, a news report said yesterday.

Yonhap news agency said a vehicle carrying the equipment was seen moving to the Musudan-ni site from a munitions factory near Pyongyang, after the suspected missile was reportedly transferred there.

South Korean and Japanese media reported last week that intelligence had spotted a train carrying a long, cylinder-shaped object believed to be a long-range missile capable of reaching the western U.S. to its east coast site in Musudan-ni.



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