

Pakistani troops kill 40 militants in tribal belt

AP, Khar

Pakistani troops killed nearly 40 suspected militants Sunday in a series of operations in northwestern tribal areas near the Afghan border, officials said.

The army launched an offensive against the Taliban in South Waziristan in mid-October, but many militants fled north to escape the fighting. Sunday's attacks, which could not immediately be confirmed, appeared to be targeting areas to which they escaped.

The deadliest strike was in Shahukhel, a town in the tribal area of Orakzai, in which at least 12 militants were reported killed and 14 detained in search operations by border forces, according to officials with the Frontier Corps.

An attack helicopter also pounded several areas else-

where in the region, killing at least four militants, intelligence officials said.

At least 11 other suspects, including an insurgent commander, were killed in fighting when the army repulsed an attack in the Bajur region, which was the site of a major operation earlier this year, officials said.

The battle broke out after an army base came under rocket fire. The military had been tipped off to the attack and opened fire on the militant positions, they said.

Officials said 10 other militants were killed in military action elsewhere in Bajur. The military campaign against the Taliban there ended with a declaration of victory in March and continued activity underscores the resilience of the militants who are routed only to return to affected areas.

The officials all spoke on

condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to release the information. Journalists have little access to Pakistan's volatile tribal regions, which makes it virtually impossible to verify the casualty figures.

Army spokesman Maj Gen Azhar Abbas said there were air strikes in tribal areas but he provided no details.

The Pakistani military said in a statement Sunday that five insurgents were killed and one soldier wounded in operations in South Waziristan.

The United States has welcomed the Pakistani offensive, but wants the army to do more against the insurgents blamed for violence across the border in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's army has retaken many towns in South Waziristan but many militants fled and have retaliated with a series of clashes and bombings.

21 Filipinos killed on way to file nominations

AP, Manila

Philippine troops found 21 bodies in the country's restive south after dozens of gunmen on Monday hijacked a convoy of politicians and supporters filing their nominations for next year's elections, officials said.

The victims, 13 women and eight men, were found in southern Ampatuan township, five km from where they were taken hostage as they traveled in three vans earlier Monday, regional military commander Maj. Gen. Alfredo Cayton said.

The identities of the gunmen were unclear but victims' relatives blamed political rivals.

Philippine elections are particularly violent in the south because of the presence of armed groups, including Muslim rebels fighting for self-rule in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation, and political warlords who maintain private armies.

The decades-long Muslim insurgency has killed about 120,000 people since the 1970s.

But a presidential adviser, Jesus Dureza, said Monday's massacre was "unequalled in recent history."

"There must be a total stop to this senseless violence," he said, recommending that a state of emergency be imposed in the area to disarm all gunmen. "Anything else will not work."

National elections are scheduled for May 2010.

About 100 gunmen had stopped the convoy, military spokesman Lt. Col Romeo Brawner said.

UK begins Iraq war inquiry with spotlight on Blair

AFP, London

An independent inquiry into Britain's role in the war in Iraq begins public hearings today that will culminate in the eagerly-awaited testimony from former prime minister Tony Blair.

Military chiefs, diplomats, ministers and senior officials will all be called before the five-member committee as it looks into what lessons can be learned from the controversial war.

The inquiry committee's chairman, former civil servant John Chilcot, said Monday he was confident of producing a "full and insightful" account of the decision-making process, which took Britain into the conflict.

"Our determination is to do not merely a thorough job but

one that is frank and will bear public scrutiny," he told the BBC.

"All five members of the committee are now completely independent from different perspectives and bodies of experience," he added.

John Scarlett, the former head of foreign intelligence service MI6, and one-time ambassadors to the United States, Christopher Meyer, and to the United Nations, Jeremy Greenstock, will be among the first to give evidence.

Scarlett was chairman of Britain's main intelligence committee when Blair's government produced a dossier outlining how Iraq had weapons of mass destruction -- a principal justification for the US-led invasion on March 2003.

Tension between British, US military leaders in Iraq

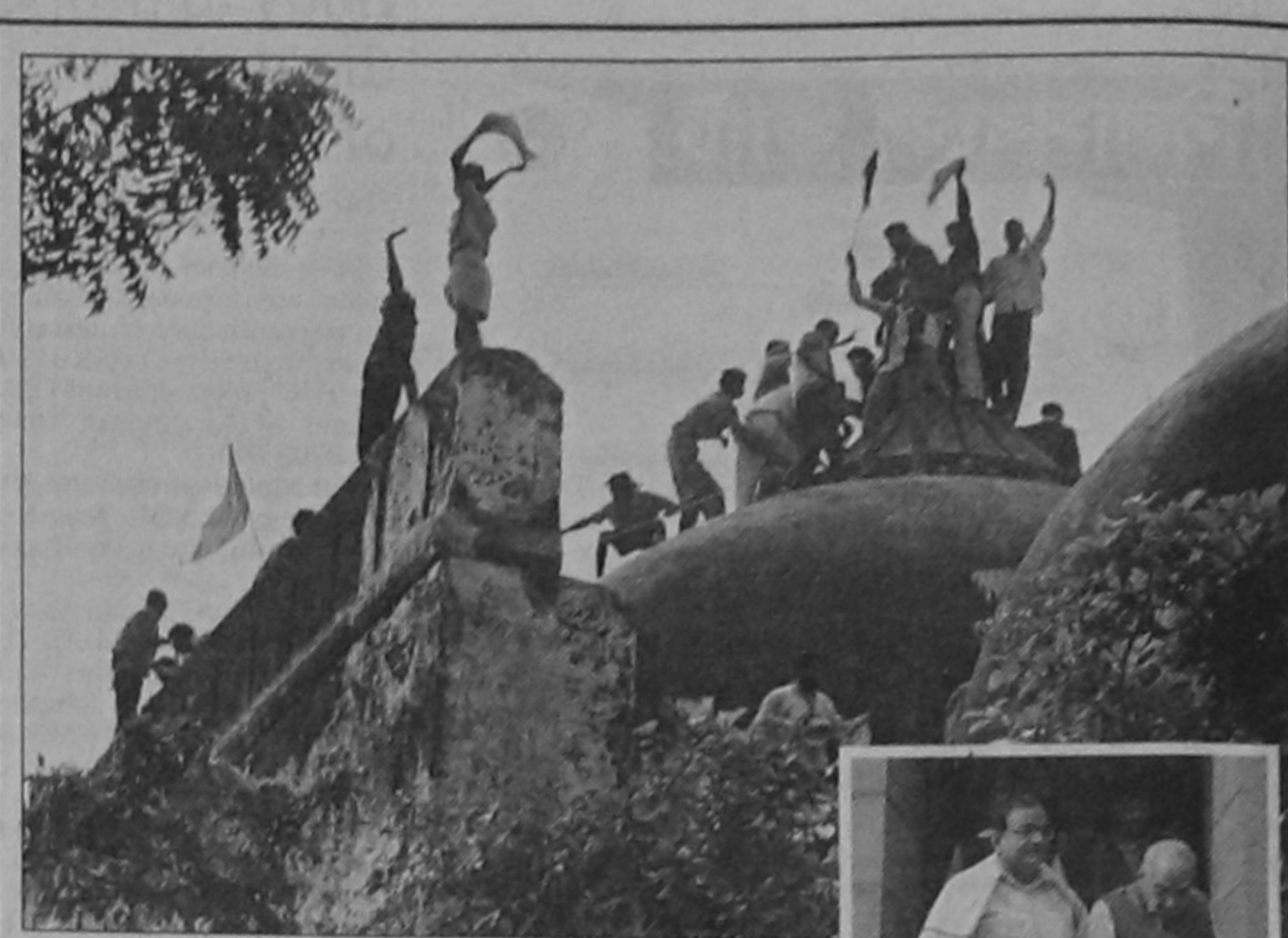
AFP, London

Hostility between US and British military leaders in Iraq ran deep, with one describing his US counterparts as "group of Martians," a newspaper reported Monday, citing leaked government documents.

The top British commander in the country, Major General Andrew Stewart, said

our ability to influence US policy in Iraq seemed to be minimal" in the first year of the conflict, according to documents published by the Daily Telegraph.

Britain's chief of staff in Iraq described as difficult attempts to communicate with senior US military commanders. "a group of Martians" for whom "dialogue is alien," the newspaper said.



File photograph taken on December 6, 1992 shows Hindu zealots clamour atop the 16th century Babri Mosque five hours before the structure was completely demolished by hundreds of Hindu fundamentalists. Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram (Inset) comes out of parliament after adjournment of the session in New Delhi over leakage of the inquiry report on the demolition of the mosque that led to bloody Hindu-Muslim riots in India.

Indictment in Babri Mosque demolition case very clear

Says Congress while BJP points to Jharkhand polls as cause of report leakage

PTI, New Delhi/ Ranchi

Amid controversy over leakage of Liberhan Commission report, Congress today targeted the BJP saying the indictment of those responsible for the incident is very clear.

"Perceptually the indictment is very clear.

Perceptually the issue in the mind of people is already settled as far as guilt and culpability are concerned.

BJP and its affiliates are responsible (for the demolition)," Party spokesperson Manish Tewari told reporters here.

He said the events that

culminated in the demolition of the mosque were played in "full public view".

To a question why the government was not placing the Commission report before the House immediately as demanded by the opposition, Tewari hoped the government will do it as soon as possible.

"The Commission gave its report to the government on 30th June. It has to table the report in the Parliament within six months (December 30).

But BJP President Rajnath Singh Monday accused the government of "selectively

leaking" the Liberhan Commission report on Babri Masjid demolition to the media with the aim of "polarising" voters ahead of the assembly elections in Jharkhand. "Keeping the upcoming elections in view, the UPA government has selectively leaked the report to the media so that there is a polarisation of votes," he said here reacting to the reported findings of the Commission which is believed to have indicted senior BJP leaders Atal Bihari Vajpayee, LK Advani and MM Joshi, among others, for the demolition.

India's longest running inquiry

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

It took 17 years and 48 extensions for the Liberhan Commission probing the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya to submit its report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in June this year.

One of the country's longest running inquiry commissions, which has cost the government nearly Rs.7 crore (Rs.70 million),

the Liberhan Commission was set up to probe the sequence of events leading to the razing of the Babri mosque by Hindu mobs on Dec 6, 1992.

The report -- in four volumes with an extensive set of annexures -- will be placed in both houses of parliament along with the Action Taken Report (ATR) in the ongoing winter session, union Home Minister P. Chidambaram said in the Lok Sabha Monday.

During the entire tenure, the one-judge probe has been dogged by procedural delays, non-cooperation from key witnesses and even constant transfers during the early days of the commission's functioning.

The commission's lawyer, Anupam Gupta, dissociated himself from the one-man panel after eight years because of differences with Liberhan.



An image grab taken from Iran's satellite English-language official Press TV station shows Iranian air defence forces taking part in military manoeuvres at an undisclosed location in Iran on Sunday. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, a commander of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, said that air defence forces would "annihilate" Israeli warplanes if they attack the Islamic republic.

Indian PM asks US to push Pakistan on militants

AFP, Washington

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who has started a visit Sunday to Washington, called for US pressure on Pakistan to rein in extremists and doubted Islamabad was fully committed to Afghanistan.

Singh, whom President

Barack Obama is honouring with the first full-fledged state visit of his White House, also said he would encourage the US leader to stay engaged in Afghanistan as he hears a decision on troop levels.

In an interview with The Washington Post and Newsweek, Singh renewed his call for talks with Pakistan but

said that India's historic rival had not done enough against the perpetrators of last year's grisly attack on Mumbai.

"We have been the victims of Pakistan-aided, abetted and inspired terrorism for nearly 25 years. We would like the United States to use all its influence with Pakistan to desist from that path," Singh said.

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Invitation for Bids

Loan No. 2332-BAN: Sustainable Power Sector Development Project (SPSDP)
ICB No.: 04/2009; Procurement of Special Tools & Equipment

1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh has applied for loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of "Sustainable Power Sector Development Project" and it is intended that part of the proceeds of this loan will be applied to eligible payments under the contract for which this Invitation For Bids (IFB) is issued.

2. Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd., (DESCO) now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders from the member countries of ADB for the supply and delivery of the goods/materials under the following bid packages:

Sl. No.	Package No.	Lot No.	Item
(i)	5	G (Group-1)	Tools & Safety Accessories
(ii)	5	G (Group-2)	Test Equipment
(iii)	5	G (Group-3)	Meter Testing Equipment
(iv)	5	G (Group-4)	Transformer Oil Centrifuging Machine & Accessories

(Details and specifications are provided in the Bidding Document)

3. International competitive bidding will be conducted in accordance with ADB's Single-Stage Two-Envelope procedure and is open to all bidders from eligible source countries.

4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from DESCO and inspect the Bidding Document at the address given below, from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm on all working days.

5. The Bidding Document, in English Language, may be purchased by interested Bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below mentioning the requested delivery procedure and upon payment of non-refundable fee of Tk. 5,000/= (Taka Five thousand) only. The method of payment will be in the form of Demand Draft or Pay Order in favour of Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd., (DESCO) for this Bidding Document. The delivery procedure is by surface mail or courier or hand delivery for local delivery (no additional cost) and by airmail for overseas delivery for an additional fee of US\$ 150. No liability will be accepted for loss or late delivery. Bidding Document will be available from the Head Office of DESCO on all working days from the dates shown in the following table. No Bidding Document will be sold on the day fixed for opening of bids.

6. Bid must be delivered to the address below on or before the closing date and time as mentioned below. Late bid shall be considered as rejected. The Technical Proposals of the Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address at the time and date indicated below. The Price Proposals of Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the time and date and at the address to be advised by the Purchaser after obtaining concurrence of ADB on the evaluation of the Technical Proposals. A Bidder may participate in either one group or more groups. Technical Proposal(s) and Price Proposal(s) shall be submitted separately for the respective groups. Evaluation of bids will be done group wise.

Sl. No.	Package No./Lot No.	Item	Amount of Bid security in US\$	Selling of Documents starts from	Deadline for Bid Submission	Time of Opening of bids
(i)	5/G (Group-1)	Tools & Safety Accessories	1,650.00	24/11/2009	05/01/2010 at 12.00 PM	05/01/2010 at 12.30 PM
(ii)	5/G (Group-2)	Test Equipment	6,600.00	24/11/2009	05/01/2010 at 12.00 PM	05/01/2010 at 01.00 PM
(iii)	5/G (Group-3)	Meter Testing Equipment	4,500.00	24/11/2009	05/01/2010 at 12.00 PM	05/01/2010 at 01.30 PM
(iv)	5/G (Group-4)	Transformer Oil Centrifuging Machine & Accessories	2,000.00	24/11/2009	05/01/2010 at 12.00 PM	05/01/2010 at 02.00 PM

7. DESCO will not bear any costs or expenses incurred by bidder(s) in connection with preparation or delivery of Bids.

8. In the comparison of Bids, ADB's Domestic Preference Scheme will be applied in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the Bidding Document.

Company Secretary

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Two survivors from the 147-tonne Dumai Express ferry that went down in heavy rain and huge swells off Karimun island in Sumatra arrive at the port on Sunday after rescuers pulled them from the sea. Twenty-nine people were killed and some 250 were rescued after a ferry sank in stormy seas off Indonesia's Sumatra island.

Murky ocean depths hide abundance of life

AFP, Washington

Thousands of animal species thrive in the ocean depths beyond the reach of sunlight, between 200 to 5,000 meters below the surface, an international team of scientists reported Sunday after nearly 10 years of research.

More than 2,000 scientists from 80 countries are taking part in the first global Census of Marine Life project scheduled to be completed in October of next year.

Using deep-towed cameras, sonar and other state-of-the-art technologies, the teams since 2000 have inventoried 17,650 species of marine species, ranging from crabs to shrimp to worms, living below 200 meters, the penetration limit for the sun's rays.

US asks Tehran to accept nuke offer

AFP, Halifax

A senior US official on Sunday urged Iran to "engage" with the West over its nuclear program, after an Iranian military chief warned that an attack on its nuclear sites would be crushed.

"We would prefer that the Iranian regime follow through on the opportunity to engage," said Ellen Tauscher, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security at the US State Department.

Tehran "asked for engagement with the United States. It has it. Now what is it going to do? Is it going to stand up and say that they're going to take our deal... or are they going to use some other flimsy excuse to duck," she said.

"If persuasion doesn't work, pressure is going to have to be the next line of action," Tauscher warned, suggesting a further round of sanctions

against Iran.

Speaking at the Halifax International Security Forum, she said the United States continues to have "significant" concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions.

But, she added, "I don't believe (military action against Iran) is on the table now."

Earlier, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reiterated that Tehran is ready for further talks on supplying fuel for the internationally supervised reactor in the capital.

Meanwhile, a commander of the elite Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday that its air defences would annihilate Israeli warplanes if they attacked.

He spoke at the start of five days of manoeuvres aimed at honing a response to any assault on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Indonesian ferry was overloaded

Say furious survivors

AFP, Tanjung Balai

Passengers screamed in panic and fainted with seasickness as an overloaded ferry rocked violently in heavy seas and sank off the Indonesian island of Karimun, survivors recalled Monday.

They described scores of undocumented passengers cramping the decks ahead of the disaster on Sunday morning in the Malacca Strait, rejecting the captain's claims that the ferry went down because of bad weather.

High-school teacher Amir Azli, 56, described scenes of pandemonium on board the Dumai Express as water started to pour through cracks in its hull.

Afghan attacks kill four US soldiers

AFP, Kabul

Insurgent attacks and bombs have killed another four US soldiers in Afghanistan, the Nato-run International Security Assistance force said yesterday.

Two were killed by a roadside bomb and a third died in a militant attack on Sunday. A fourth soldier was killed by a improvised explosive device on Monday, Isaf said in a statement.

"Four Isaf service members died in the last 24 hours in Afghanistan," the statement said. All the casualties were US nationals, it added.

There are more than 100,000 international, mainly US, troops stationed in Afghanistan to battle Taliban insurgents who are trying to topple the Western-backed government in Kabul and expel foreign militaries.