

# Nato admits killing Afghan women in bungled raid

10 more militants killed in new raid

AP, Kabul  
Nato confirmed that international troops were responsible for the deaths of five civilians, including three women, in February. Such killings have inflamed frictions between the government of President Hamid Karzai and his Western backers.  
A Nato statement said a joint international-Afghan patrol fired on two men mistakenly believed to be insurgents in the Feb. 12 incident in Gardez, south of Kabul. It said the three women were "accidentally killed as a result of the joint force firing at the men."  
Family members said they were awaiting formal notice of the Nato admission.  
Meanwhile, Nato forces said they killed 10 militants in a raid on a compound near the Pakistani border early yesterday, while gunmen seriously wounded an Afghan provincial councilwoman in a drive-by shooting in the country's increasingly violent north.  
In Monday's raid, which began around 2 am (2130 GMT), US troops backed by Afghan army and police forces moved on a compound in Nangarhar province's Khogyani district after receiving reports of militant activity there, the international forces command said in another statement.  
They were fired on with heavy weapons and 10 militants were killed and one wounded in the ensuing fire fight, the statement said. A search of the compound found automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, material for building roadside bombs, and communications equipment, Nato said. It said no civilians were harmed in the operation.



US officials examine the site of suicide attacks outside the US consulate in Peshawar yesterday. Islamist militants armed with guns, grenades and suicide car bombs targeted the consulate and hit a political rally, killing 46 people.

PHOTO: AFP

## Militants blow up school in Pakistan

Set ablaze tankers

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

Militants blew up a girls primary school while unidentified people set fire to seven oil tankers yesterday in Pakistan's tribal region bordering Afghanistan.

A government girls primary school was blown up in Baizai while unidentified people set fire to seven empty oil tankers parked in Landi Kotal in the Mohmand district, Xinhua reported.

The number of schools so far destroyed by militants in Mohmand district has reached 40.

The Pakistani Taliban, opposed to women's education, have destroyed hundreds of schools in the country in the past two years.

## Kandahar elders criticise Karzai

ANI, Kandahar

Tribal elders in the Afghan city of Kandahar have sharply criticised President Hamid Karzai over issues of security and corruption.

According to the BBC, one tribal elder after another stood up, speaking loudly, angrily, some shouting at the president, complaining of police corruption, official bribes and insecurity.

Tribal elders took Karzai to task over issues of security and corruption.

"I can't, I will be killed by the terrorists," retorted one tribal elder - a reference to the growing strength of the Taliban in the region.

But the message from this gathering of some 1,500 tribesmen is that they are not ready for any major military operation by Afghan and Nato led forces anytime soon.

The president assured them that no operation would be started without their support.

# Pirates hijack South Korean oil tanker

Navy in pursuit

BBC ONLINE

A South Korean navy warship is in pursuit of a huge oil tanker, hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean.

The 300,000-tonne Samho Dream, which was on its way from Iraq to the United States, has 24 crew on board, and is loaded with crude oil.

Reports suggest the Korean destroyer is fast enough to catch up to the tanker before it reaches the Somali coast.

Pirates targeting ships off the coast of Somalia made tens of millions of dollars in ransom payments last year.

South Korea is one of several Asian nations that have an anti-piracy warship patrolling Somali waters to guard against hijackings. Western navies are also trying to protect ships against pirate attack.

The destroyer now in pursuit of the South Korea-operated, Singapore-owned tanker was on

anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden - one of the world's busiest and most dangerous shipping lanes.

It has been diverted some 1,500 km (930 miles) south-east of the Gulf to the area where the hijacking took place.

A South Korean official said the destroyer had been ordered to intercept the hijacked vessel on its expected route into Somali waters, according to Yonhap news agency.

He also expressed concern for the safety of the crew - five South Koreans and 19 Filipinos - but said the government would not negotiate with the pirates.

It is unclear what action the warship will take once it reaches the tanker.

The BBC's East Africa correspondent Will Ross says that it is extremely rare for any navy to use force once hostages have been taken.

Given the nature of the cargo there is also the risk of immense environmental damage, he adds.

## US, EU condemn Peshawar attack

AFP, Washington/Brussels

The United States yesterday condemned an attack on the US consulate in Peshawar and expressed "great concern" after Islamist militants targeted the building in Pakistan's north-western capital.

"We strongly condemn the violence," said White House spokesman Robert Gibbs.

Islamist militants armed with guns, grenades and suicide car bombs targeted both the US consulate in Peshawar and struck against a political rally, killing 46 people, officials in Pakistan said.

The United States said at least two Pakistani security guards employed by the consulate were killed and a number of others seriously wounded.

The attacks in quick succession were among the deadliest so far this year in nuclear-armed Pakistan, where insecurity has raised concerns in the United States as Washington steps up the fight in Afghanistan and against Al-Qaeda.

# Lanka monks vow anti-govt protests

Party activist killed as election nears

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's influential Buddhist clergy vowed yesterday to launch a wave of anti-government protests after police arrested a dozen monks who demanded the release of the jailed former army chief.

The National Bhikku Front (NBF) accused President Mahinda Rajapakse's government of committing an "unforgivable sin" when police beat and arrested 12 monks staging a fast outside the main railway station in Colombo.

"The fast was to press for the release of General Sarath Fonseka," NBF head Dambara Amila told reporters in Colombo. "The government will have to pay for this."

A court martial is set to resume its hearings on Tuesday against Fonseka, who failed to unseat Rajapakse in January elections.

He faces one set of charges that he interfered in politics before he retired from the army, and another alleging he was involved in corrupt arms deals.

The monks said they planned a mass rally to keep up pressure on the government to free Fonseka, who was detained on February 8.

Plain-clothed officers on Monday bundled

the protesting monks onto a bus as armed police ringed the railway station where they had begun a fast over the weekend.

Fonseka, who is also running in Thursday's parliamentary elections, denies the court charges and says they are part of a vendetta against him.

He fell out with Rajapakse and quit the military in November, six months after leading the military offensive that finally crushed the separatist Tamil Tigers rebels.

Meanwhile, gunmen shot dead a ruling party activist in Sri Lanka as campaigning for parliamentary elections drew to a close, police said yesterday.

In the first killing ahead of Thursday's vote, a member of the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) was gunned down in the north-western district of Kurunegala on Sunday night.

"Gunmen travelling in a vehicle sprayed bullets into a crowd killing a UPFA supporter," a police official said.

President Mahinda Rajapakse, who leads the UPFA, is widely expected to consolidate his January re-election by gaining a clear majority at the assembly polls.



PHOTO: AFP  
Space Shuttle Discovery lifts off from Pad 39-A at Kennedy Space Centre yesterday, in Cape Canaveral. Discovery is scheduled for a supply mission to the International Space Station.

## Musharraf ready to defend himself

ANI, Islamabad

Former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, who is set to launch his political party next month, has said he is ready to counter the allegations levelled against him in the media.

"The former president (Musharraf) is ready to defend five allegations against him, including the Lal Masjid operation, murder of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, promulgation of the defunct National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) and removal of Justice Iftekhar Chaudhry as the chief justice of Pakistan and imposition of dictatorial rule in the country," The News quoted Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Musharraf's lawyer and a close aide, as saying.

"General (retired) Musharraf is all set to launch his own political party next month," he added.

He further said the name of the new party had been finalised, and reiterated that Musharraf has decided to stage a comeback.

"We have applied for registration under the name of the All Pakistan Muslim League," he said.

## US aims to ease Indo-Pak tension

ANI, Washington

United States President Barack Obama has reportedly issued a secret directive to its top foreign-policy and national-security officials to intensify their efforts aimed at easing tensions between India and Pakistan.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the directive was summarized in a memo written by National Security Adviser James Jones at the end of the White House's three-month review of Afghan war policy in December.

In the directive it is stated that India must make resolving its tensions with Pakistan a priority for progress to be made on US goals in the region.

A debate continues within the administration over how hard to push India, which has long resisted outside intervention in the conflict with Pakistan.

Current and former US officials said the discussion in Washington over how to approach India has intensified as Pakistan ratchets up requests that the US intercede in a series of continuing disputes, The News reports.

## 'Anything below sovereignty' negotiable for Kashmir

Says Indian Home Secy

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

The Indian government is holding back-channel talks with separatist Hurriyat leaders on the Kashmir issue and is open to negotiating anything less than independence, says Home Secretary GK Pillai.

"Talks are going on and the talks will continue. These are back channel talks," Pillai told IANS in an exclusive interview at his North Block office.

Asked if the government still believed late prime minister PV Narsimha Rao's 'sky is the limit' promise made in 1995 for Kashmir, the home secretary said: 'You have to understand the realities of today'.

"We are telling everybody please tell us what you feel is achievable. We have no fixed, closed mind. The government of India is open. Total

azadi (independence) - no government would be ready to say yes. Anything below azadi - we are open to negotiate on that."

Does that mean autonomy for the terror-ridden state where over 70,000 people have been killed in an unending separatist war since 1989?

"It can be anything. The state has some sort of autonomy. If they want more, let them come up with that idea. We are ready to talk about anything."

Pillai said silence over the talks between 'some separatist leaders and the government' was called for after militants attacked senior Hurriyat leader Fazal Qureshi in Srinagar in December last year.

"You know what happened to Qureshi. People want to keep them (talks) as quiet as possible till the situation improves in Jammu and Kashmir," the official said.

## Police lift day curfew in riot-hit Hyderabad

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Hyderabad

After more than a week of tension, people in parts of communally sensitive Hyderabad breathed easier yesterday with curfew being relaxed from 8 am to 5 pm.

Amid massive security arrangements, life returned to near normalcy in the old city and other areas, which were rocked by communal violence last week.

Police Commissioner AK Khan, however, warned that any untoward incident would lead to re-imposition of the curfew.

Police said propitiatory orders banning assembly of five or more people would continue across the city and asked public leaders not to visit riot-hit areas. Pillion riding on two-wheelers has also been banned between 11 pm and 6 am.

Khan told reporters that night curfew would continue till the situation completely returned to normal.

Indefinite curfew was imposed March 29 in all 17 police stations areas of the old city and on March 30 in eight police station areas of the new city following communal clashes.

### INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH

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