

Taliban attack Nato base in Afghanistan

BBC ONLINE
 Insurgents have attacked Nato forces in eastern Afghanistan. Several attackers were killed in the Taliban attack on a base at an airfield outside Jalalabad, near the border with Pakistan. Gunmen set off a car bomb and fired rocket-propelled grenades, and wounding two soldiers, Nato said.

The attack came a day after US Gen David Petraeus warned of an "industrial strength insurgency" in the country. Gen Petraeus, who is set to take over command of the US military in Afghanistan, also warned that fighting "may get more intense in the next few months". He is expected to take up his post as Nato commander in Afghanistan following the dramatic departure of Gen Stanley McChrystal last week.

COMMANDO-STYLE RAID
 The attack began at 0730 local time (0330 BST), with insurgents attacking the airport from different directions.

A Nato spokesman said the perimeter of the base was not breached. An Afghan soldier and one international service member were wounded.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said six suicide attackers had taken part in the assault.

Eight insurgents died in the ensuing gun battles, the Associated Press news agency reported.

The attack is yet another example of the increasingly sophisticated assaults favoured by the Taliban, says the BBC's Quentin Sommerville in Kabul.

These commando-style operations are increasing in numbers, and often result in higher civilian and military casualties.

A total of 100 Nato troops serving in Afghanistan were killed in June, making it the deadliest month for the alliance since the US-led invasion of 2001.



Nepalese Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal (C), announces his resignation as prime minister saying he wanted to end a long political stalemate in the troubled nation in a live televised address in Kathmandu yesterday. Nepal had been under intense pressure from the opposition Maoist party to quit ever since he agreed last month to make way for a power-sharing government in a deal with the former rebels.

US attorney general in Kabul for graft talks

AFP, Kabul

US Attorney General Eric Holder was in Kabul to discuss efforts to battle corruption and enforce the rule of law in Afghanistan, just days after billions of dollars in US aid was blocked because of graft concerns.

"Fighting corruption and supporting the rule of law in Afghanistan are top priorities for this administration," Holder said in a statement issued by the US Department of Justice announcing his arrival in the Afghan capital.

"We will continue to assist the Afghan government in creating and sustaining the effective criminal justice system to which the Afghan people are entitled."

His visit, which the Department of Justice says will include meetings with Afghan and US officials, comes amid increasing tension over the Afghan administration's efforts to tackle corruption.

Indian officials meet on Maoist strategy

BBC ONLINE

Authorities in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh are meeting to review strategy a day after 26 policemen were killed by Maoist rebels.

The state chief minister has condemned the attack on the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) contingent.

The rebels say they are fighting for the rights of the rural poor.

They have carried out a spate of deadly attacks in recent months. In April, 76 CRPF members were killed in the state's Dantewada district.

In May, 145 people died when a train crashed in West Bengal after Maoists, also known as Naxalites, allegedly sabotaged the rails.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has described their insurgency as India's biggest internal security challenge.

Fake degree scandal roils Pak politics

AP, Islamabad

Scores of Pakistani lawmakers may lose their seats for allegedly lying about their academic credentials, a growing scandal that adds to the woes of the US-backed leadership as it struggles with Islamist militancy and a weak economy.

What began as accusations against a handful of lawmakers has mushroomed into formal legal challenges against up to 160 elected officials more than 10 percent of the country's federal and provincial legislators. Many are said to have claimed fake degrees to meet a previous requirement for holding office.

The Supreme Court has ordered the Elections Commission to vet the credentials of nearly all of the some 1,100 federal and provincial lawmakers. If enough lawmakers are found ineligible, there are rumblings that a midterm election may be needed.

The scandal has drawn some frustrated reactions from lawmakers besieged by an

aggressive media.

"A degree is a degree! Whether fake or genuine, it's a degree! It makes no difference!" Baluchistan province chief minister Nawab Aslam Raisani, who claims a master's in political science, shouted at a gaggle of reporters Tuesday.

The controversy has its roots in a 2002 law imposed by former military ruler Pervez Musharraf that required candidates for office hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent. Musharraf supposedly wanted to improve the calibre of lawmakers, but critics said the move was more about sidelining certain opponents.

It also was undemocratic, critics alleged, in a country of 180 million where only 50 percent of adults are literate. Traditionally, feudal ties or business success count for more in politics than academic achievement.

Seven other countries including Chile, Nigeria and Tajikistan have constitutional provisions specifying an educational qualification for candidacy to the lower house of the national parliament, said Pippa Norris, who teaches at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government.

KASHMIR SITUATION Army chief for political solution

AFP, New Delhi

The head of the Indian army has called for a political solution to unrest in Indian Kashmir, saying the military should step back from its security role in the region.

Street violence in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley has increased in recent weeks after the deaths of several unarmed civilians who were killed as troops sought to contain protests against rule from New Delhi.

"I feel there is a great requirement for political initiatives that take all people together," General VK Singh told the Times of India in an interview published Wednesday.

" Militarily, we have brought the overall internal security situation in Jammu and Kashmir under control."

Maldives in political deadlock after cabinet quits

AFP, Colombo

The Maldives was without a government, after the cabinet resigned en masse amid a worsening power struggle between President Mohamed Nasheed and the opposition-controlled parliament.

Nasheed's 13-member group of ministers quit on Tuesday, saying parliament was blocking all its efforts to govern the Indian Ocean atoll nation and undermining the authority of the executive.

Officials said Nasheed, 43, who came to power in 2008 as the Maldives' first democratically elected leader, would hold off on re-naming a cabinet.

"There is no point in having a new cabinet unless the crisis in parliament is resolved. What we now have is a political deadlock," a senior official close to the president told AFP by telephone.

Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party enjoys the support of 32 lawmakers in the 77-member national assembly, while the opposition Maldivian People's Party (DRP) has the backing of more than 40 MPs.

Nasheed said Tuesday that the opposition was using its parliamentary superiority to bring the process of government to a standstill, by blocking numerous policy initiatives including an ambitious privatisation programme.

Pakistan proposes law on media terror images

AFP, Islamabad

Lawmakers in Pakistan have proposed a code of conduct for Pakistan's electronic media to restrict their graphic coverage of militants' terror attacks, a government spokeswoman said yesterday.

If approved by the National Assembly, the new code will also repeal "draconian" laws imposed on the media by former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, the spokeswoman said.

Presidential spokeswoman Farahnaz Ispahani said the code was not an attempt to control the Pakistan's fiercely independent electronic media, and would be similar to one "practised all over the world."

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