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## **Pakistan Tribal Unrest Intensifies- International Terrorism Monitor- Paper No. 267**

By B. Raman.

Anti-Musharraf and anti-US anger continues to run high in the Pashtun tribal areas of the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan.

2.The fresh wave of anger, which initially started after the raid of the Pakistani Army commandoes on the Lal Masjid in Islamabad between July 10 and 13,2007, has further intensified after the death of Abdullah Mehsud, a pro-Taliban tribal leader of South Waziristan and a former detenu at the Guantanamo Bay detention centre in Cuba, at Zhob in Balochistan on July 23,2007 .

According to the Pakistan Army, he blew himself up when he was surrounded by the security forces. But, his supporters allege that he was shot dead at point-blank range by the security forces.

3. The intensified anger has not only led to many more clashes between the tribals and the security forces, but also to a boycott of the celebration of Pakistan's 60th Independence Day anniversary in many tribal villages.

4.The "Daily Times" of Lahore reported as follows on August 15,2007: " Many people in the tribal areas marked August 14 as a 'black day?', in protest at the stepped up military presence in the region near the Pak-Afghan border. Many tribesmen in Khyber Agency and 25 disputed villages adjacent to Mohmand Agency

observed the 60th Independence Day by hoisting black flags on their homes. Similarly, tribesmen in South Waziristan, North Waziristan and Bajaur agencies did not observe Independence Day due to the military's operations in the tribal areas. "For the first time in the country's history, numerous tribesmen did not celebrate Independence Day. There were no selling and buying of national flags and other relevant things in North Waziristan," Haji Gul Noor from Miranshah told Daily Times. "This could be a reaction to military operations and the Taliban may have forbidden tribesmen to celebrate the day," he added."

5. On August 17, 2007, seven soldiers and 15 tribals were reportedly killed in clashes in Chackmalai and adjacent areas of North Waziristan. Eleven soldiers were also injured. The clashes occurred when a military convoy came under attack and the security forces retaliated. On August 16, 2007, 10 tribals were killed and many injured when Pakistan Army gunship helicopters retaliated after an attack on a military convoy near the same area. In the attack on the convoy, three soldiers were killed and six others injured. On August 14, 2007, the beheaded body of one of the 16 paramilitary Frontier Corps soldiers, kidnapped by militants in the South Waziristan agency a week ago, was found on the Tank-Jandola road. A note left on the body warned that the remaining soldiers would be punished in the same fashion if the tribals' demand for the release of 10 tribal detenus (reportedly Mehsuds) was not met by the Army.

6. Is Pakistan a jihadi volcano waiting to erupt?

7. That is the question which has been worrying the minds of many intelligence analysts, Congressmen and policy-makers in the US.

8. They may differ in their assessment of the ground situation in Iraq.

9. But they are all agreed that the ground situation in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region does not bode well for the success of the so-called war on global jihadi terrorism.

10. Recent testimonies by senior intelligence and military officers and non-governmental analysts before Congressional committees and recent debates among aspirants for the Presidential race next year have revealed a convergence of views on both sides of the political

spectrum that there has been a worrisome resurgence of Al Qaeda from new sanctuaries in the Pakistani territory.

11. According to them, its command and control, which was badly disrupted by the post-9/11 US military operations in Afghanistan, has been repaired and revamped. It has set up a new jihadi training infrastructure in the North Waziristan area in replacement of its previous infrastructure in Afghan territory, which was destroyed by the US security forces. New recruits have started flowing in---- Arabs as well as non-Arabs. Recruits from the Pakistani diaspora in the West have been in the forefront of the flow of new non-Arab volunteers.

12. The determination and motivation of Al Qaeda and its mix of leaders of old vintage such as Osama bin Laden and his No.2, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the crop of new post-9/11 recruits remain as strong as ever despite the losses in leadership, cadre strength and resources suffered by it in 2002 and 2003.

13. There is an apparent realization----not yet openly expressed---- that Pakistan's President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has not been such a sincere front-line ally in the war against jihadi terrorism as he was projected to be. He made brave statements on his determination to act against jihadi extremists and terrorists, but his actions on the ground belied his statements.

14. He promised action against the madrasas producing terrorists, but refrained from action against them. He was reluctant to act even against the Lal Masjid, which had set up a jihadi GHQ right under his nose in Islamabad. He was forced to act not by US threats, but by Chinese unhappiness over the kidnapping of six Chinese women by the girl students of the Masjid's madrasa for girls, who accused them of loose morals.

15. He claimed to have effectively sealed the Pakistan-Afghanistan border by deploying thousands of extra troops in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to prevent the ingress of the Neo Al Qaeda and Neo Taliban elements from Afghanistan to set up new bases in Pakistani territory. These troops, instead of fighting the terrorists, made peace with them---initially in South Waziristan in 2005 and then in North Waziristan in 2006.

16. He assured the international community that his peace

agreements were meant to encourage the local people to rise against the Neo Al Qaeda and the Neo Taliban. Instead of doing so, they joined hands with them and helped them set up new training bases in North Waziristan.

17. The realization is slowly dawning on US intelligence analysts and policy-makers that Musharraf is either unable to act or insincere or both.

18. All this has been taking place at a time when Musharraf's authority has been weakening due to his ill-advised confrontation with the judiciary and the lawyers' fraternity, which ended in an embarrassing loss of face for him when the Supreme Court unanimously ordered the reinstatement of the suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhury. The public rallies in support of the wronged Chief Justice demonstrated the extent of the growing alienation against the General.

19. Balochistan continues to burn. There is a growing clamour for his discarding the post of the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) to which he continues to cling due to fears that he may not be able to control the Army effectively if he ceased to be the COAS. His uniform gives him the power to intimidate his people and opponents. Once he discards it, he may lose his power of intimidation. So he apprehends.

20. He does not have the confidence that his political supporters in the Pakistan Muslim League (Qaide Azam), who are in a majority in the present National Assembly, may be able to retain their majority in the new Assembly to be elected later this year. If his detractors secure a majority, his hopes of continuing as the President for a second term may be belied. Hence, his desperate anxiety to have himself re-elected by the present National Assembly before it is dissolved.

21. The Supreme Court, headed by a Chief Justice who was sought to be humiliated by the General, may come in the way. Nawaz Sharif, the former Prime Minister, has already challenged the various executive orders passed by Musharraf against him. If the Supreme Court upholds Nawaz's petition, it might severely weaken the legal basis of Musharraf's rule.

22. Musharraf has for the present given up the idea of imposing a State of Emergency in order to escape the consequences of his sins of commission and omission.

But, he may still use that sword. If he does, there may be violent street protests against him.

23. Public disenchantment on the one side and the spreading Talibanisation and jihadi anger on the other. That is the situation facing Musharraf today. The US is not yet prepared to write him off, but is already considering fall-back options if it has to. Inducting Benazir Bhutto as the Prime Minister to soften the arbitrary image of Musharraf is unlikely to work. She is not very popular among the Mohajirs, the Balochs and even large sections of the Sindhis, despite her being from Sindh. Large sections of senior Army officers do not feel comfortable with her. Moreover, it is doubtful how effective a woman Prime Minister will be against the jihadis, who would look upon her as apostate.

24. Pakistan is not Iran. An Islamic revolution of the Iranian model of 1979 is unlikely. But its FATA and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) are no different from Afghanistan. The Pashtun tribes, who inhabit these areas, are strongly anti-US and anti-Musharraf. The 9/11 terrorist strikes came from the Pashtun areas of Southern and Eastern Afghanistan. If there is a repeat of 9/11, it would have originated in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan.

25. The anger against both Musharraf and the US is so intense in the Pashtun belt on both sides of the Durand Line that no precise human intelligence has been forthcoming from the people of the area. The communications security of the Neo Al Qaeda is so strong that the available technical intelligence is weak. Despite nearly four years of its operations, the US? intelligence agencies have not been able to establish wherefrom As-Sahab, the Neo Al Qaeda?s Psychological Warfare unit, has been operating and silence it.

26. The US is thus in a dilemma. It is not in a position to act on its own due to inadequate intelligence. Nor is it in a position to depend on Musharraf due to his insincerity and ineffectiveness.

27. This dilemma is likely to continue for some time till the capability of the US for the collection of precise intelligence improves. Fears of instability in Pakistan due to political factors and insecurity due to the uncontrolled activities of the Neo Al Qaeda and the Neo Taliban would continue to confront the US policy-makers. Their bold statements of their intention to act are just whistling in the dark in the absence of precise intelligence.

28. There is no end in sight to the US military operations against the Neo Al Qaeda and the Neo Taliban even almost six years after the operations started. This is nothing to be surprised about. Victory in the war is not for tomorrow or the day after. There is no doubt that the US will one day ultimately prevail over the jihadi terrorists. It has to in order to protect its homeland. But that day is still far off.

29. The time has come for the US to have a revamped policy on Pakistan and to make it clear to Musharraf that the days of lollipops are over. That is what the recently passed Congressional Resolution seeking to tie future military and economic assistance to his actions against the jihadis does. This is a good beginning. This has to be followed by pressing him to hold free and fair elections and seek a new mandate from a new Assembly and not from the present one in which his followers have an engineered majority. The lollipops should be withheld if he does not do so.

30. India cannot remain unaffected by these developments. Some of the associates of Al Qaeda in the International Islamic Front (IIF) such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LET), the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM) are active in India for many years. The developing Indian relations with the US and the increasing US presence in India are a cause for provocation for Al Qaeda. Its intention to target India is already being reflected increasingly in the statements of its leaders. Al Qaeda as an Arab terrorist organization has not yet carried out a terrorist strike in Indian territory. But it is wanting to do so. India should take Al Qaeda's threats seriously and avoid an Al Qaeda orchestrated Pearl Harbour in its territory.

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[Back to the top](#)

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