Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan

Introduction

The Pakistani-based terrorist group Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has carried out numerous attacks against American interests in Pakistan and Afghanistan, has warned of future terror attacks inside the U.S.

While TTP originally focused its attacks on Pakistani and American installations in Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to implement shari'a, or Islamic law, the May 2010 attempted bombing in Times Square is indicative of the group's expanded focus of operations. Leaders of TTP, which facilitated, funded and directed the failed attack, claimed responsibility for the attempted bombing, describing it as revenge for the April 2010 killings of Al Qaeda's top two leaders in Iraq, as well as for perceived U.S. interference in Muslim countries.

"These individuals are dedicated terrorists, and they are attempting to extend their bloody reach into the American homeland," Robert Hartung, Assistant Director of Threat Investigations and Analysis Directorate in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, said. "They are a danger to the interests of the United States, to its facilities and its citizens."

Several months earlier, TTP orchestrated a suicide bombing at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan, in which seven American citizens were killed. TTP has since claimed that the bombing was a revenge attack for the death of Beitullah Mehsud, the former TTP leader who was reportedly killed in a drone attack in August 2009.

TTP leaders have since warned that they have placed operatives, poised to launch terror attacks, in the U.S. "Our fidaeen [commandos] have penetrated the terrorist America, we will give extremely painful blows to the fanatic America," TTP leader
Hakimullah Mehsud threatened. "The flames in our hearts will only be lightened when our Fidaaeen [sic] will deliver precise and destructive attacks on the terrorist America, bringing it down to its knees."

**Background**

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which operates in the tribal region along the Afghan-Pakistani borders, seeks to expel the Pakistani government and NATO and American forces from the region in order to establish shari'a, or Islamic law.

TTP, also known as the Pakistani Taliban, was formed in December 2007 by Beitullah Mehsud as a loose alliance of Pakistani militant groups. Pakistani and American officials aver that TTP, under Mehsud's leadership, was responsible for several terrorist attacks in Pakistan, including the December 2007 assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the September 2008 suicide bombing of a Marriott hotel in Islamabad.

Hakimullah Mehsud inherited the role of emir, or leader, of TTP after Beitullah Mehsud was reportedly killed in a drone attack in August 2009. Hakimullah Mehsud continued his predecessor's strategy of carrying out attacks against Pakistani military and government installations, as well as attacks on Western targets in the region. He was killed in a US drone attack on November 1, 2013. On November 7, 2013, TTP chose Mullah Fazlullah as its new emir. Fazlullah is, known for his extreme radio broadcasts and his role in ordering the shooting of Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani girl who has advocated for female education.

According to the U.S. State Department, TTP maintains a "symbiotic relationship" with Al Qaeda, drawing ideological guidance from the international terrorist organization while providing its operatives a safe haven in the Pashtun areas along the Afghan-Pakistani border. "They train together, they plan together, they plot together," Senior White House counterterrorism advisor John Brennan said. "They are almost indistinguishable."
While most of TTP’s terror plots and attacks have been confined within Pakistan and Afghanistan, the May 2010 attempted bombing in New York’s Times Square is indicative of the group's extended focus to launch a terror attack in the U.S. TTP facilitated, funded and directed the attempted bombing just five months after a TTP suicide bombing at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan killed seven American citizens.

In September, 2010, the U.S. government charged then-TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud with conspiracy to murder U.S. citizens abroad and conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction against U.S. citizens abroad for his involvement in the suicide bombing at the U.S. military base. That same month, the U.S. State Department listed Mehsud and Wali Ur Rehman, TTP’s leader in South Waziristan, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists and designated TTP as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Two years earlier, the Pakistani government banned TTP and froze its bank accounts to stem the flow of funds to TTP coffers and to stifle its terrorist activities. In response to these designations, TTP has increased its attacks against foreigners, including aid workers, journalists, diplomats and politicians.

**Campaign Against the U.S.**

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has carried out numerous attacks against American interests in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In recent months, the terrorist organization has not only attempted to carry out a terror attack in New York, but has also warned that it has placed additional operatives, poised to launch terror attacks, in the U.S.

TTP orchestrated the May 2010 attempted bombing in Times Square in which Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized American citizen from Pakistan, attempted to detonate his explosives-laden car at an intersection heavily populated with tourists and pedestrian traffic. Shahzad told federal authorities that he had previously received bomb-making training from TTP in Waziristan, an Al
**Qaeda** and Taliban stronghold which serves as a center for launching attacks against U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan. While in Pakistan, Shahzad was reportedly introduced to Qari Hussain, commander of TTP who trains suicide bombers, and made a "pact" with his trainers to "wage an attack inside the United States of America."

TTP claimed responsibility for the failed Times Square bombing in a series of videos released by Umer Studio, TTP's media wing. "From now on, THE MAIN TARGETS of our FIDAEEN [commandos] are AMERICAN CITIES," TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud warned in one of the videos. "Today on-wards, the direction of our JEHAD is AMERICAN States & Cities." Mehsud and Shahzad also appeared together in another video, recorded in Pakistan prior to the attempted bombing, in which they threaten that "we are planning to wage an attack on your side."

The attempted Times Square bombing, which marked the first time TTP attempted to launch an attack on U.S. soil, was preceded by several TTP attacks against American targets in Pakistan and Afghanistan. A month before the attempted attack on Times Square, TTP operatives carried out a suicide bombing at the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing six Pakistani citizens.

There have also been less dramatic cases of individuals within the US working with the TTP. In 2011, for example, **Hafiz Khan**, a naturalized citizen of Pakistani origin residing in Florida, was charged with providing material support to the organization. He has since been convicted.

In December 2009, Jordanian physician Human Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi (also known as Abu Dujanah al-Khorasani), under Mehsud's leadership, carried out a suicide bombing at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan. Seven American citizens – including several CIA officers and analysts – were killed in the attack, and six other Americans were injured.

Following the attack, Umer Studios released a video featuring Hakimullah Mehsud and al-Balawi posthumously. The men, seated together, claimed the bombing was a revenge attack for the death of Beitullah Mehsud, the former TTP
leader who was reportedly killed in a drone attack in August 2009. "We will always demand revenge for him inside America and outside," al-Balawi threatened. The U.S. government has since charged Hakimullah Mehsud for his alleged involvement in the attack.

TTP gunmen were also responsible for the November 2008 killing of Stefan Vance, an American citizen and USAID worker stationed in Peshawar, which borders the trial districts. The assassination came shortly after the Pakistani government banned TTP and froze its bank accounts, to which the terror group responded by increasing attacks against foreign aid workers, journalists and diplomats.

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