

Pak Taliban top don Mehsud dead in drone attack

ISLAMABAD: Baitullah Mehsud, Pakistan's most feared terrorist commander who established the Taliban as a force in huge swathes and unleashed attacks across the country, was killed in a US missile attack on the house he was hiding in.

Mehsud was killed along with his wife, brother-in-law and six bodyguards when an unmanned aircraft struck the house of one of his fathers-in-law in Zangara village last Wednesday.

Mehsud's death, which will give Pakistan's beleaguered army a breather, was confirmed by interior minister Rehman Malik.

The Tehreek-i-Taliban chief who had struck cities and military garrisons with impunity was killed in the drone strike, Malik said, adding he had received confirmation from Waziristan's political administration. Mehsud was buried in Nargasi village, about 5km from Zangara, last Wednesday night (Muslims must be buried before sunrise the next day).

The Tehreek-i-Taliban is currently said to be holding a shura (council) meeting to name his successor. In the running are Mehsud's spokesman Hakimullah Mehsud, an aide Azmatullah



Pakistani Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud in this February 2005 file photo.

Mehsud, and a Mufti Wali-ur Rahman. Mehsud's death deals a major blow to the Taliban movement in Pakistan. In his mid-30s and suffering from diabetes and kidney problems, Mehsud commanded around 20,000 warriors and was the most feared name in Pakistani cities and towns for a wave of suicide bombings since 2006.

Pakistan has arrested Jamil Ahmed, a Saudi Arabiabased Pakistani businessman who was a key financier of the 26/11 plot, but Islamabad is yet to officially confirm the development. Ahmed, who was held on August 5, reportedly transferred Rs 10-15 lakh to Shahid Jamil Riaz, one of the five accused who have been arrested by Pakistan. P 11

FACE OF TERROR

Son of a minor cleric, Mehsud was educated in a madrasa and worked as a truck driver.

The Tehreek-i-Taliban chief led 20,000 men, including hundreds of Uzbeks and Arabs. By 2006, he held sway over large parts of Waziristan

Pak govt declared Mehsud "mother of all evils". US state dept had a reward of \$5mn on his head. He was behind the Lahore police academy attack and the uprising in Swat. CIA saw him as chief suspect in killing of Benazir Bhutto, though he denied it

Some right wing political forces in Pakistan may have hidden sympathy for Mehsud's anti-American rhetoric but civilians have viewed him with suspicion and anger.

Mehsud and his fighters had claimed every high-profile terrorist act in Pakistan except the killing of former PM Benazir Bhutto in 2007. Then military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, had blamed Mehsud for Bhutto's assassination, but the man himself denied the charge, saying he would never kill a woman.

Musharraf booked for detaining judges: police

ISLAMABAD: Police in the Pakistani capital Tuesday registered a case against former President Pervez Musharraf for illegally detaining top judges during 2007 emergency rule a day after a court called for registration of the case.

Up to 60 judges including chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, were sacked and put under house arrest when they refused to show loyalty to Musharraf.

Musharraf was charged under various sections which carry at least three-year jail term, said Liaquat Niazi, Deputy Superintendent of Police at Secretariat Police Station, where the case was registered.

Niazi said that all aspects will be reviewed during the investigation as to which police officers and officials in Islamabad followed instructions from the former president.

A lawyer Aslam Iqbal Ghuman had filed a petition in the district court Islamabad, requesting the judge to order the police to register case against the former military president. Ghuman told reporters that he will also name more people to be booked in the case when he will record his statement with the police.

The petitioner said that the former President had put under house arrest the Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and around 60 judges of highest judiciary and their families when he imposed emergency rule on Nov. 3, 2007.

Terrorists have attacked Pakistan nuclear sites three times: Report

Terrorists have attacked three of Pakistan's military nuclear facilities in the past two years and there is a serious danger that they will gain access to the country's atomic arsenal, according to a journal published by the US Military Academy at West Point.

The report, written by Professor Shaun Gregory, a security specialist at Bradford University, comes amid mounting fears that the Taliban and al-Qaeda will breach Pakistan's military nuclear sites - most of which are in or near insurgent strongholds in the north and west of the country.

The most serious attack was a strike by two suicide bombers on the Wah Cantonment Ordnance Complex, thought to be one of Pakistan's main nuclear weapons assembly plants, about 18 miles northwest of Islamabad, in August 2008. The incident, which claimed 70 lives, was widely reported but little mention was made of the nuclear risk.

Other attacks included the suicide bombing of a nuclear missile storage facility at Sargodha, in central Punjab, in November 2007 and a suicide attack on Pakistan's nuclear airbase at Kamra, near Wah, on December 10, 2007.

In the Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel, Professor Gregory writes that the attacks illustrate "a clear set of weaknesses and vulnerabilities" in Pakistan's nuclear security regime. The strikes occurred as Pakistan sought to ramp up its nuclear capability - and as US special forces formulated contingency plans in the event of the country falling to insurgents.

A US Defense Intelligence Agency document revealed in 2004 that Pakistan had a nuclear arsenal of 35 weapons, a figure it planned to more



A man keeping guard in a village, walks through the rubble of a home destroyed during the recent military offensive against the Taliban, in Buner district.

than double by 2020.

In June, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, an al-Qaeda commander in Afghanistan, suggested that the group would show no hesitation in using nuclear weapons. "God willing... the mujahideen would take them and use them against the Americans," he told al-Jazeera television. Pakistan's security regime is modelled on the American system and includes the separation of warheads from detonators, which are stored in underground bunkers staffed by highly vetted personnel. Many details of the country's nuclear programme - including the location of many warheads and their exact number - remain unknown. However, most of the country's nuclear weapons sites

were built in the north and west of the country in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly to distance them from India - a ploy which now means many are located in insurgent areas. There are also concerns that vetting programmes may not identify Islamist sympathisers, whose influence extends far up Pakistan's military hierarchy.

Professor Gregory writes: "There is already the well-known case of two senior Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission scientists, Sultan Bashirrudin Mahmood and Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, who travelled to Afghanistan in 2000 and again shortly before 9/11 for meetings with Osama bin Laden himself, the content of which has never been disclosed."

THUMBNAILS

Nine killed in midair crash

NEW YORK: A small plane and a tour helicopter carrying five Italian tourists collided and fell into the Hudson River and onto the New Jersey waterfront on Saturday, and authorities believed all nine people aboard the two aircraft were killed.

The accident, which Mayor Michael Bloomberg called "not survivable," happened just after noon between Manhattan and New Jersey and was seen by thousands of people out enjoying a clear summer day.

40 killed as blasts rock Iraq

DUBAI: More than 40 Iraqis have been killed, victims of sectarian and ethnic conflict, as vehicle bombs went off in two separate areas on Monday morning.

Two truck bombs exploded in Khaznah, a Kurdish Shia village near the troubled northern city of Mosul. Two car bombs detonated separately in Baghdad, in an area having a mixed Sunni-Shia population.

The Khaznah attack killed 25 people, wounded 70 and flattened 35 homes. In Baghdad, the bombings targeted Shia daily wage earners, who were waiting to be hired for work at construction sites.

Analysts point out that both attacks appear premeditated. They say that in the Nineveh province, of which the Khaznah village is a part, there is high tension between Sunni Arabs and Kurds, revolving around the future status of the province. Expansionist Kurds want Nineveh province, or its parts to join the Kurdistan Regional Government, further to the north.

Gilani, Kayani visit Swat

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani made a confidence-building visit to Swat on Monday accompanied by Army chief Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, the Provincial Governor and two Chief Ministers.

This was the first visit by the country's political leadership after the anti-Taliban military operation in the valley apparently aimed at sending out the message that it is safe for people to return to their homes.

The United Nations said last Saturday that 7.6 lakh registered displaced people had returned to their homes in Swat and the adjoining Buner district.

The returns have been taking place since July 13, when the government officially declared victory in the military operations and asked people to return to their homes. But 1.3 million people are still displaced.

Jackson laid to rest: report

London: Michael Jackson has finally been laid to rest without any grand ceremony. The "Thriller" hit-maker, who died at the age of 50 on June 25, was buried at the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Hollywood Hills without a fan in sight, Mirror online reported.

Jackson's family has gone to extraordinary lengths to keep the exact location secret as they are reportedly worried that his followers will through the resting place of their idol.