

## **Scenario 178**

### **OPERATION ZARB e AZB [2014]**

#### **NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY [2013]:**

Resolutions of joint sessions of the parliament and the decisions of All Parties Conferences [APCs] were abundantly available on books and office registers but never acted upon by any regime. The minutes were recorded for media discussions and just to make fool of the poor populace.

In the previous resolutions, the PML[N] was fully represented by its top leadership. Each time a consensus of the national leadership was achieved to deal with terrorism and drones. Nawaz Sharif had earlier re-marked, on PPP's APC on **29<sup>th</sup> September 2011** that:

*"We will have to implement the resolutions unanimously adopted by the parliament to effectively counter the menace of terrorism. Had the previous resolutions of joint sessions of parliament been honoured and implemented, no APC was needed at all."*

Albeit; another APC, with similar recommendations and resolve, was there to mince the same words by all political parties – another total betrayal for the nation. The salient points to be noted were:

- *The Federal government was asked to open [or continue] **dialogue with insurgents and terrorists and Taliban** in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan especially the North Waziristan.*
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- *The Balochistan government was asked to open dialogue with Baloch dissidents and rebellious factions even sitting abroad.*
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- *The government was asked to move the UN to bring an end to drone attacks – without taking the Pak-Army into confidence.*
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- ***No party leader suggested that to tackle the menace of terrorism, civil summary courts be raised with enhanced powers and amended court procedures.***

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- ***Traditional criminal procedures and penal code [nearly 165 years old] regarding warrants, arrests, searches, police custody, confessions before the magistrates and of admissibility of evidence be changed in the Parliament which required only simple majority.***

Rather the September 2011's APC had an additional clause that 'a parliamentary committee will be constituted to oversee the implementation of earlier resolutions as well as the APC's resolution and progress on the same would be made public on a monthly basis', but all ..... ***tain tain phish.***

***Then two years later,*** it was the morning hours of **9<sup>th</sup> September 2013**, when the leadership of various political parties attended All-Party Conference [APC] at Prime Minister's House Islamabad with the aim to devise a joint strategy for lasting peace to the country and tranquillity to the nation. The moot was primarily meant to approve the blueprint of National Security Policy and to seek inputs from all the stakeholders about holding dialogue with Taliban to bring an end to the menace of extremism.

Imran Khan, before entering the APC moot, told the media men that his party would be going in the conference with a four-point agenda. ***He was of the view that dialogue with Taliban was the only solution to peace in the troubled areas.***

All the major political parties were extended invitation to APC, some parties having one-man representation in the National Assembly were left out; Sh Rasheed of *Awami* Muslim League was mainly affected while PML[Zia] Chief Ejazul Haq was also ignored. PPP's top leader Makhdoom Amin Faheem was also ignored and PPP's parliamentary leader Khurshid Shah was invited to the conference.

Astonishingly, the heads of other groups that had one-man representation in the Parliament, such as Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Awami National Party, were extended the invitation. PML[Q]'s Chief Ch Shujaat Hussain attended the APC and had postponed his scheduled visit to Kabul.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addressed the members – followed by a detailed briefing on terrorism and various options to deal with this curse that

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had acquired monstrous dimensions in Pakistan. Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Kayani and DG ISI Gen Zaheerul Islam also attended.

Chief of Army Staff Gen Kayani was the third keynote speaker. After that the floor was opened to the political leadership to express their views, float suggestions or put questions to the military leadership about the options to deal with the then prevailing lawlessness. It had already been declared that it would be an in-camera moot to frame a joint resolution.

The APC discussed whether the government should opt for talks with the Taliban. A comprehensive debate was there over the question of dialogue with the Taliban and the option of targeted operation in Karachi. Comprehensive briefings by the ISI, Intelligence Bureau and other security agencies were also available to the participants - rigorous measures were needed across the board to restore stability and order.

The APC noted with concern that the situation had been continuously deteriorating over the last several years and past efforts to control terrorist and extremist elements could not yield the desired results. All members were perturbed to note the continued non-implementation of the important recommendations relating to national security contained in:

- *The Declaration of All-Parties Conference organized by the JUI(F) on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013.*
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- *The Joint Declaration of the All Parties Conference for Peace convened by the ANP on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013.*
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- *Resolution adapting the Guidelines framed by the PCNS passed by the Joint Sitting of Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012.*
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- *The Resolution of the conference of the leaders of all political parties convened by PM Gilani on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2011.*
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- *The Resolution adopted by the Joint Sitting of Parliament in session on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011.*
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- *The Consensus Resolution passed by the in-camera Joint Sitting of Parliament on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008 and recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security in April 2009.*

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It was noted that all participants were fully conscious of their responsibility as chosen representatives of the people at that critical juncture. They all were also aware of the aspirations of the people of Pakistan for the fulfilment of the promises made by the nation's Founding Fathers for establishment of a sovereign state, secure in its boundaries and determined to promote "**friendship with all and enmity towards none**".

Having deliberated over the issues at length and in depth, they unanimously resolved [in fact repeated the same academic phrases with which they have been fooling the whole nation since five decades] that:

- *The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan are paramount and must be safe-guarded at all costs.*
- *We reaffirm our complete trust and confidence in our valiant Armed Forces and assure them of our full solidarity and support in overcoming any challenge to our national security or threat to our national interests;*
- *Thousands of precious lives of innocent men, women and children and defence & security personnel have been lost in the war and the illegal and immoral drone attacks and the blow-back from actions of NATO / ISAF forces in Afghanistan. There have also been colossal damages to social and physical infrastructure, huge financial losses and adverse effects on our economy.*
- *We call upon the Federal and Provincial Governments to provide all possible assistance for the rehabilitation of these families and other victims of terrorism, including internally displaced persons.*
- *We have noted with concern the continued use of drone attacks by the US; it is not only a continued violation of our territorial integrity but also detrimental to our resolve and efforts of eliminating extremism and terrorism from our country. The Federal Government should take the drone issue to the United Nation.*
- *We declare that we shall ourselves determine the means and mode of fighting this war in our national interest and shall not be guided by the US or any other country in this regard.*
- *In the APC of September 2011, it was declared that "**Give peace a chance**" would be the guiding central principle henceforth and that dialogue be initiated with our own people in the Tribal Areas. The*

*APCs in February 2013 reiterated that attaining peace through dialogue should be the first priority.*

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- *We have noted with grave concern the continued threat to life, property and business in the city of Karachi. While expressing our solidarity with the people of Karachi, we urge the Provincial and Federal Governments to make sustained and concerted efforts with complete impartiality and dedication for bringing Karachi back to its assigned glory and lights.*
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- *We are cognizant of the troubled situation in the Province of Balochistan. This meeting authorizes the Provincial Government of Balochistan to initiate the dialogue with all estranged Baloch elements inside and outside of the country to bring them back to national mainstream.*
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- *We urge the Federal Government to make all efforts for bringing peace to Afghanistan by continuous and sustained engagement with the government and people of Afghanistan; and*
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- *We repose full confidence in efforts of the Prime Minister and call upon the Federal Government to initiate dialogue with all stakeholders forthwith. Guiding principles should include respect for local customs and traditions, values and religious beliefs and the creation of an environment which brings peace to the region.*

**On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013;** Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif chaired a meeting over the implementation of the decisions made by the Cabinet Committee on National Security [CCNS]. The meeting was attended by the new Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif also. Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan, CJCSC Gen Rashad Mahmood and DG ISI Lt Gen Zaheerul Islam were also present.

The PML[N]'s spokesman had briefed to the media that PTI's Imran Khan, JI's Munawar Hasan and PML[N] had played a key role in changing a pro-US draft of the PPP's resolution, however, without implementing that draft, the PML[N] government moved ahead with another resolution.

Meanwhile, the IG Police Punjab confirmed that majority of the Taliban leadership operated from different cities of Punjab while trying to bring the armed forces face-to-face with the public on all fronts and in all areas. Interestingly, whenever armed forces acted against terrorists, as it was being done in Karachi those days, the same political figures came forward in support of terrorists by terming them '**their innocent workers**' and started

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lobbying against Pakistan at world forums terming the effective actions as **'US Dictates'**.

Amidst other things, talks with the Taliban and ensuring the execution of a security increase on the Pak-Afghan border, went hot on the agenda.

*Full details of the decisions taken in that meeting and the reactions shown by the Taliban are available in: **'The Living History of Pakistan' Vol-II** [2016], pp 2174-78, GHP Surrey UK.*

### **NEGOTIATIONS WITH TTP FAILED:**

The net-result: PML[N] government got what it wanted from the APC.

PTI's Imran Khan termed the resolution and other decisions in line with the PTI manifesto. He claimed that 40 percent of what had been adopted in the APC was part of PTI's manifesto and expressed full satisfaction over the outcome. JI leader Liaquat Baloch had fully endorsed the policy of dialogue. But how to implement the decisions – no one questioned nor was the government serious about it.

No one had bothered that in the whole game of terrorism management, the stakeholders were not only domestic like the government and the Taliban; the Pakistani military, Afghan and US governments were all important stakeholders. Much depended on how supportive they could be towards the initiative of the Pakistani government.

The process was so fragile that a drone attack could derail everything achieved with labour of months. Intelligentsia and many analysts were not very hopeful of evolving consensus as all such previous efforts had failed to yield any result.

The PML[N] government was depending a lot on the top leadership of the JUI, including Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Samiul Haq. The two leaders were in constant touch with various leaderships of the Taliban, but they were saving their own skin being in nearby districts of the FATA.

How effectively and swiftly the PML[N] government moved forward in dealing with the militants and achieving its objectives – it was a total failure; the history pages are there to tell the truth.

Pakistan's think gurus also placed Imran Khan in shades while observing:

*"Whatever happened to not politicking on terrorism Imran Khan? Let it be decided that your pressure led everyone to call for peace talks. If they too fail like the last 16 times, you should come to the people and accept that the whole time; you had been misleading the public for your own political benefit.*

*The writing on wall is very clear, Talks with Taliban will fail and monster of terrorism will emerge bigger as ever. Will IK take responsibility for that failure?*

*My guess is he will not. Its going to be hard days for this government and for the nation, trapped between pseudo intellectuals and terrorists; Taliban & the LeJ."*

It was available on record that peace negotiations with the Taliban had earlier failed numerous times before even then the Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif announced his desire to try that way again through approval of the APC dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

**On 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014;** negotiations should have been collapsed after the **slaughtering of 23 Pakistani Frontier Corps soldiers** by the Taliban which had been held by the insurgents since 2010 but, even then, the political pundits in Pakistan vowed to continue with the talks. Thus a month-long ceasefire was reached **on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014**.

The first session of talks, between committees appointed by the Pakistani Government and the Taliban, was held **on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014** at Khyber House in Islamabad. The Taliban did not name representatives from their ranks, instead nominating pro-Taliban religious figures to represent them.

As stated earlier, the Taliban called for the implementation of Sharia in Pakistan; the Government of Pakistan demanded the cessation of hostilities, insisting that talks be held within the framework of the Pakistani constitution. Besides the meetings at Khyber House, negotiations also involved helicopter travel by government representatives to the areas under militant control near the Pak-Afghan border.

**On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014;** the TTP formally ended the ceasefire. Taliban infighting within their own factions since March 2014 had killed more than 90 militants. The strife, triggered by differences between the Mehsud group

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[led by Sheheryar Mehsud] and another TTP faction [led by Khan Said Sajna], impeded the negotiations.

The Pakistan army was ready for an operation but the sitting PML[N] government could not make a decision to convey a go ahead signal; PPP had also wasted his five years tenure in the same like negotiations during which the TTP had gone monstrously strong.

#### **ZARB e AZB OPERATION LAUNCHED:**

**On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2014;** 10 militants armed with automatic weapons, a rocket launcher, suicide vests, and grenades attacked Jinnah International Airport Karachi, Pakistan. 36 people were killed, ***including all 10 attackers***, and 18 others were wounded. The militant organisation Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan [TTP] initially claimed responsibility for the attack.

The attackers were foreigners of Uzbek origin who belonged to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU], an Al Qaeda-linked militant organisation working closely with TTP. The TTP later confirmed that the attack was a joint operation they executed with the IMU, who independently admitted to having supplied personnel for the attack.

The Karachi Airport Attack pushed the Pakistan's Army to advise halt the then on-going peace talks with militants on the backstage; though the Taliban had categorically declared the ending of any success hope in mid-April earlier.

While talking about details of ***Investigations into Karachi Airport Attack***, the Director General [DG] of the Sindh Rangers, Gen Rizwan Akhtar, confirmed that the attackers were foreign nationals and appeared to be Uzbeks. This was already confirmed by the TTP on ***11<sup>th</sup> June 2014***, while the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan also accepted the involvement of its fighters behind the attack. Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan also confirmed that foreign elements in coordination with local elements were involved in the events.

The Afghan ambassador to Pakistan was summoned after the said attack; the Pakistani officials lodged a protest over anti-Pakistani militants finding sanctuary inside Afghanistan, from where they were launching those killing attacks. ***Indian ammunition and Indian-made guns were recovered***



*from the dead militants*, alluding to allegations of Indian involvement behind the attack.

**Geo TV Channel** firstly posted the Rangers Chief's statement on Twitter about Indian weapons recovered from the scene. The **Daily Times**, **The Nation** and **SAMAA TV** reported that several made-in-India "**Factor-8 injections**" were retrieved during the search operation. These injections were being used by the Indian Army in frontline combat to stop bleeding from injuries. The injections were not available in the world market.

The **National Crisis Management Cell** of the Ministry of Interior said weapons and explosives used in the attack were transported into the airport building before the militants stormed it, leading to questions over infiltration and flaws in security. A First Information Report [FIR] was filed in the airport police station on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014 against the TTP, in which its top leadership including Fazlullah and Shahidullah Shahid were nominated.

**Karachi Airport Attack** sparked widespread reactions on social media in Pakistan, receiving condemnations from politicians and journalists. Pakistani media reacted strongly to the events, with major newspapers and news channels questioning the government's attempt at negotiations with militants, the failure of security apparatus in preventing such an attack, the safety of other sensitive installations, and with many commentators calling for renewed action against militants.

However, the attack was also condemned by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, while Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, TCA Raghavan, stated "*we strongly condemn the recent act of terrorism in Karachi that is a major setback to regional peace and stability.*" Raghavan denied allegations of Indian involvement in the attack.

The Pak-Army planned to lead for an all-out military offensive in North Waziristan and surrounding tribal areas along the Afghan border. In retaliation to the Taliban's un-ending attacks on the security forces, the military had to launch air-strikes targeting terrorist hideouts in the areas bordering Afghanistan even before the formal announcement of an Operation.

**On 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014**; the Army decided to intensify air strikes on militant hideouts following a conference between top military commanders at the GHQ Rawalpindi. A joint military offensive was planned by the Pakistan Armed Forces against various militant groups, including the *Tehrik e Taliban* Pakistan [TTP], the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [JeJ], al-Qaeda, *Jundallah* and the Haqqani network. The said plan was named as **Zarb e Azb** Operation.

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Pak-Army started its operation with aerial strikes in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency of FATA near the Afghan border, during which nine militant hideouts were destroyed and about 25 militants were killed. The area was believed to be used as a shelter for several anti-state militant factions and foreign fighters from Central Asian states.

**On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014;** the US conducted two successive drone strikes near Miranshah in North Waziristan, after nearly six-month break in US drone campaigns; 16 suspected militants were killed. The killed militants included four Uzbeks, a few key Afghan Taliban commanders and members, and two members of TTP Punjab.

**On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014;** the Operation **Zarb e Azb** was extended to North Waziristan along the Pak-Afghan border as a renewed effort against militancy because the TTP and the IMU claimed responsibility for the fatal attack on the Karachi Airport. About 30,000 Pakistani soldiers were involved in **Zarb e Azb**, described as "comprehensive" to flush out all foreign and local militants hiding in North Waziristan.

That day, Pakistan Air Force [PAF] fighter jets bombed eight militant hideouts in North Waziristan, during which at least 150 militants were killed – mostly the Uzbek fighters and the dead included insurgents linked to the airport attack too. Abu Abdur Rehman Almani, a key Uzbek militant commander and a mastermind of the attack, was also killed. Some foreign militants from the **East Turkestan Islamic Movement**, and **Uyghur separatist group from western China**, were also among the dead.

The Pak-Army's combat troops had encircled militant bases in the towns of Mirali and Miranshah. The Afghan National Security Forces [ANSF] were asked to seal the border on their side so that militants do not escape. The operation involved the Air Force, Navy artillery, tanks and ground troops.

Inter-Services Public Relations [ISPR] spokesperson Maj Gen Asim Bajwa released a statement:

*"Using North Waziristan as a base, these terrorists had waged a war against the state of Pakistan and had been disrupting our national life in all its dimensions, stunting our economic growth and causing enormous loss of life and property.*

*Our valiant **armed forces have been tasked to eliminate these terrorists** regardless of hue and color, along with their sanctuaries - .... these enemies of the state will be denied space anywhere across the country."*

The **Operation Zarb e Azb**, however, soon received widespread support from the Pakistani political, defence and civilian sectors. As a consequence, the overall security situation improved and terrorist attacks in Pakistan dropped to a six-year low since 2008.

A week earlier to the **Operation Zarb e Azb's** formal announcement, the US government passed a bill to provide military assistance to Pakistan in the next fiscal year, but the US administration was required to certify to Congress that Islamabad was conducting military operations in North Waziristan. It was called the ***Carl Levin National Defence Authorisation Act for fiscal year 2015***; the US administration was bound to submit, twice a year, a report on security cooperation with Pakistan.

One provision of this bill restricted the US Secretary of Defence from waiving the certification requirements for releasing \$300 million of the \$900 million Coalition Support Fund. The Secretary, however, could only issue a waiver by certifying that:

*"Pakistan has undertaken military operations in North Waziristan that have significantly disrupted the safe haven and freedom of movement of the Haqqani network."*

The US Secretary of Defence was also required to make available to the intelligence committees a copy of that six monthly report. The provision limited the total amount of Coalition Support Fund to \$1.2 billion that could be provided in fiscal year 2015. Of this amount, the amount of CSF that could be provided to Pakistan was limited to \$900 million. The provision also extended for one year certain notification and certification requirements relating to CSF payments.

### **ZARB E AZB ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Referring to **'the Washington Post'** dated **31<sup>st</sup> October 2015**:

A multi-day operation in southern Afghanistan in October 2015 involved 200 Special Operations forces and scores of American air-strikes targeted **"probably the largest al-Qaeda training camp found in the 14-year Afghan war"**; the senior US Commander in Afghanistan Gen John F Campbell himself supervised the operation.

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The camp was being used by AQIS, an acronym for al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent; its formation was announced a year earlier by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, believed [*by the US*] to be based somewhere in Pakistan.

The said operation was announced by the US military on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2015, hit one training area that sprawled over 30 square miles and another small one that was about one square mile; whereas the Afghan troops were involved in the ground assault, with 63 air-strikes launched to cover them. Some 160 al-Qaeda fighters were reportedly killed. The training camps were found in Kandahar province's Shorabak district, a sparsely populated area along Afghanistan's southern border with Pakistan; the camp and its facilities were established there afresh – since a year only or less.

The US General held:

*"It's a place where you would probably think you wouldn't have AQ..... This was really AQIS, and probably the largest training camp-type facility that we have seen in 14 years of war.*

*This targeted camp was discovered after a raid this summer on another al-Qaeda facility in the Barmal district of Paktika province. That rugged, mountainous district borders North Waziristan of Pakistan's tribal areas. It was a very complex target set over several days.*

*Really analyzing it, the enemy continues to evolve **as Pakistan launches operations on its side of the border to root out insurgent fighters** and the Islamic State competes with al-Qaeda for global influence."*

Gen Campbell urged that the things changed with time; what was good here in 2010 or 2011 might not necessarily be good today. The training camps were hit just days before President Obama announced on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 that ***'he will be keeping 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of 2016 and 5,500 into 2017, rather than reducing the force to about 1,000 service members by the end of 2016.'*** Obama decided so after a months-long review and a bloody year in which insurgents had taken control of cities like Kunduz in the north and Musa Qala in Helmand province.

Michael Kugelman, a senior associate for South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson Centre in Washington added his comments that:

***"AQIS began migrating from North Waziristan to southern Afghanistan last year [2014] with other al-Qaeda-linked groups after Pakistan launched a military offensive in the region. Timing was everything. It would have been helpful to the governments in Kabul and Washington if Pakistan had done so a few years earlier, when the US had more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan."***

The Americans believed that Al Qaeda always kept a deep bench of militant allies, including fighters who were in the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban.

Brig Gen David Julazadeh, Commander of US Air Force Aviation in Afghanistan told that the 455th Expeditionary Air Wing that he commanded from Bagram Airfield North of Kabul was "intimately involved" in that Kandahar operation with a wing of F-16 fighter jets, along with armed MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper Drones flying from Jalalabad Airfield and Kandahar Airfield, respectively.

**On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016;** the DG Inter-Services Public Relations [ISPR] Asim Bajwa gave an exhaustive rundown of progress made during Operation Zarb e Azb; while saying that:

*"In 2014, the security environment when Operation Zarb e Azb started was such that the country faced various instances of terrorism. There were 311 IED blasts, 74 attacks, and 26 suicide blasts in 2014.*

*The salient operational guidelines for Zarb e Azb were that it would be an indiscriminate operation, it would avoid collateral damage and it would be mindful of human rights."*

The ISPR issued written summary of progress made during Operation **Zarb e Azb:**

- War against terror had cost Pakistan \$107bn
- North Waziristan, Shawal, Khyber Agency cleared by the Army
- 900 terrorists killed during Operations Khyber I and Khyber II
- 66pc locals have returned to tribal areas
- Daesh designs in Pakistan 'foiled', 309 arrested
- Over 21,000 IBOs carried out across Pakistan, nearly 1,400 people arrested
- 536 soldiers killed, 2,272 injured during IBOs
- 3,500 terrorists killed in IBOs

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- Afghan govt, Nato forces did not take adequate action against terrorists
- Poor deployment of armed forces along Afghan side of the border
- Gates to be built at all crossing points along Pak-Afghan border

DG ISPR also displayed a map showing the concentration of terrorists in North Waziristan. He held that no one could think of going to North Waziristan as it was the epicentre [of terrorism] and home to the largest communications infrastructure. He added that:

*"Before we started the operation, Pakistan had informed all stakeholders – political, diplomatic and military. The Afghan president, political govt, military leadership, Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan were all informed of the operation and requested that if terrorists cross the border, they would have to catch them.*

*They are your [Afghani] people; you will have to take action against them. But that didn't happen."*

When the Operation **Zarb e Azb** was geared up, the terrorists went towards Khyber Agency, the Pak-Army relocated them and conducted operations Khyber I and Khyber II. The forces recovered weapons, ammunition, IEDs, explosives, communications equipment, hate literature and discovered tunnels. ***There was enough explosive material to carry out five IED blasts every day for 21 years. They could have caused 134,000 casualties with the amount of material we recovered.***

*[There are 18 major crossing points between Pakistan and Afghanistan along the 2,600 km long shared border. Pak-Army often suggested to seal those areas so that terrorists from across the border don't infiltrate and vice versa.]*

North Waziristan has very challenging terrain but despite that, Pak-Army went there and cleared all their hideouts, caves and tunnels. But Khyber was even more challenging because of its snowy mountains and was home to hideouts from the Afghan war and had a very high density of IEDs. The Army killed 900 terrorists during the Khyber operation and dismantled the network of terrorists that was threatening areas in the nearby settled areas like Peshawar, Charsadda and Mardan.

Lastly, the Pak-Army started operations in *Shawal*, where all the terrorists from North Waziristan had moved. It was their last stronghold and they had nowhere to go after that. The operation went well and the troops cleared

every village, every house, every school and every mosque in Shawal. The said area is worldly known for its Pine nuts economy.

### **'DAESH' IN PAKISTAN:**

The DG ISPR during the said briefing disclosed that **Daesh** – another name for the militant Islamic State group – had made their presence and visibility even in Islamabad [*due to utter weakness of the political hierarchy in Pakistan since 2008 obviously*].

The **Daesh** had organised themselves into two groups, the **Kutaiba Haris** [planning wing] and **Kutaiba Mubashir** [militant wing] and were trying to get local criminal and terrorist groups to join them. However, they were frustrated when the Pak-Army launched their Intelligence-based Operations [IBOs]. **Daesh's** core group had 20-25 people who had started their activities from attacks on the **Faisalabad 'Dunya'** TV, Lahore **'Din News'** office, **'Express News'** Sargodha office, and **'ARY News'** Islamabad office.

About 309 people who were part of **Daesh** organisation were arrested, including Afghans, people of Middle Eastern origin and about 157 facilitators. Even people who did wall-chalking and graffiti for **Daesh** in Pakistan for Rs:1,000 [£7 only] were also arrested.

The **Daesh** group had once planned to launch attacks in the capital's diplomatic enclave; particularly on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on foreign embassies and consulates including their employees. They had also planned to target Islamabad airport and prominent public figures.

To tackle Daesh group and their affiliates, the Pak-Army carried out '**Over 21,000 IBOs, special IBOs and combing operations**' across the country targeting terrorists, their facilitators, sleeper cells, financiers and abettors till ending August 2016.

**[Around 2,578 were carried out in Balochistan, 9,308 in Punjab, 5,878 in Sindh and 3,263 in Khyber PK. Special IBOs commenced the night the suicide blast at Lahore's Gulshan-i-Iqbal park earlier that year. Till then, 477 special IBOs had been carried out, with 1,399 people apprehended.]**

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The DG ISPR told the media that about 66 per cent of locals had returned till then to areas badly affected by terrorism but it was not enough to take them back to their homes only. Reconstruction was mainly required to ensure that the areas were better off than before; to create opportunities for livelihood and revive the local economy.

Infrastructural development projects in the region included a 70km road inside North and South Waziristan, a 75km road from Peshawar to Torkham, solar-powered water schemes and the Mirali hospital project. In addition, market complexes, mosques, schools and colleges were announced and planned to be built in these areas.

Meanwhile, the statistics from a comparative study of the US State Department's country reports on terrorism for 2014 and 2015 had shown a greater decrease in the number of people died and injured in terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

The comparative study, released during the same days of ending 2016 held that there were a total of 1,009 terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2015, compared to 1,823 in 2014, which was a 45 percent decrease. The total deaths in the attacks — 1,081 in 2015 compared to 1,761 in 2014 — went down by 39pc.

The total number of people injured in terrorist attacks dropped by 53pc, from 2,836 in 2014 to 1,325 in 2015. Injuries per attack also decreased from 1.61 in 2014 to 1.36 in 2015.

The most noticeable improvement was in kidnapping and hostage-taking cases, which decreased to 269 in 2015 from 879 in 2014.

Astonishingly, as per referred US studies, in several countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, the Philippines, Syria and Turkey, terrorist attacks and total deaths had increased in 2015. Although terrorist attacks took place in 92 countries in 2015, more than 55pc of all attacks took place in five countries: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nigeria. And 74pc of all deaths due to terrorist attacks took place in five countries: Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria and Pakistan.

The said American sources, however, told that in addition to ***Boko Haram in West Africa***, the most active of these IS branches were located in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya and Yemen; daily '***Dawn***' dated ***5<sup>th</sup> September 2016*** is referred.