

Scenario 151

KILLING SPREE ENTERS 2014

TTP EXPANDED TERROR ATTACKS:

See the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [HRCP]'s report as appeared in the 'Express Tribune' of 18th January 2014:

"The year 2013 was the deadliest one for Karachi so far. As many as 3,251 people were killed or they died from the several incidents of violence in the city. The city has seen a sharp increase in killings in the past few years with 1,981 people killed in 2010, 2,382 killed in 2011 and 3,105 killed in 2012."

Of the killings and deaths in 2013, nearly 1,000 people who had no affiliation with any political party also lost their lives in targeted attacks. The number of political workers targeted and killed was 268, and 108 people were killed due to their sectarian beliefs.

189 people in Karachi were killed either during police encounters or due to torture during police custody. The police force did, however, lose 169 personnel, apart from 22 Rangers men and other law enforcers. They also managed to gun down 28 members of banned outfits.

Lyari gang war claimed the high share; of the entire year, August was the bloodiest month with 334 killings or deaths. HRCP Chairperson Zohra Yusuf told while referring to the targeted operation that started in September [2013], the operation showed some improvements.

Karachi was then facing the biggest challenge of its era - terrorist groups like Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan [TTP], were becoming stronger and making their presence felt in Karachi. The incident of men slaughtered at a shrine was alarming; the Rangers were doing enough - but the Taliban killed whoever they wanted to.

Out of collective fear, children stopped going to school; they even shuddered when going to the bathroom alone. They could recall the events of

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showering bullets and blood splashes of their dearest ones happened before their tiny eyes. The whole families were often left torn apart by such incidents; under the genuine impression that they were being targeted due to their sectarian beliefs or political affiliations.

In reality, however, none of Karachi's major political and religious parties, save for Imran Khan's PTI, were keen on fully cleansing the city of its militant outfits. Their initial support of Karachi's top political parties for the operation was mainly out of a desire to curry favour with the army, hoping that the military would target their party's enemies and let their militants go Scot free.

The net effect: Wealthy Karachiites fled to Dubai, Islamabad, or the west. The cost of business in a port city with more than 6,000 factories closed due to continuing extortion. The common man lived in a state of fear, afraid of being shot by robbers for a mere cell phone. Gains from limited operations against militants in the city were fleeting. And the city's major parties were unwilling to make sacrifices to reduce the city's violence.

Referring to the 'Express News' dated 8th February 2014;

"During the last 5-months of the Karachi targeted operation, 79 police officers have been killed so far since the start of the operation; a report was presented to the IG of Sindh Police. The targeted operation was ordered by the prime minister in Karachi....on 7th September 2013."

In September 2013; 15 police officers were killed during the operation, 12 in October, 11 in November and 11 in December; while in January 2014, 25 police officers lost their lives and five in February till the date of above news.

Also, 15671 suspects were arrested while a total of 804 encounters and 10254 raids launched; also recovered 282 kgs explosives, 167 hand grenades and explosive devices, and seven rocket and rocket launchers. 3430 pistols, 84 Kalashnikovs, three light machine guns and four suicide jackets were also seized during the operation up till now.

The diverse and densely populated mega-city had not seen peace for years. It has been the home to mafias, terrorists, target killers and criminals affiliated with political parties and other groups aggressively pursuing vested interests. Karachi's problems had taken years to accumulate owing to negligence and complicity.

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Since the targeted operation in Karachi started, MQM has been complaining about the abduction and extrajudicial killing of its members at the hands of Law Enforcement Agencies [LEAs]. However, the presence of criminal elements within the MQM remained a fact; especially since a JIT report submitted in the Supreme Court [SC] in 2011 had pointed out. Action was required against all such individuals, regardless of their associations.

TALIBAN HIT POLICE COLLEGE:

On 13th February 2014; an explosion occurred targeting a police bus near *Razzaqabad police training college* in Karachi's Shah Latif Town in which 13 policemen were killed and 47 others, including civilians, were wounded. The attack came early in the morning. At the face of it, an explosive-laden car hit the police bus transporting officials for security duty.

The Pakistani Taliban claimed the responsibility of that explosion; TTP's spokesman Shahidullah Shahid told the media that it was a revenge attack for killing militants. *'The TTP workers were victims to targeted killings in Mardan, Swabi and Peshawar'*; the spokesman explained.

SSP Farooq Awan, head of a special investigative unit, said the bus was making a U-turn after leaving a training centre when a small van struck it. However, the CID Unit refuted the claim because no body-parts of suicide bomber were found from the crime spot to support the notion. Most probably, the blast appeared to have been carried out using a remote - controlled detonator; 25 to 30 kg of explosives were used in the attack.

About 50-55 policemen were boarding the bus; going to various points for duty from their training centre. The rear portion of the targeted bus was completely destroyed in the explosion. The intensive blast was heard in a radius of two kilometres.

During that year's Taliban rule over Karachi, see a script from *'Washington Post'* dated 14th February 2014;

".....Armoured car sales have soared; and some new luxury apartments feature bullet proof glass. Local police officers, slain this year at an average rate of one per day, are demoralized. And now even the journalists are trying to arm themselves.

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Pakistan's biggest city has been plagued by crime and political violence for decades, with Urdu and Pashto - speaking groups battling for influence. But the bloodshed is worsening as the domestic Taliban insurgency expands."

During those months, TTP militant group was largely responsible for 90pc prickles in terrorist attacks in Karachi. The bloodshed in this city reflected the Pakistani Taliban's growing national offensive against the government and religious minorities. But the insurgents are also using violence to take control of some city neighbourhoods, where ordinary residents are forced to contribute to their cause. The mayhem was raising concerns that one of the world's most populous cities was teetering on the brink of lawlessness.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was depending much on peace talks launched in January that year with the Pakistani Taliban but the city's residents were deeply worried as if the people were just waiting their turn to be killed. A couple hundred thousand Taliban sympathizers were live in the city of 20 million population but the number of active militants was far less — 10,000 to 15,000, including those aligned with groups such as *Lashkar-e-Taiba* [LeT] and *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* [LeJ].

Zia Ur Rehman, author of the book '*Karachi in Turmoil*' told the 'Washington Post' [paper dated 14th February 2014 is referred] '*...at least 10 percent of the city's residents live in neighbourhoods effectively controlled by the Pakistani Taliban*'. Till then 17 ANP party officials were killed in his central Karachi district alone by Taliban insurgents seeking to control Pashtun neighbourhoods.

The fact remained that the rise of Taliban influence was making the city more ungovernable. During prior conflicts between politically and ethnically based groups, there was usually someone who could step in to ease tensions because the various actors had financial and cultural stakes in the city - but the Taliban were not answerable to anyone.

In one killing that shocked Karachi city; head of the CID Police SSP Chaudhry Aslam was assassinated on 9th January 2014; the full details of that event are given on separate pages of this volume. Police could do nothing. Karachi's police force was then roughly the size of New York City's — even though its population was three times as big — but poor Karachi police always felt besieged and plagued.

Indeed, as the threat from militancy grew, other criminals found more space to terrorize residents through kidnapping, extortion and robbery. Criminals increasingly claimed to be working for the Taliban, when they

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were not connected to any gang – just to have better bets, simply displaying themselves as ‘terror for rent’.

On the top of it, the most telling sign of the city's troubles was the sense of helplessness gripping the police force. The bombproof police cars were able to handle 25 kilos of explosives only whereas the Taliban had used more than 200 pounds of explosives in killing SSP Chaudhry Aslam as said earlier. If the militants attacked, it was just not possible to survive.

The ‘Wall Street Journal’ [WSJ] in an essay dated 13th February 2014 correctly pointed out that:

“Karachi is likely to pay a steeper price if efforts by PM Nawaz Sharif's government to forge a peace deal with the al Qaeda affiliate's leadership in tribal areas collapsed and a military operation launched there.

The Pakistani Taliban are a national threat, with Karachi providing the group a vital financial lifeline. Money raised in Karachi from extortion, land-grabbing, kidnapping and robberies is sent to the group's leadership in the tribal areas along the Afghan border, security officials believed.

Mr Sharif, concerned that his economic-revival plans would be undermined by spreading mayhem, approved to commence a security operation in September [2013].”

ANATOMY OF KCY OPERATION [2013]:

The said operation's implementation depended largely on the Sindh's ruling government of the PPP, an opposition party. There were signs of tension between the Rangers and the provincial government of PPP that to what extent Rangers could be empowered while launching day to day operations along with the Karachi police.

Ahmed Chinoy, head of the Citizens Police Liaison Committee [CPLC], a statutory body that works with the police to reduce crime, said parts of Karachi were still too dangerous for regular patrols, while the crackdown mostly targeted regular crime. The focus of the operation was on other crimes, thus the militants got breathing space and took advantage.

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During the years of turmoil, five different police chiefs served Karachi, disrupting the battle against crime. They could not deliver mostly because that at any given time, there were only 7,000 officers available to be deployed on the streets of 23million population city, out of a total force strength of 27,000—9,000 officers were on personal security duty for politicians and other officials. Policemen were being killed day in, day out but the operation continued with an additional challenge of fighting Taliban.

On 2nd May 2014; there were four dead bodies of the MQM workers found riddled with bullets. MQM launched protest that they were arrested first – then thrown out dead; why so?

The Sindh government has been hesitantly claiming that Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah was the one with ultimate authority on issues related to the operation. If the Sindh Chief Minister was actually calling the shots, then the MQM could have been briefed with facts before strikes and protests.

Till mid 2014, the Rangers were driving through Karachi's 'no-go areas'; raids were fearlessly conducted, arrests were made confidently by the Rangers in the whole city; especially when there were five Inspector Generals of Police changed in three years. Amongst them Shahid Hayat and Ghulam Hyder Jamali were appreciated most by the police and the Lyari residents equally; they had rescued these people with inadequate police strength.

Success was there but the police and Rangers couldn't convince their political bosses to stick to the code of the two forces; civil and military. If Karachi had to be fixed, then politically-backed militias and mafias – the construction-based "raitee bajree" gangs, the land-grabbers, the water hydrant crews, the extortion expert "*bhatta*" collection parties, even the police's own "beaters" – had to be targeted, not just the Taliban wreaking havoc on the outskirts of the killer city. And the process also needed development plans implemented seriously.

The operation seemingly went futile because the political establishments of Nine Zero and Bilawal House dragged their feet with bureaucracy every now and then. Meanwhile, Gen Rizwan Akhtar also left for Islamabad on his three star promotion in mid summer of 2014. The General told 'the News' in grim tone that:

"The operation made excellent progress for about three to four months in late 2013 and early 2014. However, the usefulness of the operation started diminishing due to lack of political will and

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unwillingness to stop supporting criminals - and, of course, bad governance."

On 2nd September 2014; Ghulam Haider Jamali, IG Police Sindh, claimed that improvement had been witnessed in law and order situation of Karachi; substantial reduction in incidents pertaining to murder, kidnapping for ransom and bank robberies etc. during the past three months. However, incidents of sectarian & ethnic violence in Karachi, continued though less; minority religious sects and groups were frequently targeted.

In 2014, the HRCP reported that 2,909 people were killed in Karachi as a result of violence including sectarian enmity. These violent incidents often lead to retaliatory acts and demonstrations that used to spiral out of control quickly. Over 142 police and Rangers were killed in Karachi in 2014.

The numbers appear impressive; a briefing on the Karachi operation, given by a Sindh Rangers top official to the Senate Standing Committee on Interior, stated that the Rangers had conducted 3,696 raids, arrested 6,835 suspects and seized 5,214 weapons during that first year of the new mandate.

The briefing claimed that the operation had wiped out the TTP network in Karachi [*the later picture divulged that it was not true*], though the crackdown's impact on various categories of criminal offences was still to be evaluated. Police and the people were correct in understanding that the operation had brought down crime by 50pc at least, with the steepest drop in murders committed along political or ethnic lines.

However, Karachi has always been a complex setup where multiple stakeholders keep their conflicting agendas; if one could analyse the political, sectarian and criminal cartels and their manifestos. The decline in political or ethnic murders was indeed noticeable by the international media even. The Rangers' presence with new bundle of power and strategy played a role in reducing friction between political activists – especially through elimination of criminal gangs working in the garb of political affiliations.

The Karachi Operation had been going on in Karachi since about a year but cogent results were still awaited; though 2940 people, including 16 rangers and 170 police officers, were killed in the operation; 'Dunya News TV' dated 18th September 2014 is referred.

In police encounters, about 16000 suspects were arrested whereas 480 were killed. Though the police force and Rangers were struggling to maintain law and order throughout the city, but Karachi remained plagued with

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target killings, terrorist activities and crimes like kidnappings, murder and extortion – with much lesser extent though.

After the 2013 elections, the main political parties in Karachi, PPP, MQM and ANP, went vulnerable with heavily mandated PML[N] asserting its writ at the centre. This time MQM remained less privileged because of the PPP's limited inclination; mainly because of 'unwanted' and unaccepted role of their leadership in London which used to hurl abuses over the military set up every now and then and without any cogent cause.

Meanwhile, nearly 400 raids on the *People's Amn Committee* during the course of the operation brought down large scale, gang-related violence in Lyari, but it is relevant to point out that almost as soon as the operation began, the gangs' top tier leadership had fled the area, many went abroad along with their dollars and assets. The people immediately felt relief and also the clue that who were behind the loot and killing extravaganzas in Karachi.

Under heading of the TTP in Karachi, the Rangers held that they had arrested 760 terrorists in 403 raids on militant hideouts, but the media reports highlighted that sectarian killers — one faction of whom was said to be closely associated with the TTP — continued to carry on their business without hindrance; might be a chance or a miss-read but it remained a fact.

The above fact was also proved when close family members of prominent Shiite clergymen were targeted and killed, indicating a degree of planning which points to the existence of determined, well-organised of 'other sect's gangs'. The high command of Rangers and Police were required to sort out those simmering controversies amongst the general populace – but they perhaps remained busy in attending more important administrative issues of Karachi.

On 1st October 2014; Sindh Rangers gave briefing to the Senate Standing Committee on Interior on the Karachi operation; stating that the Rangers had conducted 3,696 raids, arrested 6,835 suspects and seized 5,214 weapons during the first year of the initiative.

While the decline in political / ethnic murders had indeed been marked, developments at home and abroad might have also played a role in reducing friction between political activists inclined to 'robust' means of conflict resolution. That was also a fraught year for the MQM anyway with legal problems dogging its leadership in London.

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In the backdrop of the TTP in Karachi; the briefing stated that the Rangers had arrested 760 terrorists in 403 raids on militant hideouts but TTP's business appeared to go as usual. Then appeared the most depressing news of Taliban's brutal attack on Peshawar Army School [on 16th December 2014] that killed 150 teachers and students at one spot and in one event.

The event changed the whole scenario of security all over Pakistan including Karachi. It had lent momentum to a *National Action Plan* [NAP] but gave Pakistanis a strange chain of events: images of hung terrorists, non-state actors carried from the gallows to the media front pages; coward and spineless judges having no move for 'speedy justice'; the strange 'Apex Committees' where corps commanders and chief ministers sit across the table from each other, free lance clergymen; well heeled Facebook activists laying siege to the Red Mosque and what not.

During 2015, however, there was seen a dramatic turnaround in targeted killing cases in Karachi since the authorities had launched an operation against criminals. Referring to 'the News' dated 25th February 2015;

"The Emiratis get ready to extradite the Lyari warlord Uzair Baloch, the Afghan National Security Forces have helped nab some of Peshawar's butchers and – believe it or not – ISPR and the Kabul Presidency have thanked each other."

For Pakistan's largest city Karachi, read the 20 points of the National Action Plan [NAP], and find clearly mentioned the following:

"[Point 3], a commitment to ensure that no armed militias are allowed to function in the country, which is reminiscent of the 'militant wings of political parties': argument that was revisited several times during the early days of the Karachi Operation; and

[Point 16], which really seals the deal, as it resurrects the 'Unfinished Operation' narrative: Taking the ongoing operation in Karachi to its logical conclusion."

.... a common talk amongst the leadership minted as "Sharif & Sharif" civil-military alliance that:

"Seven to eight out of ten cases of organized violence can be traced to the MQM & PPP both. If all roads once led to Rome, they now lead to Azizabad or Lyari."

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The TTP is a curse for the country, and may be for the Muslims, but at the Karachi level, the MQM and TTP are equal threats."

These were strong words, from powerful security players. The intelligentsia asked;

- Why the Baldia Town Joint Investigation Team [JIT] report that held the MQM in disdain was suddenly out there.
- Why the *Citizen's Police Liaison Committee* [CPLC], a group suspected to be on Nine Zero's 'payroll' was being frisked.
- Why Islamabad didn't hold back from slamming MQM brass on the Exit Control List [ECL].
- Why Imran Khan smelt blood and was closing in for his righteous kill.
- Why even the ISPR was weighing in on Karachi's affairs.

On 11th March 2015, a large cache of ammunition was recovered by Rangers *during a raid at MQM headquarters - Nine Zero*. According to Rangers spokesperson Col Tahir, the ammunition, stolen from NATO containers, was also seized during the search operation. However, while speaking to media, MQM leader Faisal Subzwari had admitted that:

"...weapons were seized during the raid, but they were all licensed and were being kept for security in view of the threats being received from the Taliban and other extremist elements.

After the Army Public School attack, even schools and colleges are now being asked to keep weapons for security. We were also told to keep weapons for our security."

So the army had to continuously push unwilling political parties to expand the operations into a comprehensive, city-wide urban operation and maintain them. Ch Nisar Ali Khan, the federal interior minister, wanted the operation sustained but his own party PML[N] was generally reluctant to pursue the aimed goal with ifs and buts at each corner. Periodically, Altaf Bhai of MQM and Zardari of the PPP had protested against the operations or threatened the army, but the military leadership simply ignored them.

In May 2015, Corps Commander Karachi Gen Naveed Mukhtar—the city's top army official—gave an address to an audience of influential Karachi residents, conveyed message to city's political class and criminals that: *"....we will take this fight to its logical conclusion."*

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As per data from *Karachi's Citizens Police Liaison Committee* [CPLC], during the first six months of 2015, murders were down by 60pc compared to the same time period last year. Bank robberies, extortion attempts, and kidnappings—all key ways to fund militarized political parties and terrorist organizations—had dropped between 70-80pc.

Interestingly, the *American 'FOX News' channel* was the first to run the above as 'breaking news' just after few minutes of the ammunition seizure in Karachi; also adding that:

".....some of the weapons had originally been used by NATO forces in Afghanistan.

*.....the weapons cache was near the office of a party with links to London and South Africa, which he declined to name. The *Muttahida Qaumi Movement [MQM]* party fits the description. It has been blamed for several attacks and targeted killings in the city.*

In recent months Pakistani security forces have detained a number of MQM members over alleged links to multiple attacks in Karachi."

STATISTICS OF KCY OPERATION [2013]:

On 12th July 2015; Pakistan's Security agencies warned that the 'slow' implementation of the National Action Plan [NAP] in Sindh was hampering the fight against terrorism in the country; the statement was made during a Sindh apex committee meeting chaired by Sindh CM Qaim Ali Shah at the CM House. Results of a media poll with a single question were also discussed; the question was:

- *Are you in favour of the Rangers operation in Karachi?*

The reply of the residents of Karachi was:

Yes (81%, 223,874 Votes); No (19%, 52,524 Votes); Total Voters: 276,394 - Media reports dated 12th July 2015 are referred.

The registration of seminaries also came under discussion, with officials being informed that there was a total 9,590 seminaries in Sindh, of which 6,590 were registered. Unconvinced Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen Naveed Mukhar asked the Sindh's home secretary that:

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"This is the same figure that was presented in first meeting of the apex committee. We want to know what action has been taken against unregistered seminaries."

PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held separate meetings with Corps Commander Karachi and DG Rangers Maj Gen Bilal Akbar before the apex committee meeting. While Bilawal expressed concern over raids conducted by Rangers at various government departments in Sindh, DG Rangers assured the PPP chairman of not taking unilateral action. Gen Mukhtar told Bilawal bluntly:

".....terrorists have taken shelter in Sindh government departments due to negligence of the provincial government."

Banned outfits still exist in society, and we will take actions against them. Those seminaries that train or brainwash people, will be cracked down upon."

However, the Sindh CM assured both about action against corrupt elements.

On 31st July 2015; while briefing the Parliament on the Karachi crackdown, Interior Minister Ch Nisar said that the homicide rate was down by almost half in the city. The once dreaded targeted killings in the port city had gone down by 43%. Similarly, incidents of murder and terrorism had fallen by 37% and 6.7%, respectively, during the period.

On 5th September 2015; the Sindh Rangers seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition in Landhi area of the city, foiling a major terror bid in the wake of Defence Day celebrations next morning. The recovered weapons belonged to the armed wing of 'a political party' involved in incidents of targeted killings in the port city. RPG rockets, 7MM and 8MM rifles, 40 Awan bombs, tens of thousands of rounds of LMG and SMG bullets among other arms and ammunition were recovered in the raid.

The Rangers and police gradually intensified the operation which was launched in September 2013 against criminals and terrorists, in the violence-hit economic hub of Pakistan. On the same day, AIG Sindh Police Mushtaq Mahar confirmed that the major crimes had been dropped by 70pc in the metropolis; he had placed the statistics regarding the Karachi operation to mark the completion of two years of the major offensive.

Referring to the 'Express Tribune' dated 9th September 2015:

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In a meeting held at the CM House to review the implementation of NAP in the province, Sindh Home Secretary Mukhtar Soomro said:

"As many as 3,662 madrassas in Sindh [2,122 in Karachi, 1,548 Hyderabad] have so far been geo-tagged as part of the National Action Plan [NAP] to see exact location of these seminaries; out of 9,590 madrassas found in the province, 6,503 were registered."

IG Sindh Ghulam Hyder Jamali disclosed that they had sealed 167 *madrassas* in the province owing to different reasons. Also that while searching 21 suspected seminaries in Karachi, Hyderabad and Badin, they had recovered hate material from some of them. The Home Secretary Sindh added that:

"Regarding the identification and repatriation of Afghan refugees, it is on record that 92,646 Afghan nationals had so far been registered in Sindh.

....that 650 families and 3,021 individuals have voluntarily repatriated since 2015 and as many as 35,278 Afghans had been repatriated by the Sindh government till August 2015.

About 720 cases had been registered against illegal Afghan nationals. Further 2,100 of them had been arrested, 1,309 had been nominated in various cases while 953 were under judicial custody.

....that 222 illegal Afghans were also repatriated by IG Jails; out of 458 prisoners on death row, 18 had been executed in the Sindh province so far.

About 395 appeals are pending in Sindh High Court, one in Federal Shariat Court, 53 in Supreme Court, five mercy petitions are with the President of Pakistan. Meanwhile, four black warrants have been stayed by the Sindh High Court."

Giving details of armed militias, which had been pointed out by the Rangers in 4th June apex committee meeting, the home secretary told that as many as 61 banned religious organisations had been identified till then; while adding that:

"1,155 terrorists were killed, including 164 leaders of al Qaeda and Pakistani Taliban, 130 Lyari gang war elements, in two years

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span of September 2013 to September 2015 while the operation is still in progress.

Over 63,000 terrorists and criminals are arrested, including 879 men who belonged to al Qaeda and the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan [TTP], and 67 were part of the Lyari gang war."

Talking about the suspects handed over to Rangers during the Karachi operation up to 31st August 2015, IGP Sindh Jamali said that *495 had been arrested, 489 had been charged, whereas six were under investigation.* Two of the accused had been convicted by a competent court while four had been acquitted. The IGP said that 462 convicts were in jail whereas 21 had managed to secure bail. 16,650 illicit arms and explosives had also been recovered.

IGP Sindh provided details of the weapons and equipment provided by the army to police; *arms worth Rs:65 million were provided to Sindh police by the Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif to complete the said Karachi operation.*

Referring to an essay on 'Political Violence in Karachi' placed at globalsecurity.org dated 14th February 2016:

"The city had suffered a major breakdown in law and order until the Pakistan's paramilitary force - Rangers started an operation in September 2013 to clear it out. The force had, by the end of 2015, carried out 7,000 operations, leading to a 70 percent reduction in target killings, an 85 percent reduction in extortions, and a 90 percent reduction in kidnappings for ransom.

Crime and safety in Karachi are major concerns. Criminal gangs, often with political party affiliations, operate with impunity in most parts of the city, and some areas are effectively cut off from the police."

The law and order situation in Karachi could better be judged from an essay appeared in 'the News' dated 25th February 2016:

"Surely, that's definitely why, after a rollicking few episodes of freewheeling insults against the military and intelligence apparatus, Altaf Hussain started playing nice, sucking up to the military courts theorem when it came to the Baldia inquiry, neatly aligning with

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the PML[N]'s 'anti-horse trading' initiative in the Senate polls, even as he drafted public service messages to consumers to convert from CNG to petrol.

But on the ground, MQM's serious minds admitted that the party was being "commanded and controlled from London and not from Karachi. Every one is afraid of being hit on the street, at home, in college, in mosque or imam bargah, then each one is expected to keep himself armed – that's why the city stands fully weaponized; and state is party to it."

That's essentially what Gen Raheel Sharif emphasized, and re-emphasized, as well: *The police must be depoliticized, and beefed up.*

But with the PPP in tow with Islamabad, [*consider deep secret and constant relationship between Zardari an Nawaz Sharif*] and Dr Zulfiqar Mirza's comeback, the old frictional political triad went resurgent again: It's the MQM vs the Army; PPP got itself out of the operational influence tactfully and through Zardari's diplomacy while leaving MQM back alone in the battlefield to face the music.

MQM itself sometimes cited extrajudicial killings. Other times, it played the *Mohajir* card. Of late, it found it convenient to up the secular anti-extremism narrative. Less frequently, it ducked and covered behind anti-Shiite violence, terming it yet another discriminatory wave targeting its rank and file. However, the Altaf Hussain's speeches and love with India kept it reputed as Karachi's most violent political group.

MQM is genuinely known as Pakistan's most organized, secular and moderate party – but on paper only. For those in the practical business of governance, it was the perfect weapon, but also a crucial tool. It exercised methodical control over cable operators, ratings indices, and even entire media houses. It mobilized thousands against Imran Khan's "*Dharna*" and *Jama'at e Islami* [JI]'s "*Jihad*".

MQM successfully grabbed Karachi many times; it burnt the city and brutalized it but remained productive work-horse of Pakistan - choking the economy and energy within hours by the throat almost anytime it wanted.

The MQM remained modern Karachi's institutional memory: past slain cops and missing workers, enduring half-dead chief ministers like Mr Shah and half-baked paramilitary operations – but successfully survived the 12th May 2007 carnage. But it remained a one man show - riders of the target killing

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waves always looked at its leader Altaf Bhai with human remote control from thousands of miles away.

On 20th September 2016; Rangers recovered huge cache of ammunition dumped underground in Orangi Town in Karachi. As per details, Rangers carried out a search operation in Qasba Colony area of Orangi Town and Kalashnikovs, rifles, 7mm pistols, bullet proof jackets and hundreds of bullets were recovered during operation.

The concealed weapons were used by a political party during riots in *Katti Pahari* area.

On 24th November 2015; the IG Police Sindh, told that since 6th July 2014, 998 criminals were killed and 16,583 arrested, 287 terrorists killed and 87 arrested, 7 target killers killed and 41 arrested, 96 kidnapers killed and 60 arrested and 6 extortionists killed and 328 arrested during that targeted operation launched by the police and Rangers.

The Kidnapping for ransom is almost eliminated and killings in Karachi were significantly down. The areas in Karachi least prone to safety issues were the neighbourhoods of Clifton, DHA, and PECHS, but even these areas experienced serious crimes and thefts in those years. *Tehrik e Taliban* of Pakistan [TTP] and *Lashkar e Jhangvi* [LeJ] remained the most active terrorist organizations and demonstrated the capability to plan and execute major attacks any where in the city.

On 5th July 2016; news bulletin at 'ARY News TV' told that an ammunition stockpile had been seized in Karachi which was hidden by a worker of a political party and was to be used for carrying out a terrorist attack in the city; Counter Terrorism Department [CTD] was active in Karachi.

The weapons were to be used in attacks on a shopping centre and the installations of the intelligence agencies. In addition, 49 suspected criminals were nabbed during raids in different parts of Karachi who were directly linked to murders, weapon trade and drugs.

Police carried out a search operation at Manghopir's Pakhtunabad area and took 44 suspects, including two foreign nationals, into their custody; three more criminals were arrested in a raid in Shireen Jinnah Colony. Police also conducted a raid at a gambling den in Baldia Town and nabbed two people.

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On 5th October 2016; a huge cache of NATO weapons and ammunition was recovered by local police during a raid on an empty house in the Azizabad area of Karachi, the headquarter area of the MQM. The seized weapons included anti-aircraft guns, SMGs, LMGs, sniper rifles, hand grenades and rocket launchers hidden in the water tank of the empty house.

Bullet proof jackets and helmets were also recovered during the raid which was conducted after the police was tipped off by an MQM political worker already in police custody. The city police Chief Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar said:

"It is the biggest recovery of arms and ammunition in the history of Karachi. In light of disclosures made by a detained suspect, big-wigs of a political party provided help in procuring these arms and ammunition.

These weapons were hidden for terror acts to be perpetrated by terrorists of a political faction based in South Africa."

Karachi police chief claimed that these arms were supposed to be used by the elements residing in London particularly with cooperation of RAW [Indian Intelligence Agency] for terror activities in the metropolis but it was foiled through timely action by security institutions.

According to the press release issued by Sindh Police, recovered weapons included 11 anti-aircraft guns, 17 grenade launchers, 39 LMGs, 9 RPG-7, 82 SMGs, 11 7-MM, one M-16, 32 China rifles 7.62, 10 G-3, 5 sniper rifles, 2 repeaters, 9 short SMGs and 245 magazines of SMGs and G-3. 200 hand grenades, 2000 rifle grenades, 140 bullet-proof jackets and huge quantity of ammunition were also seized in addition.

Forensic tests were being conducted to determine whether the weapons had been used in the past to perform terrorist activities in the metropolis. Police officials were still looking into how long the house had been vacant and who it belongs to.

RANGERS CONTROLLED TALIBAN [?]:

The whole scenario changed in Karachi till ending 2015; hats off to Rangers and police – but more salutes to the local politicians who had distanced themselves from gangsters; of course, some of them were sent to jail amidst PPP & MQM's long and hard protests.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-IV

More than body bags, it was the sentiments and perceptions of the local population that were more reliable indicators of the success of the Karachi Operation. The state of fear was far less severe. Karachiites were more willing to go out to eat at night than ever in recent years. And residents of the city's predominantly *Pashtun* areas said they were largely free from the TTP extortion networks that had been haunting them since half a decade at least.

Karachi's challenges with urban violence were not unique in a way; it has its equivalents in Delhi's water tanker mafias, Mexico City's kidnapping networks, and Mumbai's infamous gangsters - but putting together, Karachi's violent dynamics remained among the world's most complex law & order situations.

Terrorism in Pakistan was visibly in decline; the number of Pakistani civilians killed in terrorist attacks during first half of 2015 was the lowest since 2006 when the Pakistani Taliban [TTP] had started its terrorist campaign. This precipitous drop was due to both Pakistani counter-insurgency operations conducted in all seven tribal areas near Afghanistan, and in all four provinces—the most expansive of which was taking place in the mega-city of Karachi.

While foreign observers of Pakistan remained fixated on North Waziristan, the major gains of the Rangers and local police toward pacifying the complex urban environment of Karachi had to be given more credit.

Referring to the 'Express Tribune' dated 14th September 2015:

A slightly chubby policeman, Azfar Mahesar, senior police officer in the most dangerous, western part of Karachi, pushed his police vehicle deeper into the heart of one of the city's '*Talibanised*' areas; with pride he said:

"This used to be a war zone - but we have liberated it. Pashtun slums in the city of 20 million, where over the past few years, one word had been on everyone's lips here: Talibanisation; but now in Karachi it has [nearly] died down.

I can say very confidently 70 to 80 per cent (are purged). There are a few remnants in Karachi but they are not as capable of coming back with the efficiency that they had a year or so ago.

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The Tehreek e Taliban has been the country's public enemy number one since its formation in 2007."

Till ending 2015, policemen wearing flak jackets were advancing deep into the bowels of one of the remaining "no-go zones", through dug-up streets and up rocky hills that marked the city's western edge; where the local Taliban HQ was also situated nearby.

All this occurred as the military made gains in North Waziristan, from where the Taliban of Karachi received orders. The disconnection between Karachi and Miramshah, the capital of North Waziristan, helped LEAs to keep the *Pashtun* parts of the city safe and clear of the militancy. Taliban fighters instead sought refuge in neighbouring Afghanistan, and Pakistan was seeing its lowest levels of terrorist violence in almost a decade.

In the ill-known Manghophir district of Karachi, businesses started picking up; Extortion and racketeering by the Taliban — or criminals posing as them — were almost a thing of the past till beginning of 2016. Taliban gone; people were scared, they wouldn't go out to the markets; the shrine of the Sufi Saint Pir Haji Mangho — which once served as barometer of militant presence, and last attacked by militants in 2014, is guarded by crocodiles swimming in a green pond. The *Pashtuns* of the ANP held:

"God knows where they've gone. They're maybe hiding out here, or they've returned to where they came from, that's an unanswered question; however, criminals posing as Taliban were a bigger threat than the group themselves. No doubt things have changed drastically.

Now we are mentally liberated. It somehow hasn't felt this way in 15 to 20 years."

Rauf Khan, the local ANP leader happily said:

"Yesterday, I went to the cinema and came home late. I haven't done that in years."