

Scenario 152

KARACHI AFFAIRS IN YEAR 2014

SSP CHAUDHRY ASLAM KILLED:

On 9th January 2014; Chaudhry Aslam, Superintendent of Police [SP] and the head of Karachi's anti-terror operations, and his two police companions died in an attack on a police convoy in the Essa Nagri area of the city. Ch Aslam had survived at least ten previous attempts on his life. A car carrying explosives smashed into Ch Aslam's convoy. Images from the crime scene showed a number of vehicles completely destroyed and nearby buildings damaged. Five other police officers were injured.

The Pakistani Taliban [TTP] said they carried out that attack. Taliban spokesman Sajjad Mohmand promptly released message:

"Ch Aslam was involved in killing Taliban prisoners in CID cells in Karachi and was on the top of our hit-list. This is a warning to the people who are on Aslam's team. If they don't distance themselves from their agenda, their fate will be even worse than him."

Referring to UK's daily 'Independent' dated 9th January 2014;

"He was the cop who could not be got - Pakistan's toughest policeman, taking on the bad guys in the country's toughest city. But Chaudhry Aslam Khan's enemies eventually did for him."

Karachi, Pakistan's sprawling port city of more than 20m people, is notorious for its violence. A combination of common criminals; politically affiliated gangs and well-armed militants have created a situation where killings and murder are a daily occurrence."

In 2012, the most recent year for which figures are available, around 2,000 people were killed."

A year earlier, his vehicle was targeted at the same place where he was killed in that day's blast. In 2010, militants blew up the head office of the

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Karachi CID in an attempt to kill him. Each time he seemed to brush off the danger.

On that day, as his convoy was travelling through Karachi in the late afternoon traffic, a bomber targeted his vehicle. PM Nawaz Sharif, paid tribute to Ch Aslam, saying his death was a huge loss to the police force. *"Chaudhry Aslam was a brave officer. We will not let the will of the nation be crushed by these cowardly acts of terrorists."*

A 30-year veteran of the police service, SSP Ch Aslam had since 2010 been serving as head of the city's anti-terror unit. Often working through the night and typically armed with a Glock pistol, he had received countless awards for his work. In March 2013 he was awarded the *Tamgha-i-Imtiaz* award by Pakistan's President.

Ch Aslam's vehicle had been targeted at around 4.40pm as it was travelling close to the city's Lyari Expressway in the Essa Nagri area. Iqbal Mehmood, a senior officer, said the bomber smashed his vehicle into Aslam's convoy. He was returning from an operation targeting militants in which he had killed three of them in a shoot-out.

In September 2011, when a Taliban suicide bomber drove a truck through the front gate of his house in Karachi's Defence neighbourhood and set off a blast that killed eight people, then DSP Ch Aslam had emerged unhurt, stepping through the damage to denounce the attackers. He roared saying:

"They call themselves Muslims but they are unbelievers. This will make me even more determined to carry on operations against them. Such things do not scare me. I'm staying right here. They can try and come for me whenever they want and I'll be ready."

"I will give my life but I won't bow to terrorists."

The general populace was, however, astonished when Pakistan *Tehrik e Insaf* [PTI] Chief Imran Khan on the same day reiterated his stance of negotiating with banned TTP following the killing of SSP Ch Aslam. While speaking to reporters in Lahore, he said that prevailing violence and killings in the country would not end without pulling out from *'someone else's war'*, Khan was referring it to the US and Saudia.

At the same time, the cricketer-turned-politician, Imran Khan, paid tribute to the bravery, commitment and courage of slain police officer. He said that

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people were fed up with terrorism and suggested dialogue was a better option than fighting with the militants; while quoting:

"Dialogue is a better option than fighting against Taliban. At least those (Taliban) groups which are ready to negotiate peace should be contacted for talks."

Since 2008, SSP Ch Aslam had taken on and taken out countless numbers of criminals, including the August 2009's killing Rehman Dakait, a notorious gangster from Lyari's Baloch dominated area.

Yet Ch Aslam's way of working had sparked controversy and he had been accused on a number of occasions of being involved in extra-judicial killings, or "encounter". Once he was suspended. A series of investigations had cleared him of wrong-doing but the accusations did not stop. He always denied them, once told a local paper that:

"I have never staged fake encounters in my career, nor have I been involved in extra-judicial killings. All encounters that I have been involved in have been in self-defence."

BBC dated 9th January 2014 paid rich tribute to SSP Ch Aslam like that:

"Chaudhry Aslam was one of Karachi's highest-profile police officials, known for leading daring police raids and gun battles against militants in some of the most dangerous neighbourhoods of Karachi. Scores of suspected criminals and militants were killed or captured on his watch.

Pakistani TV channels often showed him holding news conferences and brandishing sophisticated weapons he claimed to have recovered in police raids. Mr Aslam carried on with his tough-cop image despite a number of attempts on his life. But on Thursday, the militants caught up with him.

His murder is being seen as a major blow to the government's efforts to fight crime and militancy in Pakistan's biggest city."

A day after the incident, a police team, investigating the suicidal attack which killed the top anti-terror cop Ch Aslam, had identified a suspect through finger prints found at the crime scene. SP Niaz Khoso, an officer of the police probe team, said the suspect had been identified as Naimullah, a

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resident of Peerabad Qasba Colony - his father Rafiullah was curator of a local *madrassa* [Islamic seminary].

As per police files, Naimullah was also part of the terrorist group that carried out deadly Abbas Town bombing in 2013.

[On 5th October 2014; Police claimed to have killed seven suspected militants including the alleged mastermind and facilitator of the attack on Ch Aslam. The raid was conducted in Karachi's Ayub Goth area near Saudabad but the raiding party came under attack, as militants opened fire and hurled hand grenades.

There were up to 16 TTP militants present in the house when it was raided. Police resorted to retaliatory firing during which seven suspected militants were killed.]

SSP Rao Anwar, the IO in-charge of Ch Aslam's killing case kept on file that three of the seven suspected militants had been identified - including brother of the suicide bomber, another militant who had conducted reconnaissance for the attack and was in contact with the Taliban leadership, and another suspect who had supplied the explosive-laden vehicle for the attack. *"These three militants, who had fled to Saudi Arabia after Aslam's murder but returned home just recently, were experts of making bombs and suicide vests,"* the file contained.

TALIBAN GAINED STRENGTH IN CITY:

The year 2014 could not have a smooth start with respect to Karachi affairs in Pakistan. The Pakistani Taliban [TTP] tightened their grip over the country's commercial hub despite a five-month government crackdown in the said metropolitan city of about 20 million.

On 7th January 2014; nine people were killed in different incidents of violence in Karachi.

The bodies of six men were found near a *shrine in Gulshan e Maymar* area; two of the men had been beheaded, while the rest had their throats slit, in the first such instance of mass killing at a shrine that the Karachiites had known. It was *Ayub Shah Bukhari*' place, considered a saint by Sufi Muslims. Three of the dead worked at the shrine while the others were frequent visitors.

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A note reading *“Stop visiting shrines — from the Pakistani Taliban; People visiting shrines will meet the same fate,”* was found at the scene along with a bloodstained knife. All the victims were tortured too before being killed with the knife who were aged between 20-30 years.

Five of the deceased persons were identified as Munawwar, Saleem, Javed, Ramzan and Abid, respectively. One victim could not be identified.

Separately, two people, including a police officer, were killed in firing incidents in the city's Pak Colony and Quaidabad areas whereas a body was recovered near *Malir* check-post.

Meanwhile, police arrested a target killer from Karachi's Musharraf colony. Police alleged that the arrested suspect was wanted in the killings of 28 people and that he hailed from a political party. Moreover, two Kalashnikovs, two hand-grenades and two home-made bombs were also seized from the suspect.

Karachi, the largest metropolitan city of Pakistan, since two decades, was riddled with targeted killings, gang wars, and kidnappings for ransom, extortion and terrorism. Targeted operations led by Rangers' forces with the support of police were going in the city but with no mentionable achievements till then even though the criminals were identified by federal, military and civilian agencies.

On 9th February 2014; unidentified gunmen threw grenades at a *Sunni* Islamic religious gathering in Karachi and then opened fire on the people assembled to offer prayers, killing eight at the spot. Eight others were wounded in the attack.

The four gunmen, who were on motorcycles, first lobbed grenades at a building where a *Sunni* saint was receiving his followers, then raked it with automatic fire; women and children were among the dead and wounded.

“Pakistan is 95 percent Muslim, and the majority are Sunnis. Sufism is a mystical branch of Islam. But Sufi shrines and followers were suddenly attacked from certain militants of Taliban school of thought who did not consider them to be true Muslims,”

[‘New York Times’ dated 9th February 2014 is referred]

No one claimed responsibility for the attack. But suspicion was on the Pakistani Taliban or their affiliated sectarian groups, which follow a strict interpretation of Islam that considers many other Muslims, like Sufis or minority Shiites, to be nearly non-Muslims. In recent years, militants have often attacked shrines, which they consider to be blasphemous.

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After 7th January's killing of six people at the shrine, as detailed in earlier paragraphs, the militants had threatened the cleric whose gathering was attacked that day, telling him he should close down the house of worship where he used to receive his followers.

On 11th February 2014; tentative peace talks with the PML[N] government were thrown into disarray when the militants claimed responsibility for a roadside bombing that killed at least 12 police officers when the bus taking them to duty was destroyed near the city's Landhi neighbourhood, an area the TTP claimed they dominated.

Karachi was in fact paying a dearer price as the efforts by PM Nawaz Sharif had aspired to forge a peace deal with the TTP's high command in Waziristan tribal areas while a military operation was being launched there.

A general impression then prevailed that if the peace talks failed, a big terrorism wave would hit Karachi as a result. The Pakistani Taliban [TTP] were a national threat, with Karachi providing the group a vital financial lifeline. Money raised in Karachi from extortion, land-grabbing, kidnapping and robberies used to be sent to the group's leadership in Waziristan tribal areas.

The assassination of Karachi's most prominent counter-terrorism police officer, SSP Chaudhry Aslam on 9th January 2014, showcased the militants' reach and had a chilling effect on the police force. Everyone then was at loss about who would step into Chaudhry Aslam's shoes; he had become a symbol, someone who was standing up to the TTP and their activities.

In the same month of January 2014, the militant group shot and killed three journalists also; repeatedly bombed paramilitary Rangers who were helping carry out the crackdown; gunned down three polio-vaccination workers, in addition to slitting the throats of six devotees visiting a shrine, as noted above. Karachi police released statistics that 27 officers were killed in January 2014, after 168 were killed a year earlier.

PM Nawaz Sharif was upset that his economic-revival plans were being undermined by spreading mayhem though he had initiated the security operation in September 2013. Karachi, a fast-growing city, having a huge industrial base, the country's only major port and was the nation's centre of banking and financial activity. In fact, Karachi's local political support was fading for the operation, which they had viewed as a last chance to regain control of the city from TTP and other militias.

The operation's success depended largely on the Sindh provincial government, which was run by the PPP, the opposition of the PML[N] in the cen-

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tre; Karachi's police was under their control. Signs of tension between the Rangers and the PPP's police were, sometimes, visibly seen in many administrative issues.

Ahmed Chinoy, head of the Citizens Police Liaison Committee [CPLC], a statutory body that works with the police to reduce crime, held that parts of Karachi were still too dangerous for regular patrols, while the crackdown targeted regular crime. Whenever the focus of the operation was shifted at some other issues even temporarily, the militants got breathing space and took advantage to launch a severe, harsh or ruthless activity than before.

During one year of 2013, five different police chiefs served Karachi, disrupting the battle against crime but at any given time, every chief had about 7,000 officers available to be deployed on the streets out of a total force strength of 27,000; a big chunk of 9,000 officers were kept on personal security duty for politicians and other officials – and the practice is still in vogue even today.

More than 13,000 people had been arrested in the sweep operation since September 2013, in more than 10,000 raids by police and the paramilitary Rangers force. But the residents held the police had left largely untouched the poor outlying neighbourhoods that were known to be under TTP control, encircling the city, including one adjacent to the new US Consulate compound.

TTP was the most aggressive armed group operating in multiethnic Karachi, alongside the ethnic Baloch gangs in Lyari, and the MQM, a party that has traditionally dominated Karachi politics.

[However, the Karachi police and Rangers told the media that their security operation had led to the arrest of 63 TTP members through the end of January 2014.

That compared with the arrest of 296 people affiliated with the MQM, 101 with links to the Awami National Party [ANP] and 171 members of Lyari gangs.]

Sharfuddin Memon, the adviser to the Sindh provincial chief minister on security issues, told the operation had led to a 50% drop in assassinations and kidnapping for ransom in the city - but the conviction rate for serious crimes was just 5%. The impact from the operation got the approval of the general populace but needed to be sustained.

'The Wall Street Journal' dated 13th February 2014 held that:

"...based on conversations with security officials and urban planners shows TTP still control or dominate about 470 square miles of Karachi, or nearly a third of its area, where at least 2.5 million people live.

TTP's sway in Karachi extends right up to Saddar—the city centre—and into areas such as Sultanabad, a ramshackle community next to the new US Consulate compound."

Those were districts with a majority population of Pashtuns, the same ethnic group as TTP's leadership. These areas that encircled the city included Baldia and the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate to the west and Gadap in the north. Residents in those areas said TTP's hold had gotten stronger over the past year. Kh Izharul Hassan, MQM's member Sindh Assembly said:

"There's been no action against the main body of the TTP, just against some smaller factions. In addition to the main TTP faction from the Mehsud tribe of South Waziristan in the tribal areas, long established in Karachi, the city is increasingly plagued by another TTP faction from the Mohmand tribal area, along with TTP Swat.

Islamist militants also have influence over some non-Pashtun districts of the city, such as Lyari in the southwest where TTP ally Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has a base. TTP has ability to stage attacks across Karachi."

It was an established fact then that TTP dominated 33 of Karachi's 178 administrative units—known as union councils. The militants had started getting more educated recruits, including non-Pashtuns, largely due to wide spread un-employment. They were spreading to neighbouring areas outside Karachi, including Hub to the west and Jamshoro to the northeast. In the areas of its control, TTP was levying a tax on residents and businesses; '*bhatta*' in state books terminology and '*security money*' for the people.

The TTP's militant group had also set up courts in neighbourhoods to resolve mutual disputes, used to give written judgments, handling matters that included disagreements over land ownership and regulating levels of theft from power lines that they allowed – and the residents had silently admitted it. The businessmen believed that:

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"The Taliban milk money from their own communities; they have calculated the worth of every person here."

For instance, on a monthly income of Rs:40,000, TTP used to take a levy of Rs:1,000; equivalent to the Islamic Tax of 2.5% - and the TTP's hold had hardened over the year gradually. Even the ANP leadership kept the opinion that *'.....the Taliban have complete control of Karachi; they can go anywhere and do what they want.'*

On 5th May 2014; a US citizen, later identified as Joel Cox, was arrested by ASF at Karachi airport; he was carrying 15 live 9mm bullets, a magazine, three knives, Brass Knuckle, Spy cameras, miniature voice recorders and other tools of spying in his baggage. He was going to Islamabad by a PIA flight [PK 308].

Joel Cox presented himself as a US citizen but soon after the arrest the US media reported that the man works for the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], the key investigation and intelligence agency of the United States. A case was lodged against him under Section 23 1(a) of the Sindh Arms Act 2013. When he was presented before the district Malir court the following day, the court sent him into judicial remanded till 10th May. The District & Sessions Court Malir released Cox after the payment of a surety bond worth Rs:1,000,000 on 8th May. SSP Malir said:

"He arrived in our homeland for a three month mission but we have yet to ascertain what the mission is as our investigations are still in progress. Each and every object is being examined by our forensic team; it will definitely help ascertain the motive of the suspect's visit to Pakistan."

He is not a diplomat who is required to go through some other kind of process for such a crime; he is a US citizen who is here on a visit visa, but carrying arms and spy gadgets to travel to the country's capital."

The Washington Post said the suspect, who was assigned to the FBI Miami Field Office, was in Pakistan on a temporary duty; scheduled to be there for three months for *'office-type work with a non-FBI-type' entity.*

Officials contended that employees of the FBI and other US agencies were allowed to carry weapons in Pakistan when authorized. The US officials asserted that he was on a temporary duty assignment to provide routine assistance to the legal attaché at the US mission.

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But if he was in Pakistan for such job then what was the purpose of carrying suspicious gadgets. It was evident that he was certainly not here for that 'office-type' job which the US Mission was quoting.

According to US officials and the reports of International Media, Joel Cox forgot to remove the loaded magazine from his luggage; a naive act that cannot be expected from an FBI Agent. Secondly, the question was not just about 15 live bullets and a loaded magazine, the guy was also carrying spy gadgetry.

Joel Cox was travelling on a passport which was issued only five months ago and he came to Pakistan for 3 months appointment. This fact lead to speculation that he was travelling on a fake identity. All these question-marks gave an idea that this was not simply an issue of law violation rather it was a matter of espionage – another assignment like of Raymond Davis, an American CIA contractor, who was arrested after shooting down two civilians in Jan 2011.

Ironically, the radical elements and TTP sympathizers started their hate-speech against respective institutions of Pakistan soon after the arrest of Joel Cox and throttled their anti-Pakistan Propaganda after the bail. Whereas, both the elements, TTP and US operatives, were up to destabilize Pakistan and malign its institutions – especially the Pakistan Army.

It also proved true the age-old allegations on our legal and political system that they have been providing shelter and immunity to such elements. One could recall the cases like of Delcan Walsh and Riz Hussein, where the intelligence provided by the agencies had been swift and fruitful.

Thus, either the Government itself was not interested in the security of Pakistan or it was under undue pressure of diplomacy. The question arose that who the real enemy of the people of Pakistan was – Pak Army, its ISI or the corrupt politicians ruling Pakistan in the name of democracy.

KARACHI INT'L AIRPORT ATTACKED:

On 8th June 2014; Karachi International Airport was attacked and ransacked by the terrorists under the banner of Taliban. The attack on Karachi International Airport began at 2300 hrs and lasted until the morning around 400 hrs of next day. Ten attackers divided in 2 groups, stormed at two different check points and attacked the cargo terminal of the airport with au-

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tomatic weapons, hand grenades, rocket-propelled grenades, and other explosives.

The attackers were dressed as security guards, with some also wearing suicide vests. They were wearing uniforms of the Airports Security Force [ASF] – the militants also tried to hijack a plane, but were unsuccessful.

Within 2 hours, eight of the ten militants were shot dead by the ASF troops and the remaining two blew themselves up when they were cornered. The siege officially ended after five hours; 36 people, including the ten terrorists, 12 ASF personnel, one Pakistan Rangers official, one Sindh Police official, and four PIA employees [including two senior aircraft engineers] were killed in the incident. At least 18 security personnel were also injured in the attack. Seven bodies that were burnt beyond recognition were also recovered from the airport's cold storage facility after a 28-hour rescue operation.

The militant organization *Tehrik e Taliban* Pakistan [TTP] claimed responsibility for the attack describing it as retaliation for the death of its former chief Hakimullah Mehsud, who was killed in North Waziristan in a drone attack in November 2013. TTP spokesman Shahidullah Shahid explained why the airport was targeted:

"We chose a location where there would be less civilian and more official casualties. The group will engage in a full-out war with the Pakistani state, starting on June 10. But if even now the Pakistani government backs down, we are ready to engage in meaningful dialogue. The main goal of this attack was to cut off the supply to NATO Troops in Afghanistan."

The attackers were foreigners of Uzbek origin who belonged to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU], allegedly an Al Qaeda-linked militant organization 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.

In an online statement, the IMU accepted its role in the attack, claiming it as a revenge for Pakistani military operations against Uzbeks and other foreign militants, and provided photographs of the ten Uzbek fighters who participated in the airport attack. In the photographs, the militants were seen wearing green tunics and white trainers while carrying assault rifles in what appeared to be a mountainous region. The men looked young and in their early 20s.

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[As per defence records, foreigners including IMU fighters had fled Afghanistan following the US-led invasion in October 2001, and had established a presence in the tribal areas along the Afghan border. They enjoyed protection and shelter of the TTP and used to provide foot soldiers for TTP's operations.]

Uzbek militants were previously involved in large-scale attacks in Pakistan, including the attack on PNS Mehran airbase in Karachi in 2011, the attack on Bacha Khan International Airport in Peshawar in 2012, and the orchestration of jail breaks in Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan in 2012 and 2013 respectively.]

Following the attack, the Pakistani military conducted a series of aerial strikes on militant hideouts in the tribal areas along the Afghan border. At least 25 militants were killed on 10th June, including foreign fighters. Two drone attacks on 12th June also killed Uzbek, Afghan and some local militants.

On 10th June 2014; just two days after the airport attack, four unknown militants opened fire over civilians near Airports Security Force Academy in Pehlwan Goth, Karachi. Pehlwan Goth is a rundown area that is considered a hub of criminal elements, with police and rangers having previously conducted several raids there following increased incidence of targeted killings in Karachi in 2011.

Inter-Services Public Relations [ISPR] soon posted on Twitter that the *"chase is still on. Three to four terrorists fired near ASF camp, ran away. No breach of fence, no entry, situation under control."*

Deputy Director General ASK, Col Tahir Ali told there were no casualties in the new attack; the airport was secure and that operations resumed. He also said that:

"...two attackers opened fire near the ladies hostel near D gate, which is located behind the ASF camp. The ASF check-post is about 100 metres from the scene. We were informed of the incident by our sentry posted there."

Initial reports suggested that the number of attackers could be between four and seven. Following a search operation in *Gulistan-e-Jauhar*, two suspects were picked up by security forces.

The camp no:2 was situated near the Jinnah International Airport Karachi which the Civil Aviation Authority [CAA] had cleared a day earlier after a long battle between security forces and terrorists which had left 28 dead.

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It was described as a hit-and-run incident aimed to create panic. The TTP accepted responsibility for the incident, too. All operations at the Karachi airport were suspended, all flights were diverted, and the airport was evacuated following the attack. The PIA had to delay or cancel 20 flights immediately after the attack. Following news of the attack, other international airports in Pakistan were put on red alert and security was increased. Airports in neighbouring India were also put on high alert.

The major implication of the attack was the fact that it made foreign airlines wary of expanding operations in Pakistan, with many international air carriers already had scaled back their activities since 2008. Before that attack, there were 19 international airlines serving Pakistani airports but then the situation changed drastically; see below:

- On 11th June, Cathay Pacific Airways notified temporary cancellation of its flights to Karachi and stated it would continue to monitor the situation closely.
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- *The same day, Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen also postponed his state visit to Pakistan indefinitely, in view of the prevailing situation.*
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- The Ireland cricket team was scheduled to play three One Day International cricket matches in Lahore Pakistan in September 2014 but cancelled their matches after the attack.

The cancellation of Irish team's tour ended a five-year waiting of light and hope of international cricket in Pakistan, with no international teams having toured the country since the 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team by militants. The attack was thought to have dashed the Pakistan Cricket Board's recent efforts to arrange international teams to tour Pakistan.

The airport and PIA were estimated to have suffered losses worth billions of rupees, with one estimate putting the accumulated loss at over Rs:180 billion. Chief Minister of Sindh Qaim Ali Shah announced monetary compensation for victims of the attack.

On 15th June 2014; the Pak-Army intensified air strikes in North Waziristan, and bombed eight foreign militant hideouts. At least 105 insurgents were killed, a majority of whom were Uzbeks, including those linked to the airport attack. A key Uzbek commander and mastermind of the attack, Abu Abdur Rehman Almani, was also killed in the operation. These military responses had given birth and strength to the famous Operation *Zarb e Azb*, Pak-Army's comprehensive operation against militants in North Waziristan.

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Karachi, the biggest business hub of Pakistan, is unfortunately being known as the main epic centre of terrorist activities since at least May 2011 when a similar attack had taken place on the Mehran naval airbase in Karachi, and in 2012, the Bacha Khan International Airport in Peshawar Khyber PK was attacked by militants.

Two aircrafts of PIA, one Boeing 747 and an Airbus A310, and one Air Indus plane were damaged during that terrorist attack. Two cargo warehouses stored with NATO Supplies i.e. jeeps, drones, medicines and explosives to be exported to Afghanistan caught fire and took 4 days to get reduced to ashes - multiple explosions continued to be heard inside from time to time till about four days later.

Under the then prevailing circumstances and deteriorating security situation, even domestic travelers got afraid of visiting Karachi due to the airport attack whereas the rising lawlessness across the city along with live coverage of such incidents by TV channels kept foreigners, particularly the businessmen and investors, away from Pakistan.

Killing Continued as Usual in Karachi: as on 18th August 2014, a policeman was shot dead in an act of target killing in Baldia Town within the limits of *Ittehad Town* police station. The deceased was identified as 40-year-old Abdul Wakeel, son of Khair Muhammad. The victim was shot multiple times by unidentified assailants. He was subsequently rushed to Civil Hospital, Karachi, where he breathed his last.

Separately, a man was shot dead in an act of target killing within the limits of Manghopir police station. Police officials said that the deceased was a resident of Baldia Town and was killed by unidentified assailants over unexplained reasons. His body was taken to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for autopsy where he was identified as Habibur Rehman, 55, son of Shamsur Rehman.

In another incident, the body of 33-year-old Farhan, son of Tanvir, was found from a garbage dump within the limits of Liaquatabad police station. No torture marks or bullet wounds were found on the body. Police suspected that he might have been killed by being given a poisonous substance. The body was shifted to Edhi morgue to trace his family after medico-legal formalities were completed at Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

Meanwhile, the body of an unidentified young man, was found from Yousuf Goth within the limits of Saeedabad police station. Police officials believed the victim might have been kidnapped earlier. They suspected

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that he was brought to the site by the assailants who shot him dead before fleeing. The motive behind his killing could never be ascertained.

On 23rd August 2014; three people were killed when armed motorcyclists opened fire at a shrine in District East. Meanwhile, two supporters of a religious organisation were shot dead in Shah Faisal Colony.

They were shot dead when armed men riding a motorcycle opened fire at *Dargah Nazar Shah*, located near Nasir Jump in Korangi, within the limits of Zaman Town police station.

"The two assailants initially came to the shrine and left after shaking hands with the caretaker, then about two minutes later, they entered the shrine again and opened fire."

As a result of firing, two victims were killed on the spot, while a third succumbed to his injuries during treatment at Civil Hospital Karachi. One of the deceased was later identified as 45-year-old Zakir Hussain, son of Yaqoob. The other two victims were identified as Nawaz and Younus.

The shrine called '*Dargah Nazar Shah*' had been running since the last 20 years. The police found at least 23 empty shells of pistols. In this case too, the police suspected the involvement of Taliban militants.

Shortly after this incident, two men were shot dead in Sa'adat Colony within the limits of Shah Faisal Colony police station. The deceased were identified as 37-year-old Asif, son of Shakeel and his maternal uncle, 50-year-old Abdul Shakoor. The victims were residents of the same area and used to run a motorcycle mechanic shop. The two assailants had come to the shop and after paying them for repairing their motorcycle, they shot the victims.

They were shot multiple times and died on the spot. The *Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat* [ASWJ] spokesperson, while claiming their affiliation with the party, said that they were killed over sectarian basis.

Separately, three people were shot dead and another wounded by gunfire in Sohrab Goth. The deceased were identified as Hameedullah, Abdul Hadi and Muhammad Ahmed. DSP Qamar Ahmed told that the victims were of Afghan origin and were involved in a dispute with the Mullah Samad group; Mullah Samad's men could be behind the incident.

PROF DR SHAKEEL AUJ KILLED:

On 18th September 2014; Prof Dr Muhammad Shakeel Auj, dean of the faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Karachi, was shot dead on University Road in *Gulshan-i-Iqbal* and a girl student was wounded. He was on his way to attend a ceremony organised in his honour at the Iranian Cultural Centre in Clifton for getting *Tamgha-e-Imtiaz* for his meritorious services in Islamic studies.

Dr Auj, author of over a dozen books, was probably targeted over his religious thoughts and his efforts to unearth an alleged fake degree scam in the Karachi University [KU].

A friend of Dr Auj had sent a chauffeur-driven car to pick him up from the university. Dr Auj, his teenage niece Dr Amna and one Dr Tahir Masood sat in the backseat while the front seat was left vacant for the professor's friend who was to join them on their way. As the car drove down the NIPA flyover ramp, two bursts were heard - there were two bullet holes in the windowpane of the car.

The driver accelerated the vehicle. The professor's niece started crying "*.....cruel persons had killed him as he lay down on the seat*". The driver rushed to the Agha Khan University Hospital [AKUH], ignoring the traffic lights on his way.

Dr Amna also got hit by a bullet on the hand. Soon after the arrival, at the AKUH the doctors declared Dr Auj dead and stated that a bullet had struck him in the head, piercing his skull and exiting through an eye. Later, the body was taken to the JPMC for a post-mortem examination. Dr Auj had received two bullets fired from a 0.9mm pistol.

During investigation, two persons including a former dean of the faculty of Islamic Studies of the KU, Dr Abdul Rasheed, were 'interrogated'. He revealed that the late Dr Auj had received a threatening message over his purported controversial lecture and the message contained that a famous seminary in *Korangi* had issued a fatwa against him over his alleged blasphemous uttering. But when Dr Auj approached the seminary, they denied having issued such a fatwa against him.

It was also a fact that the late dean, Dr Auj, had taken a 'serious notice' of 'fake degrees' in Islamic Studies awarded by some KU professors. Prof Shakeel Auj had received such threatening texts when he took up the fake degrees issue. However, Dr Rasheed, later dean of the faculty of Theology at the Federal Urdu University, told media that it was an "old case" and he

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was “acquitted” in it. Later on, he had filed a defamation suit against Dr Auj, which was also confirmed by the police record.

SSP FAROOQ AWAN ATTACKED:

On 25th September 2014; unknown assailants carried out a bomb attack on a senior police officer near Karachi's upscale Defence Housing Authority [DHA], killing two people and injuring at least seven others. The attack targeted a convoy of SSP South Farooq Awan in DHA Phase IV – luckily the SSP suffered minor wounds.

The blast was heard far and wide and a large trail of smoke was visible as well. It caused a suspension of electricity supply in the vicinity. The vehicle of SSP Awan was completely destroyed in the attack, whereas another police mobile van escorting him was also badly damaged. The attack did not appear to have been carried out by a suicide bomber; probably a bomb had been planted in a Suzuki pickup van which was remotely detonated.

A banned militant group *Jundallah* claimed the said attack. The CID Counter-Terror unit's record also confirmed the involvement of *Jundallah* because earlier the murder of Ali Akbar Kumaili, son of prominent Shia scholar and former Senator Allama Abbas Kumaili and a grenade attack on 15-*Madadgar* police at Nursery on *Shara e Faisal* in Karachi, were also claimed by *Jundallah*. The group had been 'reactivated' after a gap of about two years in the city.

Karachi has been a cauldron of ethnic and political tension for decades, where political parties have militant wings; gangs make money through drug-trafficking, land grabbing and other forms of crime, and sectarian violence also seen at high scale.

Targeted operations by Police and Rangers' forces were afoot in the city under a directive issued by the federal government against criminals already identified by federal, military and civilian agencies but the ghost was free to move and play.

In a bid to eliminate Taliban militancy from the country and to wipe out militant strongholds in North Waziristan tribal agency bordering Afghanistan, Pakistani military had launched operation *Zarb e Azb* in mid June [2014]. Pakistan Army claimed that hundreds of high profile TTP commanders and fighters had been killed in the operation ever since.

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SSP Faisal Awan was the Station House Officer of Karachi's Clifton Police Station when Mir Murtaza Bhutto was killed in the police station's jurisdiction in 1996. His name was also included in the list of six police officers who were in the TTP hit-list. He also had narrowly missed a militant attack on him in 2005.

However, he was also among those 71 unlucky police officers who were demoted in August 2013 on the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The apex court had withdrawn all out-of-turn promotions — known as shoulder promotions in bureaucratic parlance — which were handed out in the decade for courageous performance of certain police officers of Karachi.

KILLINGS' DATA FOR 2014:

As many as 7,655 people were killed in terrorism, militant attacks, sectarian violence, targeted killings, security operations and drone strikes in 2014 compared to 5,687 similar deaths in 2013's Pakistan. Fatalities from the militant attacks, terrorism and targeted killings decreased by 15pc; however, 35pc increase in the overall deaths was recorded during the year 2014. *Daily 'Dawn'* dated 10th January 2015 referred to the research report of *Centre for Research and Security Studies* [CRSS] for 2014.

"The major increase in violence was observed in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA], where fatalities more than doubled from 1,457 in 2013 to 3,399 in 2014. The major reason for the increase in deaths in FATA is the military-led operation Zarb e Azb in the North Waziristan Agency.

The second largest increase was in Punjab where deaths from violence rose by 158pc from 120 in 2013 to 309 in 2014. A part of this increased figure may be attributed to the November 1, 2014, bombing at the Wagah border which left 60 people dead."

The report added that Khyber PK province saw a decrease in violence-related deaths - 945 in 2014 compared to 1,031 deaths in 2013. Gilgit - Baltistan saw the largest decrease in violence-related casualties from 20 in 2013 to just three in 2014.

The sudden increase in deaths started from June 2014 which can be attributed to the start of the military operation but most were counted under the security force's action. Deaths from violence accelerated towards the end of

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the year compared to year 2013. The last three months of the year 2014 were especially bloody with an alarming 258pc increase compared to 2013.

The report said 1,498 of the total fatalities were a direct result of terror attacks, of which militant organisations claimed responsibility for 613 killings. As many as 40.9pc of all the fatalities attributed to terror attacks were claimed by the militant groups.

A total of 133 women and 270 children were also killed in violence of one form or another. About 40 schools and three colleges were also bombed while 26 principals, professors and teachers as well as 143 students were killed.

The highest fatalities - 2,029 - were observed in Karachi while North Waziristan Agency and Khyber Agency witnessed 1,825 and 1,187 deaths, respectively. As many as 431 people were killed in Peshawar and 170 in Quetta.

The report said the largest number of deaths in 2014 were militants - 3,460 and criminals - 595. The second largest group to be killed in violence incidents was civilians [2,395], followed by security officials [741]. Moreover, 186 politicians, including party workers, 52 individuals affiliated with religious organisations and nine journalists were also killed in 2014.

"As many as 2,125 people lost their lives in targeted killings, 982 in militant attacks, 516 in terror incidents and 209 in drone attacks.

As many as 30 suicide attacks were reported in 2014 but these suicide bombers were not included in the list of people killed during the year."

Imtiaz Gul, the head of the CRSS, confirmed that the information about the deaths in 2014 was collected from the print media.