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Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 1 - Pakistan

Overview: Pakistan continued to serve as a safe haven for certain regionally focused terrorist groups. It allowed groups targeting Afghanistan, including the Afghan Taliban and affiliated HQN, as well as groups targeting India, including LeT and its affiliated front organizations, and JeM, to operate from its territory.

Pakistan took modest steps in 2019 to counter terror financing and to restrain some India-focused militant groups following the February attack on a security convoy in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir claimed by Pakistan-based JeM. Thus far, however, Islamabad has yet to take decisive actions against Indian- and Afghanistan-focused militants who would undermine their operational capability. The Pakistani government also played a constructive role in U.S.-Taliban talks in 2019. Pakistan's progress on the most difficult aspects of its 2015 National Action Plan to counter terrorism remains unfulfilled – specifically its pledge to dismantle all terrorist organizations without delay and discrimination. While Pakistani authorities indicted LeT co-founder Hafiz Saeed and 12 of his associates on December 11, they have made no effort to use domestic authorities to prosecute other terrorist leaders such as JeM founder Masood Azhar and Sajid Mir, the mastermind of LeT's 2008 Mumbai attacks, both of whom are widely believed to reside in Pakistan under the protection of the state, despite government denials.

Pakistan experienced significant terrorist threats in 2019, although the number of attacks and casualties was lower than in 2018, continuing an overall year-on-year decline. Major terrorist groups focused on conducting attacks in Pakistan included Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP or Pakistani Taliban) and ISIS-K. Separatist militant groups conducted terrorist attacks against varied targets in Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Terrorists used a range of tactics to attack individuals, markets, police checkpoints, and places of worship, including IEDs, VBIEDs, suicide bombings, and targeted assassinations.

In June 2018, the FATF placed Pakistan on its “gray list” and issued an Action Plan directing Pakistan to take specific steps by September 2019 to address strategic deficiencies in its CFT efforts. The FATF expressed serious concern at its October 2019 plenary about Pakistan's continued deficiencies but noted it had made some progress and extended the deadline for full Action Plan implementation to February 2020.

In 2018, Pakistan was designated as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. It was re-designated as a CPC in 2019.

2019 Terrorist Incidents: Pakistan experienced numerous terrorist attacks in 2019. The following examples include some of the more destructive and high-profile attacks and demonstrate a variety of methods, targets, and perpetrators:

- On May 8, a suicide bomber killed at least 10 (including police officers and security guards) and wounded at least 24 others in an attack at Lahore's Data Darbar Sufi shrine. Hizbul Ahrar, a faction of TTP, claimed responsibility for the attack, specifying that the target was law enforcement officers and not civilians.
- On May 11, three militants killed five (including a Pakistani Navy officer) and injured six in an attack on the Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar. The Balochistan Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack, stating the targets were Chinese and other foreign investors.
- On July 21, two back-to-back attacks in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, killed 10 and injured 30. Unidentified gunmen on motorbikes opened fire on a police checkpoint killing two police officers. A suicide bomber later detonated an explosive device at the hospital where first responders transported victims of the first attack. TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On August 16, a timed explosive at Quetta's Al-Haj mosque detonated, killing four (including the brother of Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Haybatullah) and injuring 25 others. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Pakistani government continued to implement the Antiterrorism Act of 1997, the National Counterterrorism Authority (NACTA) Act, the 2014 Investigation for Fair Trial Act, and 2014 amendments to the Antiterrorism Act (ATA), all of which give law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts enhanced powers in terrorism cases.

Military, paramilitary, and civilian security forces conducted CT operations throughout Pakistan against anti-state militants. Pakistani law allows for preventive detention, permits the death penalty for terrorism offenses, and authorizes special Anti-Terrorism Courts to try terrorism cases. Military courts established in 2015 under the National Action Plan to try civilians accused of terrorism ceased operation March 31.

Pakistan collects biometric information at land crossings through its International Border Management Security System. Authorities had limited ability to detect smuggling by air travel. The Customs Service attempted to enforce anti-money laundering laws and foreign exchange regulations at all major airports, in coordination with other agencies. Customs managed the entry of dual-use chemicals for legitimate purposes through end-use verification, while also attempting to prevent their diversion for use in IEDs. Consistent with UNSCR 2178, returning FTFs may be prosecuted under Pakistani law. NACTA is responsible for compiling and verifying data on these individuals.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Pakistan is a member of the APG. Since June 2018, FATF has identified Pakistan as a jurisdiction with strategic deficiencies in its CFT system. In 2019, Pakistan made some progress toward meeting the action plan requirements for the FATF, allowing it to avoid being blacklisted, but did not complete all action plan items. In early 2019, Pakistan issued, inter alia, a statutory regulatory ordinance directing immediate implementation of sanctions against individuals and entities designated under UNSCR 1267. In October 2019, APG published a Mutual Evaluation Report that reviewed Pakistan's compliance with FATF standards and the effectiveness of Pakistan's AML/CFT system.

Countering Violent Extremism: The government operated five de-radicalization camps offering “corrective religious education,” vocational training, counseling, and therapy. A Pakistani NGO administered the juvenile-focused Sabaoon Rehabilitation Center in Swat Valley, which it founded in partnership with the Pakistani military.

Some madrassas reportedly continued to teach “extremist” doctrine. The National Action Plan directs increased government supervision of madrassas, and there was evidence of continued government efforts to increase regulation. Security analysts and madrassa reform proponents observed, however, that many madrassas failed to register with the government or provide documentation of their sources of funding or to limit their acceptance of foreign students to those with valid visas, a background check, and the consent of their governments, as required by law.

The Pakistani cities of Nowshera, Peshawar, and Quetta are members of the SCN.

International and Regional Cooperation: Pakistan participated in several multilateral fora where CT cooperation was discussed, including the GCTF, the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Pakistan has been slated to host the next summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the first since 2016, when all other SAARC member states boycotted the planned Islamabad summit following terrorist attacks on Indian security personnel committed by Pakistani groups.

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