

State Responses

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4.1 Operational Front

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4.1 Operational Front

Security forces and law enforcement agencies intensified anti-militant kinetic actions in the year 2020. On the whole, they killed as many as 158 militants in military/security operations as well as armed clashes and encounters with the militants – compared to 119 militants killed in such actions in 2019. These operations and clashes/encounters were not confined to a particular area or region but were reported from across all regions of Pakistan, as given at Tables 1 & 2, respectively.

Security and law enforcement agencies arrested 132 suspected terrorists and members of militant groups in as many as 49 search and combing operations conducted all over the country. These search operations do not include several other similar actions in which suspects were arrested and mostly released after preliminary investigation.

Furthermore, security forces foiled at least 14 major terror bids or plots, either independently or in collaboration with Bomb Disposal Squads, mainly by recovering and defusing IEDs planted by militants.

4.1.1 Military/Security Operations

As cited earlier, security forces apparently stepped up anti-militant operations in 2020. Compared to 28 in the year before, security forces and law enforcement agencies conducted 47 anti-militant operational strikes in 2020 in 22 districts and regions of Pakistan. These actions killed a total of 146 people, as compared to 81 in 2019 and injured 22 others. Those 146 killed included 129 militants and 17 Pakistan Army soldiers.

Out of the total 47 operational strikes reported in 2020, as many as 28 were conducted in KP, 15 in Balochistan, and two each in Punjab and Sindh. There were only seven (7) districts where more than one anti-militant operation happened including North Waziristan (11 operational strikes), DI Khan (5), and Bajaur and Tank (3 strikes each) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, as well as Kech and Awaran (4 strikes each), and Harnai (2) in Balochistan.

However, North Waziristan drew prime attention of security forces where they killed 49 militants (14 soldiers were also martyred) in 11 operations they conducted.

Table 1: Operational Attacks by Security Forces, against Militants and Insurgents

Region	District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Balochistan	Awaran	4	17	0
	Harnai	2	3	0
	Kech	4	9	0

Region	District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
	Khuzdar	1	3	1
	Mastung	1	1	0
	Panjgur	1	4	0
	Pishin	1	2	1
	Quetta	1	2	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>2</i>
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Bajaur	3	4	2
	Bannu	1	1	0
	Buner	1	3	0
	DI Khan	5	7	3
	Kohat	1	3	0
	Lakki Marwat	1	2	0
	Mohmand	1	3	0
	North Waziristan	11	63	15
	Swat	1	2	0
	Tank	3	4	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>20</i>
Punjab	Bahawalpur	1	4	0
	Rajanpur	1	5	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>
Sindh	Karachi	1	2	0
	Sukkur	1	2	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>
Total Pakistan		47	146 (129 militants) ¹⁸⁰	22 (2 militants) ¹⁸¹

Some major security or counterterrorism operations, or in which some important militants were killed, are listed below:

- January 29: Five members of a banned group were allegedly killed in a targeted operation by security forces in mountainous area of Buleda in **Kech** district. Security forces also seized weapons, grenades and explosives in the operation.¹⁸²

- January 30: Security forces conducted an anti-militant operation in Dattakhel area of **North Waziristan** killing 6 suspected militants. Two army soldiers also lost their lives in firing by the militants, who were identified as Sepoy Muhammad Shamim and Sepoy Asad Khan.¹⁸³
- February 21: Two militants, including a senior commander of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan's Sajna group were killed in an intelligence-based operation in the Raghzai Manjhi area on the outskirts of **Tank** district. The dead were identified as Anas Munir and Bakhtullah, both belonging to Sajna group of outlawed TTP.¹⁸⁴
- March 9: A senior officer of Pakistan Army, Col. Mujeebur Rehman, was martyred while leading an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) in **Dera Ismail Khan**. Two terrorists who were high value targets were also killed in an exchange of fire while a large cache of arms and ammunition recovered from miscreants' hideout.¹⁸⁵
- March 18: On confirmed intelligence reports about presence of militants in a hideout, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Mama Ziarat area in Dattakhel tehsil of **North Waziristan**. Seven terrorists were killed and four security personnel martyred, including an officer Lieutenant Agha Muqadas Ali Khan, in the ensuing clash.¹⁸⁶
- April 8: Security forces cordoned off **North Waziristan's** Idel Khel village after being tipped off about the presence of alleged terrorists. Four of the suspects were shot dead when they tried to escape the cordon, stated the Inter Services Public Relations.¹⁸⁷ Separately, on the same day, security forces killed three terror suspects during a raid in **Mohmand** tribal district, according to ISPR. They recovered IEDs, night vision goggles, hate material and Indian medicines from the hideout.¹⁸⁸
- April 25: Security forces conducted anti-militant operations in Khaisura and Dossali areas of **North Waziristan** district. In the actions, nine militants were killed and another one was arrested. In the exchange of fire, two army soldiers, Abdul Waheed and Sakum Dad, were also martyred and 5 others were injured.¹⁸⁹
- May 17: Four suspected terrorists of the Islamic State group, or Daesh, were killed during an intelligence-based operation conducted by the CTD in **Bahawalpur**, near Azam Chowk; 3 militants reportedly escaped. Those killed included Amanullah, Abdul Jabbar, Rehman Ali, and Aleem, and wanted to attack a worship place of a religious minority.¹⁹⁰
- June: **Bannu** police eliminated a high-profile terrorist Amin Shah, the alleged kidnapper and killer of a woman Canadian journalist, in a raid on his house in Bannu district. The terrorist was also wanted for the murder of Havaid police station SHO Imam Hussain.
- July 7: Security forces conducted anti-militant operation in a far flung area of **Khuzdar** and killed one commander of the banned Baloch insurgent group BLA along with his two aides. Those killed were identified as Muhammad Anwar, commander Abdul Hameed and and Sabir. One militant was also injured, who managed to

escape.¹⁹¹ On the same day, security forces raided a house in a periphery of **Harnai**, on the intelligence that a militant was hiding there. In the ensuing exchange of fire, BLA commander Kaisar Chalgari was killed.¹⁹²

- July 12: Security forces conducted intelligence-based operation in Vezhda Sar, some eight kilometres southwest of the Boya area in Miranshah (**North Waziristan**), and killed four terrorists. Four officials of Pakistan Army also embraced martyrdom in the exchange of fire and another three were injured.¹⁹³
- July 31: The counter-terrorism department (CTD) of Punjab police reportedly foiled a major terror bid by killing five suspected terrorists in **Rajanpur** in southern Punjab. The police also recovered a 15kg heavy IED and weapons from the terrorists, who reportedly belonged to the Baloch Republican Army.¹⁹⁴
- August 31: The CTD and other agencies conducted an operation in **Mastung** and killed an alleged commander of ISIS, identified as Mohammad Nawaz alias Sindhi. According to police, he was involved in a suicide attack on an election rally of Nawabzada Siraj Raisani and several other terrorist activities.¹⁹⁵
- September 6: The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that a wanted terrorist commander Waseem Zakeria along with four accomplices had been killed during an intelligence operation in **North Waziristan** tribal district. He was mastermind of at least 30 terrorist attacks including on military convoys, and was also believed to be involved in the assassination of Zubaidullah Khan, a CSP officer of the Federal Information Group.¹⁹⁶
- September 19: Security forces conducted intelligence-based operations on the confirmation of presence of terrorists in the central Makran region in **Awaran** district. Four suspected militants belonging to a banned outfit were killed and their hideout was destroyed.¹⁹⁷
- November 22: Security forces raided a compound of suspected militants in **North Waziristan** killing four alleged militants; an army soldier was martyred and two others were injured in the exchange of fire with the militants.¹⁹⁸
- November 23: Security forces claimed to have neutralised a network of terrorists by killing two senior militant commanders and arresting several others in an intelligence based operation in Salarzai tehsil of **Bajaur**. The killed militant commanders, identified as Zubair and Azizur Rahman alias Fida, reportedly belonged to the militant Islamic State group. Fida was the Karachi chief of IS group; his wife, in-charge of women wing the of IS in Karachi, was arrested and handed over to local police.¹⁹⁹
- December 22: At least 10 suspected terrorists have been killed in an intelligence-based operation against a terrorist hideout in Gwargo area in the **Awaran** district. According to the ISPR, these terrorists were involved in firing on security forces, which had resulted in martyrdom of Lance Naik Mohammad Iqbal on December 20.²⁰⁰

4.1.2 Security Forces' Clashes and Encounters with Militants

Security and law enforcement agencies also entered into in a total of 15 armed clashes and encounters with militants – a decrease of 40 percent from such incidents in previous year – across 11 districts of the country. These armed clashes and encounters claimed 38 lives (29 militants, 7 security personnel and 2 civilians).

As many as nine of these clashes and encounters (or 60 percent) took place in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (including 5 in twin Waziristan districts alone), another three (3) happened in Balochistan, while two (2) such incidents took place in Sindh and one in Punjab.

Table 2: Clashes and Encounters between Security Forces and Militants

Regions	District	Attacks	Killed	Injured
Balochistan	Kech	1	3	0
	Nasirabad	1	1	0
	Sibi	1	1	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Bannu	1	1	0
	Lower Dir	1	2	0
	North Waziristan	4	16	6
	Peshawar	1	5	0
	South Waziristan	1	3	0
	Tank	1	2	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>6</i>
Punjab	DG Khan	1	2	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>
Sindh	Karachi	2	2	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>
Pakistan Total		15	38 (29 militants) ²⁰¹	6 (4 militants) ²⁰²

Some of the reported clashes and encounters between security, law enforcement agencies and militants are described below.

- January 27: Two alleged terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in **Tank** district. They were identified as Jehanzeb alias Jhangi of Abakhel and Awal Khan belonging to Bittani tribe. Awal Khan was carrying Rs 500,000 head money for his involvement in different acts of terrorism.²⁰³
- February 21: Five suspected terrorists were killed in an encounter with the CTD in the Zagi Ghar area of **Peshawar**. Police said the killed militants were trying to enter Peshawar from Khyber to carry out attacks in Peshawar and other parts of the province. Officials recovered three suicide jackets, three sub-machine guns, and other weapons.²⁰⁴
- April 10: Two security personnel were martyred in an exchange of fire with militants near Mirali in **North Waziristan** tribal district; seven militants were also killed in the encounter, which happened in the Zekerkhel area of the district.²⁰⁵
- September 5: Three suspected terrorists from the banned TTP were killed in a gun battle with members of security forces in **South Waziristan** tribal district. According to police, TTP militants attacked a military convoy, which triggered the exchange of fire between the two sides.²⁰⁶ Later, on September 19, the Inter-Services Public Relations said two security personnel lost their lives during an intelligence-based operation near Spelga village in **North Waziristan**. Those martyred were identified as Havaladar Tajbar Ali and Sepoy Abdur Rashid.²⁰⁷
- November 6: Two suspected terrorists belonging to Al-Qaeda were reportedly killed in an encounter with the police in **DG Khan**. Two others managed to escape.²⁰⁸
- November 17: A suspected terrorist Mullah Omer, wanted by the Iranian government for a long time, and his two sons were killed in an exchange of fire with police in Turbat town of **Kech** district. Mullah Omer belonged to banned Iranian outfit Jashul Adal, a splinter of Jundullah.²⁰⁹

4.1.3 Terrorists Arrested

Security and law enforcement agencies arrested 132 suspected terrorists and members of militant groups in as many as 49 search and combing operations conducted all over the country. These search operations do not include several other similar actions in which suspects were arrested and mostly released after preliminary investigation.

Highest arrests for any one militant group were made of the TTP and local Taliban militants (51); 12 militants of TTP-linked Lashkar-e-Islam were also detained in Khyber district. In all, 17 members of different unspecified banned groups were also detained. Others among those arrested included 23 suspected militants linked to different Baloch nationalist groups including 12 BLA militants. As many as 5 among those detained were reportedly affiliated with ISIS, three with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and another four with Sipah-e-Muhammad. Four militants of Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army were also detained. (See Table 3)

Table 3 lists organizational association and number of different brands of suspected militants arrested across Pakistan by law enforcers in 2020.

Table 3: Suspected Terrorists Arrested in 2020

Militant Organization	Operations	Terrorist Arrested
Afghan national	1	3
Afghan Taliban	1	1
Banned militant outfits (inclusive of all)	3	8
Banned sectarian group	1	2
BLA	3	12
BRAS	1	6
Indian Intelligence Agency (RAW)	1	2
ISIS	3	5
Lashkar-e-Islam	2	12
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	2	3
Local Taliban / TTP	21	51
MQM-L	2	7
Nationalist insurgents (NI)	2	5
Sindhudesh Revolution Army	1	4
Sipah-e-Muhammad	3	4
Unknown Militants	2	7
Total	49	132

4.1.4 Failed/Foiled Terror Bids

Two more than in the previous year, security forces foiled at least 14 major terror bids or plots, either independently or in collaboration with Bomb Disposal Squads, mainly by recovering and defusing IEDs planted by militants. These also included a few incidents where militants could not reach their targets and their suicide vests or IEDs they planted exploded by accident. (*See Table 4*)