

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Dec 28- Jan 03, 12(5), 2009-10

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I. COUNTRY REVIEW

A. SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

- **8 CIA personnel killed in a suicide attack in Khost; Parliament rejects 70% of nominations for the new cabinet under Karzai ; Election Commission: Afghanistan parliamentary elections to be held on May 22, 2010; Afghanistan is deadlier than Iraq for US troops, says report; 25 security guards killed by Taliban in Musa Qala**

The CIA base in the eastern province of Khost was hit by suicide bombing on December 30 as a result of which 8 CIA personnel were killed. Officials described the attack as a major blow to one of CIA's key center for intelligence related to its counterterrorism operations. The deadly incident is quite similar to the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut where 8 CIA officers were killed, reports noted.¹

Meanwhile, on January 2 the Parliament rejected 70% of the nominations for the new cabinet as proposed by President Karzai. The complex process of voting rejected of 17 of the 24 nominees. The nominations were announced in December 2009 and retained 12 current ministers in their posts for a second term.²

The Parliamentary elections would be held on May 22 this year as announced by the Election Commission on January 2. Chief electoral officer for the Independent Election Commission, Daoud Ali Najafi, addressed a press conference in this regard and noted, "The election of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) will be conducted within the constitutional framework."³

In other developments, there were reports suggesting that in 2009 the number of US troops who died in Afghanistan is much more in comparison to Iraq. More than 300 U.S. troops died in Afghanistan in 2009 as against 148 in Iraq. According to Pentagon records, this is the first time since 2003 that more troops

¹ 'CIA base attacked in Afghanistan supported airstrikes against al-Qaeda, Taliban', *The Washington Post*, January 1, 2010 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/31/AR2009123100541.html?hpid=topnews>

² 'Afghan parliament rejects cabinet nominees', *The Times of India*, January 2, 2010 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/Afghan-parliament-rejects-cabinet-nominees/articleshow/5405850.cms>

³ 'Afghan parliament vote confirmed for May', *Reuter*, January 2, 2010 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6010QT20100102>

died in Afghanistan. Amidst such developments, military officials and analysts predict increased violence in Afghanistan in the year 2010.⁴

The residence of Mulla Abdus Salam, District Chief of Musa Qala (in Shah Kareez area of Kajki district), was attacked by Taliban on December 30. At least 25 security guards were killed, 7 injured and 5 were reportedly missing after the attack.⁵

PAKISTAN

- **At least 90 people killed in a suicide bomb attack during a volleyball match in Lakki Marwat; Karachi engulfed in riots in the aftermath of Ashura attack; TTP claims responsibility for the Muharram attack; President Zardari pledges to defend democracy; President Obama reiterates the security threat to US from militants in Pakistan; 'Aman ki Asha' project to promote peace between India and Pakistan**

At least 90 people were reportedly killed and 40 seriously injured in a suicide bomb attack in Shah Hasan Khel Village, Lakki Marwat on January 1.⁶ A truck full of explosives was driven into the wall of the premises where a volleyball match was being held. The toll was expected to rise as several of the injured were in a critical state as noted by chief of the police in NWFP.⁷

Meanwhile, violence erupted in Karachi after the main Ashura procession was attacked on Muharram on December 28. The agitated mourners attacked buildings and burnt shops and cars which resulted in a total loss of property worth Rs 30-35 billion.⁸ In related development, the TTP has taken responsibility of the Ashura attack. Reports noted that Asmatullah Khan, a senior Taliban commander said more attacks would follow in different parts of the country in the coming week.⁹

⁴ 'Afghanistan far deadlier than Iraq for U.S. troops in 2009', *USA Today*, December 30, 2009 at http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2009-12-30-troop-deaths_N.htm

⁵ 'Taliban kill 25 security guards in Musa Qala', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, January 2, 2010 at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=67628>

⁶ '90 killed in Lakki Marwat bombing', *Daily Times*, January 02, 2010 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\01\02\story_2-1-2010_pg1_1

⁷ Mushtaq Yusufzai & Barkatullah Marwat, '83 killed in Lakki Marwat suicide attack', *The News*, January 02, 2010 at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

⁸ Moonis Ahmed, 'Rs 30-35bn go up in smoke as riots erupt after blast', *Daily Times*, December 30, 2009 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\12\30\story_30-12-2009_pg1_1

⁹ Mushtaq Yusufzai, 'TTP claims responsibility for bombing', *The News*, December 31, 2009 at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

President Zardari taking a tough stand stated he will make all possible efforts to thwart the threat of disintegration from the non state actors in Pakistan. Zardari further noted that “institutions being pitted against each other” are undermining the interests of the country. He was addressing a rally to commemorate the second death anniversary of Benazir Bhutto in Naudero on December 27.¹⁰

In other developments, speaking about the terrorists’ safe havens, President Obama especially mentioned 4 countries- Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen where conspiracies against US were being hatched, as noted in a White House statement. Obama named these 4 states in context of the failed attempt to bomb an American airliner on December 25, 2009.¹¹

In an unprecedented move, leading media houses in India and Pakistan inaugurated the project ‘Aman ki Asha’ which is a joint cross border initiative to promote peace between the two countries.¹²

B. EAST ASIA

CHINA

- **Pakistani Delegation visits China; Special Operation members display their skills in the Gulf of Aden; “Cobra” system introduced; Shenyang Military Area Command carries out training in extreme weather conditions; New Compilation of military laws and regulation ready to be distributed amongst troops**

A Pakistani delegation headed by Nawaz, the visiting principal of the Command and Staff College of Pakistan was on a visit to China during the week. The delegation met Chen Yong, Assistant to Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in Beijing on December 28. During the meeting, Chen Yong reiterated that China accords a great deal of importance to the traditional

¹⁰ ‘Zardari vows to defend democracy’, *Daily Times*, December 28, 2009 at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\12\28\story_28-12-2009_pg1_1

¹¹ ‘Terror havens in four states: US’, *Dawn*, December 30, 2009 at <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/front-page/19-terror-havens-in-four-states-us-029-hh-08>

¹² Gibran Peshimam, ‘Top Indian, Pakistani media groups join hands for peace’, *The News*, January 01, 2010 at http://www.thenews.com.pk/arc_default.asp

Sino-Pakistani friendship and that the two were “reliable and truthful partners.”¹³

Meanwhile, Special Operation Members of the PLA are demonstrating exceptional fighting skills in the anti-piracy escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and waters off the Somali coast. So far, 280 members in four batches have reportedly been dispatched to the maritime region. These Special Operation members are known for their extraordinary stamina and known to have escorted 1,329 Chinese and foreign merchant ships in a total of 149 batches. Besides, they successfully rescued 8 Chinese and 13 foreign merchant ships from the pirates.¹⁴ In a related development, China's naval fleet completed 150 missions on December 27 after it successfully secured 14 vessels from the possible threat of Somali pirates.¹⁵

In other developments, the APF Engineering College of the PLA developed and produced the “Cobra” system which currently is under probation in the “Snow Leopard Commando”. The “Cobra” involves a new concealed reconnaissance and attack system. The weapon is especially designed and equipped with functions as concealing the user, reconnoitering the enemy situation and effectively searching the target. With this system, the commandos can take on the criminals and control the situation in a short span of time even in extreme conditions.”¹⁶

An army aviation regiment under the Shenyang Military Area Command of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army reportedly carried out “emergent organic call-out training with various types of helicopters and successfully accomplished the training of opening up field airdrome under frigid weather conditions.”¹⁷

The Legal Affairs Bureau of the Central Military Commission (CMC) compiled and printed the “Collection of Military Laws and Regulations of the People’s Republic of China (2004-2008)” and the “Collection of Military

¹³ ‘Chen Yong Meets Pakistani Guests’, *PLA Daily* (Online), December 29, 2009 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/29/content_4103121.htm

¹⁴ ‘Special Operation Members of Chinese Naval Escort Taskforce Show Remarkable Combat Capability’, *PLA Daily* (Online), December 28, 2009 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/28/content_4102485.htm

¹⁵ ‘China's Escort Fleet Completes 150 Missions in Somali Waters’, *PLA Daily* (Online), December 28, 2009 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/today-headlines/2009-12/28/content_4102071.htm

¹⁶ ‘APF Engineering College Develops New-type Reconnaissance and Attack System’, *PLA Daily* (Online), December 30, 2009 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/30/content_4103915.htm

¹⁷ ‘Army Aviation Regiment Raises Long-range Strike Capability under Frigid Weather Conditions’, *PLA Daily* (Online), December 29, 2009 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/29/content_4103122.htm

Regulations of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (2004-2008)." The published reports would soon be distributed amongst the troops.¹⁸

JAPAN

- **House of Councillors elections in 2010 would be crucial for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama ; Japan and the United States to develop the F-35 next- generation stealth fighter; Japan and Russia establish a vice-ministerial subcommittee on trade and investment**

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama will face a crucial test in 2010 as the Democratic Party of Japan-led government heads toward the House of Councillors elections this summer. His leadership qualities have already been challenged and therefore the stakes are high for the 62-year-old prime minister and the DPJ as reports noted. Presently, the DPJ controls the Upper House with the help of its junior coalition partners. In case his party wins a majority in the Upper House, theoretically, it will be able to run the government without heeding what the coalition partners say, or even dispense with their support if needed.¹⁹

Amongst other developments, Japan and the United States are contemplating Tokyo's participation in a multinational project to develop the F-35 next- generation stealth fighter. The move is intended to clear the way for Japan to introduce the F-35 as its mainstay fighter jet in future as countries who are not participating in the joint development would not be allowed to acquire it in near future.²⁰

Meanwhile, there were reports which suggest that Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Russian Industry and Trade Minister Victor Khristenko agreed to establish a vice-ministerial subcommittee on trade and investment to expand bilateral economic ties.²¹

¹⁸ 'Collection of Military Laws and Regulations (2004-2008) Published', *PLA Daily* (Online), December 30, 2009 at http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/30/content_4103779.htm

¹⁹ 'FOCUS: Hatoyama to head for key election in 2010 amid declining popularity', *Associate Press*, December 29, 2009 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9CSRIO01&show_article=1

²⁰ 'Japan, U.S. mulling Tokyo's participation in F-35 development', *Associate Press*, December 29, 2009 at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9CSUACG0&show_article=1

²¹ 'Govt, Russia to establish panel to lift economic ties', *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 29, 2009 at <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/business/T091228003810.htm>

C. WEST ASIA

IRAN

- **8 people killed in fresh violence; Pro-government rallies across country; Mousavi: My blood is no redder than theirs**

Violent clashes across the nation claimed at least 8 lives and left several people injured. As a result, the security forces arrested more than a dozen dissidents including aides to reformist ex-president Mohammad Khatami, opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, veteran leader Ebrahim Yazdi and the award-winning campaigner for human rights, Emadeddin Baghi. The arrests and the raids conducted by the security forces are likely to further antagonize the opposition which has defied the authorities ever since Ahmadinejad returned to power in the contentious June 2009 presidential elections. These demonstrations were held on the sacred day of Ashura when thousands of protesters poured on to streets of Tehran and other major cities to stage fresh anti-government rallies. According to the state television, at least 15 people were reported killed in Tehran alone. Majority amongst the dead were members of “anti-revolutionary terrorist” groups as noted by the television report. Meanwhile, Iran’s bloody crackdown on the protesters drew criticism from around the world including its key trading partner Russia and some western countries.²²

In other developments, thousands of Iranians demonstrated in favour of their government in major cities across the country opposing the anti government protests. The supporters of the government marched in Tehran, Shiraz and Qom shouting “Death to opponents!” Notably, Tehran has accused Western powers of supporting these protests.²³

Leader of opposition Mir Hossein Mousavi stated that he would even sacrifice his life in support of the ongoing campaign against the presidential polls held in June 2009. Speaking on the fresh incidents of violence Mousavi noted, “I am not unwilling to become a martyr like those who made that sacrifice after the election for their rightful national and religious demands.” “My blood is no redder than theirs,” he further added. Demanding the government to cease the crackdown against his supporters, he urged the government to “take responsibility for the problems it has created in the country... release political prisoners... and recognise people’s right to lawful assembly.” Mousavi also

²² ‘Iran cracks down on dissidents after deadly protests’, *Khaleej Times*, December 28, 2009 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/December/middleeast_December647.xml§ion=middleeast

²³ ‘Iran government supporters rally’, *BBC News*, December 30, 2009 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8435007.stm

pointed out “until there is an acknowledgement of the existence of a serious crisis in the country, there will be no possibility of resolving the problems and issues.”²⁴

IRAQ

- **Bomb blasts in central and western parts of the country; Provincial Governor injured in Anbar**

At least 30 people were killed in several bomb blasts which occurred in central and western parts of the country. The bombings are the latest addition in the series of attacks against the Iraqi government. In the western city of Ramadi, 23 people were killed and 30 injured as a result of coordinated bombings. The Provincial Governor in Anbar, Qassim Mohammed Abid was reportedly injured in the attack on the Governor House in Anbar. Some senior security officials were also killed and injured in the blasts. The Security Chief of the compound, Colonel Mahmud al-Fehdawi was killed and Deputy Police Chief of Anbar, Colonel Abbas Mohammed al-Dulaimi was injured in the incident, reports noted. Al-Qaeda in connivance with security forces was held responsible for the bombings.²⁵

²⁴ ‘Iran’s Mousavi ready to die for opposition cause’, *Khaleej Times*, January 1, 2010 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2010/January/middleeast_January5.xml§ion=middleeast

²⁵ ‘Iraq attacks kill 30, provincial governor wounded’, *Khaleej Times*, December 30, 2009 at http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/December/middleeast_December694.xml§ion=middleeast