

Security Incidents on January 25th, 2011

1. A teenage suicide bomber blew himself up near a religious procession of Shi'ite Muslims in the Pakistani city of Lahore on Tuesday, killing at least 13 people and wounding more than 80, officials said. According to media (Reuters), a group called 'Fidayeen-e-Islam' affiliated with the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack and also threatened to carry out more such activities in future.
2. There was also a blast in the country's biggest city of Karachi after a Shi'ite procession passed through a middle class neighborhood. Reports indicated that a bomber on a motorbike struck a police vehicle. Hospital officials said 03 including one policeman were killed and eight others wounded. (source: Dawn News)
3. **A woman working for an NGO in the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP), and her driver were gunned down near Mastung on Tuesday.** Sources said that senior trainer of BRSP Amul Raqib was on her way to Quetta from Mastung in a pick-up when near Gangi-Doori area some unidentified men opened fire. As a result of the firing, Ms Raqib and her driver were killed on the spot, Tehsildar Mohammad Ismail told Dawn from Mastung by phone.
4. A female project staff member of a local NGO in Layyah was killed in a road accident along with the driver of the rented motor car around 8 am in the morning. The car had a head on collision with a passenger van.

Assessment:

Although both the suicide attacks on Chehlum (40 day mourning) processions indicate sectarian rift but the ability of militants to attack whenever and wherever they choose cannot be disregarded. In spite of all the security arrangements (claimed by law enforcing agencies) the suicide bombers managed to come close enough to the target area and were able to inflict considerable damage to life and property. Some the key elements of these two attacks in Lahore and Karachi are sectarian rifts, big crowds, and being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Mastung-Baluchistan incident with a local NGO (BRSP) is of larger concern to IRP operations. The perception that only International NGOs are at a higher risk seems blurred. Two weeks back 03 abducted staff members of WESS (another local NGO) seconds the argument that even NGOs with comparatively higher level of perceived acceptance and localization share similar risks. All IRP operations in the region should exercise extreme caution in planning their field visits. Should vary travel times, gather/share timely information and stay connected to ensure their safety.

The last mentioned incident in which a woman staff member of a local NGO was killed, indicates another important security risk related to road traffic accident. Compared with targeted attacks, abductions, kidnapping and terrorists' attacks, this security hazard may well be minimized by means of proper precautions. The likelihood and severity of accidents can be reduced by following travel/driving protocols.