

EXPRESS TRIBUNE REVEALS REMARKABLY DETAILED INTELLIGENCE ON TTP THREAT TO ATTACK NUCLEAR FACILITY



Dera Ghazi Khan is seen near the center of this map, in the southeastern portion of Punjab province, near the border with Balochistan. Click on the map for a larger view.

Despite a tumultuous relationship that has seen extreme swings over the last few years, the US remains engaged with Pakistan. One reason, of course, is the reliance on overland supply routes through the country for NATO war efforts in Afghanistan. Although it is discussed less often, many also believe that keeping a close eye on Pakistan's nuclear weapons and nuclear facilities is another reason for remaining engaged.

Just under a month ago, both the US and Pakistan saw fit to issue assurances that a Taliban

attack on Pakistan's Minhas air base did not pose a threat to nuclear weapons. Flying in the face of those assurances that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and facilities are safe are articles yesterday and today in Pakistan's Express Tribune providing remarkably detailed information on a planned attack by Pakistan's Taliban at a nuclear facility near Dera Ghazi Khan. I've seen no other mention of this story in Dawn, Pakistan Today or other international news outlets I monitor.

From yesterday's story:

Following 'serious' security threats from the homegrown Taliban, the Army and Punjab police have deployed heavy forces at one of Pakistan's largest nuclear facilities in Dera Ghazi Khan (DG Khan), credible sources told *The Express Tribune*.

/snip/

"DG Khan houses one of the largest nuclear facilities in the country, and has faced the first-ever serious security threat from the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)," said a high ranking military officer currently serving at the installation.

According to an official who works at the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, a key military and civilian fuel cycle site is located 40 kilometres from DG Khan. The site comprises uranium milling and mining operations, and a uranium hexafluoride conversion plant.

The article goes on to inform us that authorities estimated an 80% likelihood of an attack. It appears that the intelligence is based on an intercepted phone call, which included very specific information:

Three to four vehicles carrying suicide bombers are about to enter DG Khan and

can strike the nuclear facilities at any time, the caller concluded according to sources. Sources said that, according to precedents, threats intercepted via phone calls often materialised in the next 72 hours. Direct threats via phone or letters often do not materialise, the source added.

In today's article, the intelligence now even includes the names of the leaders who are organizing the attack:

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)'s Punjab faction has already held rehearsals to target a nuclear site in DG Khan, revealed an intelligence report.

/snip/

Most of the reconnaissance was carried out by a Punjabi Taliban group led by Asmatullah Moavia.

Moavia's group will be abetted by TTP commanders Ghulam Rabbani and Qari Kamran for the attack.

The report also revealed that terrorists had already rehearsed the attack by having frequented their planned route to the nuclear facility.

Other details revealed in the Express Tribune articles cover the precautionary measures taken to beef up security at the facility, even including how many "new pickets" (presumably these are sentries or sentry stations) have been placed around the perimeter: six in yesterday's report and "about eight" in today's.

This situation should be watched very closely over the next few days.