



Analysis

TTP Leader Says Pakistan's Nuclear Assets Among TTP Targets

Despite past denials by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leaders that the group intends to target Pakistan's nuclear weapons, TTP Mohmand Agency leader Omar Khalid said in a 21 March video that the TTP aims to use Pakistan's nuclear technology, among other assets, to ensure Islam's survival. This is the first time that OSC has observed a TTP leader publicly list Pakistan's nuclear weapons among its goals. Other elements of Khalid's statement suggest that he may be seeking to boost his own stature within the group.

In a 21 March Pashto-language video statement posted to pro-Al-Qa'ida, pro-TTP website *Bab-ul-Islam*, Khalid listed, among several other ostensibly far-fetched goals, the TTP's aim to "utilize Pakistan's strengths such as its Army, weapons, **atom bomb**, technology, and other power[s] for the betterment of the Muslim ummah [community] and Islam's survival."^a

- A commentary in influential daily *The News* described Khalid as Al-Qa'ida's "henchman" and argued that his announcement was part of Al-Qa'ida's "game plan" (8 April).¹

By contrast, in the past, TTP leaders denied any intent to seize or otherwise utilize Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Since 21 March, OSC has seen no public statements by other top TTP figures indicating whether they endorse Khalid's remarks.

- In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* in May 2011, approximately 10 months before the release of Khalid's statement, TTP's main spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan -- who speaks for the group's Waziristan-based top leaders -- was cited as saying that the TTP has "no plan whatsoever to attack Pakistan's nuclear assets" (*Jinnah*, 27 May 2011).²
- Similarly, now deceased TTP chief Baitullah Mehsud in a 2008 Al-Jazirah Television interview, said that the TTP is "not thinking of using a nuclear bomb" because, he said, it leads to killing innocent women and children, which is forbidden in Islam. He did say, however, that "we pray to God to help Muslims seize all nuclear bombs from the infidels" (25 January 2008).³

Khalid may be trying to boost his own standing in the TTP. In the 21 March statement, he outlined TTP history, portraying his role in its formation as key. He also touted his fighters as "fully organized, united, and strong," saying they no longer need help from Waziristan.

Previous Khalid Statements Omar Khalid appeared to play a prominent role in the TTP's 2011 propaganda campaign, appearing in several videos -- one of which also depicted Hakimullah Mehsud -- and creating his own magazine. In his past statements, Khalid has threatened revenge for the attacks on Usama Bin Ladin, claimed responsibility for an attack in Peshawar using a female suicide bomber, and rejected peace talks with the government.

^a For more information, see the 24 April OSC Summary, *Pakistan: Militant Leader Narrates History of TTP* (SAP20120424434003).

¹ [OSC | | OSC ID: SAP20120410118018 | 8 April 2012 | | Article Urges Govt to Counter Propaganda Campaign by Al-Qa'ida Against Pakistan | | (U) | (U) | Islamabad The News Online in English -- Website of a widely read, influential English daily, member of the Jang publishing group. Neutral editorial policy, good coverage of domestic and international issues. Usually offers leading news and analysis on issues related to war against terrorism. Circulation estimated at 55,000; URL: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/>]

² [OSC | | OSC ID: SAP20110528100007 | 27 May 2011 | | TTP Spokesman Reportedly Says Taliban Not To Attack Pakistan's Nuclear Assets | | (U) | (U) | Islamabad Jinnah in Urdu -- Daily owned by a prominent businessman who is mainly involved in real estate business and said to be close to military high-ups. Carries good investigative reports and conducts surveys on relevant issues. Editorials are harshly critical of US policies. Recently Jinnah has adopted sensationalist reporting and tends to splash corruption stories out of proportion. Editor Khushnood Ali Khan strongly criticizes Musharraf in his daily columns.]

³ [OSC | | OSC ID: GMP20080125648001 | 25 January 2008 | | Pakistan's Pro-Taliban Mahsud Views New Alliance, Warns Musharraf, West | | (U) | (U) | Doha Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television in Arabic -- Independent Television station financed by the Qatari Government]

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