



Written by on October 4, 2010

Taliban Claims Responsibility for NATO Supply Truck Attacks

Voice of America and other news sources reported on October 4 that the Pakistani Taliban had claimed responsibility for an attack on about 20 tanker trucks carrying fuel bound for NATO troops in neighboring Afghanistan. The report cited a police report that claimed that at least three people were killed when militant gunmen fired on the tankers and then set them on fire. The attack occurred at a truck depot near Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, before dawn on October 4. A Pakistani Taliban spokesman told reporters that the attacks would continue until the supply convoys are stopped. The militant group also said it was avenging NATO drone strikes on Pakistani territory.



VOA quoted Bin Yamin, deputy inspector general of the Islamabad police, who said that at least four tanker trucks were destroyed and another 13 damaged and that in addition to the three people who were killed in the attack, six people also were injured. However, Yamin would not say whether the dead and injured were drivers or bystanders. He did state that at least two people had been arrested in connection with the incident.

[AFP](#) provided more detailed quotes from [Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan](#) (TTP) spokesman Azam Tariq, who told the French-based news service by telephone from an undisclosed location: "We accept responsibility for the attacks on the NATO supply trucks and tankers. I am talking about attacks both in Sindh and in Islamabad. We will carry out more such attacks in future. We will not allow the use of Pakistani soil as a supply route for NATO troops based in Afghanistan"

"This is also to avenge drone attacks," Tariq added.

Tariq's reference to "[Sindh](#)" addressed the September 30 attack that destroyed 15 NATO trucks parked at a fueling station in the town of Shikarpur, Sindh Province, Pakistan. Following the attack, the District Coordination Officer (DCO) of Shikarpur issued a statement that "unknown terrorists, in dozens, have attacked the NATO containers carrying oil with rockets. Some 15 to 20 containers were destroyed in the attack and the fire is still blazing and we are trying to put it off."

An October 3 report about the Sindh attack from [IRNA](#), the Islamic Republic News Agency, also cited TTP spokesman Tariq, who said that the "Siara Group" (which he identified as part of the [Hakimullah](#) group) of Taliban has carried out the attack.

The IRNA report continued:

The attack was carried out a day after Pakistan blocked supplies trucks for NATO forces in



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Afghanistan apparently as protest against the NATO air strikes which killed three Pakistani soldiers on [September 30].

The [Los Angeles Times](#) of October 4 reported that on that day NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen had met with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Brussels and formally apologized for the attack that killed the Pakistani soldiers, calling it “unintended.” ??“There is a joint investigation underway. We will determine what happened and draw the right lessons,” Rasmussen said. “I expressed my hope that the border will be open for supplies as soon as possible.”

The border closing that Rasmussen referred to is the closing of the Torkham border crossing from Pakistan into Afghanistan by NATO “ally” Pakistan, which has crowded the supply convoys into a more limited number of routes, making it easier for Taliban terrorists to locate and attack them.

A [BBC report](#) for October 4 entitled, “Analysis: Why Nato’s tankers are so vulnerable” questioned Rifaat Hussein, professor of security studies at Islamabad’s Quaid-e-Azam University, who offered his opinion to BBC World Service about why Nato’s convoys are so exposed. Hussein noted, in part:

Pakistan gives the convoys right of passage but the security and safety of the tankers is primarily the responsibility of Nato and its contractors. I do not think the government of Pakistan is directly implicated in these arrangements.

Routes through Pakistan have been very exposed for the last 10 years and their vulnerability is now becoming much more acute. Militants are feeling emboldened and enraged as a result of developments in Afghanistan and the drone attacks on the Pakistani side. We are also seeing Nato incursions into Pakistan for the first time, with the death of three Pakistani soldiers....

If Nato were to make a request to the Pakistani army or the paramilitary forces to beef up the security of these routes, I am sure the Pakistani government would be able to do that. But to the best of my knowledge, I do not think there is any explicit agreement between Nato forces and the Pakistani government that this is a job they expect the government to be doing.

It has long been a basic principle of warfare for an army to protect its supply lines. In [The Principles of War](#), the Prussian soldier and military theorist [Carl von Clausewitz](#) noted about offensive warfare:

The first [principle] is constant replacement of troops and arms. This is easier for the defender, because of the proximity of his sources of supply. The aggressor, although he controls in most cases a larger state, must usually gather his forces from a distance and therefore with great difficulty. Lest he find himself short of effectives, he must organize the recruiting of troops and the transport of arms a long time before they are needed. The roads of our lines of operation must be covered constantly with transports of soldiers and supplies. We must establish military stations along these roads to hasten this rapid transport.

If NATO has missed this point, the Pakistani Taliban may be practicing another:

If in a poor country the enemy has accumulated with great effort stores of supplies, on whose preservation his operations absolutely depend. In this case it may be advisable not to march our main forces against those of the enemy, but to attack his base of supply.

Volumes have been written in works of military history about military operations that were doomed by overextended and/or unprotected supply lines. As the Taliban extend their presence from nation to nation, will we continue to follow them to the ends of the Earth, extending our supply lines farther and farther?



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If the constitutional argument against sending our troops abroad without a congressional declaration of war continues to fall on deaf ears, perhaps a common-sense argument articulating the basic principles of warfare will be better received by our nation's leaders.

Photo: Pakistani fire fighters struggle to extinguish burning oil tankers after militants attacked a terminal in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Oct. 4, 2010:

AP Images



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