

## South Asia Overview

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“Afghanistan’s success, ladies and gentlemen, is owed primarily to two factors: the Afghan people’s determination, and the international community’s support. Today, Afghanistan illustrates how best international cooperation can be utilized to fight a global challenge, such as terrorism, and help rebuild a nation once devastated by foreign interference and violence. If we recall where we were three years ago, our accomplishments to date are truly significant. Together we have steered Afghanistan rather successfully through a tortuous journey over the last three years. Today we celebrate together not the end of our journey, but a very good beginning.”

Hamid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan  
Afghanistan Development Forum  
April 4, 2005

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*Afghan women count ballot papers in Herat following the country's September parliamentary elections, Afghanistan's first free elections in more than 30 years. (AFP Photo/Behrouz Mehri)*

Although terrorism remained a major problem in the region, with increases in activity in 2005 by terrorist groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, there were encouraging signs. Afghanistan made steps forward in democratization when it conducted successful elections for the National Assembly, began the important process of reconciliation with former militants and, under the leadership of its president, continued building the institutions of a modern democracy. Pakistan captured or killed hundreds of terrorists, significantly

increasing the effectiveness of its counterterrorism operation. In July, President Musharraf declared a “Jihad on extremism” and promised to close down extremist institutions.

The United States works closely with its South Asian partners and capacity-building programs to combat terrorism have been effective. Progress in increasing confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan may help India prevent further growth in terrorism within its borders. India has improved its tactics against terrorists and made significant arrests. Bangladesh made important arrests connected to the bombing campaign begun August 17, and announced that it was reorganizing its counterterrorism operations to increase its ability to bring perpetrators to justice and prevent further attacks.

In Nepal and Sri Lanka, terrorism carried out by the Maoists and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), while not normally directly affecting U.S. citizens, posed a severe challenge to the governments of those nations.

Nepal arrested many Maoist terrorists and associates, but is struggling to slow the growth of Maoist forces. Nepal’s success against the Maoists has not translated into effective control of its rural areas, where Maoists can operate. Sri Lankan operations against the LTTE have also shown success mixed with the inability to roll back LTTE influence in predominantly Tamil areas.

## Afghanistan



*U.S. soldiers silently pay their respects to fallen comrades killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan.  
(AFP Photo/Shah Marai)*

Afghanistan continued its progress toward building a democratic government, holding National Assembly and provincial council elections in September. In spite of Taliban threats to disrupt the democratic process, only minor incidents occurred, and the election results were accepted as legitimate by the Afghan people. The National Assembly was inaugurated December 19, marking the final milestone of the Bonn Process.

Programs designed to combat terrorism and lawlessness continued. The Program for Strengthening Peace (PTS), which reconciles

former Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) members, founded six regional offices. As of December, more than 600 former fighters had joined the program. The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program processed more than 63,000 former combatants. The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) process began work in June, focusing on vetting parliamentary candidates to ensure they had no ties to illegal armed groups (IAGs). The DIAG disqualified a number of candidates, using the program more as an effort to push compliance rather than punish individuals for past and present actions. The program’s next phase will be a province-by-province effort to disband the most notorious IAGs, coupled with the identification and removal of government officials with links to IAGs.

Increasingly, the Afghan National Army (ANA), with more than 26,000 personnel in its ranks, and the Afghan National Police (ANP), with 54,500, have taken the lead in counterterrorism operations. Proactive arrests of presumed terrorists have continued, probably preventing many bombings. Despite this progress, Afghanistan saw an increasing number of violent incidents in 2005. More than 1,500 people were killed in terrorist attacks.

The use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings in Afghanistan increased; there were an estimated 15 suicide attacks, compared to four in 2004. Suspected terrorists and anti-Coalition militants targeted candidates and election workers in the run-up to the parliamentary elections. Terrorists and anti-Coalition militants may be changing tactics to reduce the number of direct fire attacks against Coalition forces.

Overall attacks against non-combatants decreased but terrorists and anti-Coalition militants targeted international NGO and UN workers and recipients of NGO assistance in an attempt to hamper reconstruction efforts and drive the international assistance community out of Afghanistan. Thirty-three NGO staff members were killed, up from 23 in 2004.

## **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh witnessed the emergence of a dangerous terrorist group. Jamaat ul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) launched coordinated nationwide attacks on "un-Islamic" persons and facilities in pursuit of its goal of a fundamentalist Islamic society. Bangladesh had limited success in countering JMB's escalating acts of terrorism, underscoring the government's serious institutional, resource, and political constraints. Bangladeshi forces succeeded, however, in capturing Aatur Rahman Sunny, one of the operational commanders of the JMB. Porous borders, and endemic corruption continued to undermine the government's broader counterterrorism posture.

On August 17 JMB exploded nearly 500 small bombs across the country in a coordinated attack, leaving two dead and more than a dozen injured. Leaflets found at the blast sites threatened judges, government officials, politicians, and other "enemies of Islam", including the United States and the United Kingdom. Additional bomb attacks included the use of suicide bombers (in November, JMB launched suicide attacks for the first time in Bangladesh) and targeted judges, police, government offices, local non-governmental organizations, traditional folk festivals, and cultural groups. Despite arrests and seizures of explosive materials, JMB attacks continued. Subsequently, Bangladesh has succeeded in capturing JMB leaders Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia regularly condemned terrorism at domestic and international forums. The government renewed bans on Jamaat ul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), and Harkat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh (HUJI-B) as terrorist organizations.

There was good cooperation between law enforcement agencies on several cases relating to domestic terrorism. With U.S. technical assistance, Bangladesh drafted a comprehensive new

anti-money laundering law. Bangladesh was also working with the United States to strengthen controls at land, sea, and air ports of entry.

## **India**

As in previous years, terrorists staged hundreds of attacks on people and property in India. The most prominent terrorist groups are violent extremist separatists operating in Jammu and Kashmir, Maoists in the "Naxalite belt" in eastern India, and ethno-linguistic nationalists in India's northeastern states. The federal and state governments have tried various strategies to address some of these grievances within the context of Indian democracy, but the government is firm: groups must cease violence before negotiations can begin, and the government will not entertain territorial concessions.

Some terrorist groups operating in India sought to raise their profile. On May 22, there were nearly simultaneous bombings of two movie theaters in New Delhi by a Sikh terrorist organization, Babbar Khalsa International which many thought was defunct. The attacks left one person dead and more than 60 injured. On October 29, a series of explosions in crowded marketplaces and on a public bus in New Delhi killed approximately 60 and injured more than 150 on the eve of Diwali, India's most important Hindu holiday. The Indian Government blamed the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LT) for the attack.

Kashmiri terrorist groups made numerous attacks on elected Indian and Kashmiri politicians, targeted civilians in public areas, and attacked security forces. Hundreds of non-combatants were killed, most of whom were Kashmiri Muslims. Indian experts asserted that the April attack on the bus depot for Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus was designed to inhibit growing Kashmiri enthusiasm for normalization of ties between Indian- and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir. The designated FTOs LT and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM) claimed responsibility for many of these attacks. Some of these groups are believed to maintain ties to al-Qaida.

Nevertheless, civilian fatalities from terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir continued a five-year decline in the first nine months of 2005. The Indian Government and military credit improved tactics and a fence that runs along the Line of Control (separating the Indian and Pakistani sides of Kashmir) for having significantly reduced the number of terrorists who cross into Indian Kashmir, thus resulting in a lower number of attacks and fatalities in Jammu and Kashmir. After the October 8 earthquake in Pakistan that reportedly killed many Kashmir-based terrorists, however, the terrorists launched a series of high-profile attacks across the degraded frontier defenses in an effort to prove their continued relevance. Indian experts believe that the car bombs, grenade attacks, daytime assassinations, and assassination attempts on Kashmiri political leaders, including current and former state ministers, were designed to signal that the terrorist groups retained the ability to conduct "spectacular" operations despite their reported losses.

Naxalite (Maoist agrarian peasant movement) terrorism, which covers a broad region of eastern, central, and southern India, is growing in sophistication and lethality and may pose a significant long-term challenge. The Naxalites launched two mass attacks in the second half

of 2005, destroying buildings, capturing weapons, and killing several local policemen in an attack on an Uttar Pradesh village. They also attacked the Jehanabad Prison in Bihar, killing two persons, freeing more than 300 inmates, and abducting about 30 inmates who were members of an anti-Naxalite group.

The U.S. Pacific Command conducted in September a counterterrorism tabletop exercise bringing together Indian and American military, diplomatic, law enforcement, and humanitarian assistance professionals. For the first time ever, a U.S. National Guard unit co-trained with Indian troops at the Counterinsurgency and Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram in September and October. The State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program has trained hundreds of Indian police and security officers. The U.S.-India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group (CTJWG) has met six times since its creation in 2000; India also participates in CTJWGs with 15 other countries, and in multilateral CTJWGs with the EU and BIMSTEC (an organization promoting economic cooperation among Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal).

The Indian Government supports ongoing U.S. investigations in cases involving victims of terrorism related to the United States. On April 26, a special court in Calcutta convicted seven men for the January 2002 attack on the American Center in Calcutta that left five Indian police officers dead and more than 20 injured.

India's counterterrorism efforts are hampered by its outdated and overburdened law enforcement and legal systems. The Indian court system is slow, laborious, and prone to corruption; terrorism trials can take years to complete. An independent Indian think tank, for example, assesses that the estimated 12,000 civilians killed by terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir from 1988 to 2002 generated only 13 convictions through December 2002; most of the convictions were for illegal border crossing or possession of weapons or explosives. Many of India's local police forces are poorly staffed, trained, and equipped to combat terrorism effectively. Despite these challenges, India scored major successes, including numerous arrests and the seizure of hundreds of kilos of explosives and firearms during operations against the briefly resurgent Sikh terrorist group Babbar Khalsa International.

In August, the Indian Government announced a new policy on airplane hijackings that included directing ground crews to obstruct a hijacked plane from taking off, and a clearance procedure for authorizing the shooting down of a hijacked plane in flight that might endanger civilians on the ground.

The Indian Government has an excellent record of protecting its nuclear assets from terrorists, and is taking steps to improve further the security of its strategic systems. In May the Indian Parliament passed the Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill, designed to prevent the transfer of WMD, delivery systems, and associated technologies to state and non-state actors, including terrorists.

## Nepal



*A Nepalese woman tries to identify a relative after a bomb ripped through a passenger bus in Kalyanpur in June. The incident was the worst attack targeting civilians since the beginning of the Maoist insurgency. (AFP Photo/Devendra M. Singh)*

Nepal's primary focus remained the Maoist insurgency, active in Nepal since February 1996. In 2005 alone, Maoists were responsible for the deaths of at least 263 civilians and 330 government security forces, according to press accounts. The government reports that Nepalese security forces arrested thousands of suspected Maoist militants and killed more than 966 in 2005.

On June 6, in the worst attack on civilians since the beginning of the insurgency, Maoists ambushed a passenger bus, killing 41 people and subsequently injuring 71 in a landmine blast. The Maoists imposed two nation-wide blockades February 12-26 and April 2-12, effectively shutting down traffic and businesses throughout most of Nepal. During the February blockade, the Maoists targeted civilian drivers of vehicles who defied the blockade. During the Maoists' unilateral four-month cease-fire from September 3 to January 3, killings decreased dramatically, but kidnappings and extortion continued.

Repeated anti-U.S. rhetoric suggests that the Maoists view U.S. support for the Nepalese Government as a key obstacle to their goal of overthrowing the monarchy. Maoist supreme commander Prachanda issued a press statement with his Indian counterpart on September 1 calling for continued armed struggle and naming the United States as the principal enemy.

In addition to threats against American-affiliated business enterprises, Maoists have threatened attacks against U.S. and international NGOs, including Peace Corps workers. They have continued to extort money from Nepalis and foreigners, including American tourists, to raise funds for their insurgency. The Maoists' public statements criticized the United States, the United Kingdom, and India for providing security assistance to Nepal.

On January 31, Nepal passed the Bank and Financial Institutions Ordinance, which regulates the actions of financial institutions in Nepal and provides the Central Bank with authority to freeze and confiscate the accounts of terrorists.

## Pakistan

The Government of Pakistan continued to pursue al-Qaida, the Taliban and their allies aggressively with counterterrorist police measures throughout the country and large-scale military operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Al-Qaida has declared the Government of Pakistan one of its main enemies, and has called for its overthrow. Nearly 160 people were killed in Sunni-Shia sectarian attacks, a decline from the nearly 200 killed in 2004.

In the run-up to the September parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, Pakistan deployed approximately 80,000 troops, including Frontier Corps (FC) units, to the border region.

Pakistan Army and FC units raided key al-Qaida safe havens in North and South Waziristan, including a compound used by Jalaluddin Haqqani, a leading Taliban figure. President Musharraf reported in November that Hamza Rabia, al-Qaida's chief of external operations, was killed in an explosion in North Waziristan. These operations significantly degraded al-Qaida's command and control capabilities in the region and disrupted cross-border operations. Parallel to this military effort, the government developed a strategy designed to win the support of the tribes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas with a combination of negotiations and economic development investments.

Pakistani security services cooperated closely with the United States and other nations in a campaign to eliminate international terrorism. Hundreds of suspected operatives of al-Qaida and other terrorist groups have been killed or captured by Pakistani authorities since September 2001. Notable arrests by Pakistani security forces included Syed Mohammad Hashim, wanted in connection with the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, Lashkar i Jhangvi chief Asif Choto, and leading al-Qaida fugitive Abu Faraj Al Libi. Taliban spokesman Abdul Latif Hakimi was arrested and transferred to Afghan custody in October. In January, Pakistan extradited two suspected al-Qaida figures to Turkey. The government also cracked down on several groups that had been active in the Kashmir insurgency, banning the publication of the monthly magazine Shahadat run by the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen.

Despite these successes, al-Qaida and Taliban operations in Pakistan continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests, and tribal support for operations against al-Qaida and the Taliban is mixed.



*Pakistani Muslim devotees grieve after a suicide bomber blew himself up in the middle of a shrine in Islamabad, killing more than a dozen people in May. (AFP Photo/Jewel Samad)*

Uneasy relations between the national government and elements in the province of Balochistan have also led to violence. Pakistani authorities charge that a Baloch separatist group was behind two blasts in Lahore in September that killed six people, a November car bombing in Karachi that killed three, and a December missile attack on a paramilitary base during a visit by President Musharraf. At the close of 2005, Government of Pakistan security forces were engaged in operations to subdue the rebellious Baloch militants.

Following the July 7 London subway bombing, in which three of the bombers had widely alleged ties to Pakistan, President Musharraf addressed the nation on television to condemn terrorism and call for a "Jihad against extremism." Among the measures he announced were a crackdown on banned organizations, hate materials, and incitement by religious leaders; the expulsion of foreign madrassa students; and new registration and financial disclosure requirements on madrassas. Government and religious leaders continued to negotiate over the implementation of these measures.

The October 8 earthquake that devastated Pakistan, killing more than 80,000, created an opportunity for al-Qaida-linked relief organizations to provide aid to survivors in the affected areas. The Government of Pakistan provided its own relief operations, facilitated

international relief operations, and promised to shut down known terrorist relief camps, but nonetheless several such groups were able to raise funds and reap public relations benefits.

Pakistan's antiterrorism courts continue to prosecute terrorism cases. In May, six activists of Harakat ul-Mujahedin al-Almi received 19-year sentences for possession of bombmaking equipment and weapons. In March, two physicians, brothers Arshad and Akmal Waheed, were charged and convicted of providing medical treatment to al-Qaida terrorists.

U.S.-Pakistani joint counterterrorism efforts were extensive. They included cooperative efforts in border security and criminal investigations and several long-term training projects.

## **Sri Lanka**

The Sri Lankan Government cooperated with U.S. efforts to track terrorist financing, although no assets were identified in Sri Lanka. The United States worked with Sri Lanka to provide training for relevant government agencies and the banking sector. The government cooperated with the United States to implement both the Container Security Initiative and the Department of Energy's second line of defense Megaports program at the port of Colombo.

The 2002 cease-fire between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), continued to hold despite numerous violations. The Sri Lankan Army remained deployed across the country to fight the insurgency. The paramilitary Special Task Force (STF) police were deployed in the east and at strategic locations in the west.

The LTTE conducted a campaign of targeted assassinations against political opponents in 2005. This included the August 12 assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar outside his Colombo residence by a suspected LTTE sniper team. The Karuna faction, a dissident faction of the LTTE, conducted its own assassination campaign against the LTTE and pro-LTTE civilians in the east. Members of the Karuna faction and suspected Sri Lankan Army informants killed at least 48 individuals in 2005, and approximately 49 members of the Sri Lankan security forces. Including civilian casualties, nearly 200 deaths were attributed to cease-fire violations.

Following the assassination of Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, the government enacted emergency regulations giving arrest power to members of the armed forces, who are required to turn suspects over to the police within 24 hours. Individuals arrested under the emergency regulations may be detained for up to one year. Under these regulations, 148 persons, most of whom already had been released.

The designated FTO Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) finances itself by contributions from the Tamil diaspora around the world, including North America, Europe, and Australia, and by imposing local "taxes" on businesses operating in the areas of Sri Lanka under its control. LTTE military training is self-taught; weapons are either purchased on the international black market or captured from the Sri Lankan Army. Many LTTE innovations, such as explosive belts, vests, and bras, the use of female suicide bombers, and waterborne



suicide attacks against ships, have been copied by other terrorist groups. There is no indication that the LTTE is trying to acquire WMDs.

In general, the LTTE has not targeted U.S. citizens or assets, limiting attacks to Sri Lankan security forces, political figures, civilians, and businesses. However, in November suspected LTTE militants threw a grenade at a truck donated by the United States to a humanitarian demining program. At the time, the truck was occupied by Sri Lankan soldiers, one of whom was killed in the attack.