

AFGHANISTAN

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS REPORT

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SECURITY SERVICES

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SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

“AFGHANISTAN”

Sharif compares Afghanistan, Pakistan’s narratives in the wake of isolation

The former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has compared the narratives of Afghanistan and Pakistan on international level as he strongly criticizes the foreign policy of the country which he believes has pushed the country towards isolation. “We have isolated ourselves. Despite giving sacrifices, our narrative is not being accepted. Afghanistan’s narrative is being accepted, but ours is not. We must look into it,” he said during an exclusive interview with Dawn News. This comes as pressures on the rise on Pakistan regarding the presence of the sanctuaries and alleged support of the country to terrorist groups. In other parts of his interview, Sharif has also criticized the lack of actions by the country’s leadership to conclude the trial of the Mumbai attacks. His remarks had sparked controversies on domestic level in Pakistan as well as reactions in India. “Militant organizations are active. Call them non-state actors, should we allow them to cross the border and kill 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me. Why can’t we complete the trial?” Sharif had asked in the interview.

Abdullah slams government leadership as violence soars across Afghanistan

The Chief Executive of the Unity Government Abdullah Abdullah criticized the government leadership after a wave of deadly attacks and soaring violence claimed the lives of scores of people across the country. In his speech at the Council of Ministers Meeting in Kabul, Abdullah said the ordinary people and security forces have been massacred in the past few days. He slammed the government’s political and security leadership for their silence and lack of action and said even a single meeting of the National Security Council has not been organized as violence soars across the country. This comes as the security situation has sharply deteriorated across the country in the past few weeks as the militants have stepped up attacks in the key provinces and cities. A coordinated attack in Jalalabad city left at least ten people dead including security personnel while 42 others were wounded. The militants had earlier carried out a coordinated attack in two different of Kabul city that left several people dead including security personnel while numerous others were wounded. The Taliban group

and ISIS loyalists in Afghanistan both claimed responsibility behind the coordinated attacks in Kabul city last week.

Nawaz Sharif's remarks regarding Mumbai attacks spark controversies

The remarks by Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif regarding the deadly Mumbai attacks have sparked controversies forcing the country's National Security Council to convene a meeting in response to the remarks in what they believe have been misinterpreted. "Militant organizations are active. Call them non-state actors, should we allow them to cross the border and kill 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me. Why can't we complete the trial?" Sharif had asked in the interview with Dawn News few days earlier. In reaction to the remarks of the former Prime Minister, the India media called it an admission of Pakistan's involvement in the terrorist attacks. The current Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahid Khaqan Abbasi called a meeting of the National Security Council in response to the controversies. The top brass of military leadership, including Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat and Director General Inter-Services Intelligence Lt Gen Naveed Mukhtar are attending the meeting, being held at the PM House, according to the local media reports. In regards to the controversies, Pakistan's army spokesperson Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor had announced that they had "suggested" that the NSC meeting be called to clarify the country's stance on the statement.

Coordinated attack ends in Jalalabad city, 10 dead, 42 wounded

The local officials in eastern Nangarhar province confirm that the coordinated attack on Customs Department in Jalalabad city ended with the elimination of the remaining six militants. Provincial governor's spokesman Ataullah Khogyani confirmed that the attack ended after five hours of gun battle between the security forces and the assailants. Khogyani further added that the attack was carried out by a group of eight militants with at least two of them detonating their explosives near the Customs Department at around 12:30 pm local time. He said the remaining six insurgents intruded inside the Customs Department, sparking clashes that lasted for almost five hours. According to Khogyani, at least six ten people, including civilians, workers of the Customs Department, and security personnel lost their lives in the attack. He also added that the attack left at least forty two people wounded, including civilians, Customs Department workers, and security personnel. The provincial governor's spokesman also added that the security forces managed to rescue at least forty two

people, including civilians and government workers. No individual or group including the Taliban militants has so far claimed responsibility behind the attack.

US supports terror groups in Syria and Iraq, claims Iran's top NSC official

A top official of the National Security Council of Iran has claimed that the United States is the main player organizing terrorists and fomenting instability and insecurity in Iraq and Syria. The Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani made the remarks during a meeting with the Afghan defense minister Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami during a meeting in Tehran. "The experiences in Iraq and Syria show that the US is the main player organizing terrorists and fomenting instability and insecurity in these countries, and certain reactionary Arab regimes have also supported this process financially and logistically" he was quoted as saying. Gen. Bahrami visited Iran on official invitation of the Iranian military officials to hold talks with the country's defense and security officials regarding the issues of bilateral interest. The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri had earlier said that his country seeks expansion in military cooperation with Afghanistan. He had also expressed hope that the Afghan military delegation's visit would result in more cooperation between the two countries' armed forces. This comes as Iran is accused of supporting the certain insurgent groups in Afghanistan. "Iran's desire for influence in Afghanistan remains strong. Iran seeks increased influence in Afghanistan through government partnerships, bilateral trade, and cultural and religious ties," Pentagon stated in its report regarding Afghanistan late last year. The report also adds that Iran provides some support to the Taliban and publicly justifies its relationship with the Taliban as a means to combat the spread of ISIS-K in Afghanistan. "Iran's support to the Taliban undermines the Afghan Government's credibility, adds to instability in the region, and complicates strategic partnership agreements," Pentagon had warned.

Iran's army chief seeks expansion in military cooperation with Afghanistan

The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri has said his country seeks expansion in military cooperation with Afghanistan. Gen. Baqeri reportedly informed regarding his country's intent during a meeting with the Afghan defense minister Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami. "The shared backgrounds between the two countries of Iran and Afghanistan, including religion and language, have brought them together in such way that no obstacle can undermine their close relations, especially in combatting the terrorist groups," the top Iranian General was quoted as saying by Fars News. He also expressed the

hope that the Afghan military delegation's visit would result in more cooperation between the two countries' armed forces. The top Iranian General's intent to expand military cooperation with Afghanistan comes as the country is accused of supporting the certain insurgent groups in Afghanistan. "Iran's desire for influence in Afghanistan remains strong. Iran seeks increased influence in Afghanistan through government partnerships, bilateral trade, and cultural and religious ties," Pentagon stated in its report regarding Afghanistan late last year. The report also adds that Iran provides some support to the Taliban and publicly justifies its relationship with the Taliban as a means to combat the spread of ISIS-K in Afghanistan. "Iran's support to the Taliban undermines the Afghan Government's credibility, adds to instability in the region, and complicates strategic partnership agreements," Pentagon had warned.

148 arrested in Kabul in latest crackdown on criminal suspects

The police forces in Kabul have arrested at least 148 people over a period of less than two weeks as efforts are underway to eradicate the criminal gangs from the capital. Officials in the Criminal Investigation Department said the suspects were arrested during various operations from different parts of the city. The officials are saying that the majority of the suspects have been arrested on charges of armed robberies involving armed attacks on houses and snatching of vehicles as well as other valuable items from the city residents. However, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officials are saying that certain individuals have also been arrested on charges of murder, smuggle of arms and ammunition, and other criminal related incidents. The officials specifically pointed towards the murder of a woman in the vicinity of the 5th police district of the city and said a suspect was arrested in connection to the incident due to the efforts of the police forces. The Afghan police force also confiscated various type of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and hand grenades during the operations, the officials added. This comes as criminal related incidents are on the rise parallel to the growing instability linked to terrorist attacks in Kabul city and other key provinces and cities of the country.

Top Afghan, US officials hold talks regarding ANDSF strike capabilities

Afghanistan's National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar met with the US Central Commander Gen. Joseph Votel in Kabul to discuss the ongoing coalition support to the Afghan forces, particularly focusing on the ways to further bolster the strike capabilities of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). The Office of the National

Security Council (ONSC) in a statement said the two sides discussed the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Afghan forces and Air Force in the fight against terrorism. The statement further added that the meeting focused on further strengthening and equipping the Afghan armed forces and Air Force to thwart the terrorist's plans. Atmar said the Afghan forces are fully prepared to administer the war in this year's fighting season and requested more cooperation of the coalition forces to the Afghan armed forces, particularly in air support sector. In his turn, Gen. Votel said the coalition forces remain committed to support the Afghan armed forces in the fight against terrorism and vowed to thoroughly review the needs of the Afghan armed forces in terms of the need for equipment. According to the Office of the National Security Council, the two sides also had in-depth discussion regarding the regional efforts in the fight against terrorism as well as the Afghan peace process and the US strategy for South Asia.

Coordinated blasts rock Jalalabad city of Nangarhar province

The sounds of coordinated explosions were heard in Jalalabad city the provincial capital of eastern Nangarhar province. The type of the explosions has not been ascertained so far and there are no reports regarding the possible casualties. Eyewitnesses in the area are saying that the sounds of sporadic gunfire are also being heard from the site of the explosions. Provincial governor's spokesman Atullah Khogyani confirmed that a number of the assailants have taken position inside the Nangarhar Customs office and are exchanging fire with the security forces. He said the dead bodies of at least six people have been shifted to hospital along with at least thirty others who have sustained injuries. A provincial public health directorate official confirmed that the dead bodies of at least 9 people have been shifted to the hospitals along with at least 30 others who have sustained injuries.