

South Asia Overview

In 2003, South Asia continued to be a central theater of the global war on terrorism. The Afghan Transitional Authority convened a *Loya Jirga*, and representatives debated and approved a new national constitution. The first units of the Afghan National Army joined in US and Coalition operations against antigovernment forces in the south and east of the country. The national police force continued to grow as government institutions prepared for elections in 2004.

Despite this progress, security remained a concern; the Taliban, al-Qaida, and Hizb-I Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) continued to target the Coalition, noncombatant reconstruction civilians, and the Afghan Government. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) announced its intention to expand its operations outside of Kabul.

Pakistan remained a key partner in the war on terror and continued its close cooperation with the United States in law enforcement, border security, and counterterrorism training. In 2003, the Musharraf government began to increase pressure on terrorists seeking refuge along the border with Afghanistan, conducting antiterrorist operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas for the first time. As in the previous year, Pakistani security authorities made numerous arrests of suspected terrorists, including important members of the al-Qaida leadership.

India continued to be the object of attacks by foreign-based and Kashmiri groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir. Nevertheless, Indian counterterrorist authorities could point to significant progress in the areas of legislation, finance, and investigations. India remained an important US partner in the global war on terror, and the United States hopes to continue to strengthen this relationship.

The cease-fire in Sri Lanka between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan Government held throughout 2003, despite a political crisis within the government that has delayed the resumption of direct talks between the two sides. International aid has begun to reach Sri Lankans living in LTTE-controlled territory, addressing one of the obstacles to a

negotiated settlement. In contrast, the Maoists in Nepal abrogated an eight-month cease-fire and resumed their campaign of armed attacks, bombings, assassination, and extortion against the Government and citizens of Nepal. The Maoists have also extorted money from Western tourists and threatened US citizens and interests, as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and businesses connected with the United States.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan made progress toward rebuilding the government and the country in 2003. In December, Afghanistan successfully held the Constitutional *Loya Jirga* or Grand Assembly, with delegates from around the country assembling in Kabul and approving a national constitution. Other achievements include: continued development of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and expanded training of the Afghan National Police, preliminary efforts to demobilize militia forces, and initial voter registration. In the coming year, Afghans will face challenges as they prepare for elections—scheduled for June 2004—with a precarious security environment in parts of the country.

President Karzai and the Afghan Government remained committed to the war on terrorism. The ANA began combat operations against antigovernment elements, including the Taliban, al-Qaida, and HIG, largely in Afghanistan's south and east in support of the US-led international Coalition and the ISAF.

The Taliban, al-Qaida, and HIG targeted Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), US, Coalition, and ISAF assets in Kabul and in eastern and southern Afghanistan in an effort to destabilize the country. These groups also hampered reconstruction efforts with attacks on nongovernmental organizations and United Nation facilities and personnel.

Al-Qaida regards Afghanistan as an important base of operations and continues its armed opposition to US presence. Al-Qaida fighters remain along the rough eastern border between Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas. Afghan troops conduct joint operations against antigovernment elements with US military and Coalition forces. Through a series of tripartite commission meetings, Afghanistan and

Pakistan have also made significant progress in sharing information and coordinating their efforts to improve security along the border.

Afghanistan is a party to 11 of the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.

India

The Indian Government remained steadfast in its desire to combat terrorism in 2003 and has worked closely with the United States in this regard. For example, several hundred Indian law enforcement officials participated in training as part of the Antiterrorism Assistance program. During the year, the Indian Government also moved to strengthen its international cooperation in curbing terrorism financing. In January, the Parliament enacted an anti-money laundering law that provides the legal basis for establishing a financial intelligence unit to monitor suspect transactions.

In March, the Indian Government announced that 32 terrorist organizations had been listed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and, in July, informed Parliament that 702 persons had been arrested under the Act.

The Indian Government stepped up its efforts to counter the activities of various groups. In the states of Jammu and Kashmir, killings of civilians by foreign-based and Kashmiri militant groups continued and included the murder of numerous political leaders and party workers. The Indian Government asserted that Lashkar-i-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed were behind a number of high-profile attacks in the state, which included the massacre of 24 Hindu civilians in southern Kashmir in March and an attack on 17 October outside the Chief Minister's residence compound in Srinagar.

Attacks took place in other parts of the country as well. Indian police said they had captured or killed all of the individuals responsible for the twin bombings on 25 August in Mumbai that left 53 dead and 160 injured. The Indian Government asserted that the responsible individuals were associated with Lashkar-i-Tayyiba. The People's War Group—a Maoist "Naxalite" organization—claimed responsibility for a car-bomb attack in October



An Indian man looks at buildings destroyed by a car-bomb blast at Zahir Bazaar in Mumbai, 25 August 2003, that killed 45 persons and wounded 155.



Indian pedestrians observe the wreckage of a car destroyed in a bomb blast that killed 52 persons near the Gateway of India in Mumbai, 25 August 2003.

that seriously injured Chandrababu Naidu, chief minister of Andhra Pradesh.

India is a party to all 12 of the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.

Nepal

The Government of Nepal in 2003 strongly supported US counterterrorism activities and was responsive to multilateral efforts to police international terrorism. On 25 April 2003, Nepal signed an agreement with the US Government to establish an antiterrorism assistance program. Nepal's primary focus, however, remained the Maoist insurgency, active in Nepal since February 1996.

The Maoist insurgency poses a continuing threat to US citizens and property in Nepal. Repeated anti-US rhetoric and actions suggest the Maoists view US support for Kathmandu as a key obstacle to their goal of establishing a doctrinaire communist dictatorship. After they unilaterally withdrew from a seven-month cease-fire on 27 August, the Maoists resumed full-scale hostilities. Since then, the Maoists have been responsible for the deaths of an estimated 259 civilians and 305 government security forces. The Government says that Nepalese security forces have arrested thousands of suspected Maoists and killed more than 1,000 during the year. As part of their program, the Maoists have threatened attacks against US-sponsored NGOs and have sought to extort money from Westerners to raise funds for their insurgency. The Maoists' public statements have criticized the United States, the United Kingdom, and India for providing security assistance to Nepal.

Limited government finances, weak border controls, and poor security infrastructure have made Nepal a convenient logistic and transit point for some outside militants and international terrorists. The country also possesses a number of relatively soft targets that make it a potentially attractive site for terrorist operations. Security remains weak at many public facilities, including the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, but the United States and others are actively working with the Government to improve this situation.

Nepal is a party to five of the 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism and is a signatory to the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

Pakistan

Pakistan continues to be one of the United States' most important partners in the global coalition against terrorism. President Musharraf has himself been the target of terrorist violence, narrowly escaping two assassination attempts in late 2003. US assistance supported Pakistan's efforts to establish a government presence along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and eliminate terrorist safehavens. Pakistan continued operations in the autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas, capturing and killing a number of terrorist operatives.



Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf meets with US Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington, DC, 25 June 2003.



Pakistani paramedical staff assist a police officer injured during an attempted suicide bomb attack on Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf in Rawalpindi, 25 December 2003.



Pakistani army officials remove a damaged car at the site of the attempted suicide bomb attack on Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, 25 December 2003.

Pakistan's military, intelligence, and law-enforcement agencies are cooperating closely with the United States and other nations to identify, interdict, and eliminate terrorism both within Pakistan and abroad. To date, hundreds of suspected operatives of these groups have been successfully apprehended with the cooperation of Pakistani authorities. Among those captured in 2003 were Khalid Shaykh Muhammad—the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks—and Walid Bin Attash—a prime suspect in the attack on the USS Cole in October 2002. When several militant and sectarian groups that had been banned in 2002 began operating under new aliases, the Pakistani Government banned them as well.

Pursuant to its obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions 1267, 1333, 1390, and 1455, Pakistan continues to work with the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee to freeze the assets of individuals and groups identified as terrorist entities linked to al-Qaida or the Taliban.

Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Courts continue to respond to both international and domestic cases of terrorism. In April 2003, an Anti-Terrorism Court in Karachi convicted four defendants charged with organizing the bombing of the US Consulate in June 2002 in Karachi and, in June 2003, convicted three men charged with the bombing in May 2002 that killed 11 French naval technicians. In November 2003, the same court handed down death sentences for three members of the banned extremist groups Lashkar-i-Jhangvi for planning and committing sectarian murders.

US-Pakistan joint counterterrorism efforts have been extensive. They include cooperative efforts in border security and criminal investigations, as well as several long-term training projects. In 2002, the United States and Pakistan established the Working Group on Counterterrorism and Law-Enforcement Cooperation. The meetings provide a forum for discussing ongoing US-Pakistani efforts, as well as a means for improving capabilities and cooperation. Pakistan provides significant assistance in the investigation of international terrorism, acting on leads provided to its counterterrorism and law enforcement agencies by the United States and other nations.

Pakistan has signed 11 of the 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism and is a party to 10.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka continues to support our global efforts to combat terrorism as well as undertaking their own efforts to combat terrorism domestically. Sri Lanka has actively supported international regimes to combat terrorist financing as well.

There were no incidents of international terrorism in Sri Lanka in 2003, as the cease-fire signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE held, despite a halt in face-to-face negotiations and a serious political crisis within the Sri Lankan Government. There were no LTTE suicide bomb attacks throughout 2003, and the group continues to pursue ways to further peace talks. The LTTE has publicly accepted the concept of internal autonomy within a federal Sri Lankan state, conceding its longstanding demand for a separate Tamil Eelam state. In support of the peace process, the US Government has made limited, working-level contact with LTTE authorities to facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid.

Despite this progress, the LTTE, one of the world's deadliest terror groups, did not renounce terrorism or disband its "Black Tiger" suicide squads. It continues to smuggle weaponry into Sri Lanka and to forcibly recruit children into its ranks.

It is too early to tell whether the Sri Lankan peace process will ultimately bear fruit or whether the LTTE will actually reform itself. Although guarded optimism continued to surround the peace process, the United States will maintain the designation of the LTTE as a Foreign Terrorist Organization until it unequivocally renounces terrorism in both word and deed.

Sri Lanka is a party to 10 of the 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.