

Asian Age, 1 September 2008

ISI threat more after Musharraf exit: NSA

Aug. 31: National security adviser M.K. Narayanan has said that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence had become "hyperactive" in recent months, and he feared it would become a bigger menace with President Pervez Musharraf's departure as the civilian leadership might not be able to keep it under a tight leash. Mr Narayanan said in an interview to Karan Thapar on India Tonight that the India-Pakistan relationship and issues pertaining to Kashmir "are not easiest of the things." He added: "We have seen a fair degree of progress during Musharraf's regime and several half-cooked and three-quarter-cooked ideas are in the pipeline... But to take them forward, we need great statesmanship and courage."

Daily Times, 1 September 2008

95 killed in Kurram Agency clashes

PARACHINAR: At least 95 people were killed and more than 200 injured in fresh clashes between the warring Toori and Bangash tribes in Kurram Agency on Sunday. According to sources familiar with the developments in the area, the Bangash tribe was supported by local Taliban militants. Bangash tribe attacks: Despite a unilateral truce announced by the Toori tribe, militants of the Bangash tribe and the local Taliban launched an attack on their opponents from their Bugzai headquarters late on Saturday

Daily Times, 1 September 2008

Swat Taliban reject govt truce offer

MINGORA: Taliban operating under the command of Maulana Fazlullah in Swat Valley continued their militant activities on Sunday, rejecting the government's announcement of a ceasefire. The militants destroyed four abandoned bungalows of PML-Q's local leader, Haroon Rashid, with explosives in Koza Banda area of Kabal Tehsil. Unknown assailants had attacked the grandson of Haroon Rashid after which the family vacated the bungalows and shifted to another area

Dawn, 2 September 2008

Baloch groups call off militancy

QUETTA, Sept 1: Balochistan's main militant organisations - the Baloch Liberation Army, Baloch Republican Army and Baloch Liberation Front - have decided to suspend their activities for an indefinite period. The decision was announced by Beebargh Baloch and Sirbaz Baloch, spokesmen for the BLA and BRA, while talking to journalists on satellite phones on Monday night. 'All the three militant organisations have jointly decided to suspend their resistance movement for an indefinite period,' they said

Dawn, 2 September 2008

Six Kurram tribes announce ceasefire

PARACHINAR, Sept 1: Six tribes of Lower Kurram declared a ceasefire on Monday after nine people were killed and 26 injured in sporadic clashes between Turi and Bangash tribes. The tribes, Bangash, Mangal, Para Chamkani, Zaidashat, Ali Sherzai and Maqbal, announced the ceasefire after a meeting with political administration officials in Sadda. The Turi tribe had announced a ceasefire a few days ago in reverence for

Ramazan. Earlier in the day, a lashkar formed by the Turis claimed to have taken control of Bagzai, the headquarters of the Bangash tribe, and adjoining Char Dewar and Jelamay areas. The death toll in fierce clashes since Sunday rose to 104 with 226 people having suffered injuries

Dawn, 2 September 2008

Bajaur mission fulfilled: army: Chance to net Zawahiri 'missed', says govt

ISLAMABAD, Sept 1: The army said on Monday it had routed Taliban militants in Bajaur, killing 560 Pakistani and foreign fighters and thwarting a push to make Bajaur into a militant fortress. Maj Gen Athar Abbas, the chief of ISPR, told a western news agency about 20 members of the security forces had died and 30 were missing. 'In our view, the back has been broken,' he said. 'Main leaders are on the run and the people of the area are now openly defying whatever the militants had achieved there.'

News, 3 September 2008

NAB cases against Nawaz, family reopened

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) seem to be heading towards a repeat of the early '90s. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), recently taken over by Law Minister Farooq H Naek, has reopened three corruption cases against Nawaz Sharif within 10 days of the PML-N leaving the coalition. According to reports, the NAB has sought the reopening of the corruption cases pending against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his brother Shahbaz Sharif and other members of the Sharif family. The cases include those concerning the Hudabia Papers Mills, Ittefaq Foundries and Raiwind Farms

News, 3 September 2008

Economy's freefall to a default

ISLAMABAD: Of the 192 members of the United Nations, Pakistan's sovereign debt is now the riskiest. For the week ending Aug 29, Government of Pakistan bonds overtook Argentina's to be the most unsafe for investment. In London, where Credit Default Swaps (CDS) are traded, the price for insuring \$10 million worth of Argentina's debt stood at \$788,000 while the price to insure the Government of Pakistan-guaranteed debt skyrocketed to \$950,000 - something that has never happened before - Pakistan's debt is now the priciest to insure (read: the London market is contemplating a default-like scenario)

News, 3 September 2008

15 militants among 25 killed in Swat

MINGORA/PESHAWAR: Fifteen militants, including a leading commander, and 10 civilians were killed and 25 others injured in heavy bombardment carried out by jet fighters on the Taliban strongholds in Peuchar area of the troubled Swat Valley on Tuesday. The aircraft blitzed Peuchar, where Maulana Fazlullah-led militants have established their stronghold after they were flushed out from their former headquarters Mamdheri last year, four times on Tuesday and targeted the suspected hideouts of the Taliban

News, 3 September 2008

TTP claims responsibility for kidnapping Chinese engineers

PESHAWAR: The Swat chapter of the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) outfit has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of two Chinese engineers of the Zong cellular company and their Pakistani driver and guard and warned of more abduction of foreigners. The two engineers, Zhanggua and Lung, along with their security guard Imranullah and driver Khalil, went missing in the Khall area of the Dir Lower district on Friday last. The Maulana Fazlullah-commanded Taliban, operating in the Swat valley, on Tuesday claimed responsibility for the abduction of the two Chinese engineers and their guard and driver. 'Yes, we have picked them up and they are in our captivity,' a spokesman for the Swat chapter of the organisation, Muslim Khan, told The News from an undisclosed location

News, 4 September 2008

30 die in Swat ground push against militants

MINGORA/PESHAWAR: The security forces claimed to have killed about 30 militants and wounded another 35 in a ground assault backed by gunship helicopters in the militants-infested Koza Bandai area of volatile Swat Valley on Wednesday. The military has stepped up operation in the valley despite the government's announcement of a ceasefire and killed several dozen militants in the last more than one week, while the top military official has vowed to continue the action till the elimination of militants from the valley

News, 4 September 2008

Nato forces enter Pakistan

PESHAWAR/WANA: United States-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) forces killed 15 tribesmen, including women and children, in its first-ever ground operation inside Pakistani territory on Wednesday. The allied forces were dropped from two choppers at 3am inside Pakistani village of Musa Neeke in South Waziristan Agency (SWA). They targeted the local population for half an hour, tribal and official sources told The News from the border town of Angoor Adda

News, 4 September 2008

40 police recruits, seven Khassadars kidnapped

PESHAWAR: Around 40 recruits of the Police Training College (PTC), Hangu were abducted while on their way to the college from here via Khyber Agency, eyewitnesses told The News on Wednesday. Office of the deputy superintendent of police (administration), PTC confirmed that around 50 of their recruits were absent for the day, majority of whom were abducted from Bara tehsil of Khyber Agency. Officials revealed that recruits making it to PTC Hangu said militants disembarked at least 30 of their colleagues from one passenger vehicle while two to three each were offloaded from at least two other vehicles

Dawn, 5 September 2008

Outraged parliament wants border raids repulsed

ISLAMABAD, Sept 4: Outraged by the deadly first known ground assault into Pakistan's

tribal belt by US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan, both houses of parliament on Thursday unanimously asked the government to take measures to 'repel such attacks in the future with full force'. After fiery debates over Wednesday's pre-dawn helicopter-borne raid that reportedly killed at least 20 people in a village in South Waziristan agency, the demand was made in a resolution passed unanimously by the National Assembly and the Senate separately that also wanted the government to tell the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan that such violations were 'bound to force fundamental changes of foreign policy' by a key ally in the so-called war on terrorism

Dawn, 5 September 2008

17 militants, 9 civilians killed in Swat

MINGORA, Sept 4: Seventeen militants were killed when security forces, backed by helicopter gunships and artillery, pounded militants' hideouts in Koza Bandai area of Swat's Kabal tehsil on Thursday. Nine civilians were also killed. An ISPR press release said that three key Taliban commanders - Mohammad Younis, Saifur Rehman and Ziaur Rehman - were among the dead. Military spokesman in Swat Major Nasir Ali said that

Dawn, 5 September 2008

US media warns of more attacks

WASHINGTON, Sept 4: The US administration is officially refusing to comment on a cross-border raid into Pakistan that killed at least 15 people, but unnamed US officials are confirming that American troops entered Pakistan to target extremists and may continue to do so. 'In regards to the reports about that incident, we have not commented, and I won't today,' White House spokeswoman Dana Perino told reporters on Thursday. 'I'm just not going to comment on the incident in any way.'

Dawn, 5 September 2008

Fata legislators decide to ditch PPP

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentarians from tribal areas have decided not to support PPP candidate Asif Ali Zardari in the presidential election in protest against continuing military action in their region. All senators and MNAs from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, except those belonging to the JUI-F, decided at a meeting on Thursday not to vote for Mr Zardari in protest against the government's failure to accept their demand for halting the military operation

Indian Express, 6 September 2008

Pakistan using US anti-terror funds to prepare for war against India: Obama

Washington, September 5: Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama has said that Pakistan is using US aid meant for the war on terror to 'prepare for a war against India'. He will hold Islamabad accountable for these massive funds and increase pressure to bust terrorist safe havens if he becomes President, Obama said on Fox News

Dawn, 6 September 2008

Three deposed SC judges take oath: CJ issue to be taken up after Iftikhar's oath: Naek

ISLAMABAD, Sept 5: Deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry stood virtually isolated on Friday when three of his brother judges sacked by former president Pervez Musharraf took a fresh oath and assumed their positions as judges of the Supreme Court with their seniority intact. Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar administered the oath to Justice Mian Shakirullah Jan, Justice Tasadduq Hussain Jilani and Justice Syed Jamshed Ali at a ceremony held in the Supreme Court

Dawn, 6 September 2008

Fuel supply to Nato forces 'suspended'

LANDI KOTAL, Sept 5: The government is reported to have decided to stop fuel supplies to Nato forces in Afghanistan via the Torkham highway with effect from Saturday. 'An order to this effect has come from Islamabad and the Frontier Corps has been asked to stop oil supplies to Nato forces forthwith,' a senior government official said. Sources said the federal government did not cite any reason for the move, but the decision was apparently taken in the wake of the US ground and missile attacks in North and South Waziristan tribal regions

Dawn, 6 September 2008

US looking for ways to improve arrangement with Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Sept 5: The United States is looking for ways to improve the current arrangement with Pakistan for fighting terrorists along the Afghan border, said a State Department official while responding to questions on a US commando raid earlier this week that seems to have strained Washington's relations with Islamabad. The department's deputy spokesman Robert Wood, who has worked at the US Embassy in Islamabad, also conceded that the situation on both sides of the Afghan border was neither 'perfect' nor 'easy'

Dawn, 6 September 2008

PHC chief justice, 2 judges take oath

PESHAWAR, Sept 5: Peshawar High Court Chief Justice Tariq Pervez Khan and two other judges took a fresh oath on Friday after the federal government issued notifications of their reappointment. However, Justice Ijaz Afzal Khan refused to take a fresh oath, saying 'my conscience doesn't allow me to do so'. The judges were sacked after they refused to take oath under the Provisional Constitution Order enforced by former president General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf on Nov 3 last year

Dawn, 7 September 2008

Suicide bomber kills 30; target was 'some other place'

PESHAWAR, Sept 6: At least 30 people, five of them policemen, were killed and 79 wounded after a suicide car bomb ripped through a police checkpost and nearby markets on Saturday. The explosion was so powerful that it left the checkpost and two markets in the Zhangali area of the provincial capital in ruins. A number of the injured found themselves trapped inside buildings. Militants based in the arms manufacturing Darra Adamkhel tribal region claimed responsibility for the bombing

News, 8 September 2008

Mysterious powder sent to US diplomats

ISLAMABAD: Two American diplomatic outposts in Pakistan received envelopes containing an unknown white powder last week, sparking a security scare, a US embassy spokesman said on Sunday. Tests are being conducted on the substance, spokesman Lou Fintor said. He declined comment on whether any embassy staffers had become ill or were under observation. The envelopes were sent to the US consulate in Karachi on Thursday and the US embassy in Islamabad on Friday

News, 8 September 2008

Zardari to visit China on 17th

ISLAMABAD: President-elect and Co-chairperson of the ruling PPP Asif Ali Zardari has been invited by the Chinese government to the closing ceremony of the Beijing Paralympic Games on September 17 and a decision has been taken that he will represent Pakistan at the high profile event, which will also be attended by some other world leaders. This changes Zardari's original plan to visit China within the first week of his election as the president. He will now travel to Beijing on the eve of the closing ceremony of the 13th Paralympic Games, diplomatic sources told The News on Sunday

Dawn, 9 September 2008

Asif in presidency, takes oath today

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: President-elect Asif Ali Zardari moved to the Presidency on Monday and will take oath of his office on Tuesday. Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar will administer the oath at the Aiwan-i-Sadr. Afghan President Hamid Karzai is likely to attend the ceremony

Dawn, 9 September 2008

PML-N declines to rejoin coalition

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: The PML-N on Monday politely declined president-elect Asif Ali Zardari's request to rejoin the ruling coalition, but assured him that it would play a positive role in the opposition. Mr Zardari had sought reconciliation when he met a delegation of the Pakistan Muslim League-N, headed by its chief Nawaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House. This was the first meeting between the two leaders since the PML-N pulled out of the ruling coalition on Aug 25. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani also attended the meeting

Dawn, 9 September 2008

Fresh clashes in Kurram leave 11 dead

PARACHINAR, Sept 8: Eleven people were killed and 14 injured as clashes continued in the Kurram region on Monday despite a ceasefire declared by the warring tribes. Reports of gubattles were received from Pekar, Baleshkhel, Khawar Kalley and Sadda areas. The injured were taken to hospitals in Bagan, Alizai, Sadda and Parachinar

Dawn, 9 September 2008

Haqqani's close relatives killed in US missile strike

MIRAMSHAH, Sept 8: Suspected US drones hit the house and seminary of former Taliban commander Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani in Dandi Derpakhel area of North

Waziristan on Monday killing 23 people, including three Arab and two Azerbaijani nationals among them. According to sources, Maulvi Jalaluddin's eight grandchildren, wife, sister, sister-in-law and other relatives were killed. Fourteen other people were injured

Asian Age, 10 September 2008

Zardari: Good news on Kashmir coming

Sept. 9: Pakistan's new President Asif Ali Zardari said at a press conference on Tuesday shortly after his swearing-in that backdoor negotiations were on with India and that the nation would "hear good news about Kashmir" soon, possibly "within a month" and definitely before India's general elections, due next year. Thanking the people of Pakistan for "their trust in me", Mr Zardari said he accepted the presidency in the name of his slain wife Benazir Bhutto and the "martyrs of democracy."

News, 10 September 2008

Pakistan enters Zardari era

ISLAMABAD: PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari was sworn in as the 12th president of Pakistan on Tuesday at a closely-guarded ceremony at the presidential palace in Islamabad. "I will bear true faith and allegiance to Pakistan," Zardari said, reciting the oath of office administered by Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar in a ceremony broadcast live to the nation, as his three children looked on. "May Allah Almighty help and guide me, amen," he concluded, sitting down to loud cheers of "Long live Bhutto," and "Bhutto is alive". Afghan President Hamid Karzai joined Pakistani government leaders, military top brass, judges, diplomats and high-ranking civil servants at the ceremony. A military guard of honour greeted Zardari on the lawn of the presidential palace at the conclusion of the ceremony

News, 10 September 2008

Zardari, Karzai at one against terror

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday vowed to work with neighbours, especially with Afghanistan, for regional peace and stability in the region to face the common problem of terrorism. "Pakistan intends to work not only with Afghanistan but also for the entire region including other neighbouring countries. We look into the region and shall stand with neighbours," he said while addressing a joint press conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai here Tuesday at the President House after taking oath as the 12th President of Pakistan

News, 10 September 2008

MQM poised to join federal cabinet

ISLAMABAD: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) is all set to become a part of the government at the Centre, following the departure of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz from the ruling coalition last month. MQM insiders told The News that four to five legislators from their party would get ministerial slots in the federal cabinet. However, modalities are yet to be thrashed out in this connection. "Our support to PPP's presidential candidate, who is now the president, was unconditional, as his name was proposed by our leader Altaf Hussain," said a central leader of the MQM and member of

parliament Haider Abbas Rizvi, when approached on telephone for comments

News, 10 September 2008

Opinion: The future of the Pakistan-US friendship (Khalid Aziz)

The two recent ISAF-US led attacks on South Waziristan have generated anger against the US. It is tragic that in these attacks innocent Pakistani women and children were killed. The depth of Pakistan's annoyance and hurt was evident when the US ambassador to Pakistan was summoned to the Foreign Office and a protest lodged. Later the foreign minister condemned this attack on Pakistan's sovereignty in the National Assembly. There is something quite bizarre about what is happening between two nations which consider themselves friends. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand the US motives for these attacks. These attacks have imperilled the lives of hundreds of Pakistani military personnel who are spread over the tribal areas in small guard units. The tribes will seek revenge from them

News, 10 September 2008

Opinion: The war on terror & President Zardari (Shireen M Mazari)

Now that the presidential election is over, and "democracy" has been fully established according to so many analysts, commentators and, of course, ruling party supporters, one can certainly claim that nowhere but in Pakistan could one see such free elections where questions of financial integrity, propriety and mental health never became issues at large. And, since the president is not duty-bound to declare assets, the moral factor hardly weighs in, in a system that allows horse-trading and deal-making like no other. But, technically, to be fair to the new president, the elections were transparent and constitutional other than the little incident of violation of Article 226 of the Constitution in the Pukhtunkhwa Assembly. But then as the ANP folk explained, this violation of the Constitution was "just for fun"! Where else but in this free wheeling state of ours would politicians proudly boast that they violated the Constitution "just for fun" and where else would the presiding officer, the chief justice of the same province, take no notice of such unconstitutional shenanigans! Clearly our politicians' desire for unbridled freedom in the name of democracy cannot be reigned in by a few Constitutional restraints

Daily Times, 10 September 2008

Editorial: Dim prospects of PPP-PMLN reconciliation

There was a media consensus on Monday that the Zardari-Nawaz Sharif meeting in Islamabad was the best news in Pakistan for some time. Mr Sharif congratulated Mr Zardari on becoming president and assured him support in parliament for the PPP's tenure in power. In return, Mr Zardari assured him that his party would not destabilise the PMLN government in Punjab. Surely, if a degree of realism can be acknowledged in recognition both of their individual interests and joint interests, the issues of the judges and presidential powers can be resolved in time to come. But that is easier said than done

Daily Times, 10 September 2008

Opinion: Curtains for judges' issue? (Ijaz Hussain)

Do the reappointments signal curtains for the judges' issue? It is evident that they have taken considerable wind out of the movement's sails as there is clear split in the judges'

ranks. However, it would be premature to conclude that its last rites have been performed. The PPP-led government is busy re-appointing the deposed judges. It has already got a large number of them, including those from the Supreme Court, take fresh oath of office. It contends that through reappointments, it is fulfilling the commitment that it made to restore them. The legal community and the PMLN, among others, are simply outraged by this move. They have rejected it as a violation of the Murree Declaration, which envisaged the restoration of the deposed judges to their position as on November 2, 2007. They have characterised it as an implicit endorsement of Pervez Musharraf's illegal actions of November 3. They have also accused the PPP-led government of picking and choosing judges rather than reappointing them without distinction.

Daily Times, 10 September 2008

Editorial: 'Ramazan package' for terrorists?

The interior adviser, Mr Rehman Malik, has announced that the military operation in the Tribal Areas will be suspended on August 31 in deference to the holy month of Ramazan. That means that for 30 days our army will not fight the militants who have literally taken a large chunk of our territory away. Mr Rehman says it is not going to be a ceasefire, and only he can make sense of this 'rider clause', but we hope that our army doesn't give up its position of advantage in Bajaur and Swat because of this 'deal' in the month of fasting.

News, 10 September 2008

Editorial: Homeless at home

In what is being termed the largest internal displacement in the history of Pakistan, some 40,000 people are reported to have left their homes in Bajaur, fleeing the fierce fighting that has continued there now for the past 20 days. Most have headed to the neighbouring district of Lower Dir, others to the homes of relatives elsewhere. Camps have been set up at government schools and other buildings for the Internally Displaced People (IDPs). In this respect, the ANP government in NWFP, and also the JI the first two groups to set up camps and offer assistance have acted more swiftly and sensibly than their predecessors. In past years and months, people displaced by conflict from Waziristan, Swat and other areas had received almost no official help.

News, 10 September 2008

Shots fired at PM's motorcade

ISLAMABAD: Chaos and confusion gripped the federal capital on Wednesday afternoon when almost all the electronic media channels started flashing the news of sniper attack on Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's motorcade. However, it was confirmed by highly placed security sources that the prime minister was not in the car at the time 'two bullets' hit the window on the driver's side of the bulletproof Mercedes Benz vehicle.

Daily Times, 11 September 2008

US not allowed to conduct Ops inside Pakistan: Kayani

ISLAMABAD: The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country would be defended at all costs and 'no external force is allowed to conduct operations inside Pakistan', Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Kayani said on Wednesday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Gen Kayani said that the rules

of engagement with the coalition forces were well defined and 'within that, the right to conduct operations against the militants inside own territory is solely the responsibility of the respective armed forces'. The ISPR quoted Gen Kayani as saying, 'There is no question of any agreement or understanding with the coalition forces whereby they are allowed to conduct operations on our side of the border.'

New York Times, 11 September 2008

Bush Said to Give Orders Allowing Raids in Pakistan

WASHINGTON: President Bush secretly approved orders in July that for the first time allow American Special Operations forces to carry out ground assaults inside Pakistan without the prior approval of the Pakistani government, according to senior American officials. The classified orders signal a watershed for the Bush administration after nearly seven years of trying to work with Pakistan to combat the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and after months of high-level stalemate about how to challenge the militants increasingly secure base in Pakistan's tribal areas

Daily Times, 11 September 2008

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Daily Times, 11 September 2008

Editorial: President Zardari and media obsessions

On Tuesday, at the press conference following his swearing-in, President Asif Ali Zardari set the tone by saying: 'The president will only carry forward the brief of the government and bow before the parliament; the president will be subservient to parliament'. This is all he could say as president, but those present around him wanted him to speak as chief executive, which he couldn't be without violating the Constitution. The journalists later on complained on TV that he didn't say much; and because he didn't say much, he was accused of refusing to commit himself to what they thought was his moral duty as a politician

Daily Times, 11 September 2008

30 militants killed in Bajaur fighting

KHAR: Troops backed by tanks and heavy artillery attacked militants in the Bajaur tribal agency on Wednesday, and an FC statement said 30 Taliban were killed in a clash in the Rashakai area. Regular army troops have joined paramilitary forces to continue an advance on militant strongholds in the agency, and a jirga (tribal council) vowed to keep terrorists out of the Salarzai tehsil. 'Troops pounded artillery and used fighter jets to

target militant hideouts,' a security official told AFP on condition of anonymity. 'Key Taliban strongholds Loyesam, Charmang and Tangkhatta are under the control of security forces, who are setting up checkpoints in the areas,' security officials told Daily Times. Militants clad as women tried to attack the marching troops, sources said, but the attack was repulsed. Meanwhile, the Salarzai tribe jirga renewed its pledge 'to stand by the government' as it announced new sanctions against people supporting militancy in their areas

News, 12 September 2008

Army ordered to hit back

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army has been ordered to retaliate against any action by foreign troops inside the country, Geo News quoted ISPR spokesman Maj Gen Athar Abbas as saying on Thursday night. Shakil Shaikh adds from Islamabad: Pakistan's military commanders resolved to defend the country's borders without allowing any external forces to conduct operations inside Pakistan. The military commanders expressed this resolve on the first day of the two-day Corps Commanders conference, which began here on Thursday at the General Headquarters. Army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani chaired the all-important conference against the backdrop of the new strategic developments taking place in the region

News, 12 September 2008

Nato not to intrude into Pakistan

BRUSSELS: Nato will not take part in a proposed US strategy of conducting raids into Pakistan from Afghanistan against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants, a spokesman said on Thursday. "The Nato policy, that is our mandate, ends at the border," James Appathurai told a regular news briefing. "There are no ground or air incursions by Nato forces into Pakistani territory." Appathurai said he was sure the issue would be discussed when 26 Nato defence ministers debate Afghan strategy at a Sept 18-19 meeting in London. But he added: "Let me stress, it is not Nato that will be sending its forces across the border."

News, 12 September 2008

Bush approved US raids in Pakistan: officials

WASHINGTON: President George W Bush secretly approved US military raids inside Pakistan against alleged terrorist targets, according to current and former US officials with recent access to the Bush administration's debate about how to fight al-Qaeda and the Taliban inside the lawless tribal border area. The officials spoke on Thursday on condition of anonymity to describe the classified order. The New York Times reported that the July move allowing Special Operations forces to carry out assaults within the borders of a key "war on terror" ally marked a turn for the Bush administration which has struggled with Islamabad over how to combat al-Qaeda and a resurgent Talib

News, 12 September 2008

100 militants killed in Bajaur clashes

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed up to 100 militants in fierce clashes near the Afghan border in Bajaur Agency on Thursday, a security official said. "Eighty to 100 militants were killed in Bajaur today. Most of them are foreigners," the official said on

condition of anonymity. He said the nationality of the foreigners was being ascertained. He said two soldiers were also killed in the fighting. Mushtaq Yusufzai adds from Peshawar: PAF jet fighters and Army's gunship helicopters on Thursday continued pounding suspected militant hideouts in the restive Bajaur Agency, killing dozens of suspected militants, including foreigners, and destroying a big market housing a militant centre in Inayat Killay

Dawn, 13 September 2008

New US attack mocks talk of sovereignty: Missile kills 12 in North Waziristan

MIRAMSHAH, Sept 12: Twelve people were killed and 14 others injured when a US drone hit the building of a non-functional school in Toolkhel area of North Waziristan on Friday. Sources said that the primary school was owned by local tribesman Shah Adam who had rented out the premises to the Al-Bader militant outfit. A remnant of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, the group had occasionally fought in Kashmir and turned the building into their liaison office

Dawn, 13 September 2008

White House refuses to comment on rules of engagement

WASHINGTON, Sept 12: The United States continues to refuse to talk about US military actions inside Fata with the White House saying that it does not want to comment on rules of engagement with the enemy. But unnamed Pentagon officials, in interviews to CNN, BBC, Fox News and other channels, confirmed that President Bush had authorised cross-border operations, involving both drones and ground troops, inside Pakistan. And a former Pentagon expert on Afghanistan, Col David Hunt, told Fox News that a particular unit of the US Marine Corps Special Operations called 'Detachment One' conducted last Wednesday's ground attack in South Waziristan that killed 20 people, including militants and civilians

Dawn, 13 September 2008

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Dawn, 13 September 2008

Unanimity of views between govt and army: Kayani

ISLAMABAD, Sept 12: Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has said that under the new democratic leadership all elements of national power will defend the country's territorial integrity with full support of the people. He was presiding over the two-day Corps Commanders conference at the General Headquarters which concluded on Friday. A brief statement issued by the ISPR quoted the COAS as saying that there was complete unanimity of views between the government and the army on defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The participants were given a

comprehensive briefing on the prevailing geo-strategic environment and recent strategic engagements with major stakeholders regarding peace and security in the region and beyond

Dawn, 13 September 2008

85 militants, 10 civilians killed in Bajaur

KHAR, Sept 12: Security forces in Bajaur Agency intensified attacks on militants on Friday to re-establish the government's writ in the face of stiff resistance. Fierce clashes, which began on Thursday night, continued throughout the day. According to a statement issued by the Frontier Corps, 85 militants were killed and 21 vehicles destroyed

Dawn, 13 September 2008

Editorial: Civilians must lead

WHO in Pakistan is in charge of the war against terrorism? On Wednesday, COAS Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani issued a statement condemning recent violations of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty by US forces and missiles and vowed to defend Pakistan 'at all costs'. Gen Kayani was categorical: 'There is no question of any agreement or understanding with the coalition forces whereby they are allowed to conduct operations on our side of the border.' On Thursday, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told reporters that Gen Kayani's statement 'reflected the government policy'. Is the country to infer then that the civilians are taking their cue from the military top brass? Why must the army chief enunciate government policy rather than the prime minister - or the president?

Daily Times, 14 September 2008

Opinion: The new Great Game (Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi)

The tough and categorical rejoinder by the Pakistani army chief to American statements reflected the consensus in army circles, and was aimed at dispelling the impression that he had agreed to unilateral American action during his meeting with the US top brass. Statements from top US and Pakistani commanders on dealing with the militancy in Pakistan's tribal areas reflect divergence in their perspectives on counterterrorism. The two allies do not always trust each other, and public differ on ways and means to counter the terrorist threat in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The on-going campaign along the Durand Line cannot be tension-free as Pakistan and the US have not articulated a shared vision of terrorism in the region and how to cope with it. Both are excessively occupied with their respective domestic political considerations and security concerns, which leads them to lose patience with each other. However, relations between the two cannot break down completely

Daily Times, 14 September 2008

EDITORIAL: Punjab: cockpit of political intrigue?

A much-feared but not fully spelt out 'clash of the giants' in Punjab has probably been averted for the time being by a PPP tactical adjustment, as reported by those who read the tea-leaves of PPP-PMLN relations. The PMLN was pretending to be the 'offended' party and wanted to get out of the federal government. It also wanted the PPP to get out of the Punjab government as a quid pro quo. But the PPP did not want the PMLN to quit in Islamabad and it certainly doesn't want to quit in Lahore. Indeed, it wants a bigger slice

of the action in the province. Therefore the pronouncements of bigwigs from both sides in Lahore seemed to suggest a clash in the offing

News, 14 September 2008

Militants briefly occupy govt office in Peshawar

PESHAWAR: Police commandos and Frontier Constabulary (FC) have launched search operation in Regi Lalma and surrounding areas after reports that militants had captured the site office of City Development and Municipal Department (CD&MD) in the Township, six kilometres from the Peshawar cantonment. Around 300 cops were rushed to the spot with armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and sophisticated weapons to end the reported captivity of the armed people who later escaped towards tribal Khyber Agency. There were reports that a watchman and some other people, including FC personnel, were made hostage. FC Commandant, Zafrullah Khan, however, denied any of his men was made hostage in the building. Search operation has been launched in the area and police are moving forward carefully. "Initially there were reports of the presence of 15 to 20 armed men in the building but we have moved heavy contingents of police to give a clear message," the inspector general of police (IGP) Malik Naveed told the media

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News, 14 September 2008

60 die in fierce Bajaur fighting

KHAR: There seemed to be a full-fledged war in Bajaur Agency as mountains echoed with the sound of explosions and heavy bombing by two jet fighters, gunship and Cobra helicopters and mortar and artillery shelling. Turn by turn, warplanes, gunship helicopters and then mortar and artillery shells hit militant positions in their strongholds Tang Khatta, Rashkai, Loisam, Khazana, Banda, Kerala and Bhai Cheena in Inayat Kellay. After the daylong heavy bombing, military authorities announced that 60 militants, many of them foreigners, including Arab and Afghan nationals, were killed and several others injured

Dawn, 15 September 2008

Crisis deepens as India blocks Chenab flow

ISLAMABAD, Sept 14: India has closed Chenab water flow and as a result the shortage

in Pakistan has become more severe. Sources told Dawn on Sunday that the water blockade by India could adversely affect the Kharif crops, particularly cotton and sugarcane which were in maturity stage and required final watering, and the sowing of Rabi crops early next month. They said that the Pakistan Indus Water Commission had taken up the matter with the federal government and convened a meeting on Tuesday to take stock of the situation and try to reach a diplomatic solution with New Delhi. If the Chenab closure prolongs, the sowing of Rabi crops, particularly wheat, would be hit severely

Dawn, 15 September 2008

Swat truce talks fail

MINGORA, Sept 14: Security forces pounded Koza Bandai area in Kabal tehsil with heavy artillery on Sunday night after indirect talks between the military and Taliban for a ceasefire broke down. A peace committee held talks with Brig Aslam, Col Bilal, Col Dar and Maj Idress at the FC camp in Kanju. The jirga headed by Sayed Inamur Rehman had earlier met a Taliban team led by 'commander' Mehmood at an unspecified place. Taliban leader Maulana Fazlullah talked to the jirga on phone and assured it of making all possible efforts to end violence in the area. The 40-member jirga included Prof Mian Noor Nawab, union council Nazim Karimul Hadi, Master Mohammad Amin and Advocate Peroz Shah

Dawn, 15 September 2008

21 killed in Bajaur operations

KHAR, Sept 14: A number of militants were among 21 people killed in intense strafing and shelling by helicopter gunships in Bajaur Agency on Sunday. Ground forces, meanwhile, advanced in several areas and consolidated their positions. An official of the Frontier Corps (FC) claimed that 18 militants had been killed. Local people said that three women had been killed and eight other people injured in the shelling

Daily Excelsior, 15 September 2008

India to go ahead with expedition in Siachen

JAMMU, Sept 14: Turning down Pakistan's objections, the Union Government has decided to go ahead with a 21 days expedition in Siachen from October 1 involving 40 persons including 30 civilian trekkers drawn from different parts of the country. Pakistan has been opposing any civilian movement in Siachen area in view of its 'disputed' status since 1984. Last year also, Pakistan's External Affairs Ministry had voiced strong objections to a similar civilian expedition in Siachen but the Government of India had gone ahead with trekking

Dawn, 16 September 2008

Protest lodged with India over reduced water flow

ISLAMABAD, Sept 15: Pakistan formally protested to India on Monday over the reduction in Chenab River flows and sought an emergency meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission for explanation of the violation of the 1960 treaty on water sharing. The reduction has caused substantial losses to standing Kharif crops in most areas downstream of the Head Marala, in Punjab. The irrigation needs of the area are being

currently met by increased releases from the Mangla reservoir in order to save rice and sugarcane crops

Dawn, 16 September 2008

Govt, army at one on border violations: Gilani

ISLAMABAD, Sep 15: There is complete unanimity of views between the government and the army over the issue of border violations, according to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani. Talking to reporters at an Iftar-dinner hosted by Saudi Ambassador Ali Awadh Asseri, he said Pakistan was a responsible nuclear state and under no circumstance would it act irresponsibly. Expressing the hope that the matter of air strikes by US forces inside Pakistani territory would be resolved diplomatically, he said President Asif Ali Zardari would raise the issue with the British government in his talks in London and with the US authorities during his forthcoming visit to the United States. Referring to relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, he said these would be strengthened, adding that the kingdom had always stood by Pakistan during crisis

Dawn, 16 September 2008

Bajaur clashes claim 26 lives

KHAR, Sept 15: Twenty-four militants and two civilians were killed in clashes between security forces and militants in the Bajaur tribal region on Monday. Twenty-eight people were injured. Security forces, backed by helicopter gunships and artillery, targeted militants' positions in Lowi Sam, Tang Hatta, Rashakai, Jannat Shah, Dozakh Shah, Tandar Gat, Kerala, Baicheena, Tangai and Khazana. Sources said that the troops faced stiff resistance from the deeply entrenched militants. The air strikes continued throughout the day

Daily Times, 17 September 2008

Reform ISI: US

WASHINGTON: The Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) needs reform but there is no indication this is happening yet, the top US diplomat for South Asia said on Monday. 'It has to be done,' Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher said of revamping the ISI. Asked if he had seen signs of reform, he told Reuters, 'No, I don't have anything in particular I would point to right now.' Despite its help in fighting Al Qaeda, the ISI is viewed with deep suspicion by US for retaining links to the Taliban

Daily Times, 17 September 2008

Swat suicide hit, rocket attack kills 3 troops

PESHAWAR: A suicide bomber and Taliban attacked a security checkpoint in Kabal tehsil on Tuesday killing three soldiers, a senior official said. The attack occurred at a school building where around 350 personnel of the Frontier Corps and Frontier Constabulary were present, APP reported. The bomber blew himself up as paramilitary soldiers approached his vehicle, before the Taliban attacked the checkpoint, army spokesman Murad Khan said

Daily Times, 17 September 2008

Editorial: Troubling developments in India-Pak relations

India's defence minister, Mr AK Antony, has accused Pakistan of backing the terrorists who have recently bombed the cities of India. Pakistan has already accused India of funding terrorists and insurgents in Balochistan and FATA. India has just started making noises about Pakistan fishing again in the troubled waters of Kashmir. Pakistan accuses India, similarly, of turning off the Chenab waters that belong to Pakistan under a treaty arrangement

News, 17 September 2008

Opinion: Time to eat grass? by Samson Simon Sharaf

The army is now called a state within a state, supporter of nuclear proliferation, permeated by fundamentalists and militants in its ranks and file and an institution that pursues big business rather than focus on its primary mission. Despite suffering over 1,500 dead (the highest figure for any army) in this war, it is still accused of playing a double game. American organisations that once praised now call it ill-organised and badly trained to fight counter insurgency operations in FATA. The hardest criticism has come on the ISI. It is repeatedly accused of hobnobbing with militants and supporting Al Qaeda. This is the outfit busy in unravelling the plethora of intrigues played by diverse actors against the sovereignty of Pakistan operating with the tacit consent of US and Afghanistan

Dawn, 18 September 2008

Drone attack belies Mullen's assurance: Six killed in S. Waziristan village

WANA / ISLAMABAD, Sept 17: Hours after the American military commander had assured Pakistan's political and military leadership that the United States would respect the country's sovereignty, missiles were fired from US drones on a house in South Waziristan, killing six people and injuring three others. The unmanned aircraft which entered the tribal area from Afghanistan fired four missiles on the house in a village near Angoor Adda which is close to an allied forces' base across the border. The same area had recently experienced an attack by US commandos

Dawn, 18 September 2008

Pakistan needs to deal with militants: US

WASHINGTON: Militants hiding in the tribal areas are not a threat to Pakistan alone but also to the entire world and Pakistan needs to deal with them, a State Department official said on Wednesday. 'We do make clear that there is an important security interest, not only for the United States and the region but for the globe, regarding the security in those border areas,' State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told a briefing in Washington. 'This is Pakistani territory, Pakistan sovereign territory. So they need to address those issues.' The briefing was held against the background of a missile strike on a village near Angoor Adda in South Waziristan

Dawn, 18 September 2008

Editorial: Soft on America?

STRANGE things are happening on the war against terrorism front. While President Zardari, Pakistan's most powerful civilian leader, was shaking UK Prime Minister

Gordon Brown's hand outside No 10 Downing Street, Adm Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, was flying to Pakistan to hold emergency, unscheduled talks with the top brass of the Pakistan military. Adm Mullen also met Prime Minister Gilani on Wednesday, but the meeting with civilian leaders were clearly a sideshow. Chief of Army Staff Gen Kayani's recent vow to defend Pakistan's territorial sovereignty 'at all costs' from foreign forces and subsequent noises from the military hierarchy all point to one fact: the military is angry - the word 'enraged' is being bandied about - by US attacks in Waziristan. Adm Mullen came to address that anger

News, 18 September 2008

Editorial: The ISI dilemma

Thursday, September 18, 2008 The US assistant secretary of state, Richard Boucher, has said in an interview that the problem posed by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) had become so acute that the new government in Islamabad was likely to act on this issue something which he said did not happen under Pervez Musharraf. He was referring to the relationship that Washington is convinced exists between the Taliban and Pakistani intelligence outfits. Mr Boucher, who will be leaving office with the Bush administration at the end of the year, in his unusually candid remarks, also stated he saw no sign as yet of reform within the ISI, while stressing that this was badly needed

Daily Times, 18 September 2008

Editorial: Reform ISI? Not like this

The US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Mr Richard Boucher, said Tuesday that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) needed to be reformed. He did not point to any specific flaw in the conduct of the ISI but the general impression is that his remark sprang from a deep US suspicion that the ISI 'retained links to the Taliban'. The initial reaction against the suggestion has been negative in the Pakistani media, and it was of a piece with the reaction that met Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's attempt in July to place the ISI under the control of the Interior Ministry

News, 19 September 2008

No US guarantees, says Qureshi

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has received no iron-clad guarantees from the United States that it would cease violations of its air space, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmud Qureshi said on Thursday. He also said Pakistan had not been forewarned each time violation of its air space took place. He, however, told a news conference at the Foreign Office: 'As far as the sovereignty is concerned, there is a responsibility on Pakistan as well to ensure that there is no incident of violation of someone else's (Afghanistan's) sovereignty.' As far as Admiral Mullen's statement which he made on Wednesday regarding Pakistan's sovereignty, Qureshi said: 'I have to respect it. But later when there is another attack (the same day), it appears there is an institutional disconnect (within the US). They will have to sort it out.'

News, 19 September 2008

Editorial: Mulling over matters

The statement from both sides stating that Admiral Mike Mullen has assured Pakistan its sovereignty will be respected is of course welcome. The fact that within hours of the meeting between the visiting US military chief and the Pakistani prime minister, the COAS and the defence and foreign ministers, yet another drone attack had killed at least six people in a South Waziristan village, leaves open doubts as to the credibility of these words. But it does seem some ground rules have been laid out in the open. The US seems unlikely to repeat its September 3 ground raid across the frontier. Indeed, Washington-based sources have described this as an 'anomaly'. But at the same time, the attacks by unmanned Predators will continue, as had been the case before the unusual land offensive. The indications are that Washington has noted, and taken at least some heed, of Pakistan's anger over the blatant invasion of its territory. The high-level talks in Islamabad make this obvious even though the prime ministerial claims of promises by President Bush not to threaten Pakistan's territory seem rather unnecessary. The reality then seems to be one in which unmanned flights over border areas will continue, but there will be no further actions beyond this

Daily Times, 19 September 2008

EDITORIAL: Punjab's undesirable politics of defection

Despite advice from all sane quarters, Punjab is in the grip of a power tussle. A firm arrangement is making transition to an uncertain one that is going to be haunted by court cases and general acrimony. The PMLN government wants to end the coalition with the PPP and wants its ministers out of its cabinet. Since it falls short of a majority after this exclusion, it wants the third largest party in the assembly, the PMLQ, to join it. And since it wants no truck with the leaders of the party, it is seeking defections from the ranks of the erstwhile ruling party of Pakistan

Daily Times, 20 September 2008

Editorial: The PPP and the Army

The ruling PPP and the Pakistan Army seem to be in sync even as the Americans seem to be speaking with many tongues over policy in the war against terrorism. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has fully backed COAS General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani on his handling of the two challenges facing Pakistan: the insurgency in Bajaur and Swat, and the American incursions into Pakistani territory from Afghanistan. The media also backs the civil-military consensus, and government representatives are very clear about national policy

Dawn, 20 September 2008

Six killed in Balochistan seminary blast

QUETTA, Sept 19: At least six people were killed and 14 others injured in an explosion in a seminary near Kuchlak on Friday. 'Three students were killed on the spot and three other people died in hospital,' DIG, Operations, Wazir Khan Nasar, told Dawn.

According to police sources, the explosion took place in the main hall of Madressah Mohammadia. Policemen quoted some witnesses as saying that some motorbike riders had hurled a bomb into the seminary. However, some students said two men carrying a bag had entered the seminary before the explosion. The hall and two adjoining rooms were destroyed

News, 20 September 2008

Opinion: US strikes and institutional disconnect By Rahimullah Yusufzai

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, thrust like most Pakistani politicians into a position in which he had no experience, believes rather naively that there is an institutional disconnect in the US government. It means he is of the belief that the Americans shouldn't have carried out yet another unilateral missile strike using the CIA-operated Predator aircraft in Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal region on September 17 following assurances the same day by the top American soldier Admiral Michael Mullen to him and other Pakistan government functionaries that Washington respected Islamabad's sovereignty. One has to call Qureshi naïve. How come he forgot that a similar assurance was given by no less a person than President George W Bush to Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani during the latter's visit to Washington on July 28 and yet the same day the US military unilaterally struck once more in Pakistan's tribal areas with its ferociously named Hellfire missiles to cause death and destruction? Qureshi was there at the White House that day in his capacity as foreign minister and yet he wants to be forgetful of the promise that the US president made and broke within hours. He should know that the US administration doesn't function the way our wayward government and its institutions operate in Pakistan

Dawn, 20 September 2008

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Indian Express, 21 September 2008

Indo-Pak ties need to be 'creatively re-invented': Zardari

Islamabad, September 20: Ahead of his first meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New York, President Asif Ali Zardari said ties with India need to be 'creatively re-invented' with bold commitments and expressed Pakistan's readiness for launch of cross-LoC trade. Making his first official pronouncements in Parliament after he assumed office earlier this month, Zardari said Pakistan would continue to seek the resolution of all outstanding issues with India, including Kashmir, for peace and full normalisation of bilateral ties

Dawn, 21 September 2008

Terror tears through capital

ISLAMABAD, Sept 20: An explosive-laden truck rammed into the front gate of a premier hotel in a high-security zone of Islamabad on Saturday, setting off what police called the most devastating suicide attack in the capital that killed at least 40 people and

wounded more than 250. The attack outside the five-star Marriott Hotel - not far from key government buildings such as the parliament house, the presidency, the prime minister's house and Pakistan Television headquarters - happened early in the evening shortly after Iftar and hours after President Asif Ali Zardari addressed a joint session of the two houses of parliament where he said Pakistan would not allow the use of its territory for terrorist activities. In an address to the nation after Saturday midnight, President Asif Ali Zardari vowed to 'continue to fight terrorism and extremism'.

Dawn, 21 September 2008

'Revisit' presidential powers - Zardari's offer to parliament

ISLAMABAD, Sept 20: President Asif Ali Zardari asked parliament on Saturday to review the autocratic powers of his newly won office but preferred ambiguity about the extent of a possible curtailment and sidestepped the issue of reinstating deposed judges in a move that did not seem to help his damaged credibility. In his maiden address to a joint session of the two houses of parliament 11 days after taking office, he proposed that a committee of all parties 'revisit' the Constitution's controversial 17th Amendment and Article 58(2)b through which former president Musharraf assumed sweeping powers to undermine the parliamentary system of government

Dawn, 21 September 2008

Seven security personnel die in Waziristan attacks

MIRAMSHAH / WANA, Sept 20: Seven soldiers and five civilians were killed in two attacks on military vehicles in Waziristan on Saturday. In North Waziristan, a suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into an army supplies convoy near Norak, 12 kilometres east of Miramshah, a military official said. The convoy was on its way from Bannu to Miramshah. 'The car rammed into a truck of the military logistics convoy and ignited a fuel tanker,' the official said. Flames engulfed two other military trucks, a coach and an oil tanker. Witnesses said a petrol pump had also caught fire

Dawn, 21 September 2008

Battle to be won or lost in Bajaur

THE battle in the Bajaur Agency has not only become a tipping-point for Pakistan's internal security, it can also have a deep impact on the country's status as a key US ally in the war against terrorism. In the second week of August, the operation started haltingly to prevent what looked like the imminent fall of Bajaur's regional headquarters, Khaar, to the militants. Having suffered initial reversals, the operation is now on at full throttle. It has created a surrender-or-die situation for the militants and a now-or-never moment for the country's security forces

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has created a surrender-or-die situation for the militants and a now-or-never moment for the country's security forces

Dawn, 21 September 2008

Four deposed judges take fresh oath

ISLAMABAD, Sept 20: Four judges who were sacked by former president Pervez Musharraf took fresh oath on Friday as judges of the Supreme Court with their seniority intact. Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar administered the oath to Justice Sardar Mohammad Raza Khan, Justice Nasirul Mulk, Justice Sabihuddin Ahmed and Justice Sarmad Jalal Osmany in the Supreme Court building. The ceremony was attended, among others, by judges of the apex court, Federal Shariat Court and Islamabad High Court, Law Minister Farooq Naek, Attorney General Sardar Latif Khosa, Senator Babar Awan and Chief Election Commissioner Qazi Mohammad Farooq

News, 21 September 2008

Parliament was the target

ISLAMABAD: The Marriott attack was actually aimed at parliament where the entire civil and military leadership of the country had gathered, in violation of the security codes, but it was thwarted by the strict security arrangements. Two security check-posts established on the Constitution Avenue saved the top civil and military leadership of Pakistan gathered in the Parliament House, listening to the first address by President Asif Ali Zardari, top security officials said

Daily Times, 21 September 2008

'Pakistan's 9/11' kills 60, injures 200; Nation mourns; Terrorists hit back hours after Zardari's warning

ISLAMABAD: A suicide bomber detonated a truck packed with explosives at the Marriott Hotel in a brazen attack in the heart of Islamabad on Saturday, killing at least 60 people. At least 200 people, including a PPP legislator, were injured in the massive explosion, which ruptured a gas pipeline and triggered a huge blaze. A US national was killed and several foreigners were injured, hospital officials told AFP. Many victims leapt to their deaths from the upper floors of the hotel to escape the fire, a senior security official said. Officials were worried that the hotel, a key meeting place for foreigners, would collapse. Nearby buildings: The explosion was heard throughout Islamabad and left a 25-foot crater. Some of the victims were in the adjacent Frontier House, Chief Justice's House, IT Towers and the PTV building, which were severely damaged. Sixteen US nationals were inside the hotel at the time of the attack, an official said, adding they included diplomats. The PIMS spokesman said four Germans, two Saudis and two British nationals were injured. Hotel owner Sadruddin Hashwani told Geo News most of the foreigners were rescued through the rear exit.

News, 22 September 2008

Al-Qaeda, TTP behind Marriott blast: Malik

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik put the blame for the deadly suicide attack outside the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad on Saturday on al-Qaeda and the banned militant organisation Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "This

incident has similarities with the attack on the ISI's Hamza Camp as well as with the two loaded vehicles caught from D I Khan, and with the blast outside the Danish embassy. The explosives used in this blast matched those of earlier explosions," Rehman Malik told the media at a press conference that he addressed in the Interior Ministry late on Sunday afternoon

News, 22 September 2008

Was Harkatul Jihadul Islami responsible?

By Amir Mir LAHORE: The pattern of the Marriott Hotel suicide bombing in Islamabad suggests the possible involvement of the Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI), led by Qari Saifullah Akhtar, and not the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), headed by Baitullah Mehsud, which was held responsible for most recent suicide bombings across Pakistan. According to intelligence circles in Islamabad, which are probing the latest suicide attack, the method of the bombing and the nature of explosives resemble four previous vehicle bomb attacks, carried out by suicide bombers in Lahore, Islamabad and Rawalpindi - the March 4, 2008 attack on the Naval War College building in Lahore; the March 11, 2008 suicide bombings targeting the headquarters of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Lahore; the June 3, 2008 attack outside the Danish embassy in Islamabad and the December, 25, 2003 twin suicide attacks targeting former President General Pervez Musharraf's cavalcade in Rawalpind

Dawn, 23 September 2008

Suicide bombers coming from Punjab: Owais

LAHORE, Sept 22: NWFP Governor Owais Ghani warned Punjab on Monday that militancy was gaining strength in its backyard. 'Militants in the tribal areas of the NWFP have established firm networking (with jihadi groups) in southern Punjab and most fresh recruits for suicide attacks are coming from there. Militant leaders and commanders are also coming from Punjab. The militants'; field commander in Swat too is from Punjab,'; Mr Ghani told a briefing arranged for senior journalists on insurgency in tribal areas. The words of caution from the governor came soon after a number of people were detained in Punjab apparently in connection with the Marriott bombing.

Daily Times, 23 September 2008

Editorial: Digesting the Marriott blast

Some facts about the Marriott Hotel blast are coming out gradually as the scene of destruction is carefully examined and videos from the security cameras are scrutinised. More and more people are put off by the concept of suicide-bombing and are criticising it. The fifty-odd clerics who had issued the fatwa against it in 2005 -; but were made to cower later by more aggressive clerics -; are making their voice heard again. The Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) of Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan is reluctant to own it because of this change in public opinion.

News, 23 September 2008

Editorial: After the tragedy

The search operation at the gutted Marriott Hotel is over. All the bodies have been pulled out, the injured recover in hospitals. The process of investigation is well underway. The

government has indicated there is evidence of origins in Waziristan. Mercifully, there has been no serious attempt at the official level to blame 'foreign' hands, as has too often happened in the past. Everyone seems willing to face the reality that this act, like those before it, has been perpetrated by Pakistan's own people. Both the prime minister and the president have accepted this in their words of condemnation. There are some reports, including one appearing in this newspaper, that the bombing may have been carried out by an extremist splinter group, led by a man who till June this year had been in custody in Karachi. It has been suggested his release, on court orders, was facilitated by agencies in a bid to prevent more suicide bombings. In other words a 'deal' was struck, and then broken. While it is impossible to determine whether the release of Qari Saifullah Akhtar led to Saturday's devastating tragedy in Islamabad, the report once more focuses attention on the dangerous nexus between our intelligence apparatus and extremist outfits. Others like him too walk free. Some continue to preach at mosques. Until this relationship between agencies and militants is ended, we can be certain that there will be yet more violence within a country torn apart by terrorism that has claimed thousands of lives within the past few years

News, 23 September 2008

Opinion: Significance of the Marriott bombing

Tuesday, September 23, 2008 by Khalid Aziz The suicide attack on the Marriott has brought into question Pakistan's participation in the war on terrorism. In a sense the attack was the consequence of the flawed policies which permitted our territories to be used as a place of refuge by the multinational militants who fled Afghanistan after the US attacked and destroyed the Taliban government in Kabul in November 2001. From January 2008, Pakistan began to confront the militancy in FATA more vigorously. This new military trend was heralded with the launching of operation "Zalzala," against Baitullah Mahsud and his group. This operation was in the nature of collective punishment in which homes and property worth a considerable amount were destroyed, including the main market in Kotkai Razgai

Dawn, 24 September 2008

50 militants in Darra killed, claims ISPR

KOHAT, Sept 23: Security forces attacked militants' hideouts in Shpalkiwal and Tor Chappar areas of Darra Adamkhel on Tuesday, killing over 50 militants. A soldier also was killed. Officials said that helicopter gunships bombed a school in Tor Chappar, killing eight militants who were hiding there. However, this could not be confirmed from independent sources. Sources said that troops did not face any resistance in Darra. About 400 to 500 local and foreign militants believed to have been fighting in the area have fled, leaving behind a large quantity of arms and ammunition

Dawn, 24 September 2008

Firing leaves six protesters dead in Swat

MINGORA, Sept 23: Six people were killed and 15 others injured on Tuesday when law-enforcement personnel opened fire on a violent mob protesting against suspension of power, gas and water supply in Swat. A curfew for an indefinite period was imposed in the entire district. Thousands of people took part in demonstrations in Mingora and

Fizaghut against what they called the government's failure to protect their lives and property

Dawn, 25 September 2008

34 die in fierce Bajaur clashes

KHAR/CHARADDA, Sept 24: At least 34 people, including seven soldiers, were killed in fierce clashes in the Bajaur tribal region and its adjacent Shabqadar tehsil of Charsadda district on Wednesday. Fifteen others were injured. 'There was a fierce clash between security forces and miscreants in Bajaur in which 25 miscreants were killed and seven soldiers embraced martyrdom,' a foreign news agency quoted Director-General of Inter Services Public Relations Maj-Gen Athar Abbas as saying. A security official said that the six soldiers were killed in an encounter in Rashakai, adding that bodies of 25 militants had been found

Dawn, 26 September 2008

Pakistan, US blow hot and cold over flare-up

ISLAMABAD / MIRAMSHAH / NEW YORK, Sept 25: Security forces fired on two Nato helicopters which had intruded into Pakistan territory on Thursday, forcing them to turn back to Afghanistan, officials said. 'Two helicopters from the Afghanistan side crossed into Saidgai, Ghulam Khan Sector, North Waziristan. When the helicopters passed over our border post and were well within Pakistan territory, our security forces fired anticipatory warning shots,' said a statement issued by the ISPR. It said the helicopters returned fire and flew back, adding that Pakistan was in contact with Nato headquarters in Kabul and that the issue was being resolved. In New York, however, President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistani troops were firing 'flares' to warn Nato helicopters crossing into Fata

Dawn, 26 September 2008

Five-minute ground battle?

KABUL: Firing by Pakistani soldiers at American helicopters that were escorting ground troops along the volatile border on Thursday sparked a five-minute ground battle between the American and Pakistani soldiers, officials said. US Central Command spokesman Rear Admiral Greg Smith said when the helicopters were fired on, the ground forces fired rounds meant not to hit the Pakistani troops, but 'to make certain that they realised they should stop shooting,' Smith said from Centcom headquarters in Florida. The Pakistani forces fired back during a skirmish that lasted about five minutes. The joint patrol was moving about a mile inside Afghanistan, with the helicopters flying above it, Smith said

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forces fired back during a skirmish that lasted about five minutes. The joint patrol was moving about a mile inside Afghanistan, with the helicopters flying above it, Smith said

Dawn, 26 September 2008

Pakistan assured of \$1.3bn World Bank assistance

NEW YORK, Sept 25: The World Bank is considering a \$1.377 billion package to help Pakistan overcome its economic problems, the bank's president said. World Bank Robert Zoellick made this commitment during a meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari in New York on Wednesday. He assured the Pakistani leader of the bank's continued support and said that a \$1.337 billion World Bank funded programme was in the pipeline

Dawn, 26 September 2008

10 militants killed in Bajaur

KHAR, Sept 25: Security forces, backed by helicopter gunships, pounded Taliban's positions in several areas of the Bajaur tribal region on Thursday and, according to officials, 10 militants were killed in a gunbattle. Troops attacked militants' hideouts in Lowi Sam, Rashakai and Damadola areas on Wednesday and Thursday. Residential areas also came under attack, but no casualty was reported. Sources said that troops were trying to take control of Rashakai and Lowi Sam but were facing stiff resistance

News, 26 September 2008

Indo-Pak accord on four trade routes; Singh assures Zardari of respecting Indus Waters Treaty

NEW YORK: Pakistan and India have agreed to resume trade through land routes and decided to open four points for this purpose, including two along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, while two would be on the international borders. The agreement, without any tangible progress towards the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, is perceived to be a departure from Pakistan's historic position on Kashmir followed by the successive governments. Meanwhile, India assured Pakistan that it would stand by the Indus Waters Treaty and Pakistan would get its share of river waters in accordance with the treaty. President Asif Ali Zardari raised the issue of water share in his maiden meeting on Wednesday evening with Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in his hotel in New York

News, 26 September 2008

Whose war? America's or ours?

by Ayaz Amir Was there such an animal as the Tehrik Taliban-I-Pakistan before the American invasion of Afghanistan? The Americans sparked turmoil and chaos in this region and now that they are bogged down in Afghanistan, how come this adventure they thoughtlessly started becomes our war? Yet from President Asif Zardari downwards--- Zardari more of America's man than even Pervez Musharraf---our leadership is working overtime to convince a fed-up nation, which has lapped up more than its share of lies, that this is our war too and we are under a moral obligation to fight it. Pakistan's English-speaking classes---'liberals' for want of a better word---chant, nay roar, much the same slogan. Very clear in their minds about Taliban-spread terror they sputter and choke when it comes to American-spread terror. The Marriott bombing has brought terrorism home to

mainstream Pakistan but slaughter on a far greater scale has occurred regularly in the tribal areas without having the same impact because those are remote areas not accessible to TV cameras

Asian Age, 26 September 2008

LoC is Line of Commerce

Sept. 25: India and Pakistan declared on Wednesday that trade across the Line of Control will begin on October 21 this year while modalities for the opening of the Skardu-Kargil road will be discussed. The decision after the first meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan's new President, Mr Asif Ali Zardari, envisages cross-LoC trade on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalkot roads. It was also decided to open the Wagah-Attari road link and Khokrapar-Munabao railway route to all permissible items of trade. Both countries will also continue "interaction between Planning Commissions to develop mutually beneficial cooperation, including in the energy sector"

Dawn, 27 September 2008

Schoolgirl dies in Quetta suicide attack

QUETTA, Sept 24: A schoolgirl was killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up near a security vehicle not far from a military police checkpost. Twenty-three people were injured, six of them schoolchildren and 15 security personnel. However, unconfirmed reports said that three security personnel had been killed. Officials said that three injured soldiers of the Frontier Corps soldiers were in a critical condition. 'Quetta Cantonment was the suicide attacker's target of the suicide bomber,' Capital City Police Officer Mohammad Akbar told Dawn, adding that the bomber had walked up to the vehicle. 'The bomber's severed head is intact and is in police custody. It will help establish his identity. Other parts of his body have also been collected,' he said, adding that the man was 18 to 22 years old. He said that two deaths had been reported

News, 27 September 2008

1,000 militants killed in Bajaur

PESHAWAR: Military officials on Friday said around 1,000 militants, five of them important foreign and local commanders, including al-Qaeda's Afghanistan chief Abu Saeed al-Misri, had been killed in the two-month-long military operation launched by the Pakistan Army against the militants in Bajaur Agency on August 6, in which 27 personnel of the security forces also embraced martyrdom. Also, military officials said 25 more suspected militants and three security personnel, including two senior officers, were killed in the daylong clashes between the Taliban fighters and the security forces on Friday

News, 27 September 2008

14 militants killed in Bajaur

KHAR, Sept 26: Fourteen people were killed and 20 others injured when security forces, backed by helicopter gunships and artillery, pounded suspected militant positions in the troubled Bajaur region on Friday. Officials said that militants had attacked a security checkpost in Tang Khatta, about nine kilometres from Khar, early in the morning.

Security forces returned fire and a gunbattle continued for about five hours. Seven militants were killed and several others injured. No casualty was reported from the military side