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IPCS PROGRAM ON SUICIDE TERRORISM

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Suicide attacks intensified in Iraq and Afghanistan between January and March 2006, while Pakistan, Israel and Sri Lanka witnessed a few attacks between February and March. Suicide Terrorism has been primarily limited to West and South Asia with incidences varying between India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Israel and Iraq. Indonesia has also been under hit by suicide attacks making it the only country to witness suicide terrorism in South East Asia. However, in the recent months (January - March 2006), Iraq and Afghanistan has been weighed down by chronic suicide attacks.

In Iraq, suicide bombings have become the most popular and also an effective stratagem against the American policies. The hostility is an extension of the US invasion and centers around the US attempt to promote democracy versus the Iraqi demand that the US leaves the country without more ado. However, the resentment between the Shias and the Sunnis has led to an increase in sectarian violence with suicide car bombs emerging as the most effective weapon. The frequency of Iraq's suicide bombings is unprecedented, exceeding even the Palestinian uprising against Israel.

In January 2006, there were seven suicide attacks in Iraq. A study of the attacks in Iraq reveals that most of the attacks were in the form of car bombs. They are usually directed against a convoy of American or Iraqi troops or recruiting centers for security services. The first attack (January 01) wherein thirteen car bombs were

exploded was targeted against an American patrol and an American convoy. The second attack (January 02) targeted police recruits who were struck by a suicide car bomber. There is a clear indication by the insurgents to prevent Iraqis to join the security forces. Further study reveals that civilians are also being targeted by the insurgents.

The third and the fourth attacks (January 04 and 09) indicate the growing turbulence between Iraq's Muslim sects and high level sectarian tension when civilians at a Shiite funeral and city dwellers at a market in Kerbala were targeted by a suicide bomber. The violence occurred amid difficulties faced by Sunni, Shia and Kurdish politicians to form a national unity government following the December 15 parliamentary elections. The last two attacks occurred amid accusations by the Sunni minorities being oppressed by the Shia militia and the growing resentment to the US invasion. Further study also indicates that these saboteurs have assaulted the Iraqi oil industry.

In March, there were three suicide attacks. The first attack was by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeting civilians, while the second attack on the Interior Ministry Major Crimes unit in Baghdad's central Karradah district was a suicide car bomb. The last attack targeted the Iraqi army recruitment centre. A militant coalition led by Al Qaeda's Iraq branch is behind most of the suicide attacks in Iraq. Clearly there is a pattern evolving in Iraq with an increase in non-military and civilian

attacks, ambushes against security forces and disruption of oil and water pipelines. The modus operandi mainly being car bombs, rocket-propelled grenades or explosives, machine guns, and explosive belts laced with ball bearings and grenades are the other most commonly practiced strategies.

Sectarian violence is also an underlying principle behind suicide attacks in Pakistan, where the Sunni and Shia Muslims have been carrying out these attacks with an increased intensity in the recent years. The suicide attack in February in Hangu was a part of ongoing sectarian violence. The Northern Areas, where Hangu is situated has had a history of sectarian violence. In March, there was another attack, when a suicide car bomber rammed into a diplomatic vehicle outside the United States consulate in Karachi killing the American diplomat and three others. The attack came less than two days before Bush's scheduled trip to Pakistan. Clearly it was an anti – Bush stand.

Besides Iraq, Afghanistan was beset by an escalation in suicide attacks. The Taliban continued to attack the US and Afghan troops after they were ousted by the US invasion in 2001. There were four suicide attacks in January 2006. The first three attacks (January 02, 05 & 15) were targeted at the American and the Canadian convoys. Similar to Iraq, car bombs were once again the most preferred form of attack, with civilians also being targeted. Many of these attacks have been in Kandahar province, a base for the Canadian troops who have been targeted several times. The attack on March 03 was on an armored Canadian vehicle and the methodology was similar to the previous attacks, in which a car was used as a suicide bomb.

Israel witnessed two suicide attacks between January and March. Suicide bombers in Israel continue to wrap

themselves with explosives and this was evident when a Palestinian bomber blew himself at a fast food joint in Tel Aviv. The second attack, was near a West Bank settlement in March 2006. The methodology was similar to that of other suicide attacks in Israel, in which a suicide bomber belonging to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, blew himself up.

Suicide attacks will continue to haunt Iraq and Afghanistan in the near future. While, the occurrence of a civil war in Iraq is seen as a pressing concern, Afghanistan will also be a primary target for suicide attacks under the Taliban guerrilla war. Sectarian violence would remain the primary reason for suicide attacks in these regions. Al – Qaeda would continue to hold up its presence behind these attacks. Suicide car bombs would remain customary. Israel would also witness occasional suicide attacks with Hamas formally having sworn to destroy Israel.

JAN-MAR 2006: CHRONOLOGY OF SUICIDE ATTACKS

01 January 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

Thirteen car bombs exploded injuring 20 civilians when suicide bombers targeted the American patrol and an American convoy in Baghdad ¹

02 January 2006, Kandahar (Afghanistan)

A Taliban suicide bomber drove a car bomb into a convoy of foreign troops in southern Afghanistan wounding an US soldier as well as an Afghan woman and a child. The attacked died in the blast²

02 January 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

A suicide bomber drove a car bomb into a bus killing 19 people including seven

¹ “13 car bombs injure 20 in Iraq,” *Daily Times*, 02 January 2006

² “Suicide attack injures US soldier, Afghans,” *Dawn*, 03 January 2006

police recruits near Baquba, north of the capital, as they headed for the northern Kurdish region to undergo training. Thirteen recruits were wounded.³

04 January 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

A suicide bomber attacked a Shia funeral in Miqdadiya, 100kms northeast of the capital, killing 36 people and injuring 40⁴

05 January 2006, Kandahar (Afghanistan)

A Taliban suicide bomber killed at least 10 people and wounded 50 in Tarin Kot, capital of the central province of Uruzgan.⁵

05 January 2006, Kerbala and Ramadi (Iraq)

Two suicide bombers killed 120 people and wounded more than 200 in Kerbala and Ramadi. The bomber in Kerbala detonated an explosive belt, killing 50 and wounding 138 at a market within sight of the golden dome of the shrine of Hazrat Imam Hussein. The bomber in Ramadi blew himself up, killing 70 people and wounding 65.⁶

09 January 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

Two suicide bombers blew themselves up inside the Iraqi Interior Ministry compound in Baghdad, killing 28 people and wounding.⁷

15 January 2006, Kandahar (Afghanistan)

A Taliban suicide car bomb hit a Canadian military convoy killing Canada's senior

diplomat and two civilians and injuring 12 people, including three soldiers in Kandahar⁸

16 January 2006, Kandahar (Afghanistan)

Taliban suicide bombers killed 26 people in two attacks in southern Afghanistan. 20 people died in the Spin Boldak when a bomber drove his motorcycle into a playground. Another suicide bomber blew himself in front of the Afghan army vehicle in Kandahar killing three Afghan soldiers and two civilians⁹

19 January 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

A suicide bomber detonated an explosive belt inside a coffee shop on Baghdad's Saadoun street killing 23 persons and injuring 26¹⁰

19 January 2006, Tel Aviv (Israel)

A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up at a fast food stand on Solomon street in Tel Aviv wounding 30 people¹¹

01 February 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

A suicide bomber blew himself at a gathering point for laborers in Baghdad's southern neighborhood of A-Jadida, killing three and wounding 61.¹²

09 February 2006, Islamabad (Pakistan)

35 people were killed and scores injured in a suspected suicide attack on a Shiite Muslim procession in the main bazaar of North West Frontier Province's Hangu

³ "Seven police recruits among 19 killed in Iraq," *Dawn*, 03 January 2006; "7 Iraqi police recruits killed in suicide hit," *Daily Times*, 03 January 2006

⁴ "Suicide bombing, ambush leave over 50 dead in Iraq," *Dawn*, 05 January 2006; "Iraq lull ends, suicide attack leaves 36 dead," *The Indian Express*, 05 January 2006

⁵ "10 killed in Afghan suicide bombing," *Dawn*, 06 January 2006

⁶ "120 killed in Iraq suicide attacks," *Dawn*, 06 January 2006

⁷ "Suicide bombers kill 28 at Iraqi ministry," *Daily Times*, 10 January, 2006; "Iraq's ministry blown up: 28 killed," *Dawn*, 10 January 2006

⁸ "Canadian envoy killed in Afghanistan," *Daily Times*, 16 January 2006; "Suicide attack on Canadian convoy," *The Hindu*, 16 January 2006

⁹ "26 de in Taliban suicide attacks," *Dawn*, 17 January 2006

¹⁰ "Blasts in Baghdad kill 23," *The Hindu*, 20 January 2006

¹¹ "Palestinian suicide bomber wounds 30 in Tel Aviv," *Daily Times*, 20 January 2006; "30 injured in Israel suicide attack," *Dawn*, 20 January 2006

¹² "4 killed as blasts rock Baghdad," *Daily Times*, 02 February 2006

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town, 200 kilometers northwest of Islamabad.¹³

10 February 2006, Hangu (Pakistan)

A suicide bomber attacked Ashura mourners on the main Hangu-Tall road on triggering violence. 37 were dead and 91 injured in two days of sectarian violence in Hangu, NWFP.¹⁴

02 March 2006, Karachi (Pakistan)

A suicide car bomber rammed into a diplomatic vehicle outside the United States consulate in Karachi killing an American diplomat and three others, including the attacker.¹⁵

03 March 2006, Kandahar (Afghanistan)

A suicide car bomb attack wounded five Canadian soldiers in southern Afghanistan. The attack happened about 15 km outside the city of Kandahar, and about 10 km from the airport, where Canadian troops are based.¹⁶

15 March 2006, Baquba (Iraq)

An suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed two Iraqis and wounded five others in Baquba.¹⁷

23 March 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

A suicide car bomber detonated his explosives at the entrance to the Interior Ministry Major Crimes unit in Baghdad's central Karradah district, killing 10 civilians and 15 policemen.¹⁸

¹³ "35 killed in suicide attack on Pak Shiite procession," *Daily Excelsior*, 10 February 2006

¹⁴ "37 die in Hangu Blasts," *Dawn*, 11 February 2006

¹⁵ "US diplomat, 3 others killed in Karachi attack," *Daily Times*, 03 March 2006; "Karachi hit by terror attack, four killed: US diplomat among dead, 54 injured," *Dawn*, 03 March 2006; *Excelsior*, 10 February 2006

¹⁶ "Suicide bomb wounds Canadian Troops," *The Frontier Post*, 04 March 2006

¹⁷ "20 including two US soldiers killed in Iraq," *Daily Times*, 16 March 2006

¹⁸ "56 Iraqis die in bombings, sectarian violence," *Daily Times*, 24 March 2006

25 March 2006, Colombo (Srilanka)

Six suspected Tamil Tigers were killed and eight Sri Lankan sailors were missing after rebels blew themselves up and sank a navy gunboat that had approached their trawler.¹⁹

27 March 2006, Baghdad (Iraq)

A Saudi suicide bomber belonging to a militant coalition led by Al Qaeda killed 40 people waiting outside an Iraqi army recruitment centre in Tal Afar.²⁰

30 March 2006, Jerusalem (Israel)

A Palestinian suicide bomber belonging to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades killed three Israelis near a West Bank settlement.²¹

¹⁹ "Suicide blast kills six Tamil Tigers," *Daily Times*, 27 March 2006

²⁰ "Suicide bomber kills 40 at Iraq army centre," *Dawn*, 28 March 2006; "Iraqi Shiites rage over US raid on purported mosque, suicide bombing kills 40," *Khaleej Times*, 28 March 2006

²¹ "Suicide bomber kills three Israelis in West Bank," *Khaleej Times*, 31 March 2006; "4 Israelis killed in suicide bombing," *Daily Times*, 31 March 2006

Suicide and Suicidal Terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir 2004-2005: A Chronology

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2 January 2004

Two fidayeens attacked the Jammu Railway Station killing four security force personnel and injuring nine personnel including six civilians. Both the fidayeens were killed in the attack.²²

3 March 2004

A fidayeen attacked a police bus carrying 13 under-trials, mostly terrorists, from the district jail to the Court complex in Jammu. Seven persons, including four police personnel and two under-trial terrorists, were killed and six persons sustained injuries. The fidayeen was killed in the encounter.

9 March 2004

Two fidayeens belonging to the Al-Mansoorain attacked the Press Information Bureau (PIB) of the Government of India and the Directorate of Information of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, injuring three Special Service Bureau (SSB) guards. The two fidayeens were killed by the security forces.

10 March 2004

Fidayeens belonging to Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizbul Mujahideen attacked a military formation in the Khrew area of Pulwama district killing a soldier and two civilians. Two militants were also killed.

17 April 2004

Two fidayeens were killed when security forces foiled an attack on a polling station at a Government Middle School, in Kreeri. However, one soldier was killed and two others were injured during the attack.

27 July 2004

Two fidayeens belonging to the Al-Mansoorain attacked a hotel in Dal Lake killing five CRPF personnel. Both the fidayeens were killed in the attack.

4 August 2004

Fidayeens belonging to Al-Mansoorain and Al-Madina attacked a CRPF camp in Rajbagh locality killing nine security personnel, including an Assistant Commandant and injuring seven others. One militant was killed in the attack.

12 September 2004

Two fidayeens attacked the headquarters of CRPF 94 Bn at Dalgate killing two Deputy Commandants of the CRPF and injuring five CRPF personnel. The second-in-command of CRPF 60 Bn, Anandan, and the second-in-command of CRPF 65 Bn, Chet Ram, got killed while fighting the militants. Both the fidayeens were killed by security forces.²³

6 November 2004

Two fidayeens attacked the BSF camp in Sopore killing two army personnel, a BSF jawan and injuring six others.²⁴

8 November 2004

A fidayeen was killed when paramilitary forces foiled his efforts to enter a Rashtriya Rifles (RR) camp in Sonarvani

²² The first seven entries of this chronology is based on an earlier chronology on the same issue. See Rajeshwari.B and Radhakrishnan.R, "Suicidal and Suicide Attacks in Jammu and Kashmir," *I-POST* October 2004; Vol. 1, No. 3.

²³ "Protest over student's killing in Lolab Two CRPF officers, 2 militants killed in Dalgate fidayeen," *Daily Excelsior*, 13 September 2004

²⁴ "Fidayeen attack on BSF camp in Sopore: 3 jawans among 10 killed," *Daily Excelsior*, 7 November 2004

village. However, four paratroopers were injured as he was blown apart.

17 November 2004

A fidayeen attack was averted by the security forces, killing the two militants who had perched themselves on vantage positions in the foothills of Shankaracharya hillock overlooking the venue of the Prime Minister's public rally.²⁵

3 December 2004

Two fidayeens attacked the CRPF camp in Sopore killing three jawans and injuring three others.²⁶

3 December 2004

Two fidayeens belonging to the Al-Mansoorain attacked the joint camp of 16th battalion of the CRPF and Special Operations Group of the State police in Sopore killing five CRPF jawans.²⁷

15 December 2004

Two fidayeens belonging to the Lashkar-e-Toiba and their motorcycle driver were killed in a suicide strike on a BSF formation in Sopore.²⁸

7 January 2005

Two fidayeens attacked the Income Tax office in Barbar Shah locality killing a deputy commandant of the Border Security Force, a jawan and a policeman and injuring four persons, including a security officer. One of the militants was shot dead in the exchange of fire that followed.²⁹

²⁵ "Two fidayeen killed near Manmohan's rally venue," *Daily Excelsior*, 18 November 2004

²⁶ "Three CRPF jawans killed, two injured in fidayeen attack," *Daily Excelsior*, 3 December 2004

²⁷ "Five CRPF jawans killed in fidayeen attack," *The Hindu*, 4 December 2004

²⁸ "Civilian, 2 militants killed in Sopore," *Daily Excelsior*, 16 December 2004

²⁹ "Three killed in fidayeen attack," *The Hindu*, 8 January 2005

31 March 2005

Two militants and a paramilitary soldier were killed when two fidayeens tried to storm a Border Security Force (BSF) post in Sopore.³⁰

7 April 2005

Two fidayeens belonging to a forged alliance of four guerrilla outfits attacked the Tourist Reception Centre complex injuring seven government employees while authorities claimed that both the fidayeens had been killed.³¹

5 June 2005

Two militants were killed when security forces pre-empted bid by suicide attackers as they tried to sneak into the camp of 21 Rashtriya Rifles at Zachaldara-Handwara.³²

20 June 2005

Militants attacked the Sub Divisional Police Office at Mendhar in Poonch killing three persons, including two cops where as six others were injured in a cross-fire that followed the fidayeen attack.³³

7 July 2005

Senior PDP leader and Minister of State for PHE, Syed Bashir Ahmed had a narrow escape when he was rescued by Police officials while militants attacked him in Budshah Chowk. Officials believe that the militants had been given the task of conducting a suicide strike on Dashnami Akhara - a place of worship wherefrom the holy staff for Amarnathji pilgrimage sets off in August every year.³⁴

30 July 2005

³⁰ "Fidayeen attack foiled; 2 militants, trooper killed," *Daily Excelsior*, 31 March 2005

³¹ "Srinagar TRC complex perishes in fidayeen strike," *Daily Excelsior*, 7 April 2005

³² "4 militants, 2 civilians killed," *Daily Excelsior*, 5 June 2005

³³ "Fidayeen attack on SDPO at Mendhar," *The Indian Express*, 20 June 2005

³⁴ "Militants ambush Minister near Dashnami Akhara," *Daily Excelsior*, 7 July 2005

Two fidayees belonging to Al-Mansoorain and Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen attacked the city of Budshah Chowk killing two security force personnel and injuring 24 people, including seven journalists. Both the fidayees were killed.³⁵

8 September 2005

Two fidayees attacked a cinema hall in Srinagar and one militant was killed in the encounter when J-K Police and CRPF foiled the fidayeen attack. A joint spokesman of three militant outfits claimed that the attack was carried, jointly by the militants of Al-Arifeen, Harkat-ul-Ansar and Al-Mansoorain.³⁶

8 October 2005

One soldier got killed while 10 others sustained injuries when security forces foiled a fidayeen attempt on a BSF formation in Sopore by two fidayees belonging to the Al-Mansoorain. The fidayees were suspected to have died in the fierce gun battle.³⁷

14 October 2005

A woman fidayeen blew herself up in the town of Awantipora, 50 yards away from the State Bank of India, which is frequented by army soldiers. Both the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed the bomb as their supporter. JeM claimed that the "human bomb" was their activist and belonged to a new group called Baantaen-e-Ayisha. Another report said that the woman belonged to Lashkar.³⁸

19 October 2005

Two fidayees belonging to the Al-Mansoorain and Islamic Jihad Front

attacked the VVIP residential colony in Srinagar and killed Kashmir's junior education minister Ghulam Nabi Lone along with three others, including a CRPF guard.³⁹

20 October 2005

A fidayeen belonging to the Hamadania Brigade attacked a Police party in Pampore township on Srinagar-Jammu national highway killing two civilians and injuring the Sub Inspector of Police including 10 others.⁴⁰

2 November 2005

A Jaish-e-Mohammad fidayeen detonated a bomb in Nowgam, killing at least 10 people and injuring 15 others. The explosion took place about 15 km from Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC). A 10-year-old boy, a female pedestrian, three Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel, including a Sub Inspector, and the fidayeen were among the ten killed in the fidayeen attack.⁴¹

15 November 2005

Two fidayees attacked the business hub of Lalchowk area killing two CRPF soldiers, two civilians and injuring 17 persons, including a Japanese journalist.⁴²

24 November 2005

Two fidayees attacked the CRPF company headquarters at Hawal killing three security personnel and injuring seven others. Both the fidayees were killed.⁴³

³⁵ "Gunfight ends in Srinagar," *The Hindu*, 31 July 2005

³⁶ "Gun fight ends, militant killed," *The Hindu*, 9 September 2005

³⁷ "Soldier killed, 10 injured; 2 militants may be dead," *Daily Excelsior*, 8 October 2005

³⁸ "J&K's first woman fidayeen," *Hindustan Times*, 14 October 2005

³⁹ "Terror tremor: Minister killed in living room," *The Indian Express*, 19 October 2005

⁴⁰ "2 civilians killed, 10 injured in Pampore," *Daily Excelsior*, 20 October 2005

⁴¹ "10 killed, 15 wounded in car blast," *Daily Excelsior*, 3 November 2005

⁴² "Japanese lens man among 17 injured in Srinagar fidayeen attack; 2 CRPF men, 2 civilians killed," *Daily Excelsior*, 15 November 2005

⁴³ "2 militants, 3 CRPF jawans killed in fidayeen attack," *Daily Excelsior*, 24 November 2005

OPINION

Suicide Terrorism in Afghanistan: Taliban's New Game plan

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Suicide attacks now are becoming frequent in Afghanistan, which has been embattling insurgency since the US military operations in 2001. The first warning of suicide attacks came in the form of an audiotape message in February 2003, allegedly recorded by Osama bin Laden. In June 2003, an explosive-laden taxi slammed into a bus carrying German International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops, killing four soldiers and an Afghan national. This attack heralded a new wave in Afghan insurgency.

The suicide attacks have been ascribed to the Taliban, reinforcing threats of its resurgence and signifying a change in its strategy. Suicide attacks are being strategically used by the Taliban to counter the US and NATO-led ISAF troops in the ongoing asymmetric conflict. The Taliban's survival is contingent upon suicide campaigns and other guerrilla tactics as it can never match up to the conventional superiority and military stealth of international troops. This technique of "not fighting fair" has been a hallmark of Iraqi insurgents, which has levelled the playing field and reversed US' conventional superiority. Urban warfare characterized 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', where the insurgents forced the US into close quarter combat on the streets of Baghdad and Fallujah.

Secondly, even though suicide attacks have achieved limited success, it has nonetheless augmented and strengthened the Taliban's resolve to recapture power in Afghanistan. Clearly, the Taliban intends

to intensify insurgency to scuttle the reconstruction process of the state by driving away potential investors. This may prove critical for Afghanistan's survival and stability, which receives approximately 90 per cent of its income from aid donations. Similar tactics were employed by Hamas that carried out suicide attacks during critical junctures in the negotiation period of Oslo Accords.

Thirdly, suicide attacks have managed to create fear and scepticism in states contributing troops to the ISAF as majority of attacks have been carried out against NATO and US-led troops. The reluctance of the Dutch to send troops to Uruzgan stemmed from the dangers of suicide and IED attacks by the Taliban. It was only recently that it agreed to send 1,400 troops to assume responsibility for the provincial reconstruction team (PRT) based in Tarin Kot, currently under US command.

Interestingly, unlike Palestine and Iraq, suicide attacks do not have mass support in Afghanistan. This may prove to be a possible bulwark against suicide attacks in the future. The suicide attacks are now also being aimed at soft targets. In the worst ever attack on 16 January 2006, twenty people were killed and 25 injured when a motorcycle bomb exploded in a playground in Spin Boldak. Such indiscriminate use of suicide terrorism is alienating potential domestic supporters.

The Taliban has failed to elevate the status of its suicide bombers to 'martyrs' and 'freedom fighters' as is the case in Iraq, Palestine or even the LTTE-controlled areas in Sri Lanka. Demonstrations denouncing suicide attacks have been

staged at Herat, Ghazni, Kandahar and Spin Boldak in Afghanistan. This is testimony that the general population does not identify with the ideological and religious orientations of the suicide bombers.

Also, unlike the 1987 intifada and Al Aqsa Intifada, the insurgency in Afghanistan will never take the form of a 'movement'. The former was a political act of resistance and a revolution informed by nationalism, whereas the latter has a politico-religious orientation in defiance of Afghanistan's 'occupation' by the United States and its allies. Moreover, the suicide attacks in Palestine and Iraq are executed by indigenous people unlike in Afghanistan where the bombers are suspected to be foreigners. The needle of suspicion has been repeatedly pointed at Pakistan which shares a 1,500 mile long border with Afghanistan and allegedly harbouring Al Qaeda terrorists and members of the Taliban.

As NATO unveils the third stage of its Afghan plan, extending its area of operation to the troubled southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan; an amplification of insurgency can be expected. NATO has an onerous task ahead due to the proposed reduction of US troops. NATO's mandate is restricted to peacekeeping, thus leaving counter-terrorism operations outside the ambit of its designated role. The primary task of the 3,300 British combat troops who arrived recently is to protect British army and air force engineers who are building a base in Helmand's capital, Lashkar Gar, and though Helmand is Taliban's stronghold, the peacekeeping force is limited in its capacity.

Incidents of suicide attacks are on an upward swing, with 2005 being the bloodiest year since the commencement of 'Operation Enduring Freedom'. Last year, nearly 1,500 people died in various incidents of violence in Afghanistan. The

death toll of US troops almost doubled from 51 deaths in 2004 to 99 in 2005. There will be more suicide attacks in the future in Afghanistan. However, the sustainability and success of suicide attacks will depend upon the Taliban's ability to reorganize itself in the face of the growing presence of NATO-led ISAF troops. The US 'War on terror' is far from over.