Indo-US-Militants Nexus & Our Strategies for Survival
Qadar Bakhsh Baloch* Ghulam Abbass**

Prior to 9/11 Pakistan was a peaceful country. There was no challenge to the writ of its government in the entire length and breadth of the country including its Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The country was free of militancy and terrorism, suicide attacks and serial bomb blasts that have, of late, taken the headlines. Pak Army was held in high esteem and law enforcing agencies were effective in maintaining law and order. Tribal chieftains were successfully exercising their power over their respective tribes through their time tested code of collective responsibility. Malakand Division and Waziristan were among few places in Pakistan that were endowed with calm and quiet scenic beauty, housing affable, hospitable, and peaceful people. No one could imagine that after 9/11 not only Afghanistan but Pakistan would also face most crucial turbulent times so much so that its very survival would be at stake.

Pakistan has demonstrated its resolve to fight terrorism and eradicate extremism in Swat, South Waziristan and beyond. The sacrifices in men and material it has rendered during the war against terror are far more than any other country fighting this war. Pakistan has not only provided the United States access for undertaking Operation Enduring Freedom but also rendered intelligence and logistics facilities to support the operation towards its success. Pakistan has not only denied sanctuary to the terrorists on its soil but also interdicted their financing and apprehended terrorists for prosecution in Pakistan and abroad.

* Dr. Qadar Bakhsh Baloch, Associate Professor, Qurtuba University of Science & IT, Peshawar Campus. Email: qbuzdar@yahoo.com
** Ghulam Abbass, M.Phil Research Scholar, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad
During the period, Government of Pakistan on numerous occasions went against the wishes of its own people in supporting this war. Pakistan has ensured security and safety of NATO supply route from Karachi to Afghanistan. Despite all this, Pakistan’s commitment has always been questioned and its leadership has always been whipped with the rhetoric of ‘do more’. Drone attacks are consistently challenging Pakistan’s territorial sovereignty and Black Waters and similar other security outfits are flouting diplomatic immunities at will. Is it the way to treat a front line ally? America ought to demonstrate that it can and will reciprocate the cooperation, and acknowledge Pakistan’s sacrifices rendered while fighting this essentially an American war. Respecting the demand of the Pakistan’s Parliament, drone attacks must be stopped forthwith. Rather it would be appropriate if Pakistan is given the drone technology for its use against the terrorists, operating in FATA and elsewhere in Pakistan.

Economic cost of the losses of men and material suffered by Pakistan in War against Terror in NWFP, FATA and elsewhere in Pakistan has surpassed over $70 billion. The economic relief being provided in the Kerry Lugar bill is peanuts compared to the losses suffered and that too with conditionalities undermining national sovereignty of Pakistan. Fairness demands that the U.S should first recompense the losses suffered by Pakistan and then talk of additional help for restructuring the devastated economy of Pakistan.

Coalition forces in Afghanistan having failed in controlling the resistance struggle inside Afghanistan have conveniently shifted the onus of their failure on cross border movements and blamed Pakistan for inaction and so-called duplicity. While looking for lame excuses, they ignored the large-scale operations of Pakistan Army in FATA and its resultant adverse consequences for our own survival. The Americans incessant demands of ‘Do More’ deeply embroiled the Pakistani security forces, and earned the ill will of the tribes who till then had admired and
adored their Army. A well orchestrated propaganda campaign was unleashed by the US think tanks and media, in concert with the State Department and Pentagon, projecting Pakistan as the most serious threat to world peace. Since it has become obvious by now that America has come in the area to stay for their strategic designs therefore, the propaganda campaign maligning Pakistan’s areas as haven for terrorists is misconceived, overblown and far from truth just as it was in the case of Iraq. To further compound the gravity of the threat, a false bogey of nuclear weapons falling into the Al Qaeda hands has been created to fabricate the possibility of a nuclear threat. The suspicions about American intentions on Pakistan and its nuclear assets are gone to their limits with the recently announced American’s new Afghani Policy unveiled by President Obama on 1st December 2009. One salient aspect of his policy which is too serious and alarming to escape notice-relates to Pakistan. While he has tried to mollycoddle Pakistan by pledging to protect Pakistan’s nuclear assets and help prevent any possibility of Taliban’s take over of Islamabad, he has indirectly voiced his misgivings that Pakistan can not protect its nuclear assets on its own. While Obama partly praised Pakistan for launching operations in Swat and FATA, his address did convey, in implied terms, his intentions to extend his covert and overt operations inside Pakistan under the pretext of eliminating Al-Qaeda and forestalling an imagined (falsely exaggerated) threat of militants gaining access to the nuclear assets. It means America would jump in as and when it feels that our nuclear assets are unsafe. For this, they would fabricate situations to ensure their intervention. It is this vicious intent which further raises serious concerns to the presence of Black Water and other security agencies within striking distance of our core nuclear assets. These are clearly pressure tactics to cow down
Pakistan to take on groups headed by Siraj Haqani, Maulvi Nazir and Gul Bahadur. Pakistan must not only strongly resist this pressure but also convey to America, in no uncertain terms, that we can not afford to open another front totally detrimental to our national interests. Simultaneously, we must prepare a detailed and firm response to convince America that their intelligence about Al-Qaeda using our soil for masterminding terrorist acts in US and West is as faulty, baseless and exaggerated as it was in the case of Iraq developing weapons of mass destruction.

Pakistan’s leadership has so far shown reluctance and even timidity in dissociating from the American war due to loss of covert US support in the formation of our governments or discontinuation of aid flow. Without having any question on the sincerity of Obama’s intentions, to nip the evil, if any, there is need to re-negotiate the US-Pak partnership ensuring mutual interest, mutual respect and mutual trust. There is also dire need to realize that envisaged placement of Indian troops in Afghanistan will fill the void once NATO forces leave Afghanistan. Hence, it is easy to predict that America will continue to fabricate conditions to justify their presence in the region. It is widely believed that to dilute the intensity of resistance in Afghanistan, insurgency in Swat, Bajaur, Waziristan, (and now over blowing to the areas of southern Punjab) etc has been masterminded and sponsored by the Indo-US nexus. The continuous supply of arms and ammunition, infiltration of paid insurgents, and removal of American/ NATO forces from military check post on Afghanistan side of the border and the adjoining areas of Waziristan during the ongoing operation to facilitate escape of insurgents to Afghanistan bear ample testimony to their nefarious game plan. Seeing the human and economic losses of War against Terror Pakistan stands out the one that had borne the main brunt. Since September 11, 2001
when Pakistan was coerced to be a frontline state in the US-led war on terror, the violence has inflicted over fifteen thousands causalities since 2003. The total human cost to American forces in Afghanistan include only 929 dead and 4334 injured against Pakistan’s 7515 dead and 14273 injured and even then constantly embroiled in ‘Do More Syndrome’

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civilians Pakistan</th>
<th>Pak-Security Force Personnel</th>
<th>Alleged Terrorists</th>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>7515</td>
<td>2856</td>
<td>14273</td>
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</table>

- Data till December 14, 2009
- Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal

Human cost and miseries that people of Pakistan suffered also include forced abductions, illegal detentions and torture without any due process of law and disappearances of over 4000 Pakistani citizens on suspicion of terrorist activity and transfer of over hundreds to Guantanamo Bay for the last eight years. The American drones continue to violate our sovereignty, killing innocent civilians at will and fuel more violence in the country. Of the 60 drone attacks carried out in Pakistan between January, 2006 and April 8, 2009, only 10 were able to hit 14 alleged al-Qaeda members, remaining 50 drone attacks were misdirected perishing 687 innocent Pakistani civilians. It is difficult to fathom how with the available technology and surveillance capabilities, the Americans have thus far not been able to locate Baitullah Meshud giving strength to the speculations that he is their man. On the one side U.S expresses its sincerity towards the stability of Pakistan and while on the
other gives silent consent to Indian intrigues in stepping up insurgents in Balochistan, Waziristan and other parts of FATA.

Reportedly, Indo-US-militants nexus has intensified its efforts to create law and order problem in southern Punjab as well so as to embroil Pakistani forces gradually across length and breadth of Pakistan. Continuation of such an alarming state of affairs would virtually absorb our military leaving a vacuum on our eastern border for India to exploit our vulnerability. There are strong apprehensions that Indians(with American connivance) have created their own brand of Taliban (TTP) to embroil Pakistan in settled areas, and that the legacy of so called anti-US Taliban using FATA as safe haven is only a propaganda ploy to pressurize ‘Pakistan’. America and NATO are brokering peace deals with Afghan Taliban but they start crying hoarse when Pakistan Government does the same in its own area. It is interesting to note that America can live with the nuclear China, Russia, France, England, Israel, India and even North Korea but finds it difficult to live with nuclear Pakistan and possibly nuclear Iran. Mismatching unsynchronized tunes of protests at political and military circles reveals a dismal picture of lacking coordination. While Pakistan must strive to improve relations with India, it must constantly review threat perception along western borders and take adequate safeguards to meet that threat. Mere verbal assurances of America must not lead us to lower our guards like in 1971 when we vainly kept waiting for the US 7th Fleet to come to our rescue.  

Having known the American and Indian game plans, should we still follow a suicidal way to get in their well conceived death trap or try to avoid it by reviewing our policies at strategic and operational level? The option is pretty obvious and needs no genius to understand it. The recent recession in America, it may be understood, is the direct outcome
of huge spending on global misadventures. How long can they resuscitate their economy with the temporary bail out plans; for a decade or two? Sooner the Pakistan’s policy makers realize the better it would be for its cohesion and solidarity. We should understand that the U.S. economy is in a state of melt-down and so is its empire. We would be well-advised to see this change and guard our sovereignty by our own efforts.

Strategizing Pakistan’s Response

Military operations are well on their way to success. Peace and stability of Swat Valley has been restored and civil administration is in full control of the local affairs. Military operations in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) are proceeding according to the plan, and it is hoped that fairly large number of militants may be killed and even larger number driven out and the area physically occupied. By now a substantial part of the Southern Waziristan has also been purged of the militants and fleeing insurgents are being interdicted on their way to Northern Waziristan, Khyber Agency and elsewhere in and out of the country. Siege of the Kurram Agency and Khyber Agency is well tightened and given the intensity and speed of operations, it is hoped that the entire region may soon be brought under control. However, it may be understood that the success of military operations alone may not restore peace in the turbulent region unless the Government takes immediate follow up steps to establish its writ. Writ, in simple term, calls for good governance through efficient administrative measures and any delay in the implementation of these measures shall allow the miscreants to once again stage a comeback. Without casting doubts on the final outcome of operations while the military is engaged in mopping up operations, the Government shall step up their efforts for reconstruction and rebuilding.
of trust and confidence of the locals. The ones who escape shall do so in the hope that they will come back someday to re-establish their hold over the area. It is this possibility of return of militants that must be prevented at all costs. This requires mix of largely political and partly military strategy.

It is believed (and I just pray it to be true) that the Government has set clear political aims and objectives which must be achieved in the post operations period to ensure durable peace in the troubled zones. Those political objectives must be streamlined and, if need be, reformulated after getting detailed input from the political cadres inside and outside the Parliament. The nation must then be taken into confidence and a clear sense of direction given to put their concerns to rest.

Notwithstanding the language and text of the political objectives, these must be based on the underlying causes of militancy so these necessary goals / steps must be incorporated into the overall political strategy to remove the causes of friction and unrest. Once clear aims have been laid down, the eroded confidence of the people shall be restored which shall enable them not only to cooperate with the Government but also actively participate in the nation rebuilding process. This should form the basis of the political strategy for without sound and clearly defined basis the leaders as well as the nation shall be vainly groping in the dark and chasing nothing but dark shadows.

Having said this, one is inclined to wonder what the political strategy should look like; should it only be based on weeding out militants through military operations, as is being done now, or should it be focusing more on rooting out the terrorism through a multi-pronged strategy which, besides consolidation of gains through mopping up operations, must largely include pacification measures such as reconstruction and rehabilitation. However, it may be understood that the latter measures can be undertaken only after restoring a
semblance of peace in the area and taking along the populace on board through a well planned participatory process of development.

The objectives so set may be aimed at achieving the following results.

- The area purged of militants should have Government’s presence in the form of deployment of Frontier Corps (FC) personnel and local Khasadars.

- The authority of political administration, thoroughly undermined in the recent past, must be restored by FC as well as tribal maliks through a time-tested concept of collective responsibility.

- All possible steps must be taken to prevent the return of militants.

- Intelligence agencies in concert with Political authorities ought to play a much more pro-active role to give timely information for expeditious actions.

- After successful military operations, the Army should be garrisoned at selected places with bulk of the deployment done by FC. Army should only be used sparingly till the Political authorities find themselves suitably equipped and prepared to handle sporadic incidents of militancy. A timeframe for Army’s pull out could be worked out after careful analysis of the situation.

- Once people are back, their confidence restored and grievances redressed, the Government must immediately undertake massive reconstruction and rehabilitation works in addition to compensation, where necessary.

- Indian consulates deployed along the Pak-Afghan border are using FM Radio stations for propaganda. This must be countered
by installing our own FM Radio stations which must transmit well thought out themes containing entertainment and education programmes besides apprising people about the nefarious designs of foreign powers.

- The draconian Frontier Crimes regulations have been put on hold by the successive governments despite their claims of revisiting them. A grand jirga representing all agencies and Frontier Regions must be convened to know what they want, and their recommendations given due weightage to evolve a package widely acceptable to all.

- While the agencies had hard core militants, mainly the foreign elements, bulk of others joined the band wagon either out of compulsion due to fear or poverty, resentment against the killings of their near and dear ones in collateral damages, drone attacks or attracted by the sheer glamour / lure of authority. Leaving aside the hardened militants who must be driven out, the remaining elements can be brought back into mainstream life through persuasion, incentives and general amnesty. In nutshell, these are the objectives that our rehabilitation and reconstruction process must aim at.

America and NATO are engaging Afghan Taliban to normalizing the socio-politico order in Afghanistan and preparing the ground for their exit from Afghanistan. Apparently, the commonly accepted modalities such as US announcing a time table for pull out and reaching out an agreement with Taliban dissociating them from Al-Qaeda could form the basis of an agreement. Whereas, Pakistan is being pressurized to extend its military operation in other parts of FATA and Southern Punjab. On the face of their own reconciliation plans with
Taliban (and that is with the help of Pakistan), asking from Pakistan to extend its operations to all parts of FATA is against all norms of diplomacy, justice and fair play. As a quid pro quo, Pakistan too must be given a chance and encouraged to rethink and modify its strategy from one of conflict to one of conflict resolution. America should seriously consider the reconstruction and rehabilitation of war torn FATA and Afghanistan while forcing India to stop fomenting any more trouble inside Pakistan. It must be asked to dismantle its several consulates from Pak-Afghan borders and only engage in reconstruction activities. There should be an end to conspiracies, subversions and sabotage activities being organized by various foreign agencies inside Pakistan especially in FATA and Balochistan. The involvement of India in FATA, Balochistan and even Punjab is an open secret. The large cache of Indian arms, ammunition, heavy weapons and currency recovered from every hideout cleared by Pak Army proves beyond doubt that Indian consulates deployed along Pak Afghan border, are consistently at work to recruit, train and equip the militants. The Americans know this pretty well but are quiet, albeit naively; not realizing that by allowing a free run to the Indians, it is they, besides the region, which would stand to lose by way of increasing Indian influence in the longer run. The US must realize that their new strategic partnership with India is not as enduring and long lasting as it is with their old time tested – Russian ally; hence it is the combined Indo-Russia influence that will re-emerge in Kabul with America finding itself as high and dry as on 9/11.

**Post Military Operation Strategies**
The military operations must be succeeded & followed by the implementation of political objectives. Various strategies can be adopted to consolidate the gains of successful military operations, some of which are given below:

**Strengthening the institution of political administration**
This can be done by giving them the powers and authority that they had been exercising before the deployment of Army in FATA. They are familiar with the psyche and systems of enforcing writ through force, persuasion, jirgas, inducements and incentives.

**Revival of tribal Maliks**
The Maliks wielded tremendous influence over their tribes with the help of political administration and through jirgas. Their recommendations with regard to the raising of khasadar force, allotment of ration quotas, employment in schools etc taking due care of merit must be given weightage to strengthen their hold over their tribes.

**Representation in NWFP Assembly**
While FATA is represented in the Parliament, they must be given due representation in NWFP Assembly as well to enhance their level of participation and sense of belonging to the Province where they carry out bulk of their business, education and social activities.

**Generous Funding**
Federal Government has been receiving sizeable foreign aid packages for development of FATA, but regrettably only a negligible amount has been actually spent in FATA. Hence, poverty and unemployment have been constantly on the rise resulting in ever more deprivation and alienation.
This feeling of being left out has to be redressed through generous allocations.

**Massive reconstruction and rehabilitation works**

This will ensure prosperity and employment besides substantially improving health and education facilities. It may be appreciated that everything boils down to economics and no one can be averse to development, education, sound health facilities and ample job opportunities. Once happy and prosperous, the stakes in the event of defiance are very high and no one in his right frame of mind would like to forego those opportunities. It is only a man with empty stomach and without any prospects of bright future who would take to the mountains to fight, for he has nothing to lose. The strategy should aim at improving his condition to a level where he is quite content with living a normal life. An environment in which his children are getting education, his family receiving good medical treatment, and has enough money to live a decent life.

**Establishing Writ of the Governmen**

FC has always been present in FATA to assist the local political administration in enforcing the writ of the Government. This has been an age old practice and the tribals have never objected to their presence; partly because most of the FC personnel belong to various tribes who are accustomed to their traditions, and respect the norms and customs of the tribal areas. While the tribals respected the Pak Army which is why they volunteered to fight alongside them during the Indo-Pak wars, they took them as unwanted intruders in their areas. The Army must, therefore, be stationed slightly away from the major population centres, and finally pulled out after restoring peace and normalcy in the area. All out efforts
must be made to dry up the sources of supply of weapons and ammunition to the militants. Simultaneously, borders must be sealed to prevent the infiltration of foreign militants. The free and open use of FM radio stations for 6-7 long years, spreading venomous propaganda and misleading the innocent population, was an act of gross negligence and indifference. Government must, therefore, react promptly to any such development in future.

**Sustainable Economic Environment**

Reconstruction and rehabilitation works are sine qua non for improving the social conditions of the tribal populace. These development works shall no doubt create job opportunities as well. However, these measures may not have lasting economic impact on the people unless they are sustained through durable long term measures such as:

- Construction of small dams, irrigation channels and installation of tube wells to bring the large desolate and barren land under cultivation. A team of agricultural research specialists / scientists may be tasked to carry out a detailed survey of the area and put up its recommendations with regard to the suitability of land for raising various crops and fruit orchards etc.
- Government must encourage locals to take to farming. Provision of basic skills, expertise and incentives such as easy loans etc may be seriously considered.
- Some of the mountains in FATA are thickly wooded from where timber is mostly transported to all parts of the country. Wood and handicraft factories can be set up to provide jobs and increase their earnings. At some stage when this industry takes off and grows, the locals can be included in the venture as
shareholders to increase their stakes and consequent productivity.

- Education should be made compulsory and provided for free to increase the literacy rate. As an incentive, those with potential for higher studies may be sent to various schools, colleges and universities in other provinces at government expense. When the environment for education gets fully conducive, then a university which must also include professional colleges, must be built exclusively for FATA students at a centrally located place in NWFP. This, however, should be over and above the quota allocated for FATA in all other institutions of Pakistan.

- Quota for FATA students exists in various institutions of the country. However, over the years it has been felt that the fixed quota has done more harm than good to a fairly large number of FATA students who are left out of the main stream education process due to fixed number of seats. Ideally, while the allocated quota must remain in place, those FATA students who stand eligible for admission purely on open merit must be treated over and above the fixed quota. This anomaly has been created due to a large number of FATA students whose parents are serving / settled (outside FATA) in various parts of the country. By virtue of good schooling, these students do have a clear edge over those studying in FATA. Resultantly, they are left out of the main stream education process. Hence the need for remedying the situation.

- FATA is represented in the Parliament. However, the process / system of election need to be revisited. Tribals are politically far more mature now than they ever were, hence their involvement
in direct adult franchise may be seriously considered to give the importance of participation in the election process. Similarly, the election of representatives at lower tiers i.e. at the level of villages, towns etc may also be given due consideration.

- Provision of health facilities is a sore point with the tribals. In the absence of proper means of communication roads, it takes them days to take the patients to the hospitals only to find most of them losing their precious lives en-route. It is, therefore, extremely important to build dispensaries and hospitals in FATA regions to enable easy as well timely access to the patients to have treatment.

**Revitalizing Role of Frontier Corps/ Constabulary**

The institution of the FC may be restructured, re-equipped and its role may be revitalized. FC may be garrisoned in FATA at critical points and tasked to ensure the following:-

- Maintain law and order
- Provide security to the elements undertaking development works in FATA.
- Create good will among local population through measures such as provision of supplies, health care, repair and renovation of schools, hospitals and roads etc.
- Augment the efforts of the political administration.
- Identify hard core militants and try to isolate them from local population to dry up their support. Meanwhile, help the political authorities in their efforts to engage the militant commanders to bring them back into the main socio-political stream.
• Help political authorities in reviving the age-old institution of ‘Maliks’ to re-establish their hold and restore the concept of collective tribal responsibility.

**Strengthening of Local Institutions/ Values**

The FATA has always had a strong institution of Jirga wherein the bitterest of rivalries are settled amicably according to the age-old traditions which are by and large in line with Quran and Sunnah. So in a way, the Nizam-e-Adl regulation already exists in FATA since ages. This may, however, be strengthened through official patronage and fine tuned to give it wider acceptability.

- Zero Tolerance for Foreign / Hard core Militants. Such elements should not be shown any mercy. Those who survive the operations must be evicted and their return prevented at all costs.

- General Amnesty. It is neither possible nor desirable to kill all the militants. Except those (who in any case would be few), the remaining large number of local militants may be offered an olive branch and afforded an opportunity to lead normal life.

- The Government must organize a local civil defence system by way of forming village / town defence committees to meet any possible threat in future. If deemed appropriate, large number of weapons (small arms only) recovered from the miscreants must be distributed to these committees. However, a great degree of caution must be exercised to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of the miscreants for self-defence.

- Last but not the least, even at the cost of stirring debate (or even controversy), a serious thought may be given to giving representation to the Pro-Government Chieftains like Maulvi Nazir, Gul Bahadar and their likes in the Parliament and NWFP.
Assembly. Their inclusion into the main stream political process might broaden their outlook; increase their level of social and political awareness and obligation and more importantly ensuring their unconditional allegiance to the State.

**Conclusion**

The military operations must be expeditiously followed by political and socio-economic measures to prevent the return of militants in the area and create conditions favourable for lasting peace. The construction of concrete fortifications and elaborate tunnel system in complete secrecy by the militants speaks of the failure of our intelligence agencies and ineffective local-political system. There is an urgent need to re-look at our Intelligence system in the area so as to make it more pro-active so that it might provide timely warning against the revival of militants. Last six-seven years of Swat and Waziristan proves that the militants did find space and continued to expand it only in the absence of good governance. The essential lesson learnt is to deny any space to such elements by ensuring good governance.

It is time tested dictum that insurgent thrives on projection that enables him to gain popularity amongst the innocent local population. And there is no denying the fact that our media has been partly responsible in indirectly helping these militants to glorify themselves. There has to be fine balance in objective and independent reporting and national interests. However, it is heartening to note that the media has realized its past mistakes by self imposing an ethical code on itself. The recent denouncing of the suicidal bombing in Pakistan by the militants by the religious seminaries and the Ulema shall be incorporated in the campaign to discredit and isolate the militants from the general public. Obviously these denunciations of Ulema won’t hold any ground.
if the drone attacks are allowed to continue to play havoc in our Tribal areas. Our Federal Govt. and our Army Chief are expected to pressurize the US Administration to stop invading our sovereignty forthwith.

To sum up, the ‘Scarlet Thread’ of the entire operation of restoring durable peace hinges upon our success in winning the hearts and minds of people including the militants and their descendents. Therefore the prime recipe for restoration of peace and stability rests on the political will and sincerity with which the Government must seriously engage itself in winning the battle of hearts and minds.
End Notes:

1 President Obama’s address at Military Academy, west Point, dated 1st December 2009
2 Iraq was invaded with the allegation of possessing weapon of mass destruction—a threat to the security of America and the Israel. After occupation of Iraq and destruction of world’s oldest civilization they switched their war aim from destruction of Iraqi MAD to regime change.
3 Aslam Beg, Daily Nawa e Waqt,
5 South Asia Terrorism Portal, Available at: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm (16-12-2009)
6 South Asia Terrorism Portal, Available at: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm (16-12-2009)