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# **Prospects of Hostilities on Western Border For Pakistan**

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## Executive Summary

The Conflict Monitoring Center's data shows an unprecedented level of escalation of hostilities on its western border by Afghan National Army, NATO, and anti-Pakistan militants. During the year 2012, 732 cross border attacks took place from Afghan soil into Pakistani territory including rocket and mortar attacks, airspace violation, boots on grounds by Afghan National Army and NATO troops and persistent physical incursions by anti-Pakistan militant in FATA as well as border districts of Khyber Pakhtunehwa. The year saw record flow of money, weapons and militants from Afghanistan into Pakistan. Afghan National Army conducted 300 rocket and mortar attacks while 12 times its troops crossed Pakistani border and attacked inside Pakistan. NATO war planes violated Pakistani airspace for 52 times while the Al-Qaeda affiliate TTP militants carried out 368 cross border attacks inside Pakistan from Afghan soil.

Pakistani parliament, media and civil society has not taken up the issue of Afghan hostility seriously while Afghanistan has presented its case at international level and accused Pakistan for cross border attacks. The issue requires immediate attention of Pakistan's parliament, foreign office, military and intelligence apparatus.

Besides security, measures Pakistan will have to do serious efforts for impression management in Afghanistan's civil society, media and other walks of life. NATO's hostilities generally stem from frustration as it has failed in its Afghan campaign, however its dual face policy with Pakistan may backfire and cause hindrance for its exit strategy.

## Cross Border Hostilities on Western Border and Their Implications

Pakistan's western border had become a point of concern for Pakistan's national security since 9/11 for many correlated factors but recently a new factor has evolved to a level of worrisome and needs immediate attention from Pakistan's foreign office, military and intelligence apparatus. Pakistan has been protesting and expressing its serious concern on militant incursions from Afghanistan but its protest met with increased 'official' hostilities from Afghan National Army backed by NATO and U.S. The Conflict Monitoring Center has gathered information from its field representatives and other sources and came up with this shocking figure that Pakistan's western border has become most hostile one despite the prevailing doctrine of 'India being eternal enemy'. Mainly three forces had conducted cross border attacks into Pakistani area from Afghan side during 2012.

1. The Afghan National Army
2. NATO and U.S.
3. Anti-Pakistan militants

## The Afghan National Army

The Afghan National Army has adopted most aggressive posture towards Pakistan during the year. It not only conducted cross border attacks inside Pakistan but also violently treated Pakistani citizens on its soil. The ANA stepped up its rocket and mortar attacks from across the border into Pakistani area provoking Pakistani forces in many cases to retaliate. During the year, it conducted 300 rocket and mortar attacks on Pakistani soil. Month-wise break up of these attacks is as under;

Month	Rocket/Mortar attacks by ANA
January	9
February	9
March	12
April	17
May	34
June	32
July	46
August	28

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<b>September</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>December</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>

Afghan government has different story to tell. It not only accuses Pakistan for cross border attacks but two of its ministers –Defense minister and Interior minister- were sacked by Afghan parliament <sup>1</sup> over their inability to stop cross border attacks from Pakistan. It also summoned Pakistan's ambassador in foreign office to convey strong protest. Rocket attacks fired from Pakistani side <sup>2</sup>gained high media attention worldwide while, hostilities from Afghan side generally remained unnoticed by International as well as Pakistani media. Pakistan has not expressed as strong reaction as the Afghan government did. Unlike Afghan parliament, which took stern action against two of the government's ministers, Pakistani parliament or any of the provincial assemblies did not even discuss the issue, which has deep impact on country's national security.

It is not clear whether Pakistan has deliberately downplayed Afghan aggression or the Afghan government played a better media campaign at international level to portray Pakistan's image as aggressor. The author of this report contacted various current and former military officials for their viewpoint on the issue of cross border attacks from Afghan side and accusations by the Afghan government that Pakistan is responsible for the attacks on Afghanistan. The outcome of this discussion was a one-liner question; "what will be the benefit to attack inside Afghanistan?" One officer who looks after security along the border said, "A peaceful western border is need of the hour as cross border attacks from Afghanistan has complicated security situation in the area to manifolds. Yet people sitting on diplomatic front are not properly raising the issue with Afghan government." Abdullah Khan, counter terror expert and Director at the Conflict Monitoring Center said, "The Al-Qaeda and TTP are the ultimate beneficiaries of this tension between the security forces of the two countries.

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Until both sides stop blame game and focus on common enemy, the problem will persist and common citizen living both sides of the border will continue to suffer”.

Pakistan's point of view is that it only retaliates against rocket, mortar, and artillery shelling from across the border. Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, a professor of International Relations said, “Pakistan's point of view regarding cross border attack is not presented properly. This is for the first time I came to know about such figures (CMC's figures about cross border attacks from Afghanistan). It is taken for granted at international level that Pakistan being 'bigger' Army will be aggressor but I cannot understand what Pakistan will gain with such attacks.”

The cross border attacks from Afghanistan started in 2007 when Afghan National Army attacked a Pakistani military post<sup>3</sup> and killed eight soldiers. These attacks were stepped up since 2011 and the year 2012 witnessed an unprecedented level of cross border attacks by Afghan National Army.

### **Boots on ground**

The Conflict Monitoring Center also recorded at least 12 incidents where troops of Afghan National Army crossed into Pakistani territory and attacked Pakistani areas.

<u>Month</u>	<u>No. of physical incursions by ANA</u>
February	2
March	1
May	2
June	1
July	3
August	1
September	1
October	1
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>12</u></b>

### Hostilities by NATO and U.S.

NATO and U.S. forces were expected to show restraint after Pakistan's severe reaction over Salala incident. Pakistan's foreign minister had also claimed at first anniversary of Salala incident that relations between Pakistan and U.S. have fully normalized<sup>4</sup> but ground situation tells quite a different story. NATO and U.S. warplanes violated Pakistani airspace for 52 times during 2012 and in some cases bombed inside Pakistani territory, though not against military targets like Salala check post. A month-wise breakup of these airspace violations are in the table below.

Month	No. of Airspace violations by NATO
January	6
February	3
March	8
April	4
May	9
June	6
July	1
August	3
September	5
October	6
November	1
December	0
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>52</u></b>

At strategic level, United States and its allies are forced by the situation in Afghanistan to accept Pakistan's broader role in their exit strategy<sup>5</sup> but at tactical level, the attitude is irritating for Pakistani forces deployed at Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan has been avoiding a direct confrontation with NATO forces for the larger

interests of the national security but Abbottabad Operation has created a trust deficit, which may not be fully overcome forever. Salala attack has deepened the gulf of mistrust even further. Perception in Pakistan's national security circles is that U.S. airspace violations stem from frustration<sup>6</sup> as the campaign in Afghanistan has failed to achieve its basic objectives.

The hostile violations of Pakistani airspace by NATO aircrafts and helicopters reinforces the perception in Pakistani military and security personnel stationed alongside Pak-Afghan border that TTP and Al-Qaeda's attacks inside Pakistan are supported and facilitated by NATO and other forces active across the border. Despite this perception, the NATO aircrafts avoided Pakistan's military installations and followed suspected militants who are believed to be roaming freely across both sides of the border. U.S. has officially accused Pakistan for supporting Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network<sup>7</sup> while Pakistan has stopped short of reciprocal blame when its defense secretary accused U.S. for working against Pakistan's national interests<sup>8</sup>.

### **Anti-Pakistan militants**

The third major force, which conducted cross border attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan, was militants of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). During the year 2012, the Conflict Monitoring Center noted that anti-Pakistan militants have established safe havens inside Afghan territory without any check from Afghan National Army or NATO forces. This new development has worsened security situation in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and FATA. Anti-Pakistan militants plan and organize their activities in Afghanistan and then cross over into Pakistani territory, achieve their targets and flee back. During the year 2012, Al-Qaeda affiliated TTP militants attacked almost every day from across the border into Pakistan. Conflict Monitoring Center's data shows 368 attacks took place in 365 days of the year. The table below shows a month-wise break-up of these attacks.

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<u>Month</u>	<u>Cross border attacks by TTP and Al-Qaeda</u>
January	11
February	10
March	15
April	46
May	58
June	62
July	41
August	30
September	18
October	40
November	25
December	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>

The year 2012 witnessed unprecedented flow of weapons, money, and militants from Afghanistan into Pakistan. After successful military operations in Swat and South Waziristan in 2009, militant activities were gradually declining in numbers as well as quality of targets<sup>9</sup>. Taliban's leadership had lost its grip over the group and local commanders were emerging stronger than the central command and were deciding at their own. The year 2012 was a different story. Support provided by the forces active across the border started to translate into escalation of violence in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunehwa. Militants are once again trying to reemerge in Swat. Swati Taliban have carried out some devastating cross border attacks in Chitral, Upper and Lower Dir districts of Khyber Pakhtunehwa and Bajour Agency of FATA. Border areas of at least five eastern Afghan provinces i.e. Kuner, Nangarhar, Gardaiz, Pakita and Paktika have become launching pads for cross border attacks into Pakistan.

Pakistan has always suffered from foreign interventions in Afghanistan. It is the only convenient transit route to landlocked neighboring country. Pakistan sided with

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United States in its war against Al-Qaeda and Taliban. It has been paying having human and economic losses as the war has engulfed its own territory. Despite all these efforts and sacrifices, Pakistan is not considered a trusted partner in the war. This trust deficit may complicate the withdrawal plan in 2014-15.

Pakistan needs a stable, peaceful, as well as friendly Afghanistan. To achieve this goal Pakistan must try to overcome trust deficit with Afghan government, media, and civil society. It is ironic that current Afghan Army chief spent years in exile in Pakistan but still his force is a hostile one towards his country of refuge. Recent violence against Pakistani citizens is another manifestation of strong anti-Pakistan sentiments in Afghan security forces. It seems Pakistan has not done much for its image building inside Afghanistan. Security measures to thwart anti-state militant attacks or cross border attacks by Afghan National Army are definitely of vital importance but Pakistan will have to do a lot of work on diplomatic, political, as well as public diplomacy fronts to change public perceptions across the country.

United States' dual face strategy to deal with Pakistan may cause hindrance for its own interests as Pakistan has seriously trying to facilitate a workable solution of the Afghan issue and 'honorable' exit of U.S. and its allies. Unprovoked airspace violation, harboring, and supporting of anti-Pakistan militants will damage the relations between the two states and ultimately Al-Qaeda and TTP will benefit from the situation. This outcome may not be acceptable for any of the parties involved in the conflict.

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<sup>2</sup> "Pak ambassador summoned in Afghanistan", *The News International*, July 22, 2012  
<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-60020-Pak-ambassador-summoned-in-Afghanistan>

<sup>3</sup> **Wikipedia**  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan%E2%80%93Pakistan\\_s skirmishes#cite\\_ref-13](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan%E2%80%93Pakistan_s skirmishes#cite_ref-13)

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[http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?section=todaysfeatures&xfile=/data/todaysfeatures/2012/November/todaysfeatures\\_November47.xml](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?section=todaysfeatures&xfile=/data/todaysfeatures/2012/November/todaysfeatures_November47.xml)

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<http://www.newspakistan.pk/2012/12/04/endgame-pakistan-u-s-hold-talks-post-2014-transition-afghanistan/>

<sup>6</sup> "US frustrated with Pak's dubious role in Afghanistan: Clinton", *The Indian Express*, October 12, 2012

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<sup>7</sup> "US military chief Mike Mullen accuses Pakistan of backing terror group", *The Guardian*, September 22, 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/22/pakistan-david-petraeus>

<sup>8</sup> Mirza Hasan "Have complete information of CIA agents in Pakistan: Asif Yasin" *The News Tribe* December 28, 2012

<http://www.thenewstribes.com/2012/12/28/have-complete-information-of-cia-agents-in-pakistan-asif-yasin/>

<sup>9</sup> Abdullah Khan "Significant Decline in Suicide Attacks in Pakistan: Annual Report" *The Conflict Monitoring Center*, January 1, 2012 <http://cmcpk.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/annual-report-suicide-english-reviewed.pdf>