



## **SPECIAL ADVISORY**

### **Threat to Schools in Pakistan**

**December 22, 2014**

#### **SUMMARY**

On December 16, 2014 the Army Public School and Degree College (the “Army School and College”) in Peshawar, Pakistan, was [attacked by group of 7 Pakistan Taliban terrorists](#). Using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and automatic weapons, the attackers killed at least 145 people before being killed by responding forces. At least 132 of those killed were children (most between 12 and 16 years old). The Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility for this attack, citing the fact that many students were children of military personnel and were studying in preparation for a military career.

**CCI has received very reliable information that the Pakistan Taliban plans additional, similar attacks on schools in the country. We have high confidence that this information specifically suggests targeting of American and Christian schools.** The particular information upon which this Advisory is based was directed at colleges; however, the Taliban attack on the Army School and College clearly demonstrated targeting of primary school children. The 2002 Taliban attack on Murree Christian School is further evidence of Taliban targeting of and willingness to kill western missionary children.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

As mentioned above, CCI assesses this information as very reliable. We are aware of the sources (which cannot be disclosed) and that knowledge supports this assessment of reliability.

The key elements in evaluating or assessing any threat are the adversary’s intent and capability. In this case, the adversary has demonstrated intent through actions (including, but not limited to, the attacks on Murree Christian School and

on the Army School and College) and words (statements of justification to the media). The Taliban assassination attempt of Malala Yousafzai in 2012 is another demonstration of an absolute willingness to target children. The adversary has demonstrated capability through accomplishment of successful attacks.

The adversary, the Pakistan Taliban, has also demonstrated the capacity to adjust tactics and to escalate its actions to overcome security measures. The Murree Christian School attack was not complex (less than 6 attackers armed with personal weapons and several grenades). It was disrupted in large part by traditional security measures in place at the school (even though there were national staff fatalities, no students or expatriate staff were killed). The attack on the Army School and College, however, was decidedly different. It was a complex attack that involved the use of diversions, IEDs, and at least 7 personnel. The attackers were able to hold the school for some 5 to 6 hours (and were equipped and apparently prepared to hold the school for a considerably longer time).

The Army School and College attack mirrors recent Afghan Taliban attacks on guesthouses in Afghanistan: Use of multiple weapons, breaching perimeters and doors with IEDs and coordinated interior attacks with both IEDs and personal weapons.

CCI is aware that the Pakistan government is responding to this threat information in a variety of ways. These include consultation, briefings, and in some cases posting of military personnel at facilities for protection. The government has also resumed public capital punishment as a means of 'sending a message' to the Taliban. Although the sharing of information and consultation by the government to schools is welcome and should be encouraged, the physical security measures such as posting of military personnel are likely to offer little if any deterrent and little actual protection to the affected school. Likewise, public executions will most likely only inflame and inspire the Taliban.

**It is CCI's assessment that there is a credible and imminent threat by the Taliban against American, "western" and Christian schools in Pakistan.**

We do not see this threat as limited to certain areas or locations. There is credible information to suggest that the more "American" and "Christian" a school is perceived to be, the more likely that school may be to being targeted by the Taliban.

A Taliban attack against a school is likely to be complex: It may begin with a diversion (designed to draw security forces away from the point of attack and/or into a trap). It is likely to be followed with an explosive breach of any perimeter walls or gates (this breach may be accomplished by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device<sup>1</sup>, or "car bomb"). Doors, if secure, will likely be breached with

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<sup>1</sup> VBIED

additional IEDs. Attackers will enter, firing automatic weapons at all persons, regardless of age, they encounter. IEDs may be used to facilitate deeper access into the facility and to inflict mass casualties. IEDs may also be deployed to delay or defeat responding security personnel.

## **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

“Recommendations” are not presented, as there is a potential liability issue if recipients receive recommendations and do not or cannot follow them. Options for consideration provide CCI’s best judgments and are offered to recipients to be considered with other information in the local context.

1. Consideration should be given by every school to reach out to government officials to seek additional information on this threat and specific threat information, if any, concerning their school. CCI believes that the government of Pakistan is, at this time, highly motivated to work with schools to prevent another high-casualty event. Appropriate Embassy security offices should also be contacted.
2. Consideration should be given to a professional, exhaustive review of school physical security with special attention to perimeters, gates and doors. Such a review should focus on the efficacy of these measures against the kind of complex attack described herein.
3. Consideration should be given to a professional review of existing guard and protective forces at every school. CCI assesses the use of unarmed guards as having little to no effectiveness against this threat. Armed guards can be a part of a multi-layered physical security system at a school. However, to be effective an armed guard force must be of sufficient size, be adequately armed, be appropriately trained and be trusted with the key role they fulfill.
4. Consideration should be given to a professional review of all other security systems and procedures (in addition to the perimeter and guard reviews cited above).
5. Consideration should be given to having redundant communications resources at multiple locations throughout the school, with specific and clear directions on who to call first for assistance in the event of an attack. The call procedure and interaction with the first responding forces should be planned and rehearsed with all parties.
6. Consideration should be given to a thorough review of school’s emergency plans for this type of attack. All staff needs to understand intimately their actions and responsibilities in the event of an attack. Plans should address

options for immediate evacuation of as many students as possible and moving students remaining on campus to the most secure locations possible.

7. Consideration should be given to comprehensive in-service training for all staff in threat recognition, first reactions to an attack, and duties and responsibilities pursuant to the school's emergency plans.
8. If a school in Pakistan, especially a western, American and/or missionary school is unable to determine that all of these areas meet standards sufficient to prevent, deter or defeat a Taliban attack; consideration should be given to a strategic suspension of activities until a thorough security review and resulting actions can be completed.

*CCI stands ready to support Christian agencies in the response to this increased threat, to conduct site-specific assessments, to provide training and to assist agencies in the implementation of these recommendations and additional actions; and to discuss specific issues and situations.*

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