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TTP's EXPANDING FOOTPRINT IN BALOCHISTAN

A CHANGING SECURITY LANDSCAPE

Analysis by
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1. Introduction

Balochistan's security landscape is undergoing a significant transformation. For years, the province has primarily been associated with the insurgency led by Baloch separatist organisations, particularly the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF). Developments during 2025 and, more noticeably, 2026, suggest that the outlawed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is also attempting to broaden its geographical and operational footprint in the province.

It would be premature to conclude that the TTP has established the kind of organisational presence it maintains in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Nevertheless, when militant claims, security operations and local reports are examined collectively, there are indications that TTP-linked activity may no longer be confined to Balochistan's predominantly Pashtun northern districts.

2. From the Northern Belt to a Wider Presence

Historically, the TTP's presence in Balochistan has been associated with Quetta, Zhob, Pishin, Qila Saifullah and other Pashtun-majority areas in the north. The European Union Agency for Asylum noted that while the TTP's activity remained concentrated largely in northern Balochistan, operations or claims linked to the group were also reported during 2025 in areas including Makran, Pishin, Qila Saifullah and Kalat.

In 2026, armed activity increased across districts such as Zhob, Harnai, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Qila Saifullah and Ziarat, indicating a widening of the geographical space in which the TTP is attempting to operate.

3. Panjpai: A Significant Development

Fighting around Panjpai and Nohsar near Quetta provided one of the more significant examples of the evolving security environment.

On May 24, prolonged clashes were reported between security forces and armed militants in the area. According to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), nine militants were killed, while four CTD personnel were killed and six others injured.

Substantially higher casualty figures for security forces were subsequently circulated by local sources. Those figures could not be independently verified. The discrepancy highlights the need to treat casualty figures as attributed claims unless independently corroborated.

4. Zarghun Ghar and the Northern Security Belt

Zarghun Ghar, near Quetta, has also emerged as an important area in the changing security picture.

In May, a Balochistan government official said operations underway since May 13 in the Mangla/Zarghun Ghar area had resulted in the deaths of more than 35 militants and the destruction of several hideouts linked to the TTP and other armed elements.

The full casualty figure could not be independently verifed. Nevertheless, the reported scale of the operations indicates that authorities regard the area as a significant militant zone.

Key Areas of TTP Activity and Claims in Balochistan



5. Kharan, Panjgur and Mastung: A More Important Question

The key question is whether the TTP's expansion remains confined to northern Balochistan or is extending farther south and west into predominantly Baloch areas.

During 2026, Kharan, Panjgur and Mastung repeatedly featured in reports of militant activity and counterterrorism operations. Many attacks in these districts have been claimed by the BLA, BLF or other Baloch armed organisations, while others remain unattributed.

The broader increase in violence in these districts cannot be assigned to the TTP. However, reports of TTP-linked individuals, claims and security operations beyond the group's traditional areas warrant attention. If a sustained pattern of TTP-specific incidents emerges across this belt, it would represent a significant geographical development.

6. Shamsi Airbase Claim

In September 2026, the TTP claimed that it had targeted Shamsi Airbase in Washuk district with a BM missile. Claims regarding casualties or material damage were not independently verified.

The significance lies in the location. Shamsi is situated well beyond the TTP's better-established areas of activity in northern Balochistan. Considered alongside reports from Mastung, Panjgur and other areas farther south, the claim raises questions about a possible southward expansion of the TTP's operational geography. A single incident cannot establish a permanent presence, but it is an important indicator of a widening operational reach.

7. Zhob, Abductions and Tribal Mediation

TTP-linked incidents in and around Zhob have included cases in which individuals were reportedly detained before being released following intervention or guarantees from tribal elders. Similar patterns have appeared elsewhere in Balochistan. In September, Kharan Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmed Soomro was abducted while travelling from Quetta towards Kharan. He was released nearly two weeks later following negotiations in which tribal elders reportedly played an important role.

Such incidents raise a broader governance question: what happens to perceptions of state authority when tribal intermediaries become an important mechanism for recovering government officials or civilians from armed groups? This should not automatically be interpreted as a collapse of state authority. Tribal mediation has long been part of conflict resolution in the region, but its repeated use in serious security incidents remains analytically significant.

8. TTP and Baloch Armed Groups: Cooperation or Geographic Overlap?

The TTP, BLA, BLF and other Baloch armed organisations do not share identical ideologies, political objectives or social constituencies. The TTP operates within a jihadist framework, while the BLA and BLF pursue separatist or nationalist goals. Yet their operational geographies are increasingly intersecting. Some analysts have raised the possibility of limited tactical cooperation, local accommodation or deconfliction between different armed groups. At present, there is no clear public evidence of a formal alliance or shared command structure between the TTP and major Baloch separatist organisations. The more defensible assessment is that different insurgencies are operating within overlapping geographical spaces while retaining their distinct objectives and structures.

9. Conclusion: A Multipolar Insurgency Environment

Balochistan's security challenge is increasingly defined by the simultaneous presence of multiple armed actors rather than a single insurgency. The TTP's activity appears to be widening geographically, with questions over a possible southward expansion. There is, however, no clear evidence of a formal alliance between the TTP and major Baloch separatist groups. The key question is whether the TTP can transform its expanding operational reach into a sustained and broader organisational footprint in Balochistan.