

SECURITY REPORT



Terror Attacks in Brussels and Lahore: Wakeup Call for India?

The month of March ended with the world living on tenterhooks and fear of the next impending terror attack looming large in Europe. On March 22, 2016, Brussels Airport and a metro station was rocked by a series of terror attacks in quick succession. It led to the death of more than 37 people and more than 300 injured with some of them critically. The terror attack in Brussels happened in a little over four months after a deadly terror attack had hit Paris. The Brussels terror attack happened in spite of the fact that law enforcement agencies of Belgium were anticipating such an attack but failed to neutralize the threat before it struck.

The Brussels terror attack brings to the fore some key issues related to the ability of law enforcement agencies of European countries to deal with such threats and the apparent lack of coordination among the European states.

Also related to this is the issue of too liberal policies and primacy of civil liberty at the cost of national security. Once serene and peaceful, Europe is now on the brink of disaster. Incessant influx of illegal immigrants from Middle East and North Africa and unrestricted movement of men and material within the EU countries have made the situation more complex and challenging.

With global economy already reeling under a series of economic troubles, threats of terror and insecurity would only add to the economic woes. Further, the Brussels terror attack did expose the lapses and loopholes in the existing airport security architecture including that of India. The terror attacks also vindicated the ability of ISIS to strike deep inside Europe and should be an eye opener for many countries like India.

Meanwhile Tehreek e Taliban orchestrated a major terror attack in Lahore on 27th March , 2016 at Gulshan e Iqbal Park which is frequented on weekends by civilians. Of the 75 people who died and the 340 injured, majority were women and children. Tehreek e Taliban stated that they deliberately executed the attack on Easter Sunday to target the Christian minorities.

Threat to soft civilian areas a major cause of concern worldwide

The attack in a park once again brought out the issue of vulnerability of civilian places being chosen as soft targets by terror organizations. From the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya, to the Garissa University terror attack in Kenya, from the Peshawar school attack in Pakistan to the Paris terror attack in the Bataclan theatre as well as the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai Taj and Oberoi hotels, each of these terror attacks have shown the manner in which terror organizations have been targeting civilian places even as military and governmental establishments become more impregnable. This ideally should be a

wakeup call for countries like India which have densely populated cities. There is a strong need to reform India's private sector security architecture and make sure that adequate measures are taken to create the first line of defence in areas and places frequented by civilians.

More CRPF casualties in Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh- Lack of National Policy to be blamed?

The last week of March also witnessed a deadly IED ambush by the Maoists on the CRPF jawans in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh which resulted in the death of seven CRPF personnel. Repeated ambushes and casualties of CRPF personnel have become routine over the last one decade and there is perhaps a strong and a pertinent need for a National Policy on dealing with Maoists. In the absence of a National Policy, often the CRPF jawans have been left in the lurch to fight their own daily battle against an invisible and ruthless adversary which has better understanding of the terrain and topography. Zero tolerance towards terrorism would remain incomplete the Maoists are not controlled and defeated.

Finally, Indian Army to have some Bulletproof Jackets- but is it enough?

On the positive side, Indian Army is finally expected to start receiving bullet proof jackets after waiting for more than a decade. After repeated tender cancellation, over the last half a decade, the Defence Minister Manohar Parikar finally took the bold step for acquisition of 50,000 bulletproof jackets through the interim emergency acquisition route. The Indian Army has signed a contract with Tata Advanced Material for the supply of 50,000 bulletproof vests whose supply would be completed by January 2017. The Army was supposed to have 1.86 lakh bulletproof vests supplied by 2012 followed by 1.67 lakh additional vests by 2017. However the neither is anywhere near fructification with the latest tender being cancelled in 2015. The acquisition of 50,000 bulletproof vests through the emergency route is at best a stop gap arrangement but the fundamental issue of self defeating

procurement policies that prevent India's armed forces from procuring critical equipment in time, remain unaddressed. It is not just the armed forces but the central police forces as well who suffer from severe shortage of bulletproof vests even as India continues to have some of the world's best private manufacturer of bulletproof vests and helmets who supply to more than 230 forces in 100 countries.

ITBP to have a new Weapons Training Center and to Induct Woman Officers in Combat roles

Media reports state that ITBP would have its latest modern weapons training centre in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh. The first of its kind centre for ITBP would be set up over an area spread across 1800 acres at an estimated cost of Rs 2100 crore. Meanwhile ITBP has decided to hire counselors for dealing with the issue of stress related disorders and suicides. There is a strong potential for the private sector to pitch in and help central police forces to deal with issues of stress. Further, MHA has now allowed the direct recruit of female officers in combat role in ITBP.

Andaman & Nicobar Island to have a stronger Indian Coast Guard presence

In a bid to strengthen India's maritime zones in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Indian Coast Guard recently decided to relocate a Fast Patrol Vessel along with six interceptor boats to a new Coast Guard station created in Andaman. Over the last few years India has been gradually strengthening its military presence in the islands which is of immense strategic importance to India. Meanwhile Goa Shipyard has handed over the second Sankalp class offshore patrol vessel to Indian Coast Guard. Goa Shipyard has a contract for manufacturing six 2400 ton offshore patrol vessel for Indian Coast Guard.

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