

# Quetta, Balochistan : LeJ and Islamic State claim responsibility for raid in Pakistan police academy

mardi 25 octobre 2016, par [BALOCH Kiyya](#), [BOONE Jon](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 25 octobre 2016).

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## Quetta attack

### **Pakistan reels as more than 50 die in assault on police academy**

***Terrorists explode suicide vests after storming into Balochistan police college firing machine guns and throwing hand grenades, say cadets and authorities.***

At least 59 people have died and more than 110 were injured after a team of heavily armed suicide attackers stormed a police training academy in the Pakistani city of Quetta.

The government said three gunmen attacked the Balochistan police college on the outskirts of the capital of Balochistan province at about 11.20pm local time on Monday, killing two guards on the front gate and then making straight for the hostel where 700 cadets were sleeping.

Peer Jan Naeem, 23, said he and his fellow cadets were “left at the mercy of Allah”.

“They were carrying Kalashnikovs and firing blindly and throwing hand grenades,” he said. “No one was there to help us so we fell to the ground and hid beneath our beds.” One of the militants shouted “Allahu Akbar” (God is great) before detonating his suicide vest, he said.

Officials said most of the deaths were caused by two suicide blasts, with the third attacker shot dead before he could blow himself up. Many of the cadets sustained injuries after jumping out of windows to escape.

The attack echoed the devastating December 2014 massacre at the army public school in Peshawar, which killed more than 130 schoolboys, and the January 2016 assault on the Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, in which more than 20 were killed.

The Balochistan police college is located far from the city centre on Saryab Road, complicating the work of rescue workers who had to ferry the injured to the Quetta civil hospital about eight miles (14km) away.

Speaking during the attack, Zarak Khan, a rescue worker for the Edhi foundation, said rescuers were at first unable to enter the compound as security forces tried to fight their way in.

Personnel from the paramilitary frontier constabulary (FC), the army and police rushed to the scene while military helicopters circled overhead. Officials said security personnel struggled to distinguish between attackers and friendly forces after electricity was cut, plunging the area into darkness.

The final assault to clear the compound was carried out by commandos from Pakistan's elite special services group and the site was finally fully secured four hours after the attack began.

Islamic State released a statement on its Amaq news agency claiming responsibility. The statement included a picture of three men brandishing assault rifles and wearing what appeared to be bomb vests.

Although attacks have been carried out in Pakistan in the name of Isis in the past, it is rare for its central organisation to comment so soon after an incident.

Earlier in the morning a hitherto unknown organisation calling itself Tehreek-e-Taliban Karachi had made its own claim of responsibility. In an email to media organisations it said the assault was to avenge the alleged killing of its men in police custody, and threatened more attacks.

It said the group was led by Mullah Dawood Mansoor Hafisullah, a close associate of Baitullah Mehsud, a leading member and founder of the Pakistani Taliban, who was killed in a US drone strike in 2009.

It is not unusual for conflicting claims of responsibility to emerge after such attacks.

Security officials had also pointed blame towards Afghanistan-based groups.

FC commander Maj Gen Sher Afgan said authorities had been listening in to the militants' conversations with their handlers in Afghanistan and had established they belonged to the "al-Alimi" faction of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a brutal sectarian group that usually focuses on targeting Pakistan's Shia minority.

Balochistan hosts a wide variety of militant groups, including Baloch secessionists and the leadership of the Afghan Taliban.

Saryab Road, which is home to slums and various different ethnic communities, has long been a focus for attacks on security forces in Quetta. There is a heavy security presence in the area, with multiple police and frontier constabulary check posts.

The training college itself has been attacked twice before - once in 2006 and again in 2008.

The Peshawar atrocity of December 2014 at the army public school was the spur for a far-reaching crackdown on militant groups. Although overall violence has fallen, such groups have continued to launch attacks.

Balochistan has been the focus of counter-terrorism efforts as it has been earmarked for a major role in an ambitious \$46bn programme of Chinese infrastructure projects over the coming years.

After the 2014 Peshawar attack, all schools and colleges in the country were ordered to improve security and build walls to protect their students.

But some reports on Tuesday suggested at least one of the attackers in Quetta may have gained access to the police college by climbing over a back wall.

In August, 73 people were killed in the city when a bomber detonated himself amid a crowd of lawyers who had gathered outside the Quetta civil hospital following the killing earlier in the day of a prominent lawyer.

Additional security procedures were in evidence at hospitals on Tuesday to prevent a similar secondary strike.

### **Jon Boone and Kiyya Baloch**

\* The Guardian. Tuesday 25 October 2016 09.53 BST Last modified on Tuesday 25 October 2016 15.03 BST :

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/25/quetta-attack-pakistan-reels-as-more-than-50-die-in-assault-on-police-academy>

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## **Quetta attack : LeJ kills 60 in Pakistan police academy**

**Outlawed group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claims responsibility for raid on facility in Quetta where 200 cadets were stationed.**

At least 60 people have been killed in an attack on a police training centre in the city of Quetta in Balochistan province, Pakistani officials say.

The announcement on Tuesday came at the end of a military counter-operation.

About 200 trainees were stationed at the facility when the attack occurred late on Monday, officials said, and some were taken hostage during the attack, which lasted five hours.

Most of the dead were police cadets.

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, home minister of Balochistan, said early on Tuesday that five to six armed men attacked a dormitory inside the training facility while cadets rested and slept.

More than a hundred people were injured, he said. The death toll could rise as many cadets were seriously injured.

The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) claimed responsibility for the attack. The group, which has been outlawed by the government, has been involved in past attacks on security forces.

« Over the past few years LeJ has been targeted by the military, especially in Punjab province where its leadership was eliminated. And this attack surprised many that it still survives in some form, » writer and columnist Raza Rumi said.

An emergency was declared in all government hospitals of the provincial capital of Balochistan, with the injured shifted to the Civil Hospital Quetta and the Bolan Medical Complex.

### **Previous attacks**

Witnesses reported hearing at least three explosions leading up to the raid. Sources told Al Jazeera

that it took at least 30 minutes before Pakistani authorities responded to the assault.

Al Jazeera's correspondent Kamal Hyder said the police training centre had come under attack in the past, with rockets fired towards it in 2006 and 2008.

Monday's assault came just hours after armed men shot and killed two customs officers and wounded a third near the town of Surab, about 145km south of Quetta.

The customs officers were targeted by gunmen riding on a motorcycle, said Zainullah Baloch, a spokesman for the local police. Baloch said two officers died on the spot and the injured one was taken to the hospital in critical condition.

Earlier on Monday, two assailants on a motorcycle killed a police intelligence officer in the country's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to Khalid Khan, a local police officer.

The Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility for that attack. The group's spokesman, Muhammad Khurasani, said in a statement that the shooters returned to their hideout after the attack.

Pakistan has carried out military operations against armed groups in tribal areas near Afghanistan and in cities across Pakistan, but the fighters are still capable of staging regular attacks.

**Source : Al Jazeera News And Agencies**

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<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/hurt-gunmen-storm-police-centre-quetta-161024192252388.html>

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