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Al Jazeera

Explosions rock northwest Pakistan

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A series of explosions across Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) have killed more than 30 people and wounded 100 others, police have said.

A bombing at a political rally in the town of Timargarah in Lower Dir district on Monday was quickly followed by at least three explosions near the US consulate in Peshawar, the main city of North West Frontier Province.

"We can confirm there has been an attack at the US consulate Peshawar facilities," Ariel Howard, the spokeswoman for the US embassy in Islamabad, said.

Pakistani television said three people died in the attack.

Sattar Khan, a police official, said those killed included a soldier, a private security guard and a civilian.

There have been no reported US casualties from the attack.

Sensitive locations

The location of the Peshawar explosions was also close to a number of sensitive military installations and police stations, witnesses and a security official said.

"It is a sensitive area. Most of the gun fire was probably from the security forces in the area," Kamal Hyder, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Islamabad, said.

"The three powerful blasts sent off more secondary explosions. The military is sealing off the area."

"I heard three big explosions. We are investigating what the target was. If there were three explosions, ultimately there will be casualties," a military official told the AFP news agency on condition of anonymity.

Pakistani television showed security forces firing their weapons and clouds of smoke rising over the garrison area of the city, close the Peshawar headquarters of Pakistan's intelligence agency, which was bombed last November.

While there have been no claims of responsibility for either attack, Zafar Jaspal, a security analyst in Islamabad, told Al Jazeera that the Pakistani Taliban were the likely perpetrators of the Peshawar attacks.

"The American consulate is one of the most well guarded places in Peshawar. It [the attack] was well planned and they very confidently hit their target," he said.

"Tehrik-e-Taliban and their associates were responsible. The government has been intervening in places like South Waziristan, but it's an ongoing war. They have routed them [the Taliban] from their bases, but they are spreading into settled areas."

Bashir Ahmed Bilour, a government minister, said "They came in two vehicles. The militants were well-equipped. It was a well organised attack.

"The militants were trying to enter the American consulate, but they did not succeed," he said.

Rally targeted

Zahid Khan, a spokesman for the Awami National Party, said his party was celebrating the recent decision to change the name of North West Frontier Province when a suspected suicide bomber struck in Timargarah

The NWFP, the name of which dates back to British colonial rule, will now officially be known as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in a nod to its Pashtun-majority population.

"We have received 38 dead bodies," Doctor Wakeel Ahmed, the head of the main hospital in Timargarah, told AFP.

"There are more than 100 injured. Most of them are in a serious condition. I'm still sending out my ambulance."

Residents in Timargarah reportedly said the bomb exploded close to the stage at the political gathering and police later confirmed it was a suicide attack.

"The man came on foot and detonated himself," Mumtaz Zareen, the Timargarah police chief, said.

Hyder said there have been a series of attacks against the party, which is in government in the province.

"This is an ongoing thing, although this is a clear warning. Recently the Taliban said there would be more attacks there. So some kind of escalation was expected," he said.

More than 3,150 people have been killed in bomb attacks over the last three years, with much of the violence concentrated in the northwest of the country.