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The Frontier Post

Baitullah Mehsud

Air Marshal ® Ayaz Ahmed Khan
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On Friday, August 7, 2009, Associated Press reported from Dera Ismail Khan that Baitullah Mehsud, Chief of the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan, who had lead a violent campaign of suicide bombings, kidnappings, beheadings and assassinations in Pakistan had been killed in a US missile attack. Kafayatullah, a Senior Taliban commander and aide to Mehsud, telephoned Associated Press and said, "I confirm that Baitullah Mehsud and his wife died in the American missile strike in South Waziristan". Kafayatullah refused to give any further details. Earlier Foreign Minister Shah Ahmed Qureshi told reporters in Islamabad that intelligence reports showed that Baitullah Mehsud had been killed in Wednesday's drone strike on his father-in-laws house at Lada village in South Waziristan. He said that authorities will travel to the bombed site to confirm the report. Confirmation of his death is still awaited, yet officials claim 90 to 95% probability that he was killed and buried the same evening in a nearby village. CIA had ordered the drone missile attack after a drone kept hovering in the vicinity for 48 hours, and strong suspicion of Baitullah Mehsud's presence was confirmed. US and Pakistani authorities investigating reports of Baitullah Mehsud's death, have yet to provide fool proof confirmation of his demise. There is no doubt that Baitullah Mehsud's death would represent a significant victory in Pakistan's bid to eliminate Taliban insurgency and al-Qaeda sponsored terrorism. Baitullah Mehsud was a dreaded terrorist warlord and militant commander much like the Jordanian mass murderer Zarqawi in Iraq. Well funded and with over 20,000 trained well equipped and motivated militant fighters, his motive was to destabilize Pakistani polity and government. He had claimed to remove the NAP led government in Peshawar in five days. He was responsible for over 100 suicide bombings, and scores of ambushes and deadly attacks on mosques and market places across Pakistan. Bombing worshippers to death in mosques during Friday prayers, kidnapping for ransom and beheading his opponents, especially soldiers and policemen reflected his demonic psyche and ruthless mentality. Thousands of Pakistani men, women and children have died as a result of the deadly bombings and attacks ordered by him. He

was responsible for several assassinations. He is suspected of being the mastermind of the December 2007 assassination of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, though he denied it. But he owned bombing of the huge Benazir welcome rally in Karachi on 18th October, 2008, in which 150 PPP workers were killed and over 500 injured. He accepted responsibility for all the suicide bombings in Islamabad, including the September 2008 bombing of Marriott Hotel and on the FC camp on Margalla Road. He accepted responsibility of all the suicide bombings in Lahore, including attacks on Police Training Centre, Manawan, Rescue-15, FIA HQ's and on the Sri Lankan cricket team. He accepted responsibility for all the suicide bombings in Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Kamra, Peshawar, D.I Khan, Bannu, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Hangu, Charsadda, Sawabi and the two attempts to kill Aftab Sherpao and Asfandiyar Wali Khan. He ordered kidnappings, beheadings and killings all over Pakistan, including FATA and NWFP. His hands were red with the blood of Pakistan citizens. He was a much feared and dreaded Taliban leader, who had ambushed sizeable Pakistan Army contingents, killed many Army and FC soldiers and Pakistan Air Force personnel. Pakistan Army defeated and subdued the Swat Taliban within a short period of time, but crushing Taliban militancy in Waziristan had posed a much bigger challenge, as long as Baitullah Mehsud was alive. There is no doubt that Mehsud's death would be a major victory, for the efforts to defeat the Taliban in South Asia. Mehsud brought different militant groups under one banner of extremism and terrorism. After Mullah Omar he was acknowledged as a leader of all Taliban factions. The loss of his leadership skills and experience would impact adversely on the morale, motivation and ability of Pakistani Taliban to destabilize the federal or provincial governments by terrorist bombings and attacks. In the long run it could mean the end of Taliban terrorism in Pakistan. In any case it will be a major set back for the terrorists and extremists. His death in a drone bombing proves that Taliban's most senior leaders can be taken off the battle field with great precision. Over 300 Hellfire Missiles fired by Predator drones have caused hundreds of casualties, killing many prominent terrorists, including Baitullah Mehsud. Regretfully hundreds of innocent civilian men, women and children have also perished in the Drone bombings. It is important that Washington compensates the near and dear ones of the people who have been needlessly killed. Three hundred precision missile bombing attacks by Pakistan Air Force broke the back of Taliban terrorism in Swat with insignificant collateral damage. One hundred precision missile bombings in Waziristan, and bombings by US drones have resulted in the death of several Taliban commanders, including Baitullah Mehsud. In Waziristan the Taliban have not been defeated, but are likely to suffer increased casualties from air attacks by Pakistan Air Force, and from US drone attacks. Collateral damage here should be fully assessed and the affected people be compensated by the governments of Pakistan and the United States. Major General Athar Abbas DG ISPR said that, "unconfirmed sources claim that Baitullah Mehsud was in his father-in-law's house and among the dead. But to confirm, intelligence needs to produce someone who witnessed what had happened. General Abbas added that if Mehsud's death was confirmed, it would make a huge difference in Pakistan's fight against Taliban. His death would be a major blow to the morale and unity of the Taliban. Baitullah Mehsud was a top priority to be eliminated for the Pakistani and American establishments. Washington had put dollar five million bounty on Mehsud. Islamabad had offered dollars six lac for the Taliban leaders death and capture. He was an elusive fighter and managed to stay out of the harm's way. But he killed men, women and children ruthlessly and without mercy, and did not and cannot escape Allah's punishment.

