

Is NATO readying to strike northwest Pakistan?

After deploying troops across the Kurram Agency along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has sent soldiers to the North Waziristan Agency (NWA), raising fears of a strike into the tribal areas in Pakistan's northwest.

Quoting official and tribal sources in NWA, The News said Wednesday that NATO troops started arriving near the border areas Monday night.

'Some of them had been brought in choppers and others by armoured personnel carriers. The troops had also shifted heavy arms and ammunition, including tanks, heavy machine guns and artillery to the border,' Haji Yaqub, a resident of the border town of Ghulam Khan, said.

The NATO troops have been deployed near the border towns of Ghulam Khan, Saidgai, Shawal and Mir Safar.

'They started setting up bunkers very close to the border while gunship helicopters are continuously hovering over the border,' said Roohullah, a resident of the border town of Saidgai.

He said he had never before seen such a large deployment of foreign troops near the border.

'For us, it's unusual as they are on the zero point,' Roohullah said, adding that the foreign troops had not crossed the border thus far.

The News quoted its sources as saying NATO troops had dug trenches at Mughalgai near Zhawar, the training camp of Afghan Mujahideen commander Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani, in Khost near Pakistan's Saidgai town.

Another bunker was established at Gurbaz near Tarkhobi area of Khost, close to Pakistan's Ghulam Khan town. Trenches were also dug close to Mir Safar and Shawal towns of NWA.

NATO forces had planned to set up four new military camps along the border in the Taliban-dominated provinces of Khost and Paktika in Afghanistan, The News quoted its sources as saying.

'They planned establishing four new military camps along the border and this latest deployment of the foreign troops was first step of the future planning,' the sources added.

Meanwhile, Pakistani Taliban spokesperson Maulvi Omar has said Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's recent statements had provided the US-led NATO forces with an opportunity to deploy near the tribal areas.

Omar said: 'When a responsible person like the prime minister has himself said that foreign militants were hiding in Pakistani tribal areas and could cause another 9/11 like disaster, then who will stop American forces from invading the country?'

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