

July 7, 2003

## Cops Fired After Pakistan Mosque Attack

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Filed at 9:17 a.m. ET**

QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) -- A city police chief and two other officers have been dismissed for security lapses that allowed attackers to storm a mosque and kill as many as 50 Shiite Muslim worshippers, a top police official said Monday.

Quetta police chief Rehmatullah Niazi and the other officers were dismissed because of last week's assault by four attackers in the heart of the city during Friday prayers, said Shoaib Suddle, police chief for the southwestern province of Baluchistan. Quetta is Baluchistan's capital.

The attackers hurled grenades and sprayed worshippers with bullets as they prayed. Security guards killed three attackers and a fourth died later in a hospital.

"Our first concern is to identify the bodies of these terrorists," Suddle said in a telephone interview.

Some Shiite leaders said they were not Pakistani, but did not identify their nationality.

Suddle said 17 people arrested in police raids may help determine who was behind the attack.

Authorities are investigating the possibility that al-Qaida and Taliban fugitives hiding out along the nearby Afghan border regions may have been responsible.

The victims were ethnic Hazaras -- a minority that also lives in Afghanistan and was often at odds with the Taliban during their rule that ended in 2001 following a U.S.-led war.

Friday's attack came just weeks after pamphlets threatening attacks by Taliban suicide squads surfaced in Spinboldak, an Afghan town near Quetta. They were signed by Mullah Akhtar Usmani, formerly the Taliban military commander.

Shiite leaders plan nationwide demonstrations for Wednesday.

A moderate Shiite leader said the government should also tighten its ban on extremist Sunni Muslim groups, noting that some of them kept functioning after merely changing their names.

“The government should take the groups working with new names into an iron grip and ban them,” said Mohammed Ali Khan, Baluchistan head of the Shiite organization Tehreek-e-Jafria.

Khan didn't single out any groups, but Jaish-e-Mohammed, which now operates as Khudamul Islam, is one of the groups banned by President Pervez Musharraf when he clamped down on Muslim extremism following the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

The group is suspected of involvement in attacks targeting Christians and Westerners in Pakistan.

Shiite Muslims account for about a third of Quetta's 1.2 million population. The rest are mostly Sunni Muslims, who are a majority in Pakistan. It was the third attack in the past month against Hazara Muslims in Quetta.

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