

PAKISTAN MILITANCY ASSESSMENT

MAY 2026 | Monthly Security Report

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Pakistan Militancy Assessment – May 2026

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Centre for New Age Warfare Studies (CNAWS)

Pakistan Militancy Monitoring Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Militant activity across Pakistan intensified during May 2026, with both incident volume and casualties increasing compared with April. CNAWS recorded **345** security-related incidents during the reporting period, including **277 militant attacks** and clashes and **68 counterterrorism operations**. Total reported casualties rose to **652**, reflecting an elevated operational tempo across multiple theaters. Compared with April, **total incidents increased by 26.8%, attacks increased by 30.7%**, and overall **casualties rose by 40.8%**, indicating a broad-based escalation rather than a localized surge.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained the primary centre of militant activity, accounting for the majority of recorded incidents and casualties. North Waziristan, Bannu, South Waziristan and Bajaur continued to serve as key operational hubs for Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and allied militant factions.

Balochistan was the second major conflict theater, with insurgent groups sustaining attacks against security forces, infrastructure and state-linked assets. Activity was concentrated in Kech, Nushki, Mastung, Gwadar, Barkhan and Kharan districts, highlighting the continued geographic reach of the Baloch insurgency despite ongoing counterinsurgency efforts.

Clashes, targeted killings and explosive attacks were the dominant forms of violence. Small arms engagements accounted for the majority of incidents and casualties, reflecting continued reliance on ambushes, raids and targeted attacks. At the same time, militant groups demonstrated increasing use of drone-enabled attacks, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, highlighting the gradual expansion of stand-off attack capabilities.

Several developments warrant close attention. Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP) continued to demonstrate operational activity across North Waziristan, Bannu, Mohmand and Khyber districts through ambushes, improvised explosive devices and drone attacks. The group's growing operational profile and recent recognition within Al-Qaeda-linked media ecosystems suggest increasing relevance within the regional militant landscape.

Meanwhile, reports of factional disputes and internal tensions within the broader TTP network indicate persistent organizational challenges beneath the group's operational momentum. While these dynamics have not yet translated into a measurable decline in attack activity, they remain a factor that could influence future militant cohesion and effectiveness.

Although incident reporting declined during the final days of May, the reduction appears linked primarily to Eid-related factors and reporting limitations rather than a significant shift in militant capability.

Overall, sustained pressure from both Islamist and Baloch insurgent actors continued to shape the security environment, with current trends suggesting elevated levels of violence in the months ahead.

WHY THIS MATTERS

May's increase in violence was not driven by a single actor, district or tactic. Instead, activity remained dispersed across both Islamist militant networks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baloch insurgent groups operating in Balochistan, highlighting the persistence of multiple active conflict theaters.

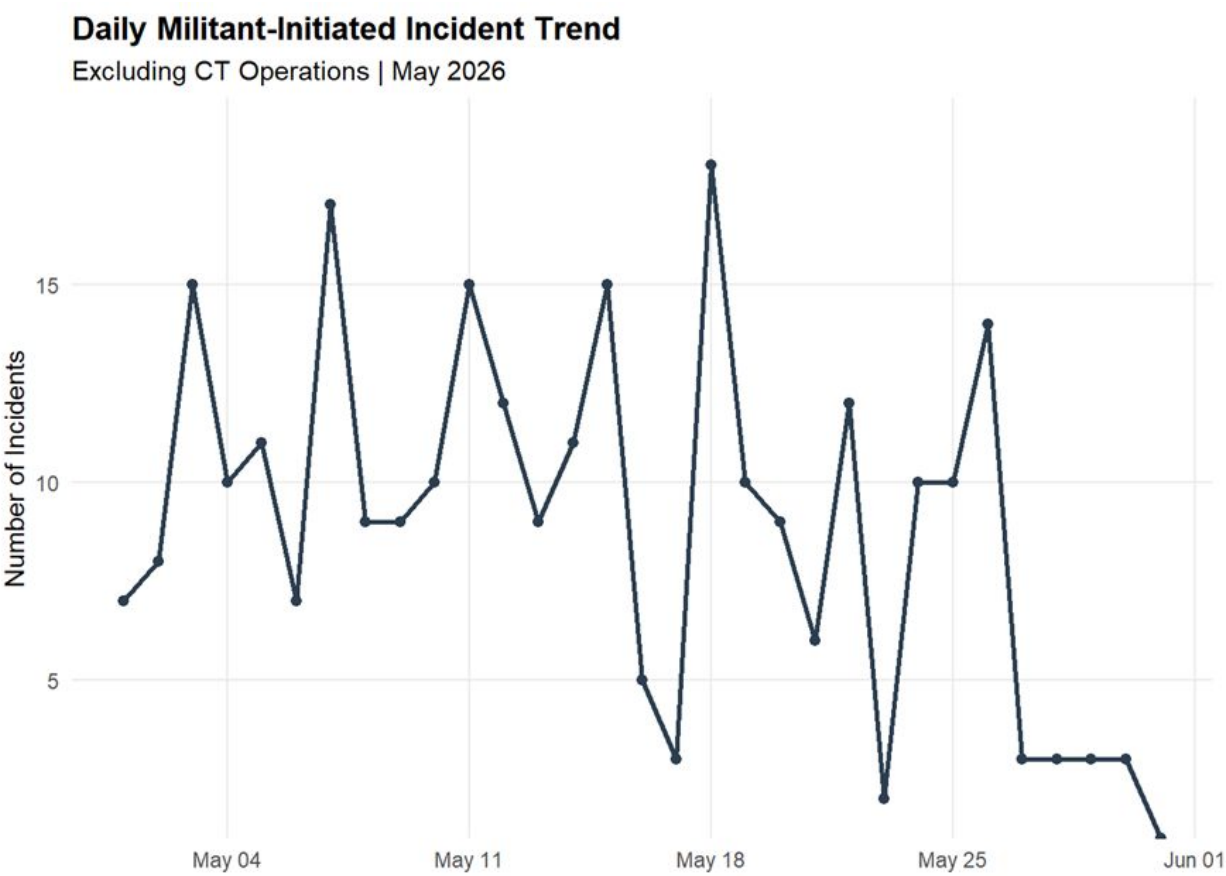
The reporting period also highlights growing tactical diversity, including drone attacks, infrastructure sabotage, suicide bombings and conventional ambushes. This adaptability complicates security operations and increases the challenge of responding to evolving threats.

Beyond Pakistan, continued militant activity along the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier carries wider regional implications. Cross-border militant networks and competing claims over militant safe havens remain a source of tension between Islamabad and Kabul. Persistent militancy also risks reinforcing regional threat perceptions. Taken together, these trends suggest that Pakistan's security challenges are becoming increasingly complex, driven not only by the volume of violence but also by the diversity of actors, tactics and operational environments.

Key Takeaways

- Militant actors retained operational initiative (277/345, ~80%), while security forces conducted 68 counterterrorism operations (~20%), indicating that violence continued to be driven primarily by insurgent activity rather than proactive disruption.
- Conflict remained heavily concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (191 incidents) and Balochistan (143 incidents), which together accounted for over 96% of all recorded activity, reinforcing their status as Pakistan's principal conflict theaters.
- Violence reflected an increasingly diversified tactical environment, with Clashes (90), Targeted Violence (74), Infrastructure Sabotage (57) and Explosions (56) all contributing significantly to the overall threat landscape.
- Small arms remained the dominant weapon system (220 incidents, ~64%), driving the majority of recorded casualties, while explosive systems (54 IED incidents and 42 explosive ordnance incidents) continued to serve as force multipliers.
- Drone-enabled attacks (12 incidents) remained limited in volume but continued to appear across multiple operational theaters, indicating the gradual diffusion of stand-off attack capabilities among militant actors.
- Cross-border militant dynamics along the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier remained a significant security concern, contributing to insurgent resilience and continuing to shape regional security calculations.
- District-level intensity remained uneven, with North Waziristan (31 incidents), Bannu (32 incidents) and South Waziristan (23 incidents) driving operational volume, while North Waziristan (161 casualties) emerged as the most lethal district during the reporting period.

1. INCIDENT VOLUME & OPERATIONAL TEMPO



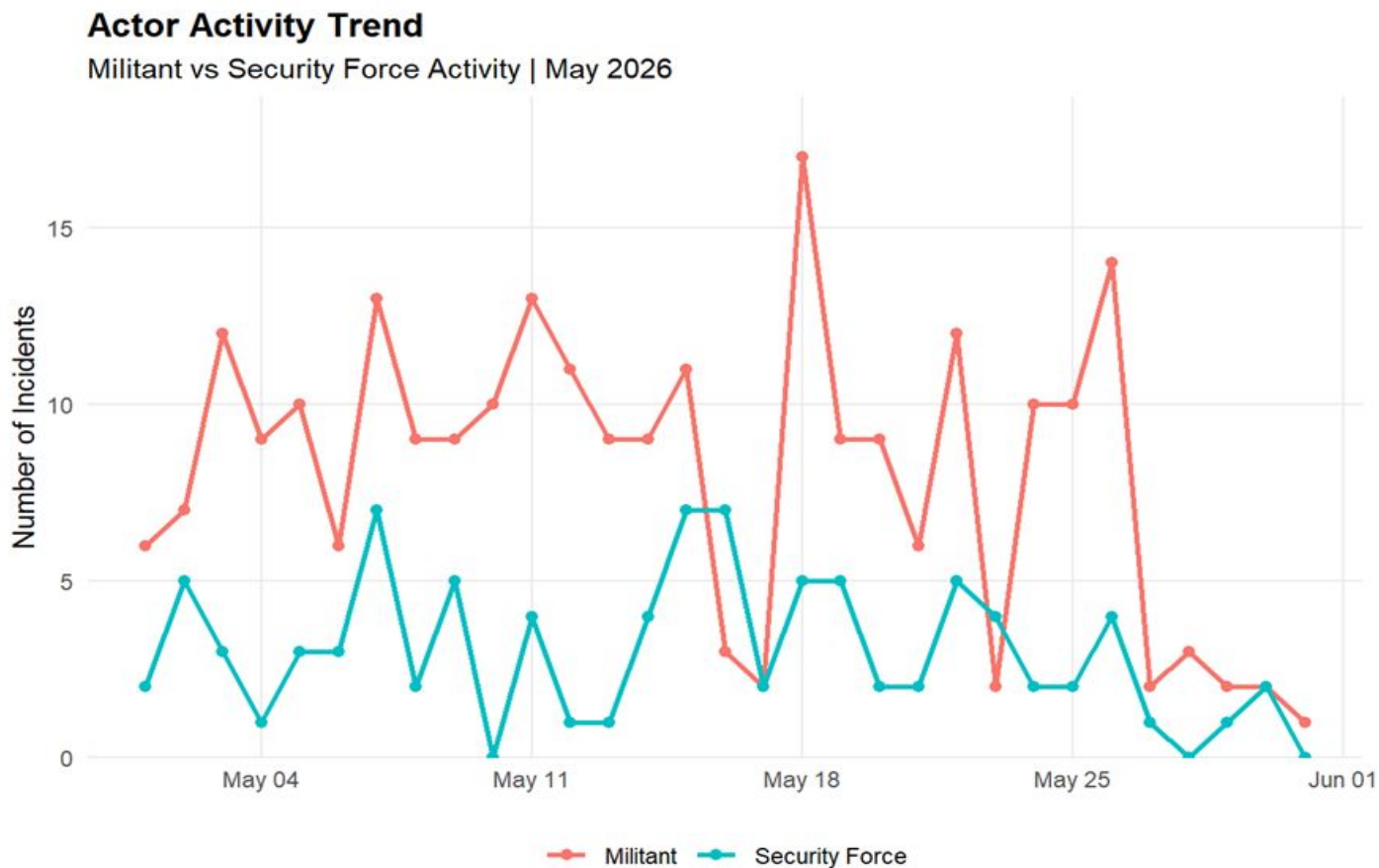
1.1 ASSESSMENT

Militant activity increased substantially during May, with total recorded incidents rising from **272 in April to 345 in May (+26.8%)**. Militant attacks and clashes increased from **212 to 277 incidents (+30.7%)**, while counter-terrorism operations rose more modestly from **60 to 68 incidents (+13.3%)**.

The disproportionate growth in militant initiated activity relative to security force operations suggests that insurgent activity continued to outpace state responses throughout the reporting period. While security forces increased operational activity, the gap between attacks and counter-terrorism actions remained significant, indicating a predominantly response-driven security posture.

The parallel rise in both militant attacks and security force operations points to an increasingly active security environment rather than a shift in territorial control or conflict geography. Activity remained concentrated within established conflict zones, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where militant networks continued to generate sustained activity.

1.2 ACTOR ACTIVITY TREND (MILITANT VS SECURITY FORCE)



Militant actors accounted for **277 of 345 recorded incidents (~80%)**, compared with **68 counter-terrorism operations conducted by security forces (~20%)**. This approximately **4:1 ratio** highlights a persistent imbalance between militant activity and state-led operations throughout the reporting period.

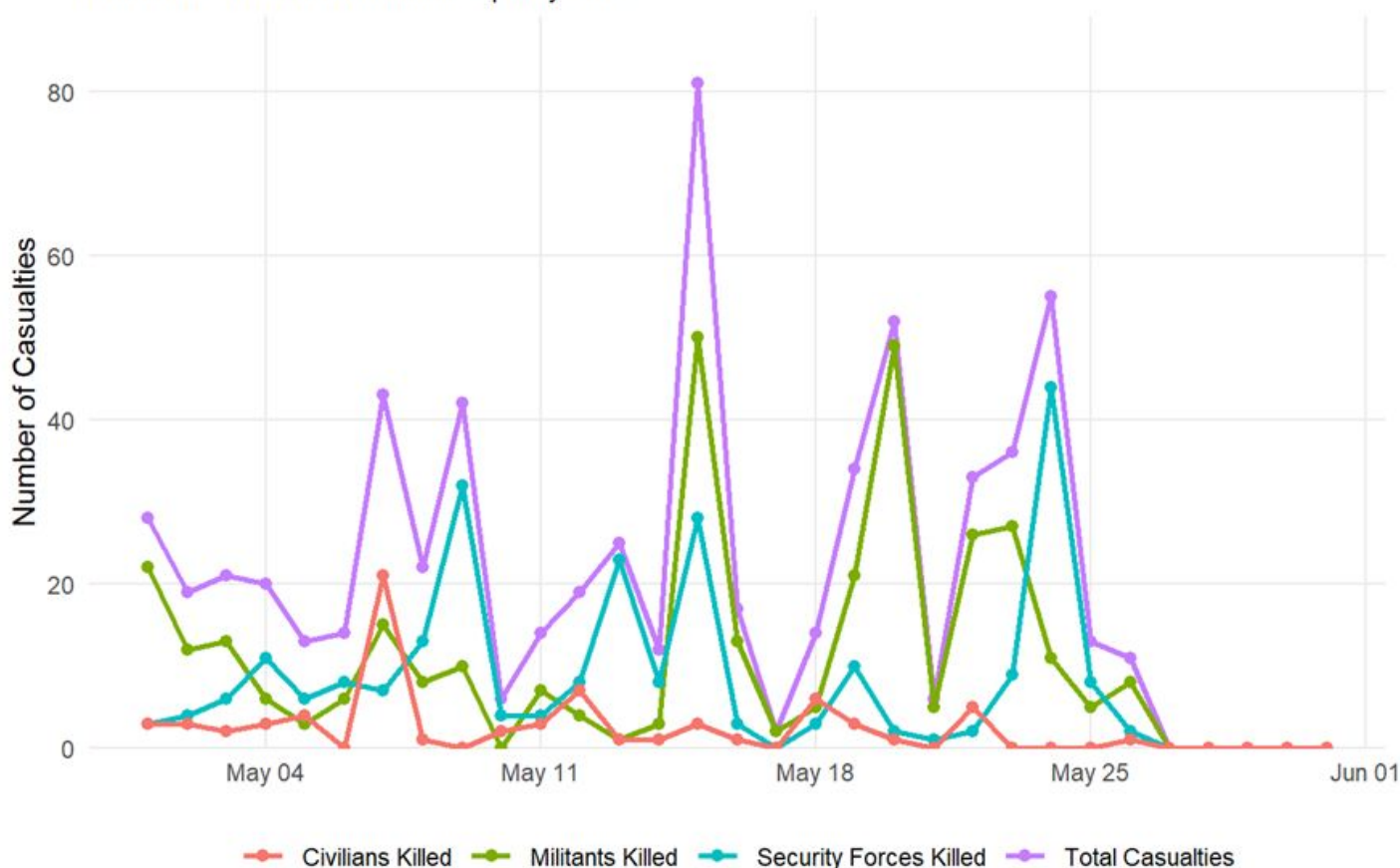
Security force activity increased periodically during the month, but these spikes generally coincided with elevated militant activity rather than preceding it. The parallel movement of both series suggests that security force engagement remained largely reactive, responding to existing militant activity rather than consistently disrupting it before execution.

The sustained dominance of militant-initiated incidents reflects the continued ability of insurgent networks to generate attacks across multiple districts and operational theaters despite ongoing counter-terrorism pressure. As a result, security forces remained engaged across multiple fronts without consistently shifting the initiative in their favor.

2. CASUALTIES AND IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

Daily Casualty Breakdown

Fatalities and total casualties | May 2026



2.1 Daily Casualty Breakdown

Total reported casualties increased from **463 in April to 652 in May (+40.8%)**, indicating that the rise in militant activity was accompanied by a significant increase in overall lethality. Casualty levels fluctuated throughout the month, with several high-impact incidents generating sharp spikes rather than a steady distribution of losses. The most notable surge occurred in the last week of month, driven in part by a mass-casualty VBIED attack in Quetta and a series of major engagements across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Militants accounted for the largest share of recorded fatalities (**332 deaths, approximately 51% of total casualties**), reflecting the continued intensity of counter-terrorism operations and armed confrontations. Security forces sustained **249 fatalities (approximately 38%)**, underscoring the persistent operational capability of militant groups to inflict substantial losses despite sustained security pressure and offensive actions by state forces.

Civilian fatalities accounted for **71 deaths (approximately 11% of total casualties)**. While civilians represented the smallest casualty category, several incidents demonstrated the continued vulnerability of non-combatants to both direct attacks and the broader effects of violence in conflict-affected areas.

The casualty profile indicates that the majority of losses remained concentrated among direct conflict participants. However, the sharp increase in total casualties compared to April suggests a more lethal operating environment, driven by a combination of high-impact attacks and intensified kinetic engagements between militant groups and security forces.

2.2 PROVINCE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF VIOLENCE AND LETHALITY

Casualties remained overwhelmingly concentrated in **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (436 casualties, ~67%)** and **Balochistan (211 casualties, ~32%)**, which together accounted for more than 99% of all recorded casualties during the reporting period. This concentration closely mirrors the geographic distribution of militant activity, reinforcing the status of both provinces as Pakistan's primary conflict theaters.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded both the highest incident volume and the highest casualty burden, driven by sustained militant activity, frequent armed engagements and an elevated tempo of counter-terrorism operations across former tribal districts. The province also accounted for the majority of **militant fatalities (251)**, reflecting the intensity of security force operations in the region.

Balochistan recorded fewer incidents than Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but generated a disproportionately high casualty burden, accounting for **211 casualties from 143** recorded incidents. This pattern reflects the impact of several high-lethality attacks and security force engagements, particularly in urban and insurgency-affected districts.

The provincial distribution suggests that lethality remained closely tied to established conflict theaters, with little evidence of meaningful spillover into peripheral provinces despite isolated incidents elsewhere.

Province	Total Events	CT Ops	Total Attacks	Casualties (Total)	Militants Killed	Security Forces Killed	Civilians Killed
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	191	45	146	436	251	133	52
Balochistan	143	18	125	211	81	113	17
Punjab	5	2	3	3	0	1	2
Sindh	4	1	3	2	0	2	0
Gilgit-Baltistan	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	345	68	277	652	332	249	71

Province-wise Incident and Casualty Summary (All Events Included)

2.3 DISTRICT-LEVEL HOTSPOTS AND LETHALITY PATTERNS

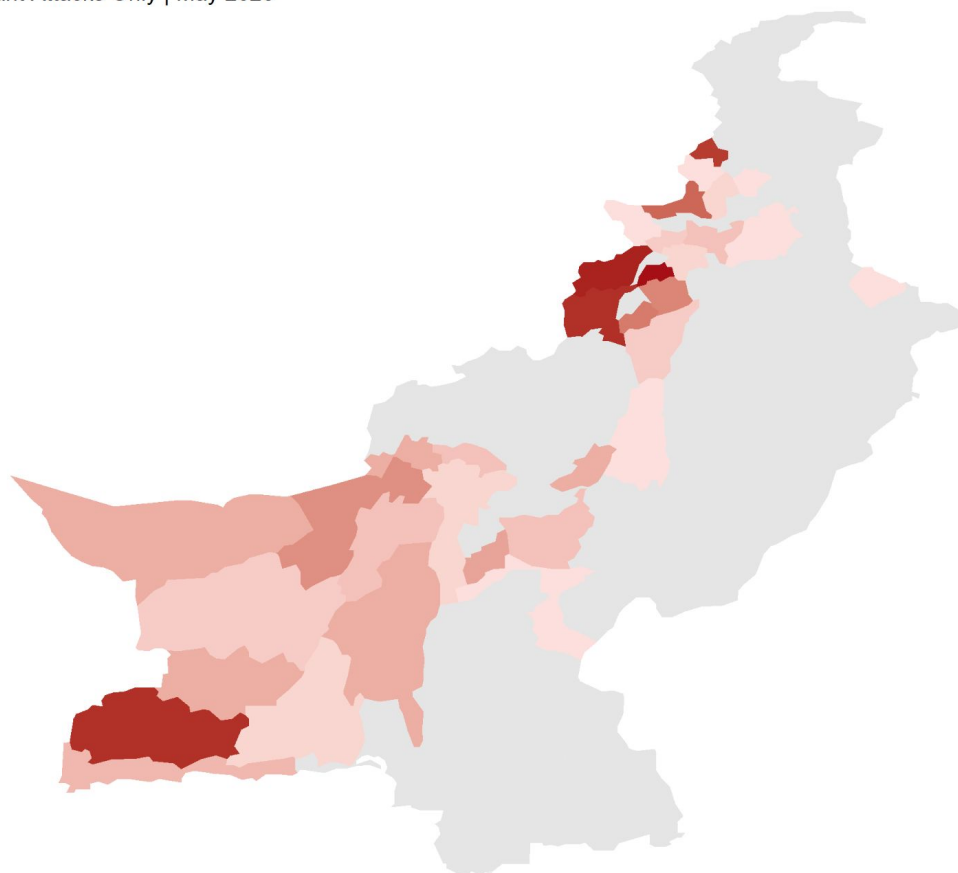
Casualty distribution remained heavily concentrated in a small number of districts. **North Waziristan** recorded the highest casualty burden (**161 casualties**), reflecting the combined impact of militant activity and intensive counter-terrorism operations. **Quetta** emerged as the second most lethal district (**87 casualties**), largely due to a high-impact VBIED attack during the reporting period, demonstrating how a single mass-casualty event can significantly influence district-level lethality.

South Waziristan (42 casualties), Bajaur (37), and Bannu (59) also recorded elevated casualty levels amid sustained militant and security force activity.

The distribution highlights the distinction between operational frequency and lethality. While districts such as Bannu and North Waziristan experienced persistent incident activity, Quetta generated a disproportionately high casualty burden from a relatively limited number of incidents. This suggests that assessing security trends through incident counts alone may understate the impact of high-casualty attacks concentrated in urban centres. (*For a detailed district-level breakdown of incident activity and casualties, see Appendix B*)

District-Wise Militant Incident Intensity

Militant Attacks Only | May 2026



Incidents
5 10 15 20

Source: Center for New Age Warfare Studies (CNAWS) - OSINT Incident Database, May 2026

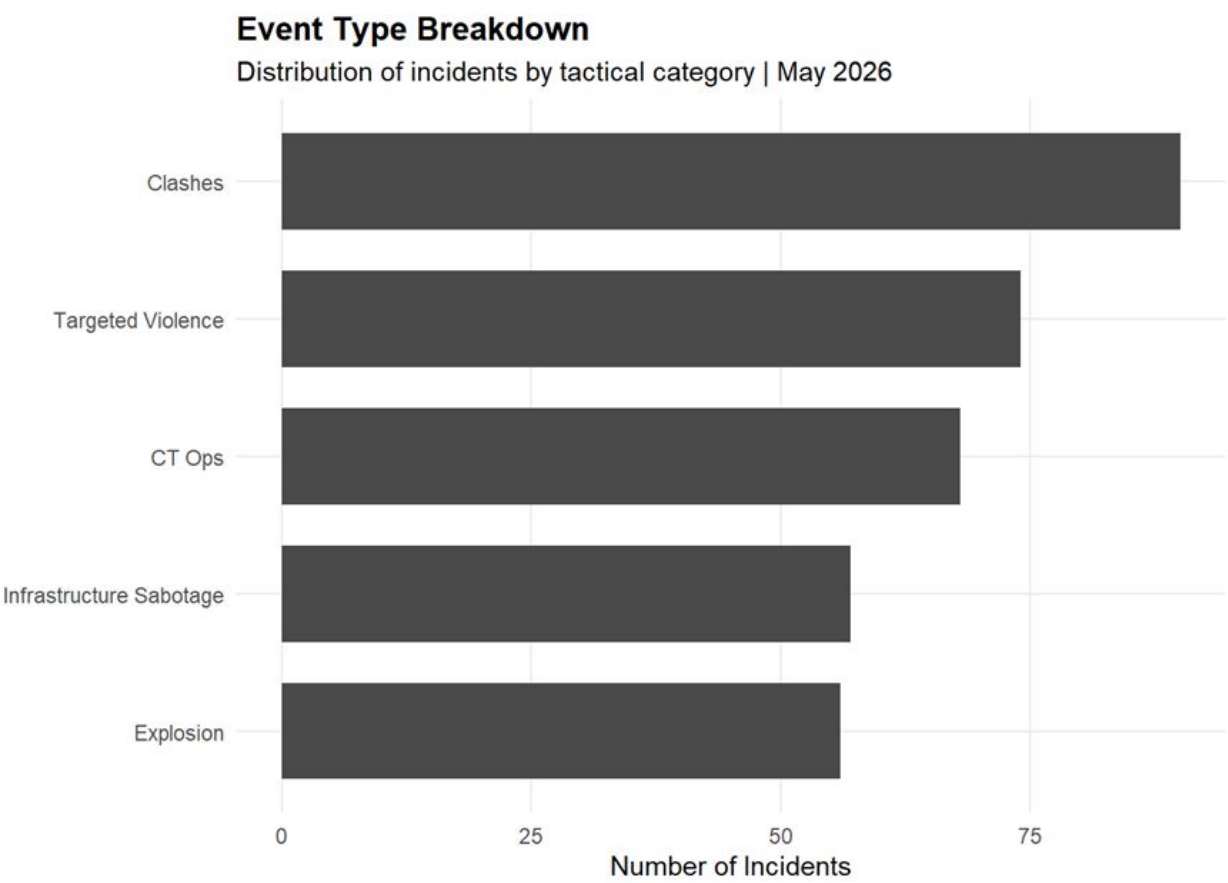
3. NATURE OF VIOLENCE & TACTICAL COMPOSITION

3.1 EVENT TYPE DISTRIBUTION

Clashes accounted for the largest share of recorded incidents during May (90 incidents), followed by Targeted Violence (74), Counter-Terrorism Operations (68), Infrastructure Sabotage (57) and Explosions (56). The relatively narrow spread between categories indicates that violence was distributed across multiple operational methods rather than dominated by a single form of activity.

The prominence of clashes reflects the continued frequency of direct engagements between militant actors and security forces, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and parts of Balochistan. At the same time, the substantial presence of targeted attacks, sabotage operations and explosive incidents **demonstrates** that militant groups maintained the capability to employ both kinetic and disruptive tactics across multiple theaters.

The distribution suggests a conflict environment characterized by tactical diversity, with militant actors combining direct confrontation, selective targeting and infrastructure-focused attacks to sustain operational pressure throughout the reporting period.(See Appendix C for a complete event-type distribution table)



3.2 TACTICAL ASSESSMENT

The tactical profile observed in May reflects a conflict environment centered on direct confrontation but supported by a broad range of complementary attack methods. Frequent clashes indicate that militant groups remain willing and capable of engaging security forces directly, particularly in established conflict zones where both sides maintain a sustained operational presence.

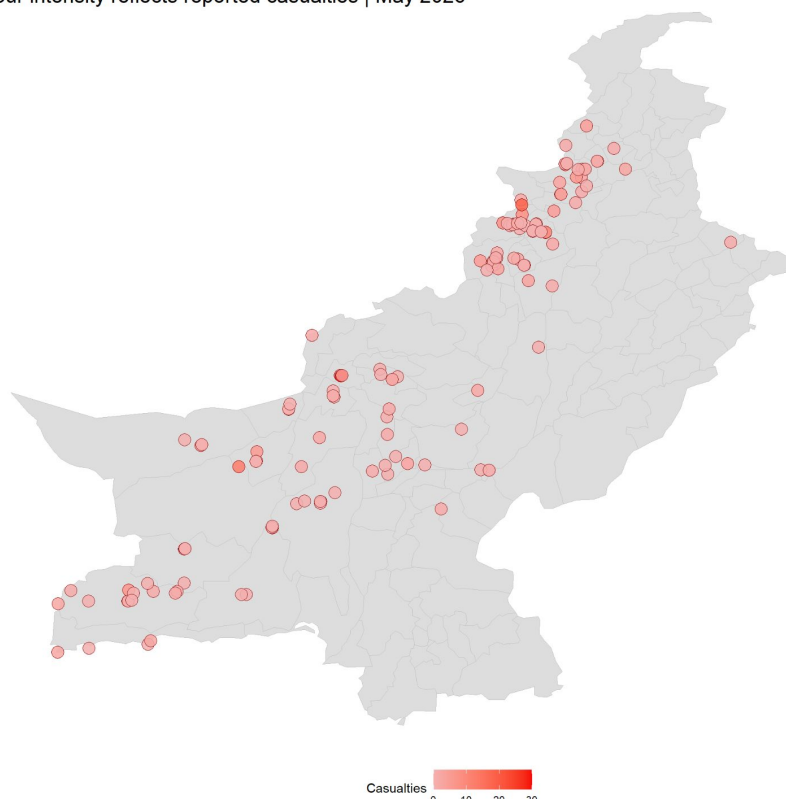
At the same time, the continued use of targeted attacks, explosive devices and infrastructure sabotage highlights an effort to impose costs beyond conventional battlefield engagements. These tactics allow militant actors to disrupt economic activity, target specific individuals and sustain pressure even when direct engagements are limited.

The coexistence of kinetic engagements and disruption-focused tactics suggests that militant groups are not dependent on a single method of violence. Instead, they continue to adapt tactics to local conditions, target availability and security force posture. This flexibility increases the complexity of counterterrorism operations by requiring simultaneous protection of personnel, infrastructure and civilian populations.

The tactical landscape in the month of May was characterized by operational adaptability rather than tactical specialization, indicating that militant networks retain the capability to employ multiple forms of violence across Pakistan's primary conflict theaters.

Militant Attack Locations and Casualty Severity

Colour intensity reflects reported casualties | May 2026



Source: Center for New Age Warfare Studies (CNAWS) - OSINT Incident Database, May 2026

4. WEAPONS ANALYSIS

4.1 WEAPON UTILIZATION PATTERNS

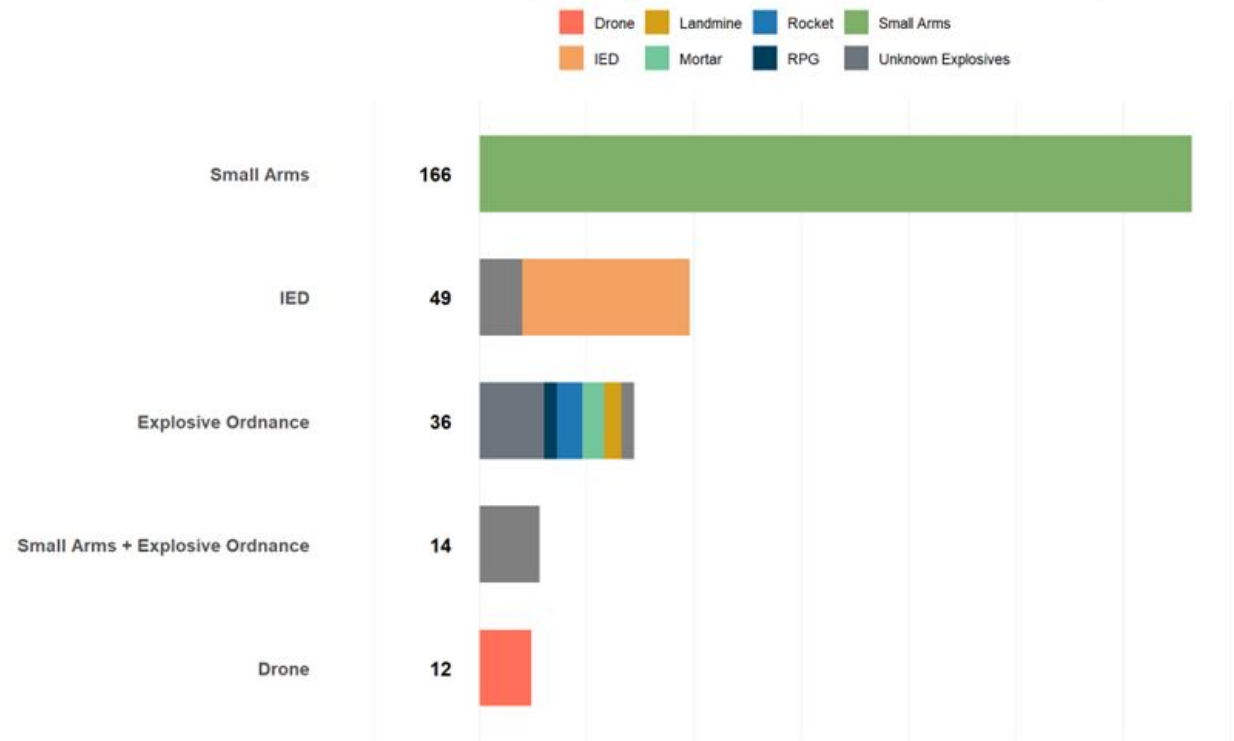
Weapon utilization during May remained heavily concentrated around small arms and explosive systems, reflecting the continued preference for low-cost, readily available weapons across Pakistan's primary conflict theaters. Small arms were employed in the majority of recorded incidents, underscoring their central role in ambushes, targeted attacks and direct engagements between militant actors and security forces.

Explosive devices remained the second most significant weapon category, supporting both offensive and disruption-focused operations. Their continued use highlights the enduring relevance of stand-off attack methods capable of generating casualties while reducing direct exposure to security forces.

The overall distribution suggests that militant actors continue to prioritize operationally proven weapon systems rather than pursuing widespread adoption of more advanced capabilities. While emerging technologies have begun to appear in isolated cases, the tactical environment remains dominated by conventional weapons and explosive devices.

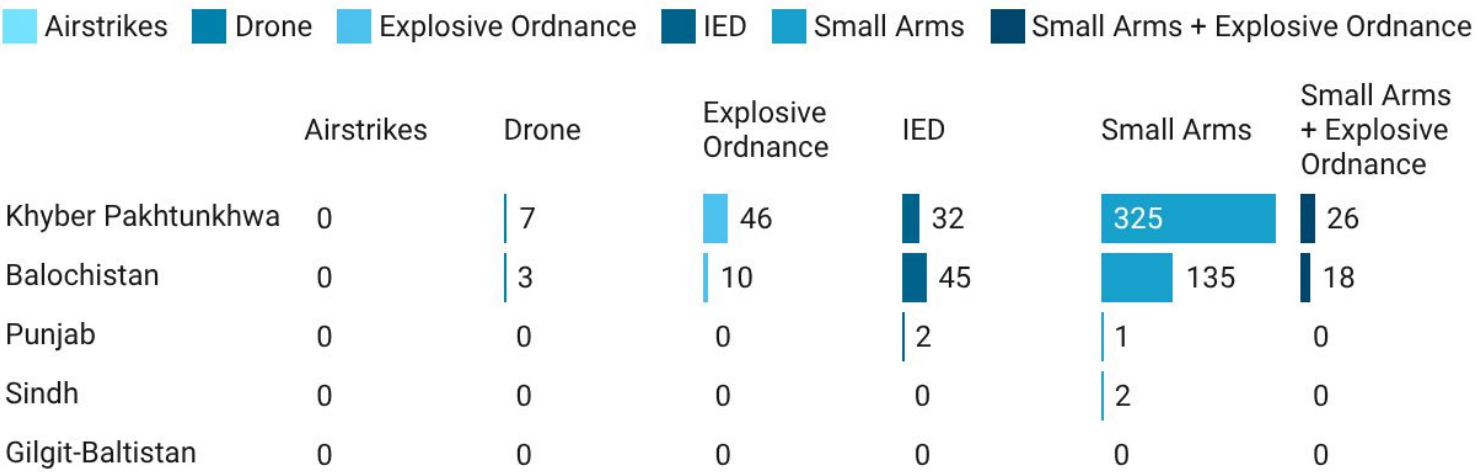
Weapon Types and Subtypes Utilized

Small arms dominated May 2026 engagements, with IEDs and explosive ordnance as secondary attack methods.



* CT Ops are excluded from event frequency metrics but included in weapon analysis
Source: CNAWS – OSINT Incident Database | May 2026

Province-wise Casualties by Weapon Type (All Events Included)



4.2 GEOGRAPHIC VARIATION IN WEAPON USE

Weapon utilization patterns varied across Pakistan's principal conflict theaters, reflecting differences in terrain, target availability and operational objectives. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, violence remained dominated by small arms engagements and explosive devices, consistent with a conflict environment characterized by frequent clashes and security force targeting.

Balochistan exhibited a broader mix of weapon types, including small arms, explosive devices and attacks linked to infrastructure disruption. This pattern reflects the strategic focus of Baloch insurgent groups on both security forces and state-linked economic assets.

The geographic variation in weapon use suggests that militant groups continue to adapt tactical methods to local operational conditions rather than relying on a standardized approach across all theaters. As a result, regional conflict dynamics remain shaped by distinct tactical signatures rather than a uniform national pattern.

4.3 WEAPONS AND LETHALITY

Weapon frequency and lethality remained distinct dynamics during May. While small arms accounted for the largest share of recorded incidents, explosive systems generated a disproportionate share of casualties through their ability to inflict concentrated effects during attacks on security personnel, infrastructure and civilian targets.

Several of the reporting period's most lethal incidents involved explosive devices, including high-impact attacks capable of producing casualty levels well above those associated with routine small arms engagements. This pattern demonstrates that incident volume alone does not necessarily correspond to operational impact.

The relationship between weapon type and casualty outcomes suggests that militant actors continue to balance reliability and lethality, employing small arms for sustained operational activity while utilizing explosive systems to generate strategic and psychological effects disproportionate to their frequency of use.

4.4 DRONES AND EMERGING STAND-OFF CAPABILITIES

Drone-enabled attacks remained limited in overall volume during May but continued to appear across multiple operational theaters, indicating the gradual diffusion of stand-off attack capabilities among militant actors. Although drones accounted for only a small proportion of total incidents, their continued use demonstrates an increasing willingness to experiment with methods that reduce direct exposure during attacks.

The emergence of drone activity across both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan suggests that this capability is no longer confined to a single region or actor. Instead, it reflects a broader trend toward tactical adaptation within Pakistan's militant landscape, supported by the accessibility of commercially available unmanned aerial systems.

At present, drones do not represent a primary driver of violence or casualties. However, their continued adoption carries significance beyond current incident totals. If sustained, this trend could enhance militant reconnaissance, targeting and attack capabilities while complicating force protection requirements for security forces operating in conflict-affected areas.

The continued appearance of drone-enabled attacks therefore represents an emerging capability trend rather than a dominant operational feature, warranting close monitoring in future reporting periods.

Case Study: Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP) Drone Operations

On 25 May, Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP) released footage showing drone attacks against seven separate Pakistani military positions. The video included aerial surveillance imagery, munition-release sequences and post-strike assessment footage, indicating the use of unmanned aerial systems for both reconnaissance and attack roles.

Beyond the strikes themselves, the footage suggests a degree of persistent aerial surveillance capability. In multiple sequences, military personnel were visible moving within and around targeted positions before munitions were released. The apparent ability of the drone to observe targets, loiter over military sites and conduct multiple attacks across separate locations indicates a level of operational confidence not typically associated with opportunistic drone use.

While the full operational impact of the attacks remains difficult to independently verify, the footage demonstrates an effort by a relatively small militant actor to integrate weaponized drone capabilities into its operational toolkit. The release also reflects a broader trend in which militant groups increasingly employ commercially available drone technology for surveillance, targeting and precision strike functions.

The emergence of such capabilities among smaller militant organizations suggests that drone-enabled operations are becoming more accessible across Pakistan's militant landscape and may no longer be confined to larger or better-resourced groups. If sustained, this trend could complicate force protection requirements by exposing fixed positions to persistent aerial observation and stand-off attack methods that reduce direct exposure for militant operators.



Drone Attack Site 1



Drone Attack Site 2



Drone Attack Site 3



Drone Attack Site 4

5. ACTOR DYNAMICS & TARGETING PATTERNS

5.1 ACTOR DYNAMICS

The militant landscape during May remained dominated by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliated factions, which continued to generate the highest volume of attacks across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sustained activity in North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Bannu and Bajaur reinforced the group's position as the primary driver of Islamist militant violence during the reporting period. The month also witnessed one of the most significant attacks of the reporting period in Bajaur, where a complex assault involving a VBIED and follow-on assault teams targeted the Damangi Scouts post, highlighting the group's continued ability to conduct coordinated operations against hardened security targets.

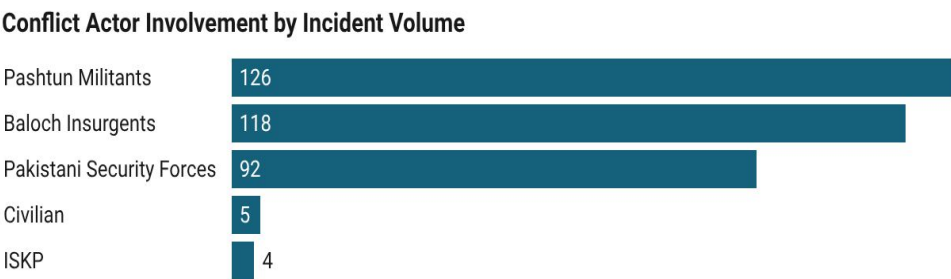
Baloch insurgent organizations remained the second major source of violence, maintaining operational pressure through attacks targeting security forces, infrastructure and state-linked assets across multiple districts in Balochistan. The continued activity of groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) underscores the persistence of a geographically distinct insurgency operating alongside the broader jihadist threat environment.

The reporting period also highlighted the growing visibility of smaller actors, particularly Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP). While its overall activity remained limited compared with larger organizations, the group's use of drone-enabled attacks and sustained operational activity across former tribal districts point to an increasingly capable actor within Pakistan's militant ecosystem. IMP's significance extends beyond attack volume. The group is assessed to include elements linked to Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), alongside militants associated with Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) and Hafiz Gul Bahadur (HGB) networks. Of particular note, IMP operations were highlighted and praised in AQIS April 2026 publication, released on 25 May. This coverage suggests that the group's influence and visibility within Al-Qaeda-aligned circles may exceed what would be expected from its current size alone. (*See Appendix D for actor distribution by incident volume.*)

Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) remained a comparatively minor but active actor, continuing its focus on targeted assassinations and attacks against police personnel, alleged intelligence-linked informants and pro-government peace committee members. The group's claims regarding the killing of former provincial parliament member Muhammad Idris and several attacks in Bajaur reflect a targeting strategy centered on selective violence rather than sustained territorial or military engagements.

At the same time, reports of factional tensions and armed clashes within the broader jihadist environment highlighted persistent organizational rivalries. Notably, fighting between TTP and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar reportedly resulted in significant casualties and hostages, underscoring the continued presence of intra-militant competition despite shared ideological objectives.

However, these disputes are yet to produce a measurable reduction in overall militant activity, suggesting that operational capability across the militant landscape remains resilient despite internal frictions.



5.2 TARGETING PATTERNS

Security forces remained the primary target of militant violence during May, reflecting the continued emphasis placed on challenging state authority and degrading security operations in conflict-affected regions. Military personnel, police forces, paramilitary units and intelligence-linked targets collectively accounted for the majority of attacks recorded during the reporting period. Infrastructure also remained a significant target category, particularly in Balochistan, where insurgent groups continued to attack transportation networks, utilities, communications assets and state-linked economic projects. These attacks demonstrate an effort to impose economic costs while disrupting government presence and mobility.

Although civilians represented a smaller proportion of direct targets, several incidents resulted in civilian casualties, highlighting the continued risk posed by explosive attacks, crossfire and attacks occurring in populated areas. The overall targeting profile suggests that militant actors remain focused primarily on state institutions while retaining the capability to affect civilian populations indirectly.

5.3 ACTOR-TARGET INTERACTION

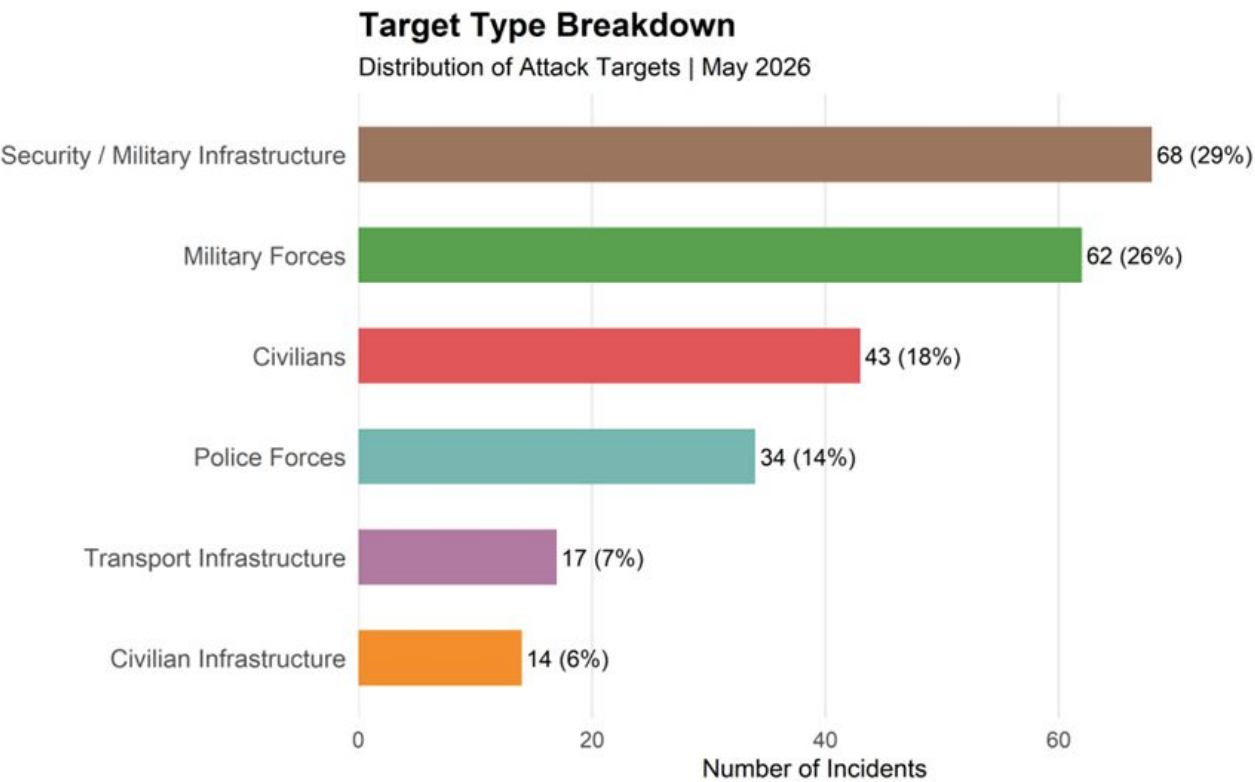
Distinct targeting preferences continued to differentiate Pakistan's principal militant actors during May. TTP remained focused on security forces and military infrastructure, exemplified by the complex assault on the Damangi Scouts post in Bajaur involving a VBIED, armed assault teams and follow-on engagements. The operation highlighted the group's continued emphasis on coordinated attacks against hardened security targets.

Baloch insurgent groups maintained a broader target set, combining attacks on security personnel with infrastructure sabotage and operations against state-linked economic assets. This pattern reflects a strategy aimed at disrupting both security operations and government influence in insurgency-affected areas.

ISKP activity remained comparatively limited but displayed a distinct assassination-focused profile. Claims published in Al-Naba highlighted attacks targeting police personnel, alleged intelligence-linked informants and members of pro-government peace committees in Bajaur and other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The group's assassination of former provincial parliament member Muhammad Idris further demonstrated its preference for selective targeting over large-scale engagements.

Emerging actors such as IMP largely concentrated on security force targets while experimenting with drone-enabled attack methods. Separately, reports of armed clashes between TTP and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), which reportedly resulted in more than 20 JuA fatalities and multiple hostages, underscored the continued presence of intra-militant competition within the broader jihadist ecosystem.

Taken together, these patterns indicate that while militant actors share a common focus on challenging state authority, they continue to pursue this objective through distinct operational models shaped by ideology, geography and organizational capability.(*Selected high-impact incidents referenced in this assessment are summarized in Appendix A.*)



6. EXPANSION & EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

This section identifies early-stage geographic signals outside core conflict zones, focusing on low-frequency incidents that may indicate emerging militant presence, testing activity, or future expansion pathways.

6.1 Emerging Geographic Signals

Despite the increase in overall violence during May, militant activity remained heavily concentrated within established conflict zones. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan continued to account for the overwhelming majority of incidents, indicating that operational growth occurred primarily within existing theaters rather than through the creation of new conflict hubs.

Outside core conflict areas, incident activity remained limited but analytically significant. Isolated events recorded in Sindh, Punjab and selected urban centres did not display the clustering or persistence typically associated with sustained militant expansion. Current patterns are more consistent with probing activity, network maintenance and opportunistic operations than territorial diffusion.

At the same time, several developments warrant continued monitoring. The growing visibility of IMP, the appearance of drone-enabled attacks across multiple districts and continued ISKP assassination activity in Bajaur and surrounding areas suggest ongoing tactical and organizational adaptation within Pakistan's militant landscape.

While evidence of large-scale geographic expansion remains limited, frontier districts along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border continue to generate the strongest early-warning indicators. These areas remain important incubators for operational innovation, inter-group interaction and emerging militant capabilities that could influence future conflict dynamics.

Signal Type
Early-stage diffusion

Primary Regions
Sindh, Punjab, Urban Centres (Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta)

Risk Level
Low (Short-Term)
Moderate (Long-Term Potential)

Trend Direction
Gradual, incremental expansion

6.2 Expansion Index

The Expansion Index quantifies the extent to which militant activity is spreading beyond core conflict zones by integrating geographic concentration, peripheral signals, and district-level distribution into a single composite assessment.

Expansion Index
Score: 4.20 ≈ 4.2 / 10

Classification:
Controlled Diffusion

METHODOLOGY & CALCULATION

The index is derived from four components, each scored on a 0-10 scale and weighted based on analytical importance.

Component Scoring

Component	Score (0-10)	Weight	Weighted Score
Geographic Concentration	2.0	30%	0.60
Peripheral Presence	5.0	25%	1.25
District Spread	7.0	25%	1.75
Sustained Presence Outside Core	3.0	20%	0.60

Calculation
(2.0 × 0.30) = 0.60
(5.0 × 0.25) = 1.25
(7.0 × 0.25) = 1.75
(3.0 × 0.20) = 0.60

TOTAL = 4.20 ≈ 4.2 / 10

Core Concentration: High

Peripheral Signals: Present

Spread Level: Moderate

Expansion Risk: Low

District-level indicators supporting the Expansion Index are available in Appendix B.

Methodology & Calculation Text

Despite a significant increase in overall violence during May, militant activity remained overwhelmingly concentrated within established conflict theaters. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan accounted for approximately 97% of all recorded incidents, indicating that operational growth occurred primarily within existing areas of activity rather than through the establishment of new conflict hubs.

Peripheral signals remained present across Sindh, Punjab and selected urban centers, while isolated ISKP assassinations, drone activity and sporadic incidents outside core zones provided evidence of continued probing behavior. However, these developments lacked the persistence and clustering typically associated with sustained geographic expansion.

District-level dispersion increased compared with April, reflecting broader operational reach across multiple districts. Nevertheless, incident intensity remained concentrated in a limited number of hotspots, particularly along the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier and in insurgency-affected districts of Balochistan.

While the overall score increased from **3.8 to 4.2**, the change reflects broader district dispersion and stronger peripheral signaling rather than the emergence of new operational theaters. Current indicators therefore point toward **controlled diffusion and tactical adaptation**, rather than meaningful geographic expansion.

7. FORWARD OUTLOOK

Current indicators suggest that militant activity is likely to remain elevated in the near term, particularly across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where the overwhelming majority of incidents continue to occur. Despite ongoing counter-terrorism operations, militant actors have demonstrated the ability to sustain attacks across multiple districts and operational theaters, indicating that existing networks remain resilient.

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is expected to remain the principal driver of Islamist militant violence, particularly in frontier districts along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. While reports of factional tensions and clashes involving Jamaat-ul-Ahrar indicate underlying organizational frictions, there is currently limited evidence that these disputes will significantly reduce the group's operational capacity in the short term.

Baloch insurgent organizations are likely to continue targeting security forces, infrastructure and state-linked assets, maintaining pressure across key districts in Balochistan. The persistence of infrastructure sabotage and attacks on economic targets suggests that disruption-focused operations will remain a central feature of the insurgency.

Emerging actors and capabilities warrant continued monitoring. The growing visibility of Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP), the increasing use of drone-enabled attacks and continued ISKP assassination activity indicate that Pakistan's militant landscape is becoming more diverse and tactically adaptive. While these developments do not currently represent a dominant share of overall violence, they may have an outsized influence on future operational trends.

Overall, available indicators point toward continued high levels of violence concentrated within established conflict zones, accompanied by gradual tactical evolution rather than major geographic expansion. As a result, the near-term outlook remains characterized by persistent militant activity, localized innovation and sustained pressure on Pakistan's security apparatus.

8. FINAL ASSESSMENT

May 2026 was characterized by a significant increase in both militant activity and overall casualties, reflecting a more active and lethal security environment than the previous reporting period. However, the rise in violence did not correspond to a comparable expansion of the conflict's geographic footprint. Instead, activity remained overwhelmingly concentrated within established conflict theaters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

The reporting period highlighted the continued resilience of Pakistan's principal militant actors. TTP and its affiliated factions remained the primary drivers of Islamist militant violence, while Baloch insurgent organizations sustained operational pressure through attacks on security forces, infrastructure and state-linked assets. At the same time, smaller actors such as Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP) demonstrated increasing visibility, while ISKP maintained a limited but persistent assassination-focused campaign.

Several indicators point toward a militant environment that is evolving tactically rather than geographically. The continued use of infrastructure sabotage, the appearance of drone-enabled attacks across multiple districts and evidence of persistent aerial surveillance capabilities suggest that militant groups are adapting operational methods while remaining concentrated within traditional areas of activity.

Although reports of factional tensions and intra-militant rivalries emerged during the month, these dynamics have yet to produce a measurable decline in militant capability or attack volume. Militant actors continue to demonstrate the capacity to sustain operations across multiple districts despite ongoing counter-terrorism pressure.

Taken together, the findings of May 2026 suggest that Pakistan's security environment is currently defined by sustained violence, increasing tactical adaptation and the emergence of new capabilities rather than large-scale geographic expansion. While the conflict remains largely contained within established theaters, the continued evolution of militant tactics and the growing visibility of emerging actors indicate a threat landscape that is becoming more complex, diversified and difficult to counter over time.

Strategic Warning

The principal risk facing Pakistan's security environment is not large-scale geographic expansion, but the continued evolution of militant capabilities within existing conflict zones. The spread of drone-enabled attack methods, the emergence of smaller but increasingly capable actors and sustained cross-border militant dynamics suggest that future threats may become more technologically sophisticated and operationally diverse. Absent effective disruption, these trends could increase the complexity of counter-terrorism operations even if violence remains geographically concentrated.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A - Selected High-Impact Incidents - MAY 2026

03 May 2026

Chaghi District, Balochistan – Armed militants attacked a mining project in Chaghi, killing at least 10 individuals, including a Turkish national, in one of the deadliest attacks targeting economic infrastructure during the month.

04 May 2026

Azam Warsak, South Waziristan District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – A suicide bomber targeted a local gathering, causing multiple civilian casualties. The attack was later claimed by Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP).

08 May 2026

Bajaur District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – A drone strike targeted a cricket ground, injuring several children and highlighting the growing use of unmanned aerial systems in Pakistan's conflict environment.

09 May 2026 – Fateh Khel, Bannu District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – An explosives-laden vehicle was rammed into the Bannu police checkpoint at Fateh Khel, followed by intense firing between police and attackers. Reports stated that **21 officers were killed**, and **Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP) claimed responsibility**.



IMP VBIED attack in Bannu

15 May 2026

Loi Mamond (Damangi Scouts Camp), Bajaur District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – TTP militants launched a complex assault on the Damangi Scouts camp in Loi Mamond. According to TTP statements, the operation began with a VBIED attack conducted by a member of the group's Special Istishhadi Force, followed by an armed assault team that entered the compound and engaged security forces in prolonged fighting. The attack represented one of the most significant assaults against a security installation during the reporting period and underscored TTP's continued ability to conduct coordinated, multi-stage operations in Pakistan's frontier districts.



TTP VBIED and Coordinated Assault on Damangi Scouts Camp

APPENDIX A - Selected High-Impact Incidents - MAY 2026**23 May 2026**

Barakzai and Marian Areas, Bannu District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – Clashes erupted between security forces, local peace committee members and militants in the Barakzai area. Militants claimed to have besieged police and peace committee personnel and inflicted casualties, while pro-government sources reported militant losses. The incident highlighted the contested security environment in Bannu and the continued ability of militant groups to challenge local security structures.



TTP Militants Set Vehicle Ablaze During Bannu Clashes

24 May 2026

Chaman Phatak, Quetta District, Balochistan – The Baloch Liberation Army's Majeed Brigade conducted an attack targeting the Jaffar Express passenger train, drawing nationwide attention and demonstrating continued capability to strike transport infrastructure.



BLA Majeed Brigade VBIED Attack in Quetta, 24th May 2026

APPENDIX A - Selected High-Impact Incidents - MAY 2026

25 May 2026

Jusak Area, Kech District, Balochistan – Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) fighters ambushed a Pakistani military convoy in the Jusak area, reportedly killing five security personnel. Following the attack, militants besieged and overran the Dungar Police Station, seizing seven government-issued rifles, ammunition magazines and additional security equipment before withdrawing from the area. The incident highlighted the group's ability to conduct coordinated operations against both military and police targets within a single operation.



BLF Besieged Dungar Police Station

26 May 2026

Nasirabad - Baloch Republican Guard planted explosives and detonated them, destroying two main power transmission towers near the Hamid Goth area of Nasirabad. These towers were part of the power transmission line from the Uch power plant to Punjab. As a result of the explosions, two towers completely collapsed, while two others were severely damaged.



BRG Power Transmission Line Sabotage, Nasirabad

APPENDIX A - Selected High-Impact Incidents - MAY 2026**27 May**

Mastung District, Balochistan – Pakistani security forces reportedly killed 15 alleged BLA militants during a security operation in Mastung, marking one of the largest counterinsurgency successes reported during the month.

30 May 2026

Dara Adam Khel, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – Pakistani security forces reportedly killed 13 TTP militants, including two Afghan nationals, during operations targeting the Tariq Gidar faction.



TTP Militants during firefight in Dara Adam Khel

May 2026 (Multiple Dates)

North Waziristan, Bannu, Mohmand, and Khyber Districts, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa –

Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP) conducted a series of attacks involving ambushes, IEDs, and drone strikes, emerging as a militant actor of increasing concern during the month.

APPENDIX B - District-Level Intensity & Lethality

This table highlights districts with the highest operational activity and lethality, illustrating the uneven geographic distribution of violence. ([Source: CNAWS Pakistan Militancy Dataset, May 2026](#))

District	Total Events	CT Ops	Total Attacks	Casualties (Total)	Militants Killed	Security Forces Killed	Civilians Killed
North Waziristan	31	9	22	161	120	34	7
Quetta	11	5	6	87	46	38	3
Bannu	32	8	24	59	26	31	2
South Waziristan	23	3	20	42	21	7	14
Bajaur	20	1	19	37	13	19	5
Tank	16	5	11	24	15	8	1
Gwadar	7	1	6	23	4	17	2
Kurram	3	1	2	23	23	0	0
Dera Ismail Khan	13	9	4	22	14	8	0
Khyber	15	1	14	19	6	12	1
Hangu	5	0	5	17	5	2	10
Lakki Marwat	12	2	10	14	3	4	7
Harnai	5	0	5	14	1	13	0
Kech	20	1	19	13	1	12	0
Nushki	10	0	10	13	3	10	0
Khuzdar	10	4	6	11	11	0	0
Barkhan	8	0	8	11	1	10	0
Mastung	10	1	9	9	0	7	2
Kalat	7	1	6	6	6	0	0
Dera Bugti	4	0	4	6	0	6	0
Chagai	7	1	6	5	0	0	5
Mohmand	3	2	1	5	4	1	0
Washuk	5	1	4	4	4	0	0
Kohat	6	1	5	3	0	0	3
Panjgur	6	0	6	3	0	0	3
Karak	3	1	2	3	0	3	0
Peshawar	3	1	2	3	1	2	0
Charsadda	3	1	2	2	0	0	2
Pishin	2	2	0	2	2	0	0
Attock	1	0	1	2	0	0	2
Kharan	9	0	9	1	0	0	1
Nasirabad	8	1	7	1	0	0	1
Jhal Magsi	2	0	2	1	1	0	0

APPENDIX C - Event Type & Weapon Distribution

C1. Event Type Distribution

Event Type	Incidents
Clashes	90
Targeted Violence	74
CT Ops	68
Infrastructure Sabotage	57
Explosion	56

C2. Province-wise Weapon Type Distribution (All Events Included)

Province	Total Events	CT Ops	Total Attacks	Clashes	Explosions	Infrastructure Sabotage	Targeted Violence
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	191	45	146	52	31	13	50
Balochistan	143	18	125	38	23	43	21
Punjab	5	2	3	0	2	0	1
Sindh	4	1	3	0	0	1	2
Gilgit-Baltistan	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	345	68	277	90	56	57	74

Appendix D: Actor Distribution

Actor	Total Incidents
Pashtun Militants	126
Baloch Insurgents	118
Pakistani Security Forces	92
Civilian	5
ISKP	4
Total	345

Methodology & Data Sources

All data presented in this report is derived from the CNAWS Intelligence Database, developed through continuous multi-source OSINT collection and analysis.

Sources include:

- Open-source media reporting
- Verified social media intelligence (SOCMINT)
- Militant group communications and claims
- Government and security force releases
- Regional and local reporting networks

Incidents are cross-verified where possible and categorized based on:

- Actor attribution
- Tactical classification
- Weapon usage
- Geographic location

CNAWS applies a structured analytical framework to ensure consistency, enabling trend analysis, comparative assessment, and predictive insights. Analytical assessments represent CNAWS judgments based on available information at the time of publication.

Access & Contact

For interactive data and real-time insights, visit: <https://cnaws.in/pakistan-militancy-dashboard>

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