

Baloch Republican Army

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

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SUMMARY

Formed: 2006

Disbanded: Group is active

First Attack: October 20, 2007: The BRA claimed responsibility for a bomb that targeted a public bus in Dera Bugti, Balochistan. (8 killed, 28 wounded)¹

Latest Attack: February 23, 2019: The BRA claimed responsibility for an IED blast that targeted a Pakistan army convoy. (6 killed, unknown wounded).²

OVERVIEW

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The Baloch Republican Army (BRA) is an ethno-nationalist separatist militant organization fighting against the Pakistani government for an independent Baloch state.³ The group is often referred to as the Baloch Republican Army, though it is distinct from the Balochistan Republican Army – Azad. Most members of the BRA are members of the Bugti tribe and are young student political activists in Balochistan.⁴

The group was founded in 2006 in response to growing resentment over what Balochistan residents felt was increasing Pakistani central government control and monopolization of Balochistan resources. The organization is against any foreign investment and intervention in Balochistan, whether by Pakistan or any other country. The BRA has targeted Pakistani security forces and manufacturing infrastructure to try and “take back” its province’s resources for the people of Balochistan.⁵ The BRA has also targeted public

transportation and threatened to continue to attack civilians if the Pakistani government does not withdraw troops from the region.⁶

The BRA does not identify its leaders; however, the Pakistan government has alleged that Brahamdagh Bugti has led the group since it was founded. Bugti is also the leader of the Baloch Republican Party, which is a nationalist political party with strong ties to the BRA and other Baloch militant groups.⁷ The BRA is largely believed to be the militant wing of the Baloch Republican Party.⁸

In 2017, Pakistani security forces launched Operation Raddul Fasaad in an effort to eliminate the threat of terrorism within the country's borders. The operation is said to have resulted in the August 2017 surrender of twelve members of the BRA.⁹ As of March 2019, the group remains active and continues to target the Pakistani government and foreign influence. Although the group has conducted attacks in the Sindh province, it has remained largely active in Balochistan in recent years.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Brahamdagh Bugti (2006-unknown): The Pakistani government alleges that after the death of his grandfather, Akbar Bugti, Bugti became the leader of the Balochistan Republican Party and subsequently the BRA.¹⁰

Sarbaz Baloch (unknown-present): Sarbaz acted as a BRA spokesman and issued a statement for the group in December 2018. It is not clear if Sarbaz is the main spokesman for the group, nor for how long he has held a position as spokesman.¹¹

A. NAME CHANGES

There are no reported name changes for the group.

B. SIZE ESTIMATES

There are no publicly available size estimates for this group.

C. RESOURCES

It is believed that the BRA benefits from leftover weapons from prior conflicts in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran.¹² Due to high community support for autonomy and independence from the people of Balochistan, many analysts suspect that a large amount of the BRA's income and weapons supply come from donations from the Baloch people.¹³ Baloch leaders have also claimed that financial contributions from the Baloch diaspora make it possible to procure arms and ammunition through the black market.¹⁴

Experts have also speculated smuggling could also be a large source of income for the BRA.¹⁵ Balochistan is a central smuggling route for many products, including opium, and the BRA may draw funds from the trafficking of black market goods.

D. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

The BRA is headquartered in Balochistan, Pakistan. Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province. It shares a border with Iran and Afghanistan to the west, the Arabian Sea to the south, and the Sindh and Punjab provinces to the east. The majority of the BRA's attacks have been in the province of Balochistan, but the BRA has carried out attacks in the bordering province of Sindh.

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

The BRA Balochistan Liberation Front is an ethno-nationalist separatist organization with the goal of creating an independent Baloch state.¹⁶ The group aims to "liberate" Balochistan from control of the Pakistani government. Although real separatist tendencies existed within Balochistan in the early 2000s, now a majority of the population wants more autonomy without explicitly demanding independence. The demand in autonomy is particularly with regard to control and allocation of the province's natural resources.¹⁷

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

While the BRA has no formal political organization, analysts speculate that the nationalist Balochistan Republican Party works with the BRA.¹⁸ The BRA also garners sympathy, and at times open support, from other Baloch political parties, including the National Party and the Balochistan Student Organization.¹⁹

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

The BRA has used a variety of tactics to achieve its goal of gaining greater regional autonomy. These tactics include car bombs, mortar strikes, rocket strikes, IEDs, landmines, grenades, kidnappings, and small-arms attacks.²⁰ The BRA largely targets Pakistani security and police forces. The group also conducts attacks on public buses, railways, communication systems, gas pipelines, electricity pylons, check-posts, and civilian offices.²¹

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

October 20, 2007: The BRA planted a vehicle-borne IED on a public transportation bus in Dera Bugti, Balochistan (8 killed, 28 wounded).²²

January 9, 2009: A landmine planted by the BRA in Dera Bugti was meant to target Pakistani government personnel, but killed a Baloch tribal chief and other nearby civilians (4 killed, 10 wounded).²³

April 21, 2011: Eight BRA members fired on a military-run Frontier Works Organization camp. (11 killed, 2 wounded)²⁴

May 14, 2012: The BRA claimed responsibility for two car bombs that went off near Pakistani security forces' vehicles in Quetta, Balochistan (6 killed, 58 wounded).²⁵

October 21, 2013: A BRA bomb exploded on a railroad, derailing a Jaffar Express train in Nasirabad district, Balochistan (6 killed, 18 wounded).²⁶

February 16, 2014: A bomb went off on train tracks in Thul town, Sindh province (5 killed, 30 wounded).²⁷

December 27, 2014: The BRA claimed responsibility for an attack against a Frontier Crops convoy. (9 killed, 18 wounded)²⁸

April 23, 2015: The BRA attacked a Pakistani security forces convoy in Kech, Balochistan (8 killed, unknown wounded).²⁹

October 16, 2016: BRA fighters attacked a convoy of a Chinese company in the Ormara area of Gwadar (4 killed, unknown wounded).³⁰

December 20, 2018: The BRA claimed responsibility for a landmine blast in the Phelawagh area of the Dera Bugti district (1 killed, 0 wounded).³¹

February 23, 2019: The BRA claimed responsibility for an IED blast that targeted a Pakistani army convoy (6 killed, unknown wounded).³²

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

There is significant support in Balochistan for an independent Baloch state.³³ As a result, the Baloch people support many of the ethno-nationalist groups in Balochistan. While the majority of people distance themselves publicly from the BRA, sympathizers and supporters can be found throughout the community and Balochistan Republican Party.³⁴ Some in the community find the BRA's tactics distasteful, though others feel that the BRA and organizations like it are fighting for the community's cause.³⁵

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

The BRA is one of multiple insurgent groups fighting for increased sovereignty for the Balochistan province. In addition to the BRA, the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Lashkar-e-Balochistan (LeB), and the Jhalawan Baloch Tigers are also active in the region. The BLA and BLF are the strongest and most influential militant groups operating in Balochistan.³⁶ There has been no confirmed coordination between the BRA and other Baloch and non-Baloch groups. While some groups' claim to have almost identical goals, they still operate independently of one another.³⁷ Of the Balochistan militant organizations, the BRA is the most violent.

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Pakistani politicians have claimed that U.S. and British intelligence agencies are supporting the Baloch rebellion in order to sabotage a proposed oil pipeline that could undermine U.S. control of Gulf oil; however, these claims are unverified.³⁸

MAPS

- Pakistan

¹ "Incident Summary:." Incident Summary for GTDID: 200710200005. Global Terrorism Database. Web. 27 July 2015.

² MyNation, Team. "Yeddyurappa Shames BJP; Says Party Would Win 22 Lok Sabha Seats Because of Air Strikes." Asianet News Network Pvt Ltd, www.mynation.com/india-news/yeddyurappa-shames-bjp-party-would-win-22-lok-sabha-seats-air-strikes-pnmeyu.

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⁴ "Situationer: Who's Who of Baloch Insurgency." - *Pakistan*. 1 June 2015. Web. 30 July 2015; "SEARCH RESULTS: 141966 INCIDENTS." *GTD Search Results*. Global Terrorism Database. Web. 23 July 2015.

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⁶ "Baloch Republican ArmyThe Defenders of Motherland." *Baloch Republican Army*. Web. 11 July 2015.

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⁸ Frederic Grare. "Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation." The Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2013. <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/balochistan.pdf>

⁹ "12 Baloch Republican Army Militants Surrender to Security Forces." DAWN.COM, 30 Aug. 2017, www.dawn.com/news/1354941.

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- ¹² “Balochistan Liberation Army.” *The National Baloch Media RSS*. Web. 2 July 2015.
- ¹³ “Balochistan Liberation Army.” *The National Baloch Media RSS*. Web. 2 July 2015.
- ¹⁴ Adeel Khan, “Renewed Ethnonationalist Insurgency in Balochistan, Pakistan: The Militarized State and Continuing Economic Deprivation,” *Asian Survey* 49 (2009):1078
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- ¹⁶ “Baloch Republican Army The Defenders of Motherland.” *Baloch Republican Army*. Web. 11 July 2015.
- ¹⁷ Grare, Frederic. “Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/11/balochistan-state-versus-nation-pub-51488.
- ¹⁸ “Situationer: Who's Who of Baloch Insurgency.” - *Pakistan*. 1 June 2015. Web. 30 July 2015.
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³⁸ “Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan,” International Crisis Group, 14 September 2006.