

Al-Qaeda training camps resurfacing in Afghanistan?

30/12/2015 18:56 by admin

New York: Nearly 200 fighters at an al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) terror training camp in the Af-Pak border region were killed in a recent attack by the US and Afghan commandos, amid growing concerns that Qaeda camps are resurfacing in Afghanistan, according to a media report.

“An old enemy seems to be reappearing in Afghanistan: Qaeda training camps are sprouting up there, forcing the Pentagon and American intelligence agencies to assess whether they could again become a breeding ground for attacks on the US,” the New York Times said.

Most of the handful Qaeda training camps sprouting up in Afghanistan are not as big as those built by Osama bin Laden before the September 11 attacks but the scope of Al Qaeda “deadly resilience” in the country appears to have caught American and Afghan officials by surprise.

“Until this fall, American officials had largely focused on targeting the last remaining senior Qaeda leaders hiding along Afghanistans rugged, mountainous border with Pakistan,” it said, adding that now the Qaeda camps are not among the most urgent on the Pentagons list in Afghanistan.

The AQIS camp, described by military officials as one of the largest ever discovered, was attacked by American and Afghan commandos in October, backed by several US airstrikes.

Top American commander in Afghanistan Gen John Campbell had said that at the time of the raid the camp was used by the new Qaeda offshoot Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

The offshoot, created in September 2014 and believed to be based in Pakistan, is focused on India, Pakistan and other nations in southern Asia.

The assault on the camp, located in a sparsely populated area of Kandahar Province along Afghanistan’s southern border with Pakistan, took place over several days and pounded two training areas that featured elaborate tunnels and fortifications. As many as 200 al-Qaeda fighters were killed in the attack, the report added.

“The discovery of the large camp attacked in October raised questions about the American militarys ability to detect and destroy a major Qaeda stronghold in the country, more than 14 years after the American-led invasion of Afghanistan drove out Al Qaeda and toppled the Taliban government that supported them,” the report said.

Senior administration officials have conceded that there are other Qaeda camps or bases, including at least one in Helmand Province and some of the facilities in the camps apparently were in place for up to a year and a half, undetected by American or Afghan spies or surveillance plane.

“I do worry about the rebirth of AQ in Afghanistan because of what their target list will be us,” former deputy director of the CIA Michael Morell said.

Campbell had said that the Haqqani network remains an important “facilitator” for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The two groups, he said, share a goal of “expelling coalition forces, overthrowing the Afghan government, and re-establishing an extremist state.”

- PTI