

## **Pak-based terror groups target India's interests in Afghanistan: Envoy**

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Coming down heavily on Pakistan for being safe haven for terror groups, Afghan Permanent Representative at the UN, Mahmoud Saikal, said that LeT, Taliban, JeM, al-Qaeda and others target India's interests and goals in Afghanistan.

### **Mahmoud Saikal**

Saikal said that these groups also pursue other objectives like creating sanctuaries and safe havens in tribal areas between Kabul and Islamabad.

"In Afghanistan, regional terrorist groups have cooperated with the Taliban based on their common goals and mutual interests. These groups include Lashkar-e-Taiba, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Islam, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Eastern Turkistan Islamic movement. These groups pose a strategic threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan," Saikal said here at an open briefing of the Counter- Terrorism Committee on foreign terrorists yesterday.

He said these terror groups "pursue a few objectives" in Afghanistan, the main among them being "revival of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, targeting India's interests and goals in Afghanistan" and forming "strategic alliances with international terrorist networks in the region and world."

These groups also seek withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, creating bases and safe havens in northern and north-eastern provinces and using them as a platform for "undermining and toppling" Central Asian "secular" governments, Saikal said.

They also pursue the objective of creating "sanctuaries and safe havens" in tribal areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan and along the Durand Line, the 2,430-kilometre long international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He said there are 6,100 foreign fighters in Afghanistan, based mainly in eastern and north-eastern provinces. Among them about 1,800-2,000 have pledged allegiance to the ISIS.

"We also have Pakistani terrorist groups like JeM, Lashkar-e-Islam also cooperating with the Taliban in eastern and south-eastern provinces of Afghanistan," Saikal said.

The threat of foreign fighters and regional terror groups are of "growing concern" to Afghanistan and the world, the Afghan envoy said.

"Improving the implementation of counter-terrorism resolutions is crucial, especially the UN Security Council (resolutions). Speed is the essence and at the moment, terror is moving fast. I hope we can catch up with it soon," he said.

In a scathing attack on Pakistan last month, Afghanistan had said the killing of notorious terrorist leaders, including Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Mansour in "safe havens" in Pakistan, prove that it violated sovereignty of other nations and the country needs political will and not "nuclear deals or F-16s" to take action against terrorists.

Saikal had accused "elements within the state structure of Pakistan" of facilitating most of the terrorist groups active in the region and had warned that a country using "good and bad terrorists" against each other is "playing with fire".

- With PTI Inputs