

Taliban head says he called academy attack

by UPI

LAHORE, Pakistan -- A Pakistani Taliban chief claimed responsibility for the attack on a police academy in Lahore in which 30 cadets and academy employees died.

Baitullah Mehsud said he ordered followers to carry out Monday's attack and resulting eight-hour standoff with law enforcement officials, The Times of London reported Tuesday. He is the leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan -- or Movement of Taliban, Pakistan.

A second group, Fedayeen-i-Islam, also claimed responsibility for the deadly assault on the academy.

"Yes, we have carried out this attack. I will give details later," said Mehsud, who is believed to have ties with al-Qaida.

He said the attack was "in retaliation for the continued drone strikes by the U.S. in collaboration with Pakistan on our people," the British newspaper reported. The attacks would continue "until the Pakistan government stops supporting the Americans."

Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik said the militants involved in Monday's attack come from Mehsud's base in South Waziristan.

Malik said three of the 10- to 12 militants blew themselves up during the final assault, and commandos rescued 10 police being held hostage inside the main academy building. The assault began during morning drills.

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