

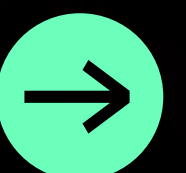
The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA): Origins, Insurgency, and Major Attacks



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Overview

- **Full name:** Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)
- **Founded:** 2000
- **Type:** Baloch separatist militant organization
- **Fighter Strength:** Known to have at least 6,000 cadre
- **Primary area of operation:** Balochistan, southwestern Pakistan
- **Main objective:** Independence for Balochistan



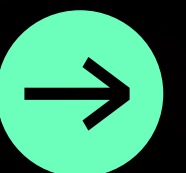
Safe Havens and Training Grounds

Balochistan's mountainous areas provide refuge and training grounds for insurgents and Islamist militants.



- Amplified the BLA's narrative of Baloch victimhood.
- Connected different sections of Baloch society.
- Fueled a more radical form of Baloch nationalism.

Social Media's Role



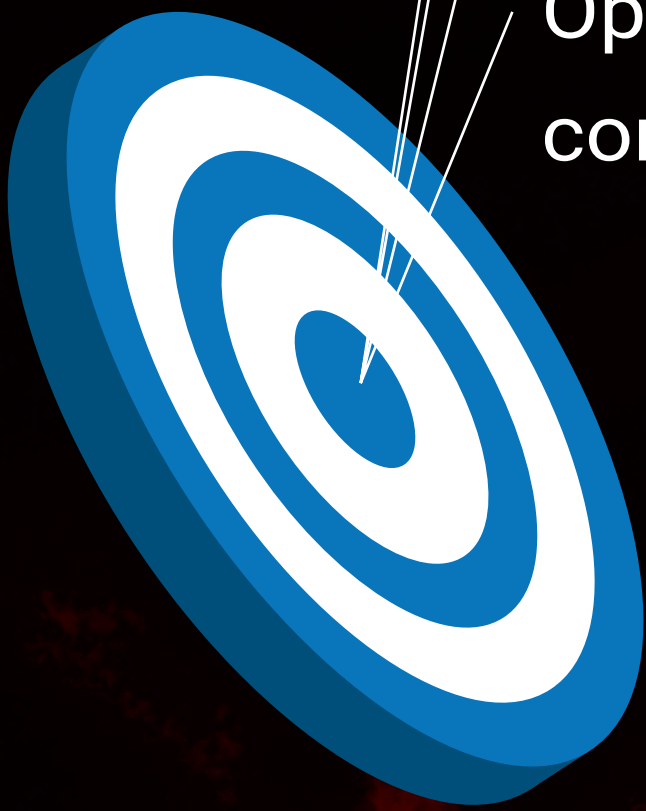
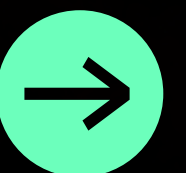
Goals and Motivations

Seeks independence for Balochistan.

Opposes federal government control over the province's natural resources and security.

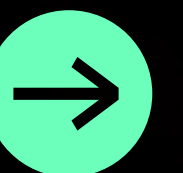
Claims Balochistan's gas and mineral wealth belongs to its people.

Opposes Chinese involvement in projects it views as contributing to the exploitation of the province.



Main Targets

- ① Pakistani military and security forces.
- ① Chinese nationals and Chinese-linked projects.
- ① Infrastructure, including railways.
- ① Civilians and migrant labourers from other Pakistani provinces have also been targeted, according to Reuters.



Geographic Focus



Core region: Balochistan, Pakistan.

1

2

Other reported locations: Karachi and other areas outside Balochistan.

Balochistan borders Afghanistan to the north and Iran to the west.

3



Why **Balochistan** Matters?



Home to Gwadar deep-water port, a major Chinese investment interest.



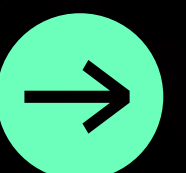
Part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative.



Contains major mineral resources and mining projects, including Reko Diq, a gold and copper project operated by Barrick Gold.

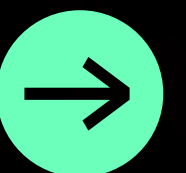


Its strategic location includes a coastline along the Arabian Sea.



Regional and Security Context

- 1 Pakistan accuses India and Afghanistan of supporting the militants; both countries deny the allegations.
- 2 The insurgency has contributed to prolonged insecurity in Balochistan.
- 3 The province has also experienced protests by Baloch activists over alleged abuses by security forces; the Pakistani government denies those allegations.



International Terrorist Designations

- ✔ **2019:** The United States designated the BLA as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) organization.
- ✔ **August 11, 2025:** The United States designated the BLA as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), a more severe designation under US law.
- ✔ **Global Terrorism Index 2026:** Pakistan ranked first among countries most affected by terrorism, with the BLA identified as its second most active armed group after the TTP.
- ✔ **Pakistan's Ban (2006):** Pakistan proscribed the BLA in 2006 following attacks on civilians and security personnel.



Leadership Evolution

1

Early leader: Balach Marri, son of Baloch nationalist leader Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri.

2

Leadership shift: Moved away from figures linked to the Marri tribe.

3

Current leadership profile: Includes educated Baloch figures, some formerly associated with the non-violent Baloch Students Organization (BSO).

Reported Tactics



Guerrilla attacks and ambushes



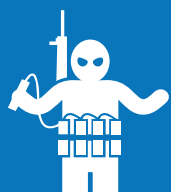
Explosive attacks: IEDs, car bombs, landmines, and grenades



Mortar strikes and sniper fire



Suicide attacks, including attacks involving women



Coordinated gun and bomb attacks



Railway sabotage



Highway attacks targeting passengers



Hostage-taking

The BLA is the second South Asian insurgent group to hijack a train.



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Source: InDepthNews (3 September, 2024).

Source: Mapping Militants Project, Stanford University

Source: U.S. News & World Report (4 February, 2026).

Source: The Diplomat (April, 2025).



Major Attacks by the BLA's Majeed Brigade (Armed Wing)

August 2018

Dalbandin

First claimed attack by the Majeed Brigade on a Chinese target.

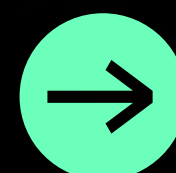
Target: Chinese engineers working at the Saindak mineral reserves.

3 Chinese nationals injured.



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Source: Jamestown Foundation (2022).



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November 2018

Chinese Consulate, Karachi

- ✔ Armed attack on the Chinese consulate.
- ✔ **7 people died in total:** 4 victims (2 police officers and 2 Pakistani civilians) and 3 attackers.
- ✔ No Chinese nationals were injured.

May 2019

Pearl Continental Hotel, Gwadar

- ✔ Armed attack on a hotel popular with Chinese visitors and businesspeople.
- ✔ **5 victims killed:** 4 hotel employees and 1 Pakistan Navy soldier.
- ✔ All 3 attackers were also killed.



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Source: South China Morning Post (23 November, 2018).
Source: Dawn (12 May, 2019).



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January 25–26, 2022

Kech District

- ✓ BLA claimed responsibility for an attack on a security forces' checkpoint.
- ✓ 10 Pakistani soldiers killed.
- ✓ The military reported that one attacker was killed and several others injured.

February 2, 2022

Panjgur and Naushki

- ✓ Coordinated attacks targeted security forces' camps in both locations.
- ✓ Panjgur: 1 Pakistani soldier killed.
- ✓ Naushki: 4 attackers killed and 1 officer injured.
- ✓ The BLA claimed responsibility for both attacks.



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Source: Dawn (2 February. 2022).



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April 26, 2022

University of Karachi Suicide Attack

- ✔ **4 killed:** 3 Chinese nationals and 1 Pakistani driver.
- ✔ 4 injured.
- ✔ A female suicide bomber detonated near the entrance of the Confucius Institute as a van carrying staff approached.

March 2025

Jaffar Express Hijacking, Balochistan

- ✔ BLA militants hijacked the Jaffar Express after blowing up railway tracks.
- ✔ The train was carrying approximately 450 passengers.
- ✔ Pakistani security services said around 190 hostages were rescued.
- ✔ Casualties: 33 militants and 21 hostages were reported killed by officials.

Important: The BLA separately claimed it had killed 50 hostages.



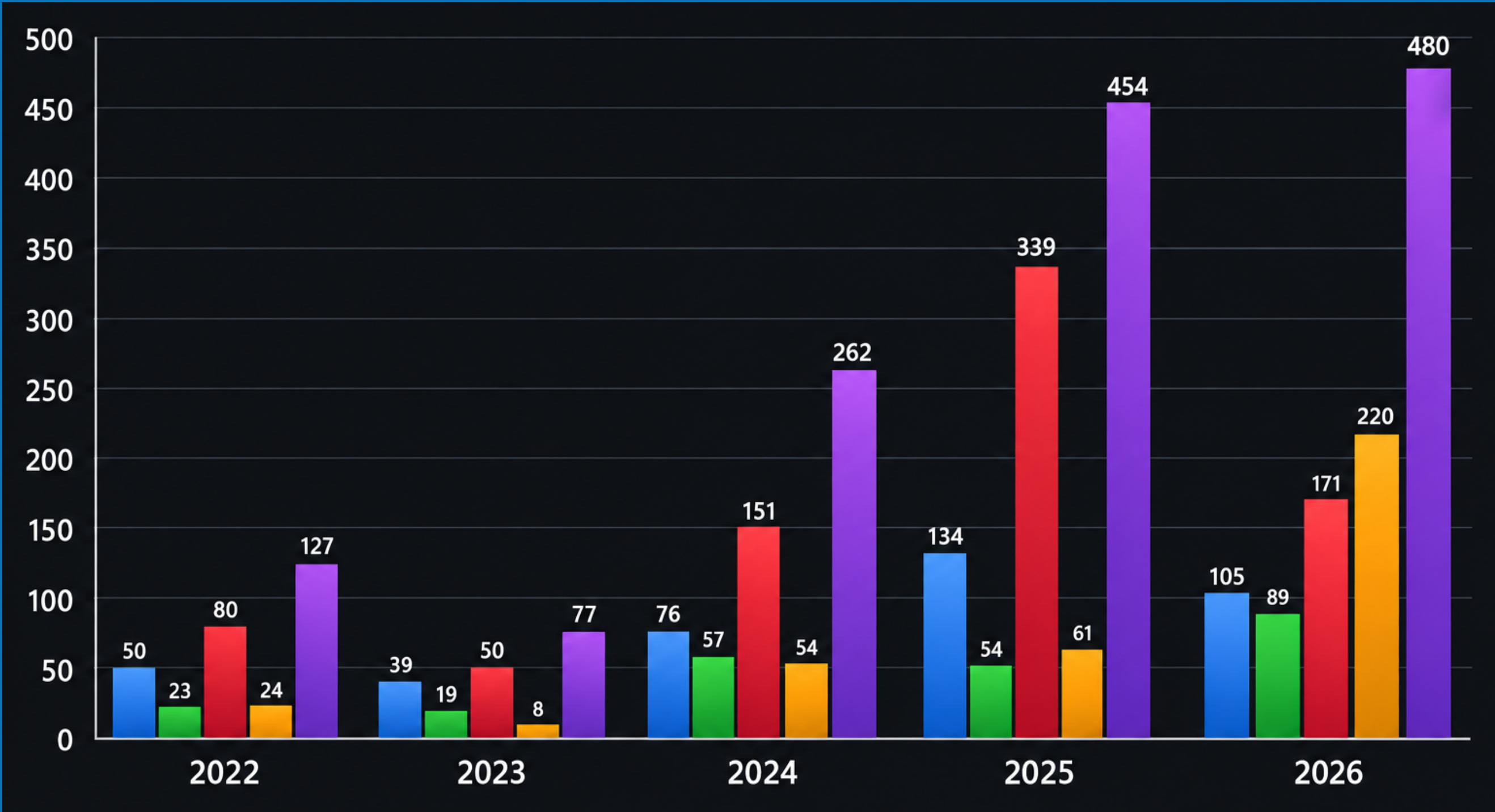
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Source: Dawn (26 April. 2022).

Source: The Guardian (12 March, 2025).



Yearly Fatalities



- Incidents of killing
- Civilians
- Security forces
- Terrorists/insurgents/extremists
- Total fatalities



Funding Sources

Illicit activities: Alleged income from extortion, smuggling, drug trafficking, and kidnappings for ransom.

Coal mining: An analyst identifies income from Balochistan's coal mines as a major source.

Diaspora support: Some members of the Baloch diaspora reportedly provide financial assistance.

External funding claims: Pakistan accuses India of funding the BLA, but the source says these allegations lack publicly established proof.

Weapons supply: Reportedly obtains weapons through black markets in Iran and Afghanistan, including leftover U.S. weapons from Afghanistan.

