Background

- Formed in 2007, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a subset of the Pakistan Taliban, aims to remove the Pakistan government’s influence in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province region, which merged with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in 2018 in Pakistan; implement strict Sharia law; and expel US forces from Afghanistan. Additionally, TTP leadership has expressed its goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate in Pakistan.

- TTP is an umbrella organization made up of over 40 separate tribal factions located within the KPK region, with several other factions having a loose affiliation with the group. In 2007, the 40 separate tribes united under the new TTP banner as a way of strengthening their defensive capabilities against the Pakistan government.

- TTP maintains a close relationship with al-Qaeda, as both groups share resources and territory. Historically, al-Qaeda has provided TTP with ideological guidance, while TTP has supplied al-Qaeda with safe havens in Pakistan along the border with Afghanistan.

TTP poses a low threat to New Jersey due to its territorial losses in Pakistan, the United States targeting its leaders, and internal conflicts constraining the group to regional operations, despite prior plots against the United States. TTP has never succeeded in conducting an attack in the United States; however, the group continues to entice Americans to provide monetary and material support.

- In response to TTP attacks, the Pakistan army conducted several operations on TTP-held territory in February 2017, specifically targeting commanders and supporters and weakening the group’s capabilities. Additionally, after TTP attacked Jinnah International Airport in Karachi in 2014, Pakistan’s military launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb, targeting the group’s strongholds and forcing TTP to abandon its positions in the FATA.

- In February 2018, the US military killed TTP deputy leader Khan Said Mehsud in a drone strike, according to a TTP press release. The United States has targeted TTP since its creation with drone strikes, limiting the group’s ability to function in the region and eliminating its safe haven. Additionally, US forces killed the group’s founder and his successor in two separate strikes.

- In October 2014, four months after ISIS declared the formation of its self-proclaimed caliphate, a TTP representative and several tribal chiefs pledged allegiance to ISIS’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, creating fractures within TTP’s ranks and limiting its capabilities and resources.

US Nexus

- In 2017, TTP began releasing a magazine in English titled Sunnat E Khailu that targets female Muslims. Its goal is to “provoke women of Islam to come forward and join the ranks of mujahideen e Islam.” The first edition featured an interview with the wife of TTP’s leader and articles calling for Muslim women to embrace Islamic principles and reject the Western perception of women. TTP only published two editions in 2017, initially released on its Telegram channel.

- In August 2013, Hafiz Khan of Miami received a sentence of 25 years in prison for sending approximately $50,000 to Pakistan to support TTP.

- In January 2012, court officials sentenced Irfan UI Haq to 50 months in prison for conspiracy to provide material support to TTP. Additionally, in December 2011, court officials sentenced Qasim Ali to 40 months in prison and Zahid Yousaf to 36 months in prison for the same offense. The three individuals allegedly attempted to smuggle someone they believed to be a member of TTP into the United States.

- In May 2010, Faisal Shahzad attempted to detonate a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in New York City after traveling to Pakistan in July 2009 to receive explosives training from TTP. Following the attempted attack, authorities arrested Shahzad at John F. Kennedy International Airport, and he received a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole in October 2010. Following the incident, a TTP spokesperson claimed responsibility for the plot.