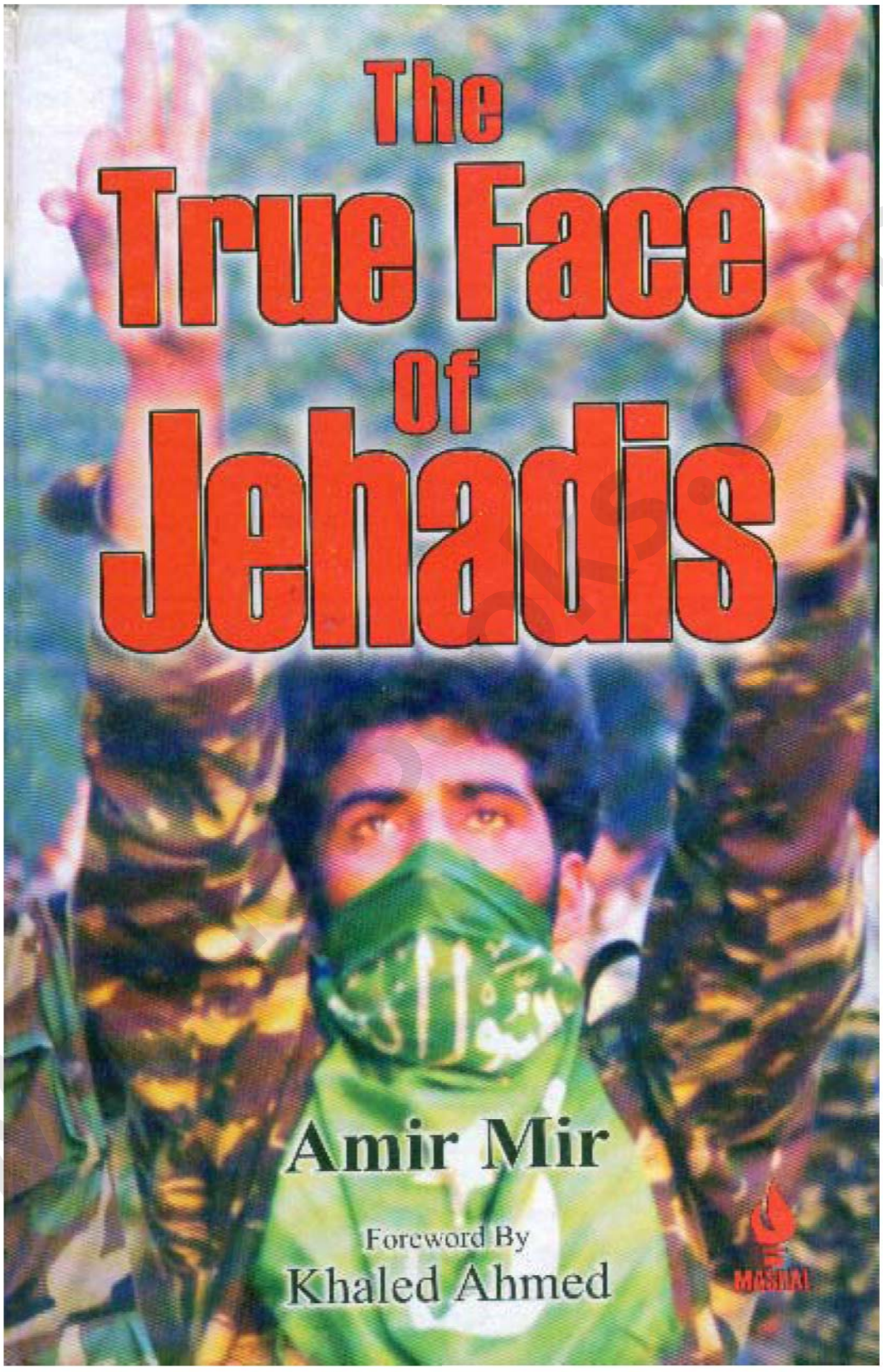

The
True Face
of
Jehadis
Amir Mir
Foreword By
Khaled Ahmed
MASHAL

Chapter 1

The rise of militant Islam in Pakistan

With the end of the Cold War, the militant Islam, popularly known as jehad, had emerged as a global security issue in the West, but not without posing serious challenges to state authority in many Muslim countries especially Pakistan, that became a breeding ground for Islamic militants with the beginning of the Afghan jehad against the Soviet occupation forces in 1979.

Islamic militancy and religious extremism had emerged as potentially the most threatening forms of international terrorism since the closing years of 1980s, though it has little to do with Islamic teachings as such. Until the 1980s, religion remained largely a personal matter. It was perhaps deeply ingrained in the national identity, but was kept apart from the day-to-day functioning of the state and the life of the general public. However, with the advent of General Ziaul Haq's 1977 martial law, the clergy became powerful, making Pakistan the chief patron and promoter of the Islamic militancy.

Islamabad's open and official association with Islamist politics began with Zia's 1977 coup against Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's elected government, and it was under the general's rule that narrow and bigoted religiosity became Pakistan's state policy. In order to gain legitimacy for his rule and to develop close relations with Muslim countries, especially oil-rich Saudi Arabia, General Zia projected himself as a champion and his country the citadel of Islam. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan provided him with an opportunity to declare that Islam was in danger in Kabul and jehad should be waged to expel the "infidel" troops from Afghanistan.

On the domestic front, General Zia sought political support of the mullahs for his illegitimate dictatorial regime, for he had no other political base. As the Russian occupation had already angered the US, its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was made to organise and finance Islamic resistance groups against the Soviet occupation troops. The CIA soon started organising armed religious groups in Afghanistan, in cooperation with Pakistan. Under CIA's supervision, thousands of volunteers from various parts of the world were sent across the Afghan border to fight out the Soviet troops.

Besides United States, China, Saudi Arabia and many other Muslim countries poured in huge resources in men, material and money to organise resistance to the Soviet forces. Overnight, thousands of the Afghan refugees who had taken shelter in Pakistan were converted into mujahideen. With the advent of 1980s, a sophisticated, well-equipped infrastructure to train militant Islamists was fully

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available to the Zia regime. The CIA then tasked Pakistan's premier intelligence agency – the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), to regulate the mujahideen operations and provide advice and support to them.

The Zia regime was so much committed with the Afghan jehad that it even used commandos from the Army's Special Services Group (SSG) to guide the guerilla operations in Afghanistan. According to careful estimates, the ISI trained about 85,000 Afghan mujahideen during the Afghan jehad, which also resulted in the enhancement of the ISI's covert action capabilities. A number of officers from the ISI's Covert Action Division received training in the US and many covert action experts of the CIA were attached to the ISI for guidance in its guerilla operations against the Soviet troops by using the Afghan mujahideen and the Islamic fundamentalists from Pakistan. The Afghan war soon brought together militants from all over the Muslim world and Afghanistan was turned into a training ground for fighters drawn from various parts of the world.

This was bound to revive the idea of Pan-Islamism that lay buried under the debris of the *Khilafat* movement of the early 1920's. And General Zia was there to patronise the idea, as he relied more and more on obscurantist elements for political support. While acting as a frontline state in the Afghan war, Pakistan assumed a supervisory role for training mujahideen and a large number of Muslim youth from other countries in the Middle East to participate in the jehad. The Pakistani religious parties did not lag far behind in providing volunteers for the Afghan civil war. A large number of training camps were set up along the Pak-Afghan border to impart religious indoctrination and military training to such volunteers.

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet occupation forces from Afghanistan in 1989, the CIA was also withdrawn from the scene, leaving it to Pakistan to deal with the mess of Islamic militancy created by the Americans. What remained after the Soviet withdrawal was a huge force of highly motivated, militarily trained Islamic militants, who were now looking for new pastures. Since there was no dearth of funds from domestic as well as foreign sources, Pakistan had at its disposal all the means required for the pursuit of promoting and sustaining Islamic militancy and utilising the same to become one of the leading lights of the Islamic world.

During the Afghan war, the ISI had especially favoured the *Hizb-e-Islami* led by Pushtun leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, hoping that once in power, Hekmatyar would protect and promote Islamabad's strategic interests. But following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and even after the fall of Dr. Najibullah government in 1992, Hekmatyar could not attain power in Kabul. The ISI then devised a plan to raise a militia of the Taliban as an alternative to Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*.

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Initially most of the Afghan youth constituting the Taliban militia were the product of Maulana Fazlur Rahman's *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*-run *deeni* (religious) madrassas in the Frontier and Baluchistan Provinces bordering Afghanistan. The major chunk of the former Taliban regime as well as soldiers actually came from two schools – *Darul Uloom* set up by Maulana Abdul Haq at *Akora Khattak* and the Binori Chain of madrassas, the centre of which is situated in Binori Town in Karachi.

At least three members of the Taliban *ameer* Mullah Mohammad Omar's six-member Governing Council and some of the top military commanders of the Taliban had emerged from the Binori Town madrassa or one of its affiliated schools scattered all over Pakistan. Sunni fundamentalists to the core and highly motivated, many of the Taliban had taken part in the Afghan war who, after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, had returned to their schools. It was from among those that while acting in unison with the ISI, Pakistan's former Interior Minister Major General (retd) Naseerullah Khan Babar recruited and raised the Taliban militia in the Spin Baldak area of Kandahar inside Afghanistan. Six months before the emergence of the Taliban, camps were set up by Pakistan's Frontier Corps to train the Taliban militia, before they were sent to fight against Afghan local warlords.

In 1994, the Taliban forces were able to capture Kandahar and Herat regions, culminating in the September 1996 occupation of Kabul after making Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani's government and his supporters flee to the north, and thus bringing nearly two-thirds of Afghanistan under their control. Thus was catapulted to power in Afghanistan the Taliban militia of hardliner Sunni Muslims and highly motivated Afghan young fighters, trained, armed, funded, equipped and guided by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence.

After the Soviet's withdrawal from Afghanistan, the new agenda for thousands of Pakistani militants was to liberate the Indian Held Kashmir (Jammu & Kashmir). By the end of 1989, most of the Pakistan-based jehadi outfits and the graduates of the Afghan war were joining the jehad in Kashmir. What began as an indigenous and secular movement for liberation, soon became an increasingly Islamist crusade to bring all of Kashmir under the Pakistani control. Within a couple of years, many Pakistan-based militant groups, especially the *Hizbul Mujahideen*, gained more prominence and significance as compared to the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front and other secular Kashmiri groups that believed in political struggle to achieve their goal of liberation.

By 1992, the ISI was accused of operating 13 permanent, 18 temporary and 8 joint military training camps for the Kashmiri youth. By the summer of 1992, some 3,800 Kashmiri militants were located in those camps. By late 1990, an estimated

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5,000 Kashmiris were receiving military training in Azad Kashmir and other parts of Pakistan. By the beginning of 1993, an estimated 20,000 young Kashmiris had been trained and armed by Pakistan to fight out the Indian occupation forces in the J&K. In early 1995, Pakistani officials reportedly estimated that at least 10,000 Islamic militants (other than of Kashmiri origin) were trained on the Pak-Afghan border since the end of the Afghan war in 1989. At the end of 1995, it was reported that the ISI, in collaboration with *the Jamaat-e-Islami*, was raising a Taliban-type force comprising of young students from Pakistan with the sole purpose of fighting Indian forces in Jammu & Kashmir.

In the process, however, Pakistan became home, a base and transit point for outside operation for many militant groups active in various parts of the world. Resultantly, the fallout of Pakistani military establishment's policy of nursing, promoting and sponsoring Islamic militancy is very much there for everyone to see. Even after a lapse of 15 years since the end of the Afghan war, Islamabad seems struggling hard to control the jehadi monster nurtured by Zia. Analysts, therefore, perceive the Musharraf-led civilian government's anti-jehadi drive as its growing nervousness at the challenges the radical Islamists pose to Pakistan's 'vital national interests'.

Some strict anti-jehadi measures taken by Pakistan's first commando President, coupled with his efforts towards peace with India, have already infuriated thousands of Islamic militants, who had spent the past decade in waging a so-called jehad against the 'enemy troops' in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. Even before the signing of the January 2004 Islamabad agreement by Musharraf and Vajpayee, most of the Pakistani militant outfits had taken with a pinch of salt Musharraf's offer to New Delhi -- that Islamabad is ready to drop its erstwhile demand for a plebiscite in the disputed territory of Jammu & Kashmir and to resolve the issue by 'meeting halfway somewhere'. For most of the militant groups operating in the Valley, an Indo-Pak dialogue means handing over of Kashmir to Pakistan on a platter; nothing less than that.

Thus, they want Pakistan not to discuss any other issue with India except the 'core issue' of Kashmir. To them, the only solution to the lingering dispute of Kashmir is to hand it over to Pakistan at once. Thousands of militants belonging to various guerrilla groups - including Syed Salahuddin-led *Hizbul Mujahideen*, Hafiz Saeed-led *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, Masood Azhar-led *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, Fazlur Rahman Khalil-led *Harkatul Mujahideen* etc. -- had been waging an armed struggle against the Indian occupation forces inside the Jammu & Kashmir. Though Islamabad used to insist before the 9/11 terror attacks that it only provides moral support to the militant outfits waging jehad in the Held Kashmir, New Delhi was consistent in its stand that the Inter Services Intelligence fully backs these militant groups with logistic and financial support.

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However, after the 9/11 attacks, Washington and New Delhi's interest to curb the jehadi groups fighting the Indian security forces in J&K dovetailed neatly, compelling Musharraf to roll back his establishment's policy of nurturing jehad and the jehadis. Since 9/11, a visibly worried and perturbed US leadership seems keen on evolving some kind of safeguards against the ever-increasing threat of terrorism emanating from the neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan. As Islamabad moved swiftly to address the American concerns by distancing itself from the Kashmir jehad, the militant outfits that had long depended on the ISI support for their guerrilla activities described the policy change as a betrayal to their struggle for independence.

Since Musharraf threw in his lot with the United States, he is wrestling to gain control over the 10,000-strong ISI. Transforming the agency from one that abetted Islamic militancy to one that combats the same is fundamental to both Musharraf and the United States. But analysts believe it is a daunting task. Commonly branded "a state within the state" or an "invisible government", the ISI had been sponsoring the Kashmiri militants in the Jammu and Kashmir for the past one decade. However, having joined hands with the United States in late 2001, the Musharraf administration began to disband two major units of its powerful intelligence service that had close links to Islamic militants in Afghanistan and Jammu & Kashmir.

Though the policy change was not announced publicly, the fact is that it was one of the most significant shifts emerging from Pakistan's decision to align itself with the West during the crisis in Afghanistan and to reduce ties with Islamic militants there and in Kashmir. However, despite taking tough measures against jehadis in Pakistan, the supporting structures continue to breed more jehadis due to the weaknesses in the state structure and the connivance of the state. This is primarily because of the fact that the unholy alliance between Pakistan's security agencies and jehadi groups is quite old and has ideological bonds. With changing scenarios all over the world, there has been a change of minds, though there is a need of a change of hearts towards jehadis by sympathisers in Pakistan's defence and intelligence establishments.

In the current environment, the apparent failure of the Musharraf-led regime to counter Islamist militancy and religious extremism is all the more inexplicable, since the country claims to have handed over more than 500 al-Qaeda operatives to the US authorities since the war on terror began. The will to contain Islamist extremist groups that are not on America's list of priorities appears to be absent and a significant number of such groups continue to operate within the country, many of them with apparent immunity. The leadership of several such groups, most visibly the *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Harkatul Mujahideen* and

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Hizbul Mujahideen - despite an official ban - continue to enjoy full freedom of movement and speech.

On the other hand, however, despite the ouster of the BJP government in India, peace efforts between New Delhi and Islamabad are still on. But what has become a major source of worry for the proponents of peace is India's allegation that the ISI has re-opened militant training camps in large numbers in Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas. A June 2004 Indian Home Ministry report alleged that the largest militant training camp was located in the Jungle-Mangal area where nearly 300 militants, mostly foreign mercenaries, were being trained for terrorist activities.

A July 15, 2004 feature on www.samachar.com titled "*Kashmir: keeping the talks going*" stated: "Musharraf obviously is playing a double game as usual. On the one hand, he is sending his emissaries to meet their Indian counterparts; on the other, he is keeping his jehadis in good mood. How can one ever trust such a leader?" The same day (July 15, 2004), US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage reiterated that Pakistan had not yet dismantled militant camps in Azad Kashmir. "I was correctly quoted (in India on July 14, 2004) when I noted that all the terrorist camps (in Azad Kashmir) have not been dismantled," Armitage told reporters after talks with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar.

But analysts believe that these are still early days to predict the precise shape of Musharraf's future handling of the Kashmir policy and it will not be easy for him to torpedo the Indo-Pak peace process, primarily of the US pressure. The major problem for Musharraf is that he cannot back off from the peace process because not only would it allow India to tighten its grip over the Valley, it would also be under no compulsion to talk to Pakistan and resolve the festering Kashmir issue. Though much will depend on progress of the Indo-Pak peace initiative, there are clear signs that Musharraf's U-turn on Kashmir has driven a wedge between jehadi leaders and their once all-powerful spy masters, primarily because of the changing nature and interpretation of the military establishment's 'national interests'.

As the national interests of the military establishment and those of the Islamists are no longer fully compatible with each other, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, General Pervez Musharraf and his jehadi opponents are clearly on a collision course. The twin suicide attacks on General Musharraf on December 25, 2003 in Rawalpindi were a classic example of the monster rising to consume its creator. The deadly attempts showed that the ISI-nurtured jehadi outfits have closed their ranks and are acting in unison to physically eliminate a key US ally in its war on terror.

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Interestingly enough, those who most want Musharraf dead had traditionally been the closest allies of the General and his all-powerful military establishment. In Afghanistan as well as in Kashmir, Pakistan's intelligence agencies literally hit a jackpot when they realised the efficacy of covert warfare as a potent method of bleeding a stronger adversary while keeping the element of plausible deniability. In Afghanistan, a majority of the resistance cadres came from within the ranks of the motivated Islamic militants who were prepared to die for the cause as well as to kill the communists.

The same policy was used in Jammu and Kashmir, which also created a nexus between groups fighting in Afghanistan and those operating in the Kashmir Valley. But the military establishment's policy of using Islamic militants had its flipside. They played ball with the state until it suited them, which meant making space for their jehadi activities and propagation of their ideology. They did not and do not believe in a nation-state. Pan-Islamism is their creed. That ideology runs contrary to Musharraf's changed policy of 'Pakistan-first'. It also militates against the state policy of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. So, having changed track, General Musharraf now faces a dilemma since there are those in the establishment who believe that he will not be able to change the nature of relationship between the militants and the military overnight, even if he sincerely wishes to.

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Chapter 2

Jehadis vs General: Friends turned Foes

General Pervez Musharraf's revelations in a television interview with ARY on June 4, 2004, that some junior officials of the Pakistan Army and the Pakistan Air Force had been arrested for their alleged involvement in an assassination attempt on him in Rawalpindi in December 2003, served only to confirm what had till now been a conjecture: Islamist extremists and their ideological partners in the garrison are acting in unison to eradicate the key American ally in the US-led war against terror.

Arguably, the deadliest of at least six abortive attempts he countenanced from the time he deposed Mian Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, General Musharraf survived miraculously after two suicide bombers rammed his motorcade with their bomb-laden cars at a petrol station two kilometers from his residence in Rawalpindi, adjoining Islamabad, killing 16 people and injuring 54 others on 25th December, 2003. According to the contents of the most extensive military investigation of a crime in Pakistan, a Pakistani national considered to be the key contact person for the top al-Qaeda leadership wove a web of religious freaks in the Pakistan-based jehadi groups, Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force and Rawalpindi police to execute the two assassination attempts on Musharraf. The military investigation of the two successive attempts in December 2003 was headed by Commander 10 Corps (Rawalpindi) Lieutenant-General Ashfaq Kiyani, who had marshaled dozens of military investigators for about four months until General Musharraf was informed about the completion of the investigation and identification of all suspects in May 2004.

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A few days after the suicide attempts, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) arrested Muhammad Naeem (number 4202) of the Special Branch, Capital Police, Islamabad, for his possible links with the December 25 attempt on Musharraf. Mohammad Naeem had received a call on his cell phone a few minutes before the suicide attacks which made him a suspect. The call was tracked to the cell phone of Mohammad Jameel, one of the two suicide attackers and a *Jaish-e-Mohammad* activist from Balakot in Azad Kashmir. The other suicide bomber was identified as Hazir Sultan, a *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* operative belonging to the Panjsher valley of Afghanistan. It is now known that the two suicide car bombers who nearly missed the president's car were getting live information on his motorcade's movement through another police official, assigned to Rawalpindi's Civil Lines police station. Mohammad Naeem was deployed at the Convention Centre in Islamabad where Musharraf had gone to preside over a function. Investigators believe, Naeem contacted Jameel on his cell and gave him the precise location of the presidential convoy.

Naeem's alleged role proved that the assassination attempts could not have been just the handiwork of the al-Qaeda and it could also have involved those in Musharraf's inner circle who turned against him for reversing Pakistan's Afghan and Kashmir policies. The two suicide bombers had links with the intelligence agencies before they went to fight in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance a few years ago. Jameel, 23, was a resident of Torarh, in Poonch district, Azad Kashmir. His identity was established after the detectives rummaging through the debris and human body parts recovered his torso and national identity card. Post 9/11, Jameel and Sultan were captured by the Northern Alliance troops. They were among the several hundred Pakistani jehadis whom Kabul had released after negotiations with Islamabad. On their return to Pakistan, they were set free by their intelligence minders who could now have instigated them to launch the attacks.

On December 25, 2003, in the half-hour before Mohammed Jameel ended his life, he was a busy man. As he sat in a pickup truck loaded with deadly explosives, he made and received no fewer than 109 calls on his cell phone, talking, at least in some cases, to accomplices in his effort to incinerate the khaki President of Pakistan. Jameel might have assumed that the evidence he was creating would disintegrate in the blast he planned for Musharraf. If he did, he was wrong. Not only did he and a second car bomber fail to kill Musharraf in their December 25 attempt, but also the memory card of Jameel's cell phone, which investigators found intact amid the detritus of the blasts, has led authorities to dozens of suspected collaborators.

Interestingly, during his days of captivity in Baharak Jail, Punjsher Valley in Afghanistan where he was held by the Northern Alliance, Mohammad Jameel

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had projected himself as a Captain of the Pakistan Army. However, the Pakistani authorities deny Jameel's claim, saying that he might have done so to minimise the volume of the humiliation being meted out to the Pakistani captives by the Northern Alliance troops. Here goes the official version: "As a matter of fact, after his defeat on several war fronts at the hands of the Taliban troops which were now marching towards the Punjsher Valley, the commander of the Northern Alliance forces Ahmed Shah Masood had released a fabricated list of the Pakistan Army prisoners to mislead the international community. Projecting the jehadi prisoners from Pakistan as members of the Pakistan Army was the only way left for Masood to get a face-saving and to give an impression to the world it was the Pakistani Army which was helping the Taliban move forward at various war fronts, especially in those areas which were once considered as power pockets of Masood"

"In order to get statements of their liking, the Pakistani prisoners were severely tortured by the Northern Alliance forces. The prisoners were told that the only way to save their lives was to make confessions in accordance with the wishes of Ahmed Shah Masood. Mohammad Jameel, who was apprehended while taking shelter in a mosque of Chareaka, South of Kabul, was the first one who surrendered his will at the mercy of his captors by falsely admitting that he was a member of the Pakistani army with the rank of Captain. Audio films and photographic sessions were held in which these prisoners were shown before the selected foreign journalists. After keeping them for over seven months, all of them including Jameel were shifted to Siraj Jail for their onward journey from Baghram airport to an under ground jail in Tehran (Iran) where they remained for the next five months".

"They were once again asked the same single question of being members of Pakistan's armed forces. The prisoners pleaded to have nothing to do with the Pakistan Army and they were the members of mujahideen groups, which were aiding the Taliban forces against the Northern Alliance forces. In Tehran jail, the persons who spoke Urdu fluently interrogated them while two prisoners were kept in a cell with heavy guards. During the period of their detention of five months, they were never allowed to see daylight. After five months, they were again handed over to Ahmed Shah Masood back at the Tajikistan airport from where they were shifted to District Farkhar of Southern province of Talaqan for another year".

"At least four futile attempts of jail-breaking were made by Jameel and his companions thrice in Afghanistan and once in Tehran Jail. In one particular futile jail-breaking attempt, one of Jameel's co-prisoner, who was identified as the real planner, was shot dead in front of his fellow prisoners by jail authorities who did not remove the dead body for six days just to terrify the others not to follow suit.

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Jameel made yet another plan of jail-break by taking into confidence two other prisoners, Mehmood, an Arab Mujahid and Khial Mohammad, who was from Baluchistan."

"Though they were successful in jail-breaking, the Arab Mujahid lost his life due to the severe cold wave on the snow-caped mountains. The Gujjar tribe had helped Jameel and his friend Khial in crossing over to Taliban-controlled area. Having spent just 20 days in Pakistan, Jameel again left for Afghanistan to fight against the Northern Alliance but was again apprehended and handed over to Pakistan when hundreds of Pakistani prisoners were released by the Karzai government as a goodwill gesture but only after full-fledged enquiries which determined that all of them were in Afghanistan just to help out Taliban".

Despite Pakistan government's denials that Mohammad Jameel had nothing to do with the Pakistan Army, an exclusive news report run by the United Press International Washington dateline on February 26, 2004 stated while quoting the US defence intelligence source: "The man who tried to kill General Pervez Musharraf in December was a spy in Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI)". A May 28, 2004 news analysis titled *"Army plot to kill Musharraf: Today's News Four Months Ago"* and carried by the South Asia Analysis Group website claimed that "the Pakistan government had played down the fact that one of the two suicide bombers----Mohammad Jameel, resident of Androot, Police Station Torarh, in Poonch district, Azad Kashmir -- belonged to the Sudan tribe of Azad Kashmir, the same tribe to which Gen. Mohammad Aziz Khan, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and Maj. Gen. (retd) Mohammad Anwar Khan, the President of AJK, belong".

The analysis further stated: "According to a retired senior officer of the Pakistani Police, who continues to be in touch with his former department, some associates of Mohammad Jameel who were rounded up by the Police from his village in the Azad Kashmir told the police during their interrogation that one of the reasons why Jameel volunteered for this suicide mission was his anger over Musharraf's decision to retain the post of Chief of Army Staff (COAS), thereby depriving General Aziz Khan of an opportunity to become the COAS. There are many Sudanis serving in the Pakistan Army in different ranks, but General Aziz Khan was the first Kashmiri to have risen to such a senior position. According to Jameel's associates, he allegedly blamed Musharraf for preventing a Kashmiri from becoming the COAS for the first time in the history of the Pakistani army".

The December 25 suicide attacks on General Musharraf were preceded by another incident on December 14, 2003. Then Musharraf had escaped an assassination bid when a powerful remote-controlled bomb planted under a bridge in Rawalpindi exploded 55 seconds after his convoy passed over it. The

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blast could have proved fatal had the signal jammer system in his bullet-proof car not jammed the remote-controlled device for 55 crucial seconds as the presidential convoy crossed the bridge near the 10 Corps HQ. According to the government sources, two consecutive attempts on General Musharraf's life in a highly protected military area close to the Army House and the corps headquarters could not have been possible without having regular access to top-secret information about the presidential movement. They added that in the two previous attempts in Karachi last year, the suspects included an officer of the rangers and a naval dockyard worker, which means the investigators cannot rule out similar involvement of low-level government officials in the recent attacks.

The government sources further informed that a 'source report' that had spoken about the possibility of a suicide attack on General Musharraf had reached senior levels of the intelligence, but the information did not attract the attention it deserved. The oversight on the part of the Military Intelligence chief who was privy to that intelligence tip but failed to react appropriately led to an immediate transfer of Major General Tariq Majid, who was replaced with General Musharraf's Military Secretary Major General Nadeem Taj. The investigators had highlighted some specific areas where the security lapse was particularly appalling. As far as the bridge blast is concerned, the investigators argued that it would have taken the terrorists hours to lay down 550 pounds of explosives under the culvert and wire them up with the remote-controlled triggers.

The material used to blow up the bridge was C4 explosive, the best quality military plastic explosive, with tremendous velocity. The C4 plastic explosive, mainly manufactured in the United States but widely supplied to military forces around the world, resembles white, uncooked pastry or bread dough, and can be kneaded and moulded into any shape in total safety. The explosive had been expertly tied to each of the five horizontal bars on the sliding side of the bridge that had no load bearing pillars. And the estimate of the quantity of explosives used in the attempt cannot be too far off the mark either: the blast was so powerful that a thick layer of reinforced concrete was literally ripped off the bridge. It is astonishing that the terrorists managed to do all that without being noticed in a military neighbourhood.

According to the investigation agencies, five of Pakistan's leading militant outfits, which have their supporters in the military establishment, are working in tandem with each other to physically eliminate General Musharraf. The 25th December twin suicide attacks on Musharraf's life in Rawalpindi confirmed the involvement of at least two of these jehadi outfits -- Jaish-e-Mohammad and *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*. As stated above, the suicide bombers were identified as Muhammad Jameel, a *Jaish-e-Mohammad* activist from Azad Kashmir and Hazir Sultan, a *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* operative from Afghanistan. The *Jaish* led by

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Maulana Masood Azhar and the *Harkat* headed by Qari Saifullah Akhtar, are components of a five-member "Brigade 313" (the number of companions with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the battle of Badr), launched in 2001 after the US-led Allied Forces attacked Afghanistan. Three other Brigade components included *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* and *Harkatul Mujahideen al-alami*. The Brigade leadership had pledged to target key Pakistani leaders who in their opinion were damaging the cause of jehad to further the American agenda in Pakistan.

That the December 14 and December 25 assassination attempts were carried out by the component of Brigade 313 was confirmed by an arrested leader of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, Akram Lahori, who revealed during interrogations that more than 100 members of the Brigade had sworn in Karachi on the Holy Koran in May 2002 to physically eliminate Musharraf at every cost. Lahori was arrested along with his accomplice Attaur Rehman alias Naeem Bukhari for the US Consulate bombing in Karachi, Mominpura massacre in Lahore and several other sectarian killings. Lahori later guided the investigators to arrest three hardcore activists of *Harkatul Mujahideen al-alami* -- Mohammad Imran, Mohammad Hanif and Sheikh Mohammad Ahmed -- for making an abortive attempt on Musharraf's life in Karachi by blowing up an explosive-laden car.

In light of the revelations made by Akram Lahori and other arrested jehadi leaders, information is being collected about the potential suicide bombers belonging to the five component parties of the Brigade 313, who are still at large. The security agencies have intensified their hunt to arrest at least five members of the Jaish-e-Mohammad and *Jamaat-ul-Furqa* suicide squads. These include Abbas Haider, a resident of Sibi; Naeem, resident of Bhakkar; Adil, resident of Mailsi; Safir, resident of Bhakkar and Tahir, a resident of Mailsi. Five of their associates had died in 2000 while carrying out three suicide missions in Islamabad, Murree and Taxila. Mohammad Sarfraz, a resident of Attock lost his life while conducting the March 17, 2002 suicide attack on the Protestant International Church in Islamabad's diplomatic enclave, which killed half a dozen people.

Three other suicide bombers from the Jaish, (now renamed *Khudam-ul-Islam*) -- Reran Barbary, a resident of Muzaffargarh, Qari Zarrin, a resident of Mansehra and Nawaz Gujjar, a resident of Gujranwala, blew themselves up in less than 24 hours after killing six people inside the Christian School at Gharial in Jhika Gali near Murree on August 5, 2002. Having fled from the scene, the terrorists were trapped by the security agencies near the Kohala Bridge, making them to blow themselves up to escape arrest. And Kamran Butt, a resident of Rawalpindi lost his life while carrying out the August 9, 2002 grenades' attack on the Christian Hospital in Taxila, which had killed four female nurses.

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However, the intelligence agencies failed to identify the bodies of the May 8, 2002 suicide attack in front of the Sheraton Hotel, Karachi that killed 14 people and the June 14, 2002 attack outside the US consulate in Karachi that had killed 12 people. In the first attack, the bomber rammed his explosive-ridden car into a bus, which was carrying French engineers, killing 11 of them and three others. In the second attack, the bomber exploded his car outside the US embassy, killing 12 Pakistanis. Subsequent raids carried out by the authorities led to the arrests of over a dozen suspected suicide bombers besides recovery of a huge quantity of explosives. All those arrested belonged to the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* who conceded during interrogations that the suicide bombing was a part and parcel of their strategy.

The arrested *Jaish* members revealed that the suicide bombings were planned in November 2001 in the wake of the US-led allied forces' attack on Afghanistan, after the operational commander of the outfit Maulana Abdul Jabbar returned to Pakistan and called a meeting at the Balakot training camp. The participants of the meeting decided to resist the increasing US influence in Pakistan through any means possible, including suicide bombings. The suicide missions were launched in March 2002 and continued for the next six months, successfully hitting six targets in Islamabad, Karachi, Murree, Taxila and Bahawalpur. As the agencies directed Masood Azhar to stop these operations, Maulana Abdul Jabbar alias Maulana Umar Farooq disagreed, only to be expelled from the outfit. He subsequently launched his own group, called *Jamaat-ul-Furqa*. But the group's back was literally broken by the agencies when they arrested Jabbar in connection with the 2002 suicide bombings.

Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed stated thrice after the December 25 Rawalpindi attacks that the suicide-bombers, who nearly killed Musharraf, were a mix of outsider and insider jehadis. "Kashmiri and Afghan militant groups were behind the latest assassination attempt on General Pervez Musharraf. Both the suicide bombers have been identified. One of them belonged to Kashmir and the other was from the North West Frontier Province. It's a huge network of terrorists having tentacles from Kashmir to Afghanistan and has international ties," the minister had observed. Information acquired by intelligence sources substantiates Sheikh Rashid's claim.

According to investigation of the two successive attempts in December 2003 that took the military investigators to five towns in the Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and the tribal areas, about 150 suspects including four-dozen PAF and Pakistan Army non-commissioned personnel, were questioned. The investigation showed big administrative holes in the Pakistan Air Force's security apparatus whereas the said force, before the latest investigation, kept no record on the

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movement of its personnel to and from its official residential facilities after office hours. The Air Intelligence, the intelligence wing of the PAF, surprisingly had no wind that its personnel - about two dozen at the Chaklala air base - had been attending meetings with religious extremists and in the first week of December 2003, were making active preparations at the Pakistan Air Force base to bomb the presidential motorcade.

The military investigation also led to the arrest of the civilian religious extremists, including three clerics involved in the indoctrination of the PAF technicians and planning of the attacks. A small group of religious extremists who had stored and supplied the C4 explosives to the Air Force technicians and the suicide bombers have also been arrested. The military investigation headed by Lt. Gen. Kiyani also cited lapses in the presidential security codes and arrangements. Police are responsible for General Musharraf's security as the President of Pakistan. Presidential security codes are governed through an extensively laid procedure called 'Blue Book'. But, a special detachment of the Military Intelligence is responsible for his security as the Chief of Army Staff.

The investigation discovered glaring loopholes in the presidential security plan on December 14 and 25, 2003. The investigators were simply stunned to learn that the Air Force technicians spent two days making several trips beneath the Lai Bridge to strap large quantities of the C4 explosives to the pillars of the bridge, all without being noticed either by the police or the Military Intelligence, which was supposed to keep an eye on this presidential route. The military investigation also focused on the leakage of information about the jamming device in Musharraf's car that had delayed the remote-controlled trigger for the bomb blast at the Lai Bridge on December 14. The investigators believed that this piece of information had prompted the terrorists to use the suicide bombers for the December 25 attack.

On December 14, 2003, attackers - identified as low-level technicians of the Pakistan Air Force - had blasted the Lai Bridge seconds after Musharraf's car on its way from the airport to Army House passed over it in Rawalpindi, the military investigation concluded. The investigators describe the first attempt as an exclusive job of more than a dozen brainwashed-technicians of the Pakistan Air Force who lived nearby in a PAF residential facility. The Air Force technicians were reportedly directed, motivated and armed by the Pakistani contact person of the al-Qaeda. On December 25, 2003, the two suicide bombers who rammed two cars laden with explosives into the presidential motorcade, were motivated by the same al-Qaeda contact aided by his contacts in the Rawalpindi police.

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In a television interview with ARY on June 4, 2004, General Musharraf identified Amjad Farooqui, the man who had also allegedly masterminded the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, as the chief plotter of the two assassination attempts on him in Rawalpindi. In the Punjab police criminal investigation department's 'red book', Amjad Farooqui is serialized as No. 1497 under the name of Amjad Hussain alias Farooqui, alias Haider Ali, son of Mohammed Afzal, a 30-year-old standing five feet seven inches (170 centimeters). Described as a fugitive leader of the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, Amjad is listed in the 'red book' as one coming from Toba Tek Singh, but southern Punjab has been his main playing field.

With a three-million rupee bounty on his head, a nationwide hunt has been intensified to arrest Amjad Farooqui who has turned out to be the right hand man for Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed and a close associate of the al-Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, a key al-Qaeda lieutenant of Osama bin Laden. Omar Saeed was granted death sentence for Daniel Pearl's murder while Khalid Sheikh was nabbed from Rawalpindi in March 2003. Farooqui's links have also been traced to the two suicide bombers in the Rawalpindi assassination attempts on Musharraf and he is now the most wanted man in Pakistan.

The panic that hit Musharraf's security staff after the latest assassination attempts revolves around the problem of creating a watertight security regime. Already, the General is surrounded by a security protocol that can be ranked amongst the most stringent in the world. The only predictable part is the fact that he mostly uses the ring road to get on to the Kashmir highway for his trips between Rawalpindi and Islamabad since it bypasses the busier urban areas. However, before his motorcade sets out, hundreds of security personnel are deployed along the route to check for any suspicious movement or presence on the route.

The entire route is checked and cleared by the bomb disposal squad, which gives special attention to bridges, as they are obvious places for planting bombs. Besides other security cars and ambulances that usually accompany the presidential motorcade, a discreet force of about 20 SSG troops, called Rapid Reaction Force follows his convoy and maintains a 45-second distance with the main motorcade. Intelligence sources say that Musharraf himself decides at the last minute in which car he will ride. Helicopters, too, are routinely used to keep a close eye on the route.

Then the presidential armoured Mercedes is built like a fortress on wheels. No known bullet can pierce its armour. In fact, the presidential Mercedes currently in use has been designed to withstand even chemical and biological attacks. It can keep running even if all the rubber is blown off its tyres and a five-inch thick

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armour, which can withstand rocket-propelled grenades, surrounds it. But all these security arrangements can do little when it comes to suicide bombing. In Musharraf's own words, "these are mobile bombs and they can just come in front of any target".

Officials close to the investigations say that the only security feature that seemed to have worked on December 14 was the VIP-2 Bomb Ranger - a highly sophisticated and extremely expensive piece of counter-terrorism equipment, primarily meant to analyse and jam radio signals for remote-controlled devices which seem to be the weapon of choice for most terrorists these days. The jammer usually works by emitting a magnetic pulse to block frequencies used for remotes as well as signals from precision timers. The VIP-2 is a portable countermeasure system that attacks unauthorised transmitting devices in various frequency ranges, sought after for explosive detection and bomb disposal. The jammer gives the edge against Radio Fired Mines composed of mobile transmitting stations, invisible caches of ammunition and remote controlled bombs (for ambush or street crime.) And it was only the 55-second delay caused by VIP-2, say the intelligence sources, that saved the General's life.

Given that the existing security arrangements had proven to be inadequate - at least to the extent that the terrorists managed to get within 55 seconds of the General's cavalcade - it has been decided to install cameras on the long and tricky Kashmir highway. A central monitoring room has been established at the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) headquarters to monitor General Musharraf's movements starting from his early morning drive from Rawalpindi to Islamabad. To keep an eye on the long route, which passes through some dense patches of trees around the federal capital, the agencies have planned installation of cameras even on trees to record every movement on the road leading to Murree and areas around Islamabad.

Musharraf has also been advised to shift to the presidency in Islamabad following the second abortive attempt on his life near his army residence in Rawalpindi. Like General Ziaul Haq, Musharraf too lives in the Army House in his capacity as Army Chief, despite his June 2001 decision to take over as 'President'. Since then, he has been using the Presidency as his secretariat only and continues to stay in the Army House. In addition, the presidential security team has also recommended the installation of the highly sophisticated SSR 2000 Radar Imaging System to monitor the presidential route on the Kashmir highway. The SSR 2000 is a visual explosive detection system, which can help to find explosives and weapons, hidden inside walls, floors, cabinets and other hard-to-access locations such as concrete walls up to 10 inches thick. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) applications enable the SSR-2000 to assist police

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responders, Bomb Disposal Units, Bomb Prevention Operations as well as Weapons Inspectors during explosive detection examinations.

The General's new security protocol also includes plans to add three more Mercedes cars in the presidential cavalcade so that no one outside the convoy should know exactly which car he would be traveling in, thereby minimising the threat of an attack. The airspace over the president's secretariat and the GHQ remains closed to commercial air traffic. Musharraf himself usually carries a pistol, wears a bulletproof jacket with metal shock plates, built specifically to stop bullets and other small projectiles. There are also reports that the General may start using 'doubles' for extra protection. Keeping in view Rajiv Gandhi's killing at the hands of a female suicide bomber, General Musharraf has strictly been advised to avoid showing up in public unnecessarily and to refrain from embracing or even shaking hands with anyone.

Security experts say that the threat of a missile attack on the president's plane must not be played down given that Pakistan has twice lost key members of its senior military cadres in such attacks. Therefore, plans to equip the presidential plane with the most modern anti-missile system are already being finalised. The system carries airborne laser weapon technology that can shoot down missiles before they reach their target. The airborne laser weapon system operates at relatively high altitudes from where it could track missiles as they start gathering speed. Soon as it locks onto an incoming missile, it fires high-energy laser beams that can force a premature detonation.

Following the attempts on his life, General Musharraf seems to have decided to proceed against jehadis. However, the task appears to be long and dangerous because the jehadi tentacles are spread far and wide. On the run after being under suspicion, these groups appear more dangerous and desperate than ever and they are not ready to accept the harsh fact that the days of jehad are over, at least for the time being.

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Chapter 3

Pakistan Army: Islamists vs Reformists

Since the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States and General Pervez Musharraf's subsequent decision to make Pakistan a frontline state in the US-led war on terror, conflicting ideologies have seemingly caused dissensions in the Pakistan Army, pitting the Islamists against the Reformists.

These dissensions, though, had rarely spilled out in the open, merely articulated as they were, through whispers in the corridors of power or innuendos in newspaper articles. All this changed in August 2003 following the arrest of a group of officers from the Pakistan Army for their alleged links to al-Qaeda and other extremist militant organisations. These arrests were followed by release of a letter in October 2003 by renegades within the force, written on a GHQ letterhead and sporting the monogram of the Pakistan Army. The letter, which launched a scathing attack against General Musharraf and his pro-US policies, literally brought to the fore the raging ideological conflict and internecine rivalry within the Pakistani Army.

As a matter of fact, the Pakistan Army became a politicised army in the very first decade after the creation of Pakistan. It literally became the power behind the throne in Pakistani politics and soon seized political control. Thereafter, the Pakistan Army has intervened frequently to seize political power by imposing military rule for protracted periods. While General Ziaul Haq's dictatorial regime lasted for 12 years, General Musharraf seems to be headed for an equally long run. The Pakistan Army has thus ceased to be apolitical. Having tasted political power, it is subjected to the same corrosive influences of corruption and influence peddling as the politicians are accused of. At the same time, the top military leadership, despite claiming to pursue a liberal political agenda, continues to exploit Islamic fundamentalists as political allies.

The politicisation of the Pakistan Army has already caused the spread of Islamic fundamentalism at all levels, which seems to be a natural phenomenon in Pakistan because of socio-economic causes. The large masses of the urban and rural poor, with no avenues for economic advancement, are being drawn to fundamentalism. As the soldiery of the Army is largely drawn from the rural and urban masses, it would be inescapable for them not to be infected with the virus of Islamic fundamentalism being propagated by thousands of *deeni* madrassas across Pakistan. During the Zia regime, the composition of the Pakistan Army cadre was changed at the expense of the urbanised, western looking middle class and upper class elite and preference in officers' commissions was given to the emerging rural educated generation, which had strong leanings towards

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conservative Islam. This large body of Islamist officers, commissioned during the Zia regime, forms the backbone of the present day Pakistan Army, after being moved into the higher echelons since then.

The resentment within the country's most-disciplined force is believed to be simmering at two levels: among junior officers who vie with contempt General Musharraf's attempts at getting the army to combat rather than abet Islamist militancy. And at the higher echelons where General Musharraf finds himself pitted against a few of his senior generals. Musharraf himself admitted on May 27, 2004 that personnel at a junior level within the Army and the Air Force were involved in assassination attempts on him in December 2003.

"Well, there are some people in uniform, junior level, ... Air Force and Army ... but they are very small," Musharraf said while responding to queries in Geo TV's talk show "Follow up with Fahd" at his Army House residence in Rawalpindi. He informed that most of the armed forces personnel that were involved were now in custody and would be tried in a military court. But he did not disclose the category (commissioned officers or others) and ranks of the personnel accused of being involved in the plot.

Musharraf, however, claimed that the armed forces personnel already in custody were motivated by greed. "Some of them are not even for religious motivation, some of them are for money", he said. However, Musharraf added that he was very much sure that none of the senior people of the armed forces were involved in the attempt on his life. "We have unearthed everything, we know exactly who is involved, we know the entire picture of both the actions and exactly the names, we know their faces, we know their identities, we know their families, we know everything", he said.

Yet, this was not the first instance of involvement of army personnel in activities motivated by Islamic militancy in contravention of the military professionalism. It was a Hong Kong-based web newspaper (*Asia Times*) that on August 30, 2003 reported the arrest of several army officers, claiming that they were conspiring to stage a coup against General Musharraf. As other Pakistani newspapers began to speculate on the number of the officers arrested—and the conspiracy they were involved in—the normally reticent Inter-Service Public Relations Department, which handles the media and the army, issued a brief statement on August 31, 2003: "Three to four army officers of the rank of lieutenant colonel and below are under investigation by the agencies for possible links with some extremist organisations".

Director General of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), Major General Shaukat Sultan, however, remarked: "There is no senior officer among them."

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Two lines of investigations were pursued in the post-arrest scenario: one, the connection between the incarcerated officials and extremist organisations; two, and quite incredibly, a possible link between some of them and India's Research and Analysis Wing. According to defence sources, those investigated for their RAW connections belonged to the ranks of non-commissioned officers. A dozen junior commissioner officers were arrested in Islamabad, Karachi and Hyderabad, primarily on charges of spying for India.

The investigations, which had actually begun in July 2003, came as a shock to intelligence authorities when it was revealed that the concerned officers, all of whom emanate from non-commissioned ranks, were in fact trained RAW agents. According to the intelligence sources, the whole episode kicked off with an anonymous call made to Mumbai from a Public Call Office in Hyderabad in December 2002. Though the caller, who provided sensitive Army information to the Indian side, could not be traced, he did drop a lead to the intelligence agencies by mentioning an address in the phone call. The Pakistani intelligence got its first break a few months later when a non-commissioned officer was arrested in Hyderabad. During the interrogation, he repeated the same address mentioned in the phone call. Subsequently, a few more Army officers were taken into custody from Karachi and Hyderabad.

During interrogations, the arrested officers conceded that they were trained RAW agents of Indian origin, planted in the Pakistan Army. However, it was the group allegedly connected to the al-Qaeda that posed an ideological challenge to the fourth military ruler of Pakistan – General Musharraf. The provenance of the episode goes back to March 15, 2003, when top al-Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Mohammad was nabbed from the Rawalpindi residence of a *Jamaat-e-Islami* office-bearer, Ahmed Quddus. Subsequently, Pakistani authorities were made to arrest Quddus' uncle, Major Adil Quddus, from Kohat in the NWFP on March 16, 2003.

The next round of arrests was made in August 2003, with the nabbing of five more middle ranking Pakistan Army officers, which appeared to be the first case of defiance within the Pakistan Army at the Colonel's level. Two Colonels, two Majors and one Captain were picked up by the agencies over a period of two weeks in August 2003. Those arrested included Colonel Abdul Khalid Abbasi (General Headquarters), Lt. Col. Abdul Ghaffar (Headquarters Army Aviation Command), Major Muhammad Rohail (2nd Corps), Major Attaullah (2nd Corps) and Captain Dr. Usman Zafar (Mujahid Battalion).

Of them, Lt. Col. Abdul Khalid Abbasi was considered to be a religious-minded person who used to deliver daily lessons from the Holy Koran to junior officers of the Pakistan Army. One of the arrested army officers, Lt. Col. Khalid Abbasi

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was finally charged with giving asylum to the al-Qaeda operatives, one of whom was a foreigner. Khalid Abbasi was suspected when an alleged terrorist made a telephonic contact with him and sought his consent for two people to stay with him for a few days. This call was intercepted by the Americans who have laid down a state-of-the-art espionage system in Pakistan to monitor communications conducted through the airwaves.

But the interrogators failed to ascertain whether or not Lt. Col. Khalid Abbasi was connected to Major Adil Quddus, whose house in the Kohat Cantonment was thoroughly searched by army officials before his arrest—in a sequence of rapid events set off by the capture of the FBI's Most Wanted, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. Those who interrogated Khalid believe that he might have shifted from his Karachi hideout to Rawalpindi in order to facilitate an assassination attempt on Musharraf. The assassination theory, however, received a fresh boost through an audiotape that the al-Qaeda released on the second anniversary of 9/11 (September 11, 2003).

In it, Osama bin Laden's deputy Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri exhorted Pakistanis, "We ask our Muslim brethren in Pakistan: till when will you put up with the traitor Musharraf, who sold Muslims' blood in Afghanistan and handed over the Arab mujahideen to crusader America? The officers and soldiers of the Pakistani army should realise that General Musharraf will hand them over as prisoners to the Indians...." He then went on to add, "Act, O Muslims in Pakistan before you wake up from your slumber to find Hindu soldiers raiding your homes in complicity with the Americans."

Zawahiri's tape predictably fanned suspicions in the Pakistan army, prompting Musharraf to tell the BBC: "I have the full support of the armed forces of Pakistan and I must be the poorest commander if none of my Generals are with me. I have spent 40 years in uniform and I'm proud to say that I have always commanded from the front. I have been in the front and I have led from the front through personal example. Every man down to the sepoy is with me and behind me - let me assure you that. There should be no such misperception that anyone is against me," Musharraf claimed while answering queries in a live BBC programme, *'Talking Point'*, aired on September 11, 2003 on the second anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The General was actually asked to comment on the tape-recorded message from Osama's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in which he denounced him as a traitor.

Musharraf's assertions apart, political analysts believe that the Pakistan Army is presently divided into two groups—the Islamic fundamentalists and relatively more liberals. The split has sharpened because of the General's half-hearted attempts to give the Army a liberal outlook, acceptable to the West. Yet, his

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efforts are being resisted by some rogue elements that are the product of Zia era when public display of Islamic orthodoxy and conservatism was considered to be an asset. At the same time, the Army officers were taught during the days of Zia; who was the son of an *Imam Masjid*; that Islam was integral to the ideology of the Army. Before that, the Pakistan Army used to project a moderate and liberal face of Islam.

Whether a person strictly observed Islamic teachings and rituals or not was viewed as a matter of personal choice. However, Islam's relation with the Army underwent a change in the 1980s due to domestic and external factors. Chief of Army Staff General Zia, who grabbed power in July 1977 by overthrowing an elected government, used Islam and conservative Islamic groups to legitimise his military rule and undercut the opposition to his rule. He pampered conservative and orthodox Islamic groups in the political and cultural domains and encouraged Islamic orthodoxy and conservatism in the Army. Zia was the first Army Chief and head of state to attend the annual congregation of the *Tableeghi Jamaat* at Raiwind. Encouraged by this, many officers began to openly associate with the *Tableeghi Jamaat* and publicly demonstrated their religiousness, something Army personnel avoided in the past.

Other religious groups also cultivated links with the army personnel. This fitted in with the Zia regime's identification with conservative and orthodox Islamic values and the rise of Islamic conservatism in the society. Zia used to encourage his officers to say their prayers five times a day, and those who did so were looked at favourably when promotion time came around. Indeed, with the passage of time, it became essential that anyone seeking a top position in the army or the ISI displayed the appropriate religious fervor. Even better would be if an officer had a background in the *Islami Jamiat Talaba* (the student wing of the *Jamaat-e-Islami*). Such a connection led to the emergence of the likes of Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul, Brigadier Imtiaz Ahmed Billah and dozens of others who made their names in political operations in favour of Islamic parties or in launching conspiracies to unseat secular parties, such as the Pakistan Peoples Party's twice-elected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Even after Zia's death in an airplane crash on August 17, 1988, people are careful to at least pay lip service to the Zia legacy. Musharraf himself, who claims to be a liberal compared to the former military dictator, praised Zia's policies in these words: "He was a patriot and was a very God-fearing person". Musharraf proved his affection for Zia by inducting the latter's elder son [Ejazul Haq] in the federal cabinet in 2004 as Minister for Religious Affairs. The fact remains that even after Zia's death, the Pakistani Army largely through the Inter Services Intelligence, as part of its strategic vision for the region, actively supported and promoted the Taliban in its formation and ultimate seizure of power in

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Afghanistan in 1996. The external factor contributing to this trend was Pakistan's active involvement with the Afghan resistance against Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan (1979-89) and the subsequent activism of the Afghan mujahideen. The struggle against Soviet troops in Afghanistan enabled conservative Islamic groups to obtain acceptability and material resources they were armed with during this period.

The ISI's active role in support of the Afghan resistance brought Pakistan Army personnel in contact with conservative Islamic groups who were engaged in armed struggle against the Soviet occupation. This popularised the strategy of armed struggle in support of Muslim causes. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the ISI maintained contacts with some Afghan mujahideen groups; the Taliban being the last of them. This factor adversely affected the delicate balance the Pakistan Army had traditionally maintained between Islam and professionalism. Many officers and men were attracted to radical Islamic ideology and thought that it could take precedence over professionalism. They talked of 'jehad' as a legitimate political strategy for the state of Pakistan. This line of thought persisted as the ISI was allowed to encourage many of the militant Islamic groups operating from Pakistan to pursue Islamabad's official policy of supporting insurgency in the Indian Held Kashmir.

A decade-long ISI-sponsored Islamic militancy was bound to have implications for the army, whose personnel were directly exposed to Islamic militancy and propaganda by Islamic groups in support of militancy and a genuinely Islamic order for Pakistan. The Pakistani state openly identified with Islamic orthodoxy and militancy and it became fashionable to publicly support the militant Islamic groups engaged in insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir.

Having realised that the Islam-oriented activism adopted by the Pakistani Army officers was now affecting the organisation's professionalism and discipline, the military hierarchy is attempting to push back the politicised Islamic elements and to reassert the army's tradition of keeping Islam and professionalism together. Under General Musharraf, the selection process for the higher echelons of the Army has been made rigorous with a strong emphasis on service record and professionalism. This minimises the chances of an officer having a record of political activism or having links with extremist groups reaching the senior command level. The Army also looks after the material interests of its senior officers, both in service and after retirement, in a bid to dissuade them from giving in to extraneous religious or political influences.

Unfortunately, however, some religious-minded (pro-jehad) officers already inhabit the top echelons of the Pakistan army. Among them are the duo, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Aziz Khan and Vice Chief of

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Army Staff General Mohammad Yusuf who are portrayed as fundamentalists opposed to the US policies in the region. Both are also due to retire in October 2004. In the present Army hierarchy, only Mohammad Yusuf and Aziz Khan owe their rise in their career beyond the rank of Major General to the pre-1999 political dispensation and not to Musharraf. Once they retire in October next, all the other Lieutenant Generals would be officers who crossed the rank of Major General due to the benediction of Musharraf.

Analysts link this fact to General Musharraf's repeated assertions that he wants to continue as Chief of Army Staff and president for at least one more year. Should Musharraf quit as COAS before October 2004, Yusuf or Aziz would succeed him, consequently strengthening the Islamic fundamentalist group in the Pakistan Army and weakening General Musharraf's grip over power and undermining his pro-US policies. But a wait till October 2004 could allow Musharraf to appoint a trusted and comparatively liberal general as COAS. While striking a deal with the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA) in December 2003, Musharraf had agreed to take off the military uniform by December 2004. But six months down the road, the General seems reluctant to honour his commitment as per the deal.

Military sources say that General Aziz has, at times, dared to openly differ with Musharraf on important policy matters. Perceived to be a hardliner because of his Kargil association and his pro-*Jamaat-e-Islami* leanings, General Aziz was post-9/11 promoted to the powerless post of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, from the influential Corps Commander, Lahore. There had not been much protest because Musharraf had successfully portrayed himself as a liberal out to save Pakistan from the Taliban-like fundamentalists and also from the wrath of a vengeful US bleeding from terrorist attacks. In other words, the moment had been opportune to marginalise a religious-minded general who had played an important role in capturing the Kargil heights in the summer of 1999.

The military top brass aside, the release of an unsigned letter on the GHQ letterhead in October 2003 had hinted at the prevalent resentment among the second-ranking leadership of the Pakistan Army. The letter, written in Urdu in the form of a petition, had been circulating among army officers for quite some time before being made public on October 20, 2003 when the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy president, Makhdoom Javed Hashmi, addressed a press conference in Islamabad to release the same. But Hashmi's decision to make it public was construed as sedition and he was subsequently sentenced to 23 years in prison for inciting mutiny in the army.

Among other things, the letter on the GHQ letterhead had demanded that the army high command permit the Pakistani parliament to debate the Kargil

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venture, determine the motives behind the operation and the causes of its failure. It also launched a scathing attack against General Musharraf and his pro-US policies. Addressed to the 'national leadership', the letter states, "We, on behalf of the Pakistan Army, assure the nation that it is your army—the army of Islam and Pakistan, and we expect every member of the parliament, from whichever party he belongs, to work for the sovereignty of the parliament". It goes on to describe Musharraf and his cabal as 'national criminals' who have not only plundered the national wealth with impunity but have also helped the Americans, Jews and Christians to kill 'our Afghan brothers'.

"Pervez Musharraf has turned Pakistan—the fort of Islam—into a slaughterhouse of the Muslims". The letter applauds the parliament, claiming that had it not been constituted, the Pakistani army would have been dispatched to Iraq to kill 'our brothers'. The letter asked the parliament to discuss a range of issues: "What were the objectives behind the Kargil venture? Why did Pakistan suffer massive losses, even higher than what it sustained in the 1965 and 1971 wars? Why has not Pakistan, like India, instituted an inquiry commission into Kargil?" The letter then revealed information quite sensational—and incredible—in its sweep. It alleged that the commander of the Kargil war, Major General Javed-ul-Hasan, had been a military attaché in the US for four years, and had worked there under the CIA's supervision. "The Kargil war was waged at the behest of the US. He (Major General Javed) was even attacked by the officers and jawans for his poor planning of the (Kargil) war. But his mentors got him promoted as Lieutenant General, though he should have been sacked".

Through a series of questions, the letter brought under the scanner the coup Musharraf staged against the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on October 12, 1999. It asked: "What happened on October 12, 1999 (when General Musharraf seized power)? Which units of the Pakistan Army were directed to surround Islamabad?" Then the spotlight was turned on corruption in the army, questioning the allotment of prime plots of land to brigadiers and generals in Lahore.

Finally, the letter demanded that the parliament institute a national judicial inquiry comprising of those chief justices of the Supreme Court and provincial high courts who were in office at the time of the 1999 coup. "The patriotic elements in the Pakistan Army will reveal these national secrets before the national judicial commission so that the culprits are brought to task in accordance with Article 6 (awarding death penalty to anyone who overturns the Constitution) of the 1973 Constitution". Just in case anyone had doubts about the agenda of those who wrote the unsigned letter, it concluded: "Our aim—a free army and a sovereign Pakistan". Such damning information and prickly demands infuriated the military top brass, especially Musharraf. Inter Services

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Public Relations Director General, Major General Shaukat Sultan thought the letter Hashmi had released was forged and meant to harm the unity of the armed forces. He had further said: "A high-level probe has been initiated into the communication and delivery of the letter, allegedly dispatched from the GHQ, though it seemed nothing more than a pack of lies". Federal Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed dismissed the letter as a ploy by India's Research and Analysis Wing to damage Pakistan's armed forces.

However, there are those in the military circles who believe that the letter Javed Hashmi had released was not fabricated and that other members of parliament too had received copies of it. It is through anonymous missives that disgruntled officers now seem to be waging their battle. For instance, in the recent past, one such letter had divulged information about the arrest of Pakistan Army's officers (Lt. Col. Khalid Abbasi etc), which was being kept secret by the military authorities. Though its contents were dismissed outright, the Inter Services Public Relations subsequently announced the arrest of army officers for their links with the al-Qaeda and other militant outfits.

According to the military circles, the Army Intelligence had been reporting about the discontent brewing in the army. For one, some sections are not pleased with the talk about striking a compromise with India on Kashmir. Second, they are opposed to Pakistan reducing its role in the region, on America's insistence. In an attempt to mount pressure on Musharraf, the Islamist dissidents dared to distribute an audiocassette titled *Crush India* among the border villages and the army camps, units and forward posts.

The cassettes contained provocative songs, speeches and apocryphal stories about martyrs hoping to imbibe in soldiers the spirit of jehad. The cassette reportedly stated: "Since Independence, our army has been fighting with the enemy which is five times larger and equipped with latest weapons. But our army is equipped with a special weapon the enemy doesn't have—the spirit of jehad. Every Pakistani soldier is a soldier of Islam. He will be rewarded by Allah".

The renegades had further circulated a booklet among junior officers, underlining the benefits of waging jehad against India. It stated, "One who kills a *kafir* (non-believer) will not go to Hell ever and there will be no shortcoming in his prosperity as regards to wealth and good food. The soldiers of Islam should know that winning or losing is in the hands of the Almighty and defeat can only be provided by God..." and that even if soldiers die during a jehad, "their pain would be equivalent to that of a mosquito bite".

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Given all these developments, it seems unlikely that General Musharraf's efforts to transform the Pakistan Army from a fundamentalist force into a moderate and liberal one will succeed in the near future. But the General, inexplicably, remains upbeat. Sample his response in the live BBC programme, *Talking Point*, aired on September 11, 2003, "...Let me tell you, all my commanders are with me totally—each and every general is with me." One hopes the General is right.

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Chapter 4

Daniel Pearl's murder: A major blow to jehadis

The gruesome murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl and the subsequent investigations apparently led to the unravelling of the deadly cocktail of radical Islamic groups and intelligence operatives that Pakistan has been host to for a fairly long time. The involvement of an alleged ISI operative in the brutal beheading of Pearl created enormous US pressure on General Pervez Musharraf, forcing him to clip the wings of the Inter Services Intelligence, long considered the 'invisible government' of Pakistan.

"US journalist Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and then murdered by Islamist groups manipulated by a faction of the (Pakistani) intelligence services - the most radical, the most violent, the most anti-American … This faction, from the beginning to the end of the affair, behaved itself as if it was very much at home in (General) Musharraf's Pakistan", states a famous French writer Bernard-Henri Levy's "*Qui a tue Daniel Pearl?*" (Who killed Daniel Pearl?), one of the best seller books in France during 2003, which was subject to considerable media frenzy.

Bernard started his book on January 31, 2002, when *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl was tortured and decapitated in Karachi, after being kidnapped by a bunch of jehadis. On July 15, 2002, a special anti-terrorism court of Hyderabad, Sindh, had found guilty Ahmed Omar Sheikh, Syed Salman Saquib, Sheikh Muhammad Adil and Fahad Naseem of the kidnapping and murder of Pearl. Omar was one of the three jehadi leaders released by New Delhi in the Kandahar hijack drama in December 1999. Now languishing in jail awaiting outcome of his appeal, Sheik Omar had been the right hand man of the now banned militant outfit, *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, led by Maulana Masood Azhar.

Bernard, who describes his book as a *romanquete* - an investigative novel -, which is fascinated by two main themes: the flower of evil (personified by Sheikh Ahmed Omar, the mastermind of Pearl's ordeal) and the double (Omar the killer as the double of the sacrificial lamb Daniel Pearl). Most of all, Bernard, a French writer trying to deconstruct radical Islam, is fascinated by Pearl as his own double. Pearl was an American Jewish journalist trying to come to grips with radical Islam. Bernard had one year, plenty of time and resources and at least four trips to Pakistan to weave his plot. Pearl is a sublime martyr - while for many in South Asia he was little else than a Jewish American writer for the *Wall Street Journal* who landed in Muslim Pakistan from a spell in India without carefully assessing his new role.

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Bernard reconstitutes the last days and minutes of Daniel Pearl before subcontracted Yemenites in a desolate Karachi suburb beheaded him. Omar Sheikh was to arrange the interview Daniel Pearl was so obsessed with. The interviewee would be Sheikh Mubarak Gilani, the leader of the al-Furqa. Bernard chooses to interpret Omar Saeed as the Western double of Daniel Pearl: Omar himself was a Westernised Muslim, born in England and having received a perfectly English education. Omar's "master of terrorism" was Masood Azhar, the leader of the *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, "a mix of saint and serial killer", a definition that could also be applied to Omar himself.

On January 23, 2002, Pearl left his Karachi home to meet British-born Islamic militant Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh at a local restaurant. Pearl hoped that Omar Sheikh would arrange a subsequent meeting with Pir Mubarak Shah Gilani, head of a small extremist political faction named *Tanzeem-ul-Furqa*. Having initially met Sheikh along with his colleague and local journalist Asif Farooqui, Pearl chose to venture out alone. According to a taxi driver who allegedly drove Pearl to the restaurant, Pearl met his man and stepped into a white car along with Omar Sheikh and three others, and he has not been seen since.

In an e-mail to US authorities four days later, an unknown group The National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty sent ransom demands along with pictures of the 38-year old reporter in chains. On February 20, 2002, three men approached a Karachi-based journalist reporting for the Pakistani media group Online International News Network, offering to sell a compact disk depicting Pearl's death for USD 200,000 as well as a promise of global coverage. These men were believed to have been seen previously distributing press releases for an unknown local political faction. Lacking the equipment needed to play the CD-ROM as proof, the three men returned the next day with the footage converted to videotape. With a camera purchased from a local video store, the journalist was able to view and confirm the tape's gruesome images.

The list of demands put forward by Pearl's assassins included better treatment and release of Taliban prisoners, release of F-16 fighter planes to Pakistan and release specifically of Mullah Zaeef, Taliban's former ambassador to Pakistan. During interrogations by a joint team of security officials belonging to the US and Pakistan, sources said they were shocked when Omar claimed to be an Inter Services Intelligence agent. He further volunteered to describe his role in the explosion outside the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly building in October 2001, the attack on Indian Parliament in December 2001 and the American Centre in Calcutta in January 2002. His confessions also showed that all these had ISI's backing and that he claimed to be on their payroll. Omar Sheikh further told his interrogators that his captors might have killed Pearl by then.

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On May 17, 2002, three detained activists of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, a banned militant group helped the Karachi police recover a chopped-up body of Daniel Pearl from a vacant plot in the Gadap Town off Super Highway, owned by *Al-Rasheed Trust*. Mufti Ahmed founded the Trust in the 1980s as one of several ostensibly humanitarian relief organisations, which used to finance some leading jehadi outfits like *Jaish-e-Mohammad* as well as the Taliban rulers in Afghanistan. The three detained suspects were among the six who are allegedly the associates of Omar Sheikh and had revealed during interrogation that the US journalist had been kept in a house in Orangi Town when he was alive. But after his murder his remains were buried in a desolate place in Gadap Town. Acting upon this information the police dug the plot and recovered Daniel Pearl's body parts.

Coming back to the book, it picks up speed when Bernard starts making the inevitable connections between jehadis and the Pakistani intelligence services. An example is the famous September 11, 2002 raid by a "Pakistani power in panic" that a "satanic interview" about to be broadcast by al-Jazeera proved that there was an al-Qaeda cell in the heart of Karachi. Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, the all-important al-Qaeda operations' chief, was not there at the moment and once again evaded capture. The operation against the alleged brains behind September 11, again on a September 11, was supposed to be a birthday gift from the Pakistan government to the Bush administration. This leads Bernard to proclaim that the kidnapping and the subsequent murder of Daniel Pearl was an initial response from dissatisfied sectors of the Pakistani ISI to an America-accommodating Musharraf.

"Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed, the Londoner who became a warrior of Allah, was instrumentalised by a branch of the ISI hostile to the evolution of Musharraf". A few pages later, Bernard writes: "Daniel Pearl was kidnapped and murdered by Islamist groups manipulated, yes, by a faction of the services - the most radical, the most violent, the most anti-American ... This faction, from the beginning to the end of the affair, behaved itself as if it was very much at home in Musharraf's Pakistan".

The writer then throws light on the inevitable connection between the ISI and the al-Qaeda. An informant tells Bernard: "How everything started by the dismantling of a cell making fake papers for al-Qaeda clandestine; and how the investigation led to a trafficker specialised not only in fake papers but in the export of clandestine workers to Riyadh, 11 or 12-year-old kids selected in Karachi and Dacca to work as jockeys in camel races on the beaches of Dubai and, last but not least, al-Qaeda combatants exported, through the Oman Straits, to the Emirates, Yemen and other Middle East countries".

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This man, the real target of the anti-terrorist operation of September 11, 2002, was not Ramzi bin al-Shibah who was arrested, but Saud Memon, the owner of the plot where Pearl was kept captive, tortured, executed and buried. Bernard has described it as a house belonging to a fake welfare organisation, which served as a front for bin Laden. He is referring to the Islamic NGO *Al-Rasheed Trust*, which after September 11 made it to the US list of terrorist organisations. Saud was first affiliated with *Al-Rasheed Trust* but later became a member of the *Al-Akhtar Trust*, which too was banned by the US Treasury Department by designating it as a terrorist support organisation on October 14, 2003.

It will come as no surprise to anyone covering and following the "war on terror" that the best of Bernard's reveals himself to be a Saudi lawyer in Dubai - the Arab capital of big money and privileged Oriental crossroads. The lawyer paints a striking picture of Islamism as pure business: "We draft the papers. We establish the contracts. And I can tell you that most of them don't give a damn about Allah. They enter Islamism because, especially in Pakistan, it's nothing other than a source of power and wealth". The blunt Saudi lawyer confirms "very few people in Pakistan become Islamists by conviction or fanaticism. They are just looking for a family, a mafia, capable of protecting them from hard times".

And the writer is scandalised by these "jehad golden boys" who are very much aware of Omar Sheikh when he leaves Indian jails - as he was one of the three militants exchanged for the passengers of an Indian Airlines jet that was hijacked and landed in Kandahar in Afghanistan in December 1999. When Bernard starts following the money, his investigation really takes off. It all starts with the famous $100,000 wired to September 11's chief operative Mohammed Atta's account in the United States by one Ahmed Omar Sheikh, following instructions by the then ISI Director General Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, who was removed by Musharraf less than a month after September 11. The Pakistani press reported at the time that Mahmood was removed because US investigations had proved a liaison between himself and none other than Omar Sheikh.

Almost a year before Bernard's book was marketed [in April 2003], an in depth investigative report in *The Sunday Times* [April 21, 2002] had detailed links between the ISI and Omar Sheikh. The report said the Britain-born Sheikh knows too much about this connection to ever be allowed to leave Pakistan alive.

One "bizarre clue" the report mentioned is the demand by Pearl's kidnappers to honour an agreement to sell F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. "This hardly squared with the outlook of a militant Muslim organisation fighting a jehad in Afghanistan and Kashmir," the report said. The next clue came with the revelation that Omar Sheikh was in custody. On a visit to the US, Musharraf

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announced on February 12, 2002 that Omar Sheikh had been captured by the police authorities in Lahore. But Sheikh shouted out in court that he had turned himself over to the Home Secretary Punjab Brig. (retd.) Ejaz Shah.

"It would appear that the ISI had its own reasons for holding Sheikh for a week before announcing to the world that he was in custody," the report said. "One thing it would have wanted to do was to make sure its protégé did not give more away than absolutely necessary about his relationship with Pakistan's intelligence services." This "missing week" shed new light on media reports in October 2001 that the ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmed had been forced into retirement after the American Federal Bureau of Investigations sleuths uncovered credible links between him and Omar Sheikh in the wake of September (2001) 11 attacks. According to these media reports, *The Sunday Times* stated, the FBI team established that in early September, Ahmed had instructed Sheikh to transfer $100,000 to Mohammed Atta, leader of the hijackers who crashed into the World Trade Centre on September 11.

The report further stated: "Sheikh was their (the ISI's) man and he was brought in to deal with Pearl; the ISI knew everything." The report said the Karachi police, who deeply distrust the ISI, leaked details of their interrogation of Sheikh in which he talked about his ISI links. As a result, ISI operatives broke into the newsroom of *The News*, the largest English language newspaper, in February 2002. Mr. Shaheen Sehbai was editing the News at that time, the first local journalist Pearl contacted when he arrived in Pakistan. Failing to prevent publication of Sheikh's confession, the ISI demanded an apology from the owners of *The News*, finally compelling Sehbai to quit.

The Sunday Times report quoted M.J. Gohel of the Asia-Pacific Foundation, a security and terrorism policy assessment group that has been researching Pearl's murder, as saying: "Sheikh is a vital key that can open all the doors to the al-Qaeda network, to the links between the Pakistani military intelligence establishment and the terror groups, and can destroy Musharraf's credibility with Washington." The report said the full story of the kidnapping of Pearl would probably never come to light. Quoting documents, *The Sunday Times* said it has found evidence to show that Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed was close to the radical Pakistani cleric Maulana Masood Azhar — a close associate of bin Laden, the report said.

Yet another report appearing in the *Newsweek* in April 2000 said: "The ISI has been so powerful for so long that it seems to play by its own rules. In the Pearl case, the ISI may have had mixed motives. According to well-informed sources, ISI agents were confident they could cut a deal for Pearl's release by offering to let Omar Sheikh go in return. The US authorities believe Omar himself was an ISI

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asset at one point, most likely an operative in Kashmir. The ISI would have had good reason not to burn one of its former contacts. That could send a message to other present and future intelligence assets that the ISI doesn't protect its agents. The ISI always wants to keep its options open."

The report added: "Even in custody, Sheikh Omar seems confident, even cocky. According to a senior US law-enforcement official, the militant bragged to FBI agents that he would never be extradited to the United States, and in fact would serve only three or four years if convicted of Pearl's murder in Pakistan. The only remorse he expressed was over Pearl's unborn child. He said he felt bad because he realised Pearl was going to be a father soon, and he had a 2-month-old son," says the American official.

In October 2003, fifteen months after Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed was convicted (July 15, 2002) for Daniel Pearl's murder by a special anti-terrorism court of Hyderabad, the case took a new turn. A senior White House official called Marianne Pearl and Paul Steiger, the managing editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, to report a new, key development in the investigation into the death of Marianne's husband, Daniel Pearl.

"We have now established enough links and credible evidence to think that Khalid Sheikh Mohammad - the mastermind behind the September 11 attacks - was involved in your husband's murder", the official reportedly told Marianne. "What do you mean 'involved'?" Marianne asked. "We think he committed the actual murder."

So said a sensational article on the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl, a US journalist, written by Asra Q. Nomani, a freelance journalist, then living in Karachi, in whose house Pearl and his wife Marianne had stayed when Pearl went on his ill-fated trip to Karachi from Mumbai.

Asra Nomani writes in his article: "In the hundreds of reports - open as well as confidential - which have emanated from Pakistan on Pearl's murder, the name of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad has not figured. The Musharraf regime initially projected the murder as the work of the banned *Jaish-e-Mohammad,* which continues to be active despite a so-called ban, and then the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, a banned Sunni extremist organisation, and then others. Omar Sheikh, a British citizen of Pakistani origin who had been working for the Inter Services Intelligence since the early 1990s and who used to head the Lahore cell of al-Qaeda, was ultimately blamed, along with some others".

Two years after Omar Sheikh was sentenced "to be hanged till death" (on July 15, 2002), there have been some fresh developments. On 18 January 2004, Omar

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Sheikh was transferred by helicopter from Hyderabad prison to Adiala detention center near Rawalpindi (close to Islamabad). Interior ministry spokesman Abdur Rauf Chaudhry described it as a security measure. He was quoted as saying by national newspapers that dangerous criminals form themselves into groups if they are allowed to stay in the same place for too long. That is why they are moved to different prisons".

But other sources linked Omar's shifting with the investigations of the December 25, 2003 assassination attempt against Musharraf. Daily Dawn gave another hint by stating that the ISI wanted to question Omar Sheikh about his links with al-Qaeda. The two judges at the Sindh High Court hearing Sheikh[1]s appeal and that of his accomplices against their convictions asked the authorities on 17 February 2004 to explain the transfer. The prison authorities subsequently presented a federal government transfer order for Omar Sheikh with no further explanation. The federal government replied to the Sindh High Court on February 26, 2004 that the reasons for the transfer could not be revealed because these were related to a highly sensitive matter. Since then the authorities have confined themselves to advancing security reasons to explain the decision.

The appeal filed by Omar Sheikh against his conviction has not been heard so far. The hearing on the appeal is being repeatedly postponed on one ground or the other. Even as the hearing in the anti-terrorism court was on, the Pakistani media reported that the Pakistani authorities had in custody some other suspects, including some Yemeni-Baluchis, who confessed murdering Pearl. It was also reported that it was on their confession that the Pakistani authorities recovered the remains of Pearl.

Under the law in most countries, when material objects relating to a case are recovered on the basis of a confessional statement of a suspect, the confession is presumed to be correct unless proved otherwise. Surprisingly, the Pakistani authorities did not charge these new suspects with the murder of Pearl. The anti-terrorism court, under pressure from the Musharraf regime, refused to take cognizance of the media reports in this connection and call for the production of the new suspects before the court. And it accepted the denial of the state that any such confession had been made.

Who is Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed

Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed, the convicted killer of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl dropped out of a prestigious London university when war in the heart of Europe lured him to a life of Islamic militancy. Omar was radicalised by the people he met and the things he learnt on the way to Bosnia in 1993. After the trip, he dropped out of the London School of Economics and headed for the

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training camps of Afghanistan. He was put on trial in Pakistan on April 22, 2002 for the kidnapping and murder of Pearl, the 38-year-old reporter who was abducted on January 23, 2002 while working on a story about Muslim extremists in Pakistan.

It was the second time the British-born Omar had been charged with kidnapping a US citizen. In November 2002, Omar was secretly indicted in the United States for the 1994 kidnapping of four Westerners in India, including Bela Nuss of California. He spent five years in an Indian jail for those kidnappings but was released as part of a deal to free the hijacked passengers of an Indian Airlines flight in 1999. Omar Sheikh was born on December 23, 1973, six years after his father; a clothing merchant; moved to London from a village near Lahore, Pakistan. His father, Saeed Ahmed Sheikh, was born in Dhoka Mandi village near Lahore and lived there till his early 20s before migrating to London sometime in 1968 to pursue a Chartered Accountancy course.

After being an accountant with a record company for a short while, Saeed Ahmed Sheikh started his own wholesale garment business under the name 'Perfect Fashions'. At present, his company earns over half a million pounds annually. His family owns a house (bought in 1977) in London, some shops and land. Omar Sheikh is the eldest of the three children. His younger sister, Hajira Sheikh, was a medicine student at Oxford, while his younger brother, Awais Sheikh, was a student of 'A' level in Oxford. All the three children are known to be brilliant and are recipients of scholarships. Omar Sheikh did his schooling at Nightingale Primary School and later at Forest School at Snaresbrook. Present English cricket team captain Nasser Hussain was his classmate at school. In 1987, Omar's father wound up his business and moved back to Lahore, but returned to London soon in 1990, after he had fallout with his cousins.

During his stay in Lahore, Omar went to Aitchison College. Indian agencies said that Omar was known for his temperamental behaviour and he had enough quarrels that forced his father to call him back to London. Omar went back to Forest School and finished his Senior Cambridge in 1992. During his Forest School days, Omar had a short-lived romance with an English girl, Sarah, about whom he spoke affectionately to Indian interrogators. Omar is a combination of complex interests, according to intelligence agencies. He was a chess champion during his days at London School of Economics, where he was also reputed for his brilliant academic abilities. He is also a keen arm wrestler, and took part in the 1992 World Arm Wrestling Championships in Geneva.

A martial arts enthusiast, Omar's prowess was seen by Indian police officers, who nabbed him in mid 90s, when he was holding five foreigners captive outside Delhi. While in a Ghaziabad hospital, after being arrested by Delhi and Uttar

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Pradesh Police, he punched a deputy superintendent of police and threatened to track down and kill the constable who had slapped him back. Later at the Meerut jail, he kicked the jail superintendent, and was shifted to high security Tihar jail in Delhi, after the Uttar Pradesh Police categorised him as 'dreaded'. During his LSE days, Omar dabbled in shares and equities and was earning up to 1000 pounds a day from a chain of retail customers he had set up using his father's business base.

Moved by a documentary on Bosnia (Destruction of a Nation) in 1992, Omar Sheikh took to jehad and went to Bosnia on a trip with 'Convoy of Mercy'. Indian officials believe that he had tacit support from his father. According to some reports, Omar was in contact with Maulana Ismail of Clifton Mosque in North London, who inspired him to join *Harkat-ul-Ansar* and come to Kashmir. The psychologists who interacted with him during his stay in Indian jails believe that he is an 'anti-Zionist and anti-Christian who believes that Muslims can never be friends with Christians and Jews'. And feels it is the duty of every Muslim to take up jehad and strengthen the Muslims wherever they are in minority.

Sheikh Omar in his own words

In October 1994, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed had organised the abduction of one American and three British tourists from a low-budget hotel in New Delhi to press for Maulana Masood Azhar's release. The hostages were driven to a safe house near Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, where police officers located them on October 31 that year. Sheikh and his accomplice, Pakistani national Abdul Rahim, were arrested after a brief shootout, in which an Uttar Pradesh Police commando was killed. The four hostages were brought out unharmed. The kidnapping was the second in a series of three kidnappings of foreign tourists to secure Azhar's release. How the prime suspect in Daniel Pearl's murder case, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed, entered New Delhi to free the now detained Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Maulana Masood Azhar—all the details, in his own words

It's a 35-page note handwritten in English, gathering dust for over five years in New Delhi's Patiala House courts. For, the author of this note is Omar Sheikh, a British national who studied at the London School of Economics and was one of the three militants released by New Delhi in the Kandahar hijack drama in December 1999. Now languishing in a Hyderabad jail in connection with Daniel Pearl's murder trial, the FBI is exploring leads that Sheikh could have been involved in the transfer of $100,000 to Mohammad Atta, one of the hijackers in the September 11 attacks in the US.

Sheikh's note, written in Tihar and part of the records in his TADA case, describes, in almost diary-like detail, how he went about his "kidnapping

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mission'' in India at the behest of his superiors in Pakistan. His mission: to kidnap a group of foreigners in India and then demand, as ransom, the release of several Kashmiri militants, the most high-profile being Maulana Masood Azhar. The mission failed, Sheikh was arrested but five years later he got what he had come for. With Azhar, he was on a plane to Kandahar, delivered to the Taliban by Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh.

Following are excerpts from Sheikh's note.

ON July 26, 1994, I arrived at Indira Gandhi International Airport. I went by auto rickshaw to Connaught Palace. My instructions were to spend the first night in some good hotel and then contact the two phone numbers I had been given the next day. I was to ask for a ''Farooq.'' Maulana Abdullah (a Harkat operative) had given me these instructions over the phone. When I got to Connaught Palace, I stopped a passer-by and asked which was a ''good hotel'' to stay in. He mentioned a few names — one of which was Holiday Inn. I chose to go to this because the name was familiar.

I registered under my own name and gave my passport number. The bill was an astounding $ 210/night. I did not know I had picked the most expensive hotel in town — I thought all Delhi hotels were this expensive and that my money would soon run out! Therefore I decided I had better contact Farooq straightaway. I phoned both numbers from the hotel. Both answered there was no Farooq there. This worried me even more and I debated whether to contact Maulana Abdullah but decided against it since it would have been grossly against principles to phone head-office from a hotel...

Sultan (an accomplice) took me to a guesthouse in the *Jamia Masjid bazaar* area. After we checked in, Sultan became much more friendly. I asked him if Mr Zubair Shah (the chief of my mission) had arrived and he said not yet but he would soon. He said he had been very pleased to hear of him coming since they had fought many battles together in Afghanistan. Back in the guesthouse, we chatted for a while. Sultan had instructed several of the lads I had been a co-instructor with. I asked him about conditions here and he said they were not going well mainly because Farooq and he were not getting on — they didn't know who was in charge between them and they didn't have clear directions. I asked them what they had in terms of weapons and he said that he had an AK-47 and a couple of pistols. He said that Farooq had a couple of pistols and some grenades also. I asked him where the stuff had come from but he was evasive. Later on I learnt that they had come from Kashmir — but by which route or other details I do not know.

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I managed to persuade Sultan to take me to where he lived — the *Ganda Nala* house in Nizamuddin. At that time Sultan, Farooq and Nasir were staying there. We sat down and discussed what our steps should be. Sultan and Farooq wanted to wait until Shah Saab arrived before starting anything. I said we should seriously consider buying a house in Delhi. They said that some Aswat Darr — who had betrayed after the arrest of Maulana Masood, had taken the money that had been sent to them. I said I wanted to see him. They reminded me that I was supposed to do the job I was sent for, namely kidnapping, and not interfere in what they were doing.

(Over the next one month) every place I visited, I analysed from various points of view — as a ''future conqueror'' as I fondly imagined myself to be, as a social scientist, a traveller, noting down the intricacies of a new country and as an introspector. I went to mosques and madrassas and talked about ideas pertaining to jehad. Among the madrassa students, I felt there was great potential for an Islamic movement to emerge but the great obstacle was that the students were generally not capable of independent conclusions — they concluded what their teachers told them to.

In September-October '94, Sheikh comes Delhi to kidnap foreigners as part of the conspiracy to force the release of *Jaish-e-Mohammad* chief Masood Azhar. He catches a Briton but loses an American.

I was at ISBT when I saw a foreign chap wandering about. I asked him where he was going. He said Dehra Dun. I quickly made up my mind. My experience with Akhmir had shown that journeys together gave an excellent opportunity to initiate friendships. So I said, ''What a surprise — I'm going there too!'' and got with him on the bus. His name was Richard and he was a British student who had arranged to have teaching experience at Doon School, Dehra Dun. He will be a teacher there now. By the time we got to Doon School, I had not only initiated a friendship — I had put forward the idea of spending time together touring India. I spent the night at Hotel Relax at Dehra Dun but failed to start up a conversation with the foreign couple staying there.

Back to Delhi, Shah Saab told me to leave the tourists aside and look for foreigners under the protection of the Indian government as he called them i.e. diplomats and engineers based here. One night Nasir said he was moving out. He left. I had the room to myself. Now, since I had been in India, the sight of emaciated beggars everywhere particularly around the (Nizamuddin) *Markaz* had posed a serious dilemma for me. I had never seen so much poverty first hand in my life before. But I had soon realised that superficial help was only perpetuating the problem — most of the money they received was spent on cigarettes or charas. But they were genuinely needy people. Anyway, that night I

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decided that since I had the room to myself, I would offer to share it with an old one-legged man who sat outside the *Markaz*. I went and brought the old man to the room. We had dinner and I was enjoying one of his stories when Farooq arrived. He declared that the old man had to leave the house. I tried to reason with him but he said that my ''antics'' were putting everyone in risk. I lost my temper, packed up my stuff and left — taking the old man with me — and telling Farooq I was sorry I had such a cowardly set of companions.

I had taken Salahuddin and Siddique to meet Shah Saab at Jamia mosque. Shah Saab talked to them in turns. He had told me that they were suitable for sentry duty over whoever was kidnapped. My search for foreign employees based in India took me to the Chanakyapuri side. But I didn't see much scope since security was tight — even to my optimistic eyes.

It was about the third week of September when Shah Saab told me in a *Jamia Masjid* meeting to bring Salahuddin and Siddique early the next day. He said that he had finally managed to arrange a house in a remote area in Saharanpur where the neighbourhood was Muslim and undeveloped to the extent that it was unlikely to have an effective system of informers. Siddique and Salahuddin were to be left in the house and be on the ready. I was to go and see the house and cook up a story accordingly to entice people there the same way as I had bought the Israeli. Sultan would be taking us there and would have two pistols with him — so we have to be alert on the way.

We got to Saharanpur, the four of us, and from the bus stand we went by cycle rickshaw to a place called Katha Keri. From there it was a short walk to the house. When I saw the house, my heart sank. How the hell was I supposed to bring a foreigner all the way here? And that unnoticed by the local people? Salahuddin was aggrieved at the prospect of himself having to stay virtually prisoner there for may be weeks to come. Siddique was jumping up and down in joy and making little gestures with the pistols. Sultan beamed at me and said, ''Like it?'' ''No,'' I said sharply. He was surprised. I didn't bother to start to explain. I'd explain to Big Man himself. But then I cheered up. This wasn't far from Dehra Dun and I'd give ole Richard a shot any day. So I told Sultan I wouldn't go back with him to Delhi and would go out ''on the hunt'' straightaway.

I stayed the night with Sid (Siddique) and Sal (Salahuddin) — and set off for Dehra Dun the next day. I met Richard at the school and he had got over his cultural shock and was involved with school activities such that he couldn't take time off to visit my ''relatives''. After Richard refused, I went onto Mussoorie, the hill-station and checked most of the hotels there but due to the agitation at that time; there were no foreigners there at all. I stayed at a hotel in front of the

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mosque there. Next morning, I went to Woodstock School — an American school situated even higher up — and applied for a job as a teacher. I did this partly because if I got it, I could easily bring one of my co-teachers down to visit my "relatives" and partly because I wanted to see whether cutting short my academic career had greatly affected my competitiveness on the job-market. I had an interview with the vice-principal and I didn't get offered the job!

So I returned to Saharanpur, spent another night there and then returned the next day to Delhi. I went to Kale Khan as instructed where Farooq met the next morning and took me for the first time to Shah Saab's hideout. It was between *Jamia Masjid* and Turkman Gate. I told him that I had had no success with Richard and that I was fed up of this friendship business — especially with a house in the middle of nowhere like that and that we stop wasting time and grab whoever we needed. He told me to be patient — he was just in the process of purchasing a van (I mentioned that we could have borrowed one a long time ago) and in any case, he was waiting for the reports of the other channels before he made a final decision.

We finally came to a conclusion. I was to have one final thrust at befriending foreigners and if there was no result by the end of four days, we would carry out the snatch option. So, next morning I left. I went by cycle rickshaw to Turkman Gate and took an auto rickshaw to Paharganj. There I checked in at Ankur Guest House (I can't remember by what name but I said I was from Bombay). I sat around at the four or five cafes in that stretch, slowly sipping or eating something and gradually developed a knack for opening up conversations. I would introduce myself as an Indian-blooded British national who was thrilled to come to India for the first time since he had left as a child. Then I would go on to tell them that my uncle had died and because of some grievance against his son, he had left his village on my name. Given that the feudal system had died out in India for a long time — it seems amazing that the story was greeted with such credible enthusiasm but the newly arrived traveller to India yearns to hear extraordinary stories, which will increase his insight into this strange and colourful culture.

That night we arranged to meet the next evening at Hare Krishna. Next morning I told Shah Saab at the *Markaz* that I had two Britishers on the pipeline; did he want them? He answered affirmatively and we arranged to meet next morning when I would hopefully have made the arrangements.

Prior to the kidnapping of the two Britishers, Omar had already successfully kidnapped another one named Rhys.

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That evening I went to Hare Krishna restaurant, met the two guys and casually mentioned I was going down to my village the next day, would they be interested in accompanying me? They agreed and I arranged to meet them the next morning in the hotel they were staying at (the name of which I can't remember). So next morning, I told Shah Saab at the *Markaz* and he had the van arranged in a couple of hours.

We met at the petrol pump behind the *Markaz* and set off. The van parked outside Delhi Railway Station and I went inside to fetch the two guys, guitars and all. So we set off to Saharanpur, the two, the driver and myself and it was almost exactly like the first time (with Rhys) except that I didn't talk about revolutions on the way — we discussed more complicated issues like women.

At Saharanpur, Siddique opened the door. He saw that two guests accompanied me and so he immediately called the others to attention telling them the Maharaja was here. There was Sultan, Salahuddin and Maulana Saab. The same drama as before happened except that this time there was an AK-47 in the picture — brandished by Sultan. I don't know how it got there. The two were shocked to see Rhys, who we'd talked about on the way. Rhys was rather pleased that he was no longer alone.

Next day, after taking their passport details and reassuring them as best as I could, I returned to Delhi. I met Shah Saab that evening at the Markaz and informed him of what had happened. He said that I should make one last thrust for an American. He told me that he'd arranged a house in Ghaziabad (near Delhi) and so it should be easier for me. I told him I'd go the next morning to Vasant Kunj and check out Michael. Our meeting was fixed for the following afternoon.

Next morning, 18th October, I popped down to Vasant Kunj and this time managed to go inside the apartment and meet Michael. He was a mousish sort of chap and I perceived that it would be virtually impossible to convince him to go anywhere.

So, when I met Shah Saab I requested him that we could only do a grab-job on Michael. He said that I would first have to do a complete reconnaissance, which included observing the Vasant Kunj area at different times. We decided Amin would meet me that evening and take me to the Vasant Kunj area on the motorbike.

After the meeting, I went down to the Paharganj area. My mind was fixed on the Michael-task so I didn't try terribly hard to browse round the foreigners there. I just sat at a cafe opposite the Ankur Guest House and ordered a drink. The

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person in front of me started talking to me and with a shock I realised he was American.

This was Bela Nuss. He was staying at Ajay Guest House and was about to leave India. He was a lonely sort of fellow who found in me someone he could talk to. I told him I was staying at Galaxy Guest House and after the conversation in which we agreed to meet later, I went and booked a room at Galaxy under the name of Rohit Sharma from Bombay.

In the evening, I met Amin at the *Markaz* and he had with him the motorbike. We went to Vasant Kunj and I noted down what was going on and also the nearest police station. I decided that morning was a better time for the job. I returned to Paharganj to find that Bela had left a message for me saying that we should meet the next day in the afternoon.

Next morning, I made my way to the *Markaz* and told Shah Saab that we could postpone the Michael programme since I had another in prospect. In the afternoon, I met Bela and we went and had dinner at some pizza place in Connaught Place. I told him I was having dinner at an Indian family's house the next day and asked him whether he'd like to come along. He was delighted.

Next day I met Shah Saab at the *Markaz*. He took me for the first time to the room in Nizamuddin behind the tomb. Farooq and Amin were present. Amin was sent to get dinner. I let Shah Saab know that the chap was set up for that evening. Shah Saab then sent Farooq to buy a burqa. He told me that I had to put it on the American since there would be a check post on the way to the house in Ghaziabad.

I slept for a few hours while Shah Saab and Farooq went and made arrangements. They were going to lock me inside but I promised I wouldn't leave the house. When Shah Saab returned, he said the driver would be there in a couple of hours. He had decided that he and Siddique would be involved as well — they would thumb a lift on the way.

I went to the house and told the guys there that I had come to take photographs. Some hours later, after sunrise, Maulana Saab went and bought a newspaper. He and Khan Saab stood in the background, veiled, with the newspaper and AK-47. Sultan took the photos — six of them. I went back by train and arrived at Shah Saab's house absolutely exhausted. Farooq was there with him. He told Farooq to take the camera to Ghaziabad and get the same of the American. I had slept a few hours when Farooq returned with the photos. Shah Saab and I then sat down to make adjustments to the letters for the photos. Our deadline was 72 hours, starting from midnight (26th October).

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I went off to Kashmiri Gate and speed-posted one letter. Then I went to Daryaganj and faxed another, asking the owner of the shop to turn his back since the contents were confidential. Next day, I went with Farooq and posted the remaining letters from Connaught Place. Then I returned to Shah Saab's. It was going to be a waiting game, said the Big Man. I was forbidden from leaving the house so I settled myself down to catch up with my Arabic.

For the next couple of days, I stayed with Shah Saab. Farooq had gone off somewhere. Amin was with us and would do errands like fetch dinner, etc. Each morning Shah Saab went off and came back saying that he had phoned Pakistan and the comrades were still not freed. On the 29th he said that the threat would have to be carried out, so I wrote out the letter to the BBC, VOA, Hindustan Times and British and American embassies.

Shah Saab added some more names to confuse the authorities even more. Next day, which was a Sunday, Shah Saab instructed me to go to Meerut and post them (in case the authorities put watchers at Kashmir Gate and Connaught Place). I was on the way to ISBT when I decided it wasn't worth wasting all that time so I got off at Kashmir Gate, took a quick look around to see if any security zones were there, went in and hurriedly got the letters posted all except the ones to the BBC and the HT — since Shah Saab and I had agreed they should be hand posted in case the authorities are watching the post at the press organisations.

Next morning, I set off with the last two letters. At Shah Saab's instruction, Amin was behind me watching to see if everything went OK. I went to Nizamuddin East but found that the BBC office had moved. A chap there gave me the new address: Rafique Marg. So off I went, Amin behind me, and gave the letter to the rather nice girl at the reception. "Tell the Editor I want an answer by 3 p.m.", I said thinking tonight she'll be telling the whole world that this big, monstrous, terrorist-looking sort of chap came to me in person and tomorrow I'll ring her up and say 'Actually, my dear, I'm not like that at all...'

I left the building speedily and went to HT in K. G. Marg. I found my way to the Chief Editor's office — he wasn't there himself so I gave the letter to his public affairs' manager and asked him to give it to him. To my consternation, he started opening it. I speedily withdrew from the room and ran down the stairs (I only just refrained myself from sliding down the banister!) and out of the entrance and across the traffic-jammed road where Amin was. We got into a rickshaw and I told him to go to Okhla since Shah Saab had instructed me to go to my Okhla hideout and show it to Amin also. On the way, when we got to Nizamuddin, I spied Siddique. So we got off, greeted Siddique and the three of us got on a bus for Okhla. I went to that place in Haji colony, which I'd had for over a month but had hardly used. Amin left while Siddique stayed.

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For my part, I thought, it was finally over, success or failure lay with Him above. Siddique and I wandered about the nearby roads and talked philosophically and not so philosophically. We talked about Afghanistan, Kashmir, Bosnia and England. We talked about Shah Saab and the other comrades and the great days we had had in India, the jokes that would be remembered for years to come. He told me about the girl back home he was engaged to, I told him about the one I wasn't engaged to. We talked about the comrades who'd be getting free any day now... now their families would meet and what they'd be likely to do next. So evening came.

It was just after sunset that Shah Saab and Amin arrived. Shah Saab told us to get ready. Amin left, Shah Saab then said that the American had stopped eating and that we were to go and convince him that it was a matter of a few days only. We left the boarding house and went towards *Jamia Millia*. Shah Saab asked me as we walked whether it had gone all right and I replied in the affirmative. He cautioned me not to talk about pertinent matters in front of the driver.

The driver and the van were waiting near Okhla ... We got in and sped off toward Ghaziabad. We got down there and instructed the driver to return at 9 o'clock. We got off on the main road and had turned into the lane that took us to the house when two armed policemen came towards me and asked gruffly who we were and where we were going. I thought it was a routine patrol and asked what the matter was. The policeman swore at me and tried to drag me to one side by the collar — at which I (got) furious and started hitting him. The next thing I remember, I felt a stinging blow on my back and I looked around to see the other swinging his rifle at me—my comrades had disappeared. I turned towards him and BANG!

I felt the anger drain out with the blood. I thought it was the end. It was the end...of one era and the beginning of another.

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Chapter 5

Jaish-e-Mohammad in disarray after losing support

Maulana Masood Azhar-led *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (Army of the Prophet PBUH) seems in disarray after losing the support of the Inter Services Intelligence which had to tighten the noose around its own creation, once it was found involved in the December 25, 2003 twin suicide attacks on General Pervez Musharraf's life in Rawalpindi. Renamed *Khudam-ul-Islam* after being banned in January 2002, the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* has already split into two groups.

The reasons for the once blue-eyed cleric of the establishment's fall from grace are manifold. For one, the Musharraf-led establishment has become wary of the Maulana in the wake of Washington's allegations that his group was linked to the al-Qaeda, coupled with an Interpol request to Islamabad for his custody for the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian aircraft. Before that, Maulana Masood Azhar had been among the establishment's most trusted jehadi leaders, one of those who walked the credibility tightrope gingerly. One season the Maulana would be mouthing impassioned anti-India rhetoric, sending his militants across the Line of Control; the next would see him lying low and smouldering. In return, the *Jaish* chief used to receive patronage of the intelligence apparatus. But all this seemed to be changing towards the end of 2003 -- and not entirely because of the diplomatic pressure New Delhi and Washington have mounted over the years.

To begin with, a glimpse of the clout Masood Azhar used to enjoy: Nothing illustrates this more vividly than the Pakistani government's decision to decline a request by the Interpol for taking Masood Azhar into custody. Interpol had been prompted to act at the behest of the US department of justice which wanted charges filed against the Maulana from Bahawalpur and Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed for their involvement in at least two crimes committed against American citizens -- the 2002 murder of journalist Daniel Pearl and the 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 (with a US citizen Jeanne Moore aboard). The Americans claimed that under their law they had the right to investigate crimes against their citizens committed anywhere in the world.

According to a senior interior ministry official, much had already been turned down by Islamabad before the Interpol request: the Musharraf regime had rejected in September 2002 the FBI's request to interrogate Azhar for his alleged links with the al-Qaeda, which was accused of plotting US journalist Daniel Pearl's gruesome murder in Karachi. Islamabad had argued that Maulana Masood Azhar did not have a role in the murder and the principal culprit, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed and three accomplices had already been tried and

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sentenced to life imprisonment by a Pakistani court. Though the presence of US national Jeanne Moore aboard IC-814 could have created trouble for Masood Azhar, the government of Pakistan had rejected the Interpol request for his custody on the grounds that he was not a hijacker and his incarceration in India had been illegal. "Otherwise, he would have been tried and convicted by the Indian courts while he was behind the bars". In other words, Masood Azhar could not be accused of any crime.

Ordinarily, the reprieve should have emboldened Maulana Masood Azhar to brazenly espouse the jehadi cause. Instead, since the wake of the year 2004 he finds himself, at least temporarily, out of favour with the establishment. This is because Washington appears convinced about his al-Qaeda links and because of the belief that he, along with other jehadi leaders had been providing logistical support to fugitive al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. However, the ongoing tussle between Maulana Masood Azhar and the Musharraf-led government took a new turn on November 15, 2003 when his jehadi outfit was banned for the second time since January 2002. While the government outlawed *Khudam-ul-Islam* (earlier called *Jaish-e-Mohammad*), *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*, the political offshoot of the already outlawed militant outfit namely the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, was only placed on the interior ministry's watch-list. Five days later [on November 20], the federal government banned three more jehadi outfits -- *Jamiat-ul-Ansar* (formerly known as *Harkatul Mujahideen*), the *Jamaat-ul-Furqa* (a sister organisation of *Jaish-e-Mohammad*) and *Hizbul Tehrir*.

The leadership of the outlawed group says the government action of banning the outfits had emanated from the United States. Significantly, the November 15, 2003 move came a day after the US ambassador to Pakistan, Nancy Powell said [on November 13 while speaking in Karachi on the Pak-US relations] that Washington was concerned about the re-emergence of several banned Islamic militant organisations in Pakistan. "These groups pose a serious threat to Pakistan, to the United States and to the region. We are particularly concerned that these groups are re-establishing themselves with new names," said Nancy. She noted that Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, founder of the outlawed *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, was also addressing rallies across the country as the leader of a new group, *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*. "He is up to his old habits of urging holy war against Indian forces in the disputed Kashmir region", she said. *Jaish-e-Mohammad* renamed as *Jamaat-ul-Furqa*, Nancy had added, was one of the groups blamed for the December 2001 attack on the Indian parliament. The ambassador then urged Pakistan to enhance its efforts to stop these groups from infiltrating into the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir.

Interestingly, however, it seems that after Maulana Masood Azhar it is Hafiz Mohammad Saeed who is to enjoy the benedictions being offered by the

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establishment, as *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*, generally considered to be the most effective jehadi outfit operating in Kashmir, has apparently managed to escape the government's wrath. Instead of being banned along with *Khudam-ul-Islam*, *Jamiat-ul-Ansar* and *Jamaat-ul-Furqa* in December 2003, *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* was only issued a caution and placed on the watch-list. Of the six militant outfits outlawed in December 2003, *Khudam-ul-Islam* seems to be the hardest hit. When Masood walked to freedom in Kandahar on December 31, 1999, as a result of an Indian plane's hijacking, few people in Pakistan had any clue of what the Maulana was up to or how events would begin to unfold upon his return to Pakistan.

Within a few weeks of his return, Masood announced on January 31, 2000 the formation of his own militant group, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* to fight against the Indian occupation forces in Kashmir. The organisation was widely supported by the country's top Islamic scholars, especially Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai of the Binori Town Mosque. The dramatic emergence of the new jehadi was seen by many in Pakistan as an ISI ploy to keep the network of jehadi organisations divided so that they could be controlled easily. The formation of the Jaish eventually caused the first serious split within *Harkatul Mujahideen*, formerly the *Harkat-ul-Ansar*, which was banned by the US in 1997 due to its association with bin Laden. Simply unable to comprehend Masood's decision to launch his own group, the leadership of the *Harkat* (with which Masood had been affiliated as an office bearer till his arrest in India) unanimously decided to distance itself from their ex-secretary general.

However, hostility developed between the two groups when a large number of the former *Harkat* activists managed to wrest control of over a dozen *Harkat* offices in Punjab. The *Harkat* leadership reacted sharply and accused Masood of being 'a greedy Indian agent who was out to damage the Kashmiri jehad'. On the other hand, Masood got an unprecedented response from the former *Harkat* cadres, primarily because of his oratorical skills, his recognition as a scholar and the four-year jail term in India. Masood's image was greatly enhanced by his spymasters in Punjab when he was allowed to travel to Lahore with scores of Kalashnikov-bearing guards. The ISI restrained him only when his anti-Musharraf statements became too aggressive.

The *Jaish* had largely confined its operations within Jammu & Kashmir and the only recorded instance of its operations outside Kashmir had been the December 13, 2001 Parliament attack in New Delhi. Earlier, on October 10, 2001, a month after the terror attacks had struck the US, Masood Azhar had renamed *Jaish* as *Tehrik-ul-Furqa*. The move was also motivated by reports that the United States was contemplating to declare it a foreign terrorist outfit because of its involvement in the October 1, 2001 explosion outside the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly. Despite being renamed, the US State Department

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designated the *Jaish* as a foreign terrorist organisation in December 2001. General Musharraf too banned the outfit in January 2002. However, within no time, Masood got his outfit registered under the new name of *Khudam-ul-Islam*.

Pertinent to mention here is a significant statement by Lt. Gen. (retd) Javed Ashraf Qazi, former Director General Inter Services Intelligence. He was quoted as saying on March 7, 2004 by the Lahore-based *Daily Times*: "We must not be afraid of admitting that the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* was involved in the deaths of thousands of innocent Kashmiris, in the bombing of the Indian parliament, in Daniel Pearl's murder and in attempts on General Pervez Musharraf's life". A former Railways Minister in the Musharraf government before the October 2002 general elections and currently a senator of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam), a former ISI chief from 1993-95 in Benazir Bhutto's second government, Qazi further said that both the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* and *Lashkar-e-Toiba* had harmed the Kashmir struggle the most.

But as things stand today, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* seems to be in disarray, especially after the 2003 swoop in which hundreds of Azhar's followers were arrested and the *Khudam* offices sealed across Pakistan, in connection with the December 25, 2003 suicide attacks on General Musharraf. One of the suicide bombers, Muhammad Jamil, was identified as a *Jaish* activist from Azad Kashmir. Many other *Jaish* activists had been arrested earlier for carrying out suicide attacks on churches and missionary institutes in Islamabad, Murree and Taxila. However, Masood's close circles insist that those involved in these attacks were in fact dissidents who had been expelled from their outfit for violating the party discipline. "The expulsions of Maulana Abdul Jabbar and other leaders eventually led to a split in our group", claimed the *Khudam-ul-Islam* spokesman, Maulana Yousaf Hussain Naqshbandi. "The dissidents were adamant to carry out suicide missions against the US interests in Pakistan to avenge the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan", he added.

The *ameer* of *Jaish-e-Mohammad* Sindh chapter, Maulana Abdullah Shah Mazhar, was the first one to leave Masood Azhar in October 2001 to launch his own faction, *Tehrikul Furqa*. He was soon joined by Maulana Abdul Jabbar alias Maulana Umer Farooq – Nazim, Military Affairs and 12 more commanders. And they all decided to confront their parent group. Maulana Abdul Jabbar became the chief of Furqa while Mazhar was nominated as the *nazim-e-aala* (chief organiser) and secretary general of the splinter group. Getting unnerved over the development, Masood informed the ISI high-ups in writing that they had nothing to do with his outfit and he was no more responsible for their actions. Azhar wrote that the expelled members were sectarian terrorists who should be arrested instead of being allowed to regroup. The others he expelled included: Mohammad Tahir Hayat alias Bhai Farooq, Ghulam Murtaza, Ghulam Haider,

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Nasir Shirazi, Naveed Farooqi, Qari Abdul Majid alias Qari Shah Jalal, Aijaz Mehmood, Maqsood Ali Shah, Abdul Samad Soomro and Shaukat Hayat.

According to Abdullah Shah Mazhar, as quoted in *The Friday Times*, Masood Azhar was made the *Jaish* chief by religious scholars -- Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, Maulana Shabbir Ali Shah and Maulana Waliullah who were the moving spirits behind the creation of *Jaish.* "And these scholars have already deprived Masood of that position. Seven out of ten members of the *Jaish* Supreme Council, which Maulana Azhar claimed to have favoured him, had dissociated from him. I am one of them. The other members of the *Jaish* supreme council who joined us included Maulana Ubaidullah Anwer, Qari Mansoor Ahmed, Maulana Ghulam Murtaza and Maulana Osama Rizwan".

He was further quoted as having said: "We are all united and running the party for the very cause for which it was actually launched. Masood Azhar has nothing to do with the cause of jehad now. Our main difference with Azhar was that he deviated from the cause of jehad while the organisation was ostensibly created for waging jehad to liberate the Occupied Kashmir. Unlike Azhar and his masters in the Pakistani intelligence agencies, we are not ready to compromise jehad for the sake of funds". But on the other hand, Masood Azhar's younger brother and the Deputy Chief of *Khudam-ul-Islam*, Maulana Abdul Rauf, says Jabbar and Mazhar had no concern for jehad and they just wanted to grab the group assets. "We have taken up the grabbing of several Mosques owned by the *Jaish* at the higher level and will get their possession sooner or later," says Rauf who had been released by the agencies after being questioned in connection with the Rawalpindi suicide bombings against Musharraf.

Though Masood Azhar has bowed to the agencies' warning by directing his henchmen not to damage the American interests in Pakistan, there prevail strong fears in the intelligence circles that the dissident members of the Jaish, who were unknown and had gone underground, posed the real threat. They are spread all over Pakistan, and are desperate to avenge the Taliban's fall and the arrest of al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan. Both the *Jaish* factions – *Khudam-ul-Islam* and *Jamaat-ul-Furqa* – already banned by the government are now, openly in conflict, one led by Masood and the second by his former right hand man, Abdul Jabbar; already declared a proclaimed offender in connection with two deadly terrorist attacks – one on a Taxila Church and the other on a missionary school in Murree. Some unconfirmed reports said Jabbar had already been arrested by the agencies and was being interrogated for the Rawalpindi suicide attacks.

Indeed history seems to be repeating itself with the *Khudam-ul-Islam* experiencing what the *Harkatul Mujahideen* experienced when Masood parted ways with his parent organisation. Although Maulana Masood Azhar is trying to conceal his

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diminishing clout over his cadre, the fact is, it is Abdul Jabbar's group, which largely controls the dominant faction of *Jaish*, renamed last year as *Jamaat-ul-Furqa*. The need for a new name arose after the US State Department had placed the *Jaish* on its terrorist watch-list. The decision to float *Khudam* was Masood's ruse to portray that he had not lost control over the group and had instead chosen to establish a new outfit. Apart from these two factions, militant and intelligence circles say, the *Jaish* had broken into many splinter groups that had chosen to defy the military establishment's diktat of not attacking the US interests in Pakistan.

The present split in the *Jaish*, however, is also a story of bitter wrangling over the organisation's finances. Some *Jaish* insiders accused Masood and his cohorts of misusing the organisation's resources to enrich themselves. They said that besides having developed difference over jehad, distribution of finances was another major cause of conflict between Abdul Jabbar and Masood Azhar. The insiders tell a long story about the division of the organisation and the vested interests, corruption, greed and deep conflict on strategic affairs behind the split. *Jaish-e-Mohammed* and *Al-Rasheed Trust*, both blacklisted by the US State Department are considered quite close. When *Jaish* was founded, *Al-Rasheed Trust* donated Rs20 million ($360,000) as seed money. Later, thousands of people joined the *Jaish* and helped to raise funds, to the estimated tune of Rs1 million a day.

A substantial amount of this money was spent on establishing training camps and paying those families whose members had been killed in J&K. Yet simultaneously, the lifestyle of many *Jaish* leaders had become incredibly lavish. For instance, Masood Azhar, who hails from a lower-class family that resided in a slummy area of Bahawalpur, moved to the city's posh Model Colony. He and his cohorts began driving around in Land Cruisers and Land Rovers along with their retinues of gunmen. The Jabbar faction alleges that Masood also appointed his relatives and friends to supervise the *Jaish*'s mushrooming assets—seminaries, publications, offices and bungalows. His blatant favouritism and lavish lifestyle irked those who had spent grim years in Afghanistan and Kashmir. As the funds kept pouring in and mesmerising speeches of Masood kept pouring out, the *Jaish* kept rolling on.

Murmurs of dissent in the outfit first surfaced at the time when Masood Azhar decided to adopt silence over Musharraf's U-turn on Afghanistan post-9/11. Several prominent *Jaish* members favoured retaliatory attacks against US interests to pressurise the military ruler against supporting Bush. But taking pressure from the agencies, Masood refused to relent. Subsequently, many *Jaish* members quietly went over to Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban; some even brought back Arab fighters to Pakistan and provided them shelter. Though these

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members did not leave the *Jaish,* insiders said that differences in approach inaugurated a period of cold war in the organisation.

Not willing to wait any longer for Masood's approval, the dissidents launched a spate of attacks on what they describe the 'US interests'. The more violent of these were on a Taxila Church and a missionary school in Murree. The police subsequently arrested Saifur Rehman Saifi who was responsible for *Jaish*'s upper Punjab operations. During interrogation Saifi revealed that he had been asked by Jabbar to launch attacks, including suicide missions, on US interests. This disclosure prompted Masood Azhar to begin the purge in the outfit to avoid the wrath of the agencies. Meanwhile, many of those who were reportedly involved in carrying out anti-US terror operations in various parts of the country, were arrested allegedly after being fingered at by Masood loyalists.

The internecine squabbles erupted into a gunfight between the contending *Jaish* factions on June 22, 2003. Then Masood Azhar had wanted to deliver a Friday sermon at *Masjid-e-Batha* in Sakhi Hassan, Karachi. But his arrival sparked a veritable battle between the two factions, each keen to gain control over the mosque and the adjoining seminary. Ultimately, the police intervened but not before several militants were injured. Two weeks prior to the incident, the two groups had clashed in a bid to capture another mosque. Then Masood tried to deliver a Friday sermon at the Binori Town Mosque in Karachi, influenced by his mentor Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai. But the mosque's administrator did not allow him to use the premises. Another scuffle between the two rival factions was reported at a mosque in the Korangi area in Karachi.

As things stand today, there are fears that ongoing disputes over possession of the various *Jaish* offices, mosques and other material assets could lead to more serious clashes between the two banned groups – *Khudam-ul-Islam* and *Jamaat-ul-Furqa*. However, no one can say with certainty at this point which one of them eventually survives.

Masood Azhar and Binori Mosque

The Binori mosque complex in Karachi has long been the nerve centre of the Mullah-Military enterprise in Pakistan. Beginning with General Ziaul Haq's decision to make Maulana Yusuf Binori, founder of the Binori mosque, the chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology in 1979, the Binori complex has been a key element in the jehad infrastructure in Pakistan. The defunct *Jaish-e-Mohammad* chief Maulana Masood Azhar is a Karachi-based Binori madrassa pass-out, which has been churning out religious extremists since 1951. The top leadership of the Taliban has come out of Binori. The chief of the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, Fazlur Rahman Khalil, was a student of Binori and the late leader of

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the Sunni extremist group *Sipah-e-Sahaba* Pakistan, Maulana Azam Tariq, was also a Binori Alumni.

The *Darul Uloom Islamia Binori* town mosque has one of the largest seminaries in Pakistan. It is perceived as one of the most influential centres of *Deobandi* Sunni ideology in the world. It has led the anti-*Ahmadiya* and anti-Shia movements in Pakistan for the last 50 years. The Binori madrassa gives religious education to some 3,500 students at a time. Curiously, a bulk of the students is not drawn from Sindh, where it is located, or even Punjab, which provides the ballast to Pakistan. A majority of Binori students are Afghans and Pushto-speaking Pushtuns from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. Smaller numbers come from Africa, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Binori has a large number of smaller affiliated madrassas in Karachi and outside.

Binori is funded largely by *Deobandis* in Saudi Arabia, the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. Analysts say that Binori advances the political-Islamic aims of the Pakistani state represented by the ISI. On one hand, it strives to decimate the Shia population much in the manner that the *Ahmadiyas* were massacred so that Pakistan becomes a Sunni state. On the other hand, it seeks a greater Pakistan in the territories of Afghanistan and Jammu & Kashmir. Afghan Pushtuns educated in Binori are unlikely to revive Afghanistan's old claim on the North-West Frontier Province. And Pakistani Pushtuns coming out of Binori would think less of separating from Pakistan than joining with Afghan Pushtuns to form a greater Pakistan.

The 'greater Pakistan' idea now lies in ruins. Buried in the debris is Pakistan's aim of gaining strategic depth in Afghanistan against India by aligning with the Taliban. But Binori *Deobandis* have not given up their resolve to take over Afghanistan. They are behind new efforts to regroup the Taliban after their current rout and challenge the interim Afghan government of Hamid Karzai. The Binori aim in Kashmir is also linked to the greater Kashmir idea. The idea rode on such terrorist groups as the *Harkat-ul-Ansar*, its two reincarnations, the *Harkatul Mujahideen* and the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, and finally, the *Jaish-e-Mohammad*. Maulana Masood Azhar was Binori Mosque's most promising militant commander. Masood fought against the Soviets in 1988-89 though his associates of *Harkat* days say he was never an inspiring military leader who had left halfway through his military training in Afghanistan.

But by 1994, he was a recognised *Harkatul Mujahideen* leader. The *Harkat* would subsequently become *Harkat-ul-Ansar* and then revert to its old name following the US ban of *Harkat-ul-Ansar*. Azhar was part of the old HuM. But his luck ran out when he was arrested in Kashmir and jailed in Jammu. Azhar came on a valid Pakistani passport to Mumbai posing as a journalist. When he was jailed,

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he told his friends that India would regret its decision. The Indian authorities had to release him following the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 from Kathmandu to Kandahar in December 1999. The plane was hijacked to spring Azhar from captivity in India.

There are unconfirmed reports that Azhar met bin Laden after he was exchanged for Indian passengers in Kandahar. But Azhar certainly went to Binori mosque to announce the formation of the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* to fight India, Israel and the United States. Anti-Americanism has also been a guiding principle of the Binori ideology. One of the two men who announced the establishment of the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* in a congregation in Binori on 4th February 2000, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, had previously denounced the United States. *Jasrat*, the Urdu daily of Pakistan's *Jamaat-e-Islami*, quoted Shamzai as declaring that the Americans were "Warring infidels" and it was, therefore, "permissible to kill them, loot their wealth and enslave their women".

Maulana Masood Azhar learnt his anti-Americanism from these men. He was also rabidly against Shias. He was a follower of Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi who founded the notoriously anti-Iran, anti-*Shia Sipah-e-Sahaba* and was killed in consequence in 1990. He was so puffed up by his release from Indian jail that he refused to accept the leadership of Fazlur Rahman Khalil then heading the *Harkatul Mujahideen*. The *Harkatul Mujahideen* had split out of the *Harkat-ul-Ansar* when it was banned by the United States in October 1997 after it killed an American kidnapped from south Kashmir. The other group to emerge out of the *Harkat-ul-Ansar*, the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, could not widen its influence.

One reason for this was the involvement of its leader, Saifullah Akhtar, in a failed Islamic coup plot against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government in 1995. A section of army officers led by a Major-General Zaheer-ul-Islam Abbasi and Major Mustansir Billah led an unsuccessful rebellion within the Pakistan army. Saifullah Akhtar saved himself by turning state witness. *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* never survived this loss of face of its chief. But the *Harkatul Mujahideen* under Fazlur Rahman Khalil emerged as a powerful organisation in all the years that Masood Azhar was in Indian jail. But once he was released, Azhar challenged Khalil's authority. Officials say that Azhar used his following in Punjab to isolate Khalil. The split became inevitable and Azhar formed *the Jaish-e-Mohammad*. But Khalil and Azhar began to fight over the *Harkat's* assets.

In March 2000, the two terrorist leaders submitted to a *hakam* (arbitration) of their elders. Muhammad Farooq Kashmiri represented the *Harkat* and Maulana Abdul Jabbar represented the *Jaish.* The ruling given by Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai and Sher Ali Shah returned all the offices occupied by the *Jaish* in Punjab to the *Harkat* in return for Rs. 40 lakh as its share of the division of assets. Azhar was

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helped in his rise by Mufti Shamzai and Maulana Yusuf Ludhianvi, who was the Chief Commander of the *Sipah-e-Sahaba*. Ludhianvi became supreme leader of *Jaish-e-Mohammad* and Azhar his chief commander. It is often alleged that Maulana Ludhianvi had organised the Kandahar hijacking to free Maulana Masood Azhar. Ludhianvi veered to the views of Masood Azhar than Fazlur Rahman Khalil. Ludhianvi was killed on 18th May 2000 in Karachi along with his driver.

Who killed Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai?

On May 30, the pro-Taliban Sunni cleric and chief of the Binoria mosque in Karachi, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, was killed when armed assailants ambushed his vehicle in front of the mosque. Shamzai, considered a top scholar of Islam with a Ph.D from the University of Sindh, was the third head of the Binoria mosque to have been assassinated in succession. Mufti Habibullah was shot dead in 1998 and Maulana Yusuf Ludhianvi in year 2000.

The perpetrators of Shamzai's assassination may never be definitively identified, but it is useful to look at the trajectory of recent violence in Pakistan. During 2003, there was a series of terrorist attacks in quick succession in Quetta and Karachi, targeting the Shias. When the Musharraf-led so called civilian set-up was still coming to terms with the spread of sectarianism, suspected Shia gunmen assassinated Maulana Azam Tariq, leader of the outlawed Sunni group *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP) on October 6, 2003, in the capital Islamabad. Some 102 persons were killed in 22 incidents of sectarian violence during year 2003, and the current year (till June 30, 2004) has already seen at least 85 persons lose their lives, with another 412 wounded in just ten incidents.

While outlawed Sunni groups like the SSP and its armed wing, the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ), have been actively targeting Shias since 1989, Shia radicals, including the proscribed *Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan* (SMP), constrained by logistics and the absence of state complicity, frequently target the high-profile Sunni leadership and have assassinated a number of them in the past. But despite all these sectarian killings, analysts believe Shamzai would not be a natural target for the Shia radicals, as he is not directly implicated in sectarian violence in Pakistan, though he is closely connected with Sunni extremism and the global Islamist terrorist movement.

Mufti Shamzai was considered to be one of the most powerful men in Pakistan during the rule of the Taliban militia under Mullah Mohammed Omar in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden are alleged to have met for the first time in the Binori mosque under the auspices of Mufti Shamzai. Along with

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the Akora Khattak seminary near Peshawar, the Binori seminary had imparted doctrinal training to senior Taliban commanders. That he wielded immense influence over the Taliban/al-Qaeda came to the fore when the Musharraf regime sent a delegation of Ulema (religious scholars), including Mufti Shamzai, to Kandahar in late 2001 to prevail upon Mullah Omar to hand over bin Laden to the US. The US administration is later reported to have learnt that the delegation, which included Lt. Gen. Mehmood Ahmed, the then ISI chief, instead of pressurizing Omar to hand over bin Laden, congratulated the Taliban supremo for resisting US pressure and encouraged him to continue to do so. Among the 2,000 odd *fatwas* issued by Shamzai, the most infamous was the one he gave against the United States in October 2001, declaring jehad after the Americans decided to attack Afghanistan.

While Shamzai was widely believed to be a patron of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* (HuM), one of his many students, Maulana Masood Azhar, launched the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). Operating under Shamzai's tutelage after his release by the Indian Government in Kandahar on December 31, 1999, following the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Flight IC 814, Azhar set up one of the most lethal terrorist organizations operating in the region, and continues to operate freely from Pakistan, despite a token ban on his organisation. In July 1999, at the height of the Kargil war, Mufti Shamzai, Mufti Jamil Khan and Abdur Razzaq had also issued an edict of jehad against India in Islamabad in response to a request from the HuM. The *fatwa* reportedly ordered that all seminaries in Pakistan should suspend their classes and send their students to Jammu and Kashmir to participate in the jehad.

Although Shamzai was never accused of direct involvement in the Sunni-Shia violence in Pakistan, it is now becoming increasingly clear that the *Deobandi* platform that has spawned jehad in South Asia has an intrinsic sectarian element. Analysts, therefore, believe that the shadow of suspicion for Mufti Shamzai's assassination falls across a far wider spectrum of motives than a Shia vendetta alone, and there are at least some elements within the Pakistani state structure, and within the opportunistic alliance of Forces within the US led global war against terrorism, who have been increasingly troubled by activities of many within the circle of Shamzai's radicalized fraternity. Mufti Shamzai's death notwithstanding, the convulsions within the Military-Jehadi enterprise in Pakistan can be expected to continue.

General Musharraf is a Traitor: Masood Azhar

In an exclusive interview with the *South Asia Tribune*, that appeared in the US-based web newspaper's August 24, 2003 issue, Maulana Masood Azhar was quoted as saying: "I do not have a positive opinion about General Musharraf. He

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is a traitor of Islam and jehad. He will do anything to save his uniform. While Nawaz Sharif sold the blood of Kashmiris and mujahideen, Musharraf has sold the blood of Kashmiris, mujahideen and Afghans." Following are some selected parts of the interview:

Q. How do you look at the current phase of peace talks between India and Pakistan?

This phase of peace talks clearly indicates that the current regime in Pakistan is too weak to resist India. It is coward and ready to kneel down before India at Vajpayee's pleasure. I am really surprised to observe that our rulers are dying to embrace India despite the fact that the Indian leadership had declared Pakistan a fit case for pre-emptive strike comparing it with Iraq. It seems their *ghairat* [honour] has slept and there is a need to awaken it.

Q. How their ghairat could be awoken? Who would do this job?

It could be done by a true Muslim. It will be done through jehad. The rulers are the not the true Muslims. They are the lackeys of big powers. They are guided by the rules of international politics and diplomacy, not by the teachings of Islam and the precepts of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The intoxication of power has blinded them. They cannot think like an independent person. The fate of *ummah* [Islamic nationhood] cannot be left on them. We all—the mujahideen of *Jaish* are busy on this front—fighting a jehad against the worst enemy of Islam—the Indian army that is blatantly slaughtering the Kashmiri Muslims. So, only mujahideen can awake them from their slumber of oblivion through jehad.

Q. Are you saying that you are going to wage jehad against the state to wake up the leaders' ghairat?

I am not suggesting a jehad against the state. The state consists of our brothers, sisters and elders. No, I am not saying that we should take up guns against our own people. What I am trying to convey is, let the rulers work according to their own game plan—that, by the way is the game plan of the foreign powers that are anti-Islam and anti-jehad. We will be following the agenda of Allah i.e. jehad against the oppressors to help the oppressed. Don't you remember the Kargil! *Ghaddar* [traitor] Nawaz Sharif was having a love-affair with Vajpayee and the then warrior of Islam—General Musharraf who has now unfortunately become the stable boy of Bush—was fighting a jehad and waking up the *ghairat* of *bai-ghairat* [honour-less] Sharif. That's what we are doing. We are teaching the Indian army a good lesson.

Q. How could you claim with so much confidence that you are teaching the Indian army a good lesson? Kashmir has not been freed yet!

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Kashmir had been freed had Mian Nawaz Sharif not auctioned the blood of mujahideen to Bill Clinton. Kargil was a key to Kashmir's conquest. But alas, mujahideen were betrayed. In my opinion, Nawaz Sharif is the murderer of 80,000 Kashmiris who have sacrificed their lives for the Kashmir cause. Kashmir's freedom will take time. It will be freed with India's disintegration—just like several Muslims states got freedom after the USSR's disintegration.

Q. What is the current status of your group?

I am heading *Khudam-ul-Islam*, a *tablighee* [advocacy] organisation that preaches Islam. *Jaish-e-Mohammad* is active only in Kashmir. It is working freely and there is no restriction on it.

Q. Which Kashmir?

Inside Kashmir, where the Indian army is targeting the Kashmiri Muslims. Our entire infrastructure exists there. We train the mujahideen and plan attacks on the Indian army.

Q. But how are you sustaining your jehad? You are no more supported by the establishment. General Pervez Musharraf has given this assurance to Richard Armitage.

We had not started jehad with General Musharraf's approval. We are supported by the lovers of jehad. I tell you that jehad is not fought with money or with the approval of the governments. It is fought with passion, spirit and commitment. Our mujahideen strap explosives around their bodies and blow themselves around the army camps causing the enemy colossal loss. Can you have that courage? I bet not even if I give you billions of rupees. As far as logistics are concerned, true and fearful Muslims give us donations. We buy ammunition from the Indian army. Indian soldiers are corrupt. They sell the weapons and ammunition at throwaway price because they have to buy *sharab* [liquor] and *aurat* [prostitute]. We also snatch ammunition from the Indian army in huge quantity.

Q. According to a story by The News, you were involved in Daniel Pearl's murder...

It is an outrageous lie. What is the credibility of the man who has published this report? He is living in self-exile in the US and working against the interests of Islam.

Q. Some workers of Jaish had killed the French engineers in Karachi. They have been sentenced to death. Any comments?

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There are some political reasons behind it. But let me tell you that in my opinion, they are great mujahideen. They have rich contribution in Kashmir jehad. I am sure they will go to heaven.

Q. Why it is so that you are not in the good books of the Kashmiri mujahideen? They are quite suspicious about you?

That's not the case. It is RAW's propaganda. The JeM has tremendous sacrifices for the Kashmir jehad.

Q. The Kashmiri mujahideen say that JeM conducts operation in a clumsy manner. Its operations kill the Kashmiris rather than the Indian army...

I would not agree with this. We have consigned thousands of the Indian soldiers to the hell. Our operations are carefully planned. As I said, it is RAW's propaganda to disunite us from the Kashmiri mujahideen.

Maulana Masood Azhar in his own words

Khudam-ul-Islam chief and *Jaish-e-Mohammad* founder Maulana Masood Azhar was arrested by the Indian authorities in February 1994 after traveling to Srinagar from New Delhi. But the name first hit the headlines after the December 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC-814, when he was released from an Indian jail in return for the lives of people who were held hostage on the plane.

During lengthy interrogations by the Indian Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), Masood provided fascinating insight into the world of Pakistani religious right. He provided a graphic account of the use of seminaries as factories that produce cadre for the wars in Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir and several other regions. Reproduced below is one of Masood Azhar's interrogation reports, which reveals the story of the making of the man running one of the most-feared militant organisations in the Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

"I was born in Bahawalpur on July 10, 1968. My father worked as the headmaster of the government school in Bahawalpur. I have five brothers and six sisters. My father had *Deobandi* leanings and was extremely religious. One of my father's friends, Mufti Sayeed, was working as a teacher at the *Jamia Islamia* at the Binori Mosque in Karachi. He prevailed upon my father to admit me in the Jamia. Accordingly, after Class VIII, I studied at the *Jamia Islamia* and passed the *almia* (Islamic) examination in 1989.

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A number of *Jamia Islamia* students were under the influence of *Harkatul Mujahideen* (HuM) leaders who had been students there. I was also influenced by the work of the HuM in the Afghanistan jehad. *Jamia Islamia* had on its rolls Arab nationals, Sudanese and Bangladeshis apart from Pakistanis. All of them believed in the *Deobandi* ideology, and many were recruited for the Afghan jehad. I was also sympathetic to the cause, and when I met Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, the Ameer of the HuM, he invited me to participate in training at Yavar, in Afghanistan. Partly because of my poor physique, and also because of my literary skills, I did not complete the mandatory 40 days of training. Rehman-ul-Rahman instead asked me to bring out a monthly magazine for the HuM.

From around August 1989, I started bringing out *Sada-e-Mujahid* (Knock of the mujahid). I used to bring out about 2,000 copies and most of these were offices. By 1990, the HuM had offices in almost all important cities, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, Gujranwala, Islamabad and Lahore.

In 1993, 400 United Arab Emirates' nationals and other militants were arrested by the Pakistani government at Peshawar. Because of international pressure, they were expelled from Pakistan. Some of the Arab governments, expecting trouble, did not want them back in their own countries. As such, a majority of them went to Sudan and Somalia, where they joined the ranks of the *Ittehad-e-Islami*. These people continued to correspond with us, describing the plight of the Muslims in Somalia. They told us that Pakistani troops under United Nations forces had been placed at the central positions of trouble, guarding the life and property of Americans. If one American vehicle moved, its armed guards were Pakistanis.

As such, the *Ittehad-e-Islami* was in a dilemma about when they should engage the Americans, who are the biggest enemies of Islam, because they also faced their brothers. In the attack on the Adib Radio Station by Pakistani troops, many distributed free at public meetings, Friday prayers and so on. We used to carry news of our activities in Afghanistan, our functions and the opening of new persons of *Ittehad-e-Islami* lost their lives. As such, the Pakistanis, who until now were champions of Islam, found themselves unwelcome. I published these letters and also organised for a team of journalists to meet these militants in Nairobi. After our return, a number of news stories appeared, condemning the role of Pakistani troops in Somalia. I also brought out a booklet on the issue, and distributed 5,000 copies.

Meanwhile, in January 1993, I was asked to come to Islamabad where I accompanied Maulana Rehman-ul-Rahman and Maulana Farooq Kashmiri to Bagh, Abbaspora and Rahim Yar Khan to meet the families of our militants who died in Kashmir. Sajjad Afghani also accompanied us on this trip. It was then that he was told to take up command of the organisation in Kashmir. He was

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told to go via Bangladesh, since there was heavy snow on the India-Pakistan border. I traveled along with Sajjad Afghani by an Emirates flight to Dhaka. While Sajjad Afghani was handed over to some people for his crossing into India, I returned to Karachi.

After the formation of the *Harkat-ul-Ansar* by merging the *Harkat-ul-Jehad Islami* (HuJI) and *Harkatul Mujahideen* (HuM), a number of messages were sent to the chief commanders of both outfits in Kashmir to join hands. We did not, however, receive any confirmation of our orders. In January 1994, it was decided that I should visit the Kashmir valley. In the event, we learned that our orders had been implemented, but my travel plans went ahead as planned so I could ascertain the ground position, boost morale of our cadre and resolve any differences between HuJI and HuM. I arrived in Delhi by a Bangladesh Biman flight that arrived from Dhaka early on the morning of January 29, 1994. I used a Portuguese passport, and the duty officer at Indira Gandhi Airport commented that I did not look Portuguese. However, when I told him I was Gujarati by birth, he did not hesitate to stamp my passport."

The story of my arrest

Maulana Masood Azhar narrates the story of his 1994 arrest from Jammu & Kashmir.

On the eve of Friday our old friend Abu Ghazi shaheed, along with fifteen armed mujahideen had come to call upon us (i.e. brother Sajjad Khan shaheed and myself) at a small house in a remote village of Islamabad (Anant nag, Occupied Kashmir). We greeted them warm-heartedly and soon a *majlis-i-jehad* was in full swing. Subhan Allah: What an exhilarating scene it was! In front of me and around, were faces shining with the spirit of jihad, embellished with the *sunnah-i-nabawi*. In their hearts was a deep yearning for *shahadat* (martyrdom) and in their eyes dreams of the glory and revival of Islam. Decorating the chests of these young men were magazines and grenades and within them burned high the flame of courage and bravery. All of them were listening intently to what I was saying. Their kalashnikovs lay in their laps as loved children in their mothers' laps. Some of them had rocket launchers as well as carbines, which they had seized from the Indian army. Two or three of the mujahideen were guarding the door downstairs, proudly performing the sacred duty of '*rabat*'. They would have dearly liked to join the *majlis-e-jehad*, but duty came first.

For an hour I spoke and then asked them if they had any questions to ask. In the middle of an answer the mujahideen who were stationed at a nearby post

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contacted us over the wireless. They said that they wanted to come too. But their presence was vital there and so they had to content themselves by listening to us over the waves for some time. The *majlis* ended at about two. Some stretched out on the floor while others dozed off with their backs against walls. I quietly took up one of the klashnikove and started downstairs, to join the mujahideen on guard. Half way down, in the darkness I felt the weapon in my hands and found that it was ready and willing to talk to the mushrikeen. It was cocked, and the bullet was in the chamber. A feeling of ecstasy descended upon me. My joy knew no bounds as I held the loaded gun in my hands.

It was the wee hours of the night and a cool refreshing breeze was blowing. It was the time when Allah's besieges descends upon the earth. *Al-hamdulillah*, all praise to Allah who granted me an opportunity to perform guard-duty on the front of Kashmir. For this greatest of blessings He cannot be thanked enough. The memorable night of 28th *Shaban* came to an end. According to the English calendar the year was 1994. The day, i.e. Friday was bringing a message for me of which I was completely unaware. Brother Sajjad wanted me to deliver the Friday *khutba* in the city's *Jamia Masjid*, so at nine in the morning we left the house. As luck would have it, our car broke down in the way. We hired an auto rickshaw. It was nearly 12 o' clock; we were not very far from the *masjid* when we were suddenly arrested!

The Indian soldiers were beside themselves with joy. They danced and shouted with glee at the prize they had caught. We were blindfolded and our hands were tied behind our backs and d we were driven to an army camp. A crowd soon gathered there and we could hear them cheering, "*Jai Hind! Bharat mata ki jai!*" at the top of their voices. An exercising pain ripped through my heart. What an agonizing moment it was! The enemies of Allah, the enemies of Islam, the murderers of Muslims were rejoicing and we were helplessly waiting for the coming hours when the torture would begin.

Come; now let us raise the curtain upon another scene. This is the eve of *Jumatul mubarak* (Friday). Situated on the outskirts of Jammu, in Kot Bhalwal jail, ward no.9, seventeen of us are offering our '*tarawih*' prayers. Brother Maulana Abu Jundal performs the duty of '*imamat*' and in sixteen '*rakaat*' recites one '*parah*'. The '*imamat*' is taken over by another companion and I come back to my cell with Maulana Abu Jundal. I recite one entire '*parah*' in two '*rakat tarawih*'. At 8:30 the prison guards arrive, count us and lock our barrack. Most of our companions come into my cell where I have turned on my radio. We listen to the news. Later we comment upon the hijacking of the Indian plane. The incident has given rise to a new fragile hope. Our conversation is strange indeed. The ray of hope seems to be tangible, seems to disperse the gloom in the cell. For many days now our cellmates have been busy in '*salat-ul-hajah*', in beseeching and imploring Allah

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Taalah. Till nearly 10 o' clock the *majlis* in my cell continues. Then I am all alone. I don't know why sleep evades me. May be the events of the coming day are casting a shadow over me.

The long night somehow passes. At dawn I meet my companions again. The sun of Friday, 22nd *Ramazan* 1420 rises. Tired, I now fall asleep. I wake up at ten; perform '*wuzu*' and am busy in offering '*salat*' when prison officials swarm into my cell. They tell me that they have come to take me away, so I should take my belongings. I ask them where we are going. I get a confused reply. Someone says, "Kandahar". My companions tie my few belongings together and then start saying farewell. Tears of love fell from their eyes. Some are crying as if their hearts will break. I try to say something but tears overwhelm me. At that moment it is borne upon me with intensity how deep is the love, how strong is the bond, which binds us together. We have been a need, a comfort of each other. Together we have suffered tortures at the hands of the '*mushrikeen*', heard each other's shrieks and cries of pain, bandaged each other's wounds and together confronted the enemy. So close have we become that we have become each other's identity. All these young men have been my students too. The love and respect they have showered upon me will be impossible to forget. As Allah is my witness, till all of them are free and with me, I cannot consider my freedom to be complete.

At 11:30, leaving my companions crying, I come out of the ward. At the threshold I am blindfolded and handcuffed. I am pushed into a jeep. We travel for a long time and then I am put on a plane, which lands in Delhi. We come off the plane and then, in what seems to be a convoy of cars I am taken somewhere. On our arrival I ask them to remove my blindfold and give me my Koran so that I can recite it. Their refusal fires my temper and I tell them a thing or two. My outburst seems to have an effect and my blindfold is removed. As I open my eyes I see an Airbus of Air India in front of me with strange people running here and there. Later I learn that they are officers of secret agencies. We board the plane. I sit surrounded by armed and alert commandos. I tell them to give me my Koran from my bag and starting reciting it. The plane taxis and within minutes takes off leaving the land of the cruel oppressors far behind. Startled, I listen to the announcement, "Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome you on board the flight to Kandahar."

"*Allahu Akbar*," I shout with joy and then the following *dua* comes to my lips: "All praise to Allah who has delivered me of the wrong-doing people. My *Rabb*, settle me down in a blessed place and Thou art the best of those who settle. My *Rabb*, you are my Guardian. Guide me to the right path." Tears of sheer joy come to my eyes but I hold them back lest seeing me cry might give the enemy some relief. The plane is on its journey---from '*darul Kufr to darul Islam*'. The Believers are

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getting ready to celebrate. The Islamic world is rejoicing with a sense of victory, a sense of pride. The world of '*Kufr*' is in despair. The preface to a new chapter of history is being written.

My journey to freedom

Maulana Masood Azhar narrates the story of his 2000 release from the Indian custody.

The plane was now flying high and heading for Pakistan, where crossing over Baluchistan it would enter Afghanistan. I turned to look back and caught the curiosity-filled glance of Kashmir's notable commander Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar who was seated a few feet away. He raised a questioning eyebrow asking me our destination. Perhaps because of the blindfold, which had covered his ears too, he had not heard the announcement over the passenger address system.

The joy in my eyes was enough to make him realise that we were free at last. Immediately a sense of deep contentment spread over his face too. I turned back and saw another of our mujahid companion Ahmad `Omar Sheikh sitting a few rows in front of me. Each of us was surrounded by three guards. I counted the others and there were about ninety guards in the plane with us. In the very first row sat Jaswant Singh, the foreign minister of India's '*mushrik*' government. I saw him getting up three or four times and go into the cockpit. He had a personal physician with him too who was making him take some tablets. The cabin crew politely asked us for refreshments but we declined saying that we were fasting. Had we not been fasting we would still have refused for with freedom only a few hours away we felt neither hungry nor thirsty. Furthermore we found it unacceptable to eat anything of theirs.

After an hour and forty-five minutes the plane changed direction and started descending. Then the historic moment arrived when the Indian plane with the stigma of defeat and humiliation, with head bowed down landed at Kandahar airport, in *Darul Islam* Afghanistan. The runway flashed by and I was a mixture of emotions. The land where the plane had landed, everything belonging to it was intensely dear to me. The blood of the '*shuhada*' was running in the veins of this city. The person whose deep love filled my heart, on whose unseen hand I had performed 'bait' in jail, he lived here. Kandahar -- the city of '*Ameer-ul-Mumineen*' who in these times has made Islam proud; whose presence is a true blessing for the Muslims. When I was in prison I desperately yearned to behold this city, to kiss the hand of '*Ameer-ul-Mumineen*'. It was the greatest wish of my life, a wish I had often expressed in my writings.

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Ya Allah praise be to you indeed! You chose a city from where the rays of Islam were emanating and spreading all over the world. This is the place where your words rein supreme, where Islam and the Muslims are free where the leaders are your beloved ones. The plane was racing towards the airport building and the sight of the beautiful faces of the thousands of Taliban armed guards was adding joy to my heart. I was surprised to see such a vast number of guards lining the runway. I later learnt that on that day it was the earnest wish of every citizen of Kandahar too to be present at the airport. The Taliban had banned entrance into the airport premises and so only a few thousand had managed to gain entry.

Though the Taliban had no connection with the hijacking, yet the people of Kandahar were jubilant that *Allah Taala* had granted their three Muslim brothers release and that the crises had been solved so peacefully. Upon them had been revealed the sanctity of Islamic brotherhood and so their faces shone with welcoming joy. The hundreds of armed Taliban guards at the airport, their discipline .... Their shining cars, tanks and weapons were inviting the Indian officials to thought, and the thought could be seen on the face of every *'mushrik'* sitting in India.

For many years now India has given refuge to the robbers and thieves of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. It is providing full material and financial support to this gang of murderers based in Delhi. The leaders of the opposition have impressed upon India that the Taliban are just a disorganized band whose power is only temporary. But today the foreign minister of India had landed at the Kandahar airport to acknowledge and pay tribute to the superiority and political acumen of the Taliban. He must have been witnessing the organized, controlled power, the quiet efficiency and dignity of the Taliban ranks.

When the plane came to a stop we thought that it would necessarily take a few hours for our exchange and subsequent release to take place. Unknown fears clutched at our hearts too. The delay of the next few hours weighed like a mountain upon. I felt like getting up, breaking the door of the plane and run like a mad man down the Tarmac. The smell of the *shuhada's* blood was irresistibly calling me, tugging at my heartstrings. The stairs were brought and as soon as the door of the plane was opened a man came running in. (I later came to know that he was the head of the Indian negotiation team). He quickly came up to me and said: "Maulana Sahib, come with me quickly". I told him to wait so that I could tie my *'amamah'* (turban) on my head, for this was the land of the Taliban. Having calmly completed my task I took Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar and Ahmad Omar Sheikh with me and we all made our way down the steps. As soon as my feet touched the ground my heart was transformed!

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Taliban high officials greeted us at the foot of the stairs. Corps Commander of Kandahar, Maulvi Muhammad Akhtar Usmani Sahib was among them, as I found out later. With a cordial handshake and a warm embrace he took me to a car and bade me get inside. I saw that to my right, a few feet away stood the Indian plane, which had been hijacked a week ago. I could not turn my gaze away. Our car came to a stop. The Taliban Corps Commander got down, walked under the plane and said something to the hijackers above. As I watched mesmerised, two masked men came down from the plane by a rope ladder. One of them was wearing a beautiful suit while the other was in a safari dress. Both of them were armed with revolvers and grenades. They came running towards our car and inside hugged me in a warm embrace.

A storm of emotions washed over us. Those hijackers who were being called extremists and terrorists were overcome with emotion. Tears welled from their eyes. Had the world seen those tears, it would have been forced to think what was it that had driven these softhearted young men into taking that extreme step? A step, which was condemned by the whole world? Certainly it was the atrocities committed by India, its barbaric, inhuman treatment that had driven these young men. Oblivious of their surroundings they clung to me, pressing themselves into my chest.

Suddenly the Taliban Corps Commander intervened from the front seat and quietly asked, "Are both of you satisfied"? His voice broke the spell and startled the hijackers. They quickly asked me a few questions and said 'yes'. Then the well-dressed one who seemed to be their leader beckoned from the car window, and the others who were still in the plane came running down and got into the car. In spite of the fact that they had been overcome by their emotions, I noted that the hijackers had not for a single moment let go of their weapons. In an astonishing manner all of them carried out to the letter the short orders fired at them by their leader. As a security measure they made a Taliban official get in and the car raced out of the airport building.

I realised how tense I had been until now; fearful of the last-minute hitches that might take place; of the hours it would take before we would at last be free. Nothing had happened. Everything had gone off amazingly smoothly due to the Taliban's excellent, political acumen and their superb handling of the situation. What would necessarily have taken a few hours; was accomplished within a few minutes. The Taliban had thus proved to the world that they had a keen perception of international matters and had the ability to solve crises of every kind. That day had been a Friday too. When, with both my hands tied behind my back I had been pushed into a truck.

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The truck had headed for the prison where my long life of captivity had started and today was a Friday too! Both of my hands were free and I was sitting in a Taliban car heading towards freedom -- a freedom about which my prayer is: "Ya Allah make it a precursor of the liberation of Kashmir, *Babri Masjid* and *Masjid-i-Aqsa. Aameen, Ya Rabb-i-shuhada wal mujahideen!*"

Advani! I am back!

On gaining his freedom in February 1994, Maulana Masood Azhar visited Karachi to meet his *asatizah-i-keram* (teachers) and *akabir ulama-i-keram* (mentors). On his arrival at *Darul Ifta wal Irshad*, giving in to the demands of the thousands of his admirers gathered there, he delivered a short speech, a summary of which is being reproduced below:

"My proud Muslim elders, brothers and friends! It was the year 1992, the cold month of December and the sixth day of the month that the *Kuffar* put us to the test. Thousands of '*mushriks*', chanting the names of their idols, raising slogans against Islam, challenging the honour of the Muslims had advanced upon the *Babri Masjid* in Ayodhiya. The entire Muslim world stood transfixed. Though some were not even aware of what was happening, yet others were sobbing crying with anguish and pain. Finally, the heavens witnessed the scene, the earth watched too as defying the one billion and two hundred twenty million Muslims; the Hindus attacked and martyred the 550-year-old *Babri Masjid*.

By demolishing the *Masjid*, the Hindus were testing the Muslims, watching what they would do; what the Muslim governments would do, the Muslim citizens would do. India, which was already shedding the blood of the Muslims in Kashmir, India which had tried with all its might to break Pakistan into two, India who wants to create an "*akhand*" (united) *Bharat* (Hindustan), and wave the tri-coloured flag over Pakistan --- had launched a fatal attack that was to be the forerunner of many other similar attacks.

Having demolished the *Babri Masjid* the Hindus saw that no army advanced upon them, they saw that no one fell upon them; they saw that the Muslims did shed tears but took no action and so the very next day Lal Krishan Advani announced that he would demolish 3000 more masajid and then 3000 more. The Hindus planned to first demolish all the mosques in India and then advance upon the sacred land, which Allah has given us - Pakistan. My dear friends! In those painful days, in those distressing times a weak person, a lone man used to shout, some times from a *masjid* in Karachi, sometimes from Dhabayji and sometimes form the rural areas of Sindh.

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He went to the '*ulama*' and begged them with outstretched hands and to the Afghan mujahideen too he pleaded in the name of Islam. Then this weak person, with complete faith in his '*Rabb*', here in this very city of Karachi, issued a challenge to the seemingly much more powerful Lal Krishan Advani. Advani, he said, you shall not be able to desecrate our *masajid* any more. Advani! You will not be able to demolish even three mosques now. Advani, you talk of three thousand *masajid*, we shall take away *Babri Masjid* from you, we shall wrest away Kashmir from you too. This weak person, this unarmed man went from door to door, begging each and everyone to do something.

This defenceless young man went to Kashmir. Lal Krishan Advani ordered his forces to arrest him. But after six years and twenty-four days, the Indian foreign minister had to hand over the defenceless young man to the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban, saying, "Take him back. We are unable to keep him any longer in our jails". India's Jaswant Singh and Lal Krishan Advani later had alleged that the plane was hijacked by Pakistan. Listen! I tell you the truth. No one in Pakistan had even an inkling of the hijacking. Your death warrant was issued somewhere else!

You now demand of Pakistan to hand over the hijackers to you. But where has your army of thirteen lakh gone? Where have all your agencies vanished? O drinkers of the urine of cows in front of idols! O agents of RAW! You failed to catch the five people only and you shall never catch them, *Insha Allah*. You shall not be able to catch them for possibly they are sitting upon your own chest waiting to slit your throats with their knives again. It is possible that they are people of your own country, whom we have never seen or known. You had conquered and subjugated the Muslims of India and you had thought that you had suppressed them completely. But there are embers in that dying fire. When they shall blaze again they shall teach you a lesson you shall never forget!

My dear friends! Today I am back with you again. Holding you as my witness I am telling Advani again: Advani, I have come back. And today an Islamic Emirate had been established in the world. What you wanted to destroy has reached glorious heights today. You wanted to destroy Islam, which has reached indestructible heights. I am just an insignificant servant of the ulama. You have not seen our real people. Advani! My young men, my dear young men, my mujahid companions, my *ulama*, have snatched me away from you, in the same way I shall wrest away the *Babri Masjid*, and Kashmir from you, *Insha Allah* and I shall not rest till then".

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Chapter 6

Who masterminded December 1999 Air India hijacking?

After the post-Taliban era, the war-torn, impoverished landscape of Afghanistan has become the new playground for India and Pakistan to score strategic points over each other. Having expanded its presence and influence in the post-Taliban Kabul, India has made substantial progress in its efforts to make the international community believe that Islamabad had been using terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy to pressurise Delhi for talks on the lingering dispute of Kashmir.

Having established its consulates in the Afghan cities of Herat in the West, Kandahar in the South and Jalalabad in the East, the Indian government is making renewed attempts to get hold of any evidence that could prove the involvement of Pakistani intelligence agencies in the December 24, 1999 hijacking of an Indian airplane. For the first time since the hijack, the Indian and American investigative agencies have reached the epicenter.

Two Deputy Inspectors General of the Indian Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and a couple of Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) officials visited Kandahar in the second week of October 2003 to interrogate the Taliban masterminds of the operation that saw the Indian Airlines plane seized by hijackers immediately after it took off from the Katmandu airport. Before proceeding to Kandahar, the Indian officials got prior permission from the Northern Alliance government to question several Taliban operatives including Mullah Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil who was Afghanistan's ex-foreign minister during the Taliban rule and key witness in the 1999 hijack of Indian Airlines flight IC-814. The US authorities afterwards released Wakil.

The Indian plane was on its way to Delhi from Kathmandu when five armed men hijacked it over Varansi. They first took it to Amritsar and from there to Lahore. After refuelling in Lahore, the plane then took off for Dubai where the hijackers allowed 21 passengers to disembark before they took it to Kandahar. Although an Indian national, Rupin Katyal was murdered by the hijackers, the rest of the passengers returned home safely after spending a week [from 24th to 31st December] in captivity before they were released in exchange for the release of three top militants including Maulana Masood Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar. Of them, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed has already been sentenced in American journalist Daniel Pearl's murder case. Both Indian and American authorities had subsequently registered separate cases against the hijackers.

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The Pakistani intelligence operatives in Kabul are learnt to have provided highly disturbing information to their bosses back home alleging; after invading Afghanistan, the FBI sleuths had seized exceptionally revealing tape-recorded conversations between the hijackers of IC-814 and the Air Traffic Control in Kandahar. Some of the information contained in those tapes was recently shared with the Indian intelligence, pursuing which an FBI team went to India while a CBI team visited Kandahar to follow up on those leads. The FBI had extended full cooperation to the CBI because an American national, Ms. Jeanne Moore (a psychotherapist from Bakersfield, California) was also amongst the passengers of the ill-fated flight. A criminal case was subsequently registered in the US against the hijackers. Having recorded Moore's testimony, the FBI teams had visited New Delhi thrice to discuss her abduction and progress in the case. Determined to get to the bottom of the hijack in order to unmask the masterminds, the FBI has already set up an office in New Delhi to cooperate with India to curb growing terrorism. The CBI, on the other hand, claims to have acquired the record of the incoming calls at the Air Traffic Control of the Kandahar airport.

French writer Bernard Henri-Levy writes in his famous book *"Who Killed Daniel Pearl"*: "Two high-ranking officers of the ISI were present on the tarmac in Kandahar when the Indian negotiating team landed there. They were later joined by colleagues, from the special operations wing of the ISI's Quetta station. Negotiations were being conducted over wireless sets. The five hijackers got careless and inadvertently allowed Indian negotiators to overhear them, taking instructions from Urdu-speaking men. Eventually, the episode had ended with the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar and Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed, the man who was later convicted for the brutal murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl. The aircraft and its passengers were released in exchange".

During and after the hijack drama, Islamabad vehemently denied having any role in it and went to the extent of offering to negotiate on New Delhi's behalf. The fact, however, remains that Mufti Abdul Rauf (the younger brother of Jaish-e-Mohammad founder Masood Azhar) and his brother-in-law, Yusuf Azhar were among the hijackers whilst the Jaish chief who was to be released by the Indian government from a Srinagar jail was shortly seen leading victory processions in Pakistan.

According to well-placed intelligence sources, the CBI has informed the FBI that Muttawakil had played an adverse role during the plane hijack leaving the then Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh red-faced by going back on several commitments made during the negotiations with the hijackers. The Indian side says Wakil, who acted as an interlocutor at Kandahar after the IC-814 plane landed there, was also hostile during the negotiations. When Jaswant Singh landed in

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Kandahar with the three terrorists (Maulana Masood Azhar, Omar Sheikh and Mushtaq Zargar) Wakil had made it a point to assure him that the hijackers and the terrorists would be held in Afghan custody until all the Indians left Kandahar. However, as soon as the three Pakistani militants were handed over to the hijackers, they were provided with a jeep in which they victoriously drove away.

The CBI believed that Muttawakil would be able to divulge more details about the intricacies of the hijack such as contacts that hijackers had with the outside world including instructions and logistical support they received from Pakistan. Therefore, during the Indo-US Joint Working Group on Terrorism meeting held on July 11 and 12, 2003 in Washington, India requested the Bush administration to make the FBI give permission to the CBI to grill Muttawakil. After being denied access for almost two years, Indian investigators finally succeeded in debriefing Mullah Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil and a few other Taliban leaders as well. What is not known to the Pakistani intelligence is whether Muttawakil was questioned for reconstructing the hijack drama or whether he had agreed for a statement to be recorded as a witness in the ongoing trial in a Patiala court in India.

The FBI investigators are convinced that on several occasions, Mullah Muttawakil had used the Air Traffic Control (ATC) channel to speak to the hijackers and to some Pakistani officials. Therefore, he, more than any other Taliban official, had the total picture of how the hijack was facilitated by Pakistan and where the five hijackers were headed after the scenario came to an end. India insists that Pakistan's role in the hijacking should be seen within the context of the Taliban's then official spokesman, Abdul Haj Mutmaen's January 1, 1999 statement that the hijackers and terrorists that had been released from Indian jails were left on the Pak-Afghan border near Quetta, Baluchistan.

From India's point of view — coming close on the heels of the 2003 US' blacklisting Dawood Ibrahim - any evidence that could establish the role of Pakistani intelligence officials in the hijack could put enormous pressure on Islamabad for the custody of the IC-814 hijackers. Under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation convention on extradition and mutual assistance in tackling criminal activities, the Indian government made two formal requests for the extradition of the five hijackers and their accomplices. But the Pakistani government refused to oblige, maintaining that if any person suspected of being involved in the hijacking was to be found on its territory or in Pakistan-occupied- Kashmir, Islamabad would undertake to apprehend and prosecute the suspect. The CBI Director R. K. Raghavan subsequently raised the issue with Interpol officials during the 69th annual conference of the International Organisation in Athens.

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Soon afterwards, the Interpol authorities issued a red corner alert (look-out notice) to Pakistan, Britain, the United Arab Emirates, Nepal and Bangladesh against the five hijackers and two accomplices who are believed to be the key conspirators in the hijacking. However, the Indian side is not very hopeful about getting their custody even after issuance of a red corner notice given the fact that several countries did not comply with the warrant from the international organisation. According to well placed interior ministry sources, despite a resolution to make mandatory warrants of the Interpol at its annual 1997 conference held in New Delhi, several countries still had to ratify it to turn it into an appropriate law.

The CBI has already in addition filed a charge sheet against ten people in the hijacking case, including three Indians -- Abdul Latif alias Patel, Bhupalmar Damai alias Yusuf Nepali and Dilip Kumar Bhujel. The other seven accused, all Pakistani nationals, were Ibrahim Athar, Sunny Ahmed Qazi, Zahoor Ibrahim, Shahid Akhter Sayed and Shakir and accomplices Yusuf Azhar and Abdul Rauf, agency sources said. Yusuf Azhar and Abdul Rauf are believed to be the key conspirators. The CBI charge sheet alleges that the hijackers possessed a very sophisticated satellite telephone to communicate with their mastermind in Rawalpindi. "And when the Taliban authorities in Kabul refused to allow the hijacked aircraft to land, which was communicated by the hijackers to the authorities in Rawalpindi, they were asked to proceed to Kandahar". Islamabad, however, has denied these charges time and again.

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Chapter 7

Lashkar-e-Toiba: Optimistic about future of jehad

Although the January 2004 Islamabad agreement between India and Pakistan shattered the dreams of most optimistic of the Pakistan-based militant outfits waging an armed struggle against the Indian occupation forces in Jammu & Kashmir, the leaders of the most feared jehadi outfits, *the Lashkar-e-Toiba* and its parent organisation, *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*, are still hopeful about the future of jehad and are thus keeping their fingers crossed.

The *Lashkar-e-Toiba* happens to be an *Ahle Hadith (Wahhabi)* jehadi group that was formed in 1986 by Hafiz Mohammad Saeed and his associates as the military wing of the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* or Center for Religious Learning and Social Welfare. The *Lashkar* and the *Markaz* soon set up military training camps in the eastern Afghanistan provinces of Kantar and Paktia, both of which had a sizable number of *Ahle Hadith (Wahhabi)* followers of Islam, with the aim of participating in the jehad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Because the LeT joined the Afghan jehad at a period when it was winding down (the Soviets invaded in 1979), the group did not play a major part in the fight against the Soviet forces, which pulled out in 1989. However, the Afghan campaign helped the *Lashkar* leadership to gain the trust of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). During 1989-90, however, the LeT leaders turned their attention from the internecine squabble in Afghanistan to Kashmir, which is where it gained fame.

As the world applauded the sagacity of the two nuclear armed neighbours in signing the January 6, 2004 Islamabad accord, most of the jehadi outfits bristled with rage at General Pervez Musharraf's audacity in agreeing not to permit any territory under Pakistan's control to be used for carrying out terrorism in any manner. Interestingly, however, unlike other militant leaders, the most vocal proponent of the Kashmir jehad, Saeed decided to go low key and to abstain from issuing any further statement criticising the Islamabad accord.

According to Hafiz Saeed's close circles, he was asked by the establishment to remain silent, so that a possible action against the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and its militant wing, the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, could be avoided. He was further promised that there would be no restrictions on activities of the two outfits, be it the collection of funds and the holding of public rallies or the recruitment of jehadi cadres and their training. In other words, despite having restricted activities of the other jehadi groups, the establishment continues bolstering its support for *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and *Lashkar-e-Toiba.*

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According to Hafiz Saeed's close aides, the Islamabad agreement between India and Pakistan would not be able to affect their freedom struggle in the valley immensely since they have enough arms and ammunition in the valley to resist the Indian security forces for at least the next six months. They further claimed that young jehadis from various parts of the country continue to throng their training camps at Azad Kashmir before being pushed into Occupied Kashmir. The *Lashkar* is the only jehadi outfit operating from Azad Kashmir, which still keeps a comparatively larger group of activists at its *Muaskar-e-Toiba* and *Muaskar-e-Aqsa* camps in Muzaffarabad from where young jehadis are reportedly launched after being trained at the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s Muridke headquarters.

Unlike the past strategy of launching large groups comprising of 30 to 60 militants, each on regular basis from the training camps located on the LoC; say the *Lashkar* sources; it had lately been decided to keep training militants in limited numbers and launch smaller groups of not more than five to fifteen people, with long intervals in between. With more than 2200 unit offices across the country and over two-dozen launching camps along the Line of Control, the *Lashkar* boasts of being the biggest jehadi network here. The Muridke camp is the first step for recruits who are vetted for their suitability for jehad before being moved to the next phase where they are provided two types of military training. The first one is a 21-day basic course called *'Daura Aam'* while the second one is a three-month advanced course called *'Daura Khaas'*. The advanced course is geared towards guerilla warfare, with training in the use of arms and ammunition, ambush and survival techniques.

Having remained inactive for over a year under the government pressure, Hafiz Saeed has once again got himself activated and is making fiery speeches across Punjab. In one of his March 2004 Friday sermons in Lahore and subsequently reported by the *Lashkar* mouthpiece: *Jehad Times*, Prof. Hafiz Saeed declared that the recruitment for the *Lashkar* cadres has again begun and more than 7,000 boys had already been recruited in the past six months for carrying out jehad-e-Kashmir from every nook and corner of Pakistan. He was further quoted as saying that around 800 youngsters had embraced martyrdom while fighting the Indian Army in 2003.

Even before the Islamabad agreement, the activists of *Dawa* and *Lashkar* had never been made to observe the ban General Musharraf had himself imposed on jehadi groups from collecting funds and holding public rallies. While banning the *Lashkar* and a few other militant groups on January 5, 2002, General Musharraf had declared he would remain firm in his stand against terrorism and extremism and in his commitment to the principle that no person or organisation will be allowed to indulge in terror as a means to further its cause. But in practical terms, no step had ever been taken to dismantle or even disarm the

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Lashkar, the jehadi group that is dreaded for its guerilla activities in the Occupied Kashmir and well known for the infamous December 22, 2000 attack on the Red Fort in New Delhi.

Subsequently, nowhere is General Musharraf's unfinished business more visible than at Muridke, 45 kilometers from Lahore, where a sprawling 200-acre headquarter of the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, protected by barbed wire and bearded Kalashinkov-totting men, continues to pursue its jehadi agenda uninterrupted. The vast land between Lahore and Gujranwala has already been transformed into an Islamic state that prohibits music, television and smoking in its premises. According to rough estimates, over Rs. 50 million have so far been spent on the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s Muridke headquarters, called *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad*. The *Markaz* runs a network of social services, including 16 Islamic institutions, 135 secondary schools, five madrassas and a $300,000-plus medical mission that includes mobile clinics, an ambulance service and blood banks.

Though there have been no wild guesses about exactly where the money came from for the establishment of the *Markaz*, Hafiz Saeed's close circles say that a Palestinian promoter and jehadi scholar, Abdullah Azzam bought it for the organisation. Azzam was also one of the inspirations behind the creation of the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Azzam was once considered the religious and political mentor of Osama bin Laden.

To this day, the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* uses Azzam's speeches and publications to train and motivate its cadres. Also noteworthy is the fact that the *Lashkar-e-Toiba,* before it renamed itself *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* in 2002, linked on its website to the Hamas official website and the then English mouthpiece of al Qaeda, www.Azzam.com.

A US-based Pakistani writer, Hassan Abbas, notes in his book titled *"Pakistan's drift into extremism, Allah, the Army and America's war on terror"*, that Azzam had studied Islamic jurisprudence at Egypt's Al-Azhar University, and worked as a professor in University of Jordan in Amman and later in Saudi Arabia. "He had left West Bank in 1967 arguing that he first wanted to learn the skills necessary to fight. Azzam was disgruntled by the secular nature of the Palestinian resistance and wanted to generate a new zeal among the Arabs for the lost art and science of jehad. As soon as the Afghan crisis erupted in 1979-80, he rushed to Pakistan where a teaching position at Islamic University in Islamabad was waiting for him. This assignment, however, proved to be temporary and he shifted to Peshawar shortly thereafter, where he established an organisation named *Mekhtab al-Khadamat* (Service Bureau) for Afghan mujahideen. With generous

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Saudi funds this group managed travel and training for volunteers coming to participate in Afghan jehad from across the Arab world".

Hassan Abbas further writes in his book: "In a short span of time, Azzam proved to be a valuable asset for both the ISI and the CIA, though he largely operated independently and was more loyal to his Saudi financiers than anyone else. He traveled widely around the world for generating finances and support for the Afghan cause and various cities in the US were also covered during these "lecture tours". His real long lasting contribution though was the inspiration that he provided to Osama bin Laden in mid 1980s through his speeches in Saudi Arabia. Laden's Peshawar based *Bayt-ul-Ansar* (House of the Helpers), involved in work similar to that of Azzam's group provided an opportunity to both Abdullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden to work together, though Azzam was already a prominent figure then and Osama was not. It was only a matter of time that Osama rose high in the ranks of Azzam's protégés".

During these times, Abdullah Azzam reportedly came into contact with Hafiz Saeed and the two discussed the idea of establishing *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad.* Hafiz Saeed was then tasked to draw up a plan for raising the center at Muridke near Lahore. However, before the center could become fully functional, Abdullah Azzam was assassinated along with his two sons in a powerful bomb blast in Peshawar on November 24, 1989. The ISI believed it to be a work of Israeli intelligence agency Mossad as according to their assessment Abdullah Azzam, after the mujahideen victory, was planning to return to West Bank to join Intifada. Others blame Osama bin Laden and the ISI for the killing. Peter Bergen, a renowned journalist and world's leading expert on al-Qaeda, believes that there is a strong possibility that Soviets and/or Afghan communists killed Abdullah Azzam. The murder mystery, however, was never resolved.

In December 2001, a year after the Red Fort attack in New Delhi [on 22 December 2000], the US State Department had included the *Lashkar* in the list of its officially designated terrorist outfits. Seemingly, this move had been on the cards as the US administration had blocked the financial assets of the *Lashkar* following an armed attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi on 13th December 2001. Almost ten days later, while supposedly acting under the establishment's directives, the then *Lashkar* chief, Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, addressed a press conference in Lahore [on 24th December 2001] and announced that Maulana Abdul Wahid would now head the *Lashkar*. While stepping down as the *Lashkar* chief, Saeed said he would now lead *Jamaat-ul-Dawa,* the new name for the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad*. Maulana Abdul Wahid Kashmiri, who hails from Poonch district in Jammu, was made the new head of *Lashkar*. The leadership change was aimed at making it difficult for India to malign Pakistan on its alleged support to cross-border militancy.

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In the press conference, Hafiz Saeed said these changes were meant to counter intense Indian propaganda that Pakistan had been sponsoring the jehad in the Valley. But he added that his withdrawal from the high office of *Ameer* of the *Lashkar* was not due to any internal or external pressure, be it Islamabad or Washington. A week later [on December 31, 2001], Hafiz Saeed was detained, on flimsy charges of making inflammatory speeches and inciting people to violate law and order. But according to *Jehad Times*, Hafiz Sahib knew that he was to be arrested and had reorganised outfit in anticipation. Subsequent news reports in the US media had alleged that Saeed was closely associated with bin Laden's "International Islamic Front for Jehad against the US and Israel". The government of Pakistan had strongly refuted these reports. The Lahore High Court finally let off Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, who remained in comfortable confinement, on November 19, 2002.

Having stepped down as the *Lashkar* chief, he had to look for such a role for *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* that could be more acceptable for the world. The *Dawa* survived a number of restrictions and threats from authorities in the next couple of years mainly because of the fact that it had dissociated itself from *Lashkar-e-Toiba*. In a bid to prove that the Kashmir insurgency was an indigenous freedom struggle – the *Lashkar* had to announce in 2002 that it was formally shifting its base to 'Indian Held Kashmir.' The *Dawa* further chose to camouflage its jehadi agenda and concentrated more on its prime objective of extending the invitation of Islam. According to Hafiz Saeed's associates, the cautions exercised by him helped their organisation survive a fresh ban imposed by Musharraf on several extremist outfits in November 2003.

Elaborating on the establishment's renewed love for Hafiz Saeed, the intelligence sources say the *Dawa* chief is more amenable to the Inter Services Intelligence's control than the leader of any other jehadi outfit as he could readily agree to wage a 'controlled jehad' in the Valley whenever asked to do so. Even otherwise, its militant wing – *Lashkar* - was perceived to be more dedicated to the cause of Kashmir liberation and hence more useful, given the fact that it had the largest Pakistani component when compared to many other jehadi cadres. The rise of the *Lashkar* in the establishment's priorities is also attributed to its Punjabi base, which helps easy mixing of the *Lashkar* militants with the local population of Jammu, linguistically allied to Punjab.

The *Lashkar* happens to be an extremely secretive organisation, which takes great care to conceal the real identities of its office-bearers except the *Ameer* and the fighters. For this purpose, they emulate the Palestinian organisations in the use of '*Kuniat*', which are Arabic pseudonyms adopted from the '*Kuniats*' of the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and later Islamic heroes. The

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building of the headquarter houses teaching, training and residential facilities complete with its own farms, fish-breeding ponds and stables. The Headquarter also has a modern-looking computerised religious university, which has five related institutes. At least two-dozen thoroughbred horses are used for training the students between the ages of eight to twenty years. The students, dressed in military uniforms, are imparted compulsory training in shooting and swimming. Over 2,500 students are presently enrolled with the complex and the teachers insist that all of them are Pakistanis. The education – Islamic and Western – is from the primary to the university level for both men and women and the students are brainwashed for propagating Islam and waging jehad against infidels.

Apart from the fact that its recruits have the best weapons and state-of-the-art communication technology, the *Lashkar* also is reported to have a propaganda arsenal. It publishes magazines in many languages, has a website and also plans to set up its radio station. Apart from its schools, many volunteers from other educational institutions - some even from the United Kingdom and the United States - join the *Lashkar*. Fighters from over 17 countries including Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, Iran, Chechnya and the United Kingdom, have either been killed or detained in Kashmir. The *Lashkar* also took part in the Kargil war. According to its magazine *Majallah Al-Daawa*, the first group of infiltrators who fought pitched battles with the Army in upper Drass and Batalik were its volunteers. Only later did the Pakistan Army take over.

Despite a government interdiction, banners can easily be seen in the urban and rural areas of the Punjab, urging young boys to enroll themselves with *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and *Lashkar-e-Toiba* for jehad. The banners usually carry the telephone numbers of the area offices so that the young men interested in the holy war's training can contact the *Lashkar*. Similarly, the *Lashkar* and the *Dawa* activists can be seen outside mosques distributing pamphlets and periodicals preaching the virtues of jehad in Kashmir, Palestine, Chechnya, Kosovo and Eritrea besides vowing that it would plant the flag of Islam in Washington, Tel Aviv and the New Delhi. The *Lashkar* leadership describes the Hindus and Jews as the main enemies of Islam while claiming India and Israel to be the main enemies of Pakistan.

The donation boxes of the *Lashkar* and the *Jamaat* that had disappeared soon after the militant outfits were banned have reappeared on the public places as well as mosques all over the Punjab. However, most of the *Jamaat* funds still come in the form of anonymous donations being sent directly to its bank accounts from various parts of the world. The rapidly growing *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and its leadership even raise funds on the Internet. Some insiders believe that the *Jamaat*

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has raised so much money, mostly from sympathetic *Wahhabis* in Saudi Arabia that it now plans to open its own bank.

The insiders added that the *Dawa* top notches are snapping up properties across Pakistan. "Some recent real estate purchases by the *Jamaat* in the outskirts of Lahore amount to about Rs 300 million. Similarly, the *Jamaat* has bought four plots of land in Hyderabad division [of Sindh] and six others in various Sindh districts. The total price tag is about Rs. 200 million," they added. At the time of *Eidul Azha* this year (2004), the sources said, the *Jamaat* and the *Lashkar* collectively received charity contributions worth Rs 650 million, mostly in the form of hides of the sacrificed animals.

Amid these activities, it seems that the *Markaz Yarmuk* in Pattoki is emerging as the second centre for the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* after *Markaz Dawa* in Muridke. For the second consecutive year in 2003, the *Jamaat* held its annual congregation in Pattoki because of unexplained reasons. However, it has proved a blessing in disguise for the *Jamaat*. After building its organisational structure and recruiting cadres in the Northern and Central Punjab from Muridke, the *Jamaat* will be able to take its message to more people in Southern Punjab. If the past is any guide, the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* leadership is expected to fully use its new *Markaz* in Pattoki to its advantage.

Circles close to Hafiz Saeed are convinced that General Musharraf would neither abandon the militants nor the military option until there is a formal resolution of the lingering Kashmir dispute. They pointed out that the last time General Musharraf had made the promise of curbing militancy to the visiting US deputy secretary of state, Richard Armitage in May 2003, the militants were held back for only a couple of months before being allowed to resume infiltration across the LoC. And should the Indo-Pak peace initiative fail; there are those in the military establishment who believe the *Lashkar* could once again be the frontline jehadi outfit in the Occupied Kashmir and Hafiz Mohammad Saeed the new public face of the Kashmir militancy.

Lashkar-e-Toiba/Jamaat-ul-Dawa **splitting up**

Pakistan's most feared and major pro-jehad organisation – the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* led by Prof Hafiz Mohammad Saeed has split after bitter squabbling over the distribution of the group's assets and finances, thus giving birth to a break away faction -- *Khairun Naas*.

According to highly-placed intelligence sources, some of the rebel members of the newly formed splinter group, which largely consists of highly trained and

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committed fighters belonging *to Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s military wing, the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, have even taken an oath to assassinate Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, who they accuse of nepotism, diverting the party from its original objectives and misuse of funds.

According to a former aide of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, who has already joined the *Khairun Naas*, the differences within the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* actually erupted five years ago when Hafiz Saeed appointed Maulana Abdul Rehman Makki, his brother-in-law and then a teacher at the Medina University in Saudi Arabia, the foreign affairs head of the party as well as his second-in-command. Professor Zafar Iqbal, one of the founders of the *Jamaat* and in charge of its education department, felt he deserved the post as the most senior member. Prof Iqbal, an *Arrain* by caste, also accused Hafiz Saeed of promoting those belonging to the *Gujjar* caste, to which he also belonged. Saeed had also married his son Talha Saeed to Makki's daughter. The leadership of the newly launched splinter group further allege that Hafiz Saeed's son-in-law Khalid Waleed, the media head of the party, had relations with a well-entrenched gang of car smugglers which was damaging the party's image.

Hafiz Mohammad Saeed also came under fire from his close associates in December 2001, when he renamed the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* as the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and separated *Lashkar-e-Toiba*'s infrastructure from the *Jamaat*. Many of his colleagues including the LeT chief Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi disapproved of the decision, which was meant to put the *Jamaat* in control of all funds collected from abroad and locally. According to a July 18, 2004 report of Daily Times, the dissenters within the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* and the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* felt that since donations were collected in the name of jehad and the mujahideen, the leadership of the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*, had no right to the money, since it only was a preaching organisation,

As Hafiz Saeed failed to satisfy Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi and his other associates, they subsequently decided to launch the *Khairun Naas*, mainly comprising of the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* commanders and fighters. The *Khairun Naas* leadership consists of Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s Lahore head Abu Shoaib, Punjab head Abu Naser Javed, Abdul Qadir and Saifullah Mansoor. Zafar Prof Iqbal, publications chief Ameer Hamza, and the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s seminaries head Maulana Abdul Salam Bhatvi are also siding with them. Prof Zafar Iqbal has already visited Saudi Arabia to seek the support of Saudi clerics, before the new party structure is announced.

According to a close associate of Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, the *Khairun Naas* and the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* are basically the same, but since the LeT has been banned in Pakistan, the new group was named *Khairun Naas*. He claimed that the *Jamaat-ul-*

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Dawa headquarters in Muridke and the group's assets in Azad Kashmir were under the control of *Khairun Naas*. "All the *Al-Dawa* Model Schools, seminaries, hospitals, health centers and other such assets in the Sindh province are also under *Khairun Naas*' control because the heads of these institutions are siding with us", he added.

The *Khairun Naas* leaders were also annoyed at Hafiz Saeed's second marriage to a fallen comrade's 28-year old widow, whose husband, Abu Musa, was killed in Srinagar in 2002 by the Indian security forces. They had three daughters and two sons. Abu Musa was a Shia who was persuaded to convert to *Ahle Hadith* by Saeed's speeches. However, the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* spokesman Yahya Mujahid maintains that the marriage decision was meant to provide protection to the widow and the five children she was caring for alone. When Prof Zafar Iqbal and other JD council members objected that the second marriage did not suit the party head, Hafiz Saeed reportedly castigated Prof Iqbal's second marriage to a young Baltistani girl.

On the other hand, however, Saeed's close circles say he still enjoys the support of some leading *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* leaders including Maulana Abdul Rehman Makki and Maulana Saifullah Qasoori. They insist the *Khairun Naas* has been established by the intelligence agencies to weaken the jehadis in Kashmir. "Hafiz Saeed was under tremendous pressure from the agencies not to preach jehad any more and to limit his activities", said one of his close comrades while requesting anonymity. In a bid to counter the newly launched *Khairun Naas*, Hafiz Saeed and a coterie of his trusted aides are spending much of their time in Dewal Sharif near Muzaffarabad to recruit more and more militants. Saeed's top most priority now is to form a new cadre of highly trained militants, not only to wage jehad in Jammu and Kashmir, but also to counter the might of his former comrades from the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*.

Lashkar militants fighting in Iraq

The April 2004 arrest of a senior *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT) operative from Baghdad provided the international media with an opportunity to press its oft-repeated claim that Pakistan continues to be a springboard of cross border terrorism. Danish Ahmed from Bahawalpur area of Punjab and a close associate of the LeT high-ranking leader, Zakiur Rahman, was arrested in Baghdad by the allied forces and identified as a former commander of the LeT's forward camps across the Line of Control (LoC), who had visited Jammu & Kashmir at least six times between 1997 and 2001.

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According to international media reports, Danish played a central role in the organisation's operations in Jammu and Kashmir from at least 1999, operating under the nom de guerre of Abdul Rehman al-Dakhil. Ahmed was first held by British forces in the southern city of Basra, and has since been interrogated by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) personnel. The media reports quoted Danish's interrogators as saying that he had trained many of the Pakistani militants in the use of arms and explosives at the *Lashkar-e-Toiba's* Muaskar Abu Bashir camp. Interestingly, in 1999, Daily *Dawn* quoted a *Lashkar* spokesperson Ghulamullah Azad as saying that Danish had led dozens of fresh fighters of our outfit who have reached the Kargil sector to intensify jehad against the Indian troops.

The international media reports went to the extent of alleging that up to 2,000 militants between the ages of 18 and 25 have set up a full-blown unit for suicide squad operations against the allied troops in Iraq. And most of them come from towns of the Punjab province, where the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*'s over ground political patron organisation, the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*, wields considerable influence. The media reports said that most of the *Lashkar* suicide squad volunteers come from the ranks of seminary students at Muridke, the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s main center while some have been raised at the Binori Town seminary in Karachi, which used to be run by the fundamentalist cleric, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, until he was assassinated by some unidentified persons in May 2004.

According to a news report that appeared in the *Washington Times* on June 25, 2004, jehadis from foreign nations, including Pakistan, had set up checkpoints throughout Fallujah and were imposing Taliban-like harsh Islamic laws. Even before that, a few media reports and comments by military analysts noted the presence of Pakistani jehadis in Iraq, adding that the LeT operatives might have set up bases in the Fallujah area in the Sunni triangle. According to analysts, among all the Pakistani jehad groups, there are many reasons the LeT is most suited to operate in Iraq. First, unlike the *Deobandi* jehadi groups such as the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* and the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, the LeT does not have any political ambitions inside Pakistan. The *Deobandis* have built a powerful political movement within Pakistan, but their political participation has also resulted in periodic tussles with the Pakistani army, which although highly supportive of jehad in Afghanistan and India, nevertheless brooks no challenge to its vise-like grip on political power within the nation. In contrast, the LeT-led Pakistani *Wahhabi* movement has traditionally stayed apolitical, and instead focused on global jehad outside Pakistan. Given this fact, the LeT has had a free hand to operate within Pakistan.

The LeT's publications, which are still freely available in Pakistan, have long been a harbinger of the group's plans. Of late, *Lashkar*'s official statements have concentrated on Iraq more than Jammu & Kashmir. In fact, a June 2004 editorial

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in LeT's weekly Urdu publication *Ghazwa* (Arabic for a raid against unbelievers; September 11, 2001, is described by al-Qaeda as a *Ghazwa*) called for sending mujahideen to Iraq to take revenge for US actions in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal as well as for the rapes of Iraqi Muslim women. A translated excerpt from that editorial is below:

"The Americans are dishonoring our mothers and sisters. Therefore, jehad against America has now become mandatory. We should send our mujahideen to Iraq to fight with the Iraqi mujahideen. Remember that the mujahideen are the last hope for Islam. If the mujahideen are not supported today, Islam will be erased from the map tomorrow."

While presiding over a meeting in the *Jamia al-Qudsia* mosque in Lahore in June 2004, the *Lashkar'* former chief, Hafiz Saeed, was quoted as saying: "Islam is in grave danger, and the mujahideen are fighting to keep its glory. They are fighting the forces of evil in Iraq in extremely difficult circumstances. We should send mujahideen from Pakistan to help them. American has failed to divide Shia and Sunni Muslims despite masterminding some bloody incidents of sectarian violence in Pakistan. America is now bending over backwards to foment a Shia-Sunni divide in Iraq. But we should not forget that Muqtada al-Sadr is a hero of Islam. Forget that he is a Shia. He is a great mujahid because he is fighting the worst devil on earth, that is, America. Therefore, it is our religious duty to support him", Saeed told the gathering.

However, *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* spokesman Yahya Mujahid denies that the outfit has either any international network or any ambitions against the West. Responding to allegations in the Western media that the *Lashkar* was a part of the al-Qaeda network that planned attacks in the United States, Europe and Australia, the JD spokesman said: "We handed *Lashkar-e-Toiba* over to the Kashmiris in December 2001. Now we have no contact with any jehadi organisation. We, the *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*, are only preachers. The international media reports with regard to *Jamaat-ul-Dawa*'s international network were mere propaganda." He further denied that Guantanamo detainee David Hicks and French terrorist suspect Willie Brigitte were trained by the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* in Pakistan. Brigitte was accused of planning attacks in Australia under instructions from *Lashkar-e-Toiba* member Faheem Lodhi, who now awaits trial in a high security prison in Goulburn, Australia.

Prof Hafiz Mohammed Saeed: academician turned jehadi

At first sight - he is an academician - jovial man who wears an easy smile on his face and, invariably, a Turkish cap on his head . . . a *shalwar kameez*-clad man, thoroughly Eastern in dress and habit, who is friendly and humble towards those

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who listen carefully to him . . . probably a person whose only introduction to cosmetics has been the *henna* that is regularly applied to his long beard - a regular feature on a regular face in a Muslim-dominated country like Pakistan.

At first sight - it is a face that hardly begs for the camera. Look closer - it is a face that shies away from cameras as a rule. It has good reason to: Islam, the much un-photographed man says, forbids the capture of human images. Human lives, however, are another matter. For Professor Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, killing infidels seems to be a pious man's obligation: it is his duty 'to destroy the forces of evil and disbelief'. And the Professor is a very pious man.

His kind of piety has also given him dubious distinctions. An uncrowned terror king till the suicide attack on the Indian Parliament House in New Delhi on 13th December 2001, Saeed headed the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, the militant arm of the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* (the Centre for Religious Learning and Propagation). Dreaded for its alleged guerrilla attacks in Kashmir and well known for the infamous attack on the Red Fort in New Delhi on 22nd December 2000, the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (Army of the Pure) is the Professor's brainchild, crafted through an interpretation of militant Islam. Outwardly a simple Punjabi, who speaks in the tongue of the region, Hafiz Saeed has broken a fifty-three-year-old tradition: before him, the Pashtuns always led the jehad against India. Now, the *Lashkar*'s ranks have just a few Pashtuns and even fewer Kashmiris.

Though the *Lashkar* leader cultivates simplicity, he always moves under tight security. His preferred vehicle is the hardy land cruiser. The Professor is generally surrounded by young followers with whom he is quite frank. The leader and his keen young group talk freely. Most of the youngsters are from big families that count close to ten members. The Professor favours the big-family norm, reasoning that greater Muslim numbers translate into many more fighters of jehad against the infidels. Once in the *Lashkar*, the youngsters are drawn into a pattern of community life, epitomised by the shared, common meal. All young men eat together using their fingers to pick food from a big, shared bowl or *parat*. This simple occasion is almost a rite symbolising and encouraging fraternity among the comrades-in-arms.

The Professor himself comes from a close-knit family. He was married to the daughter of his maternal uncle, Hafiz Mohammad Abdullah Bahawalpuri, a well-known religious leader and renowned *Ahle Hadith* scholar. But interestingly, he heads a very small family unit: one son and one daughter. Three members from among his widely dispersed family have been drawn into the organisation's ranks. His only son, the thirty-one-year-old Talha, looks after the affairs of the *Lashkar* at its base camp in Muzaffarabad. His brother-in-law, Abdul Rehman Makki, is his close partner and holds an important position in the *Markaz* at

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Muridke. Makki spent many years in Saudi Arabia before settling down in Pakistan. The Professor's son-in-law Khalid Waleed is also associated with the *Lashkar*'s organisational set-up in Lahore.

Two of the Professor's brothers live in the United States. One runs an Islamic centre while the other is pursuing his PhD studies in an American university. Both remain in constant touch with him. However, the Professor has never traveled to the United States or set foot anywhere in the West. And unlike most fundamentalists, he does not express deep hatred for it. But his past has been bloody, with a cause for revenge. Thirty-six members of his family were murdered during Indo-Pak partition in 1947. When his father, Kamaluddin, an ordinary landlord, moved to Pakistan, Kamaluddin first tried to settle his family in the Sargodha district of Punjab, but finally chose Village 126 Janubi, in the Mianwali district. A government land grant to the settlers and hard work soon brought prosperity to the family, an effect that the Professor credits to Allah's bounty. The Professor's parents were religious-minded and his mother used to teach the Holy Koran to her seven children, five of whom are still alive. The Professor was a good learner, and memorised the Koran. His favourite verse is: *Wajahidu Fee Sabilallah*: Wage a holy war in the name of God Almighty.

In college, the Professor furthered his religious interests. After graduating from the Government College at Sargodha, he went to Saudi Arabia for a Masters in Islamic Studies and in Arabic Lexicon from King Saud University, Riyadh. He frequently met religious scholars and even received special religious instruction. Indeed, his first job in Pakistan was as a research officer for the Islamic Ideological Council. At fifty-five, he opted for a premature retirement as professor of Islamic Studies from the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore, and fully devoted himself to his outfit. The *Lashkar*'s jehadi network is the largest, the most efficient and also has greater independence than other militant organisations since the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* has a *Wahhabi* orientation and does not have to follow any of the four Muslim religious leaders or imams. On the other hand, three other fundamentalist organisations - the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, the *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* and the *Jaish-e-Mohammed* - are *Deobandis* and follow the imams.

The Professor lives at the Muridke headquarters of the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad*, which is spread over 200 acres has so far consumed Rs 50 million on different *Markaz* projects. Where has the money come from? Osama bin Laden, whisper rumours. It is alleged that the Saudi billionaire, a figure who has grown from being demonised by the West to being mythologised, rolled out a thick wad - Rs 10 million - for the construction of the *Markaz*'s mosque. Osama bin Laden is even said to have financed Professor Saeed, his low-key, comrade-in-arms Zafar Iqbal, and a short-lived founder, Abdullah Azzam, to launch the *Markaz Dawa*

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Wal Irshad in 1988. A year later, in 1989, Abdullah Azzam was killed in a powerful bomb explosion at Peshawar. Zafar Iqbal, who used to head the Islamic Learning Centre at the government-run University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, the same one where Saeed served for 22 years, now looks after the *Markaz* affairs, being its vice-chancellor.

Saeed, however, will not speak of Osama bin Laden even though he is an ardent supporter of the al-Qaeda chief. He denies that *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* was a foreign-funded project. He says the funds came from a group of affluent traders who had offered money to buy cheap farm land near a village, Nangal Saada (Muridke), about one kilometer from the main Grand Trunk (GT) Road. According to him, a Saudi trader, Ahmed, contributed Rs 10 million (the same amount of money as allegedly donated by Osama) while another, Saudi Sheikh, donated more millions for the construction of *Dawa* Model School inside the Markaz premises. 'Generous donations' were also received to build an industrial home for female students inside the Centre.

The *Lashkar*, similarly, owes its existence to private donations. The Professor is at pains to deny the widely held belief that it is on the payroll of the Inter Services Intelligence, the Pakistani Intelligence agency that is seen by many as propping up the terrorist campaign on Kashmir. 'We do not get a single rupee from the government,' says the Professor. Alongside the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad*, the *Lashkar* has grown from strength to strength. Today, it is one of the most active militant groups working inside Jammu and Kashmir, with operations based on the Pakistani side of the border. It has growing base among the shopkeepers, lower-level bureaucrats, soldiers and students in Pakistan.

However, the Professor's jehadi opponents allege that his outfit's present strength was primarily because of a covert funding by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the early 90s to fight off the Soviet invaders inside Afghanistan. Saeed denies the charge but has no qualms to concede that he took part in the American-sponsored jehad against the Russian forces in Afghanistan. 'The US supported us with guns during Afghan jehad,' he says. 'If we were not terrorists at that time, then why are we terrorists now?'

Maybe because of Kashmir, the Professor likens the 'Indian occupation of the disputed territory' to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. For him Kashmir is a battlefield for jehad. Not only does he want Jammu & Kashmir to become a part of Pakistan, he also wants Pakistan to become a part of a global Islamic state - in the literal sense. Because the Professor, an avid student of religion in college, believes that there is no Islamic government in the world. His worldview, knocked down into two basic sentences, is straight and simple: 'God has

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ordained every Muslim to fight until His rule is established,' he says. 'We have no option but to follow God's order.'

The Professor is following God's order. And the instrument of God's order is jehad. The *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* website quotes a saying of Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that elaborates its interpretation of jehad. 'Islam will live forever and for the sake of it,' quotes the website, 'a class of Muslims will continue jehad until the dawn of Doomsday. By means of jehad,' the site says, 'the Prophet spread light in the Arabian Peninsula. By dint of this factor of jehad, he captured even Qaisar and Kisraa. Keeping themselves on the same path, the followers of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) trampled under their feet the two superpowers of their time - Iranian fire-worshippers and Roman Christians. Hence, they raised the flag of the Koran and *Sunnah so* high.'

The Professor, undoubtedly, wants to do the same. His two main targets are India and Israel: Hindus and Jews, in that order, since they are the main enemies of Islam and Pakistan. A *Lashkar-e-Toiba* pamphlet titled '*Why Are We Waging Jehad?*' clarifies matters further. It establishes the Muslim right to revenge in history. Jehad is obligatory, it pronounces, for taking back Spain where Muslims ruled for 800 years. Of course, the whole of India, including Kashmir, Hyderabad, Bihar, Junagadh and Assam also has to be retaken. Thus, the attack on the Red Fort in Delhi is seen as a significant step in this direction. The *Markaz* website points out that the Fort was the symbol of Muslim power in the subcontinent and later the main target of the East India Company's machinations. It is also the site from where India's Independence Day speeches are made on 15th August. The Professor confirms this: 'The *fidayeen* attack at the Red Fort was a symbolic activity [sic] intended to warn India that it should withdraw its forces from Jammu and Kashmir and stop the farcical show of talks.'

Ideologically, it helps that God's orders as believed by the Professor do not countenance democracy. 'I reject democracy. The notion of the sovereignty of the people is anti-Islamic. Only *Allah* is sovereign,' says the Professor. 'Democracy is a menace we inherited from an alien government. It is part of the system we are fighting against. Many of our brothers feel that they can establish an Islamic society by working within the system. They are mistaken. It is not possible to work within a democracy and establish an Islamic system. You just dirty your hands by dealing with it. If God gives us a chance, we will try to bring in the pure concept of an Islamic Caliphate.'

So, when it comes to the affairs of his organisation, it is the Professor, who decides how many militants have to be sent to the Valley. But the Professor is learnt to have only a little know-how of ordinary weapons and has, so far, kept

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his distance from combat training. Surprisingly, the Professor has never been found involved in any act of violence or terrorism in Pakistan. However, his decision to send in fighters is calculated on the number of deaths that have taken place and the requirement and capacity of the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* to absorb new fighters. The *Lashkar* and its political wing, the *Markaz*, have for many years been calling for the expansion of jehad to the rest of India to create two independent homelands for the Muslims of South and North India. As first step, they had called for intensified activities in Hyderabad and Junagarh.

The ongoing *Lashkar* operations in the Valley were reportedly given form at the annual convention of the *Markaz* in November 1993, when the Professor announced that Kashmir was the gateway to the liberation of Indian Muslims. The *Lashkar* had supplied cadre to the militant group, *Al-Barq*, earlier, but it launched its first independent operation in Jammu and Kashmir on 5th February 1993, with 12 insurgents attacking the headquarters of the 11 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry at Balnoi, Poonch. Two soldiers and three *Lashkar-e-Toiba* insurgents were killed in the attack. Since then, the organisation has been held responsible for hundreds of deaths and a large number of communal massacres in the State. The *Lashkar* later shifted its militant operations from the Kashmir Valley to the Jammu region in 1997. Concomitantly, after 1997, there was a rise in militant activities all along the border districts of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the districts of Poonch and Doda.

According to the Professor's close circles, the historical root of his militant organisation was the Afghan jehad. The Professor's version of how the *Lashkar* was launched gives the whole credit to a Saudi national, Abu Abdul Aziz. Called an 'international soldier of Islam' by the *Markaz* and the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, Aziz belongs to Hyderabad in India. He apparently went to Pakistan in the 1980s in connection with the Afghan jehad. He invited Muslims to join hands with him for launching an *Ahle Hadith* organisation. Aziz finally found the Professor and his companion Zafar Iqbal due to their Saudi links. Abu Abdul Aziz started his career, says Professor Saeed, as a personnel officer with Saudi Airlines. During this time, the Afghan war broke out. Aziz quit his job and devoted himself to the jehad against the communist forces. Besides extending generous financial assistance to the Afghans fighting the Russians, Aziz launched the Muslim jehad Organisation, with branches in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Bosnia and the Philippines.

The version in the website, however, introduces another name - a student named Abu Waleed Zakiur Rahman. He 'went to take part in the jehad in the Paktia province of Afghanistan' and 'continued visiting the country (to) show the people the path of jehad'. This young man, 'fired with the zeal of jehadi . . . met a commander of jehadi forces . . . . Soon he was entrusted with the responsibility of

jehad. Mujahideen engaged in jehad under his leadership. He had the full cooperation of Arab mujahideen who taught him the intricacies of jehad. From August 1987 to January 1990, he continued his jehadi activities at the battlefront of Kabul. At the same time, he stayed in touch with the Arab mujahideen fighting in Afghanistan.'

The website adds: 'Around that time, Sheikh Jamil-ur-Rahman declared an independent Islamic emirate in Kunnar. Young Abu Waleed and some other Pakistani *Ulema* (Hafiz Mohammed Saeed and others) laid the foundation of *Muaskar-e-Toiba* in Kunnar, on 22nd February 1990.' The website exults at the *Lashkar*'s role in sending Soviet troops back to their country. 'On 14th February 1989, the Russian forces were leaving Afghanistan in such a state that their commander had to request the Afghan commanders that his forces be allowed to leave unscathed,' it says. 'Then, a superpower, Russia had to leave Afghanistan shamefacedly. Its defeat, on the one hand, brought dignity to the Afghan nation, while on the other, it imbued subdued nations with the passion for freedom.'

The website freely owns up to several attacks on Kashmir: 'Around thirty-five thousand Indian Army jawans were under siege. India's Bofors guns were concentrated in one area which India was about to lose, Pakistan was in a position to avenge the defeat of East Pakistan, but suddenly the whole scenario changed, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif offered Kargil to India on a platter by singing the Washington accord. It brought grave disappointment to the people of Kashmir. Be it the camp at Bandipura or the headquarters of 15 Corp Badamibagh, Red Fort at Delhi or the Srinagar airport,' the website boasts, 'the mujahideen have proved that no place on Indian soil was out of their reach.' Such glaring admissions, followed by the attack on the Indian Parliament on 13th December 2001, provided the Vajpayee government with an ample opportunity to pressurise the US State Department for designating the *Lashkar* a terrorist organisation. Another blow to the *Lashkar* came from the US in its post-World Trade Center phase. It froze all assets of the organisation. The *Lashkar* reacted by projecting an unfazed attitude. The mujahideen are its assets, it said, and they cannot be frozen.

Key government agencies in the US, specifically the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), had reportedly objected to the move, saying this would not be in the best interests of Washington. The CIA believed such a designation would threaten useful links with the ISI. The US further felt that such a step could embarrass General Pervez Musharraf. But after war clouds started gathering over the Indian subcontinent, following the closure of its airspace to Pakistan Airlines among other steps, the *Lashkar* was finally stamped as a foreign terrorist organisation. Despite all these pressures, the Professor's beliefs remain intact. 'We have challenged the US authorities time and again to prove terrorism

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charges against the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* in any international fora. We repeat this challenge now. We can prove who is the real terrorist: India, Israel, US, Russia or the mujahideen? The world fully knows who was responsible for the brutal killings of hundreds of thousands of innocent people by nuclear bombs. Has the world seen a greater act of terrorism than that?' he asks. He sees the US as killing innocent civilian Muslims - and not for the first time. 'Thousands of tonnes of bombs were rained down on innocent Iraqis in 1991. Thousands of Iraqi children were deprived of their homes and were left to die in abject helplessness.'

The former *Lashkar* chief says he wrote to the US State Department to debate the issues and received a single-word reply: 'Thanks'. There is another cause that stokes the Professor's hatred for the US: Sheikh Omar Abdul Rehman. For the Professor, it is a matter of distinction that the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* had hosted the famous blind Egyptian scholar. For the Americans, however, he is a man who masterminded terrorism in various parts of their country. A US court has already sentenced him to death. And the Professor is not too happy about that. The Professor believes that America has underhand designs and that the operation against bin Laden is just its cover for occupying Pakistan. He says it is incorrect to consider the US a victim of terrorism. 'America had rained tonnes of gunpowder in different parts of the world unjustifiably, the latest being Afghanistan. The real issue before the US is not that of Osama; it actually wants to crush jehad in this region.'

The Zionists and the Hindus, he said, are perturbed over the resurgence of Islam through jehad and consider it a great threat. This lobby, he understands, has convinced America that an unchecked nuclear Pakistan would be the natural leader of the entire Muslim world. Professor Saeed, therefore, has given a call to the Pakistani nation to rise to the occasion, demonstrate total unity and stop its rulers from taking a decision contrary to national sovereignty and solidarity. Lately, the Professor is trying to give an impression as if he is a vocal critic of General Musharraf these days and insists that he should not have gone out of the way in cooperating with the US. According to the Professor, there is no logic in Musharraf's argument that the US was allowed the use of Pakistani land and air space to safeguard the country's national solidarity. 'With this, we will jeopardise both our independence and our nuclear installations. The entry of American forces would facilitate any Israeli and Indian attack on our soil. The US must be kept away from this region,' he warned.

Analysts believe that jehadi outfits like *Lashkar-e-Toiba* are still functional and operative in Pakistan with the tacit approval of the country's military and intelligence establishment. An issue of the Karachi-based English monthly, *Herald*, quoted Dr Khalid Mehmood Soomro, Secretary-General of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI) based in Larkana, as saying: 'Why is the Pakistan army not

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fighting for Kashmir? Why are they getting our youth killed there? They are using our young men for their own goals . . . . Let's be clear on one thing. These jehadi groups can't function and survive without official patronage. Is there a single militant training centre in Pakistan, which can operate without the consent of the Pakistan army? All militant groups are created and run by Pakistan's secret agencies. They have mobile phones, Land Cruisers and weapons. Where are they getting the funds from? Surely, it can't be all funded through public donations. Because if that were so, we would be getting similar donations, if not more.'

Ultimately, such voices do not matter. For the only voice the Professor is listening to, is that of God. 'This jehad has been commanded by Allah Almighty,' he says authoritatively, 'and no one can stop it.' The jehad rests in the Professor's hands. And do not forget - he is a very pious man.

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Chapter 8

Harkatul Mujahideen: With a new face of terror

The anti-extremists drive being carried out by the Musharraf administration has brought into sharp focus the *Harkatul Mujahideen*'s alleged al-Qaeda links, amid reports of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation seeking the custody of Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, the Harkat chief and the only jehadi leader from Pakistan with a record of closeness to Osama bin Laden.

The *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* – an offshoot of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* has been accused since 2002 of mounting several deadly attacks in Karachi, including two abortive attempts on General Pervez Musharraf's life and a number of suicide bombings in the port city of Karachi. On September 29, 2001, weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks, the Pakistan government had banned the *Harkatul Mujahideen* in compliance with the UN Security Council orders to all its member states to crack down on terrorist outfits. The order was motivated by the Bush administration's September 24, 2001 decision to freeze the *Harkatul Mujahideen* assets along with those of 26 other organisations and individuals in connection with a worldwide campaign against the possible sources of terrorism.

The US ban supposedly gave birth to the *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* whose name first came in the limelight in June 2002 when the Karachi Rangers arrested five extremists in connection with the suicide bomb blast outside the American Consulate in Karachi on June 14, 2002. On July 8, 2002, Director General Sindh Rangers Major General Salahuddin Satti addressed a press conference and made public the arrest of three persons involved in the June 14, 2002 bombing outside the US Consulate in Karachi. The three accused confessed their involvement in the bombing that had left twelve persons dead. The accused further confessed having planned to blow up General Musharraf's car in Karachi on April 26, 2002 by exploding a Suzuki car loaded with explosives.

They told their interrogators that they had parked a Suzuki high-roof vehicle full of explosives near the Falak Naz Centre on Shahrah-e-Faisal. But the remote controlled device developed a technical fault at the eleventh hour and did not work. The same Suzuki vehicle was later used for the suicide bombing attack on the US Consulate in Karachi on June 14, 2002. Two of the three persons arrested were produced at the press conference the DG Sindh Rangers addressed on July 8, 2002 at his Karachi headquarters. They included Muhammad Imran, *ameer* of *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* and Mohammad Hanif, *naib ameer* of the group and in charge of its *askari* (military) wing.

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As Muhammad Imran Bhai, a bearded resident of Karachi, was produced before a Karachi court a few days later, he told reporters present in the courtroom: "I am a member of the *Harkatul Mujahideen*. The *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* is the product of the rangers and the security agencies. And let me tell you there is no split in the *Harkatul Mujahideen*". Despite identifying Imran and Hanif as Al-alami leaders, the authorities had nothing to produce on the outfit in terms of literature or any other propaganda material. Therefore, the conclusion drawn by the intelligence community was that the *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* was no more than a cover up name for the *Harkatul Mujahideen*.

On May 19, 2004, the Karachi police arrested *Al-alami*'s No. 3 after a shootout in the Buffer Zone and seized huge quantity of arms and ammunitions. Carrying a Rs. 3 million head money, Kamran alias Atif alias Khalid alias Uncle alias Bhaijan, was wanted in the June 2002 US Consulate bombing in Karachi and in a failed attempt on General Pervez Musharraf's life near Karachi airport on April 26, 2002. Before that, on April 12, 2004, the Karachi police arrested six activists of the *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* from Manzoor Colony area and recovered large quantity of the automatic weapons. Earlier, on April 6, 2004, the police arrested nine activists of *Al-alami* from the Gulistan-e-Jauhar and the Boat Basin areas of the port city.

According to investigations carried out by the security and intelligence agencies, about 50 highly trained operatives of the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, using the cover up name of the Al-alami, are bent upon targeting General Pervez Musharraf, the American interests in Pakistan and the law enforcement officials. The Harkat represents Deobandi School of Islamic thought whose members are fanatic Sunni Muslims who distinguish themselves from other Sunni Muslims by describing themselves as *Ansar*, the term given to actual Muslim residents of Madina by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). With a pan-Islamic ideology, the outfit strove to achieve secession of Jammu & Kashmir from India through violent means and its eventual merger with Pakistan. About 60 per cent of its initially estimated 1000 strong cadre came from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The outfit was born out of *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* (HJI), which was launched in 1980 as a part of the Pakistan-based jehadi network fighting the Russian troops in Afghanistan. Two Pakistani *Deobandi* religious bodies – *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islami* and the *Tableeghi Jamaat* - set up the HJI in 1980, at the outset of the Afghan war. It was first formed to run relief camps for the Afghan mujahideen and was led by Maulana Irshad Ahmed. As the war in Afghanistan intensified, the Inter Services Intelligence approached the HJI leadership, asking it for recruitment and training of the militants from Pakistan. The HJI then developed links with an Afghan resistance group, the *Hizb-e-Islami* (Yunus Khalis faction). The jehadi activities of HJI began when its *ameer* Maulana Irshad Ahmed, Maulana Fazlur Rahman

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Khalil, Qari Saifullah Akhtar and Maulana Abdus Samad Siyal went to Afghanistan on February 25, 1980, to participate in the Afghan jehad against the Soviet troops along with Ahmed Shah Masood and Prof. Berhanuddin Rabbani's forces.

The jehadi activities of HJI began when its *ameer* Maulana Irshad Ahmed, Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, Qari Saifullah Akhtar and Maulana Abdus Samad Siyal went to Afghanistan on February 25, 1980, to participate in the Afghan jehad against the Soviet troops along with Ahmed Shah Masood and Prof. Berhanuddin Rabbani's forces. A power-struggle was reported within the group after the June 25, 1985 death of Maulana Irshad Ahmed, during the Afghan jehad. Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, the group's commander-in-chief split with the new *ameer*, Qari Saifullah Akhtar and decided to form the *Harkatul Mujahideen* (HuM) while retaining its links with the *Hizb-e-Islami* (Yunus Khalis faction). Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, a resident of Dera Ismail Khan and a follower of Maulana Mufti Mahmood of *the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*, became the first *ameer* of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* while Maulana Masood Alvi was appointed its central commander. Though Qari Saifullah Akhtar stayed on to lead the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, it soon split again, with Maulana Masood Kashmiri launching a third splinter group, the *Jamiat-ul-Mujahiddin* (JuM) which is different from the *Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen*, a splinter group of the *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* (HuM).

On the other hand, having parted ways with the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, the *Harkatul Mujahideen* entered the Afghan jehad and started sending volunteers into Afghanistan on its own to assist the Afghan mujahideen. The money largely came from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia which helped recruit and train over 6,000 volunteers from Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Philippines. The initial batch of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* volunteers was trained in the use of arms, ammunition and explosives, at the training camps in the Pakhtia province of Afghanistan being run by Afghan leader, Jalaluddin Haqqani, who belonged to the *Hizb-e-Islami* (Maulvi Yunus Khalis group) but later joined hands with the Taliban.

Soon, however, the HuM set up its own training camps in Afghan territory just across Miran Shah in NWFP. Some of the best fighters of the Afghan war came from the HuM training camps. Impressed by their motivation and prowess, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) supplied them with Stinger missiles and trained them in their use to bring down the Soviet planes and helicopters. After the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, *Harkatul Mujahideen* focused on the Kashmir jehad and worked in competition with *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, led by Qari Saifullah Akhtar. The first batch of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* volunteers entered Jammu & Kashmir in 1991 under Sajjad Shahid's leadership, who was the first commander of the outfit in the Valley. The Harkat started its militant operations soon afterwards in the Bara Maula, Poonch and Anantnag areas of

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J&K to promote its radical pan-Islamic agenda which it has maintained since then by striking alliances with different jehadi groups.

In 1993, two leading *Deobandi* ulemas -- Maulana Samiul Haq of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* and Hafiz Yusuf Ludhianvi of the Sunni Tehrik, asked leaders of the three splinter factions of the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* to reunite in the larger interest of the Kashmir jehad. The three groups finally merged on October 13, 1993, to form what came to be known as *Harkatul Ansar* (HuA). Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil was appointed *ameer* while Maulana Shahadat Ullah was made the chief commander of the new *Harkat*. The reunion led to intensification of jehad in Jammu and Kashmir and the group soon carved a place for itself on the Kashmiri landscape through some major operations in the Valley.

While the HuA was formally launched in Pakistan, the merger of three factions in J&K was to be achieved by the HuA general secretary Maulana Masood Azhar who had entered India on a false Portuguese passport and reached Srinagar in February 1994. On February 10, 1994, Azhar convened a meeting of 20 leaders of the HJI, the HuM and the JuM at Matigund, Anantnag district, to discuss the merger. While returning from the meeting, Masood Azhar and Sajjad Afghani, respectively the secretary general and the military chief of the *Harkatul Ansar*, were arrested in Srinagar. With these arrests, the move to reunite the three HJI factions into the HuA could not be materialised.

A few months later in April 1994, an unknown jehadi outfit, *Al-Faran*, kidnapped two British tourists from the Kashmir valley to use them as bargaining chip for the release of Maulana Masood Azhar and Sajjad Afghani. It later transpired that *Al-Faran* was actually launched by two *Harkatul Ansar* commanders, Abdul Hameed Turkey and Mohammad Sikandar. The kidnappings drew so much criticism from the international community that for the first time in the American history, two Kashmiri militant outfits – *Harkatul Ansar* and *Al-Faran* -- were placed on the US State Department's list of terrorist outfits.

On October 1, 1997, the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright notified to the American Congress, a list of 30 international terrorist organisations which the US government had decided to bring under the purview of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, 1996, that made it an offence for any citizen or resident of the US to provide funds or other assistance to such organisations. The Act also empowered the American administration to deny visas to members of such outfits and prohibited their representatives from operating from the US territory. The *Harkatul Ansar* was one such organisation so notified. The US terror tag split the *Harkatul Ansar* into two factions.

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The *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* faction blamed Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* faction for masterminding the kidnapping since the two commanders who set up *Al-Faran* belonged to his group. Groaning under tremendous pressure, Maulana Khalil simply disowned *Al-Faran* and dubbed it as a creation of the Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Commanders Sikandar and Hameed were killed soon afterwards, making it easy for Khalil to detach himself from *Al-Faran*. But the issue kept hanging fire and finally led to a split in the *Harkatul Ansar*, with both the groups reverting to their previous identities. Quite interestingly, however, both the jehadi outfits kept enjoying exemplary relations with the Taliban regime that had allowed them to run their respective training camps in Afghanistan.

A few months later, the chief of the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, Maulana Saifullah Akhtar was arrested along with four officers of the Pakistan Army for planning "Operation *Khilafat*" to take over the military headquarters in Rawalpindi and establish an Islamic regime in Islamabad by overthrowing the government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The four Army officers including Major General Zaheerul Islam Abbasi and Brigadier Mustansar Billah were tried and sentenced in a court martial, but, for some unexplained reasons, Qari Saifullah Akhtar was never formally charged. He was released after Benazir-government's dismissal in 1996 and was sent to Kabul where he once again revived *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* to support the Taliban regime against the Northern Alliance troops. Saifullah's presence and activities in Kabul remained hidden from the rest of the world until his headquarter was hit in the American bombing of September 2001.

That the *Harkatul Mujahideen* had been associated with Osama bin Laden was proved on August 20, 1998, when America bombed the al-Qaeda training camps near Khost and Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan in retaliation to the bombings of their embassies in three African countries. The bombing destroyed two *Harkat* training camps and killed 21 of its activists. Two days later, speaking at a news conference in Islamabad on August 22, 1998, Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil denied that Osama was indulging in terrorism and accused the US of killing 50 innocent civilians in Afghanistan, including 15 Arabs. He said the camps bombed by the US in the Afghan territory were actually set up by the CIA during Afghan war, that were now being used by the *Harkatul Mujahideen* for imparting education to Afghan students. The *Harkat* chief denied that any training in terrorism was going on at these camps.

Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil had then warned: "The US has proved itself to be the world's biggest terrorist by carrying out attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan. I want to convey to the American leadership that we will take revenge for these attacks." Ten days later, in yet another warning to the US on September 1, 1998, Khalil said: "The US has struck us with Tomahawk Cruise missiles at only two

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places, but we will hit back at them everywhere in the world, wherever we find them. We have started a holy war against the US and they will hardly find a tree to take shelter beneath it."

On September 29, 2001, the Pakistan government announced banning the *Harkat*, following the Bush administration's September 24, 2001 decision to freeze all its assets. The US ban compelled the *Harkatul Mujahideen* leadership to rename itself as the *Jamiatul Ansar*. However, it decided to use the cover up name of the *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* so that it could keep functioning uninterrupted. Pakistan received the first hint of the *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami*'s presence and its al-Qaeda connections in 2002 when the FBI arrested an Egyptian Arab, Hisham al-Wahid from Saudi Arabia and brought him to Pakistan in July 2002. He guided the security agencies to Gaggar Phatak in Karachi from where three activists of the *Jaish-e-Muhammad* and two of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* were arrested from behind the police station in a garage. These activists belonged to Sargodha and had been trained in the Akora Khattak seminary of Maulana Samiul Haq, the chief of his own faction of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*. They then guided the police to Gulshan Hadeed in Steel Town where the Karachi police arrested one Iraqi and two Yemeni Arabs from a bungalow.

Subsequent interrogations transpired that those arrested were connected with the al-Qaeda and were working in a Nazimabad poultry farm under fake identities. The three detained Arabs, who spoke fluent Urdu, Baluchi and Pushto, guided the police to recover three satellite mobile phones, two laptop computers, four ordinary computers, four mobile phones and four submachine guns along with six magazines. The police then searched Mujahid Colony, Nazimabad and arrested Rafeequl Islam of the *Sipah-e-Sahaba*. The audio tapes recovered during the raid carried sermons and speeches of the Taliban *ameer* Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden and books on jehad. Rafeequl Islam later admitted to be a communication man for the al-Qaeda sponsored jehadi network in Karachi.

As of today, the US intelligence agencies believe that the *Harkatul Mujahideen* still retains links, like most of other jehadi groups, with the Taliban remnants and al-Qaeda operatives hiding on the Pak-Afghan border. They recall that Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil took hundreds of his men to Afghanistan after the US-led Allied Forces had attacked Afghanistan in 2001. The *Harkat* chief returned home safely in January 2002 and lived for next six months in an Islamabad sanctuary, with no constraints until August 2002 when the government placed him under house arrest. Some say he was taken into protective custody after the American intelligence sleuths sought his custody for a debriefing. The Pakistani authorities, however, had refused to oblige.

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Considered close to *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* leader, Maulana Fazalur Rehman, the *Harkat* chief, Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, literally got a new lease of life after the electoral victory of the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* in the October 2002 general elections. Living in Islamabad, Khalil refutes that the *Harkatul Mujahideen Al-alami* has anything to do with the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, already renamed as the *Jamiatul Ansar*. The October 1997 issue of the Jane's Intelligence Review had even described the Khalil-led *Harkat* as the armed wing of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*, led by the opposition leader in the National Assembly Maulana Fazalur Rehman.

The JIR stated: "Their leaders have from the outset shared a common view of politics and religion and both share a conviction in the organised opposition to 'enemies of Islam': the West, India and Israel. The USA is seen as 'the biggest enemy of Islam' and one that has been free to undermine the Muslim world since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The alliance between the HuA and JUI-F has led one Western intelligence analyst to describe the HuA as essentially the armed wing of the JUI."

The 1997 JIR further stated: "The *Harkatul Ansar* and the Taliban share common origins, personnel and especially patrons. The Western analysts who monitor the HuA harbour no doubt that the complicity of the ISI is more than merely passive. The HuA owes its considerable arsenal in large measure to the generosity of the Pakistani Government or, more specifically, its intelligence service. We know without any doubt that *Harkatul Ansar* is very heavily backed by the ISI. The HuA and the Taliban play the same strategic role: extending Pakistani hegemony into neighbouring states. In contrast to other Kashmiri groups, the HuA has always advocated rule from Islamabad."

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Chapter 9

Hizbul Mujahideen: Still adamant to defy

Syed Salahuddin, the chief of the most powerful militant group fighting in the Jammu & Kashmir, the *Hizbul Mujahideen* (HuM), is under tremendous pressure from the Pakistan government to cease militant operations in the Valley (for the time being), especially after the inking of the January 2004 Islamabad agreement between India and Pakistan.

After successful talks between General Pervez Musharraf and the former Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee in January 2004, the government as well as the intelligence circles had initiated back channel diplomacy with most of the jehadi groups operating from Pakistan. The move was meant to make the jehadi leaders fall in the official line, keeping in view the rapidly changing geo-political circumstances that required a change of strategy. While pursuing Syed Salahuddin, the authorities had reportedly asked him to direct his cadre to cease their operations against the Indian security forces in the militancy affected Jammu and Kashmir. However, Salahuddin, who also heads the United Jehad Council, is reluctant to bow down and bitterly criticises Islamabad's "U-turn" on the Kashmir issue. "We will continue waging jehad against the Indian occupation forces in the Valley. We can't become silent spectators of a show where the puppets are India and Pakistan, and the United States is pulling the strings", the *Hizb* chief had stated while reacting to the signing of the Islamabad agreement.

Leading the *Hizb* seems to be a strange experience for Salahuddin, since he started as a schoolteacher and went on to head a deadly militant outfit. Syed Salahuddin's actual strength lies in the fact that he heads a militant group that is largely indigenous and not one dominated by foreign mercenaries. Being the supreme commander and ranking No. 8 on India's Most Wanted list, Salahuddin controls a 20,000-strong jehadi cadre sitting in Muzaffarabad. Despite having a cadre base drawn from indigenous and foreign sources, the January 2004 assassination of the *Hizb*'s chief operational commander made it quite difficult for its militants to continue carrying out major strikes against the 'enemy troops'.

Abdul Majid Dar's assassination came as a major blow to the command structure of the valley's largest militant outfit, which was already struggling hard to pull through the loss of a string of its top commanders over an intra-party blood-feud, sparked off by the gruesome murder of the pro-dialogue commander Abdul Majid Dar in March 2002. Ghulam Rasool Dar alias Ghazi Naseeruddin and the *Hizbul*'s financial and publicity chief, Fayyaz Ahmed, were killed on January 16, 2004 in a brief encounter with the Indian Security Forces, at Zainakot,

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in the Srinagar valley. Dar's death marked the climax of a long-running hunt, which began after his taking charge of the operational command in November 2003. Calling it a major success, Indian forces claim to have almost wiped out the *Hizbul Mujahideen*'s entire top brass. The successful military operation, carried out just ten days after the Indo-Pak accord, has caused wild speculations in the *Hizbul* circles that the bloody shoot out might have been the outcome of a clandestine intelligence sharing agreement between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Significantly, since the signing of the January 2004 Islamabad agreement between India and Pakistan, at least a dozen frontline leaders of the several jehadi outfits waging armed struggle against the Indian security forces in Jammu & Kashmir have lost their lives. Prominent among those killed by the Indian security forces since January 2004 include the *Hizbul Mujahideen* 'chief commander of operations', Abdur Rasheed Pir alias Ghazi Shahabuddin, who was shot dead during an encounter with the Jammu and Kashmir Police in the Maharaj Ganj area of capital Srinagar on May 6, 2004. Pir was the third successive chief commander of the *Hizb* operations killed in the last 13 months. Being the in charge of the *Hizb* operations in the J&K, Pir was responsible for many strikes against the Indian occupation forces in the Valley.

According to J&K's Police Chief Gopal Sharma's May 6th statement, which appeared in Indian Daily *Excelsior*, as many as 30 senior commanders of the HuM, *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammad* have been killed by the Indian troops in the last 18 months. Other killed are listed as follows: Abdul Majid Wani, divisional commander of the *Hizbul Mujahideen* (February 24, 2004); Ishfaq Ahmad Rehmani, district commander of *Al-Badr Mujahideeen* (February 21, 2004); Ehsaan Elahi, district commander of *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (February 20, 2004); Rafeeq Ahmed Dar, chief commander operations of *Al Umar Mujahideeen* (February 6, 2004); Javed Ahmad, operational commander of the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (January 13, 2004) etc. Due to these killings, the pressure on the jehadi groups operating in J&K is enormous and rising. Even the Indian authorities have admitted for the first time that overt support from Pakistan - including artillery cover that was routinely provided to infiltrating groups, has diminished since the signing of the Islamabad agreement. At the same time, counter-terrorist operations in J&K by Indian security forces have also been enormously successful over the past months.

In April 2003, Indian security forces had succeeded in eliminating Ghulam Rasool Dar's predecessor as military commander: Ghulam Rasool Khan, who used to operate under the code-names of Saiful Islam and Engineer Zamaan. Dar's deputy Saif-ul-Rahman Bajwa who was a Pakistani national, was subsequently killed by the Border Security Force in November 2003. As things stand today, the *Hizbul* will be hard-pressed to find a credible successor for

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Ghulam Rasool Dar, a *Jamaat-e-Islami* veteran who enjoyed the personal confidence of Salahuddin. Interestingly, Dar had been reluctant to serve in the valley and delayed assuming the responsibility for several months after Ghulam Rasool Khan was killed. Dar had narrowly escaped several security force operations while serving in J&K, and his family had subsequently left for Pakistan on the New Delhi-Lahore bus service. His death came within 15 hours after the killing of his deputy Mohammad Abbas Malik, who used to look after the launching and logistics for *Hizbul.*

Shortly before his death, Dar met the J&K *Jamaat-e-Islami* chief Syed Nazir Ahmad Kashani, to demand that the *Jamaat* throw its weight behind the All Parties Hurriat Conference leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who was opposed to the talks between the APHC and New Delhi. Previously, Dar had made his way across the Line of Control back in 2000 to participate in the first and the last official contact of *Hizbul* with the Indian government. He actually represented his leader, Salahuddin who had become increasingly suspicious of Abdul Majid Dar, the pro-negotiations' *Hizbul* commander who spearheaded the dialogue. Ghulam Rasool Dar's hard line stance during the talks eventually shut down the dialogue process. This created a visible divide between Jammu-based leaders seeking dialogue with the Indian government and Pakistan-based hardliners.

Soon afterwards, being the chief operational commander of the *Hizbul*, Abdul Majid Dar had made a conditional cease-fire offer to the Indian government at a press conference in Srinagar on July 24, 2000. Interestingly, the endorsement of this offer by the group's supremo Syed Salahuddin alias Pir Sahib was followed by a press conference in Islamabad on July 25, 2000 which he addressed after holding a meeting with *Jamaat-e-Islami* Pakistan *ameer* Qazi Hussain Ahmed. Majid Dar put forward three conditions for observance of the cease-fire namely, "…no use of force against mujahideen, human rights violations on the Kashmiris will end and people even with different political convictions will be allowed free expression".

The ceasefire offer led to widespread speculations in the jehadi circles that the move might have been motivated by *Jamaat* chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad who had just returned from a Washington visit. However, all other militant outfits operating in Jammu and Kashmir unanimously rejected the ceasefire offer. An umbrella body of 17 Pakistan-based militant outfits, the Muttahida Jehad Council (United Jehad Council) met under the leadership of its deputy chairman, Mohammad Usman (chief of the *Muslim Janbaz Force*) and rejected the ceasefire move. Acting under pressure of the United Jehad Council's other component parties, its chief Syed Salahuddin soon decided to disassociate himself and his *Hizbul* from the ceasefire offer. Salahuddin's withdrawal of support for the ceasefire offer infuriated Dar and caused high tension between the two leaders.

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Signs of the divisions within the *Hizbul* top leadership became further evident at the May 2, 2002 meeting where the decision to remove Majid Dar was made. Apart from Syed Salahuddin, only two members of the *Hizbul* command council backed the decision. Former north division chief, Abdul Rashid Hajam, alias Tahir Ejaz, and deputy south division commander Abdul Ghani supported their chief's allegations. Two others - the *Hizbul*'s north division commander Majid Jehangir and Ghulam Rasool Dar, angrily walked out of the command council meeting. Two other *Hizbul* leaders, Pir Panjal regiment commander Shamsher Khan and former south division commander Khalid Saifullah argued that Majid Dar needed to be given more time to act as per Salahuddin's orders and return to Pakistan.

Immediately after Dar's expulsion, fissures showed up in the *Hizbul* field commands. The head of the outfit's Dachinpora unit, code-named Zahoor-ul-Islam, and some 50 cadres took an unprecedented step of sending a signed petition to Salahuddin. The chief of financial affairs, Farooq-ul-Islam in turn termed the decision an unfortunate step. Cadre in the *Hizbul*'s south zone continued to report to Khurshid Ahmad Zargar, who was sacked along with Dar. Zargar, a one-time veterinary surgeon who used to operate under the code name Asad Yazdani, was among Dar's most powerful aides. Key figures in the crucial north Kashmir division also made their discontent clear. They included Altaf Ahmad, code-named Abu Amir, who was responsible for launching jehadis from training camps in Pakistan across the Line of Control.

The dramatic situation of the sacking of Majid Dar was quite predictable. In October 2001, alarmed by Dar's efforts to initiate a dialogue with the Indian government bypassing Pakistan, Salahuddin replaced his field commanders. Shortly afterwards, Khurshid Ahmed Zargar spoke out in support of a dialogue. He argued that while the armed movement brought the Kashmir issue out of the cold storage, at the same time we should accept that the gun alone is no solution to the problem. Matters spiraled out of hand and in late November 2001, the *Hizbul* command council ordered Dar and his associates to return to Pakistan. But Dar's subordinates reiterated their loyalty to him and made clear that they had no intention of leaving Kashmir until their replacements were in place.

By early 2003, Abdul Dar and many of his supporters within the *Hizbul* had decided to launch their own outfit to take part in the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly elections. However, as Dar was preparing to come to Pakistan to announce the formation of his political group; the Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement; Salahuddin's hit squad allegedly killed him near his Sopore hometown in Jammu and Kashmir in March 2003. Dar's assassination provoked a serious split within the *Hizbul* cadre in Pakistan, though Salahuddin

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survived and remained firmly in control of the organisation, primarily because of the ISI's support.

The *Hizbul* faction owing allegiance to slain leader Abdul Majid Dar joined the *Hizb-e-Islami* led by Commander Masood Sarfraz, better known as the Lion of Pir Panjal. Sarfraz used to manage the *Hizbul* wing in Azad Kashmir before launching his *Hizb-e-Islami* in 2000 after he fell out with the *Jamaat-e-Islami*, Azad Kashmir. Before that, efforts by the leadership of *Jamaat-e-Islami* Pakistan to reunify the two Hizbul factions had failed. Though all top commanders of the Majid Dar group and majority of its mujahideen decided to join the *Hizb-e-Islami*, some of them refused to work under the new flag and leadership and returned to their parent organisation - *Hizbul*. On the other hand, Salahuddin announced that the *Hizbul* would not welcome back in its folds any commander from the Dar group but the mujahideen wanting to rejoin were more than welcome to do so.

On the other hand, Majid Dar's followers had a simple response to charges that Syed Salahuddin had betrayed the cause of jehad in Jammu and Kashmir. They pointed to the story of his five sons, not one of whom has had joined the ranks of the hundreds of young cadre that the *Hizbul* leadership sends to their death each year. Twenty-four year-old Syed Wahid Yusuf is studying at the Government Medical College in Srinagar, after he was controversially granted an almost unprecedented transfer from a privately run institution in Jammu. Wahid's eldest brother, 36-year-old Syed Mohammad Yusuf, works as a laboratory technician at the government-run Sher-e-Kashmir hospital. Thirty-two year-old Syed Javed Yusuf works on the family farm at Soibugh. His younger brother, Syed Shahid Yusuf, lives outside the State, having completed a degree in Agricultural Sciences. The youngest, Syed Mayeed Yusuf, is a quiet, apolitical class XII student.

The *Hizbul Mujahideen* had gone through four splits since 1990, all of them aimed at removing Syed Salahuddin. However, he has survived till now and fully controls the party. The *Jamiatul Mujahideen* of General Abdullah, *Muslim Mujahideen* of Ahsan Dar, *Hizb-e-Islami* of Masood and Al-Badr of Bakht Zameen managed to break away from the *Hizbul Mujahideen*. In the words of an ex-intelligence official: "One of the oldest tricks in the book is to not allow any individual jehadi group to become too strong. This is a tried and tested mode of keeping overall control on such groups. Whenever one group is seen as getting too strong or influential, the agencies try to split it and sometimes pit one against the other. And the *Hizbul Mujahideen* is no exception".

The *Hizbul* was designated as a terrorist group by the US State department before Deputy Secretary of State Armitage's visit to the subcontinent in May 2003. The move came after the Hizbul leadership's owning up of having acquired

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shoulder-firing Estrela surface-to-air missiles being used against the Indian security forces in Jammu & Kashmir. Only in January 2004, the *Hizbul* had claimed killing 770 Indian soldiers and losing 232 of its fighters in 314 encounters during 2003. "The slain Indian soldiers included one brigadier, 15 majors, three captains, 10 junior commissioned officers, one sergeant and four inspectors of the regular army and personnel of Special Operations Group and Special Task Force", claimed *Hizbul* spokesman Salim Hashmi, adding that the *Hizbul Mujahideen* cadres would continue their attacks against the Indian security forces.

A comparatively stronger vocal statement came from Syed Salahuddin: "Thousands of militants have sacrificed their lives pursuing their dream of liberating Kashmir. Islamabad's bowing to US pressures on Kashmir is a betrayal". He scoffs at what was achieved in Islamabad. He quoted Vajpayee saying: "Though Kashmir is part of India, yet he would talk on it". For him, such statements shatter the dream of the Kashmiris determining their own future. The joint declaration was mere paperwork, he argues. "We believe India wanted to buy time to complete the LoC fencing and simultaneously crush the freedom struggle in the occupied territory." The *Hizbul* chief further argues: "If the Indian government accepts the disputed status of Kashmir, stops killings and atrocities, releases all detainees and reduces the number of troops in Kashmir to the pre-1988 position, the guns will become silent automatically. The mere signing of a piece of paper by Indian and Pakistani leaders cannot convince us to lay down our weapons".

Salahuddin's overtures apart, the fact remains that while operating from Rawalpindi, he is at the mercy of the Pakistani establishment; for there is little that he can do as long as he is on their soil. In the aftermath of the Islamabad agreement between India and Pakistan, Salahuddin has been barred from entering Azad Kashmir, with instructions from his masters to wait and see. At the same time, there are reports that in a move that signaled its effort to address New Delhi's concern over terrorism, Islamabad had begun disarming *Hizbul* cadres at militant training camps in Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir.

There are news reports that the Pakistani authorities have clamped down on *Hizbul* cadres at Tarbela and Haripur camps in Muzaffarabad and have asked the militants to deposit their weapons. However, it would be premature to write off the militants just as yet. As things stand, Syed Salahuddin seems to be a virtual prisoner. Though still in communication with his jehadi cadre in Jammu & Kashmir, the *Hizbul Mujahideen* chief seems no more in a position to be his own master.

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How the Hizbul Mujahideen was born?

Launched in November 1989 to struggle against the Government of India for its illegal occupation of Kashmir, the militant outfit called *Hizbul Mujahideen* has essentially three factions: The first faction was set up in Indian Occupied Kashmir in 1990 with the blessings of *Jamaat-e-Islami* (Held Kashmir) and is commanded by Syed Salahuddin. The Pakistani faction of the Hizb was founded by *Jamaat-e-Islami* Pakistan and Usman Bhai was appointed its commander. This faction actually emerged after *Al-Badr* led by Bakht Zameen Khan bade adieu in late 1998 to JI-Pakistan in an endeavor to act as an independent entity. *Ameer* Azad Kashmir JI Allama Rashid Turrabi launched the third *Hizb* faction and Masood Sarfraz was appointed its chief commander. This faction went on to be called Pir Panjal Regiment.

A 20-member Council and a five-member Shura run the party. It has its own news agency, Kashmir Press International (KPI) and a women wing: *Banat-ul-Islam*. Overseas, Ghulam Nabi Fai's Kashmir American Council and Ayub Thakur's World Kashmir Freedom Movement back it. Interestingly, besides being held responsible for a massive killing of Hindus in the valley, the Hizb is also accused of liquidating several Muslim religious leaders in Occupied Kashmir, who are opposed to the *Jamaat-e-Islami* worldview.

The *Hizb* story begins in 1983 when *Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami*, Occupied Kashmir, Maulana Saad-ud-Din, came to Pakistan on his way back from Saudi Arabia. In Pakistan, he met with the then military ruler General Ziaul Haq and leaders of *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan*, including the then JI *Ameer* Mian Tufail Mohammad, to work out a detailed strategy for armed resistance in Occupied Kashmir.

On the basis of this strategy, in 1984, *Jamaat-e-Islami Occupied Kashmir* (JIOK) began preparing for the jehad. Cadres were asked to migrate to Azad Kashmir and other areas including Afghanistan and to get military training. Syed Ali Gillani, the JIOK *Ameer*, led the movement. Scores of JIOK cadres came to Azad Kashmir and went to Afghanistan to train and fight with the Afghan mujahideen. This process went on until 1987. This period also saw the rise of many organisations like *Zia Tigers*, *Al-Hamza* and *Al-Badr*. Leaders of these organisations, invariably Jamaat affiliates sought guidance from the *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan* and its branches in Azad Kashmir and Occupied Kashmir.

These organisations began operating against Indian forces in the Occupied Kashmir from August 1988 onwards. However, until then, there was no concerted effort at armed resistance. This went on until mid-1989. At that point, leaders of the *Jamaat* in Pakistan, Azad Kashmir and Occupied Kashmir found it important to set up one organisation, which could coordinate the resistance

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effort. In a September 1989 session, the *Jamaat-e-Islami* leaders formally moved to set up such an organisation.

This session gave birth to *Hizbul Mujahideen* by merging two organisations, *Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen* and Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*. The organisational structure of the *Hizb* was finally put in place in October 1989. On November 1, 1989, its formation was formally announced in the press. Its constitution was put in place on June 10, 1990. The Indian authorities, however, allege that Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) was actively involved in coordinating all these efforts to launch the organisation.

Master Ahsan Dar, a schoolteacher of Kashmir's Pattan area reportedly went to Pakistan in 1988 and was trained there by the ISI. He came back to the valley in 1990 and was appointed the first *Hizbul Mujahideen* chief. By 1991, major groups, such as the *Tehreek-e-Jehad-e-Islami* led by Abdul Majid Dar had merged with the new outfit. In Srinagar, another veteran, Mohammed Abdullah Bangroo, who was appointed Ahsan's chief military advisor, joined Master Ahsan Dar.

Within a year, the Hizb had over 10,000 armed cadres, mostly trained in Pakistan or Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Meanwhile, *Hizbul Mujahideen*'s supreme advisory council met for two days and on November 11, 1991 and finally asked Chief Commander Master Ahsan Dar to step down. Mohammad Yusuf Shah, who goes by the name Syed Salahuddin, was named as the new patron and also the supreme commander of the *Hizb*. Under Salahuddin's command, it adopted aggressive and often communal postures.

In early 1992, the *Hizb* became a member of the Popular International Organisation, under the leadership of Sudan's Dr Hassan-al-Turabi, which made it eligible for guidance, training, funds and arms from abroad. At the same time, a mercenary organisation of the Afghans, *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami*, presently based in Pakistan, was actively collaborating with the HM, providing guidance and material assistance. The *Hizb* sources claim that on an average it is spending over Rs. 5 million every month to maintain its cadres.

The *Hizb* has been under the scrutiny of the Indian authorities for a long time. The Indian government declared it an unlawful association on September 19, 1996 and banned it under the J&K Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983. By that time, the hardcore of *Jamaat-e-Islami* and the *Hizb* leadership had already developed difference of perception and the means to achieve their objective.

On November 26, 1997, Salahuddin announced disassociating his outfit from the Jamaat-e-Islami. "Our outfit is not affiliated with any particular group. Ours is an armed resistance movement of all the people of Jammu and Kashmir. We have a

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network from Srinagar to every important capital of the world and our supporters are all Kashmiris and expatriate Kashmiris", declared Salahuddin in 1997.

In February 1998, several press reports hinted at the possibility of Salahuddin being displaced as *Hizb* chief for dissociating his outfit from the *Jamaat* - an act that also infuriated Pakistan's ISI. An intense rivalry subsequently surfaced between two *Hizb* groups - one loyal to Salahuddin, a Kashmiri, and the other headed by a Pakistani, Masood Sarfraz, who was deputed by the Inter Services Intelligence to replace Salahuddin. Sarfraz happens to be a nephew of Azad Kashmir's former President Sardar Sikandar Hayat.

However, efforts to displace Salahuddin as Hizb chief received a serious blow in the wake of complaints, ranging from arbitrary use of funds to mismanagement in the training camps to a high-handed attitude towards the party leadership - prompted Azad Kashmir *Jamaat-e-Islami* Chief Allama Rashid Turrabi to replace Masood Sarfraz as chief commander of the Azad Kashmir *Hizb*. However, Sarfraz refused to accept the orders and started confronting the *Jamaat* leadership by openly accusing them of some sinister designs and plans of compromising the Kashmir cause under the American pressure.

Following Sarfraz' refusal to step down, the JI AK *ameer*, Turrabi, himself took control of the *Hizb* headquarters in the Kotli district of Azad Kashmir, thereby leading to a fierce battle between the two groups. The fight not only resulted in dozens of casualties within the cadre of the two factions but also claimed the lives of a few innocent citizens. The fighting also points towards a trend that may have remained hushed up so far but is not likely to remain so in the future. In one line, it can be described: The armed groups fighting in Kashmir are increasingly showing signs of indiscipline, a phenomenon that has already been witnessed in Afghanistan at one stage in the development of its resistance movement against the Soviets.

On the other hand, following his opponents' failure to displace him as *Hizb* chief, the Rawalpindi-based Salahuddin announced a unilateral ceasefire against Indian Army in Occupied Kashmir. This led to his removal on July 24, 2000 from the chairmanship of United Jehad Council, which is a collective body of leading militant groups fighting for Kashmir's liberation. However, after India's failure to take advantage of *Hizb*'s unilateral ceasefire offer, the UJC restored on October 23 the *Hizb* membership and Salahuddin as the Council chairman.

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***Muttahida Jehad Council*: United they stand?**

The *Muttahida Jehad Council* (MJC), also known as United Jehad Council, happens to be a conglomerate of 22 Kashmiri militant outfits, which was formed in November 1990 to bring under a single platform all the outfits, involved in the freedom struggle in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

The MJC, whose headquarters are located at Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir, aims at joining forces and resources to augment militant operation in the Occupied Valley. The Council, headed by Syed Salahuddin of the *Hizbul Mujahideen*, also acts as the primary public voice of the militant outfits currently active in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Azam Inquilabi, who was appointed the first Chairman of the Muttahida Jehad Council, was soon replaced by Tanvirul Islam as the MJC chief. With a view to expanding the militant canvas in Jammu & Kashmir, the Pakistani establishment is reported to have organised a meeting of the various constituents of the Jehad Council at Muzaffarabad in December 1995.

During the meeting, *Hizbul Mujahideen* Supreme Commander Syed Salahuddin was appointed the chief of the conglomerate. The *Hizb* chief was elected as the MJC chairman for the fourth time for a five-year term at a meeting in Muzaffarabad on November 6, 1999. Sheikh Jameelur Rehman of *Tehrikul Mujahideen* and *Lashkar-e-Islam nazim* Liaqat Azhari were elected as MJC Secretary General and Vice President respectively.

The same meeting then evolved a strategy to transform the year 2000 into a decisive year for the militant activity by increasing the magnitude of attacks on the Indian occupation forces deployed in J&K. However, the strategy could not be materialised because of the unilateral cease-fire announced by the *Hizbul Mujahideen* on July 24, 2000. The MJC Central Executive Committee subsequently decided to expel the *Hizb* from the conglomerate besides removing Syed Salahuddin as its chief. Mohammad Usman, a representative of the Muslim *Janbaz Force* who was appointed as the acting MJC Chairman, finally replaced him.

While criticising the *Hizb* cease-fire, the MJC said that it was wastage of sacrifices and passage to servitude. The MJC rejected the ceasefire with the argument that India had a history of breaking promises and pacts and that atrocities and excesses by security forces were unabated in Kashmir. However, following the withdrawal of the cease-fire by the Hizb on August 8, 2000, the outfit was re-

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inducted and Syed Salahuddin was re-appointed as Chairman on October 22, 2000 through voting wherein the HuM secured a majority vote of eight votes.

The *Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen*, *Al-Umar*, *Al-Barq* and the *Hizb-ul-Momineen* opposed the re-induction while indicating that the HuM leader should formally admit to his cease-fire being a mistake and request for pardon. The MJC also rejected the Ramadan cease-fire announced by the Indian government on November 19, 2000. In a statement released from Muzaffarabad on November 20, 2000, the MJC said that its members would launch massive attacks on the Indian army during Ramadan, particularly on its 17th day when the battle of *Badr* was fought.

Following the signing of the January 2004 Islamabad agreement between India and Pakistan, the *Muttahida Jehad Council* was reorganised and the component militant groups were instructed by the Pakistani authorities to drop the expressions of *jehad, lashkar, jaish* or mujahiddeen in their names in order to project a secular-political rather than Islamist image. "We have been told that these names are damaging Pakistan's image abroad as well as the Kashmiri freedom movement," a jehadi leader was quoted as saying by *Daily Times*.

Asked why HuM was allowed to use its original name, the leader replied: "The HuM also holds the chairmanship of the jehad alliance and quarters abroad consider it representative of the Kashmiri freedom movement alone". Hardly a month after the Islamabad agreement between former Prime Minister Vajpayee and General Musharraf, five Pakistan-based jehadi organisations, the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* and *Al-Badr Mujahideen*, Brigade 313 and *Jamaat-ul-Furqa* joined the MJC. These outfits were not a part of the MJC before the Council's constitution barred Pakistan-based organisation from the alliance. While approving the induction of the five jehadi outfits in the MJC, its Chairman Syed Salahuddin said, "circumstances have changed and we need unity."

This was not for the first time that the MJC was restructured. In January 2002, a formula for a merger was adopted but some Pakistan-based organisations refused to accept it, as they wanted to maintain their independent identity. Secondly, the jehadi leaders of the major groups were not ready to be subordinated by small Kashmiri organisations. The new structure of the *Muttahida Jehad Council*, which consists of three alliances, is an extension of the 2002 formula according to which these alliances will launch operations against Indian forces in Kashmir, but only after getting prior permission from the MJC leaders.

The MJC new structure consists of three alliances -- Kashmir Resistance Forum (KRF); Kashmir Freedom Forum (KFF) and *Hizbul Mujahideen* (HuM). The *Hizb* alone has been permitted to retain the mujahideen in its name, since it is

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projected as an indigenous Kashmiri group against the others, which are dominated by Pakistani and other foreign mercenaries.

The Kashmir Resistance Forum (1) represents the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT), Brigade 313 (a *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* faction led by Commander Illyas Kashmiri), *Lashkar-e-Islam* (LeI) and *Al-Badr Mujahideen*. The KRF (2) is an alliance of *Al-Jehad*, *Al-Fateh*, *Hizb Ullah* and *Muslim Janbaz Force* (MJF) while the KRF (3) consists of *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* (Maulana Muzaffar group), *Jamiat-ul Mujahideen* (JuM) and *Jamiat-ul-Ansar* (JuA). The Kashmir Freedom Forum (1) is an alliance of *Jaish-e-Muhammad* (JeM) and *Al-Umar Mujahideen* while the KFF (2) includes Islamic Front (IF), *Jamaat-ul-Furqa* (JuF), *Tehrik-e-Jehad* (TeJ), *Al-Barq* and *Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen* (TuM). The new adjustment is called "*Muwakhaat*" (an Arabic word meaning agreement on the basis of brotherhood) and the move is meant to reduce internal differences of the jehadi groups, besides improving their image and making them look like political groups.

The component members of the *Muttahida Jehad Council* presently include *Hizbul Mujahideen* of Syed Salahuddin, *Lashkar-e-Toiba* of Maulana Wahid Kashmiri, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* of Maulana Masood Azhar, *Muslim Janbaz Force* of Mohammad Usman, *Tehrikul Mujahideen* of Sheikh Jameelur Rehman, *Jamiatul Mujahideen* of Mohammad Abdul Rafeh, *Tehrik-e-Jehad* of Major Tariq Zulqarnain, *Al Umar Mujahideen* of Naeemul Haq, *Islamic Front* of Bilal Ahmed Beg, *Al-Fateh Force* of Khaki Nasrullah, *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* of Jan Mohammad, *Hizbullah* of Ishtiaq Hamid, *Al-Jehad* of Zameen Khan, *Hizbul Momineen* of Shuja Abbas, Liberation Front of Saleem Haroon, *Lashkar-e-Islam* of Allama Liaqat Azhari, *Al-Barq Mujahideen* of Malik Hilal Rahi, *Al-Badr Mujahideen* and Brigade 313.

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Chapter 10

Jamaat-e-Islami: Under the FBI watch

The US Federal Bureau of Investigations is keeping a close eye on the activities of the *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan* and its top leaders since the March 2003 arrest of al-Qaeda's chief operational commander, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad from the Rawalpindi residence of the son (Ahmed Abdul Qadoos) of a local *Jamaat-e-Islami* leader.

An FBI-guided raiding party broke into the modest brick house in the West Ridge area of Rawalpindi at around 2.30 a.m. on March 1, 2003 and arrested Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, a Kuwaiti national who allegedly played a crucial part orchestrating the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Ahmed Abdul Qadoos, the owner of the house who was sheltering Khalid Sheikh, was also arrested during the raid. Since then, Islamabad-based diplomatic sources say, the US intelligence agencies have been closely watching the activities of the *Jamaat* and its top leaders, with a mandate to recommend the inclusion of the Islamic party in the US State Department's list of terrorist outfits once they get substantial evidence to establish its al-Qaeda connection.

The sources informed that the US government's special department - Office of the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, is busy collecting information about the *Jamaat* besides making detailed enquiries into its likely links with the al-Qaeda. In January 2003, two other suspected cadres of al-Qaeda were arrested from the house of another *Jamaat* member in Karachi, thereby giving rise to a suspicion that the *Jamaat* office-bearers and cadres not only in the NWFP and Baluchistan, but also in other parts of Pakistan were helping the surviving members of the al-Qaeda.

After Khalid Sheikh's arrest and his handing over to the American authorities, the Inter Services Intelligence had organised separate briefings for foreign and Pakistani journalists at the ISI headquarters in Rawalpindi. At those briefings, in response to questions about any links between the *Jamaat* and the al-Qaeda, Major General Rashid Qureshi, who was then the media spokesman of General Pervez Musharraf, had claimed, the fact that some al-Qaeda members were arrested from the houses of individual JI members did not mean that it had links with the al-Qaeda as an organisation.

However, the US intelligence officers do not appear to be convinced that these were just the rogue actions of some individual members of the Islamic party, of which the *Jamaat* leaders were not aware. Their concerns over possible links between the JI and al-Qaeda have been heightened by the apparent links of

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Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami* with the al-Qaeda and Taliban in their renewed attacks against the US-led allied troops in Afghanistan. Of all the Islamic parties, *Jamaat-e-Islami* had been the closest to the *Hizb-e-Islami* and had maintained contacts with Gulbuddin even when he and his associates were hiding. After 9/11, Tehran under pressure from the US, expelled them from Iranian territory. They were welcomed in the Pakistani territory by the *Jamaat* leadership, which reportedly gave them shelter.

At the same time, the American intelligence sleuths in Pakistan are making enquiries about Syed Salahuddin-led *Hizbul Mujahideen*'s links with the *Jamaat-e-Islami* as well as with the *Hizb-e-Islami* and al-Qaeda. The HuM was formed in 1990 at the initiative of the ISI and the JI by merging nearly a dozen small groups of Jammu Kashmir and Azad Kashmir. *Hizbul*'s chief operational commander Syed Salahuddin lives partly in Rawalpindi and partly in Azad Kashmir while the *Hizb* offices in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir are generally located in the JI offices which looks after the financial needs of Syed Salahuddin-led outfit.

Before the Taliban seized power in Kabul in September 1996, the recruits of the *Hizbul* used to be trained in Afghan territory by instructors of Gulbuddin. The Taliban leadership, which was then opposed to the *Hizb-e-Islami*, ordered the *Hizbul* to close down its training camps and expelled all its office-bearers based in Afghanistan. Since then, the *Hizbul* recruits are allegedly trained in Azad Kashmir. Expressing concern over the alleged links of *Hizbul Mujahideen* with *Jamaat-e-Islami* and *Hizb-e-Islami*, the Counter-Terrorism Division of the US State Department in its report on the Patterns of Global Terrorism during 2002 had placed not only the HuM, but also the *Al-Badr* and the *Jamiatul Mujahideen*, both associated with the JI and the HI, in the list of "other terrorist organisations".

The "other terrorist organisations" list included names of those organisations against whom the evidence regarding their likely involvement in terrorism directed against the US is not strong enough to warrant their being declared as foreign terrorist organisations under a 1996 law, which entails some punitive consequences such as freezing of funds and accounts etc. The US State Department's action to categorise the HuM, the *Al-Badr* and the *Jamiatul Mujahideen* as terrorist organisations was triggered off not so much by their activities in the Jammu & Kashmir, as by their links with the *Jamaat-e-Islami*, the *Hizb-e-Islami* and possibly al-Qaeda too.

The US State Department's annual 2002 report stated as follows on the HuM: "The group is the militant wing of Pakistan's largest Islamic political party, the *Jamaat-e-Islami*. It currently is focused on Indian security forces and politicians in Kashmir and has conducted operations jointly with other Kashmiri groups. It reportedly operated in Afghanistan through the mid-1990s and trained alongside

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the Afghan *Hizb-e-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in Afghanistan until the Taliban takeover. The group, led by Syed Salahuddin, is made up primarily of ethnic Kashmiris."

On the other hand, soon after Khalid Sheikh Mohammad's arrest, *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan* Chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed denounced as a conspiracy the allegations about his party's links with the al-Qaeda network. "This is condemnable that under a malicious conspiracy, the present government is accusing political rivals of having links with the al-Qaeda. The *Jamaat-e-Islami* has no links with the al-Qaeda. Hundreds of thousands of people are participating in our anti-US rallies and this is unbearable for the government. That is why it has started a conspiracy to link the *Jamaat* with the al-Qaeda network. The *Jamaat-e-Islami* is a national organisation and is against violence. The JI believes in a peaceful struggle in a constitutional and democratic manner", said Qazi.

Interestingly, on March 5, 2004, BBC South Asia website story read: "Khalid Sheikh Mohammad is a hero of Islam, Pakistan's largest Islamic party has said". According to the report, the *Jamaat-e-Islami* spokesman Ameerul Azeem said: "The Pakistani government, acting on the US orders, had committed a shameful sell-out by handing over Khalid Skeikh Mohammad to the FBI." The BBC story described this as "an outspoken endorsement" of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad.

However, Qazi Hussain Ahmed was quick to refute the BBC report the very next day (on March 6, 2003). He said the *Jamaat* spokesman (Ameerul Azeem) is a responsible man and he has been misquoted. He clarified that the arrest took place probably from the house of a lady worker of the *Jamaat*, not a party office bearer. Qazi further said it is unclear in what circumstances the man being referred to as Khalid Shiekh Mohammad, stayed in the party worker's house. "Maybe he was there for only one night", the *Jamaat* chief explained. He then added that special instructions have already been issued to all the JI members not to give refuge to anyone about whose identity they are unsure. "Only women and children seeking refuge are exception", said Qazi Hussain Ahmed.

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Chapter 11

Tableeghi Jamaat: Nurturing jehadis?

The *Tableeghi Jamaat* (the party of preachers), a non-militant organisation of the practicing Muslims that claims to have never indulged in any militant or political activities as a matter of principle, has been infiltrated by some jehadi elements belonging to several banned militant and sectarian outfits, which are using the *Jamaat* as a cover to further their extremist agenda.

The *Tableeghi Jamaat* came into existence in British India in 1940 to spread the message of the Holy Koran for two reasons: to ensure that Muslims strengthen their faith and to carry out humanitarian work. The *Jamaat* headquarters for South Asia are located in India. The headquarters was originally created for humanitarian work and has not yet brought to notice any extremist views. In a sharp contrast, however, the *Jamaat*'s Pakistan branch has now been found involved making clandestine efforts to facilitate the jehadi elements and to promote their agenda for quite some time now. Since the Pakistani law treats the *Tableeghi Jamaat* as a humanitarian outfit and not as a religio-political group, there is no ban on government servants, members of the armed forces and the nuclear and missile scientific community joining the party [even as members] to work for the same during the off-duty hours.

According to information acquired by the intelligence sources, many government servants, military officers and scientists devote at least part of their annual leave to do voluntary work for the *Tableeghi Jamaat*. At least three former heads of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Lt. Gen. (retd) Hameed Gul, Lt. Gen. (retd) Javed Nasir and Lt. Gen. (retd) Naseem Rana were and still are closely involved in the *Jamaat*'s preaching activities. Lt. Gen. (retd) Javed Nasir who was made the ISI chief during the first tenure of ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1990-93) had to be removed under the American pressure in 1993. He subsequently got involved in preaching tours and used to lead the *Tableeghi* delegations from Pakistan going to the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Central Asian Republics, Chechnya, Dagestan and Somalia.

The *Tableeghi Jamaat*'s annual conventions at Raiwind attract the second largest religious congregation in the Islamic world after that of the Haj in Saudi Arabia. Reputed to be the richest religious organisation in Pakistan, the *Jamaat* recruits hundreds of students in other countries and brings them to Pakistan at its own expense for studies in the religious seminaries. According to the US intelligence sources, amongst the foreign nationals who fought in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance troops and the US-led allied forces as members of the Pakistan-based jehadi outfits were American Muslims (mostly Afro-Americans),

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nationals of the West European countries, Thaïs, Malaysians, Singaporeans, who projected themselves as Malays from Malaysia and Indonesians. But as a matter of fact, the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* teams that used to visit these countries as preachers, had recruited them all. They used to bring hundreds of Muslims to Pakistan where they were imparted training at the religious seminaries before finally being taken to Afghanistan to get jehadi inoculation.

According to intelligence sources, the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and the *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* enjoy close links with the *Tableeghi Jamaat* and recruit their cadres in Pakistan as well as abroad through the TJ. Often, to avoid attracting the adverse notice of foreign intelligence agencies, recruiting teams of the *Harkat*, the *Lashkar* and the *Harkatul* go abroad under the cover of the TJ preachers. As per the American intelligence findings, reported in international media, Osama bin Laden too had used the *Harkat*, the *Lashkar* and the *Harkatul* teams going abroad under the garb of the *Jamaat* preachers for communicating instructions to his network of non-Arab organisations in different countries. In the 1990s, many members of the *Harkat* traveled to the southern Philippines under the cover of preachers of the TJ, trained the cadres of the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and participated in their operations against the Philippine security forces.

It has already been reported in the American media that the six persons of the Yemeni origin arrested from Buffalo after the 9/11 terrorist attacks by the FBI in its search for sleeper agents in the US, were found having links with the *Tableeghi Jamaat*. Moreover, they had the distinction of having visited the *Jamaat* headquarters in Raiwind before the 9/11 attacks. John Walker Lindh, known as the American Taliban, was reportedly inspired to go to Afghanistan after traveling to Pakistan with the *Jamaat* preachers. Three Australians also visited Raiwind and joined the TJ before going to Afghanistan.

An investigative report carried by Pakistan's *The News* International on February 13, 1995, brought to light for the first time the nexus between the *Tableeghi Jamaat*, the *Harkatul Mujahideen* and their clandestine role in supporting Islamic extremist movements in different countries. The report quoted unidentified office-bearers of the HUM as saying: "Ours is basically a Sunni organisation close to the *Deobandi* school of thought. Our people are mostly impressed by the TJ. Most of our workers do come from the TJ. We regularly go to its annual meeting at Raiwind. Ours is a truly international network of genuine jehadi Muslims. We believe frontiers can never divide Muslims. They are one nation. They will remain a single entity. We try to go wherever our Muslim brothers are terrorised, without any monetary consideration. Our colleagues went and fought against

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oppressors in Bosnia, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Burma, the Philippines and, of course, India".

"Although Pakistani members are not participating directly in anti-government armed resistance in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Jordan, many of the fighters in those Arab States had remained our colleagues during the Afghan war and we know one another very well. We are doing whatever we can to help them install Islamic governments in those States". The report also quoted the office-bearers as claiming that among foreign volunteers trained by them in their training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan, were 16 African-American Muslims from various cities of the US and that funds for their activities mostly came from Muslim businessmen of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UK.

The February 1998 issue of the Karachi-based Monthly "*Newsline*" quoted workers of the *Tableeghi Jamaat* as saying that the TJ had many offices in the US, Russia, the Central Asian Republics, South Africa, Australia and France and that many members of the Chechen Cabinet, including the Deputy Prime Minister of Chechnya, were workers of the TJ and participated in its proselytising activities. One of them, merely identified as Khalil, said: "It is possible that France may become a Muslim state within my lifetime, due to the great momentum of *Tableeghi* activity there".

The *Jamaat*'s activities are being closely monitored by the American intelligence community, which believes that the TJ was the mother of all the Pakistan-based jehadi organisations active not only in the Central Asian Republics, Chechnya and Dagestan, but also in other parts of the world. According to the US intelligence findings, amongst the US-based organisations with which the *Jamaat* is closely associated, are the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA). The President of the ISNA is Sheikh Abdullah Idris Ali, an American immigrant of Sudanese origin, who is also the *Pesh Imam* and *Khatib* of a mosque in New York.

The annual convention of the ISNA held at Columbus, Ohio, from September 11, 1995, was addressed, amongst others, by Hamza Yusuf, an American citizen of Greek origin, who, after embracing Islam, had lived for six years in Mauritania to study Islam and to work as a *Tableeghi Jamaat* preacher; Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens, the famous pop singer, who embraced Islam after coming into contact with the *Jamaat* in Pakistan; Dr. Saghir of Algeria and Dr. Israr Ahmed, the *ameer* of the *Tanzeem-e-Islami* of Pakistan and a member of the *Tableeghi Jamaat*.

Addressing the convention, Dr. Israr Ahmed had said: "The process of the revival of Islam in different parts of the world is real. A final showdown between

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the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world, which has been captured by the Jews, would soon take place. The Gulf war was just a rehearsal for the coming conflict." He appealed to the Muslims of the world, including those in the US, to prepare themselves for the coming conflict. The convention was told that the ISNA had a US $100 million budget for spreading Islamic education in the US through the publication of textbooks, setting-up of weekend Islamic schools and a weekly cable TV programme called "*Insight*" which would be available in all the States of the US. Amongst the alleged members of the *Tableeghi Jamaat* in the Muslim community in the United States is Louis Fara Khan, the Black Muslim leader.

The *Tableeghi Jamaat* operates in the US and the Caribbean directly through its own preachers deputed from Pakistan and also recruited from the Pakistani immigrant community abroad. In its preaching to the Pakistani immigrants in the US, the TJ has been stressing the importance of cultivating the African-American Muslims in order to counter the lobbying power of the Hindus and the Jewish people.

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Chapter 12

Dawood Ibrahim financing militants?

Few have heard of Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, despite his status as a billionaire gangster, an alleged global terrorist, a nuclear black market entrepreneur and an Islamic extremist. An impoverished street tough from Bombay (India) who grew up to possess international influence, Dawood Ibrahim formed the infamous "D Company", one of the most feared international crime organisations in the world.

A colourful mobster with powerful friends ranging from Bollywood film stars to members of the Pakistan's intelligence establishment, his alleged crimes include murder, kidnapping, drug-smuggling, and trafficking in nuclear secrets. Underworld don Dawood Ibrahim is also accused of having masterminded the 1993 Bombay serial blasts, when twelve car bombs killed almost three hundred Indian citizens and injured over a thousand more. Until September 11, 2001, this was the most destructive terrorist act in modern history.

As the global consensus against terrorism grew post-September 11, the US State Department declared (in October 2003) Dawood Ibrahim a specially designated global terrorist with al-Qaeda links. The US decision literally created ripples in Pakistan's intelligence circles that had cared little about the security implications of harbouring a mafia don wanted by an ever-hostile neighbour -- India. Not only does the US action change the complexion of its relationship with India but it also brought Washington face to face with its ally in the war against terror - Islamabad, for its alleged covert support to terrorists.

Much to Islamabad's embarrassment, the US Treasury Department in its reasons for naming Dawood in the list of the world's worst terrorists, cited intelligence reports of his connection with now outlawed militant outfits -- al-Qaeda and *Lashkar-e-Toiba*. The fact sheet on Dawood Ibrahim placed on the US Treasury Department's website states: "Dawood Ibrahim, son of a police constable, has financially supported Islamic militant groups working against India such as the *Lashkar-e-Toiba*. Information as recent as fall 2002 indicates that Ibrahim had been helping finance terrorist attacks in the Indian state of Gujarat by *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, the armed wing of *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad* -- an anti-US Sunni missionary organisation, formed in 1989".

The US had already placed (in 2003) the *Lashkar*, led by Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, on the State Department's list of officially designated terrorist outfits. According to media reports, soon after India's deputy Prime Minister Mr. L.K. Advani returned from his US visit in June 2003, New Delhi received information

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about Dawood Ibrahim's alleged links with *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and the Taliban—and through it, to al-Qaeda. But there was still a little work to be done before Washington could take action: it had to carry out final verifications of the intelligence leads, largely supplied by Indian agencies but developed subsequently on the ground by the US.

It took nearly four months for the verifications to come through, but finally Dawood was on the list of individuals involved in terrorism against the US, the list that the treasury department maintains. On his June 2003 trip to Washington, Advani told US leaders that India needed a visible, non-reversible action from Pakistan to demonstrate its sincerity in curbing terrorism. And what could be a more visible action than to hand over Dawood Ibrahim and a few others from the much-vaunted list of 20; it would be non-reversible because Pakistan could not possibly take them back from India unlike, say, the terrorist camps that are back in action.

But why Dawood Ibrahim? Advani told US leaders, "the name Dawood Ibrahim had the same kind of resonance in India as the name Osama bin Laden had in America". US leaders were also told that any movement on the list of 20 Most Wanted could completely change the dynamics in the region. Following the attack on Parliament on December 13, 2001, India prepared the list furnishing relevant details about those who were on it. Later, in early 2002, Islamabad was asked repeatedly to hand over those named in the list, but it stonewalled, predictably rubbishing media and intelligence claims of Dawood Ibrahim residing in Pakistan. Among other things, India provided details of the 1993 Interpol red corner notice (A 135/4-1993) on Dawood and also of the Pakistani passport issued to him on August 12, 1991, as well as his phone numbers.

Curiously, when the US treasury department terrorist listing was made public, it mentioned Dawood's passport number as G 869537; the number New Delhi had provided was G 866537. There was also a discrepancy in the telephone numbers. The American list said the number was 021-5892038; the numbers provided by India were 021-7278866 and 7272887. Though the US treasury did not list Dawood's address, his passport mentions his permanent residence as: 6/A *Khayaban Tanzeem*, Phase 5, Defence Housing Area, Karachi.

It is a prestigious address to boast of in Karachi where retired army officials live luxuriously; it also underscores the intimate links between Dawood and the establishment there. These discrepancies in the US treasury department listing, perhaps, enabled Islamabad to claim it had checked out the details but that they did not tally with their records. Indian officials, however, say the discrepancies were an error and would presumably be rectified by the Americans.

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Obviously, it was not just Advani's proddings that pushed the US into moving against Dawood. The latter had already crossed Washington's path during the investigations into the massive bomb blasts in Riyadh on the eve of Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit there in May this year. American sleuths were tracking the *Hawala* operations so it is not surprising that Dawood's name cropped up, considering the control he exercises in South Asia and the Gulf.

American investigations in Riyadh, to begin with, put the spotlight on one of Dawood's shadowy henchmen, Saud Memon. He was found to be financing the *Al-Akhtar Trust* (formerly *Al Rashid Trust*; it was also sanctioned by the US treasury department two days before Dawood was). Otherwise known as a wealthy Karachi garment exporter, it was Memon who, in January 2002, drove *Wall Street Journal's* South Asia correspondent Daniel Pearl into a compound that he owned. It was here that Pearl's throat was slit. Memon subsequently disappeared from Karachi.

Meanwhile, in June 2003, at the time Musharraf was in Boston, the FBI nabbed eight suspected *Lashkar* operatives in the US. Charged with stockpiling weapons and waging jehad against India, these eight activists had apparently received arms training in Pakistan and some of them had even seen action in Kashmir. A set of official documents released by the FBI on June 30, 2003 in Washington, stated that some of those arrested even fought against Indian troops in occupied Kashmir and were being funded by the Dawood syndicate to conduct terrorist activity in the Indian state of Gujarat. The documents disclosed that one of the arrested men was a Pakistani citizen working as an electrical engineer in the United States and held a H1-B visa. The FBI action subsequently led to more arrests in several other American states.

To order a crackdown on the pro-Kashmir elements living in the US, the Bush administration used an almost forgotten and obscure law that forbids Americans or US residents from attacking friendly countries with which the United States is at peace (India in this case). In subsequent raids, the US authorities arrested an Ohio truck driver of Kashmiri origin, Iyman Faris alias Mohammed Rauf. His reported connection to al- Qaeda further alarmed the FBI, forcing it to act against some other US-based Kashmiri groups as well. At least nine of the 11 Muslims of the Kashmiri origin arrested by the FBI belonged to *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and were US citizens.

Iyman Faris's arrest appeared in the American newspapers on June 20, the day General Musharraf arrived in Boston and the indictment of eight other suspects came on June 27 when the General was in Los Angeles. Interrogations showed that Iyman Faris alias Mohammad Rauf, who originally belonged to Azad Kashmir, had migrated to the United States in 1994 and was working as a truck

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driver in Ohio. The FBI charged him with having links with al-Qaeda and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, said to be bin Laden's operations chief, who was believed to have coordinated the terrorist strikes of September 11, 2001 in the US. Khalid was arrested in the house of a women's wing leader of the *Jamaat-e-Islami* Pakistan in Rawalpindi in March 2003 and was handed over to the FBI.

According to FBI investigations, Faris had visited Afghanistan and Pakistan a number of times between 2000 and 2002, met bin Laden and worked with Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, in organising and financing jehad causes. "After returning to the US from Pakistan in late 2002, he began examining the Brooklyn Bridge and discussing via coded messages with al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan ways of using blow torches to sever the suspension cables. The plotting continued through March, as Faris sent coded messages to operatives in Pakistan. One such message said that the "weather is too hot", which meant that the plot was unlikely to succeed - apparently because of security and the bridge's structure - and should be postponed."

Iyman Faris was arrested soon thereafter in the light of the information provided by Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. Sources in Pakistan describe Faris, aged 34, as a Punjabi ex-serviceman settled in Azad Kashmir, before he migrated to the US. He was associated in the past with the *Jamaat-ul-Furqa*, an anti-Jewish and anti-Hindu terrorist organisation of Pakistan, which is reported to have a large network in the US, Canada and the Caribbean. The *Furqa* was reportedly involved in a number of violent incidents against Jewish and Hindu interests in the United States in the early 1990s and its activities were cited in the annual reports of the US State Department titled "Patterns of Global Terrorism".

Documents submitted by the FBI in the court of a magistrate judge in Alexandria, Virginia, showed that the indictment relied partly on the testimony of an unnamed, un-indicted co-conspirator who was close to the group and who turned approver to provide incriminating information about the others as part of a deal with the US government. The charges revealed that the men met often at private homes and mosques in the greater Washington area to discuss and hear lectures on the righteousness of jehad in Kashmir, Chechnya and elsewhere. They also watched videotapes of terrorist attacks.

The FBI charged seven *Lashkar* men in Washington and an eighth in Philadelphia with stockpiling weapons and conspiring to wage jehad against India in support of a militant group in Kashmir. The FBI's charge sheet described them as members of the LeT. However, the US officials involved in the investigation were quoted by the US media as saying that there isn't any evidence showing that the accused were considering an attack within the US or had ties to al-Qaeda." The men, the charge sheet said, obtained AK-47s and other high-powered weaponry

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and practiced small-unit military tactics in Virginia. The indictment charged that the accused pledged their willingness to die as martyrs in support of the Muslim cause. They had also organised a function to celebrate the crashing of the space shuttle Columbia. One of the astronauts killed in the crash was of Indian origin. A message read out on the occasion had described the US as "the greatest enemy of the Muslims".

According to the indictment, at least two of the accused were described of Pakistani origin, including Masood Ahmed Khan, 27, a Maryland resident and a naturalised US citizen born in Pakistan. Khan travelled to Pakistan just days after the September 11 attacks and trained with *Lashkar-e-Toiba*. He had a document titled "The Terrorist's Handbook", with instructions on how to manufacture and use explosives and chemicals as weapons, as well as a photograph of the FBI headquarters in Washington. On June 18 2004, Masood Ahmed Khan was sentenced to prison terms of life plus 65 years. The US District Judge Leonie Brinkema said the sentences were draconian, but she had no choice but to impose them under federal law.

Before being convicted, Masood Ahmed Khan said before District Judge Leonie Brinkema that he was innocent and that he was prosecuted only because he is Muslim. "To put it bluntly ... had I been a Zionist Jew or a Christian training to fight (in Palestine), I would never have been charged with violating the Neutrality Act", he said, referring to the seldom-used US law that formed the basis for the government's conspiracy charged. Khan was convicted of the most serious charges, including conspiracy to levy war against the United States and conspiracy to contribute services to the Taliban.

The second Pakistani, Mohammed Aatique, 30, is a work (H-1) visa holder while Khawaja Mahmood Hasan, 27, is a naturalised US citizen born in Pakistan. The other accused were Randall Todd Royer, 30; Ibrahim Ahmed al-Hamdi, a Yemeni national and non-resident alien; Yong Ki Kwon, 27, a naturalised US citizen born in Korea; Seifullah Chapman, 30; Hammad Abdur-Raheem, 35; Donald Thomas Surratt, 30; Caliph Basha Ibn Abdur-Raheem, 29 and Sabri Benkhala, 28. When a visiting General Musharraf was asked about the arrests in October 2003 at Los Angeles, he was reported to have said, "We need to see who they are, where they were trained and how they were organised".

District Judge Leonie Brinkema also sentenced two of the accused, Seifullah Chapman and Hammad Abdur-Raheem, to prison terms of 85 years and eight years respectively on June 18 2004. Seifullah Chapman, a former US Marine, admitted attending the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* training camp in August 2001 but said he did so not to train for holy war but for a tough physical challenge in the rugged Pakistani mountains. The third person sentenced, Hammad Abdur-Raheem of

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Falls Church, never travelled to Pakistan but was convicted for his role in training other conspirators in military tactics in 2000 and 2001 in paintball games in the woods near Fredericksburg.

Several Pakistani and Western writers, including the slain American journalist Daniel Pearl, attempted to write about Dawood Ibrahim, but they have routinely disappeared. However, author Gilbert King has attempted to reveal the secrets of Dawood's life in his book titled *"The Most Dangerous Man In The World"*, published by the Chamberlain Bros. in the United States in May 2004. After his expulsion from UAE, says the book, no country other than Pakistan was willing to accord him asylum. "But his power and capability in the underworld remain undiminished; he can still do what he wants", the author claims.

As the author points out that it is probably just a matter of time until the world learns the name of Dawood Ibrahim. The book also paints a disturbing picture of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence and its involvement with Dawood Ibrahim. The author believes that Dawood Ibrahim is as dangerous as Osama bin Laden though few in the West know him. The book tries to connect the Karachi killing of US journalist Daniel Pearl to Dawood. The author's theory is that the journalist was trying to ferret out information about Dawood whom the author gives the title of the "King of Karachi". "Mr. Ibrahim was alarmed and had Mr Pearl kidnapped and killed". However, no one had so far linked the Pearl murder to the Indian underground figure. As for the Mumbai don's future, the author says for now he is safe in Pakistan but his fate could be affected on account of the close cooperation that exists between the US and Pakistan in the war against terrorism.

Coming back to the US Treasury Department's fact sheet, it says: "Ibrahim's syndicate is involved in large-scale shipment of narcotics in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Its smuggling routes from South Asia, the Middle East and Africa are shared with Osama bin Laden and his terror network. A financial arrangement was also brokered to facilitate bin Laden's use of these routes. In the 1990s, Ibrahim traveled to Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban". Vindicating Indian position that Pakistan continues to provide shelter to Dawood, the fact sheet claims that he lives in Karachi and has in his possession a Pakistani passport whose number is 0869537 under the individual category. During his much trumpeted 2001 Agra visit, Musharraf had vehemently denied that one of India's most Wanted underworld don had taken refuge in Pakistan, though the Vajpayee administration believed otherwise.

As a matter of fact, however, General Pervez Musharraf was right in his claim because Dawood had left Pakistan in early July 2001, before his Indian yatra. According to the FBI investigations, the mafia don had left on a fake Pakistani

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passport for Singapore and then went on to Hong Kong. He returned to Karachi from Dubai in the intervening night of July 18-19, but only after getting clearance from Islamabad. Dawood, who, according to the FBI claims stays in Moin Palace opposite Abdullah Shah Ghazi Dargah in Karachi's posh Clifton locality, traveled as Mohammad Anis on a fake passport number 11-123259. When Musharraf was holding his summit meeting with Vajpayee in Agra, Dawood left Singapore for Hong Kong on July 15, 2001, by a Singapore Airlines flight from where he went to Dubai.

Taking strong exception to the US observations that Dawood, holding a Pakistani passport was hiding in Pakistan, the foreign office spokesman in Islamabad Masood Khan said that the US had been asked to rectify its mistake. "Dawood Ibrahim is not in Pakistan. I would like to point out here that we do not have any Indian suspects on our soil. Second, India has not provided any evidence or proof of their presence on Pakistani soil. I mean this story, or this controversy, was re-ignited by a determination made by the Treasury Department of the US. Fresh inquiries have revealed that a Pakistani passport (G 869537), given by the US government and to be allegedly in possession of Dawood Ibrahim, belongs to Imtiaz Hussain, it added. Similarly, the telephone (92-21) 5892038 does not belong to any person named Dawood Ibrahim or Sheikh Dawood Hussain."

However, the FBI sleuths stationed in Pakistan simply refused to buy the foreign office assertion. They view Islamabad's claim as an exercise in face-saving because it is in its interest not to give up the don. Fresh inquiries by the FBI operatives in Pakistan show that Dawood changed his addresses in Karachi to stay out of trouble ever since the US unleashed its war on terror after the September 11 terrorist attacks. There are reports that Dawood is now trying to dispose off his properties in Karachi and other parts and has taken up residence in Islamabad, along with a couple of his close associates.

While New Delhi hopes that the end could be in sight for Dawood after the US tagging him as a global terrorist, there are indications that the going may not be so tough for the man who still has friends in high places. But the million-dollar question is: Can the Pakistani intelligence community afford harbouring the don anymore, especially after the unprecedented US action?

The don in the dock

From Mumbai to Dubai to Kuala Lumpur to Karachi, the stories connected to Dawood Ibrahim and his war with his underworld rivals can challenge the best of Bollywood thrillers. It is the nature of the crimes attributed to Dawood that place him at the top of India's most wanted wish list. The son of a police constable, he is the prime suspect in masterminding a series of bomb blasts that

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occurred in a single day in 1993 in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the financial heart of India, killing 260 people and injuring 1,000.

Dawood figures in a list of 20 fugitives that India wants Pakistan to hand over and is suspected to be the prime player used by Pakistani intelligence to foment cross-border terrorism in India. The Musharraf-led government seems under intense pressure and feels extremely uneasy at persistent media reports about Dawood's presence in Pakistan. In September 2000, an English monthly *Newsline* ran a detailed story claiming that Dawood was, indeed, in Karachi and under the protection of Pakistan's premier military intelligence outfit, the ISI. The story, which detailed his lifestyle along with a report on his enmity with Chhota Rajan, drew an extremely harsh reaction from the Pakistani authorities including the president. During a meeting with editors almost a year after the story was published, the president himself described it as an "indiscretion that had seriously hurt Pakistan's national interest."

According to one story doing the rounds in various circles in Pakistan, Dawood and Chhota Rajan parted ways due to their differences over the control of Bollywood. Suspecting that Pakistan's intelligence community might have extended protection to Dawood, RAW chose to cultivate Chhota Rajan against Dawood. Supporting this line of speculation is the abortive plot to kill Chhota Shakeel in Bangkok some two years ago, in which the alleged hitmen were hired from Karachi and are said to be former members of the largely mythical *Al-Zulfikar organisation*. The two gangs, it is said, have since been at war: the Malir Road ambush in Karachi on August 18, 2001, is rumoured to be an attempt by Chhota Rajan to kill one of the assassins hired for the Bangkok hit, Shoaib Khan. It is impossible to confirm these reports against consistent and strong denials from Pakistani officials regarding Dawood Ibrahim's physical presence in any part of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Indian CBI has pieced together its own story – which could well be another piece of imaginative fiction given that the entire affair has successfully dragged the intelligence agencies of the two countries into its fold. According to the CBI, Dawood became drawn into the communal infighting that swept India after Hindu zealots pulled down Babri mosque in Ayodhya some 10 years ago. Mumbai was badly hit by communal rioting as hundreds of Muslims were butchered in the city. It is not clear why Dawood Ibrahim chose to retaliate on behalf of the Mumbai Muslims (the Indians allege he followed instructions from the ISI while the Pakistanis feel his motivation was primarily religious) but the CBI regards him as the mastermind behind the subsequent Mumbai bombings which left over 200 people dead. Since then, India has been putting constant pressure on Pakistan for the extradition of Dawood Ibrahim who it says

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is wanted in India for a series of crimes including gun-running, counterfeiting currency, drugs trade, funding alleged criminals, murder and smuggling.

The story that the CBI has spun regarding Dawood's alleged connections with the Pakistani intelligence is again no less of a thriller. The CBI claims that it caught on to Dawood Ibrahim's alleged involvement in anti-India espionage while investigating the Mumbai blasts. According to the CBI, the perpetrators went to Dubai using their Indian passports where Dawood allegedly provided them with Pakistani visas on plain pieces of paper so that their passports would not carry any records of their entry to Pakistan. They landed in Karachi and were taken to a training camp in the NWFP. The CBI concludes that they were sent back to Mumbai after being trained in explosives by the now defunct *Harkatul Ansar*.

According to the Indian government's claim, shortly after Dawood Ibrahim left Dubai for Karachi in the wake of the Mumbai bombings, he was issued a passport back-dated to August 12, 1991. Soon afterwards, according to the CBI, he moved into a 6,000-yard house in Clifton with amenities such as a swimming pool, gymnasium and tennis court. He subsequently smuggled his family, comprising his wife, four daughters and a son, certain close associates and their families out of Mumbai. The entire Dawood family, alleges the CBI, now holds Pakistani passports.

Born on December 31, 1955, Dawood Ibrahim is the son of a former criminal investigation department *havaldar*, Ibrahim Kaskar. The collapse of the Mumbai textile industry in the 1980s and the urban despair that it caused provided the backdrop for Dawood's spectacular rise to riches. After falling out with Amirzada Pathan and his brother Alamzeb Pathan, two major figures in Mumbai's underworld associated with the Karim Lala gang, Dawood set out on his own. In 1981, his elder brother Sabir was shot dead by the Pathan brothers. Dawood promptly had Amirzada assassinated. In 1984, under pressure from both the police and Karim Lala's gang, Dawood moved to Dubai. However, Chhota Shakeel, who grew up in Mumbai's Nagpada ghetto, stayed on in India to manage Dawood's interests, which had already become substantial by the late 1980s.

By 1987, however, Mumbai had become too hot for Chhota Shakeel. First arrested in 1983 on charges of kidnapping and illegal possession of weapons, Shakeel was arrested again on December 1, 1988, at Dongri in Mumbai under the Indian national security laws. He was awarded bail by the Mumbai High Court on March 28, 1989 and immediately moved to Dubai. Meanwhile, Dawood's enterprises in Mumbai continued to flourish with the help of other key figures in his gang including Chhota Rajan.

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However, soon after the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, Rajan broke away from Dawood Ibrahim and moved to Dubai, from where he was forced to flee to Kuala Lumpur by 1994. Rajan's departure from Mumbai triggered one of the bloodiest gang wars in Mumbai's history. Significantly, the war that began with the serial blasts seems to have led to a transformation of the Mumbai-centred underworld alliances. Rajan's efforts to project himself as an enemy of the ISI, determined to avenge terrorism in India, are clearly aimed at winning support of both the Indian state and the politicians who believe that a 'Hindu' underworld is somehow better than a 'Muslim' underworld. While the stories connected to Dawood Ibrahim and his likes may read like Bollywood fiction, their impact is far from imaginary.

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Chapter 13

Most Wanted jehadi leaders

The September 11 terrorist strikes for the first time made the intelligence agencies of the world realise that the terrorists were the beneficiaries of the games that the agencies play with each other by pretending to cooperate, but doing so only half-heartedly.

The very realisation even compelled two nuclear-armed neighbours -- India and Pakistan -- to move forward and ink an extradition treaty, believing it essential for handing over of the wanted terrorists and criminals. The extradition treaty, however, could bring Islamabad under further pressure from New Delhi for extraditing over 20 wanted terrorists allegedly hiding in Pakistan for the past many years. The list of 20 Most Wanted Terrorists was handed over to Pakistan after the December 13, 2002 attack on Indian parliament. Pakistan's position, however, was that none of the individuals in the Indian list of 20 was hiding there. And even if anyone was hiding, he could not be handed over to India because there was no Indo-Pak framework or extradition treaty to justify such an action.

The list of 20 included some Kashmiris - five alleged hijackers of Indian Airlines' IC-814 flight, at least half a dozen charge-sheeted accused in the Mumbai blasts case including Dawood Ibrahim, former *Lashkar-e-Toiba ameer* Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the now defunct *Jaish-e-Mohammad ameer* Maulana Masood Azhar and *Hizbul Mujahideen* Chief Syed Salahuddin. The list also included five Sikh terrorists from the East Punjab who had allegedly been plotting to revive militancy in the Indian State of Punjab. India had further asked Pakistan to furnish a list of people wanted from New Delhi. Following is a detailed list of the 20, shortened from a preliminary list of 42 that was prepared by the Union Home Ministry and handed over to Islamabad, demanding their extradition.

I. Most Wanted from Jammu and Kashmir

Mohammad Yusuf Shah (*Hizbul Mujahideen*): Better known by his somewhat vain nom de guerre Syed Salahuddin, Shah has led the *Hizbul Mujahideen* since November 11, 1991. A resident of Soibugh, and an unsuccessful Muslim United Front candidate in the 1987 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, Shah is a long-standing member of the *Jamaat-e-Islami* Kashmir. Before taking over the *Hizb*'s Muzaffarabad-based command, he acted as its *Ameer-e-Zila* (district commander) from late 1989. Conventional wisdom has it that when the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir started, it was almost exclusively led by the secular-nationalist Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Things were

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not, in fact, quite that simple. The Hizb drew its first cadre from within the JKLF, with Mohammad Ashraf Dar, Maqbool Illahi and Abdullah Bangroo starting the pro-Pakistan organisation on instructions from the *Jamaat* leadership. Dar, however, soon fell foul of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), and was hounded out of the *Hizb*, opening the way for Salahuddin.

Major cases: Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the state of the Jammu & Kashmir Police at the time, there are no first information reports against Shah relating to crimes committed prior to 1991. It was only in 1997-1998 that the State police made serious efforts to build a legal case against him.

Hafiz Mohammad Saeed (*Lashkar-e-Toiba*): On paper, Saeed has never engaged in any terrorist activity. He is the head of the *Markaz Dawa Wal Irshad*, an organisation committed to proselytisation, and which happens to be the patron of the LeT. The *Markaz* itself was an offshoot of the ultra-conservative *Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith*, a branch of radical Sunni thought which holds that only the sayings and doings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), his followers and family members form the sole basis of Islam. It rejects the mainstream idea of *ijtema*, the interpretation of tradition to address actually existing circumstances. Saeed's rise was in large measure the outcome of patronage by the Pakistani military dictator Ziaul Haq, who granted the *Markaz* its sprawling campus at Muridke near Lahore. It helped raise cadre and funds for Haq's Central Intelligence Agency-sponsored campaign against the Soviet Union and the socialist government in Afghanistan. In 1991, the *Lashkar* was set up to give the ISI a direct role in terrorist operations in Jammu & Kashmir. Within two years, it set up a number of cells in Jammu and Kashmir and in other parts of India. From the outset, the *Lashkar* has made it clear that it sees the war in Jammu and Kashmir as just a stepping-stone to establish Islamic rule throughout South Asia. In the wake of the recent ban imposed on the LeT by the United States and Pakistan, Saeed announced that the LeT had shifted its headquarters to Kashmir and that the *Markaz* itself would restrict its activities to Pakistan. The announcement is disingenuous since the *Lashkar* has for a long time had offices in Pakistan-held Jammu and Kashmir, notably at the Sawai Nall at Muzaffarabad. It has also run launching camps from Lipa, Duhnihal, Athmuqam, Jura and Chikoti.

Major cases: None in India.

Abdul Karim Tunda (*Lashkar-e-Toiba*): Until his disappearance off Indian intelligence radar from Bangladesh two years ago, Abdul Karim was the top field operative of the LeT's all-India outfit, the Dasta Mohammad bin Qasim. He reported to the *Lashkar*'s head of all-India operations, Azam Cheema, who in turn did act under the instructions of the organisation's overall commander of military operations, Zakiur Rahman Lakhvi. Nick-named Tunda for a handicap

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in his left arm; sustained in the course of a bomb-building accident; Abdul Karim's association with the Islamic Right predates his association with *Lashkar*. Residents of Bhiwani: (Maharashtra) Jalees Ansari and Karim and Nizamabad-based Azam Ghauri, then residents of Mumbai, who had set up a Muslim self-defence committee in the wake of the Bhiwandi riots. All of them were later recruited by the agencies, and trained in Pakistan in the early 1990s. Ansari is now in jail, while Ghauri was shot dead in an encounter in 2000. Karim's key success was in discovering young recruits to do his work. New Delhi resident Aamer Hashim, operating under the alias Kamran, was responsible for a series of bomb blasts in New Delhi and Jalandhar in 1996 and 1997. Other agents have been brought in directly from across the border. On July 1, 1998, the Indian Intelligence Bureau surveillance led to the arrest of top *Lashkar* activist Mohammad Salim Junaid, with 16 kg of RDX (Research Department Explosive) in his possession. Junaid, a resident of Kala Gujran village in Pakistan's Jehlum district, started his career in 1991.

Major cases:
Named in dozens of FIRs relating to New Delhi bomb blasts and the bombing of passenger trains in India.

II. The Indian Airlines IC-814 hijackers

Maulana Masood Azhar (*Jaish-e-Mohammad*): Masood Azhar was an unlikely candidate to make it to any 'most wanted' list: in 1989 he was forced to drop out of his first and only arms training course with the *Harkatul Mujahideen* because he was overweight. But by 1993, he was second only to the *Harkat* chief Fazlur Rahman Khalil, having established himself as a fund-raiser and ideologue. After his release in the IC-814 for hostages-for-prisoners swap in December 1999, he went on to found the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM), arguably the most feared terrorist group in Jammu and Kashmir today. Azhar was born as the third of 11 children on August 7, 1968 to Allah Baksh Sabir Alvi, a Bahawalpur schoolteacher who ran a poultry farm after his retirement. Dropping out of school after Class VII, he joined the ultra-orthodox Binori seminary in Karachi and then he went on to join the *Harkatul Mujahideen*. He edited its magazine, *Sada-e-Mujahid*. He traveled abroad extensively on fund-raising missions and was later tasked to visit India to preside over the formal unification of the *Harkatul Mujahideen* and the *Harkat-ul-Ansar*.

Having arrived in New Delhi on January 29, 1994, on a fake Portuguese passport, he traveled on to the Kashmir Valley, from where he was arrested on February 16. Several attempts were made to secure Azhar's release by means of kidnappings, notably one by Syed Omar Sheikh, released along with him in the IC-814 deal. Sheikh, a British national and London School of Economics

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graduate, remains Azhar's closest aide. Azhar, however, was not charged for his role in these attempts. Both the *Jaish* leaders have close links with the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. Taliban supremo Mullah Mohammad Omar and Azhar were taught at the Binori seminary by Mullah Nazimuddin Shamzai, the religious leader who acts as the patron of the *Jaish*. Sheikh is believed to have remitted $100,000 to the World Trade Centre suicide bomber Mohammad Atta.

Major cases:
FIR No. 1 of 1993, filed by Counter-Intelligence Jammu & Kashmir Police under Section 3&4 of Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. No FIRs, however, have been registered for subsequent JeM attacks.

Mohammad Ibrahim Athar Alvi, Zahoor Ibrahim Mistri, Shahid Akhtar Sayed, Shakir Mohammad and Azhar Yusuf: There is little available background material on the five hijackers of flight IC-814 sought by India. All are believed to be members of the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, and now the JeM. Ibrahim Athar Alvi is Masood Azhar's brother. The JeM chief's interrogation report records his being 28 years of age in 1994. Azhar told his interrogators that his younger brother spent most of his time working at the family-run poultry farm. Alvi, along with Azhar and three other brothers have been arrested on sedition charges in Pakistan on December 31, 2001. There has since been no independent confirmation of their whereabouts.

Major cases:
Kidnapping and the subsequent murder of India's IC-814 passenger Rupin Katyal.

III. The Mumbai serial bombings

Dawood Ibrahim, Chhota Shakeel Ahmad Babu, Sagir Sabir Ali Sheikh, Abdul Razzaq and Ishaq Atta Hussain: Incensed by Hindu fundamentalist attacks on Muslims during the Shiv Sena-led Mumbai pogrom of 1992-1993, Dawood Ibrahim allowed his apparatus to be used for India's worst terrorist outrage so far - the Mumbai serial bombings of 1993. If Dawood's central role in the Mumbai bombings is well documented - and his subordinates used their contacts to ship in explosives and then set them off at key installations through the city - most people are still unfamiliar with the mass of evidence that the CBI has collected of Pakistan's direct complicity in the operation. Twenty-seven cartons of explosives recovered from Dawood in March 1992 bore the markings of Packsile Packages in Lahore. The markings were traced to the Wah Nobel Factory at Wah, which manufactures explosives.

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Since governments concerned monitor sales of large consignments of explosives, it took little to see what had gone on. The Austrian Federal Ministry for the Interior confirmed in an April 1993 letter that the HG-72 grenades used by the bombers were made on equipment sold by Ulbrichts between 1969 and 1971 to the Pakistan military supply firm of Akhtar and Hofmann. No wonder Pakistan repeatedly denied Indian assertions that Dawood was living in Karachi.

Major cases:
Dawood Ibrahim and his associates are faced with a welter of Mumbai serial blasts cases. Many of them also face additional charges. Saghir Sheikh and Ishaq Atta Hussain, for example, are charged with a September 2001 attempt to assassinate Union Home Minister L.K. Advani. He also faces charges of jumping bail and an Arms Act case from 1997. Ibrahim's top associate, Shakeel, is also wanted for crimes including the murder and attempted murder of Shiv Sena politicians and for weapons running.

Tiger Ibrahim Abdul Razzaq Memon and Ayub Memon: The guests at the wedding of the oldest Memon brother at the Islam Gymkhana in south Mumbai must have thought the family had everything going for it. The wedding had a full cast of film stars, including Jackie Shroff and cricket heroes like Mohammad Azharuddin. Reports of the event filled the glamour columns of the Mumbai afternoon papers for weeks. Not long after, things went awfully wrong. Most people reckon that the Memon family's problem was its thuggish son 'Tiger', and his younger brother Ayub. Tiger, the CBI believes, was the moving force behind the Mumbai serial bombings. The explosives recoveries, which proved crucial to cracking the case, were made from his home. More damning evidence came from Yaqub Memon, who along with his family chose to return to India after spending three months in Pakistan. Tiger, however, remains firmly committed to his cause. In 1995, he is known to have met Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front leader Hilal Baig to discuss collaboration in terrorist operations in India. The JKIF subsequently carried out a series of explosions in New Delhi, although it is unclear if Tiger Memon had anything to do with these.

Major cases: All related to the Mumbai serial bombings.

IV. The Khalistan terrorists

Wadhawa Singh Babbar (*Babbar Khalsa International*): A resident of Sadhu Chattha village near Kapurthala, Wadhawa Singh Babbar started his political life as a member of Punjab's naxalite movement. Like some members of the ultra-left movement, its defeat led him to lurch to the far right. By 1978, motivated by top Khalistan movement figure Tarsem Singh Kalasanghian, Wadhawa Singh joined the Akhand Kirtani Jatha and went on to become one of the founders of the

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Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), operating its network from Pakistan along with his brother Mahal Singh. The BKI has shown greater resilience than other terrorist groups in Punjab, owing both to its support among non-resident Indians and its contact with the Pakistan intelligence. He is believed to be hiding somewhere in Lahore.

Major cases: The most important charge against Wadhawa Singh is that he ordered the assassination of Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh. The prosecution of other conspirators in that case is proceeding, but the Indian law does not provide for trials of suspects without their presence. Four other cases were registered against Wadhawa Singh in 1981 on charges of murder.

Paramjit Singh Panjwar (*Khalistan Commando Force*): Panjwar is believed to be about 41 years old and belongs to the village of Panjwar, near Tarn Taran. Until 1986, when he joined the Khalistan Commando Force, he worked at the Central Cooperative Bank in Sohal. Shortly after taking charge of the KCF in the 1990s, after the elimination of its commander, one-time police constable 'General' Labh Singh, Panjwar left for Pakistan. His wife and children relocated themselves in Germany. With his close links to top Punjab smugglers like Bhola Thanthian and Pargat Singh Narli, Panjwar has worked to keep the KCF alive using revenues raised from cross-border heroin traffic.

Major cases: Ten FIRs registered from 1989 to 1990, including seven counts of murder and two under TADA.

Lakhbir Singh Rode: Rode's Punjab Police dossier describes him as a "hardcore terrorist". While his name did inspire fear in Punjab once upon a time, it was more the consequence of his political influence and kinship rather than direct armed action. Now aged about 50, Rode is a nephew of the feared revanchist preacher Sannat Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who plunged Punjab into the Khalistan movement and subsequently in 1984 during Operation Golden Temple in Amritsar. He joined the Khalistan movement in 1982, having returned to the State after spending five years in Dubai. He fled India to Dubai in 1986, and after arranging to send his family to Canada, went on to Pakistan. Rode continues to be something of a cult figure - and successful fund-raiser - among Khalistan supporters in the US, the United Kingdom and Canada.

Major cases: None. The sole FIR lodged against Rode is of April 19, 1984, at the Moga police station. This accuses Rode of several minor crimes, including trespass and causing damage in excess of Rs.50 to property.

Gajinder Singh (*Dal Khalsa International*): Gajinder Singh came into public notice after he hijacked an Indian Airlines flight to Lahore in 1981. The hijacking

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was carried out to protest against the arrest of Sannat Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale earlier that year for his alleged role in the assassination of *Hind Samachar* Editor Lala Jagat Narain. The hijacker was given a life sentence but served only a few years in jail before being granted asylum in Pakistan. Meanwhile, in India, Gajinder Singh's organisation, the Dal Khalsa, was banned in 1982, but was allowed to restart overground activity a decade later. On August 11, 2001, Gajinder Singh was elected chief of the organisation, although he remains in Pakistan.

Major cases: Continues to be wanted for the 1981 hijacking.

Ranjit Singh Neeta (*Khalistan Zindabad Force*): A resident of Ward 2 in Jammu city's Sumbal Camp area, Neeta is the only Khalistan terrorist to be still active among the five whom India has demanded from Pakistan. He started his career as a small-time criminal, and developed contacts with smugglers in the R.S. Pora and Samba areas. Neeta's Khalistan Zindabad Force has close links with the Pakistani intelligence and is committed to joint action with the Kashmiri groups in Jammu, notably the Hizbul Mujahideen. Despite heavy losses - Neeta's second in command, Amritpal Singh Romi, was killed in an encounter in 2000 - the Khalistan Zindabad Force remains active.

Major cases: Neeta's name figures in over half a dozen FIRs filed after bomb blasts in trains and buses running between Jammu and Pathankot between 1988 and 1999. The Kathua police filed the last case in October 2001, for the assassination of Deputy Superintendent of Police Devinder Sharma.

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Chapter 14

Sectarian monster haunts Pakistan

Celebrating liberal democracy during his speech to the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, Pakistan's founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah famously declared, "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed... that has nothing to do with the business of the state. You are free, free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this state of Pakistan." However, fifty-seven years later, one wonders what is happening in Jinnah's Pakistan where the sectarian violence has taken the shape of an unpredictable menace: for weeks, even months at a time, nothing happens. Then all of a sudden there is a sectarian massacre. Resultantly, over 1800 people have been killed and around 4,000 injured in more than 2200 sectarian incidents all over Pakistan during June 1988 to June 2004.

As things appear, the genie of sectarian violence in Pakistan refuses to be bottled and threatens the very fabric of the society. Even as General Pervez Musharraf exhorts the people of Pakistan to adapt enlightened moderation, Pakistan's tentative quest for a non-discriminatory liberal democracy continues to unravel. Indeed, the ideology of fundamentalist Islam appears to remain at the heart of the Musharraf establishment's strategy of national political mobilisation and consolidation, despite talk of enlightened moderation. Pakistan continues to be caught in the trap of extremist Islamist militancy and terror that its military establishment constructed as part of its Afghan and Kashmir policies. Official support – both explicit and implicit – to Islamic terrorist groups continues, even while the state struggles to cope with the internal fall-out of the burgeoning terrorist community.

Since the overall direction of Pakistan's military establishment is towards an Islamic ideological state, some of the militant groups whom the regime used to support are often found involved in bloody acts of sectarian violence. The result is that the Musharraf administration's support for the jehadis fighting in Jammu & Kashmir has indirectly promoted sectarian violence in Pakistan. The growing nexus between the Pakistan-based sectarian outfits and the jehadi groups active in Jammu & Kashmir and Afghanistan has lately caused an increased sectarian violence in the country. Originally a product of Pakistan's military establishment to beef up its security vis-à-vis India, these militant organisations now visibly threaten the country's internal security.

While Pakistani military establishment's support for these outfits has kept the Indian army tied down in Jammu & Kashmir, it has created a serious principal-agent problem for Pakistan on the domestic front. The linkages between militants

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active in Jammu & Kashmir or Afghanistan and those within Pakistan are not surprising since these jehadis share the same madrassas, training camps and operatives. By facilitating the actions of irregulars in the Kashmir valley, Pakistan actually promotes sectarian jehad and terrorism back home. Facing international criticism over its status as a host to numerous Islamic extremist elements, the Musharraf administration has, from time to time, sought to take steps to deflect growing internal and international criticism of the activities of fundamentalist elements within Pakistan. However, some inner contradictions within the ruling establishment are bound to hamper these efforts.

While seeking an explanation for Pakistan's sectarian menace, one is constrained to notice, that for decades, the country's Shia and Sunni sects lived side by side without developing any major problems. The roots of sectarian killings lie not in religious differences, but in political and social developments within Pakistan and the region. They are intimately tied up with the country's wider problem of militant extremist Islam. The origins of sectarian violence in Pakistan can be traced back to the days of Afghan jehad against the Soviet occupation troops. With dollars coming from the American Central Intelligence Agency, Islamabad's assistance promoted the proliferation of a huge number of militant groups and religious seminaries inside Pakistan. At that time, Washington needed Islamists to wage jehad against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, while Islamabad needed them to bring in billions of American dollars. Hence, both turned a blind eye to their radical ideology and methods.

The shortsightedness of the American administration became apparent soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. While radical Islamists in Afghanistan formed the Taliban, their brethren in Pakistan turned their attention towards Jammu & Kashmir or to sectarian opponents inside Pakistan. Each act of sectarian killing started provoking a cycle of revenge killings, with the civilian governments failing to curb the menace, either because they wanted the militants to fight Pakistan's corner in Jammu and Kashmir or because they lacked the will and the strength to do so. That failure in turn allowed the religious militants to flourish and grow in strength. However, external factors other than Kashmir also promoted sectarianism. For a period, Shia and Sunni sectarian groups were sponsored by Iran and Saudi Arabia respectively.

The end-result of all this was, when Musharraf seized power in October 1999, he faced a formidable foe: well-armed, well-trained and well-financed Islamist-sectarian organisations, with a huge resource pool of recruits in the country's thousands of religious madrassas. And dealing with such a foe was never going to be easy for an un-elected leader. But his task was made somewhat easier by the 9/11 terror attacks and the worldwide backlash against extremist Islam that it unleashed. Islamabad's decision to cut support for the Kashmiri militants also

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boosted its drive against sectarianism. Before that, many sectarian groups had emerged and were being tolerated because of their links with groups fighting in Jammu and Kashmir.

Once Islamabad decided to put the Kashmir issue on the back burner for the sake of better ties with New Delhi, it no longer had to put up with the jehadi groups operating in J&K. The first clear sign of a shift in Pakistan government's attitudes came in a televised speech by Musharraf to the nation on January 12, 2002. While announcing a massive campaign to eradicate the sectarian menace, the General banned three sectarian groups, *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP), *Tehreek-e-Jafria Pakistan* (TJP) and the *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat Mohammadi* (TNSM) and put the *Sunni Tehrik* on notice. Six months later [on August 14, 2002], he banned two more sectarian outfits – *Sipah-e-Mohammad Pakistan* (SMP) and *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ), declaring them terrorist outfits.

The Sunni-Shia conflict, in fact, is centuries old but its more modern and virulent manifestation in Pakistan can be traced to Imam Khomeini's successful Iranian revolution and the setting up of a Shia state. In response, extremist Sunni groups began to espouse the cause of transforming Pakistan into a Sunni state where Shias were to be made a non-Muslim minority. A profile of the sectarian problem in Pakistan would suggest several significant trends. In the past ten years, the struggle, which essentially began between the Shia and Sunni groups due to General Ziaul Haq's Islamisation drive, has transformed from the theological to a political battle.

The military regime of General Zia fostered the growth of sectarianism in a number of ways. It created among the Shia community a perception that his government was moving rapidly towards the establishment of a Sunni *Hannafi* state in which the Islamisation of laws was seen to reflect the Islam of the dominant community. The 1980 '*gherao*' (siege) of the government Secretariat in Islamabad by tens of thousands of Shias protesting against the *Zakat* and *Ushr* ordinance was a clear indication of their apprehensions about Zia's Islamisation project. The selective backing of the Afghan mujahideen groups resisting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan again corresponded to a sectarian pattern of preferences that reinforced perceptions on both sides of the divide.

Under Zia, with the promulgation of the *Zakat* and Usher Ordinance of 1979, the religious establishment was considerably strengthened. On joining *Zakat* committees, *maulvis* became responsible for distributing money to the poor. In rural areas, *maulvis* became *Usher* collectors and this changed their status considerably as it put them in touch with the district administration and local government. The government's decision to provide *Zakat* funds to madrassas resulted in their mushroom growth. The induction of their graduates into

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government service created the prospect for upward social mobility rendering them a more attractive proposition.

By the end of the Zia rule, the consequences of his policies were fairly obvious. Over the last decade there has been a major escalation in sectarian tension, the number of sectarian killings and armed sectarian groups. Among those that have gained particular prominence are the *Sipah-e-Mohammad Pakistan* (SMP), which is an off-shoot of *Tehrik-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafaria* (TNFJ), the main politico-religious Shia party in Pakistan, later renamed *Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan* (TFP) and the other being *Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba*, later renamed *Sipah-e-Sahaba-Pakistan* (SSP), an off-shoot of the *Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI), a leading politico-religious Sunni *Deobandi* party. A further offshoot of the SSP, considered to be the most violent sectarian outfit, is the even more militant *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*.

The present state of organised sectarian conflict can be traced to the murder of TNFJ leader Arif Hussaini in 1988. Others date it to 1987, when *Ahl-e-Hadith* leaders, Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer and Maulana Habib ur Rehman Yazdani were killed, along with six others, at a meeting near the *Minar-e-Pakistan*. Prior to this, there were serious anti-Shia riots in Lahore in 1986. In any case, the spiral of violence registered a sharp rise in February 1990 with the murder of Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, founder of the SSP. This was followed by violent clashes resulting in dozens of casualties and burning down of numerous houses and shops in Jhang.

The pattern and scale of violence indicates some key features. The contending groups are well organised and well armed. Their ability to maintain their effectiveness and to elude the law enforcement agencies also has to do with an extensive support network that includes madrassas, political parties, bases across the border, and financial support from foreign countries if not foreign governments. It is generally believed that something of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is going on in Pakistan, with different groups in Afghanistan weighing in as well.

In the process, the state authority stands eroded by the sectarian groups in one way or the other. The hate literature and cassettes from the two sides -- easily available across the country -- clearly violate the law of the land but seldom invite sanction. Offences such as murder and destruction of property do get a state response but it lacks the will to take the difficult steps necessary to deal with the phenomenon. A narrow law and order approach, with a police force unequipped to deal with highly motivated, well trained and well organised militants, has obviously not had much of an impact, particularly when the latter have state-of-the-art weapons.

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The increasing militarisation and brutalisation of the conflict shows that there are virtually no sanctuaries left -- neither home, nor mosque or the hospital. Not even the jail. And being innocent is not the issue. Just 'being' is enough -- being Shia or Sunni, *Barelvi* or *Deobandi*. One explanation for this is that in a situation where different sectarian groups are vying to prove themselves the standard bearers of Islam, one option is to stand out as being closer to 'true Islam' by displaying extreme hostility and intolerance to those designated as being un-Islamic by virtue of belonging to religious minorities and minority sects.

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Chapter 15

Sipah-e-Sahaba – The sectarian soldiers

Earlier termed *Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahaba*, the *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP - soldiers of the Prophet's companions), is a Sunni sectarian outfit, alleged to be involved in terrorist violence across Pakistan, primarily targeting the country's minority Shia community.

The SSP was one of the five militant and sectarian outfits that were banned by General Musharraf on January 12, 2002 for their alleged involvement in terrorist activities. After being banned, the party chief, Maulana Azam Tariq, renamed it *Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan*. He was shot dead in Islamabad on October 6, 2003 while going to the Parliament to attend the National Assembly session. Maulana Azam Tariq had won the October 2002 general elections from Jhang as an independent candidate. Educated in the religious seminary of Faisalabad and Karachi, he was a frequent visitor of Afghanistan during the Taliban rule.

Due to its ideological leanings, SSP was an offshoot of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI), a *Deobandi* party, which had played an active role in the electoral and agitational politics of Pakistan since its inception. Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi, Maulana Eesar-ul-Haq Qasmi and Maulana Azam Tariq established the SSP, initially known as the *Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba* in September 1985 in an environment of increasing sectarian hostility in Pakistani Punjab. The SSP founder Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who was a prayer leader in a mosque in Jhang, was a product of the madrassa education and was known for his anti-Shia oratory. He was groomed during the 1974 anti-Ahmedi agitation like many other leaders of the group and later rose to become the vice chairman of Punjab JUI.

The origin of the SSP lies in the feudal set-up of Punjab province and politico-religious developments in the 1970s and 1980s. The political and economic power in Punjab was a privilege of large landowners, mostly Shias, a minority as compared to the Sunni sect. The urban Punjab in contrast, was a non-feudalised middle-class society and largely from the Sunni sect. The SSP is also alleged to have been set up at the behest of the then Ziaul Haq regime as part of the efforts to build an Islamist counter to pro-democracy forces ranged against the military regime of the Eighties.

The socio-economic rationale for the SSP's origin is explained largely from the economic profile of Jhang, the home base of SSP. Located in a region that divides Central from Southern Punjab province of Pakistan, Jhang still has a significantly high proportion of large land holdings, leaving feudalism relatively undisturbed.

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Most large landlords, who are Shias, dominate both society and politics in the region. But, over the years, the area has developed as an important *mandi* (market town) gradually increasing the power of traders, shopkeepers and transport operators in the region. Seeking a political voice and role, this class, largely from the Sunni community, has been challenging the traditional feudal hold.

The most serious political challenge to the control of feudal interests has been articulated in the form of violent sectarianism, with the formation of the SSP. This has meant, however, that the contest for access to resources and status and the competition for domination over the state apparatus are not framed in terms of class divisions, or modernisation imperatives, but confrontationist sectarian identities. As in most areas affected by violence, a major contradiction has risen. While a sizeable proportion of traders and shopkeepers continue to fund the SSP in Jhang, most do not believe in the violence associated with the party, rather it is now a matter of buying security. Nevertheless, there is a decline in their support for the SSP over recent years as a result of the economic consequences of sectarian strife.

However, writer Hassan Abbas maintains in his book titled *"Pakistan's drift into extremism, Allah, the Army and America's war on terror"*, (published in the United States in 2004) that extremist among Sunnis, especially belonging to the *Deobandi* and *Ahle Hadith* group, had all along been uncomfortable with the Shias for theological differences, but sectarian violence until then was rare. "However, the 1979 Iranian revolution changed the character and magnitude of sectarian politics in Pakistan. It emboldened Pakistani Shias who in turn became politicised and started asserting for their rights. The zealous emissaries of the Iranian revolutionary regime started financing their outfit *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafaria* (TNFJ - Movement for the implementation of *jafaria* religious law) and providing scholarships for Pakistani students to study in Iranian religious seminaries".

Hassan Abbas further writes: "For Zia regime though, the problematic issue was the Shia activism leading to a strong reaction to his attempts to impose *Hanafi* Islam (a branch of the Sunni sect). For this he winked to the hardliners among the Sunni religious groups to establish a front to squeeze the Shias. It was in this context that Maulana Jhangvi was selected by the intelligence community to do the needful. The adherents of *Deobandi* school of thought were worried by the Shia activism for religious reasons anyhow. The state patronage came as an additional incentive. Consequently, in a well-designed effort, Shia assertiveness was projected as their disloyalty to Pakistan and its Islamic ideology. It was only a matter of few months that Saudi funds started pouring in making the project feasible. For Saudi Arabia, Iranian revolution was quite scary for its ideals were

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conflicting with that of a *Wahhabi* monarchy. More so, with an approximately 10 percent Shia population, Saudi Arabia was concerned about the expansion of Shia activism in any Muslim country. Hence, it was more than willing to curb such trends in Pakistan by making financial investment to bolster its *Wahhabi* agenda".

As soon as the SSP was launched from Jhang -- the hometown of Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, it made public its intentions to declare Pakistan a Sunni state. While fervently believing in hostility towards the Shias, the SSP declared that the Shias were non-Muslims. While the Shia activists were following the developing trend closely and were making themselves ready to counter the SSP propaganda effectively, the TNFJ chief, Allama Arif Hussain Al Hussaini was assassinated in August 1988 serving a severe blow to Shias. Hussaini had lived in Iran for a while and had a close working relationship with the Iranian regime.

According to Hassan Abbas, the Inter Services Intelligence's involvement was suspected in the murder, as a serving army officer Majid Raza Gillani had taken part in this operation. Soon it was Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's turn, who was assassinated on February 23, 1990, within a year of Arif Hussaini's elimination though SSP suspected a Jhang-based Sunni political leader Shaikh Iqbal. However, Kaka Balli, kin of a former member of the National Assembly from Jhang, Amanullah Khan Sial, was convicted to lifetime imprisonment for Jhangvi's assassination. Later, Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi took over the leadership of the outfit. But he too was killed in a bomb explosion in the Lahore Sessions Court on January 19, 1997. Maulana Azam Tariq succeeded Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi.

The SSP is reported to have approximately 3,000 - 6,000 trained activists who indulge in various kinds of violent sectarian activities, which are primarily directed against the Shias. The SSP extremists have so far operated in two ways: The first involves targeted killings of prominent opponent group activists. In the second, terrorists fire on worshippers in mosques operated by opposing sects. By 1992, the SSP was reported to have gained access to sophisticated arms as well as the ability to use these weapons even against law enforcement agencies. In June 1992, its activists used a rocket launcher in an attack, which killed five police personnel. In Punjab, 1994 was one of the worst years in terms of sectarian violence when such incidents claimed 73 lives and more than 300 people were injured. Many of these killings were the result of indiscriminate firing on people saying their prayers.

The SSP joined peace efforts in 1996 which were actually initiated by the *Milli Yakjeheti Council*, though violence continued unabated. The second half of 1996 was notable for the fact that while the number of incidents decreased, average

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casualties in these incidents increased. News reports have indicated that the SSP and other Sunni outfits hold Iran as the sponsor of Shia extremist outfits in Pakistan. Therefore, when any major Sunni leader is assassinated, Iranians in Pakistan are targeted for retribution. For instance, the Iranian Counsel General in Lahore, Sadeq Ganji, was killed in December 1990 in what was reported to be a retribution for the February 1990 killing of the SSP founder Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi.

Similarly, in January 1997, the Iranian Cultural Centre in Lahore was attacked and set on fire, while in Multan seven people were killed including the Iranian diplomat Muhammad Ali Rahimi. Earlier, in January 1997, a bomb blast at the Sessions Court in Lahore left 30 persons dead, including the then SSP chief Ziaur Rehman Farooqi along with 22 policemen and a journalist. According to newspaper files, the retribution continued even in September 1997 when five personnel of the Iranian armed forces who were in Pakistan for training were killed by suspected Sunni terrorists.

As with other sectarian outfits, the SSP chose to lie low after the military coup of November 1999, lending credence to the hypothesis that the SSP, like other sectarian and ethnic groups, indulge in violence only when a passive state guarantees an environment of neutrality and even tacit support to this violence. With a hard-line stance being taken by the military regime against internal violence within Pakistan, these outfits decided to keep a low profile for the time being. In October 2001, however, a month after the 9/11 terror-attacks in the US, the SSP joined the hardliner Council for Defence of Afghanistan to condemn the allied forces' bombing of the neighbouring Muslim State.

While condemning the Pakistan government's decision of extending support to the US-led air attacks, the SSP leader even warned to fight alongside the Taliban militia. In an interview with the BBC, Tariq openly praised the Taliban and endorsed attacks on Shias in Pakistan. He was locked up in October 2001 as US-led forces rained bombs on the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Pakistani authorities feared he would lead violent rallies against the attacks on the Taliban who also happen to be Sunnis. When General Musharraf held a national election 12 months later, Azam Tariq campaigned from behind the bars.

As things stand, the anti-Shia movement in Pakistan has two faces. One is the *Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan*, earlier called *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan*, which believes in political struggle through parliament with the ultimate aim of constitutionally turning Pakistan into a Sunni state, just as Iran is constitutionally a Shia state. The other face of the anti-Shia movement is the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ), which subscribes to the policy of eradication of Shias. It also grew out of the SSP, formed after the killing of the SSP's founder, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi and another

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chief, Maulana Farooqi. To date, all of the SSP's chiefs have died in targeted killings. Although the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* is a dissident group of the defunct SSP, many of its key members remained in contact with Maulana Azam Tariq, as he was the only political leader whose opinions they respected.

Conversely, Azam Tariq lent the LeJ a sympathetic ear. Revered by legions of Sunni Muslim followers, Azam Tariq had almost as many enemies. He led a violent militant group blamed for a spate of killings of minority Shiite Muslims and was himself charged with 103 cases of ordering the murders of rival Shiites. But he was never convicted. Killed on October 6, 2003, along with four bodyguards in a drive-by shooting at a toll plaza near Golra Sharif, Maulana Azam Tariq was the son of Haji Fateh Muhammad. Born in March 1962 at Chak No111/7R, Chichawatni, he obtained a Masters degree in Arabic and also majored in Islamiat from *Jamia Islamia*, a Karachi seminary.

After completing his studies, he stayed on to teach at his alma mater. During that period he came under the influence of Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the firebrand, rabidly anti-Shiite cleric from Jhang, a south-central town of Punjab, who had become known for his overtly sectarian sermons. In 1987, Azam Tariq formally joined the Karachi wing of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's *Sipah-e-Sahaba*. He immediately shone with his organisational skills and was instrumental in streamlining the sectarian group's offices in Karachi. In the process, he caught Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's attention and the latter invited him to Jhang to run *Jamia Muhammadia*, the SSP seminary set up earlier by Jhangvi.

Azam Tariq's next move up the ladder was when he got elected as SSP's deputy patron-in-chief. He reached the top position in the group in 1997, getting elected as SSP president after Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi was killed in a bomb explosion in Lahore. Azam Tariq, who was with Farooqi at the time of the blast, despite sustaining severe injuries, survived. At least 13 policemen and a press photographer were also killed in the carnage - one of the worst explosions in Lahore's history. Earlier, the founder of the SSP, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, and his successor Maulana Eesar-ul-Haq Qasmi also died violent deaths. Tariq's own assassination again confirms the violent streak in the group he headed.

Maulana Azam Tariq was elected to parliament four times from the SSP stronghold in Jhang. He won the national assembly constituency in 1990, 1993 and in October 2002 while in 1997, he opted to contest the Punjab assembly and again won the SSP seat. The 1990 election was a particularly big success when Tariq defeated the government-backed candidate Sheikh Yousuf by a big margin. In the last election, he was elected and contested the election from jail. The government, which earlier allowed him to contest the elections from jail, had recently filed a petition in the Lahore High Court challenging the Pakistan

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Election Commission's decision to allow Tariq to contest despite the cases against him.

Even before he became the SSP chief, Azam Tariq wielded considerable influence as an MNA. Seeking a greater political role for his party, he declared that law and order were a priority for the SSP. His party succeeded in getting two members inducted in the Punjab cabinet of chief minister Sardar Arif Nakai in 1995. However, Tariq's accession to the party's top office came in the year the militant *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, an SSP splinter group, was at its most active in Pakistan.

Although Azam Tariq publicly dissociated himself from LeJ, law enforcement agencies knew the SSP and the LeJ were two faces of the same organisation. Indeed, close observers say, creating the LeJ was a smart move since it allowed the SSP to put a political mask on its sectarian agenda. This fact was proved when Azam Tariq campaigned to save the life of LeJ activist Haq Nawaz, sentenced to the gallows for killing the Iranian consul general in Lahore. Tariq even offered to pay blood money to Iran. In May 2002, after the LeJ chief Riaz Basra was killed in a police encounter, his body was laid to rest wrapped in the SSP flag and the SSP cadres largely attended his funeral.

The SSP also had close links with Maulana Masood Masood Azhar's Jaish-e Mohammad. Masood Azhar, who was sprung from an Indian jail after the 2001 hijacking of an Indian airliner, was also a close associate of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi. In fact, one of the reasons he broke away from *Harkatul Mujahideen* was because *Harkat* was trying to clean up its act and was moving away from the SSP-LeJ sectarian terrorists. By creating *Jaish*, Azhar kept the links with his sectarian buddies. Because of his close connections with *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, Maulana Azam Tariq also supported the Kashmir jehad. When Masood Azhar formed the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* to fight in Kashmir, the SSP leader pledged to send 500,000 jehadis to the disputed Valley to fight Indian soldiers.

The gruesome murder of Maulana Azam Tariq, who was shot dead in Islamabad on October 6, 2003, remains a mystery despite the fact that he and his outfit had a cosy working relationship with the country's powerful intelligence and security agencies for more than a decade.

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Chapter 16

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi: The group of choice for hard-core militants

Most of the major terrorist operations carried out in Pakistan since the September 11 episode appear to have a common grandmother – the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ) -- the group of choice today for hard-core militants who are adamant to pursue their jehadi agenda in Pakistan.

Launched in 1996 as a militant sectarian Sunni group, the *Lashkar* today is the most violent terrorist group operating within Pakistan with the help of a suicide-attack squad. As with most of the militant groups, almost the entire LeJ leadership is made up of people who have fought in Afghanistan and most of its cadre strength has been drawn from the numerous Sunni madrassas in Pakistan. The *Lashkar* was formed by a break away faction of the Sunni extremists of the *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP), which walked out of the outfit, accusing its parent organisation of deviating from the ideals of its co-founder, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, allegedly assassinated by his Shia rivals.

After Jhangvi's murder in February 1990, those who wanted to complete his mission started leaving the *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, forming their own groups under different names. In the process, at least six splinter groups came into being including *Jhangvi Tigers*, *Al Haq Tigers*, *Tanzeemul Haq*, *Al-Farooq*, *Al-Badr Foundation* and *Allah Akbar*. While *Al-Badr Federation* was created in Karachi, the other five groups were established in Jhang, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Sumandari and Chiniot.

As the central secretary broadcast and publication of the SSP, Riaz Basra, finally decided to launch *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* in 1996, the *Jhangvi Tigers*, *Al-Haq Tigers* and Allah Akbar, decided to merge into his group. Basra, who believed in the use of force to further Jhangvi's mission, parted ways with the SSP leadership after accusing it of abandoning the path of Jhangvi. However, there are those who insist that the LeJ was launched with the consent of the SSP leadership, giving it the militant role. Riaz Basra was appointed the *'Salar-e-Aala'* (Chief Commander) of the LeJ, with 12 *salars* in his command. A network was established for an uninterrupted supply of the arms and ammunition from Afghanistan to Punjab and from there to Karachi. Although the trained LeJ operatives never crossed the figure of 500, yet they proved themselves to be the deadliest of all.

In January 1997, a bomb blast at the Sessions Court in Lahore left 30 people dead, including the then SSP chief Ziaur Rehman Farooqi along with 22 policemen and a journalist. As a swift reply, the Iranian Cultural Centre in Lahore was attacked and set on fire, while in Multan seven people were shot dead including the

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Iranian diplomat Muhammad Ali Rahimi in the same month. In September of the same year, five personnel of the Iranian armed forces who were in Pakistan for training purpose were killed. Subsequent intelligence reports revealed that both the SSP and the LeJ enjoy an easy access to sophisticated arms and their henchmen have the ability to use them even against law enforcement agencies. It was during the second tenure of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif's provincial government in Punjab moved against the SSP and the LeJ and killed 36 of its leading militants in fake encounters, and that too within a short span of one year.

During his last days as Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, whose own life was under threat from the SSP and the LeJ terrorists and had already survived an assassination attempt from the very elements, went public in naming Afghanistan as the country providing shelter and training to the SSP and LeJ hit men. Before that, on January 3, 1999, Riaz Basra-led LeJ had attempted to blow up a bridge on the Lahore-Raiwind road, close to Nawaz Sharif's house, shortly before he was due to pass by. A few minutes before the Prime Minister's convoy was to pass, two policemen on a routine patrol stopped their van under the bridge. The policemen got out to pee. Their driver pressed the button to talk on his radio. Because the van was parked only a few yards from the bridge, the rudimentary device switched on prematurely and detonated the explosives. The blast was so powerful that the two-span bridge went awry. Before this incident, the LeJ in a press release had offered a reward of Rs.135 million for anyone who would undertake the killing of Nawaz Sharif and his younger brother who was the then Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif.

The *Lashkar* uses terror tactics as a part of its grand strategy to force the state into accepting its narrow interpretations of Sunni sectarian doctrines as official doctrines. Besides targeting the American interests in Pakistan, the victims of its terror tactics have been leaders and workers of rival Shia outfits, bureaucrats, policemen and worshippers. As the *Lashkar* first indulged in acts of terrorism, its hit men used to fire from moving motorbikes. Later they began to use timed devices and graduated to throwing hand grenades and mowing down targets with machine guns. However, its latest innovation is a combination of hand grenades to kill and create panic, automatic fire to strike those stampeding to safety and suicide detonations to finish off themselves and the rest.

According to law enforcement officials, a *Lashkar* cell is made up of two or three young men—and up to seven in exceptional cases. The cell disbands after an operation and regroups at another location. The cells are drawn from a pool of young men trained in Afghanistan who are scattered all over Pakistan. The Inter Services Intelligence, with long-standing and murky links to jehadi groups, planted informers in the camps who reported back on consignments dispatched

from Afghanistan. But fresh boys without criminal records were difficult to trace once they crossed back into Pakistan. Hits made by fresh batches left the police helpless to investigate or prevent further attacks.

After the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the LeJ militants preferred to take their chances with the Pakistani authorities—even risk liquidation—rather than fall into the hands of Northern Alliance commanders. And the ISI lost what little control it had over the LeJ when new internationalist militants took over. The *Lashkar* leadership recruits hit men and operatives with care, looking for strong religious conviction and steady nerves. The trained martyrs, called the armoured corps of jehad, return to their homes and jobs to live normally until summoned. While they wait, they are under strict orders to shun beards and traditional clothes to maintain a neat, inconspicuous appearance to have their documents (real ones issued under fake names) in order and to carry them at all times and to do nothing illegal or out of the ordinary.

Terrorism experts say the *Lashkar* has become media-savvy by timing daylight attacks to catch the evening news. They believe the planners of the terror attacks watch Hollywood films for ideas. And that is how they thought of disguising the late LeJ chief, Riaz Basra, putting his leg in a cast and wheeling him into former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Lahore residence in 1998 [while he was ruling the roost] as part of a scheme to show that they could infiltrate anywhere. Another idea came from a local movie: the LeJ organised a fake wedding procession in Multan in 1997, with a bridegroom on a white horse accompanied by musicians, singers and dancers. A cameraman recorded the event. As the noisy procession passed the heavily guarded Iranian Cultural Center, hit men climbed over the back wall and shot dead the center's Shia Iranian director and six others. Fireworks set off by the wedding guests camouflaged the gunfire.

In October 2000, the LeJ split into two factions with one faction headed by Riaz Basra and the other by the chief of the outfit's *Majlis-i-Shoora* (Supreme Council), Qari Abdul Hai alias Qari Asadullah alias Talha. Qari Hai was Basra's lieutenant and ran the latter's training camp in Sarobi, Afghanistan, until the two fell out and formed their own respective factions. While the majority of Hai's supporters are Karachi-based, Basra's cadres have their roots in the Punjab. The issue leading to the split was reported to be serious difference between the two over resumption of the ethnic strife, which had receded into a relative lull after General Musharraf's October 1999 military coup. While Basra was reported to be in favour of resuming attacks against Shia targets, Hai opposed the plan terming it suicidal for the organisation, maintaining that with a military regime in power, any armed activity would invite stern action against the *Lashkar*.

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On August 14, 2001, General Pervez Musharraf, in the face of growing public criticism of his failure to control anti-Shia violence, announced the banning of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*. Five months later, on January 15, 2002, the General banned the *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP). Soon afterwards, the government claimed to round up a large number of the two sectarian outfits. However, despite being outlawed, both the groups continue to carry out terrorist activities across Pakistan. Since 2002, *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* has provided services for large-scale suicide attacks. A suicide operation in March 2002 in a church in Islamabad killed five Christians, as proxy targets for Westerners although among them were two American nationals.

In May 2002, eleven Frenchmen, who were mistaken for Americans, were blown up in Karachi and on June 14, 2002, twelve Pakistanis were killed in a suicide attack on US diplomats. At least five of the 10 terrorists identified belonged to the LeJ cadres. It was also the first occasion that police identified LeJ as being involved in all the three incidents. One of the photographed men, Asif Ramzi, was already wanted in the Daniel Pearl murder case and also for sectarian killings, with a three million rupees-reward offered for his capture. According to investigators, the al-Qaeda network worked in close coordination with the LeJ cadres to plan both the car bomb attacks in Karachi.

On January 30, 2003, the US State Department added the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* to its List of Foreign Terrorist Organisations and to those outfits covered under an Executive Order. Making the announcement on Collin Powell's behalf, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher had said that the terrorist group has already claimed responsibility for the 1997 killing of four American oil workers in Karachi. "They have ties to the al-Qaeda, ties to the Taliban, in addition to receiving sanctuary in Afghanistan for their activities in Pakistan. Moreover, the group was involved in the kidnapping and subsequent murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl", Boucher added.

As far as *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*'s leadership and command structure is concerned, Muhammad Ajmal alias Akram Lahori is believed to be its last known *Saalar-e-Aala* (Commander-in-Chief). Lahori was originally with *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP), which he had joined in 1990. Subsequently, in 1996, he along with Malik Ishaq and Riaz Basra founded the LeJ and launched terrorist activities in Punjab. Akram Lahori, who had established a training camp in Sarobi, Afghanistan after securing support from the erstwhile Taliban regime there, succeeded Basra, who was killed on May 14, 2002. Lahori is himself in police custody after his arrest in Orangi Town, Karachi, on June 17. Before being arrested, Lahori was carrying Rs 5 million head-money announced by the Sindh government and another Rs 5 million announced by the Punjab government. So far, it is not clear if Lahori has

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passed on the mantle to any one else, or continues to head the outfit from his prison cell.

The newspaper files of July 2, 2002, quoting senior police officials said Lahori was involved in 38 cases of sectarian killings in Sindh. These included the killing of Ehteshamuddin Haider (brother of former Federal Interior Minister Lt. Gen. (retd) Moinuddin Haider) and Pakistan State Oil Managing Director Shoukat Raza Mirza. Besides, he was also involved in the massacre at *Imambargah Mehmoodabad* and in the murder of Iranian cadets in Rawalpindi. Lahori reportedly confessed during interrogation that he was involved in 30 cases of sectarian killings in Punjab, including those of 24 persons who were attending a *Majlis* in Mominpura. He also revealed that his group had planned to kill Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider, but due to tight security measures, murdered his brother instead. Consequent to the death of Riaz Basra, Akram Lahori was acting as the LeJ chief.

Lahori's predecessor, Riaz Basra was involved in over 300 incidents of terrorism including attacks on Iranian missions, killing of an Iranian diplomat Sadiq Ganji and targeting government officials. Basra was arrested and tried by a special court for Ganji's killing, but escaped during trial in 1994 from police custody while being produced in court. He was Chief of the Khalid bin Walid unit of the Afghan mujahideen's training in Afghanistan. Media reports said Riaz Basra, along with three of his accomplices, was killed in an encounter at Mailsi, Multan, on May 14, 2002. Basra was allegedly in police custody in Faisalabad since January 2002 and was being interrogated for the activities of his group.

According to news reports quoting police sources, four armed terrorists came to *Chak Kot Chaudhry Sher Mohammad Ghalvi* on May 14 and stopped near the house of Chaudhry Fida Hussain Ghalvi, district chief of the banned Shia group *Tehreek-e-Jaferia Pakistan* (TJP). Consequent to a shoot-out between the two groups, the police intervened and in the ensuing encounter, Riaz Basra and his associates were killed. Ghalvi asserted that the LeJ cadres had come to kill him and to emphasise his belief, he also pointed out that the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* had killed his brother Mukhtar in year 1997.

Consequent to Basra's killing, reports on his arrest in January 2002 indicated he was arrested after the Faisalabad police captured Ajmal alias Sheikh Jamshaid, an associate of Basra. Ajmal assisted the police in arresting Liaquat Ali of Kehror Pucca, who was wanted for his alleged involvement in a triple murder case. After interrogating Liaquat, the police raided a number of locations in Faisalabad, Lahore, Jhang, Sargodha and certain other parts of Pakistan. Based on information received from Ajmal and Liaquat, Riaz Basra was arrested.

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On June 13 2004, Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat announced in Islamabad that the Karachi police had arrested one Mosabir Aruchi, who had a million dollar reward on his head, from the Karachi residence of Abbas Khan, a former divisional engineer of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited. On June 14, the Karachi Rangers announced the arrest of Dawood Badini, accusing him of planning two suicide bombings in Quetta that killed over 100 Shia worshippers. Badini was further accused of masterminding the June 8, 2003 assassination of 12 Shia police recruits in Quetta.

The same day (June 14), eight suspects allegedly involved in the June 10, 2004 ambush on Corps Commander Karachi Lt. Gen. Ahsan Saleem Hayat's convoy, and one suspect, Gul Hasan of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* allegedly involved in organising suicide attacks on Shia worshippers in the Haideri mosque and *Imambargah* Ali Raza Karachi in May 2004 were produced before the Karachi Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC), that immediately remanded them to police custody for 15 days.

The eight suspects allegedly involved in the deadly attack on the Karachi Corps Commander's convoy were described by the Police as belonging to a hitherto unknown organisation called *Jundullah* (God's Army). The accused include: Ataur Rehman alias Ibrahim alias Umer alias Uzair Ahmed, described as the *ameer* of the *Jundullah*, Shahzad Ahmed Bajwa, described as the deputy *ameer*, Shoaib Siddiqui, Yaqoob Saeed Khan alias Roomi, Uzair Ahmed alias Kashif, Danish Imam alias Shami, Najeebullah alias Atif and Khurram Shaif alias Anas. But the intelligence sources believe the *Jundullah* is just another name of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, which has established strong ties with the al-Qaeda and whose activists are allegedly being trained in Wana.

According to the intelligence sources, an amateurish blunder by one of the group members helped the security agencies to arrest the *Jundullah* gang, which in fact was a strong sleeper cell of the al-Qaeda, activated after the Pakistan Army launched a fresh operation in South Waziristan. The suspects were reportedly rounded up just hours after the June 10 attack, which killed 12 army men and policemen. As the attackers fled the crime scene, one of them dropped his mobile phone, which the intelligence agencies recovered within minutes of the attack. While using sophisticated tracking devices, the agencies raided a house from where a phone call had been made on the mobile phone prior to the ambush, leading to the arrest of the attackers.

The *Lashkar* has women suicide bombers

The intelligence sources believe the Karachi attack was to serve as a blueprint for other, similar attacks in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, in retaliation of the

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Wana operation. Some recent intelligence reports even claim that the *Lashkar* has prepared women suicide bombers to attack Shia places of worship in Karachi. A suspected mastermind of bomb blasts at two Shia mosques in Quetta is reported to have disclosed to the Karachi police during interrogation that the LeJ had brainwashed a few girls aged between 16 and 20 years to carry out suicide missions. Daily *Dawn* of July 1, 2004 quoted a Karachi police officer Manzoor Mughal as saying that Gul Hasan, an arrested accused, had disclosed the girls persuaded by *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* to explode themselves in the women section of the Karachi mosques, would be wearing veils or school uniform and carrying handbags.

According to intelligence reports, Aziza, a citizen of Uzbekistan and widow of Ubaidullah, who was an active member of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, is imparting training to female suicide bombers at a base in Pakistan's tribal area. Ubaidullah was reportedly killed in January 2004 during an operation in South Waziristan Agency conducted by the armed forces of Pakistan. In late March 2004, says a news report, Aziza told her relatives that she intended to avenge her husband's death by committing terrorist acts in Pakistan. But the Karachi police thinks it can bust the group once they capture two real sisters who are hiding somewhere in Karachi and waiting for an opportunity to explode themselves. These girls are related to Gul Hasan who is a central leader of the Asif Chhotoo faction of *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*.

The sources said the two arrested al-Qaeda accused -- Dawood Badini and Mosabir Aruchi -- are related to Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf, who has already been convicted in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York. Dawood Badini is a brother-in-law of Ramzi Yusuf and is wanted in a 2003 Quetta mosque bomb attack that killed more than 40 people. Badini's sister is married to Ramzi Yusuf. The other man arrested, Mosabir Aruchi, is a nephew of the al-Qaeda's chief operational commander, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, who was nabbed from Rawalpindi in March 2003. Khalid Sheikh is an uncle of Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf, which makes Aruchi and Yusuf cousins.

Those involved in tracking down *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*'s terror network in Karachi, believe that the group might be working in the Sindh capital as the delta force of al-Qaeda. Elaborating, they added that the delta force is a special al-Qaeda unit that was trained under Khalid Sheikh Mohammad before his arrest and is tasked with specific high profile targets, including General Musharraf. Investigations into the attack on the Karachi Corps Commander have given broad hints that it was an operation jointly planned and carried out by the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* and their al-Qaeda associates -- Dawood Badini and Mosabir Aruchi. The intelligence sources did not rule out the possibility of Badini and Aruchi's involvement in the abduction and murder planning of an American journalist Daniel Pearl who was

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beheaded in Karachi in 2002. The FBI has already identified Khalid Sheikh as the person who slaughtered Pearl with his own hands.

Sharing their findings with their Pakistani counterparts, the American intelligence sleuths stationed are learnt to have warned that another leading al-Qaeda operative - Abu Musab al-Zarqawi might also be working in close coordination with the *Lashkar* network in Pakistan to carry out some major terrorist activities. According to intelligence findings, Zarqawi, shares the LeJ's anti-Shia bias and its ultra violent techniques, right down to the May 2004 videotaped beheading of a US businessman, Nicholas Berg, in Iraq. The FBI has got evidence to prove that Zarqawi and Ramzi, who are known to each other since the 1990, had carried out the June 20, 1994 powerful bomb explosion at the shrine of Imam Ali Raza in Mashhad, Iran.

While the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* obviously takes some direction from the al-Qaeda, the group stays admirably focused on its home turf and its stated goal of radicalising Pakistan. The stakes in that battle are far from parochial. In addition to its nuclear arsenal, Pakistan is a key strategic ally of the US in its War on Terror. Most of the terrorism experts agree that the LeJ operatives are the most highly trained and vicious killers the world of terrorism has to offer. And the depressing truth is that they probably have a good shot at it.

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Chapter 17

The Mullah-Military Alliance

The religious right in Pakistan, which had been a vocal supporter of the former Taliban regime, successfully moved from the periphery to the center stage of politics in the October 2002 general elections, with the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal*, a six-party alliance of the religious parties, bagging 20 percent of the seats in the Upper and the Lower houses of the Parliament.

The religious right had been struggling to establish a foothold in the mainstream politics ever since it came into being in 1947 in the name of Islam. The liberal lobby always boasted that the religious groups had never been able to muster double-digit figures in terms of seats or vote share in any general election in all of Pakistan's five-decade-plus electoral history. But the October 2002 elections changed it all. Even optimists in the religious alliance had not dreamt that they would actually rule the Frontier and Baluchistan bordering Afghanistan, which together account for over 60 per cent of Pakistan in geographical terms. This was a first of its kind in the political history of Pakistan as six traditionally fratricidal religious parties were united on the electoral platform on the basis of a common agenda of anti-Americanism.

The MMA's surprise victory in the 2002 general elections, bagging 45 seats in the 272-member National Assembly and ruling majorities in NWFP and Baluchistan, set in motion intense analysis and speculation. According to analysts, it was mainly the *Jamaat-e-Islami*'s brain and *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*'s brawn that led to the surprise victory. The alliance was able to bring together the *Deobandi* school of Islamic thought as represented by the JUI faction, the *Barelvis* grouped under Late Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani's *Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan* and the Shiites in the *Tehrik Millat-e-Islami* Pakistan.

The MMA was born only weeks before the 2002 elections and its main leaders were in the forefront of the anti-US demonstrations in different parts of the country after 9/11. The religious parties had come together earlier too under the banner of the *Milli Yakjehti Council* (MYC), and led by Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani but the *Jamaat-e-Islami*'s attempt to convert the MYC into an electoral alliance before the 1997 elections did not click. The religious right won very few seats then. But all this changed with the beginning of the US war on terror, at least on the face of it.

The MYC moulded itself into the Pak Afghan Defence Council (PADC) in the post-9/11 scenario, the PADC was the forerunner of the MMA. The six constituents of the MMA — the JI, the JUP, both factions of the JUI headed by

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Maulana Samiul Haq and Maulana Fazlur Rahman), the *Islami Tehreek Pakistan* and the *Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith* — aspire to bring the true Islamic system in Pakistan. But differences exist among their leaders at ideological and personal levels, including their views about the Taliban. Only two of the six entities — the *Jamaat* factions led by Maulana Samiul Haq and Fazlur Rahman — support the Taliban's worldview while the JI, which is the largest religious party — openly denounced the Taliban version of Islam.

The rise of the religious right in Pakistan is attributable to several factors. Foremost among these surely was the manner in which the Musharraf regime had persistently and systematically de-legitimised the liberal mainstream parties. The credibility of parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party of Benazir Bhutto and the faction of the Pakistan Muslim League led by Nawaz Sharif was eroded systematically by evoking portrayals of these as corrupt and incompetent to run the affairs of the country. There may have been some substance in these portrayals and such an officially sponsored demonisation of these formations might not in itself have been sufficient to mar their prospects in the recently concluded general elections since the people of Pakistan are familiar enough with the nature of these formations.

But the military regime's deliberate move to block the leaders of both parties from contesting the elections, through recourse to dubious legislative measures, made clear to the people that they were not to be led by these twice-tested former Prime Ministers. Hence, the Pakistani voter was left to pick between the second or third rung leaders of the PPPP or PML -N or the largely colourless leaders of the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) as his choice for Prime Minister. That clearly was no choice at all. It was against this backdrop — where none of the mainstream parties was able to galvanise the voters — that preferences were decided on a constituency-wise basis. In this scenario, the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* which had put up a consolidated list of candidates and which seemed to promise an alternative to the PML-Q, the regime's stalking horse, had a clear advantage.

No doubt anti-Americanism had played a vital role in the political ascendancy of the MMA, but to ignore other pertinent factors projects a wrong picture. For, despite the hype, the MMA's strong showing was limited to the NWFP and Baluchistan and not spread over all of Pakistan. Of the 45 National Assembly seats it won, 35 were from the NWFP and Baluchistan. Of the 3.19 million votes in favour of the MMA, 2.8 million were from these two provinces. Though the MMA won six seats in Sindh and three in Punjab, the margin was very narrow — with two seats in Karachi and one in Hyderabad it was only around 500 votes. Even in the provincial assemblies, the MMA got enough seats to form the provincial government only in the NWFP (52 out of 99). In Baluchistan, it won

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only 14 seats out of 51, whereas the PML-Q, in fact, won 15. In Sindh, the MMA won only 8 seats out of 130 and in Punjab a mere 9 out of the 297.

Certainly, the electoral performance of the religious parties improved a lot when compared to previous elections. Though they never contested under a joint banner in previous elections, in 1993 all the religious parties put together won 1.4 million votes. Since the *Jamaat-e-Islami* did not take part in the 1997 general elections, a comparison is possible only with the election 10 years ago (1993 general polls). What led to the political growth of Islamic parties in the last ten years, especially in the NWFP and Baluchistan? Linking their growth only to anti-Americanism is simplistic. If there is an anti-American feeling all over whole of Pakistan, then why did the MMA fail to win many seats in Punjab and Sindh? How did the MMA manage to gain support only in the NWFP and Baluchistan?

From the time of the Afghan war against the Soviets, these two provinces have been steadily coming under the influence of radical Islam. The political use of religion in terms of jehad to fight the Soviets was a primary factor in militarising the society. Jehad became a household term in these two provinces with the steady inflow and outflow of mujahideen. Some analysts believe that the failure of the federal government to adequately govern these provinces also led to the shift. Parts of the Frontier were never under the total control of the federal administration and were always administered by local customs.

In the 1990s, the growth of Taliban culture provided less expensive, easy but swift justice instead of the expensive, bureaucratic and much delayed justice from the federal administration. Even after the military regime took over, welfare activities were never really taken care of. Therefore, the alienation, especially at the political and cultural levels, from the rest of Pakistan has made people in these provinces identify with the Taliban. The deciding factor in the October elections, no doubt, was the American war on terrorism and the support rendered by the Pakistani military regime. Though the above-mentioned factors had been present through the 1990s, it was this factor, which swung the voters towards the MMA.

The war affected the daily lives of people, especially the Pashtuns living along the border. First and foremost was the loss of life. Many Pashtuns from Pakistan fought along with the Taliban against the US and were killed or injured. Most of the pashtuns in Pakistan also have family ties across the border, and the US military efforts did kill many innocent victims. The more the collateral damage, the more the animosity towards the US. The Punjabi support to the US war further alienated the pashtuns from the rest of the country. Worse, the Pakistani security forces along with the US undertook search operations in the tribal areas. All these factors played a crucial role in shifting their support away from

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moderate parties the Awami National Party, the PML-N and the PPPP. With the religious parties openly advocating resistance to American influence, it was but natural for the locals to vote for them.

Factionalism within the liberal parties in Baluchistan and the NWFP further divided the liberal vote bank. The Sherpao faction of the PPP affected the latter's votes, while the National Awami Party of Ajmal Khattak affected the ANP vote bank and the PML-Q affected the PML-N vote bank. Besides, personality clashes also resulted in the liberal parties supporting the MMA candidate jointly, with the sole objective of defeating a particular candidate especially belonging to the ANP. The MMA simply seized the window of opportunity. The Westminster system of first-past-the-post also was a factor in its electoral success. While it was able to get 45 seats from 3.19 million votes, the PML-N had won only 15 seats to the National Assembly despite getting 3.30 million votes.

Moreover, the reduction of the voter age also helped the MMA. With invariably all the religious parties having their own madrassas, they were able to get the students to vote for the alliance. And, the low turnout in these provinces only helped the MMA to win more seats. In the NWFP, where the MMA received maximum number of seats for both the Provincial and National Assemblies, it obtained only around 11 per cent of the total registered votes, in Baluchistan, it was around 13.5 per cent. While the MMA succeeded in mobilising its vote bank, the liberal voters simply did not vote. Thus, it is evident that the electoral success of the MMA is not conclusive proof that religious parties are increasing their influence in Pakistan as a whole.

At the same time, there are those in the political circles who insist that the victory of the MMA in Frontier and Baluchistan was engineered by the military and intelligence establishments. The fact remains that the religio-political parties have always had a special relationship with the military in Pakistan. After all, it was the cadre of the religious parties that sustained the Afghan and Kashmir policies of the Pakistan Army. Therefore, a section of politicians still cannot believe that the people had opted for the clergy.

They point out that amazingly, the MMA impact was not felt in the largest populated province of Punjab. "Does it mean that the people of Punjab do not love Islam or have no sympathy for their Afghan brethren or are secular? Does it mean that the Punjab is the only secular and pro-America province while the rest of the provinces are anti-American? Isn't it true that the central offices of all the religious parties are based in the Punjab province and the Establishment that provides training, funding, hire and harbour the jehadi Groups also hail from the Punjab?"

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Whether the military regime wrought such an outcome or not it is undeniable that the parliamentary presence of the MMA in such strength at the centre and in the provinces has considerably enhanced Islamabad's diplomatic leeway. Pakistan's foreign and security policy establishment is now in a position to argue that it can neither proceed against offshoots of the al-Qaeda nor moderate its policy on Kashmir to the extent that Washington desires since the religious formations, traditionally hardline on both counts, have shown their political relevance.

Interestingly, the parliamentarians belonging to the MMA had played a crucial role in providing General Pervez Musharraf with the constitutional legitimacy he so desperately sought in December 2003 through 17th constitutional amendment. The amendment would not have received the requisite two-thirds majority in parliament without the MMA's support, which had earlier appeared implacable in its opposition to General Musharraf. The MMA also opposed several other decisions taken by Musharraf and repeatedly accused him of toeing a western agenda, both at home and in the region. So why then did the MMA suddenly provide General Musharraf with the constitutional legitimacy he so desperately sought?

Analysts point out that since the October 2002 general elections, the MMA has been making efforts to keep its feet in two boats. On the one hand, the Majlis-e-Amal leadership entered into a political arrangement with the Musharraf, legitimising the Legal Framework Order. On the other hand, it wants to continue as the main opposition party with a claim on the opposition leader's slot in the National Assembly. The MMA stayed away from the vote of confidence for Musharraf, enabling him to secure the required vote in the absence of too many negative votes. A similar strategy was adopted when the president addressed the joint session of the parliament on January 17, 2004. The MMA staged a walk out to maintain its distance from Musharraf but pacified the government by not joining the desk-thumping in the house during Musharraf's address to the joint session of the parliament.

The rise of the religious right in Pakistan

"The ascendancy of extremist religious groups in Pakistani politics with the tacit approval of the military, has fuelled the process of Islamisation in the country", said the April 2003 report of the International Crisis Group, titled *"Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military"*.

The ICG is a non-governmental organisation based in Brussels, which works through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve conflicts. The picture presented by the 43-page ICG report was not a pretty one.

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The core of the report was about General Pervez Musharraf's failure to live up to his pledge to crack down on extremist religious elements and the fact that he made common cause with the military and the clergy on issues such as Kashmir.

Since its inception 56 years ago in the name of Islam, a majority of the Pakistan's religious parties had enjoyed little following in the brief spells of electoral politics that marked gaps between military dictatorships. Yet, they have continued to maintain a unique relationship with the mighty military establishment, and often the two sides were seen as natural allies.

Under Pakistan's first military ruler, General Mohammad Ayub Khan (1958-69), says the ICG report, the military vowed to build a modern, pro-Western Islamic state that would serve as a bulwark against Soviet communism. "The religious parties and scholars also saw communism as the main threat to Islam. The military and the mullahs regarded Pakistanis who professed communism, socialism or secularism as their common enemy. The alliance between Ayub and the clergy was, however, strained by Ayub's liberal religious view. A code of Muslim Family Law, drawn up by religious scholars of his choice, for instance, provided legal protection to women's matrimonial rights and is still an object of criticism by the ulema".

"Another General, Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, who fought a war against East Pakistan's secession following the country's first national elections in 1970, succeeded Ayub. The religious lobby led by the *Jamaat-e-Islami*'s youth wings, actively joined the war alongside Pakistani troops fighting their secular Bengali opponents. The war resulted in Bangladesh's independence, after India intervened. That military-mullah alliance expanded and gained strength during the next period of martial law. There was a complete convergence of interests between the religious Right and Pakistan's third military ruler, General Mohammad Ziaul Haq (1977-88), who joined hands with the religious parties even prior to overthrowing an elected government. Their protest movement created the conditions for his coup d'etat.

"The military and the mullahs had a common domestic enemy - the secular mainstream parties. Zia's personal proclivities also matched those of his religious partners. Rigid interpretations of Islamic injunctions and jurisprudence were introduced during Zia's 11 years, and the *Deobandi* ulema and the *Jamaat-e-Islami* intelligentsia guided his brand of Islamisation. These religious conservatives were also the military's partners in the Afghan jehad. The regional and international climate of the 1980s favoured Zia's orthodox Islamisation and the alliance with the West served the military's institutional interests. As a frontline ally of the US in the Soviet-Afghan war, the military benefited from billions of dollars in military and economic assistance, while Zia promoted militant versions of Islam to fight the

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jehad and counter his secular democratic foes. Not surprisingly, Islamic movements and parties were also major beneficiaries. Jehad became the central point of existence for a true Islamic state and society. Madrassas mushroomed and religious parties used militancy for political gain. The growth in Islamic movements has continued ever since.

"Unlike Zia, Pakistan's fourth military ruler, Musharraf, has had to pursue a two-track policy to gain international and domestic legitimacy. In the interests of self-preservation and to promote the army's institutional interests, he abandoned the Taliban. With Pakistan once again as a frontline ally and benefiting politically and economically, his administration is actively assisting the US against Islamic militants in Afghanistan and, ostensibly, against their Pakistani allies. This change in priorities has strained but not severed the military's links with its religious allies. While his government moves against non-Pakistani Islamic militants, Musharraf has given in to the agenda of the religious parties at home. Although he denounces Islamic militancy, his administration handles domestic extremists with kid gloves.

"The official dossier of cooperation in the US-led war on terrorism is long. Arrests of suspected al-Qaeda members have become routine. Pakistani authorities, assisted by the American FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], have captured more than 500 people, mostly of Arab origin, who are now in US custody. Some fringe elements within Pakistan's jehadi organisations have also been targeted, and, in many instances, either captured or killed. The government has banned many sectarian organisations and Pakistan-based Kashmiri jehadi groups. It now decrees that jehad cannot be waged by individuals or independent groups; it is a decision of the Islamic state. Jehad without state sanction and participation is *fasaad* (chaos, disorder)".

As justification, the government has appealed to narrow national interests. Musharraf has repeatedly stressed that Pakistan's very survival required a change in its Afghan policy and cooperation with the US, after September 11, 2001. "There has been a change of reality," Musharraf said, "so we have reformulated our policy... Pakistan is following a policy which is in our national interest". 'Pakistan First' was the official slogan of General Musharraf's Presidential campaign. With the MMA's political resurgence, however, a renewed alliance between Pakistani jehadis and their Afghan counterparts cannot be ruled out. After the MMA took power in the NWFP, there has been a marked increase in attacks on US troops and their Afghan allies by insurgents, who then disappear into the Pakistani Pashtun tribal areas.

"Expressing dissatisfaction with the Pakistani military's performance in curbing such attacks, US officials have threatened hot pursuit into Pakistan. While it is

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nearly impossible to assess the extent of MMA support for this resumed cross-border activity, there is little doubt that its anti-US and jehadi slogans have emboldened religious parties such as the JUI [*Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*] to aid fellow Muslims and Pashtuns in Afghanistan. But while these attacks undermine peace in Afghanistan's Pashtun-dominated eastern and southern provinces, they do not constitute an MMA rebellion against the Pakistan military's pro-US policy in Afghanistan. Neither the MMA nor any other religious group can or desires to confront the military. Nor do they feel the need since the Musharraf administration has simultaneously appeased the clergy, hoping to use them against its domestic opponents.

"The spectacular rise of the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal*, an alliance of six amorphous religious groups, stumped political pundits and contemporary historians alike. It targeted Musharraf's pro-US policies and pledged the enforcement of the Sharia law. It is now in power in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), with a two-thirds majority. In Baluchistan, the alliance is part of the coalition government headed by the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid), nicknamed the king's party. Although the two regions account for 57 per cent of the landmass, they represent only 14 per cent of the population.

"Both the provinces are extremely sensitive as they share a long border with Afghanistan and a relatively small border with Iran. The prolonged US military campaign in Afghanistan code-named Operation Enduring Freedom and the tumultuous events that have taken place in the region over the past two and a half decades, have had a tremendous impact on these two provinces. The mercurial surge of the MMA was attributed largely to the intense resentment among the majority Pashtuns and Baluchis in the NWFP and Baluchistan against the US-led campaign against 'international terrorism'."

The International Crisis Group then raises a few questions: "What does the shift of the MMA to the centre stage of electoral politics mean? Is Pakistan poised to witness the type of revolution that Iran experienced in 1979, although through electoral means? Or is it simply a case where the military rulers in Islamabad got their calculation wrong because they were desperate to keep the mainstream parties and political players out of the fray?"

The report says that although MMA leaders have tried to allay worries that their governments might adopt Taliban-style policies, their actions indicate that they prefer to impose a strict religious code. The MMA's agenda includes putting an end to the system of co-education as the first step towards the total segregation of women in public life, and the addition of more Islamic texts in school and college curricula. In the NWFP and Baluchistan, the MMA plans to screen and register NGOs. There is official patronage for moral policing by the student wings of

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parties that constitute the MMA. Similar trends are visible in several spheres of public life.

The report emphasises that General Musharraf and the military establishment had failed to confront the MMA's religious zeal. Moreover, General Musharraf's recent constitutional amendments have undermined the domestic standing of moderate secular parties. The report warns that the MMA's extremist zeal might encourage its supporters to take up arms against the US forces or its allies in Afghanistan. In the event, Pakistani troops on the border should be able to contain the threat.

The ICG report says that the MMA's decision not to join the ruling combine at the Centre could be a tactical one. "This strategy helps it to promote an anti-American agenda while avoiding direct confrontation with the military's support for the US-led war on terrorism," the report said. The MMA is aware of the fact that foreign and defence policies are the military's preserve, and therefore restrict its opposition to rhetoric. In any case, its goal is not to confront the military but to consolidate its political gains. "By assisting the military's electoral maneuvers, including formation of suitable governments in the centre and the provinces, the MMA has obtained major concessions, such as the release from jail of party workers and the dropping of several prosecutions", the report said.

According to the ICG report, Musharraf's unwillingness to transfer power could have far-reaching implications within Pakistan. General Musharraf's constitutional and political distortions have put a fragile federation under immense stress. In the absence of checks on the military's political powers, ethnic tensions are rising, particularly in Sindh and Baluchistan, where there is growing resentment against the Punjabi-dominated military. General Musharraf's efforts to empower religious parties at the expense of moderate and secular groups with an ethnic or regional base have fuelled the resentment. Therefore, Musharraf will have to give up his personal agenda and his negative approach towards mainstream parties and their leaders.

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Chapter 18

Musharraf's half-hearted madrassa reforms

When General Pervez Musharraf had made public his much-touted plans to reform the religious seminaries in Pakistan in January 2002, he said the move was necessary because some of the private Islamic schools had become breeding grounds for intolerance and hatred. But the fact remains that even after a lapse of thirty months since he made this announcement, hardly a few cosmetic changes have been introduced in the country's most radical *deeni* madrassas that spawned Afghanistan's Taliban movement.

Since the beginning of 2002, General Musharraf has campaigned to reform the religious schools. In a televised address to the nation in January 2002, the General unveiled a new strategy, which would see *deeni* madrassas teach Mathematics, Science, English and Computer Studies alongside their traditional Islamic programme. "My only aim is to help these institutions in overcoming their weaknesses and to provide them with better facilities and more avenues to the poor children at these institutions. These schools are excellent welfare set-ups where the poor get free board and lodge." He said 'very few' madrassas run by hard-line parties 'promote negative thinking and propagate hatred and violence instead of inculcating tolerance, patience and fraternity.'

Yet, the campaign launched by the General largely failed after madrassa leaders and Islamist organisations rejected government legislation requiring the schools to register and broaden their curricula beyond rote Koranic learning. Under the madrassa reform programme, a special committee would be constituted, headed by a government functionary, which would oversee and look after education, financial matters and policies. The programme was drafted on the advice of the United States government, which has also advised other Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia regarding this issue.

However, the January 2004 International Crisis Group (ICG) report titled, *Unfulfilled Promises: Pakistan*'s *Failure to Tackle Extremism* states, "General Pervez Musharraf's promise to drive extremism away from madrassas remains unfulfilled, ". The ICG report further says, "Today, two years after he promised his sweeping reforms, the jehadi madrassas remain the key breeding ground for radical Islamist ideology and the recruitment centre for terrorist jehadi networks". Furthermore, it says that the failure to curb rising extremism in Pakistan stems directly from the military government's own unwillingness to act against its political allies among the religious groups. "Having co-opted the religious parties to gain constitutional cover for his military rule, Musharraf is

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highly reliant on the religious right for his regime's survival", said Samina Ahmed, ICG's South Asia project director, at a press conference in Islamabad on January 18, 2004 while making public the ICG report.

The ICG report referred that in January 2002, Musharraf publicly promised a list of measures to tackle extremism, including bringing the madrassas into the mainstream. The government pledged to firstly register all madrassas so that they adopt a government-approved curriculum by the end of 2002 and secondly to stop their misuse for preaching political and religious intolerance. The international community welcomed Musharraf's promise to stem jehadi ideology, but two years on, the lack of results is clear. To date, no presidential ordinance to regulate the madrassas has been promulgated. In fact, the government openly assures the religious leaders that it will not interfere in the madrassas' affairs. Most madrassas in Pakistan remain unregistered and their sources of funding remain unregulated.

The pledge to have government-prescribed curricula at all madrassas similarly remains unfulfilled, no national curriculum has been developed. Three "model madrassas" that are teaching government-approved course work have been established, but together these three schools have only about 300 students, while 1.5 million students attend unregulated madrassas. Most critically, religious extremists continue to use madrassas and mosques to propagate their extremist Islamic agenda, including their anti-American and pro-Taliban campaign, the ICG says. Pakistan's failure to close madrassas and to crack down on jehadi networks has resulted in a resurgence of domestic extremism and sectarian violence, including two assassination attempts against Musharraf himself in December 2003.

The report adds: "The government inaction continues to pose a serious threat to domestic, regional and international security. General Musharraf's priority has never been eradicating Islamic extremism but rather the legitimisation and consolidation of his dictatorial rule. And for that, he depends on the religious right. If the US and others continue to restrict their pressure on General Musharraf to verbal warnings, the rise of extremism in Pakistan will continue unchecked," the ICG report concludes.

The government circles were, however, quick to refute the ICG report, reminding that the government has already approved more than $100 million for madrassas participating in the modernisation programme. And about 80 percent of an estimated 10,000 madrassas are to receive those funds -- meaning remaining 20 percent have not met Islamabad's reform criteria. General Musharraf's reform scheme calls for modern disciplines such as English, Science, Mathematics, Economics and even Computer Science. The plan aims to curtail the enrollment

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of foreign students and to block funding -- both from Islamabad and from abroad -- for madrassas that fail to register and adhere to the modern curriculum. The scheme also calls for madrassas to stop sending students to military training camps. The three model madrassas are using government funds. But so far, the most radical madrassas appear to be rejecting the example. Instead, they continue to teach from a medieval syllabus that rejects "Western science" as un-Islamic.

Critics note, the reform plan allows the current madrassa managers and teachers to retain their posts. Crucially, the programme is not compulsory. And some conservative Islamist groups continue to oppose government interference in the curriculum. Therefore, it seems that the reforms would take years for any positive effects to be seen. Analysts link the availability of manpower for the proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir to the rapid decline in the education system and the rise of the madrassa system in Pakistan. With the national economy in immense difficulties, development priorities have been completely distorted. Over the years, the decline in the social sector expenditure on public education has allowed the institution of the madrassas or religious schools to fill the gap and also gain legitimacy within the society.

The madrassa is a traditional institution of learning in a third world country like Pakistan. The curriculum offered there is rudimentary and pertains mostly to religious instruction, which is not enough to fulfill the needs of a modern state and a modernising society. But it provides free education along with boarding and lodging; a good enough attraction for the poor who not only get free education but are also not burdened with financial liabilities. There are no exact figures about how many madrassas may be operating in Pakistan. According to rough estimates, there may be some one million students studying in 20,000 or so madrassas. Some suggest a high figure of 40,000 to 50,000 of such institutions in Pakistan.

Most of the madrassas are used as centers for the recruitment of young soldiers to fight for the cause of Islam. Pakistan's religious parties sponsor some of them and some are affiliated with the mujahideen groups. Some of these madrassas preach an extremist ideology of jehad. The current level of unemployment in Pakistan is estimated to be around 16 per cent of the working age population. With almost six million people unemployed, this number is expected to increase steadily by 500,000 people each year. It would not be presumptuous to guess which schooling system most of the unemployed come from. For the students graduating from these madrassas, due to their lack of a modern liberal education, it is very difficult to compete in society and find meaningful jobs. After having been misled with a wrong interpretation of jehad, such boys are

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mobilised to fulfill spiritual obligations by joining the militants in J&K and other places.

A related development is that most of the jehadi organisations in Pakistan are increasingly becoming self-sufficient and are now able to generate most of the funds required for their operations through private resources. One major source is public donations. Some of them have rich supporters and individual backers. According to careful estimates, about 906 madrassas across Pakistan receive Rs. 60 million annually as financial assistance from *Zakat* funds but hardly 25 per cent of the total madrassas are dependent on *Zakat* funds. The remaining 75 per cent generate their own resources through donations received directly from foreign countries or through their alumni and sympathetic individuals at home and abroad.

Mushroom growth of madrassas and jehadis

Islamic rule was introduced to the Indian sub-continent in the early 8th century when Arab warrior Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sindh, in what is southeastern Pakistan today. But the earliest known madrassas in north India were not recorded until the 13th century under the Turks. By the 14th century, Delhi alone had a thousand madrassas. In the 18th century, a curriculum known as the *Dars-e-Nizamia*, devised by Mullah Nizamuddin, became the standard syllabus. The curriculum was based on the rote memorising of the Koran, which was considered the highest scholastic achievement. However, this curriculum did not focus on violent jehad. In fact, the whole purpose of the *Dars-e-Nizamia* was to combine Islamic teachings with rational sciences to train the madrassa pupils to become lawyers, judges and administrators.

After the end of British rule and the partition of India in 1947, the madrassas in India and the newly created Islamic Republic of Pakistan took different courses. The Indian seminaries stayed true to their original mission of preaching Islamic scholarship, while the Pakistani ones became progressively more intolerant and aggressive in the competition to exclusively define Pakistan's "Islamic" nature. There are currently five broad types of madrassas in Pakistan, with four of them belonging to the majority Sunni sect and one belonging to the Shia minority. Among the Sunnis, mostly there are the *Barelvis* - a moderate group who seeks to be inclusive of local rituals and customs. Then there are seminaries run by the *Jamaat-e-Islami*, which is non-sectarian but tends to be politically very active.

In the context of extremism, the remaining two streams of madrassas are considered most important. The first one is the *Deobandi* school of thought, originating in the Indian town of *Deoband*, near New Delhi. The *Deobandi* movement has long sought to purify Islam by rejecting "un-Islamic" accretions to

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the faith and returning to the models established in the Koran. Then there are *Ahle Hadith* (followers of the way of the Prophet PBUH) who have a similar emphasis on purifying the faith as the *Deobandis*, but follow the Salafi religious jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as opposed to the *Hanafi* sect used by the *Deobandis*.

Until the 1970s, Pakistani madrassas largely followed the *Dars-e-Nizamia* curriculum and its variants established in the 1700s in India. Even the *Deobandi* alteration of this curriculum focused on purification of faith for the purposes of knowledge, rather than militancy and jehad. All this changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. General Ziaul Haq, who took power after a military coup in 1977, was an ardent Islamist. He started off with some ill-fated attempts at rushing through Islamic law within Pakistan. General Zia's existing plans to turn Pakistan into an Islamic state gained urgency and a fundamentalist tone after two major events - the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 10 years later.

The twin shocks also encouraged a new movement within the *Deobandi* madrassas, which sought to change the way Islam was taught to the students. While it is true that many madrassas dropped secular subjects like Mathematics and sciences in part or whole, what was more significant than the narrowing of the syllabus was the change in focus and interpretation in the teaching of the Koran and the *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed PBUH), drawing on the incendiary combination of Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafi* thinking developed under Saudi funding from places like the Islamic University of Medina and propagated by other Saudi-controlled foundations, such as the World Muslim League.

The emphasis in madrassa curriculum was shifted almost entirely from the standard pillars of faith such as prayer, charity and pilgrimage to the obligation and rewards of jehad. The madrassas taught the young students that the world was divided into believers and unbelievers in a black and white setting. Jews, Hindus and Christians were portrayed as evil usurpers. The curriculum started emphasising the need for Islamic warriors of jehad to liberate regions dominated by unbelievers as well as purify Islamic nations in order to establish a single Islamic caliphate where pure Islam would be followed. The students were taught that the only means to achieve this Utopian state was by waging a near-perpetual war, pursued by any and all means against unbelievers as well as impure sects within Muslims.

Subsequently, the era of the jehadi madrassas was born which got intertwined with politics under the military regime of Zia who promoted the madrassa system as a way to garner the support of the religious parties for his dictatorial rule and to recruit troops for the anti-Soviet War in Afghanistan. General Zia's

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Islamist policies opened the floodgates for funding to come in for the madrassas. Saudi Arabia, which wants to promote its brand of *Wahhabi* Islam, remains the main source of funding for the madrassas. Saudi funding, which earlier used to be for the *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan* headed by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, shifted to the *Deobandis* represented by *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*, headed by Maulana Fazlur Rahman. The *Deobandis* are inspired by the *Wahhabi* version of Islam enforced in Saudi Arabia.

It may not be a coincidence that the rise of the JUI's militant outfit, the *Harkatul Mujahideen* in the Indian held Jammu & Kashmir and the Taliban in Afghanistan was around the same time. Most of the Pakistani madrassas where the Taliban grew up and received education are controlled and run by the JUI. Gulf petrodollars funded a sustained spurt in *Deobandi* madrassas not only in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan near the Afghan border, but also in the port city of Karachi as well as rural Punjab. Prominent madrassas included the *Darul Uloom Haqqania* at Akora Khattak in the Frontier Province and the Binori madrassa in Karachi. The Haqqania boasts almost the entire Taliban leadership among its graduates, including Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, while the Binori madrassa was once talked about as a possible hiding place of Osama bin Laden and is also reportedly the place where bin Laden met Mullah Omar to form the al-Qaeda-Taliban partnership.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the rapid spread of jehadi madrassas in Pakistan continued unabated, instead of a slow-down. The first and most important reason was that Saudi money continued to flow to the madrassa system. The prestige and influence of the big madrassas encouraged wealthy Pakistanis to contribute more than ever before, sometimes as an expression of conviction and sometimes as a means of ingratiating themselves with what had become major power players. The Zia regime had grown comfortable spending massive amounts of money on defence and almost nothing on education during the days of Afghan jehad when US and Saudi aid flowed freely.

In the 1990s, after the US imposed sanctions due to Pakistan's nuclear program, the economy almost collapsed and the education infrastructure deteriorated rapidly. For the poor, the madrassas offered a place where their children could get free boarding, food and education and it turned out to be an irresistible option when compared to crumbling or non-existent government-funded secular schools. The successive Pakistani governments also encouraged this to avoid spending much on education. The Pakistani army on its part saw the large number of madrassa-trained jehadis as an asset for its covert support of the Taliban in Afghanistan, as well as its proxy war with India in Kashmir.

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In October 2003, a memo from the office of US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld intended for his top military and civilian subordinates was leaked, perhaps deliberately, to the US media. In the memo, Rumsfeld wondered: is the US capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical Muslim clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against America? As things stand today, nowhere is that aspect of the war on terror more crucial than in Pakistan.

While the US may feel that it has achieved a big success in convincing Musharraf to make a U-turn on the Taliban, stopping the inexorable tide of hate-filled messages put out by *Deobandi* and *Ahle Hadith* seminaries, the ultimate test will be the Pakistani government's will to change its long term direction away from supporting jehad. The Pakistani defence for slow progress is that madrassa reform is difficult and dangerous, so it may take a while. The problem with that is that the longer the madrassas operate as they do, the fewer people there will be in Pakistan who would support such a change.

The educational divide in Pakistan

"Pakistan's education system has created a divide in the society which is fostering a clash between those who have studied at very expensive private schools and those who have studied in the free-board-and-lodging *deeni* madrassas - a difference now all the more apparent following the 11 September events. The clash has been going on for the last 20 years. The difference now is that it has become progressively more dangerous and sharper", said a January 2002 report by the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) of the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The report titled *"Focus on the growing educational divide"* gave interesting reading: "Imagine a world of teenagers wearing Levi's jeans and Ray Ban sunglasses, and partying every weekend on the hip-hop rhythms of the Spice Girls and Madonna; of young boys and girls studying and mingling freely, exchanging cards on Valentine's day and chatting by E-mail. Now imagine a group of young zealots who think this is a sin and that martyrdom for the sake of Islam is true salvation; of young men pushing women indoors and abhorring any form of joy and festiveness as evil. Both groups are Pakistanis, but products of an education system which has collapsed, creating a divide in society, and which is raising serious concerns over the future of Pakistan's 140 million people. The first group of youth - the product of Western style English-medium education - is set to rule the country by virtue of its wealth, social status and educational advantage. The second group - the product of an archaic Islamic religious

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education - is set to fill the ranks of preachers and jehadis, or holy warriors, with very little economic clout and decision-making powers".

Pakistan's military-led government of General Pervez Musharraf, said the report, had promised to rein in on religious seminaries, which were advocating jehad (holy war), and were at the forefront of agitation against Pakistan's support for the US-led coalition fighting terrorism, and the Taliban for protecting Osama bin Laden. "Many of the hardline Islamic Taliban, routed from Afghanistan by US-led military campaign, had studied in Pakistani *deeni* madrassas, numbering between 8,000 and 12,000 across the country. In 1947, when Pakistan gained independence from Great Britain, there were hardly more than a few hundred of such religious seminaries. The madrassa as an organised system of education was formulated in 11th century Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, under the patronage of an Islamic ruler, Nizam al-Mulk Tusi. Progressive for their time, besides providing purely religious education, madrassas also taught Logic, Astronomy, Mathematics and State Affairs, producing preachers, prayer leaders, judges, teachers and legal experts who can issue edicts *(muftis)*. However, over the centuries the curriculum did not keep pace with the changing times".

According to the IRIN report, "The madrassa education is extremely archaic. Some of the books taught there, including Mathematics, date back hundreds of years. Therefore, the graduates of madrassas cannot compete against the others. They do not have any social class theory, so they want destruction. They would wish to bring the society on their level, and the only thing they can identify with is the religion. Madrassas have existed in India and Pakistan for centuries, but they proliferated during the military government of the late General Ziaul Haq's rule in 1980s in the context of his push to Islamise the country".

In the madrassa, said the report, a student comes from a very low economic level of society. "He has been essentially abandoned by his family, by his father, and because of free food and free lodging, and also because of religious enticements offered, (he) becomes part of this system. He grows up with intellectual blindfolds put up on him, is reared in the spirit of jehad and martyrdom. Former Pakistani Finance Minister Shahid Javed Burki explained in a paper he wrote in 1998 that these two extremes of youth being produced in the country were a result of the failure of the state to provide free, universal and good-quality education. He maintained that because the government was unable to provide education, private education took over. Those who could afford it went in for the expensive English-medium schools teaching Ordinary and Advanced Cambridge School Certificate levels to their students. Those who were poor ended up sending their children to free-of-cost madrassas, where the standard of education was very different and inadequate for preparing graduates to assume the social and economic responsibilities of modern life. So, it is a system that has

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collapsed... It has gradually been settling down, and it will keep going on in this direction unless something major happens".

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Chapter 19

Injecting jehad through textbooks

Some recent debates across three countries, the United States of America, India and Pakistan, on the question of textbooks reveal how the ruling regimes attempt to construct nationhood in the young minds and how textbooks are used as an instrument of ruling paradigms to develop a particular mind set. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, chaired by Vice President, Dick Cheney's wife, Lynne Cheney, published a report insisting that the American universities teach courses on western and American civilisation and America's continuing struggle to extend and defend the principles on which it was founded. The report was critical of several universities for unpatriotic incidents, which were focusing on other cultures and critiques of US policies that did not coincide with the Bush government's interests.

In India, texts by internationally acknowledged historians were first censored and then removed by the government because they discussed issues that did not conform to the construction of a dominant Hindu nation. Instead, the *Bhartia Janta Party* government of former Premier Vajpayee, despite strong resistance, introduced new school textbooks that reconstruct history to suit *Hindutva* ideology by the country's secular forces. Coming to Pakistan, an in depth study by academics from the Sustainable Development Institute of Pakistan revealed that Social Studies texts for the junior grades in Pakistan's public schools instruct students in the concept of jehad and martyrdom. Thousands of the religious seminaries in Pakistan are known to have contributed large numbers of young boys to the Taliban and jehadi outfits.

All three instances show how education can be used to construct a particular kind of national chauvinism and mind set and how ruling regimes intervene in education to promote certain ideologies that suits their own interests. In such circumstances secular and multicultural history is seen as subversive and governments try and impose a cultural uniformity through education. Textbooks are the obvious examples of how history is manipulated especially if it is conceived by ruling regimes and authored by people with interest in constructing a nation based on a homogeneous nationality. In texts where history is simplified by glorifying conquest or constructing humiliation, there is little interest in people's history.

In March 2004, the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA), the fundamentalist alliance of the religious parties in Pakistani parliament, disrupted the National Assembly proceedings and staged a walk-out on the grounds that a certain reference to jehad as well as other Koranic verses had been excluded from the new edition of

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a state prescribed Biology textbook. The MMA threatened to launch a protest movement if the Koranic verses were not reinstated. On March 30, however, Education Minister Zobaida Jalal clarified that no chapter or verses relating to jehad (holy war) or '*shahadat*' (martyrdom) had been deleted from textbooks, stating further that the particular verse referring to jehad had only been shifted from the Biology textbook for intermediate students (Classes XI & XII) to the matriculation level courses (Class X). The education ministry in Pakistan has not found it expedient to inquire - as most people familiar with the discipline of biology would - what references to jehad were doing in the biology curriculum in the first place. This is unsurprising, since it is the Ministry of Education, and its subsidiary Curriculum Wing, that put these references there.

However, the systematic slanting of the state prescribed curricula for all levels of the public education system in Pakistan was exposed in great detail by a report published by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, titled *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan*, jointly written by A. H. Nayyar and Ahmed Salim. The report, which is a close analysis of national curricula and textbooks by a group of independent scholars shows that for over two decades the national curricula and the officially mandated textbooks in the subjects of Social Studies, English, Urdu and Civics from Class I to Class XII have contained material that is directly contrary to the goals and values of a progressive, moderate and democratic Pakistan and encourage students to take part in jehad and martyrdom.

The report is abundantly clear on where the responsibility for these persistent distortions lies: "Over the years, it became apparent that it was in the interest of both the military and the theocrat to promote militarism in the Pakistani society. This confluence of interests now gets reflected in the educational material," says the SDPI Report. The opponents of the report have taken issue with its focus and tried to divert attention from its findings by questioning the agenda of its authors. But there is no arguing with the facts and findings it presents in great detail, including textbook references and their page numbers. Going through the SDPI study, it becomes clear that it is not just some *deeni* madrassas (religious seminaries) that are spreading hatred, sectarianism and religious bigotry, but also the prescribed government textbooks.

As a matter of fact, the concepts of jehad and martyrdom were incorporated into the Pakistani Curriculum after the start of the so-called Afghan jehad against the Soviet occupation troops. At that point, it suited Washington and its most allied of allies, Pakistan, to encourage and glorify the so-called mujahideen, or holy warriors, in the war against the Russians - and an American institution of higher education was asked to formulate textbooks for Pakistani schools accordingly. University of Nebraska at Omaha, which has a center for Afghan Studies was

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subsequently tasked by the American Central Intelligence Agency in the early eighties to rewrite textbooks for Afghan refugee children.

The new textbooks included hate material even in Arithmetic. For example, if a man has five bullets and two go into the heads of Russian soldiers, how many are left, kind of stuff. This was exposed in a research thesis from the New School, New York in about 2002. Since the Soviets are no more, the mujahideen have not only mutated into Taliban but have also outlived their usefulness, the same American University (of Nebraska at Omaha) has been given an additional grant by the Bush administration to re-re-write textbooks, taking out material on jehad, etc, as announced by none other than Laura Bush, wife of US President George Bush in early 2003.

Coming back to the SDPI report, it deals specifically with three subjects: Social Studies or Pakistan Studies, Urdu and English, which are compulsory for all Pakistani students. The report notes that though Islamiat is not compulsory for non-Muslim students, they are taught it through other subjects. Therefore, many non-Muslim students end up taking Islamiat anyway because they have the incentive of 25 percent extra marks. "One may get an impression from these textbooks that Pakistan is for Muslims alone because Islamiat is taught to all students whatever their faith, including a compulsory reading of the Holy Koran," says the SDPI report.

"The process of equating Muslim and Pakistani identities starts at early stages of school education. For example, the National Early Childhood Education (NECE) curriculum released in March 2002 stressed the need to nurture in children a sense of an Islamic identity and pride in being Pakistanis. There is no mention that this is to be done among Muslim students alone. The suggested material under this objective is Islamiat that is to be read by students of all religions. The curricula for all the compulsory subjects require every Pakistani, irrespective of his or her faith, to love, respect, be proud of and practice Islamic principles, traditions, customs and rituals", says the SDPI report.

The writers of the report maintain that Pakistan's public education system has an important role in determining how successful the nation can be in achieving the goal of a progressive, moderate and democratic Pakistan. And a key requirement is that children must learn to understand and value this goal and cherish the values of truthfulness, honesty, responsibility, equality, justice, and peace that go with it. "The identity and value system of children is strongly shaped by the national curricula and textbooks in Social Studies, English, Urdu and Civics from Class I to Class XII. The responsibility for designing them lies with the Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education and the provincial Text Book Boards. However, the March 2002 revision of curricula undertaken by the

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Curriculum Wing of the Ministry of Education did not address the problems that existed in earlier curriculum documents. In some cases, these problems are now even worse".

The writers then state: "Our analysis found that some of the most significant problems in the current curriculum and textbooks are: (i) young and impressionable minds are impregnated with seeds of hatred to serve self-styled ideological strait-jacket (ii) inaccuracies of fact and omissions that serve to substantially distort the nature and significance of actual events in our history (iii) insensitivity to the actually existing religious diversity of the nation (iv) incitement to militancy and violence, including encouragement of concepts like jehad and *Shahadat* (v) perspectives that encourage prejudice, bigotry and discrimination towards fellow citizens, especially women and religious minorities, and other nations (vi) a glorification of war and the use of force, (vii) Omission of concepts, events and material that could encourage critical self-awareness among students (viii) outdated and incoherent pedagogical practices that hinder the development of interest and insight among students.

The SDPI report then gave a few examples:

"The books on Social Studies systematically misrepresent events that have happened over the past several decades of Pakistan's history, including those which are within living memory of many people. This history is narrated with distortions and omissions. The causes, effects and responsibility for key events are presented so as to leave a false understanding of our national experience. A large part of the history of this region is also simply omitted, making it difficult to properly interpret events, and narrowing the perspective that should be open to students. Worse, the material is presented in a way that encourages the student to marginalise and be hostile towards other social groups and people in the region".

"The national curricula and textbooks are insensitive to the religious diversity of the Pakistani society. While the teaching of Islamiat is compulsory for Muslim students, on average over a quarter of the material in books to teach Urdu as a language is on one religion. The books on English have lessons with religious content. The subject of Islamiat is also taught in the Social Studies classes. Thus, the entire education is heavily loaded with religious teachings, reflecting in this respect a very narrow view held by a minority among Muslims that all the education be essentially that of Islamiat. There is an undercurrent of exclusivist and divisive tendencies at work in the subject matter recommended for studies in the curriculum documents as well as in textbooks. Pakistani nationalism is repeatedly defined in a manner that is bound to exclude non-Muslim Pakistanis from either being Pakistani nationals or from even being good human beings.

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Therefore, much of this material would run counter to any efforts at national integration".

The Constitution of Pakistan is cited but misinterpreted in making the reading of the Koran compulsory. The Constitution requires the compulsory reading of the Koran for Muslim students alone, but in complete disregard for the restriction, it is included in the textbooks of a compulsory subject like Urdu, which is to be read by students of all religions. The Class III Urdu textbook has 7 lessons on Nazra Koran and its translations. The Urdu and Social Studies curricula even ask for all the students to be taught Islamic religious practices like *Namaz* and *Wuzu*. Besides severe pedagogical problems like uneven standards of lessons in books on English and Urdu languages and bad English even in the English language books, glaring contradictions exist in books on Social Studies, making student unable to be a critical learner".

The SDPI report says that the Pakistani curriculum as well as the books lay an excessive emphasis on the ideology of Pakistan which is a post-independence construction devised by those political forces which were initially inimical to the creation of Pakistan to sanctify their politics. "Most of the problems cited above have their origin in the curriculum documents and syllabi and the instructions to textbooks authors issued from the Curriculum Wing of the Education Ministry. As long as the same institutions continue to be asked to devise national curricula, the problems will persist. The problems get further accentuated at the level of textbook writing where authors produce books that are heavily loaded with doctrinal material and are devoid of much useful instructional content. The provincial textbook boards are to be held squarely responsible for repeatedly failing to produce good and useful textbooks".

While giving recommendations, the SDPI report says the education reform needs to start with a clear understanding of the roots of the present crisis and a detailed plan that includes, where necessary, altering both the structure and content of the appropriate parts of the education decision making and implementation bureaucracy. These disciplines, like many others, have undergone a profound transformation in other societies. Such changes need to be incorporated if Pakistan's children are to develop the understanding and skills they will need to keep up with their peers around the world in the twenty-first century. In an age of globalisation, Pakistan's children need to learn about their society in the larger context of other societies of the world, and understand how their history and geography and identity is inextricably linked to that of many others".

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Chapter 20

The media organs of jehad

The mushroom growth of radical Islamic publications, especially magazines and newspapers, have introduced a new breed of jehadi journalism in Pakistan which is committed to pan-Islamic causes and advocates the waging of jehad (holy war) against the infidel states -- the United States, Israel and India.

Twenty Pakistan-based militant organisations bring out around thirty monthly, fortnightly, weekly and daily publications, that are a blend of information and disinformation designed for the countless millions of innocents being educated in religious seminaries, where they are taught to read, write and recite the Holy Koran by heart -- to the exclusion of all other disciplines. Those taking out these publications say they promote an alternate worldview to the mainstream press. But their critics maintain they are doing nothing positive by radicalising the Pakistani society. Some of these publications have even grabbed a share in the mainstream market, where their influence keeps growing on the back of the rising anti-US sentiment since the toppling of the hardline Islamic Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq has added fuel to the fire.

A study conducted by a German NGO titled, "*Mediaeval Mindset, Modern Media: Kabul to Kashmir,*" and published by Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, discussed the growing culture of hate speech and pondered how media could be instrumental in promoting culture of religious and political tolerance and peace in Pakistan. In legalistic terms, said the study, most of the jehadi publications have legitimate declarations issued by competent authorities, a few among them even certified by the Audit Bureau of Circulation that entitles them to get official government advertisements. The study says the genre of jehadi journalism coincides with the Afghan jehad of the 1980s, when wire services like Afghan Islamic Press, Kashmir Media Service and Kashmir Press International cropped up. With the rise of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan, these publications received massive boost and became pretty vocal and proactive in favour of what could be described as "Talibanisation of mind and soul" in Pakistan.

The most feared jehadi outfit operating from Pakistan and active in Jammu & Kashmir -- *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, led by Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, publishes monthly *Voice of Islam* (English), monthly *Al-Ribat* (Arabic), monthly *Majallatul Dawa* (Urdu), monthly *Tayyibat* (Urdu), monthly *Zarb-e-Taiba* (Urdu) and weekly *Jehad Times* (Urdu and Sindhi). The outfit also has a web-based radio, *Al-Jehad* in Urdu and Arabic languages. The study says that another militant group waging jehad against the Indian security forces in the Kashmir valley, *Harkatul Mujahideen* led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman Khalil, prints monthly *Sada-i-Mujahid* and weekly

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Al-Hilal. With stories about Islamic heroes, these magazines inspire the readers to wage jehad, while promising heavenly rewards for the martyrs.

According to one of the *Majjalatul Dawa*'s *2004* editions, the monthly publication of *Jamaat-ul-Dawa* that replaced the now banned extremist group *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, the establishment of *deeni* madrassas or religious seminaries was meant to contain the invasion of Christians, Jews and Hindus who want to erase the spirit of Islam, jehad and the *shariah* (Islamic law) from Muslim countries. "Most of our leaders are lap dogs of the Americans. The United States has forced our rulers to change the curriculum of the textbooks that is Islam-based. The government recently notified a hanger tax on those female students who wear *burqa* in schools who are now required to hang them up".

The May 2004 issue of the *Majjalatul Dawa* also praised the exploits of Abu Qasim, "a jehadi mastermind of suicide attacks against Indian dogs and pigs" (soldiers) who recently embraced martyrdom. "All mothers should feel pride for having given birth to a jehadi like Qasim. All boys should aspire to die like Qasim. O boys, forget about this material world, join the mujahideen and fight the devil forces of India who are killing and raping your mothers, daughters and sisters. Abu Qasim's blood invites you to become a mujahid. Your hero should be Qasim, not a traitor like General Pervez Musharraf."

Yet, another story in the *Majjalatul Dawa* told of the exploits of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, which was banned by the US as well as the Pakistani governments, after the September 11 terror attacks. "With the help of specialists, Prof. Hafiz Saeed preached jehad to the deaf mute that Allah has created the human beings for only one mission – waging jehad (holy war) against infidels who are out to destroy Islam. You are not less important than others because of your special status. It is also your duty to go to the Occupied Jammu & Kashmir and wage jehad against the Hindu bastards. Then I could claim that my handicapped jehadis are enough to kill the healthy Indian dogs".

Majjalatul Dawa also carries letters from militants killed while fighting the Indian army in the disputed Kashmir region. "I urge all my relatives to send their sons for jehad and in return get a place in heaven", Abu Jarar Riaz, a *Lashkar-e-Toiba* member killed in Jammu and Kashmir wrote in his last will. A *Lashkar* pamphlet titled "*Why Are We Waging Jehad?*" establishes the Muslim right to revenge in history. Jehad is obligatory, it pronounces, for taking back Spain where Muslims ruled for 800 years. "Same is the case with Nepal and Myanmar. Of course, the whole of India, including Kashmir, Hyderabad, Bihar, Junagadh and Assam also has to be retaken".

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Maulana Masood Azhar's *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (JeM) brings out fortnightly *Jaish-e-Muhammad* in both Urdu and English languages and monthly *Binnat-e-Ayesha* in Urdu, which is basically meant for women. The *Jaish* also offers electronic newsletter at its website http://www.jaish-e-muhammad.org. The now banned *Al-Rasheed Trust*, ostensibly a charity organisation but which funds the *Jaish*, advocates a jehadi view of life through daily *Islam* (Urdu) and weekly *Zarb-i-Momin* (Urdu/English). *Zarb-e-Momin* (Blow of the Pious), a weekly published by the *Al-Rasheed Trust* in Karachi, under the headline "Israel Spends $74 million to Spread Prostitution in Afghanistan", said in one such issues, "This money will be spent setting up brothels, pubs and casinos in Afghanistan. Funneled through Population Service International, ostensibly to control population, these funds are meant to lure Afghan women to prostitution".

The same issue also said that the American soldiers are promoting pornography in Afghanistan. "In Khost, the Americans are distributing triple X CDs, videos and magazines as freebies by the thousands. They have even set up internet cafes that show free porn movies...If the Afghans got rid of the Russians, how can they tolerate the Americans who are committing atrocities against Muslims all over the world?" *Zarb-e-Momin* does not publish pictures of human faces in line with Islamic edicts. Instead, its favourite images depict either weapons or Muslims' holy places. "Who will free me from the clutches of the Jews?" asked the paper under a picture of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem. With a circulation of around 145,000 copies, *Zarb-e-Momin* also quotes Islam's prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as asking followers to expel infidels from the Arab peninsula.

The contents of these publications support the worldview of the Taliban, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* and *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, the study said. Some prominent Kashmir specific publications making their regular appearance on the newsstands include monthly *Mahaz-i-Kashmir* (*Jami'at-ul-Mujahideen Jammu and Kashmir*), monthlies *Shahadat* (Urdu), *The Message* (English) and an Arabic monthly (*Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen* Jammu and Kashmir), fortnightly *Jehad-i-Kashmir* (*Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu & Kashmir*) and monthly *Kashmir Digest* (Urdu/English) printed in Birmingham, England for Kashmiris. The publishers of these newspapers, weeklies and monthlies often make claim of circulation touching the otherwise known largest ones in the market.

Jamaat-ul-Dawa's Monthly magazine *Majjalatul Dawa* (Urdu) claims the highest circulation of 400,000 copies per month. Next comes weekly *Zarb-e-Momin* with the claim of 250,000 sold copies every week. Weekly *Jehad Times* claims to have a weekly print order of over 200,000 copies. Daily *Islam*, Karachi/Islamabad, launched on September 18, 2001, after attacks in New York and Washington, claims that 60,000 of its copies are sold every day throughout Pakistan. In terms of their contents, these publications fall in the category of alternative media as

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they propagate the jehadi view of life and aspire to sharpen jehadi identity. These publications employ over 500 journalists, the sole conditionality to be part of their team being to believe in the jehadi worldview. Most of these so-called journalists believe that their Islamic publications provide alternative views on politics and international affairs, lacking in the mainstream papers, besides countering propaganda of the Western media, so that a reader can form an opinion by comparing the two versions.

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Chapter 21

Is al-Qaeda getting stronger?

Since President Bush's declaration of war against global terrorism, the United States and its allies have claimed to have killed or captured around 75 percent of the al-Qaeda's senior leaders. Yet, the frequency of terror attacks worldwide being attributed to the Osama-led terrorist network has increased, as compared to the pre-9/11 period.

Most of the Americans were unfamiliar with the al-Qaeda until the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. According to the CIA claims, using the group's trademark style of tightly coordinated and high-profile violence, the al-Qaeda operatives hijacked four US airliners and successfully crashed two of them into the World Trade Center towers in New York, with a third hitting the Pentagon headquarters in Washington and a fourth crashing in rural Pennsylvania after the passengers attempted to regain control of the plane.

The al-Qaeda, which means "The Base" in Arabic, was founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden who continues to be the organisation's undisputed leader and driving force. The al-Qaeda has other names that it goes by, such as Islamic Army, World Islamic Front for Jehad Against Jews and Crusaders, Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places, Osama bin Laden Network, Osama bin Laden Organisation, Islamic Salvation Foundation, and The Group for the Preservation of the Holy Sites. The aim behind the al-Qaeda's establishment was to expand the resistance movement against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan into a pan-Islamic resistance movement.

The religious inspiration of the al-Qaeda has its roots in the *Wahhabi* sect, the creed embraced by the current rulers of Saudi Arabia. The ultimate goal of the al-Qaeda is to establish a *Wahhabi* Caliphate across the entire Islamic world, by working with allied Islamic extremist groups to overthrow regimes it deems non-Islamic (i.e. non-*Wahhabi* Islamists). It sees western governments (particularly that of the US) as those, which are interfering in the affairs of Islamic nations in the interests of western corporations. Having fought the US-sponsored jehad against the Soviet Occupation troops in Afghanistan, bin Laden had apparently developed a taste for jehad, which was originally the concept of a holy war designed to liberate occupied Muslim lands. Laden left Saudi Arabia to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan in 1979 where he sponsored and led a number of Arabs fighting in Afghanistan against the Soviet troops in the 1980s.

In the mid-1980s, bin Laden co-founded with the Palestinian leader Abdullah Azzam the *Maktab-al-Khidamat* or Services Office, to help funnel fighters and

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money to the Peshawar-based Afghan resistance groups. The *Maktab* ultimately established recruitment centers around the world -- including the US, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan -- that enlisted, sheltered and transported thousands of individuals from over 50 countries to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. It also organised and funded paramilitary training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Osama bin Laden imported heavy equipment to cut roads and tunnels and to build hospitals and storage depots in Afghanistan. However, Laden split from Abdullah Azzam in the late 1980s to extend his campaign to all corners of the globe while the latter focused his concerns on the support to Muslims waging military campaigns across the world.

Osama's final break with Abdullah Azzam came in a dispute over the scope of jehad. Laden wished to extend the conflict to non-military operations in other parts of the world while Azzam in contrast, wanted to remain focused on military campaigns. Laden envisioned an all-Arab legion, which eventually could be used to wage jehad in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. On the other hand, Abdullah strongly opposed making war against fellow-Muslims. That was the time Laden's followers started undermining Azzam's position by spreading rumours that he was an American spy. On November 24, 1989, Azzam and two of his sons were blown up by a car bomb as they were driving to a mosque in Peshawar. Although no one claimed responsibility for the killings, many were blamed, including bin Laden.

Towards the end of the Soviet occupation, many mujahideen wanted to expand their operations to include Islamist struggles in other parts of the world. A number of overlapping and interrelated organisations were formed to further those aspirations. One of these was al-Qaeda, which was formed by Osama bin Laden in 1988. The name "al-Qaeda" was not self-chosen. It was rather coined by the United States' government, based on the name of a computer file of bin Laden's that listed the names of contacts he had made at the *Maktab-al-Khidamat.*

After the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Osama-led al-Qaeda decided to lie low for a couple of years, quietly building a financial and operational infrastructure while bin Laden returned to his native Saudi Arabia as a war hero. He raised money for the cause from among his wealthy Saudi peers. When the Gulf War broke out in 1991, bin Laden offered to raise an army of mujahideen in defence of Saudi Arabia, but he was spurned in favour of the US assistance. He considered the US presence in the Persian Gulf offensive and beginning around 1992, he led the al-Qaeda into a new role with the stated purpose of driving the US forces out of the Gulf.

The al-Qaeda launched a series of terrorist attacks against the United States' interests in the Saudi kingdom, starting with a failed attempt to target US troops

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in Yemen in 1992. Subsequent attacks include numerous embassy bombings, a boat attack on the U.S.S. Cole, bombings of airplanes etc. As Osama tried to exploit the general public sentiments against deployment of the American troops in Saudi Arabia, he was compelled to leave the Holy Kingdom. In 1991 he moved to Sudan, whose Islamic government was fighting a civil war at that time. Money poured in from false charitable funds such as Benevolence International and several groups that bin Laden's brother-in-law Mohammed Jamal Khalifa started. Laden sent his men to Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and the United States. Money and arms reportedly flowed through cities like Chicago, Illinois, Houston, Texas, Kansas City, Missouri, Santa Clara, California and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In 1996, however, Osama was expelled from Sudan after possible participation in the 1994 attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak while his motorcade was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Laden returned to Afghanistan with some of his Sudanese operatives.

In February 1998, Osama bin Laden and Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri issued a joint statement under the banner of "the World Islamic Front for Jehad Against the Jews and Crusaders" saying that it was the duty of all Muslims to kill the US citizens, either civilian or military, and their allies everywhere. From January 5, to January 8, 2000, the al-Qaeda held its 2000 annual summit in a condominium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Malaysian authorities found out about the summit beforehand and provided videotapes to the American intelligence agencies after the summit concluded. The US agencies believe that several of the 9/11 hijackers had attended the summit. Despite al-Qaeda being placed on top of the list of Western security and intelligence agencies, its members were trained to fly both in the UK and in the US for one year before the September 11 attack.

The US intelligence agencies attribute al-Qaeda's unusual capacity to withstand sustained human losses and material wastage to its unique structure and ideology. According to them, five characteristics enhance both its survivability and force multiplication. The terror outfit is neither one single group nor a coalition of two-dozen large, medium and small groups. It is a conglomerate of groups spread throughout the world, operating as a network. Its affiliates include the Egyptian Islamic Jehad (EIJ), Al Jammaya-al Islamia (IJ: Islamic Group of Egypt), the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA), the Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), the Jaish-e-Mohammed of Kashmir (JeM: Army of Mohammad) and the Abu Sayyaf Group of the Philippines (ASG). The constituent groups of the network have their own command, control and communication structures. But whenever there is the need, these groups interact or merge ideologically, financially as well as operationally.

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According to a 2002 Jane's Intelligence Review report, al-Qaeda happens to be a conglomerate of quasi-independent Islamic terrorist cells in countries spread across at least 26 countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Burma, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania, Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Bosnia as well as the West Bank. "Other countries where al-Qaeda is known to have covert operational cells, include Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia, the United States, Britain, France and Canada", added the Jane's Intelligence Review.

The al-Qaeda reportedly provides leadership at both the international and national levels. Although Osama bin Laden has identified the US as its prime enemy, he is an internationalist. As such, Osama is likely to target not only Western targets, but also regimes that identify with the West: from Israel to Pakistan. However, the leaders of the other groups that work with Osama also have crucial domestic agendas. For instance, while deputising for Osama, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, also leads the EIJ in Egypt. The broad ideological disposition of the organisation advocates pan-Islamism and not pan-Arabism. As a result, Osama's ideology cuts across divisions and appeals to both West Asian and non-West Asian groups, including Asian Islamic groups.

American terrorism experts believe it is in Osama's psyche to conduct multiple terrorist attacks. For instance, when he attacked the US diplomatic targets in East Africa, both the embassies were bombed almost at the same time. Similarly, the 9/11 attacks in the US were coordinated. The three targets were to be taken within an hour to deny his enemies the lead-time to thwart the attacks as well as to shock them. He was able to do so by meticulous planning, thorough preparation and proper attention to detail: all qualities of a professional terrorist. Furthermore, he is patient, cunning and deceptive. The planning and preparations to attack the US embassies in East Africa lasted five years.

Terrorism experts further point out that a significant characteristic of bin Laden is his ability to absorb ideas and operationalise them. According to western media reports, the idea of airborne suicide operations actually grew from a plan conceived by the Oxford and Swansea (Wales)-educated Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf in the Philippines and another al-Qaeda pilot to crash-dive a plane full of chemicals on to the Pentagon in 1994. However, an accidental fire in Manila reportedly disrupted Ramzi's plans, which included the simultaneous bombing of 11 planes over the Pacific and the assassination of the visiting US President Bill Clinton and the Pope. After testing one of the bombs over an aircraft flying over Japan, Ramzi fled to Pakistan, from where he was arrested and extradited to the United States. Although he is serving a jail term in the US for bombing the World Trade

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Centre in 1993, Osama decided to go ahead and finally operationalised Ramzi's unique terror plan.

Soon after the 9/11 terror attacks, the operational headquarters of the al-Qaeda in Afghanistan were disrupted by the US air strikes. Several of the top al-Qaeda leaders have already been captured in Pakistan in 2002 and 2003, and several more are suspected to be hiding in the region. However, the al-Qaeda chief and his second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, a former surgeon and lifelong jehadi, are still at large. If bin Laden is the heart of the al-Qaeda, Zawahiri is considered to be the brain. He was charged with complicity in the assassination of Egyptian president Anwer Sadat, who in his opinion was acting as an American agent. Zawahiri is the second-most wanted terrorist in the world, according to the FBI and also carries a $25 million price on his head.

Until March 2003, al-Qaeda's chief operational commander was thought to be Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, a tactical mastermind connected to nearly every major al-Qaeda attack in the last decade, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Thought to be the brains behind the September 11 attack, he was captured from Rawalpindi in March 2003 from the residence of an office bearer of the *Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan*. The invasion of Afghanistan drove most of the al-Qaeda's leadership out of the country and many of them are now thought to be in Pakistan, while Pakistan's intelligence services have been in cahoots with the terrorist network for several years. Now a US ally in the war on terrorism, Pakistan has been working closely with the CIA and the FBI to capture al-Qaeda operatives working throughout the country.

The regional and international manhunts have apparently damaged al-Qaeda's ability to execute major attacks. However, substantial evidence suggests that the network still has hundreds or thousands of operatives at large across the globe, including sleeper agents and others in the US. Whatever the future holds, terrorism experts believe the al-Qaeda will almost certainly continue to pose a threat to Western influences and the stability of governments across the Mideast and Southeast Asia. Since September 11, 2001, when the US vowed to eliminate bin Laden and his al-Qaeda, the terror outfit has suffered numerous setbacks and it has been forced to redefine its operations, tactics and targets. Laden's International Islamic Front, an umbrella organisation for jehadi organisations of which al-Qaeda is an element, has apparently focused its attention primarily on attacking the US and Western interests in a number of countries, which is most likely to continue.

As things stand today, it appears that the al-Qaeda has been badly affected by a change of fortunes in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, where it had enjoyed what amounted to be a truce, if not active support from the powerful establishment. A

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number of al-Qaeda suspects are now believed to be in Saudi jails, while in Pakistan, which came under intense US pressure, the blind eye that once gazed on al-Qaeda is now looking with 20-20 vision. As a direct result of this, al-Qaeda is expected to open some new fronts both in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Indeed, the ceasefire that it followed in Saudi Arabia - bin Laden's country of birth - has already been broken.

Among the 14,000 male members of the Saudi royal family there is a strong but sidelined lobby of princes who support bin Laden. They do not necessarily agree with his strict *Wahhabi* agenda, rather, they seek to use him as a means of getting at the ruling elite. In terms of its new mission, terrorism experts believe, the al-Qaeda will actively play along with this. After all, if nothing else, it still needs the funds that apparently flow from its supporters in the kingdom. In Pakistan too, the knives, literally, are going to be drawn.

From the early stages of the war on terror, there were media reports that the al-Qaeda and the Taliban had been assured by Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment that Islamabad would wear two faces - one acceptable to the US, the other friendly towards al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the latter, especially, having enjoyed long-time support from Pakistan. As a result, General Musharraf made much of his alliance with counterpart Bush on the international stage, while on the domestic front the crackdown on terror remained merely a lip service. This changed though, and in time, whether through US insistence or for another agenda, Musharraf's crackdown has begun to bite.

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Did US actions create al-Qaeda?

Many analysts believe that the al-Qaeda would not have come into being without the US funding and training given to the Afghan mujahideen fighting the Soviet invasion of 1979 to 1989. The Pakistani military establishment may have tended to supply the most extreme Islamist Afghan fighters with the lion's share of the imported weaponry. Critics of the US and Western policies in the Middle East and worldwide note that some actions have caused a great deal of opposition among Arab and Islamic people and they regard terrorism as a predictable reaction. Some examples of controversial policies include: the US support of Israel in its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, the US support to some dictators in the Middle East including Saddam Hussein in Iraq before the Gulf War, the use of Saudi Arabian bases by allied forces after 1991 while being the birthplace of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula is seen as a Holy Land where non-believers do not belong and finally it includes periodic military action against Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom from 1991 to the 2003 Iraq War, with the last particularly controversial.

The al-Qaeda arrests

Since Musharraf's joining hands with the US in its war on terror, the al-Qaeda network has suffered severe damages to its command and control structure, especially because of the arrests of its main operatives from Pakistan. Some of the big al-Qaeda catches were Abu Zubaydah (arrested from Faisalabad March, 2002), Ramzi bin al-Shibah (captured from Karachi in September, 2002), Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (arrested from Rawalpindi in March, 2003) and Waleed bin Attash (captured from Karachi in April, 2003). All those captured were instantly handed over to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation for interrogation. Of these, Khalid Sheikh was suspected to have masterminded the 9/11 strikes in the US with the help of Ramzi while Waleed was one of the suspects in the attack on the US naval ship U.S.S. Cole in October 2000. Zubaydah, reportedly a computer expert, was billed as the No. 3 of al-Qaeda before his arrest. Under these circumstances, the obvious al-Qaeda objectives are clearly evident - to deal with what it considers 'traitors' and the ruling agents of infidels in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, though there are those in the Pakistani intelligence circles who refuse to believe that the Osama-led outfit is as powerful and extensive as being painted by the American intelligence agencies.

Is al-Qaeda winning the war?

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Despite the nabbing of many al-Qaeda heavy weights from various parts of the world, especially Pakistan, there is mounting concern in the West that the terror outfit and its international affiliates are actually stronger now than they were before the 9/11 terror attacks.

A May 2004 report by the Jane's Intelligence Digest asked an important question that might have appeared unthinkable in the aftermath of the attacks against New York and Washington: Is al-Qaeda winning the war? For many people (at least in the West) the very question is provocative and even outrageous. Their argument would probably run along the lines that the US and its close allies hold both the moral high ground, as well as possessing the resources and determination to defeat an international criminal network.

The invasion of Afghanistan and the ousting of the Taliban regime have denied al-Qaeda's access to training camps that operated under state protection, the pro-Western orientation of the current Pakistani leadership has limited the group's scope for geographical movement and the capture or killing of senior al-Qaeda operatives has demoralised and undermined the movement. However, the JID report adds that while there are elements of truth in all of the above assertions, the overall progress made by the anti-terrorist coalition led by the United States is extremely limited compared to the mounting evidence that popular support for bin Laden's group and its ideology is, in fact, growing stronger.

Yet another report published in May 2004 by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) suggested that despite losing Afghanistan as a training ground for its recruits, al-Qaeda has "fully reconstituted, set its sights firmly on the US and its closest Western allies in Europe and established a new and effective modus operandi that increasingly exploited local affiliates". The IISS' Strategic Survey 2003/04 also warned that al-Qaeda must be expected to keep trying to develop more promising plans for terrorist operations in North America and Europe. The authors of the IISS report suggested that there is the potential for weapons of mass destruction to be used by the group. None of this points to an organisation in retreat or facing a crisis of morale. In fact, according to estimates quoted by the IISS, al-Qaeda is active in over 60 countries and may have as many as 18,000 potential terrorists at its disposal.

The al-Qaeda manual

The al-Qaeda operatives around the world are trained to endure military defeats and continue to fight their "jehad against tyrants" – no matter how long it takes, according to the al-Qaeda war manual, a copy of which was obtained by the American Central Intelligence Agency.

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"Patience" is listed in the 180-page how-to guide for terrorists as one of the 14 qualifications for membership in the militant Islamic network.

"The member should have plenty of patience for enduring afflictions if he is overcome by the enemies," says the secret manual, which was first confiscated by British police during a raid on an al-Qaeda safe house and was later translated from Arabic by US officials.

"He should not abandon this great path and sell himself and his religion to the enemies for his freedom," it adds. "He should be patient in performing the work, even if it lasts a long time."

Muslims under 15 need not apply. It says they lack the "great psychological, mental and intellectual fitness" the job demands. Members, who are taken prisoner, are instructed to complain about "torture" and "mistreatment," and to go on a "hunger strike" as a last resort for public sympathy. They are also told to "shout Islamic slogans" while being transported in public places, and spend their time in jail creating "Islamic programs for themselves" and "memorising the Koran," the Muslims' sacred book. And the American CIA maintains that some of the detainees at Camp X-ray in Guantanamo, Cuba, have already followed this formula.

The instructions on patience are a chilling reminder that this breed of terrorists is hardy and disciplined, as well as cunning, and that America's war on terror – despite recent successes in Afghanistan – is far from over. Their manual, though it does not include specific operations planning against the US, provides a general profile of the al-Qaeda enemy, its degree of religious motivation, its methods of operation and its level of sophistication – which the CIA officials call remarkably high.

When communicating, for example, the manual tells the al-Qaeda operatives to use transceivers near places with high wireless frequency, such as TV and radio stations and embassies, "in order to prevent the enemy from identifying its location." It also instructs them to always memorise phone numbers, but "if the brother had to write them, he should do so using a code so they do not appear as telephone numbers (figures from a shopping list, etc.).

Contacts among members are kept so secret that terrorist trainers do not even know each other's names. When traveling on a mission, the terrorists are told to do so during the day. At night, "travelers are few, and there are search parties and checkpoints along the way," the guidebook warns. Every base is covered. It even has rules for conduct on "special missions." "The brother traveling on a

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special mission should not get involved in religious issues (advocating good and denouncing evil) or day-to-day matters (seat reservation ...)," it says.

The manual also instructs al-Qaeda sleeper agents on how to blend in with Western societies by avoiding Muslim appearances. "Have a general appearance that does not indicate Islamic orientation," it says. They are told to cut their beards, lose the long shirts and shelve their pocket-sized Korans used for recitation. This is how the nineteen September 11 hijackers fit in. In addition, they are told to make excuses for fasting, such as saying they feel ill. And they are told they can combine their noon and afternoon prayers, as well as sunset and evening prayers, to avoid drawing the attention of "the polytheists," as they refer to Christians.

The manual reminds the operatives that 80 percent of intelligence about "the enemy" can be gleaned from public sources. "Through these means, it is possible to learn about major government events, and about the news, meetings and travel of presidents, ministers and commanders," the document says. It adds, quoting a Muslim general: "The nation that wants to achieve victory over its enemy must know that enemy very well." al-Qaeda encourages the recruitment of agents who work as "employees at borders, airports and seaports."

Regarding surveillance, the manual recommends photographing and videotaping attack targets – but only where it is permitted. "We discourage taking pictures where it is forbidden," it instructs. Targets listed for "blasting and destroying" include:

- Places of amusement
- Embassies
- Vital economic centers
- Bridges leading into and out of the cities
- Strategic buildings
- Important establishments
- Military bases
- Important ministries such as those of defence and internal security
- Airports
- Seaports
- Land border points
- Radio and TV stations.

The manual quotes liberally from the Koran to justify violent goals and methods. The "main mission" of the "Islamic movement," it says, is to "overthrow godless regimes" and replace them with "an Islamic regime." Regarding "the oppressors,"

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members must pledge "to slaughter them like lambs, and let the Nile, al-Asi and Euphrates rivers flow with their blood."

It says "Islam is not just performing rituals, but a complete system: Religion and government, worship and jehad, ethics and dealing with people, and the Koran and the sword." The manual says the hypocrites of the faith have strayed from "Allah's course" and fallen in "love with the world." It criticises their "loathing of death and their abandonment of jehad," or holy war against "infidels" or "unbelievers," which it defines as "Christians, Jews."

Citing the Koran and *Hadiths* – the stories passed down about their prophet Mohammed – the manual exhorts the faithful to fight and die "for the cause of Allah," and exalts martyrs. It says members should be willing to "sacrifice" themselves "for the purpose of achieving the goal, and establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth."

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Chapter 22

Taliban: Still alive and kicking

The former Taliban regime of Afghanistan was actually brought to power with United States' silent blessing as it dallied in an abortive new "Great Game" in central Asia. Keen to see Afghanistan under strong central rule to allow a US-led group to build a multi-billion-dollar oil and gas pipeline, Washington urged key allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to back the Taliban militia's bid for power in 1996.

At the start of the 1980's, although backed by an expeditionary force of around 117,000 Soviet troops, the Babrak Karmal regime was unable to establish authority outside Kabul. Around 85% of the countryside eluded effective government control. An overwhelming majority of Afghans opposed the communist regime, either actively or passively. Afghan freedom fighters made it almost impossible for the regime to maintain a system of local government outside major urban centres. Poorly armed at first, in 1984 the Afghan mujahideen began receiving substantial assistance in the form of weapons and training from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other outside powers.

Late in 1985, Afghan mujahideen were active in and around Kabul, launching rocket attacks and assassinating high government officials. The failure of the Soviet Union to win over a significant number of Afghan collaborators or to rebuild a viable Afghan army forced it to bear an increasing responsibility for fighting the resistance and for civilian administration. Soviet and popular displeasure with the Karmal regime led to its demise in May 1986. Muhammad Najibullah, former chief of the Afghan secret police, replaced Karmal. As Prime Minister, though, Najibullah was ineffective and highly dependent on the Soviet support.

It was not until 1988 that Pakistan and Afghanistan, with America and Russia serving as guarantors, signed an agreement settling major differences between them. The agreement, known as the Geneva accords, amongst other things, called for Soviet and US noninterference in the internal affairs of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the right of refugees to return to Afghanistan without fear of being harassed and, perhaps most important of all, a timetable that ensured full Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan by February 15, 1989. About 14,500 Soviet and an estimated one million Afghan lives were lost between 1979 and the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

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Significantly, the Afghan mujahideen were neither party to the negotiations nor to the 1988 agreement and consequently refused to accept the terms of the accords. As a result, civil war did not end with the Soviet withdrawal, as scheduled in February 1989. Instead, it escalated. Najibullah's regime; though failing to win popular support, territory or international recognition; was able to remain in power until 1992.

The Soviet occupation force of some 115,000 troops and the Karmal government waged several campaigns to crush the uprisings with mass arrests, torture, executions of dissidents as well as aerial bombardments and executions in the countryside. Some one million Afghans died during this period, most in aerial bombardments. These measures further expanded the resistance to the communist government in Kabul and fuelled a flow of refugees out of the country that soon reached five million out of an estimated population of about sixteen million.

That was the time when Islamic organisations became the heart of the resistance, with most of them operating from inside Pakistan and Iran. They collectively became known as the jehad fighters or mujahideen. Seeing the conflict as a way to extend the Cold War battleground, the United States and Saudi Arabia in particular, provided massive support for the resistance, nearly all of it funneled through Pakistan. Thousands of Muslim radicals from the Middle East, North Africa and other Muslim countries joined the resistance forces. Most fought with Pashtun factions that had the strongest support from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the *Hizb-e-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and *Ittehad-i-Islami* of Professor Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Among them was Osama bin Laden, who reached Afghanistan in the early 1980s and built training facilities there for these foreign recruits.

In early 1992, the forces of Tajik leader Ahmed Shah Masood, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, head of a powerful Uzbek militia that had been allied with Najibullah, and the Hazara faction *Hizb-e-Wahdat*, joined together in a coalition they called the Northern Alliance. On April 15, 1992, non-Pashtun militia forces that had been allied with the government mutinied and took control of Kabul airport, preventing President Najibullah from leaving the country and pre-empting a UN peacekeeping role.

Najibullah took refuge in the UN compound in Kabul, where he remained for the next four years. On April 25, 1992, Ahmed Shah Masood entered Kabul, and the next day, the Northern Alliance factions reached an agreement on a coalition government that excluded the *Hizb-e-Islami* led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar - who was considered to be the protégé of Pakistani establishment. Rejecting the arrangement, Hekmatyar launched massive and indiscriminate rocket attacks on Kabul that continued intermittently until he was forced out of Kabul.

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In June 1992 Berhanuddin Rabbani, the Tajik leader of *Jamiat-e-Islami*, became president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, while Gulbuddin Hekmatyar continued to bombard Kabul with rockets. In January 1994, Hekmatyar joined forces with General Abdul Rashid Dostum, head of a powerful Uzbek militia that had been allied with Najibullah until early 1992, to oust Rabbani and his defence minister, Ahmad Shah Masood, launching full-scale civil war in Kabul. By 1995, one-third of the city had been reduced to rubble.

In areas under their control, Taliban authorities enforced their version of Islamic law, enacting policies prohibiting women from working outside the home in activities other than health care and requiring corporal punishment for those convicted of certain crimes. The Taliban also enforced a strict dress code for women, and required men to have 'fist-length' beards and to refrain from Western haircuts or dress. Arguably, the most powerful agency within the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (*al-Amr bil Maruf wal Nahianal Munkir*), which was responsible for the enforcement of all Taliban decrees concerning moral behaviour.

Through 2000 and 2001, fighting continued in the North East between Masood's forces and the Taliban with the latter taking control of Taloqan in September 2000, driving out the Northern Alliance troops further east to Faizabad. On September 9, 2001, two days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Ahmed Shah Masood was assassinated when suicide bombers disguised as journalists detonated a device hidden in a video camera. Northern Alliance leaders later claimed that the Algerian assassins were linked to Osama bin Laden and the assassination was designed to deprive the Northern Alliance of its most effective leader in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC.

The US-led Operation Enduring Freedom against Afghanistan was launched on October 7, 2001 while the Northern Alliance troops entered Kabul on November 13, 2001, eventually leading to the fall of the Taliban regime. It was a twist none had expected, a sudden Taliban collapse few had predicted. In less than a week, the famed reputation of the Taliban's fighting abilities was pounded to dust under the Northern Alliance tanks. From Mazar-e-Sharif to Herat to Kabul, Taliban forces were on the run, fleeing the battlefield and leaving behind arms and ammunition. The occupation of Kabul by the Northern Alliance, with the help of the American air power and the subsequent outburst of anti-Pakistan anger in Kabul and other cities of the north, led to the hasty withdrawal into Pakistan of the dregs of the Pakistani components and their Arab associates of Chechen ancestry. Similarly, the jehadis from South East Asia and the Central Asian Republics withdrew into Pakistan helter-skelter.

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Only the Arabs of al-Qaeda led by bin Laden stayed in southern and eastern Afghanistan for some weeks and put up some resistance to the Americans. After the unsuccessful operation at Tora Bora, where the Americans managed to surround al-Qaeda dregs, including Laden, for some days, the latter managed to escape into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas from where they dispersed themselves in small groups in the main cities of Pakistan. When the US started the second phase of the operations against al-Qaeda, it sought the help of the Pakistan army to seal the border with Afghanistan to prevent the dregs from escaping into Pakistan. It similarly sought the help of the Northern Alliance to prevent their escape into the Central Asian States.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the US military operations in Afghanistan have passed through three phases. In the first phase, the government set up by the Taliban regime with its administrative headquarters in Kabul and its religious headquarters in Kandahar was replaced by a provisional government headed by Hamid Karzai, an educated Pashtun enjoying confidence of the US and other Western countries. In the second phase, the training and other terrorist infrastructure of al-Qaeda and Taliban in southern and eastern Afghanistan were destroyed through aerial and ground action. In the third phase, efforts were initiated to restore law and order and governance in the rural areas liberated from the control of the jehadi forces and to build the infrastructure of a liberal democracy in the country in the form of a constitution paving the way for free and fair elections.

However, as things stand, it appears that the Taliban movement has regrouped itself in Afghanistan, mostly along the Pak-Afghan border areas. The social, geographical and political characteristics of the whole of this tribal belt favour the Taliban fighters, and the Pakistani, US and Afghan authorities just cannot control the Taliban in this specific region. The guerilla war in Afghanistan has really taken shape since October 2002. Earlier, between October 7, 2001, and December 2001, heavy US precision bombing had coerced the Taliban to leave their controlling positions and disperse to places where they could find a shelter. Mullah Mohammad Omar's decision of retreat from Kabul and Kandahar forced most of his commanders to hide themselves in Pakistani tribal areas. Ordinary Taliban foot soldiers easily melted into the civilian Afghan population. Several disposed of their black turbans from Pakhool and joined the new Afghan administration. Many chose to go back to their tribes and resumed a routine life as ordinary citizens.

However, since August 2003, the situation in Afghanistan has been deteriorating. Increasing numbers of better trained, better equipped and better-led Taliban cadres operating from sanctuaries in Pakistan have stepped up their hit-and-run raids into southern and eastern Afghanistan in order to demoralise the newly-

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raised army and police of the Hamid Karzai government in the hope of thereby inducing large-scale desertions. Their attacks have been focused on members of the new Afghan army, police and other government departments and foreign aid workers. They have avoided direct confrontations with US forces, lest they pursue them into Pakistani territory.

The Taliban resistance movement has apparently chosen Zabul, Spin Boldak and Hilmand as the areas where they have to re-establish their authority. These districts are situated all along the mountainous terrain, which best serves a guerilla campaign. This terrain leads to safe routes that go across areas demarcated by the Durand Line, which separates Pakistan from Afghanistan, and exists only on the map. Practically, there is no clear demarcation of the border and there are dozens of villages located on the Line, part in Afghanistan and part in Pakistan. The people on both sides of the Durand Line belong to the same tribes (the Noor Zai and the Achakzai) and have traditionally moved freely on both sides of the divide for centuries. These are the circumstances that make it possible for the Taliban to attack their targets on Afghan soil, using the mountainous terrain to strategic advantage, and then melting into the villages in the Pak-Afghan border areas. The Pakistani tribal areas, consequently, provide natural strategic depth to the Taliban fighters.

The people who live all around the Chaman area on the Pakistani side of the divide are extremely religious and numerous madrassas (Islamic seminaries, numbering approximately 200) are the ideological centers of the Taliban movement. The location of these seminaries is, again, problematic since they exist along the line where a clear demarcation of Pakistani and Afghan territory is impossible. With these key factors complementing their modus operandi, the Taliban have established their writ in Zabul, Hilmand and Spin Boldak. The US Forces in Afghanistan are unwilling to take casualties and consequently provide only limited aerial support to the Afghan Army in their operations in the area.

On occasion, some US soldiers have been sent in to reinforce the Afghan militia's line of defence, but these soldiers rarely participate in the action and generally limit their role to guiding the operations. This has tended to demoralise the Afghan administration and Forces, and they now increasingly accept the presence of the Taliban in these three districts. Although the Taliban is yet to appoint its own administration in these areas, they have established a kind of de facto rule and a strong presence in the mountainous terrain around the area. The local administration is aware that, if they act against the will of the Taliban, the consequences would be extreme.

In Khost, Paktia, Paktika and Gazni, the Taliban seek to inflict terror on the US Forces. They do not control any significant areas in these provinces, but gather in

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the Northern and Southern Waziristan area of Pakistan as well as in the Kurram Agency to execute strikes across the border and then retreat to the relative safety of Pakistani territory. Once again, they hide in the mountains in areas where the nebulous Durand Line separates Pakistan from Afghanistan. There is a long-standing tradition; within this specific area; of the local Waziri tribes who live on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to move across the divide for trade. They move as a group and always carry guns and ammunition with them. For centuries, they have never been prevented from free movement in the area, and no one has ever asked them for travel documents. The result is that neither the Afghan security guards nor the Pakistanis can make out the difference between these tribal groups and the movement of the Taliban.

The seriousness of the deteriorating situation in southern and eastern Afghanistan is evident from a dispatch dated October 8, sent by Ahmed Rashid, a well-known Pakistani expert on the Taliban, from Kandahar to some Western newspapers and from a media briefing in Kabul by the Bush administration's special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been designated as the new US ambassador to Afghanistan, a nomination yet to be confirmed by the Senate. Ahmed Rashid said in his dispatch: "The Taliban army is mobilising in Pakistan for an attack into Afghanistan before the start of winter. Up to 2,500 fighters are in Baluchistan province preparing to cross the border on motorcycles and attack US and Afghan government forces, according to Western and Afghan intelligence officials."

"The Taliban have virtually taken over several suburbs of Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan, and are being supported by Pakistani religious parties, the drug mafia and al-Qaeda. There is also reportedly increasing support from the Pakistani authorities - a claim denied in Islamabad. They now plan to send US forces in Kandahar, where residents feel increasingly under siege, and Zabul. Since August, Taliban attacks have killed almost 400 Afghan soldiers, aid workers and civilians. Many US soldiers have also died. 'We have the American forces and the puppet regime of [President Hamid] Karzai on the run. They will collapse soon', said a Taliban mullah in Pushtunabad bazaar [of Quetta]. The Taliban have bought hotels, shops and houses, forcing many frightened local residents to leave. Vehicle dealers say the Taliban have bought 900 motorcycles in the past three months in the Quetta region and another 250 in Loralai. Motorcycle guerrillas roam Afghanistan's rural areas attacking aid agency vehicles and isolated police posts. For communications, they are importing hundreds of satellite telephones from the Arab Gulf states, because those bought in Pakistan are closely monitored by America's Central Intelligence Agency. Arms and ammunition are dumped inside Afghanistan. Their funding comes from the drugs trade and al-Qaeda. Osama bin Laden is still in hiding along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border".

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"According to President Karzai, the headquarters for Taliban planning is the Shaldara madrassa in Quetta run by Maulana Nur Mohammed, who is a JUI member of parliament. 'We are proud that the Taliban are made and helped here', said Maulana Abdul Qadir, the deputy to Nur Mohammed. 'Our job is to make sure that the whole Pakistani nation supports the Taliban'. Hundreds of Pakistani Taliban are joining their Afghan brothers, although Pakistan denies that its citizens are involved. US officials are perturbed at the extent of Pakistani help to the Taliban and Congress has become increasingly critical. However, the White House is still reluctant to criticise President Pervez Musharraf because of America's desperate need to enlist Pakistani troops for Iraq. Yousuf Pashtun, the governor of Kandahar province, says Pakistan has allowed the Taliban to establish six training camps in Baluchistan. He accused the Pakistani authorities of wanting to push the Taliban into another big battle with government forces, fearing that in the next phase the Taliban will start urban terrorism".

Addressing a press conference at Kabul on October 7, US ambassador to Kabul Zalmay Khalilzad made the following points: The Taliban and al-Qaeda might be planning larger or more spectacular attacks in Afghanistan as part of a campaign against the reconstruction process. We have seen a surge in activity in recent weeks, but we also see signs that the response has been quite effective, and I think in desperation they may try, or there are indications that they may try to do something to get a lot of attention. The resurgent Taliban present a serious threat across the south and east of the country, not least on the main north-south highway between Kabul and Kandahar, a priority project supported by both President Bush and Karzai. The first priority was for the government in Pakistan to stop border crossings and stop providing sanctuary to the Taliban and al-Qaeda members. "Pakistan cannot become a sanctuary for Taliban and al-Qaeda people who want to attack Afghanistan. There has to be a decrease, and at best an end, to cross-border attacks by Taliban and al-Qaeda people from Pakistan. I welcome the recent actions by the Pakistani government, but we would like to see more, in fact, a lot more".

Though the US has been saying that it is prepared for a longish stay, whatever be the cost in terms of funds and casualties, in both countries, the jehadis view this as mere bravado and have convinced themselves that the closer the elections, the weaker will be the US will to continue the fighting. America's continued reluctance to act against Pakistan and make it pay a prohibitive price for helping the jehadi terrorists is coming in the way of an effective counter-terrorism strategy. Encouraged by this US reluctance, the Musharraf regime continues to keep the jehadis alive and active in the hope of using them to retrieve lost Pakistani influence in Afghanistan, and to achieve its strategic objective of forcing a change in the status quo in India's Jammu and Kashmir state.

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Chapter 23

Osama bin Laden: A CIA creation

In its endeavor to assert the primacy of American national interests and strategic objectives through any means, the United States has over the years, through covert CIA operations, made heroes out of surrogates, whose only qualification was that they were prepared to do its bidding. Ultimately, it ended up with the mortification of seeing these heroes of yesterday becoming terrorists of today and endangering those very US national interests that they were initially created to protect.

Similar appears to be the case with most of the Pakistani militant outfits, that were once funded by the American Central Intelligence Agency, but have now turned anti-American. Saudi billionaire and the FBI's most wanted terrorist, Osama bin Laden provides a good case study of this. Be it bin Laden or the former Taliban Supreme commander Mullah Mohammad Omar, they all were originally the CIA creation, which was ably assisted by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the FBI is making frantic efforts to track down a warrior, who had actually been created by the CIA during the so-called Afghan jehad against the Soviet occupation troops- a cause that the United States funded, pouring $3 billion via the CIA.

Born in 1958, Osama bin Laden is the seventeenth of 52 sons of a Yemeni peasant (Mohammed bin Laden) who migrated to Saudi Arabia and became one of the richest construction magnates with assets worth US $ 5 billion of which, according to the TIME magazine of May 6, 1996, Osama bin Laden personally controlled assets worth US $ 300 million. His father was the favourite construction magnate of the Saudi royal family, who gave bin Laden's family huge contracts to renovate the holy cities of Makkah and Medina and build palaces for Saudi princes.

In 1980, at 22, hardly a year after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Laden, who had just then graduated from the King Abdul Aziz University, left the family business and moved over to Pakistan to organise a jehad against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, with the help of his money and with over 6,000 Muslim volunteers recruited from the Arab and other Islamic countries. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the US and other Western intelligence agencies welcomed the assistance from bin Laden and his volunteers and helped them with guidance, training, arms and ammunition for fighting against the Soviet troops and those of the then Afghan President, the late Najibullah.

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Osama used his money and machines to help the Afghan rebels fight the Soviet Army invaders. Legend has it that bin Laden fought bravely against Soviet troops. But former CIA officers say he was a financier, not a warrior - a philanthropist supporting a number of health care, widows-and-orphans charity operations in Peshawar for Afghan refugees. Osama personally participated in the fighting, constructed tunnels and other defensive structures along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and distinguished himself in the battles against Soviet troops at Jaji and Shaban. He became a legendary figure for his religious intensity and courage. While recruiting volunteers for Afghanistan, he used to say: "One day of jehad in Afghanistan is equivalent to 1,000 days of *namaz* (prayer) in a mosque".

During his stay in Afghanistan, Osama met a veteran of the Afghan war, Mullah Mohammad Omar. Laden was the one who bankrolled the Taliban's capture of Kabul under the leadership of the reclusive, one-eyed Mullah Mohammad Omar and became one of his most trusted advisers. Since then, Osama has developed a personal friendship with Omar. Later, in 1994, Mullah Omar emerged as the ruler of three-fourths of Afghanistan, being the leader of the Taliban. In the meantime, Osama established the headquarters of al-Qaeda in Peshawar where Egyptian and Saudi volunteers rested before setting off for battle in Afghanistan. Its name became a kind of flag uniting bin Laden's followers. American officials call it a global terrorist network.

When the Soviet forces left Afghanistan in 1989, bin Laden went home to Saudi Arabia. He soon set his sights on the last remaining superpower. He himself was very much wary about America. He found a new enemy on August 7, 1990, when the United States began sending half a million soldiers to Saudi Arabia, preparing for war against Iraq. King Fahd shocked Osama bin Laden by the stationing of the American troops in Saudi Arabia, despite earlier assurances that he would never do so.

His criticism of the Saudi ruling family and particularly of King Fahd increased after the Gulf war of 1991. He described the King's action in allowing US and other Western troops into Saudi territory for fighting against Iraq as desecration of the holy land by armed infidels. He allegedly fell out with the officers of the CIA and demanded the withdrawal of the US troops from Saudi territory. Osama subsequently declared the Saudi ruling family "insufficiently Islamic." He was made to stay there by the Saudi authorities till 1991 through the impounding of his passport.

Being a friend of Osama, Prince Turki, the then chief of Saudi intelligence, once again sent Osama to Peshawar and insisted that he should remain there. One of the stories put out by bin Laden is that he went to King Fahd and promised that

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he would raise holy warriors who would protect Saudi Arabia. However, his violent opposition to the Saudi royal family began when King Fahd rejected that offer. To bin Laden, the deployment of Americans in the land of Makkah and Medina smacked of the Crusades, the Christian religious wars against Islam that began nine centuries ago. His rage transformed him into a stateless outlaw.

In November 1991, Saudi intelligence officers caught bin Laden smuggling weapons from Yemen, his father's homeland. They withdrew his passport. Bin Laden's family, worried that his activities might jeopardise their close relations with the ruling clan, tried to bring him back into the fold but were forced eventually to effectively disown him. The pressure mounted. In late 1990 an escape route appeared. Osama bin Laden received an offer of refuge from Hassan al-Turabi, the charismatic Islamist scholar of Sudan, which Osama decided to accept. And in Sudan he had been able to start the serious work of building al-Qaeda - a global umbrella group of Muslim extremists dedicated to overturning 'unIslamic' governments throughout the Middle East and in other parts of the world. Turabi believed that the total defeat of Iraq and the discrediting of 'secular' Arab regimes would lead to an opportunity to set up a 'pure' Islamic government across the Muslim world. It was a seductive message. And bin Laden cracked. He fled Saudi Arabia for Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. He was never to return to his homeland.

Veterans of the Afghan jehad, or holy war against Moscow followed bin Laden, under al-Qaeda's banner. Osama set up a home in a rich suburb of Khartoum with his four wives, his children and a core of close retainers. Then he flew in several hundred Arab veterans from Afghanistan to provide the basis of a broader organisation. Life in Sudan was odd. There were football matches, bathing trips to the Blue Nile and long junior common room-type arguments over whether Shia and Sunni Muslims should unite to fight the common enemy, and points of Islamic doctrine. Bin Laden even opened a personal bank account in his own name. Most of the time of 'the sheikh' was spent making money, rather than spreading global jehad.

At one point bin Laden bought a plane for $250,000 and hired a pilot. The plane soon crashed. According to the CIA claims, Osama also set up several military training camps and hundreds of Algerians, Palestinians, Egyptians and Saudis received instructions for bomb-making and terrorist tactics. Many of them had fought in Afghanistan and now, like Osama, were at a loose end. There was talk of assassinating President Mubarak of Egypt, though nobody was sure how to go about it, and there was some haphazard surveillance of possible targets for a bombing in East Africa, including the Nairobi embassy of the US.

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In 1995, after the Saudi government rescinded his citizenship, Osama began sending scathing attacks on the royal family from Khartoum, Sudan. Laden took a chance and started doing some political activities. He started issuing political statements and communiqués, denouncing the Saudi government as corrupt and repressive. By January 1996, Khartoum was increasingly uneasy about its guest. Turabi contacted the Sudanese ambassador to Afghanistan, Atiya Badawi, who was based in Peshawar. Badawi, who had learnt the Pashtun language while fighting the Russians, had excellent contacts with his former comrades among the Mujahideen and with Afghanistan split into hundreds of warring bandit fiefdoms, it was easy to persuade three of the most senior commanders in the Jalalabad area that a wealthy Saudi under their protection might give them an edge over their rivals. The three men - all dead now - flew to Sudan to ask bin Laden to return to the land of jehad.

By mid-1996, Osama returned to Afghanistan from Sudan with his wives and children. The jehad against the Russians had given bin Laden much-needed confidence, contacts throughout the Islamic world and a taste for fame, respect and adulation. His authority and profile had been boosted further by his stance against Saudi Arabia and exile. And in Sudan he had been able to start the serious work of building al-Qaeda - a global umbrella group of Muslim extremists dedicated to overturning 'unIslamic' governments throughout the Middle East and further afield. But in terms of military capacity and strategic thinking bin Laden's group was still weak. In Afghanistan, he swiftly found a solution.

He had returned to a land that had known anarchy for six years. Thousands of Islamic militants were based in the old mujahideen complexes in the east of the country. Many were sponsored by the Pakistani secret services that wanted zealots to fight India in Kashmir. Others were backed by a variety of Islamic groups from all over the world. In the camps, the volunteers were trained in guerrilla warfare. Many had fought for the Taliban. Osama's first problem was partially solved almost immediately. He had inherited an army.

In Afghanistan, he found himself surrounded by men who could help him, especially dozens of exiled Egyptian extremists. They included Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, a 37-year-old surgeon and a founder of the effective and sophisticated Egyptian *al-Jehad* group. Another was Mohammed Atef, the group's hard and competent military commander. Al-Zawahiri taught bin Laden about the political realities of global war. Atef lectured him on the military necessities. After several security scares, he moved his household to a former mujahideen base at Tora Bora high in the mountains south of Jalalabad.

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The Egyptians told him that the best form of defence was attack. After two months at Tora Bora, he wrote and circulated a 12-page article, full of Koranic and historical references, promising violent action against the Americans unless they withdrew from Saudi Arabia. In a significant broadening of his view - showing the influence of the Egyptians - he also spoke for the first time of Palestine and Lebanon as well as 'the fierce Judaeo-Christian campaign against the Muslim world' and 'the duty of all Muslims' to resist it. Osama bought four of the Stinger missiles that had been supplied to the mujahideen by the CIA and had them smuggled to Saudi Islamic groups.

When it discovered the plot, Riyadh was incensed. The Saudi government, along with Pakistan, had supported the Taliban as a means of countering Iranian and Russian influence in Afghanistan. Now the Taliban were not only sheltering one of their most determined enemies but were also ignoring demands to hand him over. More extreme measures were needed.

In early 1997, the Taliban discovered what they said was a Saudi plot to assassinate bin Laden. The Islamic militia, who by then controlled about two-thirds of Afghanistan, invited bin Laden to move to Kandahar for his own security. To this, bin Laden agreed and moved into an old Soviet air force base close to Kandahar airport. He cemented his relationship with the Taliban's upper command by funding huge military purchases, building mosques and buying cars for the leadership. He even helped construct a new residence for Mullah Omar and his family on the outskirts of the city and started work on a huge compound to be used for prayers at the start of Ramadan.

He also set up a system to cream off the elite from the existing training camps to the al-Qaeda. The camp administrators told the volunteers that the best of them would earn an audience with 'the *ameer*'. When bin Laden met them, his aides would pick the most promising and send them to more specialised camps where, instead of basic infantry techniques, they had psychological and physical tests, combat trials and finally instructions in acquiring the skills of the modern terrorist. Within a year, bin Laden had created the terrorist version of special forces.

Under Zawahiri's tutelage, Laden had also realised that he needed to internationalise his cause. Towards the end of 1997 he started to work to unify Islamic movements under the al-Qaeda umbrella, using his money, charm and reputation to draw in leaders from around the world. He bolstered his support locally, giving money to village clerics to build mosques and according to one Taliban source, organising the import of 3,000 secondhand Toyota Corolla estates from Dubai. They were given to the families of Taliban casualties so they could earn a living.

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Finally, in February 1998, he felt strong enough to issue a *fatwa* in the name of the 'World Front for Jehad against Jews and Crusaders'. It was signed by bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and the heads of major Islamic movements in Pakistan and Bangladesh and endorsed by dozens of other groups throughout the region. It was, according to one Western scholar of Islam, 'a magnificent piece of eloquent, even poetic, Arabic prose'. There was nothing poetic about its message. The *fatwa* said that killing Americans and their allies, even civilians, was a Muslim duty. Shortly afterwards bin Laden told an interviewer that there would be 'radical action' soon.

Then came the 1998 annual report of the US State Department on Patterns of Global Terrorism, stating that Laden was shifted from Jalalabad to the Taliban's headquarters in Kandahar in early 1997 and that he had established a new base of operations. The report added that Muslims from around the world, including a large number of Egyptians, Algerians, Palestinians and Saudis, continued to use Afghanistan as a training ground. The Taliban, as well as many other combatants of the Afghan civil war, facilitated the training and provided indoctrination facilities for the non-Afghans in the territories they controlled. Several Afghan factions also provided logistic support, free passage and sometimes passports to the members of various terrorist organisations. These individuals, in turn, were involved in fighting in Bosnia, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Jammu & Kashmir of India, the Philippines and parts of the Middle East.

In the first week of August 1998, American embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and *Darul Salam* (Tanzania) were bombed, allegedly by Osama's terrorist network, killing a total of 224, including 12 Americans and 38 Foreign Service Nationals and injuring more than 4,585. On August 20, 1998, thirteen days after the bombings in Africa, in retaliation against Laden for the US Embassies' bombings, the US conducted "Operation Infinite Reach". Seventy-five US cruise missiles slammed into six training camps in the eastern Afghan hills. Other missiles demolished a medical factory in Sudan. The Muslim world exploded in anger and outrage. Osama bin Laden was launched onto the global stage. When the US bombarded Afghanistan, two training camps being run by the *Harkatul Mujahideen* were destroyed and 21 of its jehadis were killed.

After the attacks, Osama was interviewed in Afghanistan by an American TV news network. From a mountain hideout in Jalalabad, Osama threatened to kill 'terrorist Americans' and praised the 1993 bombing of the Trade Center in New York, thereby 'implying' his complicity in the two incidents. The United States took notice. There had been confusion after the World Trade Center bombing about the nature of radical Islamic threats to the US. Osama was thus named in the WTC bombing for the first time. Osama had further warned: "For each of us

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killed or wounded in the cowardly US attack, at least 100 Americans will be killed. I may not be alive, but you will remember my words".

By that time, Osama bin Laden was already being suspected in the following acts of terrorism:

* In December 1995, the British Police raided the London residence of an Algerian named Rachid Ramda and recovered communications from the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria, which was involved in seven explosions in France in 1995. They also discovered records of money transfers and allegedly managed to trace them to Osama bin Laden's office in Khartoum in Sudan.

* Egyptian authorities suspected his involvement in a plot to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak in December 1995, which was foiled by the Egyptian security agencies.

* According to Egyptian security agencies, Laden was the major financier of a training camp at Kunar in Afghanistan, where members of two terrorist organisations of Egypt called the Islamic Jehad and the Islamic Group (possibly *Al Jammaya-al Islamia*) were being trained.

* Citing its own intelligence sources, the US State Department claimed that Laden helped finance three terrorist training camps in Northern Sudan, where extremists from Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt were trained.

* The State Department also suspected that Osama bin Laden had helped finance two bombing incidents in Aden in 1992 allegedly directed against US troops transiting to Somalia. While they escaped, two Italian tourists were killed.

* The Saudi authorities suspected his involvement in the explosion in November 1995, in a centre for the Saudi National Guards at Riyadh run by US troops. They also alleged his links with an anti-monarchy organisation called the Advice and Reformation Committee, which was then reportedly operating from London.

In November 1998, three months after the missile strikes, two luxury jets landed at Kandahar air base. One brought Prince Turki al Faisal, bin Laden's student friend and the head of Saudi Arabia's security services. The second was empty. It was there to take bin Laden back to Riyadh. Prince Turki, who had been crucial in getting millions of dollars of official aid for the Taliban, went straight to Mullah Omar's residence where a magnificent lunch had been laid out. The prince began to lecture the Taliban leader about his ingratitude to his former benefactors.

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In the middle of his tirade, Omar reportedly took a water jug from an attendant and emptied it over his head. 'I nearly lost my temper,' he is reported to have told the astonished prince. 'Now I am calm. I will ask you a question and then you can leave. How long has the royalty of Saudi Arabia been the hired help of the Americans?' Lunch went uneaten and the second plane returned to Riyadh empty. Shortly afterwards, Osama bin Laden pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar and recognised him formally as *'ameer ul momineen'* - leader of the faithful. His fate and that of the Taliban were now inextricably linked.

Osama issued a statement denying all involvement in the US embassies' attacks - though he said that he welcomed them. No one believed him. The Taliban then said bin Laden had 'disappeared'. No one believed them either. At the same time, the al-Qaeda infrastructure continued to expand inside Afghanistan. Throughout 1999 and 2000, rattled Western intelligence services blamed Laden for hundreds of threats and scores of attacks all over the world. Though many were only tenuously linked to him, Osama was happy to take the credit. Clever publicity stunts helped too.

In April 2000, General Musharraf, acting request of the former US President Bill Clinton, met the Taliban ruler Mullah Omar to convince him to expel Osama but failed. According to an official US report, released by a commission investigating the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States: "When Mr. Clinton visited Pakistan on March 25, 2000, he raised the Osama bin Laden issue in his meeting with Musharraf. The Pakistanis asked for evidence that bin Laden had really ordered the US embassy bombings (in East Africa) a year and a half earlier. In a follow-up meeting the next day with Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering, General Musharraf argued that Pakistan had only limited influence over the Taliban," says the report. Despite these reservations, "General Musharraf did meet Mullah Omar and did urge him to get rid of bin Laden", the report said.

In early June 2000, according to the report, Pakistan's Interior Minister went to Kandahar with Mr. Pickering and delivered a joint message to Taliban officials. "But the Taliban seemed immune to such pleas, especially from Pakistani civilians like the Interior Minister," the report observes. "Pakistan did not threaten to cut off its help to the Taliban regime." The report also provides so far classified information about joint US-Saudi efforts to influence the Taliban regime on this issue.

No one knows where Osama was when the Twin Towers crumbled on 9/11, killing more than five thousand Americans. However, soon after the attacks, President Bush signed an executive order giving the CIA mandate to capture or kill bin Laden and his associates, destroy al-Qaeda's communications, security

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organisation and infrastructure. Interviewed in August 2001 by a London-based Arab journalist, bin Laden boasted that he and his followers were planning "a very big one". However, following the attacks on New York and Washington, both bin Laden himself and al-Qaeda spokesmen denied any involvement, but expressed support and congratulations to the terrorists.

The great escape

"Immediately after 9/11, dozens of Saudi royals and members of the bin Laden family had fled the US in a secret airlift authorised by the White House. And one passenger was an alleged al-Qaeda go-between, who may have known about the terror attacks in advance", claims American writer Craig Unger in his book titled "*House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship Between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties*". The 368-page New York Times' bestseller, that was published by Scribner in March 2004, has already been featured in Michael Moore's much-controversial documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11".

In his book, Craig Unger lays out a compelling case that the Bush family was so inextricably bound up with the Saudi royal family that it could not hold them responsible for the alleged role that many Saudi Arabians might have played in the 9/11 terror attacks. The shell game Bush allegedly played meant diverting the American public's attention to Iraq, which had no apparent role in 9/11. "Although 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi, bin Laden is a member of one of the wealthiest families in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudis financed bin Laden, Bush managed to convince most Americans that the majority of 9/11 hijackers were Iraqi and that Saddam Hussein played a key role in the attack. That's how a political shell game works. Only in this case, thousands of lives were lost in a con job in which the American people were played for suckers by their own leadership", writes Unger.

House of Bush, House of Saud begins with a single question: How is it that two days after September 11, 2001, even as American air traffic was tightly restricted, a Saudi billionaire socialised in the White House with President George W. Bush as 140 Saudi citizens, many immediate kin to Osama bin Laden, were permitted to return to their country? "A potential treasure trove of intelligence was allowed to flee the country-- including an alleged al-Qaeda intermediary who was said to have foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks. Why did the FBI facilitate this evacuation, and why didn't the agency question the people on the planes? Why did Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of most of the hijackers, receive exclusive and preferential treatment from the White House even as the World Trade Center continued to burn?"

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According to the writer, the answers to these questions, and ones far more troubling, lie in the largely hidden relationship that began in the mid-1970s, when the oil-rich House of Saud struck out for America in the wake of the OPEC oil embargo and soaring oil prices. "Saudi Arabia needed American military protection, access to American political power, and a place to invest its staggering cash flow, which within 5 years reached $16 million an hour. Like wildcatting oil drillers, the Saudis began prospecting among promising American politicians, including the Bush family. And with the Bushes, the Saudis hit a gusher-direct access to Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush as well as to Secretary of State James Baker, Vice-President Dick Cheney and the entire US intelligence apparatus".

The writer adds that what followed was an amazing weave of influence, strategic investment, socialising, and secret policy between the House of Bush and the House of Saud that arcs from the 1980s into the present day. "The two parties conferred on war, oil, funding for Osama bin Laden's Afghan Arabs supporting the mujahideen in the Afghanistan War, illegal arms deals, banking, private matters, and much more. By the time George W. Bush was elected, the House of Saud had transferred an astonishing sum of money to the House of Bush in deals involving dozens of companies. The total? At least $1.4 billion in investments and contracts went to companies in which the Bushes and their allies held prominent positions. But the importance of the relationship goes far beyond money. More than any other country in the world, Saudi Arabia is responsible for the rise of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism that threatens America. Horrifying as it may seem, the secret liaison between these two great families helped trigger the Age of Terror and give rise to the tragedy of 9/11".

Why didn't CIA arrest Osama in 2002?

Obsessed with the al-Qaeda and its fugitive chief Osama bin Laden, the Bush administration desperately wants some action. Therefore, the White House has intensified pressure on Pakistan to capture Osama bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri and Mullah Mohammad Omar in time for President Bush to recoup his sagging popularity and be re-elected.

According to a July 9, 2004 report carried by respected American magazine *The New Republic*, "a succession of high-level US officials -- from outgoing CIA Director George Tenet to Secretary of State Collin Powell to Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca to State Department counter terrorism chief Coffer Black to a top CIA South Asia official -- have visited Pakistan in recent months to urge General Pervez Musharraf's government to do more in the war on terrorism". Filed by John B. Judis, the Senior Editor of the magazine, the report said that the

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American ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad's repeated admonitions to Pakistan to do more in the hunt for these key figures were part of the same effort. "The Americans want Pakistan to deliver these men before the November 2004 election, although the Bush administration denies any linkage between the war on terrorism and the November election campaign", said the report.

The report claimed that Pakistani security officials have been told that they must produce these high-value targets (HVTs) before the election. According to one unnamed source in the Inter Services Intelligence, the Pakistan government is really desperate and wants to flush out bin Laden and his associates after the latest pressures from the US administration to deliver before the (upcoming) US elections". Introducing target dates for al-Qaeda captures is a new twist in Pak-US counter-terrorism relations, a former intelligence official told the magazine. The magazine then quoted an Interior Ministry official from Pakistan as saying: "The Musharraf government has a history of rescuing the Bush administration. They now want Musharraf to bail them out when they are facing hard times in the coming elections".

Another ISI source, said to be an aide to ISI Chief Lt. Gen. Ehsanul Haq, told *The New Republic:* "The Pakistanis have been told at every level that apprehension or killing of HVTs before (the) election is (an) absolute must". Referring to the fighting in Waziristan, *The New Republic* writes: "There is a reason many Pakistanis and some American officials had previously been reluctant to carry the war on terrorism into the tribal areas. A Pakistani offensive in that region, aided by American high-tech weaponry and perhaps Special Forces, could unite tribal chieftains against the central government and precipitate a border war without actually capturing any of the HVTs… Some American intelligence officials agree. 'Pakistan just can't risk a civil war in that area of their country. They can't afford a western border that is unstable,' says a senior intelligence official, who says he has not heard that the current pressures on Pakistan are geared to the election. 'We may be at the point where (Musharraf) has done almost as much as he can.' Pushing Musharraf to go after al-Qaeda in the tribal areas may be a good idea despite the risks. But, if that is the case, it was a good idea in 2002 and 2003. Why the switch now? Top Pakistanis think they know: This year, the president's re-election is at stake".

Western media reports aside, Pakistani intelligence agencies wonder as to why the Central Intelligence Agency did not nab Osama bin Laden despite having a golden chance, a year before the September 11, 2001 attacks when the ailing al-Qaeda chief had flown from Quetta and undergone a surgery at an American hospital in Dubai where he also met a CIA official. Referring to Alexandra Richard's October 12, 2001 report that appeared in French daily *Le Figaro*, the Pakistani intelligence sources say while being on the world's most wanted list, no

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attempt was made to arrest Osama during his two-week stay in the Dubai hospital, shedding doubt on the US resolve to track down the most wanted FBI fugitive. They maintain the US could have managed Osama's arrest and extradition from the Dubai hospital where he stayed between the 4th and 14th of July, 2000. Following is the full text of the Le Figaro news report:

"Dubai, one of the seven emirates of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates, North-East of Abu-Dhabi, was the backdrop of a secret meeting between Osama bin Laden and the local CIA agent in July (2000). A partner of the administration of the American Hospital in Dubai claims that public enemy number one stayed at this hospital between the 4th and 14th of July (2000). Having taken off from the Quetta airport in Pakistan, bin Laden was transferred to the hospital upon his arrival at Dubai airport. He was accompanied by his personal physician and faithful lieutenant, who could be Ayman al-Zawahiri--but on this, sources are not entirely certain-- four bodyguards as well as a male Algerian nurse and was admitted to the American Hospital, a glass and marble building situated between the *Al-Garhoud* and *Al-Maktoum* bridges.

Each floor of the hospital has two "VIP" suites and fifteen rooms. The Saudi billionaire was admitted to the well-respected urology department run by Terry Callaway, gallstone and infertility specialist. Dr. Callaway declined to respond to our questions despite several phone calls. As early as March 2000, '*Asia Week*,' published in Hong Kong, expressed concern for bin Laden's health, describing a serious medical problem that could put his life in danger because of "a kidney infection that is propagating itself to the liver and requires specialised treatment". According to authorised sources, bin Laden had mobile dialysis equipment shipped to his hideout in Kandahar in the first part of 2000. According to our sources, bin Laden's travels for health reasons have taken place before. Between 1996 and 1998, bin Laden made several trips to Dubai on business.

On September 27th, 15 days after the World Trade Center attacks, at the request of the United States, the Central Bank of the Arab Emirates announced an order to freeze assets and investments of 26 people or organisations suspected of maintaining contact with bin Laden's organisation, and in particular at the Dubai Islamic Bank.

"Relations between the Emirate and Saudi Arabia have always been very close," according to sources, "princes of reigning families, having recognised the Taliban regime, often traveled to Afghanistan. One of the princes of a ruling family regularly went hunting on the land of bin Laden, whom he had known and visited for many years."

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There are daily flights between Dubai and Quetta by both Pakistan and Emirates Airlines. As to private planes from Saudi Arabia or from the Emirates, they regularly fly to Quetta where their arrival is rarely registered in airport logs. While he was hospitalised, bin Laden received visits from many members of his family as well as prominent Saudis. During the hospital stay, the local CIA agent, known to many in Dubai, was seen taking the main elevator of the hospital to go to bin Laden's hospital room. A few days later, the CIA man bragged to a few friends about having visited bin Laden. Authorised sources say that on July 15th, the day after bin Laden returned to Quetta, the CIA agent was called back to headquarters.

Contacts between the CIA and bin Laden began in 1979 when, as a representative of his family's business, bin Laden began recruiting volunteers for the Afghan resistance against the Red Army. FBI investigators examining the 1998 embassy bombing sites in Nairobi and *Darul Salam* discovered that evidence led to military explosives from the US Army and that these explosives had been delivered three years earlier to Afghan Arabs, the infamous international volunteer brigades involved side by side with bin Laden during the Afghan war against the Red Army. In the pursuit of its investigations, the FBI discovered "financing agreements" that the CIA had been developing with its "arab friends" for years. The Dubai meeting is then within the logic of "a certain American policy", the news report concluded.

As far as Osama bin Laden's chances of arrest are concerned, there are media reports that soon after the US-led allied forces launched attacks on Afghanistan in October 2001, he made his seven bodyguards take an oath to kill him if he is in any danger of being arrested. Otherwise, he will try to blow himself up. But the real worry for the Americans must be that, even if Osama is captured or killed, the movement he leads will be harder than ever to crush.

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Chapter 24

Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri – Brain behind Osama

An eye surgeon by profession, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri is Osama bin Laden's right hand man and the chief ideologue of al-Qaeda who is considered the moving spirit behind the Egyptian Islamic Jehad.

The American intelligence agencies accuse Ayman to be the operational brain behind the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States. He is number two - behind only bin Laden - in the 22 Most Wanted Terrorists' List announced by the US Government in 2001. Born in 1953, al-Zawahiri's family was quite prominent and religiously conservative. He is remembered as a quiet and well-read student, but that may have changed in 1967, when Israel defeated the combined armies of several Arab nations. Zawahiri graduated from medical school in 1974; then spent three years as a surgeon in the Egyptian Army, posted at a base outside Cairo. This was a watershed time for many Muslims in the Middle East, and al-Zawahiri was no different.

Zawahiri joined the Muslim Brotherhood at the mere age of fourteen and in 1979, he joined the even more radical Egyptian Islamic Jehad. Eventually Zawahiri became one of the group's principle leaders who actively worked for recruiting new members into its underground, anti-government operations. In April 1979, Egyptians voted to approve President Anwer Sadat's peace treaty with Israel. In response to a series of demonstrations orchestrated by Zawahiri's organisation and other Islamists against President Sadat's pro-US and anti-jehad policies, the Egyptian leader banned all religious outfits. Onwards, Zawahiri envisioned not only the removal of the Egyptian head of state but a complete overthrow of the existing order. Stealthily, he began recruiting officers from the Egyptian military, waiting for the moment when Islamic Jehad had accumulated enough strength in men and weapons to act.

Dr. Zawahiri's chief strategist was Aboud al-Zumar, a colonel in the intelligence branch of the Egyptian Army and a military hero of the 1973 war with Israel. Zumar's plan was to kill the most powerful leaders of the country and capture the headquarters of the Army and the state security, the telephone-exchange building, and the radio-and-television building. From there, news of the Islamic revolution would be broadcast, unleashing—he expected—a popular uprising against secular authority all over the country.

On the morning of October 6, 1981, surrounded by dignitaries, including several American diplomats, President Sadat was saluting the Army troops at a military parade when a military vehicle veered toward the reviewing stand. Four Army

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jawans leapt out and tossed grenades into the stand besides emptying their cartridge of machine guns into President Sadat, killing him on the spot. After the assassination of President Sadat, the Egyptian government cracked down even harder on religious extremists. Dr. Zawahiri was arrested while trying to escape and taken into custody. At the Maadi police station, the police chief reportedly slapped him in the face and Ayman slapped him back. Subsequently, Zawahiri became known as the man who struck back.

However, he could not be directly linked to Anwer Sadat's assassination, though he was convicted on charges of keeping weapons and was sentenced to three years in prison. During that time he was beaten and tortured, experiences, which only further radicalised him. Once released, Dr. Zawahiri decided to leave Egypt. He reached Jeddah in 1985. At thirty-four, he was a formidable figure. He had been a committed revolutionary and a member of an Islamist underground cell for more than half his life. His political skills had been honed by prison debates, and he had discovered in himself a capacity and hunger for leadership. He was pious, determined and embittered.

Once in Saudi Arabia, Zawahiri returned to medicine and eventually reached Afghanistan, which had by that point become a gathering point for Muslim radicals from all over the world. Zawahiri's connection with Afghanistan actually began in the summer of 1980 by a twist of fate. He was covering for another doctor at a Muslim Brothers' clinic, when the director of the clinic asked if Zawahiri would like to accompany him to Pakistan to take care of the Afghan refugees, thousands of whom were fleeing across the border as a result of the Soviet invasion. Although he had recently got married, Zawahiri agreed. He traveled to Peshawar along with an anesthesiologist and a plastic surgeon where they worked for the Red Crescent Society, the Islamic arm of the Red Cross. Having spent four months in Pakistan, Zawahiri returned.

In March 1981, he returned to Peshawar for another tour of duty with the Red Crescent Society where he discovered Osama bin Laden among thousands of other radical Islamists who were drawn to Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979. For one thing, both were very modern men. Laden, who was in his early twenties, was already an international businessman; Zawahiri, six years older, was a surgeon from a notable Egyptian family. Both played an important role during the Afghan jehad to fight out the Russian occupation troops from Afghanistan.

After the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, al-Zawahiri returned to Egypt - now more radical than ever and like other Arab fighters, having learnt how to use force and violence to create an Islamic state. Throughout the 1990s he was responsible for organising and bringing former mujahideen into the Egyptian

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Islamic Jehad. Because of governmental pressure, he had to move to Sudan in 1992 to join hands with Osama there. But in 1996, Zawahiri and Osama were compelled to leave Sudan, making them to return to Afghanistan. Before that, Zawahiri had already been sentenced to death in absentia by an Egyptian court in 1999 for his role in organising a variety of deadly terrorist attacks, but in particular the massacre of fifty-eight tourists in Luxor in 1997.

By the time they returned to Afghanistan, Osama and Zawahiri had apparently realised that each man filled a need in the other. They were both members of the educated classes, intensely pious, quiet and politically stifled by the regimes in their own countries. Osama, an idealist with vague political ideas sought direction, and Zawahiri, a seasoned propagandist, supplied it. Osama had a good number of followers, but they were not organised. On the other hand, those with Zawahiri had extraordinary capabilities—doctors, engineers and soldiers. They had experience in secret work and they knew how to organise themselves and create cells.

In June 2001, two jehadi outfits, Osama-led al-Qaeda and Zawahiri-led Egyptian Islamic Jehad, formally merged into one and launched Qaeda al-Jehad. Although Osama eventually became the public face of al-Qaeda's Islamic terrorism, the fact remains that it was Zawahiri and his team members who actually provided the backbone of the larger organisation's leadership. As a man of science, Zawahiri was interested in the use of biological and chemical warfare since he believed that the destructive power of these weapons was no less than that of nuclear weapons. According to US intelligence agencies' findings, Dr. Zawahiri pored over medical journals to research on the usage of chemical and biological weapons.

In the process, he met with an Egyptian scientist in Afghanistan, Medhat Mursi al-Sayed, whose jehadi name was Abu Khabab. The US intelligence officials believe that Khabab prepared the deadly explosives for the truck bomb that hit the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in August 1998. Later, during the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the US forces reportedly claimed to have discovered a factory under construction, near Kandahar, to be used for the production of anthrax. A sample of anthrax powder was reportedly found in Zawahiri's house in Afghanistan.

On September 11, 2002, Zawahiri, bin Laden and their followers evacuated their quarters in Kandahar and fled into the mountains, where they listened to an Arabic radio station's news flashes about the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. According to a CIA report about the events of that morning, at 9:53 a.m. between the crash of American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon and the downing of United Airlines Flight 93 in Pennsylvania, a member of al- Qaeda

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in Afghanistan was overheard saying that the attackers were following through on "the doctor's programme."

On December 3, American bombers struck a heavily fortified complex of caves near Jalalabad. When the ground troops arrived, they discovered more than a hundred bodies and they were able to identify eighteen of them as top al-Qaeda lieutenants. Dr. Zawahiri's wife, Azza, and their children were also killed, but, according to the FBI, there is no confirming evidence of this. After the attacks, a Northern Alliance commander announced that Zawahiri, too, had been killed in the American bombing. However, the claim was belied by the release of a videotape showing Osama and Zawahiri sitting on a blanket beside a mountain stream, talking about the jehad operations of September 11.

Where is Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri?

Is Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri really holed up in the besieged Azam Warsak area in South Waziristan? Or has there been a miscalculation on the part of the military commanders who felt the fierce resistance being put up by the militants was primarily aimed at protecting a high-value al-Qaeda target? General Musharraf's comment on the issue during the CNN interview in March 2004 not only fuelled speculation to the identity of the high-value al-Qaeda target but also raised expectations with regard to the success of the military operation in South Waziristan, which eventually provided futile.

Despite the subsequent explanations by government spokesmen that the General did not mention Dr. al-Zawahiri's name, the international media turned its focus on only one issue -- the fate of the Egyptian surgeon who is now effectively the al-Qaeda number two. The government subsequently came under sharp criticism as the security forces could not get hold of him in the first round of the operation that was concluded in mid-March 2004. The international media reported that Zawahiri was able to slip out of the supposedly tight military cordon. The Musharraf administration further attracted flak for misleading the world by claiming that somebody important in al-Qaeda could be hiding in the targeted area. The Bush administration now feels justified in demanding Musharraf to let the US troops enter the Federally Administered Tribal Areas due to the inability of the Pakistani troops to nab the wanted men.

Analysts say it would be wrong to rule out the presence of Dr. Zawahiri in South Waziristan, or indeed in some other border area in Pakistan. As a matter of fact, most of the al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders and commanders tried to escape to Pakistan after the fall of Taliban regime in Afghanistan and many of them managed to do so. According to intelligence sources, there is every possibility of Dr. Zawahiri or even Osama spending time in South Waziristan at one stage. But

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common sense demands that they would try and move out of a place that in recent months has become the focus of an intense hunt for them. The sources say if they are still there, it only shows that they do not have many other safe places to hide and are unable also to take the risk of moving elsewhere.

It appears that before launching the military operation in South Waziristan, Musharraf and his military commanders did base their assessment about the presence of the high-value al-Qaeda target in the area only on the basis of the fierce resistance being put up by the militants. Though military spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan made it clear that the assessment was not based on any information gleaned from captured militants, it is possible that the US and Pakistani army commanders are in possession of intercepts and leads which point to the possible presence of Zawahiri in the mountains of South Waziristan.

Otherwise, those who know the al-Qaeda fighters, or are aware of the fighting skills and determination of Chechens, Uzbekistanis and Pashtuns, will not be surprised a bit by the spirited fight being put up by the outnumbered and outgunned men holding out in the villages around Azam Warsak. They never surrender and are willing to die for their cause. They would put up a strong resistance with or without Zawahiri. In addition, there was an assumption that Laden and Zawahiri would stick together as they have done all these years. If they are now separated and Zawahiri is holed up alone in South Waziristan, there could be two explanations for this. Firstly, that the two have decided to stay separately so that one is able to survive and run al-Qaeda in case the other is killed or captured. Secondly, that Osama is long dead and that is why Zawahiri is alone rather than in the company of his al-Qaeda boss.

Analysts say that one should keep in mind that there are fewer Arabs among those resisting the Pakistan Army compared to the Uzbekistanis, Chechens and Pakistani tribesmen. The Arabs are the real al-Qaeda and the followers of bin Laden and Dr. Zawahiri. They would surely fight to protect their two al-Qaeda leaders. For the Uzbekistanis, Chechens and Pakistani Pashtun tribesmen, association with al-Qaeda would be far less important than the urge to help the homeless Arabs. The Uzbekistani Islamists seem more inclined to protect their leader Tahir Yuldesh, head of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan who too is believed to be hiding in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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Zawahiri vs Musharraf

A virulently anti-Musharraf message, issued by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, was disseminated by the Al-Jazeera TV station of Qatar on March 25, 2004, which

coincided with a joint Pak-US operation to smoke out the dregs of al-Qaeda allegedly hiding in the South Waziristan area of the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The high-profile operation, one of whose main objectives was to catch Dr. Zawahiri who was projected by Pakistani Army officials as hiding in that area, eventually proved to be an embarrassing fiasco for the General Musharraf. The operation inflamed anti-US and anti-Musharraf anger among tribals of the FATA who accused Musharraf of letting himself be used by the US for making Muslims kill Muslims and Pakistanis kill Pakistanis. The local tribals not only managed to frustrate the search of the security forces for foreigners allegedly hiding in that area, but also managed to inflict heavy human casualties and equipment damage on the security forces in ambushes and frontal clashes.

During the operation that started on March 18, 2004, at least 70 personnel of the Pakistani security forces were killed by the tribals, with eight of them captured in an ambush and executed at point-blank range after having been held hostage for some days. They were executed after the Pakistan Army top brass turned down the demand of the tribals for the release of the 100 tribals earlier arrested by the Army under suspicion of their being foreigners. Faced with the determined resistance of the armed tribals, the Army had to halt its combing operations in the interior areas of South Waziristan.

In his message, Zawahiri called on the Pakistanis to overthrow General Musharraf. "I call on the Pakistani people to unite under the banner of Islam. All Muslims in Pakistan should attempt to get rid of this traitor government, which has surrendered to the Americans, leading to the destruction of Pakistan so the Indians can be in control. I call on the Pashtun and Baluchi tribes, on the two sides of the border with Afghanistan. O tribes, your Taliban brothers and their followers are your brothers and your hosts. How can you allow the agents of the Crusaders and the Jews to strike you? The Pakistani people in general and the Pashtun tribes in particular should take revenge", added the tape-recorded voice of Dr. Zawahiri.

"I call on the Pakistani army, the poor army that was put in a miserable state by Musharraf, the Indians are in front of you and behind you in Afghanistan… Musharraf has disposed of your nuclear arms. Are you going to remain silent until the partition of Pakistan once again?" "Fight the supporters of the devil," the voice said, calling on the religious leaders, "to do their duty and reveal the real face of Musharraf". The voice also accused Musharraf of "killing thousands of Muslims in Afghanistan" and being put in charge by the United States "of new missions, most importantly the destruction of Pakistan. Among these plans is the freezing of the Pakistani nuclear programme".

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Reacting sharply to 'The Zawahiri message', Pakistan's foreign office spokesman Masood Khan rejected the threat to General Musharraf and claimed the people of Pakistan fully back the government's efforts to root out terrorism and extremism. "Pakistan's military does not get orders from al-Zawahiri so it is absolutely absurd", said the Inter Services Public Relations spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan. Giving his reaction to the Zawahiri message, General Musharraf vowed that he would eliminate al-Qaeda. Musharraf spoke during an interview with ABC News, a day after Zawahiri urged Pakistan's military to support al-Qaeda and sweep Musharraf from power. "Now as far as if he's taunting me well, I would like to say that I'm going to eliminate all of them," he said, referring to Zawahiri. "I mean Zawahiri is on the run. For heaven's sake, it's just one tape. Let's not get excited. It's very clear we'll eliminate them, and the tribal elders are cooperating", Musharraf was quoted as saying.

While it is not clear when Zawahiri's latest message was recorded, the virulence of its attack on Musharraf indicates that it was probably recorded after reports started appearing in the US and Pakistani media about the intensification of the hunt for bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and their supporters by the US and Pakistani forces through coordinated, but separate operations in the areas adjoining the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The Zawahiri tirade against Musharraf was meant to exploit the anti-Musharraf anger among fundamentalists over three issues, namely, the action against Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the government restrictions on the jehadi outfits operating in Jammu & Kashmir and cooperation with the US in its hunt for bin Laden and other al-Qaeda dregs in the tribal areas.

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Chapter 25

Mullah Mohammad Omar: One-eye command

Mullah Mohammad Omar, the self-styled 'Commander of the Faithful', used to head the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which once controlled approximately 90 percent of the country's territory. Very little is known about the personal life of the Taliban's supreme commander, because he was a reclusive figure even before his militant Taliban government was overthrown by the Americans and he was forced into hiding. His refusal to give up Osama bin Laden was the main motivation for the US-led strike on Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Born to a poor agricultural in Mewand district of southwestern Afghanistan in 1960, little is known of Mullah Mohammad Omar until the early 1980s, when he appeared as a guerrilla leader fighting against the Soviet Armed Forces in Afghanistan. During the fight against the Soviets, he was reportedly injured several times including an attack in which his right eye was injured by shrapnel. It was then that he came into contact with his best friend and fishing companion, Osama bin Laden, a friendship which transcended the responsibilities of a leader of his country, if not all of his people, resulting in the current situation of chaos in which the country is emerged. Mullah Omar and bin Laden go back to their time as resistance fighters against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Bin Laden is believed to have at least partially financed the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, from which Mullah Omar emerged as 'Commander of the Faithful,' a title with great resonance in Islamic history.

Shortly before he launched the Taliban movement in the spring of 1994, Mullah Mohammad Omar was called by the humble people of his village, Singesar, who complained that two local girls had been tied up, shaved and gang-raped by the mujahideen militia. Mohammad Omar gathered together 30 former guerrillas, found the girls, freed them and hanged the mujahideen leaders publicly. It was acts of savagery like this committed by the mujahideen, which may have led to the austere regime of strict discipline that Mullah Mohammad Omar imposed on his country. The Taliban movement was thus launched in, more by accident than design, to control the growing anarchy within the country after the US-backed mujahideen had ousted the communist government of Dr. Najibullah from Kabul in April 1992.

The people of Afghanistan greeted the Taliban with enthusiasm as they systematically clamped down on the mujahideen warlords and drugs barons who had taken over the country. They were seen as a movement, which restored a minimum of order over total chaos. A large number of the religious seminaries

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along the Pakistan-Afghan border provided a significant number of recruits to the Taliban. Mullah Mohammad Omar once told the Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yousufzai, "We were fighting Muslims who had gone wrong. How could we remain quiet when we could see crimes being committed against women and the poor?"

In Mullah Omar's perception, the rationale of the Taliban was to overcome what he saw as Afghanistan's descent into warlordism. The paramount purpose of Mullah Omar was to forge a unity among the various warring factions and establish a true Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan. Initially, the people of Afghanistan welcomed him as a 'harbinger of peace and stability' in the war-torn country. The Taliban under his leadership captured Kabul in 1996, founded the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and also introduced *Shariah* (Islamic law) as the legal system of the country. Once approximately 90 per cent of Afghanistan came under the Taliban control, Mullah Omar initiated his agenda of 'transforming' Afghanistan into the 'purest Islamic State' in the world.

Some unconfirmed western media reports indicate that Omar has close personal ties with Laden as he has married bin Laden's eldest daughter and that bin Laden has married one of Mullah Omar's daughters. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington and the US allegation that Osama bin Laden was the prime suspect in the same, Mullah Omar while vigorously defending him indicated that his guest (Laden) does not possess the wherewithal to carry out such lethal terrorist attacks.

Different media reports describe Omar as unusually tall (6 foot, 6 inches), bearded, reclusive, a lover of war stories and a speaker of Dari with an Iranian accent -- despite being a Pashtun from Maiwand in Kandahar. His right eye is stitched shut, the result of an encounter with Soviet soldiers when he was a mujahideen commander with the *Harakat-e-Inquilab-e-Islami* party. Omar's refusal to be photographed or interviewed tended to reinforce his image as a sphinx-like visitor from another plain of being. In a bizarrely-constructed exchange with David Loyn, the BBC's South Asia Correspondent, Mohammad Omar, who was still in power at that time, explained -- from behind a curtain and via a third party seated inches away -- that his reluctance to hold face-to-face interviews was because he did not wish to meet anybody who was not helpful to his cause.

The Mullah's first explanation of the Taliban's mission was that it had arisen to restore peace, to provide security to the wayfarer and to protect that honour of women and the poor. Although the implication was there, no explicit mention was made of jehad and, indeed, it could not have been until the Taliban had acquired the critical mass needed to present themselves as a popular force for change. But jehad had become something of a hackneyed concept even to

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Afghans after the events of 1992, when a government of blood-stained communists -- which, nevertheless, possessed some of the legitimacy required in traditional leadership equation -- was replaced by home-grown Islamists with talents for little more than libertinism.

The culture of the military commander was a degeneration of a system that had been in place centuries before. But the rise of the Mullah, under the Taliban, proved to be less a return to the elusive values cherished in pre-communist times than the stupefying of a spiritual tradition that once traced its origins back to the footsteps of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Determining whether the rise of the Mullah was tantamount to the dumbing down of a richer spiritual and legal tradition is hampered by the opacity of the Taliban movement and the convergence of its military and religious agendas. The young Taliban, who rallied to the cause, and many of the Taliban leaders were the product of the *Deoband* school of Sunni thought, founded 130 years earlier in Uttar Pradesh, India, which, in the absence of any domestic school of theological studies, had exerted an influence on Afghanistan's spiritual leadership equal to that of Egypt's Al-Azhar University, the alma mater of ousted president Berhanuddin Rabbani.

The *Deobandis* represent the extreme of attempts to regulate the personal behaviour of their pupils, having issued nearly a quarter of a million *fatwa* on the minutiae of everyday life since the beginning of the century. There is eyewitness testimony of children, chained to their lecterns, rocking back and forth as they learn by rote a Koran, written not in Pashtun, but in Arabic. Boys enter the system as wards, exchanging life in a poor family, for bed, board and an austere catechism that one will one day lead to life as a mullah. It is tempting to identify in this early separation from female relatives the origins of the extreme misogyny, which even more than the objective of a pure Islamic state, lent cohesion to the Taliban as they marched into, and subdued, non-Pashtun lands.

Official Taliban policy, in a very immediate sense, stigmatised females as the evil eye made omnipresent -- and a cause for real fear -- in the communities the rank-and-file occupied. They had to be covered, closeted and where necessary, beaten to prevent more sin from being spewed into society. The penalty for women showing their faces in public was set by the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, the religious police established in Kabul, at 29 lashes. Part of this anxiety was sexual and could be attributed to the highly-charged rules of *pashtunwali*, by which girls embark on the perilous road to puberty at seven when they are first sequestered from boys and men. From then until marriage, youths have no licit contact with the opposite sex beyond the members of their own family.

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In Kandahar, the custom of seclusion had given rise to a rich and colourful tradition of homosexual passion, celebrated in poetry, dance and the practice of male prostitution. Heterosexual romance, by contrast, was freighted with the fear of broken honour, the threat of vendetta and, ultimately, death by stoning, if the heart were found out. In Pashtun society, man-woman love was the one that dared not speak its name; boy-courtesans conducted their affairs openly. The Taliban grew to maturity on the gruel of orthodoxy, estranged from the mitigating influence of women, family and village. This ensured that early recruits to the movement were disciplined and biddable. If their gynaeophobia appeared the product of a repressed homosexuality on the march, Taliban cohorts also conjured up echoes of a medieval children's crusade, with its associated elements of self-flagellation and an innocent trust in the immanence of Paradise.

According to analysts, the Taliban regime which imposed a strict and eccentric interpretation of the Holy Koran, banning all activities which distracted people from praying, may have been a reflection of the personal psyches of Mohammad Omar and Osama, the first, reacting against his poor origins and the second, against his misspent youth, in his quest for attention. Osama craved the attention of the father who abandoned him, through death, when he was ten years old. Mohammad Omar mixed traditional Pashtun lore with Islamic law in his personal fix for the ills of the country he came to dominate, more by chance than by design. The end result was a regime which imposed a prohibition of almost all earthly pleasures: Lobster, television, cinema, enamel, statues, nail varnish, satellite dishes, photographs of people and animals, stuffed toys, the Internet, computer discs, non-religious music, dancing, musical instruments, cards, ties, chess, lipstick, fireworks, catalogues, poppies, human hair products, women drivers, female students and kite flying.

Subsequently, the Taliban lost touch with their people through an excessive imposition of the *Shariah* (Islamic law), which inflicted mutilations, decapitations, public stoning and torture on its people, the imposition of the *burqa* (total coverage) on women, who were denied schooling and the prohibition of male doctors from touching the bodies of women. A reclusive figure that lived in total austerity in Kandahar, the ultra-shy Mohammad Omar imposed his personal limitations on the movement he created. Nevertheless, Omar is no fool. In an interview with the Pakistani daily *Dawn*, in 1997, he declared that Afghanistan would be attacked by the US using Osama bin Laden as a pretext because the Taliban had refused to allow an American company to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian Ocean.

By the end of year 2000, facing drought, military problems, a lack of international recognition and sanctions, Mullah Omar became increasingly isolated and

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dependent on Osama bin Laden. During his last months in power, his public statements took on a pan-Islamic tone, which is found more among militant Islamists from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In a Voice of America interview on Sept. 21, 2001, Mullah Omar said: "God says he will never be satisfied with the infidels. In terms of worldly affairs, America is very strong. Even if it were twice as strong or twice that, it could not be strong enough to defeat us. We are confident that no one can harm us if God is with us". The US-led military operation against Afghanistan started on October 7, 2001, eventually led (in November 2001) to the fall of the Taliban regime led by Mullah Mohammad Omar.

The hunt for Mullah Omar

Since a US-led coalition booted the Taliban and its leaders from power in Afghanistan in December 2001 for refusing to hand over Osama bin Laden after September 11, the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, has vanished. Omar's appearance remains a mystery to many, and that presents a challenge to those on his trail.

There are persistent reports from coalition intelligence sources that he is in western Afghanistan, particularly in the Kandahar region, once a stronghold of the Taliban, and nearby provinces. However, the hunt for Omar has focused recently on the areas around Uruzgan, Kandahar and Helmand. On July 8, 2004, international media widely reported that Afghan intelligence agents have talked to Mullah Mohammad Omar after commandeering a satellite phone being used by his top aide.

According to Kandahar intelligence chief Abdullah Laghmanai, a man believed to be Mullah Omar's aide, Mullah Sakhi Dad Mujahid, was captured in the first week of July 2004 while carrying a satellite telephone containing the phone numbers of top members of the ousted government. "We contacted Mullah Omar by Mullah Mujahid's phone", he said, adding that at first Mullah Mujahid was forced to talk to his boss on the phone. "But when he (Omar) realised the situation ... he cut off the phone".

"*Assallam-o-Aleikum*, where are you?" Mullah Omar asked Mullah Mujahid, according to Mr Laghmanai, who did not say when the call was made. Mullah Mujahid, as he is known locally, was arrested during a raid in Dara-i-Noor, some 70kms north of Kandahar. The area is in the rugged border region between Uruzgan and Kandahar and known to US military officials as the 'Taliban heartland'. Mullah Mujahid served as Mullah Omar's secretary under the Taliban's 1996-2001 rule. "Currently he was serving as Mullah Omar's military assistant", he said.

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Laghmanai said subsequent efforts to contact Mullah Omar had been unsuccessful as the one-eyed Taliban boss refuses to answer phone calls 'from strange numbers'. “Maybe Omar has found out that his friend is under our control”, he said. “He doesn't answer his telephone”. Mullah Mujahid was transferred in handcuffs to Kabul for investigation, which authorities hope could lead to the arrest of other militants. Mr Laghmanai alleged that intelligence reports as well as information received from Mujahid suggested Mullah Omar was hiding in Pakistan's tribal areas near Kandahar and close to Quetta. “The information Mujahid provided, and also our intelligence, suggests that Omar is in Pakistan's tribal areas”, he said.

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Chapter 26

Khalid Sheikh Mohammad: The 9/11 mastermind

Having been captured from Pakistan in March 2003, al-Qaeda's chief operational commander Khalid Sheikh Mohammad reportedly told his interrogators that the planning for the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States started much earlier than anyone had realised and was intended to be even more devastating.

"The original plan was for a two-pronged attack with five targets on the East Coast of America and five on the West Coast. I met Osama bin Laden in Kabul. It was at this time that we discussed the Heathrow operation. We talked about hitting California as it was America's richest state and Laden had talked about hitting economic targets", claimed an exclusive news report filed by prominent western journalist Christina Lamb for the *Sunday Times* on March 28, 2004. The report was based on the leaked transcripts from the interrogation of the alleged 9/11 mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad.

Christina Lamb wrote: "Khalid Sheikh Mohammad has told the interrogators that he and his terrorist nephew, Ramzi Yusuf, leafed through almanacs of American skyscrapers when planning the operation. Sears Tower in Chicago and Library Tower in Los Angeles - which was "blown up" in the film *Independence Day* — were both potential targets, according to transcripts of interrogations of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. "We were looking for symbols of economic might," he told his captors."

Accounts emanating since 9/11 from US intelligence officials and some non-governmental counter-terrorism experts known for their proximity to American intelligence agencies have been projecting Khalid Sheikh Mohammad as the real action man of Osama bin Laden, the man who orchestrated the 9/11 terrorist strikes in the US. In an interview to the Al-Jazeera network from their Karachi hideout in August 2002, Khalid Sheikh and Ramzi bin al-Shibah, a Yemeni member of the al-Qaeda, bragged about their role in 9/11. Khalid introduced himself as head of al-Qaeda's military committee.

The Al-Jazeera correspondent reported that he interviewed them in a hideout in Karachi. The American intelligence officials then organised a massive hunt for them in Karachi and through electronic intercepts located their hideout, which was raided by Pakistani authorities on September 11, 2002. During an exchange of fire lasting about four hours, bin al-Shibah was captured and airlifted to Diego Garcia for interrogation. According to US officials, he was to have joined the hijacking of the aircraft on 9/11, but could not do so because he could not get an American visa.

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Almost six months later, on March 1, 2003, a joint team of the ISI and the FBI raided a house in Rawalpindi in an area where many retired officers of the Army and the ISI live and arrested three persons, one of them a Pakistani. One of the arrested persons was identified as Khalid Sheikh Mohammad who was handed over to the US intelligence officials, who flew him out to the US naval base in Diego Garcia, where a secret detention centre had been functioning since March, 2002, away from the prying eyes of the media and the international human rights organisations.

Coming back to the *Sunday Times* news report, Osama bin Laden, who like Khalid Sheikh Mohammad had studied engineering, vetoed simultaneous coast-to-coast attacks, arguing that it would be too difficult to synchronise. Khalid Sheikh switched to two waves: hitting the East Coast first and following up with a second attack. Osama wanted the second wave to focus on the West Coast. Zacarias Moussaoui, a French-Moroccan who had lived in London, was sent to Pan Am international flight school in Minnesota to train for the West Coast attack.

However, his instructor alerted the FBI after the Moroccan showed no interest in landing planes — only in steering them. He was arrested in August 2001. Until now, it was widely believed that Moussaoui was meant to have been the 20th hijacker of the 9/11 attacks. The revelation by Khalid Sheikh Mohammad that he was part of a second wave is lent weight by the arrest of two other men by the FBI who were allegedly part of the West Coast conspirators. Despite the setbacks, Khalid Sheikh described the 9/11 attacks as "far more successful than we had ever imagined".

In the words of Christina Lamb, 'He recounted sitting looking at the books with Ramzi Yusuf, his nephew by marriage, who was the man behind the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. In that attack, Yusuf succeeded only in ripping a crater into the foundations with a van bomb. "We knew from that experience that explosives could be problematic," said Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, "so we started thinking about using planes".'

When Khalid Sheikh was arrested in March 2003 from the Rawalpindi residence of a *Jamaat-e-Islami* office bearer, the paunchy 37-year old was unshaven and wearing a baggy vest. He looked more like a down-and-out than one of the most dangerous men in the world. Despite their arrest by the FBI, a number of intriguing questions about Ramzi Yusuf and Khalid Sheikh remain unanswered. Are they related to each other as some reports claim? Are they Pakistanis (Yemeni-Baluchis) as Filipino and Western agencies seem to believe or are they Kuwaitis (this is denied by the Kuwaiti authorities) or Iraqis (in the past, the

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Pakistani media had been consistently referring to Ramzi Yusuf either as a person of Middle Eastern background or as an Iraqi)?

Born in Kuwait -- either on March 1, 1964 or April 14, 1965 – Khalid Sheikh's al-Qaeda roots run deep and wide. In 1996, he was indicted in New York for his alleged involvement in a Philippines-based plot to blow up 12 US-bound commercial airliners in 48 hours. The indictment has no legal bearing right now, US government officials said and the priority is to interrogate him. The FBI believes that it was Khalid Sheikh who ordered the killing of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. Khalid Sheikh has also been linked to the bombing of the U.S.S Cole in 2000, Richard Reid's foiled 2001 attempt to blow up an airliner with a shoe bomb and the bombings at the *El Ghriba* synagogue, in Djerba, Tunisia and the Bali bombings last year. The synagogue bombings were the first al-Qaeda attacks outside Afghanistan after September 11, 2001.

Western counter-terrorism experts believe that Khalid Sheikh was the brain behind 9/11. In 1995, he and Ramzi Yusuf had together plotted from their hideouts in the Philippines a series of terrorist strikes against the US, which did not materialise. Both fled to Pakistan after the Filipino authorities got scent of their plans. Ramzi was arrested by the Pakistani authorities in 1996 and was handed over to the FBI for trial in the New York World Trade Centre explosion case. However, Khalid Sheikh managed to evade arrest and emerged as one of the principal aides of Osama bin Laden, when the latter returned to Afghanistan in 1996.

Western media had quoted in 2003, a senior American intelligence official saying that if he had to decide between catching Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, he might prefer the latter. The Western media also quoted French terrorism expert and United Nations Security Council consultant Roland Jacquard as saying: "Khalid Sheikh Mohammad is probably the only man who knows all the pieces of the puzzle". The police authorities of the Philippines had described Khalid Sheikh as a Kuwaiti-born and US-educated Pakistani. If he were proved a Pakistani, it would mean a Pakistani assisting bin Laden masterminded 9/11.

According to Christina Lamb, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed, already convicted in the gruesome murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, was reported to have told the Karachi police that during a visit to Afghanistan before 9/11 he had come to know of the plans for the terrorist strikes in the US and had immediately informed Lt. Gen. Ehsanul Haq, the present Director General of the Inter Services Intelligence, who was at that time Corps Commander, Peshawar. She adds that the interrogation reports make clear that Khalid Sheikh was not only the chief

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planner for September 11 but also was the one to introduce Osama bin Laden to Hambali, the Indonesian militant accused of the Bali bombing.

To date, Khalid Sheikh is the most senior al-Qaeda member to have been caught. Until now there has been no word of where he is being held or what, if anything, he is saying. Although his interrogation transcripts are prefaced with the warning that "the detainee has been known to withhold information or deliberately mislead", it is clear that he is talking — and that the September 11 conspiracy was much more extensive than has previously been revealed.

Khalid Sheikh was born in Kuwait city, where his father was a preacher. He joined the Muslim Brotherhood as a teenager and went to the United States to study engineering in North Carolina. At that time, the Afghan jehad against the Russians was in full flow. After graduating, he headed for one of bin Laden's guesthouses in the Pakistani frontier town of Peshawar. He has reportedly told interrogators that it was there that he first met Hambali. In 1992 Khalid Sheikh moved south to Karachi. Posing as a businessman importing holy water from Mecca, he acted as a fundraiser and intermediary between young militants and wealthy sponsors in the Gulf.

His nephew Ramzi Yusuf's failed attempt to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993 inspired him to conceive his own operations. The first was Operation Bojinka (Serbo-Croat for big bang) — a plot to blow up 12 American airliners over the Pacific. Both Yusuf and Hambali were involved. It failed after the conspirators' Manila bomb factory caught fire. The men fled to Pakistan where Ramzi Yusuf was arrested. Undeterred, Khalid Sheikh decided to start working on something "far more spectacular" for which he "hoped to persuade bin Laden to give him money and operatives". He also decided to introduce Hambali to bin Laden. Riduan Isamuddin, alias Hambali headed *Jemaah Islamiya* (JI), which wanted to unite Southeast Asia under an Islamic banner.

According to Christina Lamb's report, Khalid Sheikh told his interrogators: "I was impressed by *Jemaah Islamiya's* ability to operate regionally and by Hambali's connections with the Malaysian government. He told me that his group had a training camp in the Philippines and a madrassa (religious teaching) programme in Malaysia on the border with Singapore. In 1996, I invited Hambali to Afghanistan to meet Osama. He spent three or four days with him and it was agreed that al-Qaeda and Hambali's organisation would work together on 'targets of mutual interest'."

Hambali, who had been operating on a shoestring, was provided with a new car, mobile phones and computers. Osama bin Laden was apparently impressed by Khalid Sheikh's networking and ideas and made him head of al-Qaeda's military

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committee. From then on he was a key planner in almost every attack, including the simultaneous bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Osama bin Laden dubbed him The Brain. The big challenge was to attack Americans on their own soil. Initially, Khalid Sheikh proposed leasing a charter plane, filling it with explosives and crashing it into the CIA headquarters. Then the plan became more ambitious.

Osama bin Laden reportedly pointed out that on a visit to America in 1982 he had been to the Empire State building in New York and was astonished by how unprotected such key landmarks were. A committee, known as the *shura*, was formed comprising of bin Laden, Khalid Sheikh and four others. It met at what was known as the war room in bin Laden's camp outside Jalalabad in Afghanistan. The plan for a two-pronged attack was formed. "We had scores of volunteers to die for Allah but the problem was finding those familiar with the West who could blend in as well as get US visas," revealed Khalid Sheikh.

Two Yemenis and two Saudi pilots, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Midhar, were selected and given commando training in Afghanistan. "All four operatives only knew that they had volunteered for a martyrdom operation involving planes," said Khalid Sheikh. In 1999, the two Yemenis were refused American visas but a few months later, four jehad recruits from Hamburg arrived in Quetta, Pakistan. Led by Mohammed Atta, an Egyptian, they had originally planned to go to Chechnya to fight the Russians, but a former jehadi in Germany had given them an introduction to bin Laden.

After meeting the al-Qaeda leader in Kandahar, they delivered an oath of allegiance required to gain access to his inner circle and were invited to his Ramadan feast. He told them that they had been selected for a top-secret mission and promised that they would enter paradise as martyrs. They were instructed to go home and destroy their passports so their trip to Pakistan remains undetected. They were further instructed to shave off their beards, get new passports and obtain pilots' licenses in the US. Khalid Sheikh reportedly told his interrogators that he had provided them with a special training manual, which included information on how to find flight schools and study timetables.

Three of the four were granted American visas. The fourth, Ramzi bin al-Shibah, failed and returned to Afghanistan where he communicated with them through Internet chat rooms. In the spring of 2000, after a planned meeting in Kuala Lumpur, bin Laden reportedly scaled back the plan from two-prong to two-wave because they had been unable to get enough potential pilots into United States. Moussaoui succeeded in entering America, but the order went out for potential recruits who were not Arab, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad further told his captors. A date was set for the first wave attack, codenamed "Porsche 911", and a

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message went round the world for followers to return to Afghanistan by September 10.

The messages were intercepted by several western intelligence agencies but none apparently realised their significance. When the suicide planes struck on 9/11, al-Qaeda seems to have been taken by surprise — both by the success of the attacks and by the US reaction. "Afterwards we never got time to catch our breath, we were immediately on the run," said Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. He said the war on terrorism and the US bombing of Afghanistan completely disrupted their communications network. Operatives could no longer use satellite phones and had to rely on couriers, although they still used Internet chat rooms.

"Before 9/11 we could dispatch operatives with the expectation of follow-up contact but after October 7, 2001 (when the bombing started) the situation changed by 180 degrees. There was no longer a war room or s*hura* and operatives had more autonomy." He told interrogators that he remained in Pakistan for 10 days after September 11, then went to Afghanistan to find bin Laden: "I went to Jalalabad and Tora Bora, looking for him and then eventually met him in Kabul." The al-Qaeda leader instructed him to continue operations — with Britain as the next target. "It was at this time we discussed the Heathrow operation," said Sheikh.

"Osama bin Laden declared (Tony) Blair our principal enemy and London a target." He arranged for operatives to be sent from Pakistan and Afghanistan to London, where surveillance of Heathrow airport and the surrounding areas began. However, he claimed, the operation never got beyond the planning stages. "There was a lot of confusion," he said. "I would say my performance at that time was sloppy."

One priority was to get Hambali out of Afghanistan. In November 2001, Khalid Sheikh arranged for him to go to Karachi. There he gave him $20,000 and a false Indonesian passport with which he could travel to Sri Lanka and further to Thailand from where he would help organise the Bali nightclub bombing the following year. They kept in touch through Riduan Isamuddin, alias Hambali's 27-year old younger brother, Gun Gun Rusman Gunawan who used to live in Karachi, posing to be an Indonesian student.

At the same time, the net was closing in around Khalid Sheikh Mohammad himself. Another s*hura* member, Abu Zubaydah, was already arrested from Faisalabad in Pakistan in March 2002. Six months later bin al-Shib was seized in the Karachi apartment that he shared with Khalid Sheikh, who managed to escape, but his flight came to an end in the early hours of March 2, 2003 in Rawalpindi. Questioned for two days by the Pakistani intelligence agencies,

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which say he did nothing but pray repeatedly, he was flown blindfolded to Bagram, the US base in the mountains above Kabul. It is neither clear how long he was held there nor what methods were used to get him to talk.

A few months later, the FBI also arrested Hambali [in August 11, 2003] from Thailand while his younger brother Gun Gun Rusman Gunawan was captured [in September 2003] from a religious seminary in Karachi. As things stand, the investigators have been cross-checking Khalid Sheikh's confessions and revelations with those of Ramzi bin al-Shib, Abu Zubaydah and Riduan Isamuddin Hambali. However, the most disturbing fact for the United States is that despite all these arrests, the al-Qaeda lives on.

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Chapter 27

Was Pakistan Air Force Chief killed?

Abu Zubaydah, a top al-Qaeda operative captured from Rawalpindi in March 2002 and handed over to the US Federal Bureau of Investigations, claimed in subsequent interrogations that some key Saudi authorities and the late chief of Pakistan Air Force, Air Marshall Mushaf Ali Mir had prior knowledge of the 9/11 terrorist plot, writes Gerald Posner in his book, *"Why America Slept: The Failure to Prevent 9/11"*, published in September 2003.

In the words of Posner, the Wall Street lawyer-turned-investigative writer, "Abu Zubaydah was duped by the US interrogators masquerading as Saudis and using painkillers and sodium pentathol, sometimes called truth serum, to befuddle him into divulging secrets. As a result, the top al-Qaeda operative made startling revelations about secret connections linking Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Osama bin Laden". Exclusive details of this terrorism triangle are provided in the explosive final chapter when Posner examines who did what wrong before September 11. Most of his book is a lean, lucid retelling of how the CIA, the FBI and the American leaders missed a decade's worth of clues and opportunities that if heeded, might have forestalled the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Chapter 19 of the book contains the most controversial stuff as far as Pakistan is concerned -- an account based on Abu Zubaydah's claims as told to Posner by the US government sources "in a position to know"—of what Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, despite being allied to the US, did to build up al-Qaeda and what they knew before 9/11. The tale begins at 2 a.m. on March 28, 2002, when US surveillance pinpointed Zubaydah in a two-storey safe house in Pakistan. Commandos rousted out 62 suspects, one of whom was seriously wounded while trying to flee. A Pakistani intelligence officer and hastily made voiceprints quickly identified the injured man as Abu Zubaydah. When questioning stalled, according to Posner, CIA men flew Abu Zubaydah to an Afghan complex fitted out as a fake Saudi jail chamber, where "two Arab-Americans, now with Special Forces," pretending to be Saudi inquisitors, used threats and other methods to scare him into more confessions.

Yet when Abu Zubaydah was confronted by the false Saudis, writes Posner, "his reaction was not fear, but utter relief". Happy to see them, he reeled off telephone numbers for a senior member of the royal family who would, said Zubaydah, "tell you what to do". The man at the other end would be Prince Ahmed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, a Westernised nephew of King Fahd and a publisher better known as a racehorse owner. His horse War Emblem won the Kentucky Derby in 2002. To the amazement of the US, the numbers proved valid.

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When the fake inquisitors accused Abu Zubaydah of lying, he responded with a 10-minute monologue laying out the Saudi-Pakistani-Osama triangle.

Abu Zubaydah, writes Posner, said the Saudi connection ran through Prince Turki al-Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, the kingdom's longtime intelligence chief. He said bin Laden personally told him of a 1991 meeting in which Turki agreed to let bin Laden leave Saudi Arabia and to provide him with secret funds as long as al-Qaeda refrained from promoting jehad in the kingdom. The Pakistani contact, high-ranking air force officer Mushaf Ali Mir entered the equation, Abu Zubaydah said, in a 1996 meeting in Pakistan also attended by Zubaydah himself. Osama bin Laden struck a deal with Mir, who was then in the military but tied closely to Islamists in Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence to get protection, arms and supplies for al-Qaeda. Zubaydah told interrogators that bin Laden said the arrangement was "blessed by the Saudis".

Abu Zubaydah said he attended a third meeting in Kandahar in 1998 with Turki, senior ISI agents and Taliban officials. There Turki promised, writes Posner, that "more Saudi aid would flow to the Taliban, and the Saudis would never ask for Osama bin Laden's extradition, so long as al-Qaeda kept its long-standing promise to direct fundamentalism away from the kingdom". In Gerald Posner's stark judgment, the Saudis "effectively had (bin Laden) on their payroll since the start of the decade". Abu Zubaydah told the interrogators that the Saudis regularly sent the funds through three royal-prince intermediaries he named.

The last eight paragraphs of the book set up a final startling development. Those three Saudi princes all perished within days of one another. On July 22, 2002, Prince Ahmed was felled by a heart attack at the age of 43. One day later Prince Sultan bin Faisal bin Turki al-Saud, 41, was killed in what was called a high-speed car accident. The last member of the trio, Prince Fahd bin Turki bin Saud al-Kabir, officially "died of thirst" while traveling east of Riyadh a week later in the last week of July 2002. And seven months after that, Mushaf Ali Mir, by then Pakistan's Air Marshal, perished in a plane crash. The Fokker, which was used to transport VIPs, came down near the village of Taulanj, in an area of low hills about 17 miles from the town of Kohat, killing all the 17 people aboard including Air Chief and his wife. Air Chief Marshall Mushaf Mir was on his way to Kohat base for a routine annual inspection.

The findings of an inquiry, conducted by the PAF authorities, regarding the Fokker crash, had later claimed that it was an accident that might have been caused due to an error of judgment on the part of the pilot. "The plane most likely crashed into the side of a 3,000 ft. mountain covered in fog about 17 nautical miles East of Kohat, because of a human error of judgment", said the

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inquiry report. However, there are much stronger arguments to suggest that the crash might have been an act of sabotage.

The arguments: The Fokker took off after getting clearance from the Visual Flight Range (VFR) and the Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS). Before the crash, the plane neither gave any warning calls nor its radar system showed any terrain on its way. At the time of the crash, the skies were almost clear with only some clouds near the mountain peaks. Any experienced pilot would never drop his plane to such a low level and that too on a hilly area of Kohat. There is also another route, a bit longer, to bypass the hilly area. If the pilot had been facing any vision problems due to a thick fog, he could have opted for the long route to avoid any risk. Many villagers who were the first to reach the crash scene had stated that they had heard firing before and after the big bang of the crash. "I heard a bang, followed by another big bang, and then I saw flames and smoke on the hills," Reuters news agency had quoted a villager Zarmast Khan as saying. Yet, the PAF authorities had denied having found any weapons near the crash site, besides ruling out the possibility of the plane having been hit either from the space or from the soil.

The plane crash investigations, however, took a new turn after the March 2003 arrest of the al-Qaeda's operational chief, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad from Rawalpindi and Major Adil Qudoos of the Pakistan Army from Kohat. Those involved in the interrogation reportedly suspected Khalid Sheikh Mohammad's involvement in the February 2003 PAF Fokker crash. The al-Qaeda leader had moved from his Karachi hideout to Rawalpindi to facilitate an assassination attempt on General Pervez Musharraf. While looking into the possibilities that might have caused the tragic crash, the intelligence sleuths did not rule out the PAF Fokker having been hit by the Kohat-based al-Qaeda operatives under Sheikh's supervision, who happens to be an engineer by profession. Having arrested Sheikh from Rawalpindi, the FBI was quick to detain from Kohat a serving major of the Pakistan Army; Adil Qudoos, a relative of Ahmed Qudoos from whose residence Sheikh and another al-Qaeda suspect were captured. Major Qudoos was detained from his Cantonment residence in Kohat during an operation.

A group of senior military officials went to the residence of the major, who belonged to the 45 Signals regiment and carried out a thorough search of his house. The Major was asked to give details about Sheikh such as whether he had visited Kohat in recent days or last year. Sheikh had first come into notice in 1993 when his nephew Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf, formerly of *Sipah-e-Sahaba* Pakistan, the political wing of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, was nominated in a plot for a series of terrorist attacks directed against the US interests. According to the FBI findings,

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Khalid Sheikh Mohammad was to take part in the hijacking of the aircrafts in the US on September 11, but could not do so after being refused a US visa.

According to intelligence sources, the FBI sleuths came to know of the whereabouts of one Mohammed Omar Abdel-Rahman, the son of the blind Egyptian Sheikh accused of inspiring the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, while interrogating two members of the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* arrested in Karachi on a tip-off from members of the Kashmiri Shia community of the port city hailing from Gilgit. The younger Rahman was caught in the first week of March 2003 in Quetta, who later guided the agencies to nab Sheikh from his Rawalpindi hideout. Omar Abdel-Rahman told his interrogators that Sheikh had been staying with him, but had escaped just before the Quetta raid. Omar gave address of the *Lashkar* leader's son in Rawalpindi as one of the likely places where Sheikh might take shelter. The house in Rawalpindi was raided thereafter and Sheikh was arrested.

While looking into the possibility of the al-Qaeda's involvement in the Kohat air crash, the investigators pointed out that the Kohat air base was being used by the US forces, under an agreement to grant the US "blanket over flight and landing rights and access to Pakistan's naval and air bases." The investigators knew quite well that on numerous occasions, blindfolded al-Qaeda operatives were handed over to the US commandoes at Kohat airbase. More than 125 al-Qaeda suspects had been interrogated at an Army base in Kohat by the FBI officials before the March 2003 plane crash. During the American war on terror, Kohat had once made it to the international news headlines for clashes between the al-Qaeda activists and security agencies of Pakistan, resulting in casualties on both sides.

The investigators further came to know that al-Qaeda activists often escape from tribal areas and make their way to Kohat. Keeping in view the al-Qaeda activity in and around Kohat, the investigators could not rule out the possibility of sabotage in the air chief's plane crash. Another puzzling facet for investigators was the fact that the wreckage of the ill-fated aircraft was found scattered over a large area on two sides of the mountain cliff, with the tail end at one place and rest of the body at another. This had raised the possibility of a mid-air blast due to a missile hit and a subsequent incapacitation of the pilot. The fact that there was no distress call from the pilot further raises possibilities for sudden incapacitation of the crew, which is yet to be explained. Part of the debris had fallen in the tribal areas while the forward portion carrying the passengers, navigators and the pilots was found near the mountains, thereby raising doubts that need to be clarified if the plane really hit the mountain or something else; may be a missile attack; was the cause of the tragedy?

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However, there are those in the PAF who do not rule out the possibility of the plane having been shot down by the US planes, which had been using the same corridor to carry out their anti-Taliban operations in Afghanistan. After all, Air Chief Marshal Mushaf Ali Mir had already been found involved in a deal with Osama bin Laden "to get protection, arms and supplies for al-Qaeda", as claimed by Abu Zubaydah and reported by Gerald Posner in his book *"Why America Slept: The Failure to Prevent 9/11"*.

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Chapter 28

WTC bombing, Ramzi Yusuf and Pakistan

The *Sipah-e-Sahaba* Pakistan (SSP) has often been linked to Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf, the main accused in the New York World Trade Centre bombing of February 1993. He was arrested from an Islamabad guesthouse on February 7, 1995 and was handed over to the United States.

Exploring Ramzi Yusuf's links with a Pakistani sectarian outfit, *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, a March 27, 1995 news report in Pakistan's English daily, *The News* stated: "The Pakistani investigators are now sure of Ramzi Yusuf's ties with the *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, which flourished mostly in the military training camps inside Afghanistan designated for Arabs and Pakistanis. Orthodox Sunni religious schools in Pakistan serve as feeders for these military training camps". The report further stated: "Pakistani investigators have identified a 24-year-old religious fanatic Abdul Shakoor residing in Lyari in Karachi, as an important Pakistani associate of Ramzi Yusuf. Abdul Shakoor had intimate contacts with Ramzi and was responsible for the June 20, 1994 massive bomb explosion at the shrine of Imam Ali Reza in Mashhad. The Iranian government had earlier held the rebel Mujahideen Khalq group responsible for the explosion. Some analysts suspect Ramzi Yusuf's connection with *Mujahideen Khalq* because of his Iraqi background".

The News report added: "Independent reports suggested that in *Moharram* (first month of Islamic calendar) last year (1994), Ramzi traveled to Iran via Turbat in Baluchistan. Abdul Muqeem, another long-time resident of Karachi and identified as a brother of Ramzi, had also spoken about Ramzi's involvement in the bomb blast at Mashhad. Ramzi is understood to have strong connections in the Pakistani and Iranian side of Baluchistan. Last year (1994), Ramzi's associates in Karachi were given the task to murder Maulana Salim Qadri, the chief of the Sunni Tehrik, an organisation of moderate Sunnis from the *Barelvi* school of thought. Besides Abdul Shakoor, investigators believed that Abdul Wahab, owner of Junaid Bakery in the Lyari area of Karachi and the unit in charge of the *Sipah-e-Sahaba* in Chakiwarah, neighbourhood of Karachi, was another close associate of Ramzi."

The report said that Ramzi also ran a network of Saudi nationals committed to destabilising the royal family in that country. "There is no evidence available to suggest that the *Sipah-e-Sahaba* was in any way aware of Ramzi's anti-kingdom operations inside Saudi Arabia. A nationwide hunt is currently on to trace Munir Madni, a suspected Saudi national and a resident of Bahadurabad in Karachi. Evidence confirmed that Ramzi, through Munir Madni, had established a front

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import-export company that used to get a gift of *Aabe Zam Zam* (holy water) from Saudi Arabia worth many millions of rupees. At one point last year (1994), the same front company generated about Rs.7 million by selling the holy water. The money was later used by Ramzi to finance Saudi extremist groups. Official investigation has also revealed that dozens of Saudis committed to jehad all over the world are visiting the military training camps inside Afghanistan. These training camps are ideal places to rub shoulders with persons like Ramzi Yusuf whose colleagues in Pakistan and Afghanistan were still busy in fuelling unrest in the kingdom".

A July 2002 report by South Asia Analysis Group stated, "In 1996, cadres of the *Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Harkatul Mujahideen* encouraged by the Inter Services Intelligence, entered Afghanistan in numbers of thousands to help the Taliban in its successful assault on Jalalabad and Kabul. After the capture of Kabul by the Taliban in September 1996, they stayed behind in Afghanistan to help the Taliban in its fight against the Northern Alliance. It was the SSP/LeJ elements, which had joined the Taliban and later carried out the brutal massacre of the Shias in the Hazara belt".

The report added: "When bin Laden moved over to Afghanistan from Sudan in 1996, he did not have to create a new terrorist infrastructure to help him in his operations against the United States and Israel. A well-motivated and well-trained infrastructure already existed on the ground consisting of trained Arabs as well as Pakistanis and he took over their leadership. After he formed his International Islamic Front For Jehad Against the US and Israel in 1998, the Pakistani organisations --- the HuM, the LeT, the JeM and the SSP/LJ -- joined it and fought against the Northern Alliance and then against the international coalition led by the United Sates. Subsequently, after the collapse of the Taliban, this infrastructure moved over to Pakistan, along with the surviving leaders and cadres".

Though Ramzi Yusuf's nationality remains disputed, it is believed that he was a native of the Baluchistan area of Pakistan, a wild lawless border region with deep and broad ties to the former Taliban regime. His uncle and partner-in-crime, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, is also believed to hail from Baluchistan. Following his 1995 arrest from Pakistan, a spokesman of Pakistan's Foreign Ministry denied that Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf was a Pakistani national and asserted that his papers showed that he is an Iraqi national. This gave rise to the question: whether Ramzi and his associates might have organised the New York World Trade Centre explosion, which coincided with the second anniversary of the end of the 1991 Gulf War, at the instance of the Iraqi intelligence, with the help of some local accomplices in New York.

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While the official agencies of Pakistan and the US could not collect any credible evidence to prove or disprove this suspicion, Ms. Laurie Mylorie, then of the Foreign Policy Research Institute of Philadelphia, made a detailed investigation into the nationality of Ramzi and a paper based on the results of her research were carried by the US journal "The National Interest" in its issue for Winter 1995/96. While enquiries into his real nationality after his arrest established that he was a Yemeni-Baluchi of Pakistan, she came to the following conclusions on his possible links with Iraq:

(i) On September 1, 1992, Ramzi arrived in the US with an Iraqi passport under the name Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf without a US visa. He was granted temporary asylum pending an enquiry (ii) On November 9, 1992, he reported to the Jersey City Police that his name was Abdul Basit Mahmud Abdul Karim, a Pakistani national born and brought up in Kuwait, and that he had lost his passport. His report was recorded (iii) Between December 3 and December 27,1992, Ramzi made a number of telephone calls to Baluchistan, several of which were conference calls to a few key numbers, a geographical plotting of which suggested that they were related to his probable escape route through Pakistani and Iranian Baluchistan across the Arabian Sea to Oman, after which the telephone trail ended (iv) On December 31, 1992, he went to the Pakistani Consulate in New York and submitted a copy of the report recorded by the Jersey City Police about the loss of his passport along with the copies of his lost passport to show that he was a Pakistani national with the name Abdul Basit Mahmud Abdul Karim and applied for a new passport. The Consulate issued to him a temporary passport under this name with which he escaped from the US after the explosion (v) The Kuwait government's archives did have the papers and finger-prints of one Abdul Basit Karim, a Pakistani national born in Kuwait, but without copies of his passport. The archives contained a note that Abdul Basit and his family had left Kuwait for Baluchistan via Iraq and Iran on August 26, 1990 (vi) After finding out that Ramzi had fled the US after the explosion as Abdul Basit, a Pakistani national, the US Immigration sent his finger prints to the Kuwaiti authorities who confirmed that they tallied with the finger prints in their records (vii) Thereafter, the US authorities presumed that Ramzi's real name was Abdul Basit, that he entered the US as Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf, an Iraqi national and fled after the World Trade Centre explosion as Abdul Basit, a Pakistani national. For some reasons, which remained unclear, they chose to prosecute him as Ramzi Yusuf and not as Abdul Basit.

According to the FBI investigations, Ramzi Yusuf was out of the US before the smoke had cleared from the World Trade Center's halls. He escaped to Pakistan just hours after the bombing, where he first visited his family and then decided to stay at an Islamabad guesthouse. Ramzi then reacquainted himself with his uncle, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and organised several attempted terrorist acts,

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some of which succeeded. In a meeting with Khalid Sheikh and Abdul Hakim Murad, an old friend of Yusuf's, the three discussed airplanes and pilot training. After a few months, say the FBI findings, all three were dispatched to Manila, the Philippines, under orders from Osama bin Laden to begin plotting direct strikes on the United States of America.
As with many elements of Yusuf's life, it remains a mystery exactly when did he first join forces with the al-Qaeda. There is some evidence that the first WTC bombing might have been assisted or facilitated by bin Laden, but there is a lot more evidence that Yusuf's Manila cell was an al-Qaeda shop, financed by bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa. There is a school of thought in the American intelligence community that Yusuf might have been working for Iraq instead of al-Qaeda, particularly since the first WTC bombing took place on the anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait by allied forces in the first Gulf War. However, most theories closely tying Ramzi Yusuf to the government of Iraq tend to involve an amount of misdirection and the connections have thus never been proven.

According to US intelligence reports, with funds flowing from the al-Qaeda, Ramzi Yusuf sat down with Khalid Sheikh and together they devised what would have been the biggest and most devastating terrorist act in history. And they came within two weeks of pulling it off. Project Bojinka (a Serbo-Croatian word for explosion) was the devious brainchild of these sessions. The plan was ruthless. In Phase One of Bojinka, a minimum of five al-Qaeda operatives would work in concert to destroy 11 US-bound airliners over the Pacific almost simultaneously starting on January 21, 1995. The terrorists would board planes bound for the US with stopovers all across Asia. They would plant bombs timed to explode on the second leg of the flight, then get off during the layover and repeat the process for another plane.

The FBI findings say the plan was elegant and highly coordinated, as all the five operatives would have escaped to Pakistan unharmed. If the plan had succeeded, it would have killed an estimated 4,000 people and completely shut down all air travel around the world for days or even weeks. The bombs were ingenious constructions, using Casio digital watches as timers and virtually undetectable liquid nitroglycerin as the explosive. Ramzi Yusuf tested the device on a flight from Manila to Tokyo on December 11, 1994. He built his bomb in the lavatory and left it under his seat when he disembarked in Philippines. It exploded on the way to Japan, killing the businessman unfortunate enough to have taken over Yusuf's seat. The plane managed to land successfully thanks to a heroic effort by the pilots. Yusuf resolved to increase the potency of the explosive.

On January 5, 1995, one of Yusuf's compatriots started a small chemical fire in the apartment where the bomb supplies were being mixed. The conspirators fled,

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leaving documents and a laptop computer behind. Watching smoke pour out the apartment window, Ramzi Yusuf calmly sent Abdul Murad back to retrieve the computer after the fire department left, but the police were already on their way and Murad was arrested. Yusuf left the country a day or two later and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad was not far behind. Murad, left to the gentle ministrations of the Philippines police, began a lengthy confession under torture. During the course of his confession, he laid out Phase Two of Bojinka. Murad reportedly told his interrogators that he had been selected for the great honour of martyrdom. Murad, who was trained as a pilot in the United States, had been instructed to hijack a commercial airliner and crash it into a US landmark. Possible targets included the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and CIA headquarters.

Ramzi Yusuf and Khalid Sheikh subsequently fled to Pakistan. One month later, the FBI operatives tracked Ramzi down and arrested him. The joint team of FBI agents and Pakistani intelligence officials, which arrested Ramzi from Islamabad was so busy patting themselves on the back that they completely ignored Khalid Sheikh, who was sleeping in the room next door. Yusuf was flown back to the United States and into New York, where an outstanding indictment for the WTC 1993 bombing awaited him. As the story goes, as soon as Ramzi's plane landed, an FBI agent pointed out the World Trade Center towers to the terrorist, and commented, "They're still standing". Ramzi Yusuf reportedly responded, "They wouldn't be if I had enough money and explosives."

Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf was convicted in a New York courtroom for both the WTC bombing and the Bojinka plot, and sentenced to life in prison without parole. Judged a high escape risk, he was sent to serve his sentence at the Supermax prison in Colorado. Ramzi might have been locked away but on September 11, 2001, he still managed to take one last shot at his favourite target, and this time he succeeded. An al-Qaeda operation led by Ramzi's uncle Khalid Sheikh finally made the Bojinka plan a reality, hijacking four jets and crashing three of them into their targets: the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. With a body count around 3,000, it was only a little less mayhem than would have been caused by Yusuf's first draft of the plan. And the twin towers did come down this time.

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Chapter 29

Lt. Gen. Mahmood and the Sept 11 attacks

Well known journalist and analyst Pepe Escobar writes in one of his investigative pieces titled *"9-11 and the smoking gun"* (carried by Asia Times Online, dated April 8, 2004): "If the 9-11 Commission is really looking for a smoking gun, it should look no further than at Lieutenant-General Mahmood Ahmad, the director of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) at the time".

The 9/11 Commission was created by congressional legislation in late 2002 to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is important to remember that on September 13, Islamabad airport was shut down - allegedly because of threats against Pakistan's strategic assets.

According to Pepe Escobar: "On September 14, Islamabad declared total support for the US: the airport was immediately reopened. Mahmood Ahmad remained in Washington until September 16 - when the war on Afghanistan was more than programmed, and Pakistan was firmly in the "with us" and not the "against us" column. Million-dollar questions remain. Did Mahmood know when and how the attacks of September 11 would happen? Did Musharraf know? Could the Bush administration have prevented September 11? It seems hard to believe high echelons of the CIA and FBI were not aware of the direct link between the ISI and alleged chief hijacker Mohammed Atta. On October 7, Mahmood was demoted from the ISI. By that time, Washington obviously knew of the connection between Mahmood, Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed and Mohammed Atta: the FBI knew it. The official version is that Mahmood was sacrificed because he was too close to the Taliban - which, it is never enough to remind, are a cherished creature of the ISI".

Pakistan's chief spy -- Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad was in Washington when the 9/11 attacks occurred. He arrived in the US on the 4th of September 2001, a whole week before the attacks. He had meetings at the State Department after the 9/11 attacks. But he also had a regular visit of consultations with his US counterparts at the CIA and the Pentagon during the week prior to September 11.

What was the nature of these routine pre-September 11 consultations? Were they in any way related to the subsequent post-September 11 consultations pertaining to Pakistan's decision to cooperate with Washington? Was the planning of war being discussed between Pakistani and US officials? On the 9th of September 2001, while Mahmood Ahmad was in the US, the leader of the Northern Alliance Commander Ahmad Shah Masood was assassinated. The Northern Alliance had

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informed the Bush Administration that the ISI was allegedly implicated in the assassination. The Bush Administration consciously took the decision in the post September 11 consultations with Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad to directly cooperate with Pakistan's military intelligence (ISI) despite its links to Osama bin Laden and the Taliban and its alleged role in the assassination of Commander Masood, which coincidentally occurred two days before the terrorist attacks.

Meanwhile, senior Pentagon and State Department officials had been rushed to Islamabad to put the finishing touches on America's war plans. On the Sunday prior to the onslaught of the bombing of major cities in Afghanistan (October 7th), Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad was sacked from his position as head of the ISI in what was described as a routine reshuffling. In the days following Mahmood's dismissal, some American media reports quoting the US intelligence sources "revealed" the links between Mahmood Ahmad and the presumed ring leader of the WTC attacks, Mohamed Atta. These reports alleged that it was Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad who ordered the UK-born Sheikh Ahmed Omar Saeed to send US$100,000 to Muhammad Atta. Sheikh Omar has already been convicted in the murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl.

In his best seller book (in France in 2003) "*Qui a tue Daniel Pearl?*" (Who killed Daniel Pearl?), famous French writer Bernard-Henri Levy suspects collusion between al-Qaeda and ISI working together to destroy the Twin Towers in US. He writes: "The possible Pakistani responsibility in the September 11 attack remains the great unsaid in George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld's America ... to admit that (Sheikh) Ahmad Omar (Saeed) wired the money ... wouldn't it be to question the whole foreign policy which, already at the time, made Iraq as the enemy and Pakistan as an ally?"

A year before Bernard's book was marketed [in April 2003], an in-depth investigative report in *The Sunday Times* [April 21, 2002] had further explored links between the ISI and Omar Sheikh. The report said the Britain-born Sheikh knows too much about this connection to ever be allowed to leave Pakistan alive. The report said that General Musharraf is reported to have told the then US Ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlain, "I would rather hang Sheikh myself than have him extradited."

One "bizarre clue" the report mentioned, is the demand by Pearl's kidnappers to honour an agreement to sell F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan. "This hardly squared with the outlook of a militant Muslim organisation fighting a jehad in Afghanistan and Kashmir," the report said. The next clue came with the revelation that Omar Sheikh was in custody. On a visit to the US, Musharraf announced on February 12, 2002 that Omar Sheikh had been captured by police in Lahore. But Sheikh shouted out in court that he had turned himself over to the

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Home Secretary Punjab Brig (retd) Ejaz Shah, on February 7— one week earlier. Omar had surrendered to Ejaz Shah, a former chief of the ISI Punjab, presently working as Director General of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), as he was afraid that the Police might torture him once he is arrested.

"It would appear that the ISI had its own reasons for holding Sheikh for a week before announcing to the world that he was in custody," the *Sunday Times* report said. "One thing it would have wanted to do was to make sure its protégé did not give away more than absolutely necessary about his relationship with Pakistan's intelligence services." This "missing week" shed new light on media reports in October 2001 that the ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad had been forced into retirement after the US Federal Bureau of Investigations sleuths uncovered credible links between him and Omar Sheikh in the wake of September 11, 2001 attacks.

The *Sunday Times* report further stated: "The FBI team established that in early September, Mahmood Ahmad had instructed Sheikh to transfer $100,000 to Mohammed Atta, leader of the hijackers who crashed into the World Trade Center on September 11. "There is a further angle that implicates the ISI," the report said. "It had strong reasons for tailing Pearl: he was normally based in India, which to the ISI was prima facie evidence that he was reporting back to Indian intelligence." When the ISI discovered Pearl was trying to find out who was financing terror groups, it was the final straw, the report said.

Little is so far known about how Omar Sheikh may have passed on funds to Atta. The *Jaish-e-Mohammad* has two known accounts with the Allied Bank, at Binori in Karachi (account number 1697) and Khayabeya in Rawalpindi (account number 1342-0). These accounts run by using the names of Khadri Mohammad Sadiq and Bahsud Ahmad, have been used to deposit funds raised from West Asia, the U.K. and the US. Before his arrest in 1994 in Srinagar, Azhar had visited several countries in Africa, West Asia and the U.K. for fund-raising missions. It is unlikely, however, that either of the above-mentioned accounts was used to handle funds meant for Atta.

According to a 2002 *TIME* magazine report, Mohammad Atta received at least two wire transfers of funds from Egypt, on September 8 and 9. US investigators have said they believe Atta handled funds passed on from Mamoun Darkazanli, a Syrian businessman who ostensibly controlled a bank account in Germany held by Mustafah Ahmad, Osama bin Laden's head of finance. No one is, however, talking about where the funds deposited in this account came from. The role of Sheikh and others like him could hold the key to this so far unanswered question.

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It was 10 a.m. on September 12, 2001, a day after the devastating terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and Pentagon headquarters in Washington, when Lt. General Mahmood Ahmad, the then ISI chief, arrived at the State Department for an emergency meeting with the US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage. The General, who was on an official visit to Washington, was to leave for home, but was left stranded, as all airports had been closed. Journalist Zahid Hussain writes in a 2002 issue of Monthly *Newsline* that Richard Armitage told General Mahmood that the US required Pakistan's full support and cooperation. "We want to know whether you are with us or not, in our fight against terror", Armitage is reported to have added.

The meeting was adjourned for the next day after the General had assured Armitage of Pakistan's full support. "We will tell you tomorrow what you are required to do", Armitage reportedly said as they left the room. Meanwhile, at 1:30 p.m., Collin Powell spoke to Musharraf on the phone. "The American people would not understand if Pakistan did not cooperate in this fight with the United States", Powell said candidly, as one general to another. General Musharraf promised to cooperate fully with the United States. It was 12 p.m. on September 13, when General Mahmood returned to the State Department for the second meeting.

"This is not negotiable," said Armitage, as he handed over a single sheet of paper with seven demands, which the Bush administration wanted him to accept. The general, who was known for his hard-line pro-Taliban position, glanced through the paper for a few seconds and replied: "They are all acceptable to us." The swift response took Armitage by surprise. "These are very powerful words, General. Do you not want to discuss with your President?" he asked. "I know the President's mind," replied General Mahmood. A visibly elated Armitage asked General Mahmood to meet with George Tenet, the CIA chief at his headquarters at Langley. "He is waiting for you," said Armitage.

The list of demands included:

1) Stop Al-Qaeda operations on the Pakistani border, intercept arms shipments through Pakistan and all logistical support for bin Laden
2) Blanket over-flights and landing rights for US planes.
3) Access to Pakistan's naval bases, airbases and borders.
4) Immediate intelligence and immigration information.
5) Curb all domestic expression of support for terrorism against the Unite States, its friends and allies.
6) Cut off fuel supply to the Taliban and stop Pakistani volunteers going to Afghanistan to join the Taliban.

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7) For Pakistan to break diplomatic relations with the Taliban and assist the US to destroy bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network.

Islamabad's support was important for the United States. Its geographical proximity and its vast intelligence information on Afghanistan were seen as crucial for any military action against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Pakistan was one of the two countries - the other was Saudi Arabia, which had formally recognised the conservative Afghan Islamic government. The American demands, which General Mahmood had acceded to, in next to no time, required Pakistan to abandon its support for the Taliban regime and provide logistical support to the American forces.

Interestingly, a few days earlier, General Mahmood in his talks with the CIA chief in Washington, had defended Mullah Omar describing him as a pious humanitarian, not a man of violence. Pakistan's patronage of the conservative Taliban regime, which had provided a base for Osama and thousands of other militants from different nationalities, had strained Pakistan's relations, not only with the US, but also with neighbouring countries. It is clearly apparent that the post-September turnaround was forced on the military regime and was not the result of a considered policy review.

Just a few months before surrendering to America's arm-twisting, the mighty military authorities in Pakistan were vehemently defending their support for the Taliban regime, which, according to them, provided Pakistan "strategic depth." It was the same General Mahmood who tried to convince the American administration positively about the Taliban when Thomas Pickering, Deputy Secretary of State in the Clinton administration, warned Pakistan against the consequences of being "in bed with the Taliban."

Astonishingly, within the course of a week, the military government took an about-turn to become a lynchpin in the US-led military operation in Afghanistan, which ousted the Taliban regime. Pakistan was back as the US's strategic partner in the region and was now involved in a new war against terrorism. Indubitably, the military government did not have any option, but the unconditional and the quick about turn surprised even the American authorities.

Events following September 11, within a week in Washington and Islamabad provide an interesting insight into the ad hoc and arbitrary decision-making process in Pakistan on crucial national security and foreign policy issues. Like the policy to support the Taliban regime, the decision to surrender the country's sovereignty was also taken just by a few generals. There were no consultations at any level when General Musharraf abandoned support for the oppressive and reactionary regime in Afghanistan and gave the American forces complete access

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into Pakistani territory. It was all done in the best national interest, he later declared. However, the military leader had offered the same argument when they got Pakistan into a messy situation by supporting the Taliban. The Pro-Taliban policy had not only isolated Pakistan, but had also encouraged Islamic extremism within the country, creating a huge domestic problem.

Musharraf was addressing a meeting of local *nazims* in the evening of September 11, 2001, when he was interrupted by an urgent call from Major General Rashid Qureshi, who informed him about the terrorist attack on America. "I realised the gravity of the whole issue of this terrorist attack", Musharraf said. The next day he flew to Islamabad where he went into consultations with his military commanders and members of the National Security Council. In the evening of September 12, he received a phone call from General Mahmood in Washington who briefed him about his meeting with Armitage. "He did tell me the gravity of the situation, and the shock and anger that is being expressed in all the US government and also the shock of the nation," said Musharraf. Later, US Ambassador Wendy Chamberlain met with him and conveyed a formal message from the American leader, for cooperation. The General assured her of Pakistan's full support.

There was no consultation with political leaders on the paradigm shift in the strategic discourse of the nation. Musharraf took his handpicked cabinet into confidence, almost three days after his ISI chief had already consented to the US demands. His line was that Pakistan itself was a victim of terrorism and the Taliban government was providing refuge to the religious extremists involved in sectarian killings in Pakistan "We had given a long list of the terrorists who we wanted to be handed over to us. At least they should have turned over the terrorists to us." He told the ministers that the decision to cooperate with the United States was necessary to safeguard Pakistan's nuclear assets and its Kashmir policy.

General Musharraf was concerned about the possible reaction from rightwing Islamic groups and the domestic fallout of his policy shift. He expressed his concern to the American Ambassador during his long meeting with her on September 15, "I did express to her, our major concerns. I kept telling everyone and I told Wendy also that this is our cooperation against terrorism. You must understand the domestic fall-out. Thus decisions are not very easy and we need close links with bin Laden." With Lt. Gen. Mahmood in charge of the powerful ISI, it was not easy to effectively implement the new policy on Afghanistan. In a last bid to prevent a US attack on Afghanistan, Musharraf in the third week of September, dispatched the ISI chief to Kandahar to persuade Mullah Omar to hand over bin Laden to the United States.

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The General met with the Taliban leader without any aide for several hours and later informed Musharraf that he was hopeful that Mullah Omar would cooperate. In September, Musharraf sent three missions to Mullah Omar, two of them led by General Mahmood. He also sent a delegation of religious scholars to persuade the Taliban leader. The main point he conveyed was to surrender Osama bin Laden for the sake of peace in Afghanistan. "I was constantly conveying a message that they must understand realities and prevent the suffering of the people of Afghanistan by surrendering Osama bin Laden. And I was also trying to drill home to him that he should not make people of Afghanistan suffer for a person who's not even an Afghan, but someone who has come from outside."

In an interview Musharraf said: "Mahmood, on one occasion, did manage a breakthrough. He said, "We sat separately, without the interference of anybody, and Mullah Omar seemed to show a little bit of flexibility. Unfortunately, however, he did not agree on the issue of surrendering Osama bin Laden. The maximum that he agreed to was to form a court, an Islamic religious scholar's court, to try him. He would not agree to more than that". Some highly placed sources believe that Mahmood may have been playing a double game. Musharraf was also not very happy with Mahmood's arrogant style and for not consulting him before agreeing to Armitage's seven-point demand. "Though Musharraf would have given his consent, he did not like being bypassed," maintains a senior official.

General Musharraf acted swiftly and replaced the hard-line Mahmood with Lt. Gen. Mohammed Ehsan, a former Military Intelligence chief (MI) and corps commander Peshawar who was known for his anti-Taliban views, as the new ISI chief. Through a series of purges at the top level, Musharraf consolidated his position with the new commanders backing him fully on the new policy on Afghanistan. Interestingly, General Musharraf informed the US ambassador about Mahmood's retirement on October 6, a day before the decision was made public. "Yes, I did tell her, I did surprise her," he said in an interview. Shortly afterwards the agency that had been deeply involved with the Taliban since its inception was guiding the US-led Allied Forces into Afghanistan.

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Chapter 30

Al-Qaeda's ISI connection

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, there has been a growing flurry of reports appearing in the Western media, exploring alleged Pakistani connections with the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the most important being 32 vital documents declassified by the US State Department and the US Defense Intelligence Agency of the Pentagon, on the eve of the second anniversary of September 11 attacks.

The information contained in these documents clearly shows that the US State Department and the US Defense Intelligence Agency of the Pentagon knew of the role of the ISI in sponsorship of not only the Taliban, but also the al-Qaeda. After General Musharraf seized power on October 12, 1999, the documents say, the presence of the Pakistani intelligence in the Taliban-controlled territory increased and Afghanistan became a veritable Pakistani colony, which was facilitated by the past nexus of many of the Mullahs of the Taliban with Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment. Yet, the Bush administration chose to close its eyes to the complicity of Pakistan and to project General Pervez Musharraf to its own public opinion as well as to the international community as a frontline ally in the war against terrorism.

The first document spanning over 15 pages and prepared in September 1999, is based on an analysis of all information received by the DIA until July 1, 1999 titled "*Defense Intelligence Assessment*". The subject of the assessment is "*Osama bin Laden/al-Qaeda Information Operations*". The second document, dated September 24, 2001, is titled "*Veteran Afghan Traveler's Analysis of al-Qaeda and Taliban's Exploitable Weaknesses*" carries the following summary, "Eventually, the Taliban and al-Qaeda will war with each other. The weakness of both is in the minds of the individuals that belong to the groups and in the power that is given to them by their names. Al-Qaeda has not integrated with Afghans or the Taliban, leaving them susceptible to exploitation." By this, the analyst means exploitation by the US to play the Taliban/Afghans and al-Qaeda against each other.

The analysis carries the most damning account of Pakistan's role as the real host of bin Laden and his al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. It says, "bin Laden's al-Qaeda network was able to expand under the safe sanctuary extended by the Taliban following Pakistani directives. If there is any doubt on that issue, consider the location of bin Laden's camp targeted by US cruise missiles, Zahawa. Positioned on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it was built by Pakistani contractors, funded by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate and protected under the patronage of a local and influential Jadran tribal leader,

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Jalaluddin Haqqani. However, the real host in that facility was the Pakistani ISI. If this was later to become bin Laden's base, then serious questions are raised by the early relationship between bin Laden and Pakistan's ISI."

It describes Jalaluddin Haqqani as "the Jadran tribal leader most exploited by ISI during the Soviet-Afghan war to facilitate the introduction of Arab mercenaries" and the Taliban as "the handy cloak woven by Pakistan to shroud their progress". Whose progress - al-Qaeda's or Pakistan's? Most probably, Pakistan's, but this is not clear. The analysis describes the US objective as "the establishment of a more stable Afghan coalition government free of the Taliban and Pakistani interference" and advocates a cost-effective military engagement with appropriate air support than the mass deployment of ground forces. It says, "The enemy does not have mass, which makes them harder to engage."

The analysis' predictions of differences emerging between the Afghans and the Taliban on the one side and al-Qaeda on the other because of the latter's 'superiority complex' and its perception of itself as an elite force destined to command, have not proved correct so far. The analysis projects the then coming war against terrorism in Afghanistan as likely to be fought on two fronts - a war to destroy the material strength of the al-Qaeda - its cadres, training camps, infrastructure etc - and another for the minds of the people. In the context of the war for the minds of the people, it underlines the importance of right names and right images to influence the cognitions of the targeted people.

It points out the impact on the minds of the Muslims made by the characterisation of the US as "the Great Satan". The constant reference to the US as the "Great Satan" and not as the US serves the double purpose of highlighting the immense power of the US, which could be countered only with determination and projection of that power in negative colours to create an aversion for it. It stresses the importance of a similar characterisation of al-Qaeda by an appropriate name and not by its real name. Apparently, US policymakers and psy-warriors have not been able to determine what that characterisation could be.

The third document, also dated September 24, 2001, is titled "*Veteran Afghanistan traveler's analysis of al-Qaeda and Taliban, military, political and cultural landscape and its weaknesses*". It also carries the same caution as the second. It goes into great detail regarding the Pakistani game in Afghanistan in the following words: "During the Soviet-Afghan war, the West preferred to maintain a policy of deniability and allowed Pakistan to handle the daily administration of the war, cash and arms distribution. It was a task Pakistan carried out with great enthusiasm and they helped themselves to generous portions of cash and arms. The Pakistan government also had a hidden agenda.

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"Unlike the West, they [Pakistan] were concerned with what would happen after the war to ensure influence over any government that came to power in Afghanistan after a Soviet withdrawal. Pakistan decided to directly influence the outcome. Rather than allow the most gifted Afghan commanders and parties to flourish, who would be difficult to control later, Pakistan preferred to groom the incompetent ones for the role of future leaders of Afghanistan. Being incompetent, they would be wholly reliant on Pakistan for support. The principal beneficiary of this policy was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. His credentials were that of an anti-Western Islamic fundamentalist.

"In tandem with favouring the incompetent Hekmatyar over more enterprising and gifted commanders such as Ahmed Shah Masood, the Tajik commander from northern Afghanistan, Pakistan also encouraged, facilitated and often escorted Arabs from the Middle East into Afghanistan ... visitors from the Middle East had been in evidence since the very early part of the Soviet-Afghan war. However, they lacked numbers, confidence, experience or bonding ties sufficient to give them a separate identity from their hosts.

"This was allowed to evolve over a period of time, which was effectively the incubation of al-Qaeda. For the first time, large numbers of Arabs were observed in Afghanistan during the Soviet withdrawal. One of the key features of the Paktia border province, in which they were first established, was that it had no Russians ... at that point, the Arab visitors were largely linked and reliant on Haqqani's mujahideen in Paktia.

"When Kabul finally fell, it was Ahmed Shah Masood who captured it, not Hekmatyar. Pakistan could not accept this result and the fragile Afghan coalition government began another civil war, with the Pakistani stooge Hekmatyar being backed to seize total power. He was never able to wrest Kabul from Masood, despite massive logistical and material (including manpower) support from Pakistan. Against this failure, it should be noted that Pakistan has lost every war it has ever fought.

"After years of futile effort, which effectively saw the Lebanonisation of Afghanistan, Pakistan finally abandoned Hekmatyar, but not in favour of a more rational policy. Instead, they set about doing the same thing all over again. They created another force they hoped to have better control over than Hekmatyar's rabble. It was called Taliban, the Arabic name '*Talib*' being literally translated as 'asker' or 'seeker'.

"Taliban means 'the seekers', signifying a student of divinity. This inspired title helped cloak Pakistan's hidden agenda in a new Islamic coat. To lead the Taliban, Pakistan chose Mullah Mohammad Omar, who was willing to do as he was told.

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According to Taliban propaganda, the mullah was divinely inspired to rid Afghanistan of the troublesome war and warlords. Afghanistan was blighted with both, largely due to years of civil war sponsored by Pakistan and reliant on the stockpile of arms plundered from a covert Western arms pipeline. From the old Soviet-Afghan war days, the mullah emerged with a fully functioning, fully armed, conventionally equipped, fully trained military force prone to large-scale conventional actions. Omar's emergence is credited to Pakistan ISI's actions.

"The repeated, pronounced pattern under ISI direction has been to ignore the poorly-trained guerilla nature of the Afghan mujahideen and press them to conduct conventional-style engagement, the same style the Taliban are credited with learning from the Koran. As a result of these actions, the fully-supported by Pakistan Taliban prevailed over the unsupported legitimate government of Afghanistan.

"The Taliban is not synonymous with Afghanistan. It was created, imposed and recognised by Pakistan in pursuit of its own interests. Playing the Islamic fundamentalist card as a means of securing control over a compliant proxy regime in neighboring Afghanistan has seriously backfired. Pakistan has also lost control of the Taliban, who are proving to be both unpredictable and ungrateful. Under the shade of the Taliban umbrella, the bin Laden brand of extremism has been able to grow unmolested inside Afghanistan.

"The al-Qaeda agenda in Afghanistan differs significantly from that of the Taliban. They are not about creating an independent Islamic state. Long term, there can be no room for Taliban in their ambitions. Having been artificially introduced to the region and encouraged in their ambitions so far, they have grown in confidence and stature. Taliban acceptance and approval of fundamentalist non-Afghans as part of their fighting force were merely an extension of the Pakistani policy during the Soviet-Afghan war. It is very important to realise that members of 055 Brigade [al-Qaeda] might serve with Taliban forces, but they are not in any Western sense integrated. They remain rather like an international brigade, different in language, habit and in the interpretation of Islam. Additionally, their vision of the future of Afghanistan differs.

"Pakistan's goals are simple, the continuance of the policy they have always demonstrated regarding Afghanistan. It is failing with the Taliban and it cannot succeed under any Afghan government controlled by al-Qaeda. The repercussions from Pakistan's attempt to manipulate the Islamic card are just surfacing. In Islamabad, they have tried to ignore or bury the evidence for some time. It must be a deeply troubling period for General Pervez [Musharraf] in Pakistan, who is asked to help hunt down the culprits that he helped to establish

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and supported. Not to support the US invites trouble and to assist the US to their aims also presents problems to Pakistan. The quandary leaves the Pakistanis confused as to how they might be absolved without permanently shattering their regional aspirations or their government."

According to these documents, moderating, if not countering the Taliban was one of the main themes of the discussions during feverish comings and goings between Islamabad and Washington between June and September 2001 -- the visits by Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, to the United States in June, of Christina Rocca, the US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, to Pakistan July-end/beginning August, of a three-member team of the US Congressional Intelligence Oversight Committees led by Bob Graham, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, to Pakistan in August, of Inamul Haq, the Pakistani Foreign Secretary, to Washington in August, of Gen. Charles F. Wald, chief of the US Air Force in the US Central Command, to Pakistan in August and of Lt. Gen. Mahmood Ahmad, the then ISI Director General to Washington in September 2001.

During these meetings, Pakistan claimed that it had very little influence over the Taliban and at the same time, promised that, despite this, it would try its best to moderate the Taliban. Besides these documents, an official report released in March 2004 by a Commission investigating the Sept 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, said that General Musharraf met Taliban ruler Mullah Omar in April 2000 to convince him to expel Osama bin Laden but failed. The report says the meeting took place on the request of the former US President Bill Clinton.

"When Mr. Clinton visited Pakistan on March 25, 2000, he raised the Osama bin Laden issue in his meeting with Musharraf. The Pakistanis asked for evidence that bin Laden had really ordered the US embassy bombings (in East Africa) a year and a half earlier. In a follow-up meeting the next day with Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering, General Musharraf argued that Pakistan had only limited influence over the Taliban." Despite these reservations, says the report, General Musharraf did meet Mullah Omar and did urge him to get rid of bin Laden. The meeting, however, "remained futile", the report concluded.

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Chapter 31

The 9/11 Commission and Pakistan

Prior to September 11, although United States intelligence had wind of several possible al-Qaeda schemes involving an attack on the World Trade Center and the hijacking or destruction of airplanes, the precise plans for that fateful day were so closely guarded that even Osama bin Laden did not know the details until September 1.

This emerged from investigations carried out by Pakistani agencies that worked in tandem with the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sleuths who interrogated at least three senior al-Qaeda members after their arrest from the port city of Karachi. According to these investigations, if the beads are placed on the thread, the bombing of the World Trade Center's car park basement on February 26, 1993 in which six people were killed and more than 1,000 injured, kicked off the planning that culminated in al-Qaeda's September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. A group headed by Ramzi Yusuf, who is serving a 240-year prison term after being extradited from Pakistan and subsequently convicted by a US court carried out the 1993 bombing. The FBI investigations claimed that Ramzi Yusuf's group received financial support from al-Qaeda via Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, the alleged mastermind of the September 11 attacks, who was arrested from Rawalpindi in March 2003. But a direct al-Qaeda role in the 1993 attack could not be established.

However, after the 1993 attack, al-Qaeda members concluded, given the architecture of the twin towers, they could not be destroyed from their base. And so, the seeds of the outrageous plan for a plane attack on the building were planted. In August 1998, the Clinton administration fired cruise missiles through Pakistani airspace into Afghanistan in an abortive strike meant to kill Osama bin Laden in retaliation for suspected al-Qaeda attacks on three US embassies in Africa. Earlier that year, Laden, after forming the "Coalition against Crusaders, Christians and Jews" - the International Islamic Front - issued a *fatwa* declaring that it was the "duty of Muslims everywhere to kill Americans, including civilians".

According to an April 2004 news feature by *Asia Times Online*, a South Asian web newspaper, the American attack on Afghanistan acted as a catalyst for several al-Qaeda cells to seriously begin planning a major attack on the US soil. Details of this reportedly emerged from intelligence sources familiar with the case of al-Qaeda operative Ramzi bin al-Shibah, who was arrested after a shootout with Pakistani security forces in Karachi on September 11, 2002, the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The ISI and the FBI interrogated him, jointly and separately.

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After these sessions, he was finally handed over to the US authorities. According to *Asia Times Online* report, Ramzi's account of events disclosed several new aspects, which clearly show why the US intelligence failed to detect the September 11 plot. Ramzi was supposed to be the 20th hijacker, but he failed to obtain a US visa.

As per Ramzi's revelations, the final execution of the attacks was plotted in Hamburg, Germany, where an important al-Qaeda cell was based. Its members had never carried out any missions against US interests, and they were highly motivated and extremely secretive. Beyond the team members, no one knew of their plans, and apparently Osama bin Laden was only informed 10 days before September 11 of the actual nature of the attack. Ramzi bin al-Shibah reportedly informed his interrogators that he was assigned to tell bin Laden of the plan. He traveled from Germany via Bangkok to Afghanistan, where he met bin Laden. From Afghanistan he returned to Germany, where he learnt that his application for a US visa had been refused. He rushed to Spain to submit a fresh application, but was again unsuccessful. So, he returned to Afghanistan, only leaving when Kabul fell in late 2001. He ended up in Karachi, where he was arrested on September 11, 2002.

According to the information extracted by the interrogators from Ramzi bin al-Shibah, the nature of the Hamburg cell is typical of the manner in which al-Qaeda operates. Once members of a particular cell are assigned a specific task, the details of the planning and execution remain with them alone and they do not know what other cells are doing. Take the case of Khalid Bin al-Attash. He was arrested on April 29, 2003 in Karachi, and was regarded as the biggest-ever catch in the "war on terror" as a hardcore al-Qaeda member and a close associate of bin Laden. The one-legged operative was a suspect in the attack on the warship U.S.S. Cole at Aden, Yemen, in October 2000. At the time of his arrest by the Pakistani Intelligence Bureau, al-Attash was mistakenly taken for a local Pakistani jehadi, but under interrogation, his real identity emerged. He was later passed on to the ISI and then the FBI but after exhaustive questioning, it became obvious that he did not have a clue about the September 11 planning.

Similarly, Ramzi bin al-Shibah was part of the September 11 team, but interrogators soon realised that he was unaware of any other al-Qaeda activities. The same was true of Abu Zubaydah, arrested in 2002 from Faisalabad by a joint team of Pakistani security officials and the FBI. Zubaydah is known to be a part of Laden's inner circle. He was unable to supply any information on September 11, or on future plans, except for some general information. Against this backdrop, it was not a surprise that the September 11 plan went undetected. According to *Asia Times Online* sources, a Central Intelligence Agency memo of August 6, 2001, indicating that the al-Qaeda wanted to attack the US was no

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more than a piece of intelligence analysis, primarily extracted from al-Qaeda's track record and bin Laden's call for an attack on the US. Beyond that, no specifics were available. This raises the strong possibility that, just like before in Hamburg, a highly secretive al-Qaeda cell might at this very moment be in the throes of planning another major attack.

The roots of 9-11

As the 9/11 Commission begun its proceedings in April 2004 to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration started feeling the heat for perceived failures to respond to the terrorist threat towards the United States.

But as Washington Post editor Steve Coll has made clear in his book, "*Ghost Wars*", far worse finger-pointing can be leveled at previous US administrations, led by President Clinton. "Their mistakes, naiveté and wrongdoing over Afghan policy not only indirectly led to thousands of Afghan deaths and the rise of the ultra-conservative Taliban, but also gave succor to the anti-American Osama bin Laden, helping to lay the groundwork for the terrorism exploding around the world today", says the writer.

According to the book, "*Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*", published by the Penguin Press, "it all began back in the 1980s with the United States government's misplaced multi-million dollar anti-Soviet policy in Afghanistan. During that time, an Afghan royalist mujahideen commander offered this warning to the US: 'For God's sake, you are financing your own assassins'. With his warning, the commander and supporter of long-exiled Afghan king, Zahir Shah, was not saying do not fund the Afghan freedom fighters, those battling the Russian communist forces who had invaded Afghanistan in 1979 (many saw the mujahideen as a just cause), his gripe was that when it came to the choice of who in the mujahideen to back, Washington was funding the wrong guys".

Steve Coll, who was the *Washington Post's* South Asia Bureau Chief from 1989 to 1992, states in his book that it is easy to talk with hindsight, but even back in the mid-1980s, in the midst of the Cold War, warnings were given to Washington on the dangers of backing hard-line Islamic fundamentalists who increasingly spat venom at the US. That warning, by a moderate commander, was prophetic. But few in the US Central Intelligence Agency and Washington's halls of power were willing to listen. Instead, a policy was followed that not only backed the wrong mujahideen in Afghanistan, but also helped provide Osama bin Laden with a crucible for developing terror.

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It is clear that questions need to be asked as to whether the September 11 terrorist attacks could have been prevented. And the world's most powerful democracy currently is asking them from President Bush and his administration in this election year (2004). Meanwhile, the 9/11 Commission is unearthing what few Americans knew about the low priority the terrorist threat got from Bush prior to that sunny Tuesday morning when fully loaded passenger jets were flown into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in southern Pennsylvania. But as the debate over responsibility for September 11 continues to rage and threatens the Republican's grip on government, there has been little debate over the genesis of what is proving to be the greatest threat to peace in the world today. *Ghost War*s looks at the roots of poor intelligence and bad policymaking over Afghanistan that led to the terrorism crisis.

Few would venture as far as saying categorically that a major terrorist attack on the United States could have been avoided. Yet, in the book, the roots of what caused September 11 to occur are carefully laid out. And when the blame has to fall, president Bush should not be the only one on whom it all comes crashing down on. In the saga of international jehad, President Bush is relatively new on the scene, following on the actions and failures of his predecessors, Presidents Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and even Bush's father, George Bush Sr. It is worth keeping this in mind while following the ongoing critical onslaught in Washington against the current President Bush.

*Ghost War*s chronicles the litany of mistakes made by the CIA and current and previous US administrations as well as the often-flawed policy decisions regarding Afghanistan and bin Laden that may actually have contributed to September 11. In his book review of the *Ghost Wars*, published by *Asia Times Online* in April 2004, US analyst Julian Gearing writes that is a story comprising heroes, misfits, incompetents, villains and an important thread throughout is the work put in by dedicated CIA agent Gary Schroen. "He spent much of the last 25 years dealing with the complexities of a country, Afghanistan, used as a playing field by his country's intelligence agency and those of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Russia and others. Schroen comes across as an agent's agent, an operative whose work the CIA should feel proud of, but whose advice and knowledge is not always listened to or acted upon".

According to Julian Gearing: "Through Schroen and others, one learns how the CIA, Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and Saudi Arabia's General Intelligence Department operated secretly in Afghanistan, backing the various Afghan factions from the Soviet invasion in 1979 to the eve of September 11, 2001. Crucial to the plot is how Washington dealt with the Afghan mujahideen, the Taliban and the arrival of a young Saudi millionaire's son, Osama bin Laden.

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The US scorecard shows its failures of intelligence, failure to act on intelligence and the failure of its policy. Washington's major mistake was to hand over control of backing the mujahideen to Pakistan's ISI. Pakistan was seen as a bulwark against communism, but Islamabad not only wanted to control Afghanistan, it had its own Islamic agenda under former military and political leader General Ziaul Haq".

"Together with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan backed the Islamic fundamentalist groups, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*, at the expense of more moderate groups and helped block support to the most effective guerrilla commander in Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Masood, a minority Tajik. The irony was that Hekmatyar's group not only did little to engage the enemy - the Soviet and Afghan communists - but actually fought against Masood. Washington sought to maintain deniability - anything that would help avoid Moscow's ability to point a finger at American interference in Afghanistan as an excuse to widen the war".

Julian Gearing further writes: "The US intelligence appeared unable or unwilling to assess the viability and agendas of the various mujahideen groups. They backed Pakistan's choice of players, which stifled the effective players, fueled inter-mujahideen conflict, and, partly because of an ugly civil war, led to the rise of the Pakistan-backed Taliban. Fobbing off the contrary assessments of the British and French intelligence agencies, the CIA appeared unwilling to admit it was wrong. Only after the Soviet forces pulled out in 1989 did the CIA attempt to deal directly with mujahideen commanders, but by then the die was cast".

As one American policymaker put it back in the 1980s, "Militant Islam and militant Christianity should cooperate in a common cause" - defeating communism. Such a statement sounds ludicrous today. The irony is that Washington was setting itself up for the very thing the CIA claimed it was founded for – "to ensure there will never be another Pearl Harbor". American policy, however, allowed bin Laden in the 1980s to set up training camps for Arab militants and Muslims of other nationalities. Mesmerised by the glint of oil from Central Asia in the 1990s, Washington further backed a one-eyed, half-crippled Muslim fanatic, Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, in his 'cleansing of Afghanistan'. The US hoped to profit from an oil pipeline through Afghanistan, but instead, they saw a pulverised Third World country thrown back to the Dark Ages.

Suspecting that the 9/11 terrorist attacks on US targets were the work of Afghanistan-based bin Laden, Washington failed to capture or kill him, despite cruise missile strikes on one of bin Laden's bases. Today, Osama bin Laden may be a tired and harried man as he tries to avoid the US 'hammer on the anvil'

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posed by US Special Forces on the Pak-Afghan border. Yet, he must be grinning over how the United States has indirectly helped him stir up so much sympathy and brought so many angry recruits to his cause.

"Pakistan was a patron of terrorism"

"Pakistan, not Iraq, was a patron of terrorism and had closer ties with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda leading up to the September 11 attacks. The Taliban's ability to provide al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden a haven in the face of international pressure and UN sanctions was significantly facilitated by Pakistani support. Pakistan broke with the Taliban only after September 11, even though it knew the Afghan militia was hiding al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden", said the June 2004 interim report by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States.

The report said Pakistan benefited from the Taliban- al-Qaeda relationship, as Osama bin Laden's camps trained and equipped fighters for Pakistan's ongoing struggle in Kashmir. The Taliban faction that seized Kabul was itself supported by Pakistan, said the 12-page report, and added that even when headquartered in Sudan, al-Qaeda had used Pakistan and Afghanistan as regional bases and training centers, supporting Islamic insurgencies in Tajikistan, Kashmir and Chechnya. The training at al-Qaeda and associated camps was multi-faceted in nature, it said.

"A worldwide jehad needed terrorists who could bomb embassies or hijack airliners, but it also needed foot soldiers for the Taliban in its war against the Northern Alliance, and guerrillas who could shoot down Russian helicopters in Chechnya or ambush Indian units in Kashmir. Thus, most recruits received training that was primarily geared towards conventional warfare. Terrorist training was provided mostly to the best and most ardent recruits," the National Commission report said. "The quality of the training provided at al-Qaeda and other jehadist camps was apparently quite good. There was coordination with regard to curriculum and great emphasis on ideological and religious indoctrination. Instruction underscored that the US and Israel were evil, and that the rulers of Arab countries were illegitimate", the report said.

A multimillionaire from a wealthy Saudi family, said the report, Osama bin Laden used his personal wealth and connections with rich Arab contributors to facilitate the flow of fighters into Afghanistan. He provided extensive financing for an entity called the "Bureau of Services" or *Maktab al Khidmat*. The bureau apparently operated a recruiting network in Muslim communities throughout the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Western Europe and the United States. "It

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provided travel funds and guesthouses in Pakistan for recruits and volunteers on the road to the Afghan battlefield. Osama bin Laden also used his financial network to set up training camps and procure weapons and supplies for Arab fighters, Major Afghan warlords who led forces in the battle against the Soviets also benefited from the use of these camps", the report said.

"Following the defeat of the Soviets in the late 1980s, bin Laden formed an organisation called 'The Foundation' or al-Qaeda which was intended to serve as a foundation upon which to build a global Islamic army. By 1992, bin Laden was focused on attacking the United States. The camps created a climate in which trainees and other personnel were free to think creatively about ways to commit mass murder. According to a senior al-Qaeda associate, various ideas were floated by mujahideen in Afghanistan: taking over a launcher and forcing Russian scientists to fire a nuclear missile at the United States; mounting mustard gas or cyanide attacks against Jewish areas in Iran; dispensing poison gas into the air conditioning system of a targeted building; and, last but not least, hijacking an aircraft and crashing it into an airport terminal or nearby city", the report added.

As time passed and the al-Qaeda repeatedly and successfully hit US targets, said the report, Osama bin Laden became a legendary figure among militants both inside and outside Afghanistan. "He lectured at the camps. His perceived stature and charisma reinforced the zeal of the trainees. Bin Laden also personally evaluated trainees' suitability for terrorist operations. The camps were able to operate only because of the worldwide network of recruiters, travel facilitators, and document forgers who vetted would-be trainees and helped them get in and out of Pakistan".

The 9/11 Commission report urged the US government to make a long-term commitment to the future of Pakistan, as long as its leadership remains willing to stay the course in the fight against terrorism. The Commission, which released its 575-page on July 22, 2004, recommended that US should make the difficult long-term commitment to the future of Pakistan, so long as Pakistani leaders remain willing to make difficult choices of their own. The recommendation on Pakistan notes that "if General Musharraf stands for enlightened moderation in a fight for his life and for the life of his country, the United States should be willing to make hard choices too, and make the difficult long-term commitment to the future of Pakistan".

"Sustaining the cur-rent scale of aid to Pakistan, the United States should support Pakistan's government in its struggle against extremists with a comprehensive effort that extends from military aid to support for better

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education, so long as Pakistan's leaders remain willing to make difficult choices of their own," the brief recommendation said.

In its chapter on Pakistan, the Commission said (Pages 384-386):

"Pakistan's endemic poverty, widespread corruption, and often ineffective government create opportunities for Islamist recruitment. Poor education is a particular concern. Millions of families, especially those with little money, send their children to religious schools, or madrassas. Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as incubators for violent extremism. It is hard to overstate the importance of Pakistan in the struggle against Islamist terrorism. Within Pakistan's borders are 150 million Muslims, scores of al-Qaeda terrorists, many Taliban fighters, and—perhaps—Osama Bin Ladin.

Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons and has come frighteningly close to war with nuclear-armed India over the disputed territory of Kashmir. A political battle among anti-American Islamic fundamentalists, the Pakistani military, and more moderate mainstream political forces has already spilled over into violence, and there have been repeated recent attempts to kill Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf. In recent years, the United States has had three basic problems in its relationship with Pakistan:

- On terrorism, Pakistan helped nurture the Taliban. The Pakistani army and intelligence services, especially below the top ranks, have long been ambivalent about confronting Islamist extremists. Many in the government have sympathized with or provided support to the extremists. Musharraf agreed that Bin Ladin was bad. But before 9/11, preserving good relations with the Taliban took precedence.

- On proliferation, Musharraf has repeatedly said that Pakistan does not barter with its nuclear technology. But proliferation concerns have been long-standing and very serious. Most recently, the Pakistani government has claimed not to have known that one of its nuclear weapons developers, a national figure, was leading the most dangerous nuclear smuggling ring ever disclosed.

- Finally, Pakistan has made little progress toward the return of democratic rule at the national level, although that turbulent process does continue to function at the provincial level and the Pakistani press remains relatively free.

Immediately after 9/11, confronted by the United States with a stark choice, Pakistan made a strategic decision. Its government stood aside and allowed the U.S.-led coalition to destroy the Taliban regime. In other ways, Pakistan actively

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assisted: its authorities arrested more than 500 al-Qaeda operatives and Taliban members, and Pakistani forces played a leading part in tracking down KSM, Abu Zubaydah, and other key al-Qaeda figures.

In the following two years, the Pakistani government tried to walk the fence, helping against al-Qaeda while seeking to avoid a larger confrontation with Taliban remnants and other Islamic extremists. When al-Qaeda and its Pakistani allies repeatedly tried to assassinate Musharraf, almost succeeding, the battle came home.

The country's vast un-policed regions make Pakistan attractive to extremists seeking refuge and recruit and also provide a base for operations against coalition forces in Afghanistan. Almost all the 9/11 attackers traveled the north-south nexus of Kandahar–Quetta–Karachi. The Baluchistan region of Pakistan (KSM's ethnic home) and the sprawling city of Karachi remain centers of Islamist extremism where the U.S. and Pakistani security and intelligence presence has been weak. The U.S. consulate in Karachi is a makeshift fortress, reflecting the gravity of the surrounding threat.

During the winter of 2003–2004, Musharraf made another strategic decision. He ordered the Pakistani army into the frontier provinces of northwest Pakistan along the Afghan border, where Bin Ladin and Ayman al Zawahiri have reportedly taken refuge. The army is confronting groups of al-Qaeda fighters and their local allies in very difficult terrain. On the other side of the frontier, U.S. forces in Afghanistan have found it challenging to organize effective joint operations, given Pakistan's limited capabilities and reluctance to permit U.S. military operations on its soil. Yet in 2004, it is clear that the Pakistani government is trying harder than ever before in the battle against Islamist terrorists.

Acknowledging these problems and Musharraf 's own part in the story, we believe that Musharraf 's government represents the best hope for stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

- In an extraordinary public essay asking how Muslims can "drag our-selves out of the pit we find ourselves in, to raise ourselves up," Musharraf has called for a strategy of "enlightened moderation." The Muslim world, he said, should shun militancy and extremism; the West—and the United States in particular—should seek to resolve disputes with justice and help better the Muslim world.

- Having come close to war in 2002 and 2003, Pakistan and India have recently made significant progress in peacefully discussing their long-standing

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differences. The United States has been and should remain a key supporter of that process.

- The constant refrain of Pakistanis is that the United States long treated them as allies of convenience. As the United States makes fresh commitments now, it should make promises it is prepared to keep, for years to come."

Discussing the days after 9/11 and how the attacks on Afghanistan were launched, the Commission report said:

The principals also focused on Pakistan and what it could do to turn the Taliban against al-Qaeda. They concluded that if Pakistan decided not to help the United States, it too would be at risk. The same day, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage met with the Pakistani ambassador to the United States, Maleeha Lodhi, and the visiting head of Pakistan's military intelligence service, Mahmood Ahmed. Armitage said that the United States wanted Pakistan to take seven steps:

- to stop al-Qaeda operatives at its border and end all logistical support for Bin Ladin;

- to give the United States blanket over flight and landing rights for all necessary military and intelligence operations;

- to provide territorial access to U.S. and allied military intelligence and other personnel to conduct operations against al-Qaeda;

- to provide the United States with intelligence information;

- to continue to publicly condemn the terrorist acts;

- to cut off all shipments of fuel to the Taliban and stop recruits from going to Afghanistan; and,

- if the evidence implicated bin Ladin and al-Qaeda and the Taliban continued to harbor them, to break relations with the Taliban government.

Pakistan made its decision swiftly. That afternoon, Secretary of State Powell announced at the beginning of an NSC meeting that Pakistani President Musharraf had agreed to every U.S. request for support in the war on terrorism.

The next day, the U.S. embassy in Islamabad confirmed that Musharraf and his top military commanders had agreed to all seven demands. "Pakistan will need

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full US support as it proceeds with us," the embassy noted. "Musharraf said the GOP [government of Pakistan] was making substantial concessions in allowing use of its territory and that he would pay a domestic price. His standing in Pakistan was certain to suffer. To counterbalance that he needed to show that Pakistan was benefiting from his decisions."

At the September 13 NSC meeting, when Secretary Powell described Pakistan's reply, President Bush led a discussion of an appropriate ultimatum to the Taliban. He also ordered Secretary Rumsfeld to develop a military plan against the Taliban. The President wanted the United States to strike the Taliban, step back, wait to see if they got the message, and hit them hard if they did not. He made clear that the military should focus on targets that would influence the Taliban's behavior.

President Bush also tasked the State Department, which on the following day delivered to the White House a paper titled "Game Plan for a Political-Military Strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan." The paper took it as a given that Bin Ladin would continue to act against the United States even while under Taliban control. It therefore detailed specific U.S. demands for the Taliban: surrender Bin Ladin and his chief lieutenants, including Ayman al Zawahiri; tell the United States what the Taliban knew about al-Qaeda and its operations; close all terrorist camps; free all imprisoned foreigners; and comply with all UN Security Council resolutions.

The State Department proposed delivering an ultimatum to the Taliban: produce Bin Ladin and his deputies and shut down al-Qaeda camps within 24 to 48 hours, or the United States will use all necessary means to destroy the terrorist infrastructure. The State Department did not expect the Taliban to comply. Therefore, State and Defense would plan to build an international coalition to go into Afghanistan. Both departments would consult with NATO and other allies and request intelligence, basing, and other support from countries, according to their capabilities and resources.

Finally, the plan detailed a public U.S. stance: America would use all its resources to eliminate terrorism as a threat, punish those responsible for the 9/11 attacks, hold states and other actors responsible for providing sanctuary to terrorists, work with a coalition to eliminate terrorist groups and networks, and avoid malice toward any people, religion, or culture.

President Bush recalled that he quickly realized that the administration would have to invade Afghanistan with ground troops. But the early briefings to the President and Secretary Rumsfeld on military options were disappointing. Tommy Franks, the commanding general of Central Command (CENTCOM),

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told us that the President was dissatisfied. The U.S. military, Franks said, did not have an off-the-shelf plan to eliminate the al-Qaeda threat in Afghanistan. The existing Infinite Resolve options did not, in his view, amount to such a plan.

All these diplomatic and military plans were reviewed over the weekend of September 15–16, as President Bush convened his war council at Camp David.45 Present were Vice President Cheney, Rice, Hadley, Powell, Armitage, Rumsfeld, Ashcroft, Mueller, Tenet, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and Cofer Black, chief of the DCI's Counter-terrorist Center. Tenet described a plan for collecting intelligence and mounting covert operations. He proposed inserting CIA teams into Afghanistan to work with Afghan warlords who would join the fight against al-Qaeda.

These CIA teams would act jointly with the military's Special Operations units. President Bush later praised this proposal, saying it had been a turning point in his thinking. Also by September 18, Powell had contacted 58 of his foreign counterparts and received offers of general aid, search-and-rescue equipment and personnel, and medical assistance teams. On the same day, Deputy Secretary of State Armitage was called by Mahmood Ahmed regarding a two-day visit to Afghanistan during which the Pakistani intelligence chief had met with Mullah Omar and conveyed the U.S. demands. Omar's response was "not negative on all these points."

But the administration knew that the Taliban was unlikely to turn over Bin Ladin. The pre-9/11 draft presidential directive on al-Qaeda evolved into a new directive, National Security Presidential Directive 9, now titled "Defeating the Terrorist Threat to the United States." The directive would now extend to a global war on terrorism, not just on al-Qaeda. It also incorporated the President's determination not to distinguish between terrorists and those who harbor them. It included a determination to use military force if necessary".

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Chapter 32

Nuclear scientists and their jehadi links

The plot of a novel titled "*Is New York Burning*?" written jointly by two famous American writers Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins following the 9/11 attacks, involves some al-Qaeda operatives, with help from a Pakistan Army Major, successfully smuggling a Pakistani nuclear device into New York and then using it to try to blackmail the United States government into stopping support for Israel.

The Pakistani jehadi group that plays a big part in the plot has been named as *Lashkar-e-Tibi*, showing thereby that even the American fiction writers have started connecting the dots linking Pakistan's nuclear establishment, its home-grown jehadi groups and the possibility of an al-Qaeda nuclear attack overseas. In an interview with the *New York Times* in November 2001, Pakistani nuclear scientist, Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy while admitting deep cleavages in Pakistan, was quoted as saying that there was the danger that the Pakistani government could lose control of parts of the highly secretive programme.

In the post-9/11 period, the western media and non-proliferation experts have increasingly raised questions about the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. They talk about the possibilities of extremist Islamic groups like the al-Qaeda, gaining access to Pakistan's nuclear weapons or fissile or radioactive materials. The Bush administration took up this matter with the government of Pakistan in 2001-2002 and offered assistance for strengthening the security and safety of Pakistan's nuclear assets. Pakistan assured the international community that its nuclear assets were beyond the reach of unauthorised individuals and groups. However, the controversy involving Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan and his involvement in nuclear proliferation to other countries has raised new questions, yet to be answered.

The first indications of the presence of pro-jehadi scientists in Pakistan's nuclear establishment came to notice during the US-led allied forces' military operations in Afghanistan against al-Qaeda and the Taliban when documents recovered by the troops reportedly spoke of the visits of Pakistani nuclear scientists, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid, to Kandahar when Osama bin Laden was operating from there before 9/11. Sultan Bashiruddin was the first head of the Kahuta Uranium Enrichment project before Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, who subsequently became famous as the father of the Pakistani atomic bomb. Qadeer replaced Bashiruddin in the 1970s. Subsequent investigations carried out by American intelligence discovered that Osama had contacted these scientists for assistance in making a small nuclear device.

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The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) subsequently sought two veteran Pakistani nuclear scientists in particular, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid, for interrogation. The two admitted working in Afghanistan in recent years, but said they had only been providing charitable assistance to the poor and needy Afghans. Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood was no low-level scientist. He was one of Pakistan's foremost experts in the secret effort to produce plutonium for atomic weapons. In 1999, he publicly said that Pakistan should help other Islamic nations to build nuclear weapons. He also made some public statements in support of the Taliban movement.

After being taken into custody on October 23, 2001 and while being interrogated by a joint team of the American and Pakistani officials, Sultan Bashiruddin had been reportedly asked about his prediction in his book *Cosmology and Human Destiny* released in 1998: "during the autumn of 2000-2001, due to high energy solar cycle and its impact on people, certain crazy actions were likely to happen." The American intelligence officials wondered was he referring to the al-Qaeda or the Pakistan's nuclear establishment itself?

It was reported, just after the arrests of Sultan Bashiruddin and another nuclear scientist Abdul Majid, that both held extensive meetings with Osama's second-in-command Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri in August 2001. Bashiruddin further held several meetings with the Taliban's *ameer* Mullah Mohammad Omar during a visit to Kandahar in mid-summer 2001. After the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the two scientists had together gone to Kandahar to have another meeting with Mullah Omar. *Washington Post* had reported on March 3, 2002 that Pakistani officials had maintained that the scientists did not pass important secrets to al-Qaeda, but they did not disclose that Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood failed multiple polygraph examinations about his activities.

Bashiruddin Mahmood, who happened to be the chief designer of Khushab nuclear reactor, mainstay of Pakistan's weapon grade Plutonium, is said to have spoken in an interview to *The News* that he could never stay before the (lie-detecting) machine beyond a few minutes because of his age and health. Less is known about other Pakistani scientists like Abdul Majid and Mirza Yusuf Baig of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission who were also arrested in connection with similar charges of having possible connection with the al-Qaeda, but were released later.

In December 2001, the *New York Times* reported that while US authorities were investigating Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid, they found some links between the al-Qaeda and two other Pakistani nuclear scientists, Suleiman Asad and Muhammed Ali Mukhtar. However, before US investigators could reach to them, Pakistan sent the two scientists to Myanmar on an unspecified research

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project. The two scientists were believed to be involved in Pakistan's nuclear development programme and had been working for the Khan Research Laboratories. The *New York Times* further quoted some Pakistani officials saying that General Musharraf personally telephoned one of Myanmar's military rulers to ask him to provide temporary asylum for the two nuclear specialists. In January 2002, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Asad and Mukhtar were possibly aiding Myanmar's efforts to build a 10-megawatt nuclear research reactor.

Both the Pakistani nuclear scientists were sought by the CIA for investigation for having links with Bashiruddin's suspicious NGO, *Ummah Tameer-e-Nau* (Islamic Reconstruction). Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid organised *UTN* in June 2000 to provide relief for the people of Afghanistan and develop commercial projects relying on investment by Muslim countries. With offices in Kabul, Afghanistan and Lahore and Islamabad, Pakistan, *UTN*'s stated mission was to focus on development, educational reforms and ways to feed the impoverished Afghan population.

Given below is the full version of an exclusive news report by late American journalist Daniel Pearl titled "*Military elite is linked to activities of nuclear scientist*" that appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* on December 24, 2001 and gives an insight of the jehadi mind-set and the activities of Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and his NGO *Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (UTN).*

"Pakistan has pledged to clamp down on a humanitarian organisation headed by a nuclear scientist, but the nation's military government also has ties to the organisation, which is accused of sharing nuclear information with terrorists. The organisation, *Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (UTN),* used an ex-military officer to pursue a large agricultural project near Kandahar, Afghanistan, according to three people involved in the venture. The officer recently obtained a senior position in a regional commission tasked with combating government corruption.

Moreover, a former head of Pakistan's military intelligence service, General Hameed Gul, says he was *Ummah Tameer-e-Nau*'s honorary patron and encouraged Pakistani businessmen to invest in *UTN*. General Gul saw the nuclear scientist, Dr. Bashiruddin Mahmood in Kabul, the Afghan capital, in August (2001) -- the same month Dr. Mahmood is alleged to have discussed nuclear weapons with Osama bin Laden, whom the US blames for the September 11 terror attacks. President Bush last week ordered *UTN*'s assets frozen, saying the group claims to serve the hungry and needy of Afghanistan but provided information about nuclear weapons to al-Qaeda, bin Laden's organisation. A Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman later said Pakistan would also freeze *UTN*'s assets. Pakistan's military government said it originally detained Dr.

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Mahmood on October 23 (2001) after the US Central Intelligence Agency raised questions about his visits to Afghanistan.

Still, *UTN*'s connections with ex-military officials suggest Pakistan had been monitoring Dr. Mahmood and the Afghanistan trips for some time. "If he was a nuclear scientist on the loose, why was the Pakistan government not aware of it?" said General Gul, who maintains contacts with some active members of the Inter Services Intelligence directorate. General Gul said he never heard of any discussions between Dr. Mahmood and Mr. bin Laden. One former ISI colonel said the intelligence organisation was always aware of *UTN*'s activities and had encouraged Dr. Mahmood's Afghanistan trips. He said the ISI learned in the year 2000 that Dr. Bashiruddin Mahmood had recently discussed nuclear matters with bin Laden and Dr. Mahmood had agreed not to do so again.

The colonel's account could not be verified. Dr. Mahmood, released from custody on December 13, 2001, declined to be interviewed. So did his son, Shahzad, who had accompanied his father on a May 2001 trip to Afghanistan and was trying to establish a development bank in Kabul. Dr. Mahmood's defenders have insisted that he did nothing wrong but was simply a fervent Muslim who wanted to buoy the Afghan economy. And the idea that *UTN* served merely as a cover for Dr. Mahmood to pass nuclear secrets seems simplistic at best.

One Pakistani military analyst said it was inconceivable that a nuclear scientist would travel to Afghanistan without getting clearance from Pakistani officials and being debriefed each time. Pakistan maintains a strict watch on many of its nuclear scientists, using a special arm of the Army's general headquarters to monitor them even after retirement. Pakistani analysts doubt Dr. Mahmood or a second nuclear scientist associated with *UTN* had the expertise to deliver nuclear weapons plans to Mr. bin Laden. Dr. Mahmood, 61 years old, headed Pakistan's nuclear power program and was forced to retire in 1998, when he spoke out against the idea of Pakistan signing the nuclear Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Dr. Mahmood, who advocated nuclear explosions for the building of dams and reservoirs, was a scientific gadfly. In a 1997 book, he linked events such as the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan during World War II to the seasonal effects of solar radiation on world leaders' emotions. He later said he wrote to Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf asking him not to be swayed by the catalytic effect of solar radiation, which Dr. Mahmood feared could lead to chemical or atomic warfare. Dr. Mahmood's religious mentor was Dr. Israr Ahmed, a Lahore-based political and religious leader who has called for strict implementation of Islamic law and has strongly backed Afghanistan's Taliban regime, which sheltered bin Laden. Dr. Ahmed (who heads *Tanzeem-e-Islami* Pakistan)

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interviewed at his religious academy, said Dr. Mahmood wanted to help Afghanistan, not al-Qaeda.

In a September 23, 2001 interview, Dr. Mahmood said he had learned of bin Laden through charity work. "Osama bin Laden, as I came to know, was helping in different places, renovating schools, opening orphan houses, [helping with] rehabilitation of widows", he said, but he stopped short of saying the two had met. Dr. Mahmood did not hide his connections with Taliban officials. A video he commissioned of a trip by *UTN* directors to Kabul in May 2001 shows Dr. Mahmood, clad in a white turban and other directors of *UTN* sitting across a table at a hotel from Taliban bureaucrats.

According to an itinerary, the delegation spoke with the Taliban about the development of oil and natural gas fields, iron, copper and coalmines. Today, a *UTN* plant in Kandahar produces 200 tons of flour a day, said the relative of Dr. Mahmood. But other projects remained on the drawing board. *UTN*'s members and associates lost money on the planned farming venture, in a village called Dasht-e-Zeray, north of Kandahar. It was structured as a $400,000 Islamic investment, promising $250 in profit over three years for every $1,000 share purchased, according to a brochure promoting the investment. Ten percent of profits were to go to *UTN*'s charitable activities.

Hashim Sheikh, a Karachi philanthropist who accompanied Dr. Mahmood on the May 2001 trip, said that he later persuaded several friends to invest but that the deal fell victim to the war in Afghanistan. Mr. Sheikh said the man who explained the farming venture to the trip's delegates was Brig. Gen. Mohammed Ali, a *UTN* director. Gen. Gul and a third man, Mohammed Hayat, who was consulted on how to level the land, both confirmed that Gen. Ali was in charge of the project and a *UTN* document identifies him as a director. Gen. Ali (who later served as a deputy director in Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau's regional office in Peshawar) denied association with *UTN*".

Daniel Pearl's news report aside, French journalist and author Bernard Henri-Levy has been quoted by the international media as making a sensational claim that "Pakistan's disgraced father of the nuclear bomb, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, was in fact a member of *Lashkar-e-Toiba* (LeT)" (a leading jehadi outfit of Pakistan which is headed by Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed). What is definite, says Bernard Henri-Levy, is that Dr. Khan did attend the *Lashkar's* April 2001 annual congregation, as an honoured guest. And accompanying Dr. Khan on the dais was none other than Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood.

On February 12, 2004, Dr. Khan appeared on the state run Pakistan Television after holding a lengthy meeting with General Pervez Musharraf and confessed

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that he had been solely responsible for operating an international black market in nuclear-weapons' materials. The next day, on television again, Musharraf, who claimed to be shocked by Khan's misdeeds, nonetheless pardoned him, citing his service to Pakistan (he called Khan 'my hero'). For two decades, the western media and their intelligence agencies have linked Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan and the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), to nuclear-technology transfers, and it was hard to credit the idea that the successive governments Dr. Khan served, had been oblivious.

Nuclear Money Trail

There have been many contradictory reports about Pakistan's nuclear program both leading up to and following the bizarre confession by Pakistani nuclear figure Dr. A. Q. Khan and his subsequent pardon by General Musharraf. In this context, one can infer interesting conclusions by following the money trail and correlating it with the involvement of foreign nations or people in the Pakistani nuclear program.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who was then prime minister, initiated Pakistan's nuclear weapons program at a meeting of high-level military and civil bureaucrats and scientists in the city of Multan on January 20, 1972. Needing financial support, Bhutto openly propounded the need for the "Islamic civilisation" to possess nuclear weapons since the Christian and Jewish societies already had it. Bhutto went on tour to the oil rich Arab nations, challenging their rulers to demonstrate their Islamic solidarity.

Bhutto immediately won pledges of support from three rich Islamic states – Iran, Saudi Arabia and Libya. Under the patronage of Saudi King Faisal, Bhutto hosted the 1974 Islamic Summit in Lahore, Pakistan. It was here that Bhutto and Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Qaddafi sealed a deal, by which Libya would contribute substantial sums of money to Pakistan's nuclear program in return for Pakistani transfer of nuclear know-how at a future date. Bhutto even arranged for Qaddafi to tour Pakistan's new Canadian built nuclear reactor in Karachi guided by the long term chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, Munir Khan, who, some say was the real "father" of Pakistan's bomb.

Mohammed Beg, former European Director for Pakistan International Airlines and Bhutto confidant later revealed that Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Qaddafi personally supervised transfers of suitcases filled with US Dollars to Pakistan on PIA flights, sometimes up to $100 million in a single flight. Saudi King Faisal also generously contributed funds to Pakistan's nuclear program during this time. Bhutto's indebtedness to these two leaders was made clear

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when he named the largest Cricket Stadium in Pakistan after Qaddafi and renamed the old Colonial city of Lyallpur as Faisalabad, in honour of King Faisal. In the year following the deal with Libya, Bhutto convinced the Shah of Iran to contribute up to $500 million, ostensibly for crushing a Baluch rebellion near Pakistan's Iran border, but widely believed to be earmarked for the nuclear program. Put together, the Islamic contribution to Pakistan's atomic program reached many billions by the late 1970s.

After General Ziaul Haq overthrew and later executed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1979, the Pakistani military took firm control of the nuclear program. Thanks to the Afghan jehad, Pakistan was by then swimming in cash, both due to direct aid from the US as well as contributions from the Saudis. However, despite ambitious goals, Pakistan lacked the scientific base needed for the many thousands of sophisticated components required for a nuclear weapons program. But by leveraging his European contacts, A .Q. Khan set up a network, supervised by the Pakistan Army's Special Works Organisation as well as the sinister spy agency, the ISI, which could acquire virtually any desired item from Western European nations as well as the US and Canada to a lesser extent. During this time, failed Bank of Credit and Commerce International played a critical role in financing this Pakistani nuclear smuggling ring. In 1992, a report into from a US Congressional sub-committee headed by Senator John Kerry, said that there was "good reason to conclude that BCCI did finance Pakistan's nuclear program."

By the late 1980s, Pakistan had acquired the ability to make an atomic device as well as the nuclear fuel needed for it. It was time for the lenders to come calling for a return on investment. Iran was the first to approach Pakistan. Then Pakistan Army Chief General Mirza Aslam Beg openly called for a Pakistan-Iran strategic alliance that included nuclear co-operation. An aide to then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif recently revealed that General Baig and a senior Iranian military official met with Mr. Sharif and informed him of a deal to sell nuclear technology to Iran for an additional $12 billion. We now know that Pakistan did transfer nuclear technology to Iran around this time. We also know that sometime later, Libya also approached Pakistan and obtained nuclear technology for further cash transfers to the tune of more than $100 million.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto recently mentioned in an interview that she had sanctioned the purchase of ballistic missile technology from North Korea. Western analysts now believe that Pakistan transferred nuclear technology to North Korea in return for the missiles since it lacked foreign exchange during the mid 1990s. The recent Saudi connection is also important. After Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, Saudi Arabia provided almost a billion dollars worth of free oil supplies to Pakistan every year. In 1999, Saudi Defence

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Minister Prince Sultan became one of the few foreigners to tour secret Pakistani nuclear facilities - places where even former elected Pakistani Prime Ministers were not welcome. Arnaud de Borchgrave recently broke a story on a secret Pakistan-Saudi deal on nukes. Interestingly, the Saudi oil facility was stopped right after that report and there are now talks of a large Pakistan army contingent moving to Saudi Arabia - both possible signs of a deal clinched.

Another pointer to the financial aspect of Pakistan's proliferation was revealed in 2000, when the Pakistan commerce ministry issued advertisements in prominent English language Pakistani papers announcing intended sale of enriched uranium, plutonium and 17 types of equipment, including nuclear power reactors, reactor control systems and many other similar technology. Days after this, the Pakistan government withdrew the ads and said that it was a "mistake". Despite this General Baig commented that selling "surplus" nuclear material to fellow Islamic nations was a "respectable way of earning money."

The bottom line is that an analysis of the money trail shows that the drivers behind Pakistani nuclear proliferation were essentially that of a state and not some rogue individuals. Even though A. Q. Khan and some of his assistants may have had a major role in the nuclear network, the Pakistani Army essentially supervised it. That oversight is not dependent on whether goods were coming in or going out of Pakistan. As the 2000 advertisement saga shows, Pakistan government was seriously pursuing the usage of its nuclear technology as a tradable commodity. The huge sums of money involved also point to state involvement. Given this, it would not be possible to break this nuclear network without bringing to account the various Pakistani state entities, overt and covert, and their representatives abroad. Unfortunately, by buying General Musharraf's incredulous claims of no state involvement and focusing on A. Q. Khan, the US and its allies are ensuring that the nuclear network remains alive, albeit more underground.

Was Dr. Khan made a scapegoat?

Pakistan continues to quake under the shockwaves Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan's televised confession had generated. Though Musharraf categorically rejects allegations of Pakistan's involvement in any proliferation activity at the official level, evidence Washington provided to Islamabad shows that the country's leading nuclear scientists had been assisting North Korea and Iran under officially agreed upon agreements for clandestine training of nuclear scientists and mutual exchange of the nuclear know-how. And no such agreement could have been possible without the military leadership's approval.

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According to well placed diplomatic sources in Islamabad, a swift action against Dr. A. Q. Khan was the minimum Musharraf was required to do after being provided mind boggling evidence by three top American government officials, who arrived in Islamabad in the first week of October 2003. The government machinery swung into full action when two weeks later, the International Atomic Energy Agency demanded a detailed probe against Pakistani scientists, through an official two-page letter addressed to the General. The sources said, in order to emphasise the importance of the evidence of nuclear proliferation against Pakistani scientists, the Bush administration used the usual diplomatic as well as the military channels at the highest level.

On October 6, 2003, the US Central Command chief Lt. Gen. John Abizaid, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Assistant Secretary of State (South Asia) Christina Rocca, loaded with intelligence information, landed in Islamabad and held a lengthy meeting with Musharraf at the Army House in Rawalpindi. The US officials reportedly requested an independent verification of the charges, followed by a stern action against the scientists found involved in nuclear proliferation. To get the maximum out of their meetings, Armitage and Rocca, who were earlier scheduled to arrive on October 2, advanced their trip to October 5 so that their meetings with Musharraf coincide with the Centcom chief's meeting, who landed in Rawalpindi on October 5, 2003.

According to diplomatic sources, the evidence collected by the US intelligence services detailed almost all foreign travels of Dr Khan, particularly to the UAE, Malaysia, Libya, Iran and North Korea in the previous few years. Minute details of his meetings with nuclear black marketers were provided and documents were given to prove the sale of nuclear hardware and designs to many countries. The sources said the US government provided evidence against the Pakistani nuclear scientists in October, yet twice in the past four years they had notified Pakistan about suspicious activities of these scientists. They added that fairly credible information was received by the US in May 2003 when Richard Armitage visited Islamabad to apprise Musharraf of the Bush administration's decision to impose sanctions against the Khan Research Laboratories in March 2003.

According to diplomatic sources, the evidence, collected by the American intelligence community and furnished by the US officials, indicated a trilateral nuclear cooperation involving Pakistan, Iran and North Korea. The US officials provided the following pieces of information to the Pakistani government:

"During the first tenure (1990-93) of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the Inter Services Intelligence Chief Lt. Gen. Javed Nasir visited Pyongyang to sign a secret agreement with North Korean intelligence for joint production of US-made

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shoulder-fired Stinger missiles and their batteries. As the Iranian intelligence agreed to fund the project, some of the US-made Stinger missiles from the Pakistan army's stock were provided to the North Korean intelligence, to help produce an imitated version of the Stingers and their batteries. Pakistan was particularly interested in the batteries because it was unable to use a large number of the Stinger missiles in its stocks since the life-period of the batteries supplied by the United States before 1988 had expired. The Reagan administration had supplied these missiles to Pakistan to enable it to use the same against the Soviet occupation troops in Afghanistan."

"In 1992, a team of Pakistani scientists and engineers visited North Korea's missile-development centre. The same year saw a visit by Mr. Kim Yong-nam, the North Korean foreign minister at that time and deputy prime minister to Syria, Iran and Pakistan in July-August. The Pakistani and Iranian scientists and engineers visited North Korea in May 1993 to witness the launching of one Nodong and three Scud missiles. Former Premier Benazir Bhutto's visit to Beijing and Pyongyang in December 1993 was followed by visits of a number of North Korean personalities to Pakistan in 1994-95 to discuss bilateral nuclear and missile cooperation. Important among these visits were the following: First, during April 1994, Pak Chung-kuk, deputy to the Supreme People's Assembly, visited Iran and Pakistan as the head of a team of the North Korean Foreign Ministry officials and experts from the country's nuclear and missile establishment. In September 1994, Chairman State Commission of Science and Technology Choe Huichong visited Pakistan as the head of a North Korean team of nuclear and missile experts".

Giving a clear hint about the raison d'être of these visits, the American information goes on to add: "During November 1995, a delegation of North Korean military officers and nuclear and missile experts headed by Choe Kwang, Vice Chairman National Defence Commission, Minister of the People's Armed Forces and Marshal of Korean People's Army, visited Pakistan. The team included senior officials of the Fourth Machine Industry Bureau of the Second Economic Committee and Changgwang Sinyong Corporation, commonly known as North Korea Mining Development Trading Corporation. The Kahuta Research Laboratories as well as the North Korean Corporation are state-owned entities, run and managed by officers of the armed forces of the two countries. Besides holding meetings with senior armed forces' officials during their stay, the North Korean delegation visited a number of important nuclear and missile establishments, including the KRL".

According to the US intelligence findings, the launching of Pakistan's Ghauri missile had a lot to do with North Korea's Changgwang Sinyong: "During the visit, the Kahuta Research Laboratories and the Changgwang Sinyong

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Corporation signed an agreement for supplying the Nodong missiles, fuel tanks and rocket engines to Pakistan. The agreement also provided for stationing of the North Korean missile experts in the KRL for training their Pakistani counterparts in the use and maintenance of the missiles supplied by North Korea. They were also tasked with the supply and development of mobile erector launchers for Stinger missiles. These visits contributed to the speeding up of Pakistan's missile development programme and culminated in the April 6, 1998 launching of the so-called Ghauri missile by the KRL, led by Dr. A. Q. Khan. Pakistan had projected Ghauri as its own indigenously developed missile".

Further information illustrates an interesting co-relation between the cooperation of the two countries and the May 1998 Chagai nuclear tests in Pakistan: "A US-supplied C-130 aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force was used for transporting the North Korean missiles to Pakistan. The missiles and other weapons sent by North Korea to Iran in the 1980s had transited through Pakistani territory, escorted by the intelligence agencies. That Pakistan and North Korea had a joint project for reverse engineering of US-made Stingers is substantiated by the fact that the Korean nuclear scientists were invited to Pakistan to witness the Chagai nuclear tests of May 1998. While returning the Korean assistance, tones and tones of wheat Pakistan had purchased from the US and Australia was diverted to Pyongyang, enabling it to withstand the economic boycott by the West."

More information proclaims: "Pakistan's diplomatic mission in Pyongyang is headed and staffed by serving or retired military officers. A Major General, who was involved in the clandestine procurement and theft of the nuclear material while posted as the defence attaché in the Pakistani embassy in Moscow from 1991 to 1993, was posted as ambassador to North Korea to oversee a clandestine nuclear and missile cooperation between North Korea and Pakistan. After completing his tenure in Moscow, he had coordinated the clandestine shipping of missiles from North Korea, the training of Pakistani experts in missile production and testing facilities of North Korea and the training of the Korean scientists in the nuclear establishment of Pakistan through a retired Captain who had been working as third secretary and acting head of mission in Pakistani embassy in North Korea from 1992 to 1996. Before the Major General's transfer from Moscow, the North Korean missile and nuclear cooperation project was handled by another Major General from the Baluch Regiment, who worked in the clandestine procurement division of the intelligence agency for five years".

According to diplomatic sources, the US intelligence sleuths stationed in Pakistan had first suspected the North Korean involvement in Pakistan's nuclear and missile program after the mysterious June 9, 1998 Islamabad murder of Kim Sin-ae, wife of Kang Thae-Yun, economic counselor in the North Korean embassy in Islamabad and a key figure in the missiles-for-nuclear-technology

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deal. The US agents believe that Kim was killed on purpose - probably by her own government- because she was spilling secrets about North Korea's missile and nuclear programs or because she was planning to defect. The agents further believe that Kim Sin-ae was murdered after she approached the British MI-6 in Islamabad, wishing to defect in exchange for nuclear secrets of Pakistan and North Korea. Kim's murder took place two months after Pakistan had successfully tested its Ghauri missile on April 6, 1998.

Kang Thae, also a local director of the North Korean Mining Development Trading Corporation, is regarded as one of North Korea's busiest arms dealers. In 1997, while living in Islamabad, Kang reportedly brokered a deal with an unidentified Russian company to bring to Pakistan maraging steel, a key component of missile bodies and nosecones. Kang Thae Yun and his wife, who were close to Dr. A. Q. Khan and lived in the same neighbourhood, used to receive North Korean guests who worked as technicians at the KRL. Under a counselor's cover, Kang worked for Changgwang Sinyong Corporation that trades for North Korea's "Second Economic Committee." which manages North Korea's nuclear infrastructure. Kim San-ae's death caught the attention of the US sleuths after allegations that a prototype centrifuge was smuggled with her coffin on a special flight from Islamabad. In a related development on March 24, 2003, the US imposed sanctions on Changgwang Sinyong Corporation and the Kahuta Research Laboratories for a related missile technology transfer.

"Since January 2000, Pakistani nuclear scientists and engineers had been working in North Korea and the North Korean missile experts in Pakistan. Since September 2001, the increased and still increasing cash flow into Pakistan from the US, the European Union and Japan enabled the Musharraf administration to pay for the North Korean missiles and related technology in hard currency. Since the beginning of 2003, there has been a large-scale movement of military goods under military escort to Pakistan from China along the Karakoram Highway. While most of these containers reportedly contained spare parts and replacements for the Chinese arms and ammunition and aircraft in Pakistan's arsenal, one should not rule out the possibility that the Chinese might have accepted the Pakistani request for the movement of the missile-related goods from North Korea by train and road across China and then along the Karakoram Highway".

Keeping in view all these allegations, analysts here ask only one question: can Musharraf convince the world that whatever happened on the nuclear front was nothing more than the outcome of runaway greed and ambition of a few individuals?

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Chapter 33

Fugitives vs Federal Bureau of Investigation

Having set up a high-tech espionage network in the four provincial capitals and the tribal areas of Pakistan to accelerate the ongoing hunt for the remaining al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives, the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is slowly but surely prying open Pakistan's sensitive national security system.

The American investigation agency had to set-up its own espionage network in the country due to lack of cooperation from the Inter Services Intelligence in locating the al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants. Since the ISI has had deep and long-standing ties with the Taliban and is largely believed to be beyond the government control, the FBI further decided to form its own ad hoc group of natives called the Spider Group, which is a band of former army and intelligence officers, some of whom had reached the ranks of brigadier and colonel. The Spider Group members include hundreds of experts in the fields of intelligence, interrogation, linguistics, cyber crime, communications and forensic investigations.

Many of those in the US-organised espionage service in Pakistan have had long experience dealing with Afghanistan, which can be traced back to the American--sponsored war against the Soviet troops in the 1980s and as recently as the times of the Taliban rule from the mid-1990s till 2001. The members of the Spider Group are entrusted with the task of tracking the activities of the fugitive al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives in the border areas as well as in the big cities of Pakistan. The Spider Group has been formed to ensure that the FBI agents who had previously worked under restrictions with the ISI could have access to a free flow of information that would help them locate the al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives allegedly hiding in Pakistan.

In 2003, two years after Pakistan opted to become a frontline state in the US-led war on terror, some high profile arrests of several leading al-Qaeda fugitives by the FBI from the Pakistani soil have exacerbated the public perception that the country is swarming with FBI agents. The work of the US intelligence agents in Pakistan has led to some of the greatest successes so far in the hunt for the Most Wanted FBI fugitives, especially the March 2002 arrest of al-Qaeda's No. 3 man, Abu Zubaydah from Faisalabad. Another FBI operation led to the September 2002 arrest of Ramzi bin al-Shibah from Karachi, who allegedly planned the September 2001 suicide hijackings in the US. Similarly, al-Qaeda's operational chief, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad was arrested from Rawalpindi in March 2003, followed by the capture of Waleed bin Attash from Karachi in April 2003, again with the FBI assistance.

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Despite these high-profile arrests, the FBI still appears to have a lengthy anti-terrorism agenda for Pakistan. As per the US intelligence findings, the continuing terrorism infrastructure in Pakistan and Afghanistan consists of the following:

Al-Qaeda: About 400 survivors of the 500-strong hardcore of al-Qaeda had crossed over into Pakistan from Afghanistan giving a slip to the US security forces. Of these, about 75 are reported to have moved over to Yemen and Saudi Arabia while 30 are believed to have crossed over into Iran via Baluchistan. About the remaining 300 fugitives, it is deemed that somewhat 225 scattered out to Punjab, the NWFP, Baluchistan, the FATA and Azad Kashmir while 75 of them sought refuge in Karachi, out of whom 50 are still holed up in various hideouts there with the assistance of their Pakistani sympathisers.

The Taliban: Out of their pre-October 7, 2001 strength of 20,000-strong militia, there were about 5,000 survivors of the Taliban, including its *ameer* Mullah Mohammad Omar and some other senior leaders. While from the remaining number of 15,000, about 5,000 are estimated to have perished during the US air strikes and 10,000 are reported to have dispersed to their respective villages in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The 5,000, who have taken shelter in Pakistan are operating against the US and allied troops in Afghanistan from their safe havens in the NWFP and Baluchistan, in concert with the *Hizb-e-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

The survivors of International Islamic Front: Before October 2001, the five components of the IIF -- *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, *Harkatul Mujhideen*, *Harkat al-Jehad al-Islami* and *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* -- had a total estimated strength of about 35,000 members deployed in Afghanistan to help the Taliban and al-Qaeda in their fight against the Northern Alliance. About 30,000 of these managed to survive the US strikes, crossed over into Pakistan and moved over to Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Azad Kashmir.

While aiming at these targets in Pakistan, the FBI initially kept a low profile and confined itself to assist the ISI operatives in tracking down the Most Wanted fugitives. However, as things stand today, the FBI works autonomously and has even established its own organisational set-up here in Pakistan, which includes communications to track mobile and land telephone calls as well as sophisticated bugging devices. The FBI field offices have literally established direct control over the Pakistani law enforcing agencies, such as the police, who take orders from the Bureau agents.

Yet, not all are happy with this state of affairs. The FBI had been involved in some operations that have touched a nerve with hard-liners. Musharraf's support for the US war on terror has already become a rallying cry for resurgent Islamic

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hard-line groups in Pakistan, which rode a strong anti-American platform to unprecedented success in the 2002 polls. Time and again, the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* has expressed its concern over the presence of a large number of FBI agents in Pakistan besides urging the government to expel them. However, Director General of Interior Ministry's National Crisis Management Cell, Brigadier Javed Iqbal Cheema, refutes the MMA claim that the FBI rules the roost in Pakistan. According to the Brigadier, "Every white person in Pakistan is mistaken as an FBI agent. Though it is just a misperception, there are vested interests here that want to catch on to the public sentiment to give a false impression as if the FBI was on a rampage in Pakistan".

According to the US Embassy sources in Islamabad, the number of FBI agents in Pakistan has fluctuated between two to twelve since the September 11, 2001 attacks. General Musharraf made almost a similar claim in a television interview in 2003, saying, "Hardly a dozen FBI agents are present on the Pakistani soil." Whatever the actual number might be, the officials of the Pakistani intelligence and law enforcement agencies believe that the FBI agents had been involved in almost every important anti-terror operation in Pakistan since the war on terrorism began.

Contrary to Musharraf's own claim, an FBI official, speaking in Washington in November 2003 had informed the American media that "between several dozen and a hundred" FBI agents remain in Pakistan at any one time, working closely with local and federal police and intelligence officials. According to well-informed interior ministry insiders, around 200-250 FBI agents are presently working along with their Pakistani counterparts in the border areas and the big cities including Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi, Faisalabad etc. They added that the FBI varies its presence in the country according to the requirements in its hunt for al-Qaeda suspects.

A senior official of the ministry of interior informed while requesting anonymity: "Around 200 more support-people generally known as permanent legal attaches or legats, (mostly belonging to the Spider Group) are assisting the FBI agents. These agents are often directly involved with interrogation of terrorist suspects or criminals and sometimes submit questions to those conducting the interviews, including the American Central Investigation Agency officers. The legats feed information gleaned from the interviews back to the US for further investigation, sometimes resulting in more suspects being put under surveillance or homes being searched". To another question, the official said that the FBI's precise activities are unclear. "Officially, a group of 15 agents is providing technical assistance, including sharing information about terrorist groups and training the Pakistani police to track down and apprehend Islamic militants".

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To yet another question, the interior ministry official said that the FBI had so far set up 28 field offices inside Pakistan including the border areas and the cities to track down the al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives. "Around a dozen such offices were established in the border areas of Pakistan while 16 others continue working in the cities. Working under tight security being provided by the Pakistani agencies, the FBI offices are equipped with high-tech surveillance equipment". After the September 11 attacks, the official said, the Bush administration had approached General Musharraf to set up at least 100 such offices, carrying signboards and security. "However, permission was granted for only two dozen offices, after Pakistan signed a mutual bilateral pact with the US to fight out terrorists under a joint working-group programme." Under the programme, the FBI could establish field offices in Pakistan and take assistance from its intelligence agencies.

US State Department's official spokesman Richard Boucher had disclosed after General Musharraf's return to Pakistan from his September 2003 US visit, that the two countries had signed a Letter of Agreement on September 23 to undertake the following:

- "Strengthen Pakistan's control over frontier areas bordering Afghanistan
- Continue construction of roads in Federally Administered Tribal Areas
- Support law enforcement reform and
- Provide training and equipment to develop police capacity, including the creation of a border security coordination center."

According to Boucher, this Letter of Agreement was reaffirmed on October 2, 2003 when Secretary of State Collin Powell called on the then Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali in Washington. After the accord, both the countries further agreed to re-work their strategy on a case-to-case basis before launching any further operations in the Federal Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA). Subsequently, a massive army operation was launched in the South and North Waziristan agencies in March 2004 in the wake of repeated allegations by the American intelligence agencies that remnants of the al-Qaeda and Taliban and their local aides were regrouping in the border areas of Pakistan and were launching raids against US-led coalition troops in Afghanistan.

The tribal operations were followed by American media reports that the US military was making plans for an offensive that would reach inside Pakistan to destroy the al-Qaeda network. A few weeks before the Waziristan operation was launched, the Chicago Tribune, in a report from Washington said while citing military sources that the plan involved thousands of US troops, some of them already in neighboring Afghanistan. Since the Pakistani government denied as usual that it would allow such an operation, the Pentagon declined to confirm

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that such a plan was being worked on. Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations Major General Shaukat Sultan contradicted the news report saying any foreign forces would not be allowed to use the Pakistani soil. "Only Pakistani forces will carry out operations from its sources," he said. But the US media kept reporting that the plans were advanced and their execution would depend on events on the ground. This was "not like a contingency plan for North Korea, something that sits on a shelf. This planning is like planning for Iraq. They want this plan to be executable — now", one military source was quoted as saying by the *Chicago Tribune*.

However, the *Chicago Tribune*, quoting sources, who requested anonymity, had reported that a team of military intelligence officers would go into Pakistan ahead of time to prepare an operation which would involve Special Operations forces, Army Rangers and ground troops and an aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea. The operation is being called "spring offensive" in internal Pentagon messages and a series of planning orders were issued in recent weeks, the newspaper said. As per the report, a military source told the newspaper: "Before we were constrained by the border. Musharraf did not want that. Now we are told we're going into Pakistan with his help. Musharraf's vulnerability is of deep concern to US officials. If he were killed, Bush administration officials say, it is unlikely that any successor would be as willing to work towards US goals to eliminate Islamic extremists."

The deadline for key planning factors to be detailed by the US military was January 21, 2004. Sources said the plan against al-Qaeda would be driven by events in the region rather than set deadlines and that delays could occur. But military sources said the push for this spring appeared to be triggered by the assassination attempts on Musharraf, both of which came in December 2003. Pentagon and administration officials, buoyed by that success, believe a similar determined effort could work in Pakistan and lead to the capture or killing of bin Laden, said sources familiar with the planning. Thousands of US forces would be involved, as well as Pakistani troops, planners said. Some of the 10,600 US troops now in Afghanistan would be shifted to the border region as part of regular troop movements, some would be deployed within Pakistan.

However, the Pakistani government circles believe that such an intervention by some of the 11,000 US troops in Afghanistan would be political dynamite for Musharraf. But the fact remains that the FBI Director Robert Muller has had some lengthy discussions with Musharraf during which plans to get hold of Osama and other al-Qaeda leaders were discussed. The official circles say Musharraf had bowed to Muller's demand for setting up a permanent intelligence system in the tribal areas, allowing the FBI to monitor the Pak-Afghan border. The monitoring is being carried out with the help of

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sophisticated electronic surveillance equipment which includes global-positioning trackers and software imaging systems, anti-bugging devices, concealed cameras with remote-recording capability, cell phone direction finders, call interceptors and voice analysers, all-terrain vehicles, helicopters and radio communications gear.

An American communication and intelligence centre has been set up in the tribal area on the Pakistani side to help coordinate the hunt for al-Qaeda fugitives by providing spy satellites, electronic-eavesdropping planes and special ground sensors. According to a March 23, 2004 *New York Times* report, "besides providing blocking positions at strategic places along the Pak-Afghan border to stop or kill al-Qaeda fighters fleeing from the Pakistani army, US military sensors are peering across the mountains into Pakistan to help in the hunt. The US helps Pakistan track enemy movements with spy satellites, Air Force E-8C Joint Stars ground-surveillance jets and remotely piloted Predator aircraft track enemy movements. They also eavesdrop on enemy fighters with RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft that scoop up cell phone calls and other electronic transmissions. U-2 spy planes soar high overhead. Pakistan has also received US helicopters, specialised training and sophisticated ground sensors that can count vehicles on mountain roads and measure their loads by sensing their vibrations".

Then there are reports that the FBI has tasked the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) offices in the four provinces to prepare a database of criminals' finger prints. The provincial police forces including those of Islamabad, AJ&K and northern areas would be connected to the database on a nation-wide computer network which would be regularly updated with the inputs received from the provincial police headquarters. Working in tandem with the FBI, the National Police Bureau, Islamabad, is giving final touches to an Automated Fingerprinting Identification System (AFIS), which would be a component of the overall computerisation of criminal record. The national crime record would be built and placed at FIA Headquarters Islamabad and would be open to inspection by the FBI whenever required.

Pakistan's first commando President has accepted yet another American offer for a number of Pakistan army and intelligence officers to be trained in the United States. There are media reports saying, about 100 army and intelligence officers were sent to the 'land of opportunities' (US) in mid-2003 for various short courses. Those being trained will be made a part of a Special Investigation Group (SIG) to track down members of the al-Qaeda network in Pakistan.

Whilst the government of Pakistan maintains that the officers were sent to the US for training after it had realised that Pakistan's investigative machinery was simply incapable to deliver in the highly sensitive law-enforcement operations.

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But there are those in the country's intelligence circles as well who maintain that having army and intelligence officers trained by a foreign intelligence apparatus was like handing over the keys of the country to another nation as it allowed them undue influence in the armed forces. However, hardly bothered about any such apprehensions, the Musharraf administration continues to bow to the ever-increasing FBI demands.

The authorities have allowed the FBI to freely use Echelon software to run its communication monitoring operation, though in collaboration with the ISI. Echelon, developed by the US National Security Agency, is a secret network that is designed to detect and capture "information packets" couriered through Internet, telephone or fax. Techniques such as voice signature, word spotting and speech recognition through key words 'assassination,' 'terrorism', 'Jehad', 'bombs', 'Osama' etc., are used to track the terrorists, their plans and whereabouts. Whenever these words are used on phone, email, fax, or a website, these are automatically spotted.

The Echelon software is so powerful that it can monitor, prepare and maintain an archive of millions of emails, telephone calls through satellite, cell and landlines and faxes which cross the planet every day. To monitor airwaves in and around Pakistan, the US has installed a powerful network at various key points across Pakistan that can monitor various kinds of activities. Earlier, the FBI had developed Carnivore software, which was used for similar espionage activities but Echelon is more sophisticated and has a wider range to monitor the whole world. The system also enables the intelligence agencies to monitor the websites visited, sending and receiving of e-mails, e-mail text, what is downloaded from a site, streaming events such as audio, video and internet telephony used and those visiting a suspected website.

The intelligence sources further added that the FBI has further installed a hi-tech Transaction Tracking Server (TTS) at the Quaid-e-Azam International Airport, Karachi, and the Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, which poses a serious threat to Pakistan's sensitive security operations and covert movements. The TTS installation was motivated by the FBI to monitor the arrival and departure of the passengers. The sources said the Transaction Tracking Server is connected with the FBI databank and the newly upgraded Interpol data store through satellite for instant transmission and retrieval of information. The Server is further linked with the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA), through a landline. "Thereby the system, being supervised and monitored by the FBI, is using, storing and updating all available information with Nadra about every Pakistani citizen," the intelligence sources added.

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The sources said the TTS is backed by a hi-tech Pisces (Personal Identification Secure, Comparison and Evaluation System), a top-of-line computer system having software to identify and check any US-wanted Pakistani citizen boarding international flights. The system contains data on worldwide bomb explosions, suspected, wanted and convicted terrorists as well as information regarding car thefts the world over.

The system also has the software to match the basic physical features like height, skin colour, prominent identification marks, fingerprints, eye colour and type of hair of a terrorist with any passenger boarding any international flight. All passengers have to go through the Pisces scanning system to board any flight. To check passports and other identification papers, the Pisces is supported by flex-cam cameras connected to special software, which can film the subject from any direction and magnify it by manifold.

The entire set-up is stationed in the Intelligence Bureau (IB) headquarters in Islamabad and its Karachi offices where the US experts along with the IB officers control its operations. The system was basically installed to check the large number of fleeing Afghans and Arab volunteers who participated in the war against the US alongside the Taliban. The US State Department computer experts had installed this system at the Karachi airport on December 9, 2001.

"The system poses a serious threat to domestic and external security operations of the country. Like any other country, Pakistan too will be sending its personnel to various countries for intelligence purposes. But now it is almost impossible to keep such missions secret because of the Pisces scanning system and its linkage with Nadra. But the government is totally oblivious of the threat and is yet to take up the matter with the United States", said a retired intelligence official on condition of anonymity.

The intelligence official further claimed that the FBI had also been allowed access to the communication network of Pakistan for monitoring and scanning the targeted landlines linked directly or indirectly to the Working Transit Exchanges (WTE) of the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL). "After the 9/11 event and the subsequent US-led attack on Afghanistan, the ISI had been supplying the transcripts of certain suspicious telephone numbers to the FBI sleuths in Pakistan. After Musharraf assumed power in October 1999, the ISI was granted direct access to the telecommunication network for the purpose of monitoring and bugging".

However, according to the retired intelligence official, the FBI sleuths stationed in Pakistan kept insisting that the provision of mere transcripts was not sufficient to serve their purpose. Finally, acting under the increasing American pressure,

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the Musharraf regime finally allowed access to the FBI to our communication network. The permission was granted despite a serious question being raised within the security agencies: whether or not the bugging of telecommunication network would remain confined only to the tracking down of the al-Qaeda operatives and their jehadi aides in Pakistan?

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Chapter 34

Wana operation: Osama still at large

Osama bin Laden, painted by the western media as one of the most significant financial sponsors of Islamic extremist activities in the world, is a man on the run since a US-led attack in October 2001 drove out Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime, which had turned the custody of the al-Qaeda chief over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Osama bin Laden, named by the FBI as the prime suspect in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, was the villain on the cover of almost every American and European magazine after the US-led attack on Afghanistan. Then he suddenly vanished and President George Bush, who holds the most powerful job on earth, wants him badly - dead or alive – before the November general elections. The American intelligence agencies are sure of one thing: Osama is not dead, he is very much alive, hiding somewhere on the Pak-Afghan border. As long as he remains at large - despite desperate efforts by the world's most powerful army - he will continue to be the subject of intense debate.

Cynics and detractors of President Bush attribute the intensified hunt for Osama to his anxiety for a major operational success before the November Presidential elections. But the fact remains that the hunt has proved a major embarrassment for his administration to date. The American record on the attack on Tora Bora, Operation Anaconda and Operation Snipe is dismal. Laden himself, the al-Qaeda leadership and thousands of Arab fighters managed to escape from Tora Bora despite Allied Forces' efforts to track them down. Anaconda - employing 2,000 GIs, 2,000 Afghans, loads of B-52s and Apache helicopters, supposedly cleared out the Chah-e-Kot valley in the Paktia province. However, most Arabs and Taliban eventually managed to escape to the East. Snipe - employing 1,000 Royal Marines, intervened in Khost and just managed to push the al-Qaeda fighters further inside the Federally Administered Tribal areas (FATA) of Pakistan. There they blended in everywhere: in Miran Shah, South Waziristan Agency and deep in the tribal areas.

Asked about the Osama whereabouts, the visiting US Secretary of State Collin Powell said in an interview to the Geo TV in Islamabad in March 2004: "He is working hard not to be found. We don't know exactly where he is. No one has seen him in a long time, but there is certainly evidence that he is alive. If he is alive, then he is hiding in the area between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is very difficult to find someone in that area. We are looking for him and we have been encouraging our Pakistani friends to search in their tribal areas. Our troops are also present on the border because free movement of the Taliban and al-Qaeda

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terrorists is not in the interests of neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan. These terrorists want to destabilise the region".

Powell was answering questions about the intensified operations on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border to capture Osama and other dregs of the al-Qaeda and the Taliban. In fact, a fresh operation to dig out Osama is going on in fits and starts since October 2003, with frequent changes of code names for the hunt. However, more hype than concrete result has been the outcome so far. Initially, the Musharraf regime deployed mainly para-military forces, but more and more regular troops joined later. This was partly under US pressure and partly on their own volition after the two al-Qaeda-sponsored attempts to assassinate General Musharraf in Rawalpindi in December 2003.

The tribal zone of Pakistan, which borders Afghanistan, had played an important role in turning ordinary residents of the area into hardliner mujahideen when the then Reagan administration hired General Ziaul Haq to fight out the Soviet troops in Afghanistan in the 1980s. That was the time the mujahideen established their headquarters and military training camps in the tribal areas that had advantages over other areas. Firstly, the tribal areas were mostly inaccessible to ordinary people and could serve as secret hideouts. Secondly, there was no easy land route available to these areas even from Afghanistan. And last but not the least, there were places in these mountainous areas where the mujahideen could remain entrenched for months and years without coming into harm's way.

The Afghan fighter groups used to bring young Afghans to be trained in these camps, only to be sent back to Afghanistan to fight a guerrilla war. The tribal zone proved an ideal place to launch the US-sponsored war on its superpower rival in Afghanistan. Defence experts believe that without this belt, it would have been a lot more difficult to carry on that war. The same camps also trained Pakistanis and Muslims from all over the world to take part in the so-called Afghan jehad.

Both North Waziristan and South Waziristan agencies were preferred places of the mujahideen groups because of their dense forests. They set up their camps in the inaccessible jungles of these agencies. They also built their madrassas across the agencies. Wana and Mirali became their headquarters. With the advent of the Taliban, the mujahideen further strengthened their infrastructure in the two Waziristan agencies. Subsequently, the mujahideen of the past and the terrorists of today have developed deep roots and following among the local populations of the tribal areas. And it would take many years to undo what the once US backed militants have done in the last quarter century.

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On March 15, 2004, a few hours before a major operation was launched in the Wana area of the tribal belt, General Musharraf addressed representatives of the tribal jirga at the Governor's House Peshawar and claimed that the investigations into the twin suicide attempts on his life have turned the needle of suspicion on an absconding Libyan member of the al-Qaeda. However, he said, it was yet to be probed who ordered the Libyan activist of the al-Qaeda to carry out such an attack. "Such elements also hired services of a Pakistani in return for Rs. 1.5 million to Rs. 2 million. And the master source of the network is here", he said without directly referring to the tribal belt. The General added that 500 to 600 foreign elements were still hiding in the tribal areas, thus posing a serious threat to the future of the country.

Then, waving a copy of TIMES magazine in his hand, General Musharraf said the world was expecting practical steps from Pakistan. Elaborating, he said, the magazine contains something different, wherein harsh words are used against Pakistan. He said actions speak louder than words and emphasised that some practical steps are needed which is impossible without the support of tribal elders. "In the wake of certain allegations against Pakistan, we need to eradicate the trend of extremism and terrorism. The allegations are 1) terrorism is penetrating from tribal regions of Pakistan into Afghanistan 2) Pakistan is also encouraging extremism and terrorism in Indian Occupied Kashmir 3) misuse of nuclear capabilities and 4) encouraging trend of militancy."

The General then informed the tribal elders that his government was left with no other option but to take practical steps to nip the evil of terrorism in the bud. "Otherwise Pakistan's very own survival could be endangered". The Wana operation was subsequently launched a few hours later to smoke out the dregs of the al-Qaeda terrorists. Intelligence sources say, two closely coordinated operations were launched -- one on the Afghan side by a large number of US troops aided by a small number of British and Afghan troops. The other operation began on the Pakistani side of the border with a total of 7,000-plus Army troops and para-military forces.

In the first week of March 2004, without a blip in many a strategic radar screen, Commando 121, that had captured Iraqi President Saddam Hussain from Tikrit, was transferred from Iraq to the Pak-Afghan tribal belt. While there was no common military command and control system, there was definitely a common intelligence command and control. The National Security Agency (NSA), the Technical Intelligence (TECHINT) agency of the United States, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) led the intelligence component of the hunt.

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However, the operation proved futile as none of the "high-value targets" – either Osama or his No. 2, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, could be captured. But it was not less than a coincidence then, that a tape-recorded message by Dr. Zawahiri surfaced on the Al-Jazeera TV station of Qatar on March 25, 2004, only a day after the Pentagon leaks claimed that they had al-Qaeda surrounded, with the Americans just waiting for some authorisation to capture them. The Zawahiri tape came as a clear hint that most of the al-Qaeda leaders hiding in the tribal area had already managed to slip out of the cordon that the troops had laid in a 50 square km area in Azam Warsak and its surrounding villages.

The failed operation was a replay of the Tora Bora in December 2001, when US-led forces were convinced of having trapped Osama in the mountainous range of Afghanistan, only to learn that he had actually moved on long before the worst of the massive American assault on the area. The failure came despite the fact that the plan to smoke out the al-Qaeda fugitives was well though out and straightforward: the US-led coalition forces would drive from inside Afghanistan into the last real sanctuary of the insurgents, and meet the Pakistani military driving from the opposite direction. There would then be no safe place left to hide for the Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants or presumably, for Osama and Zawahiri themselves.

The implementation of the plan had begun with the start of the operation "Mountain Storm" around March 15, 2004. But the insurgents had a plan of their own. International media reports said that conceived by foreign resistance fighters of Pakistani and Arab origins, it was a classic guerrilla stratagem that involved enmeshing United States' mighty military forces and its allies in numerous local conflicts, diverting them from their real goal and dissipating their strength. As the insurgents' plan was put into effect, a fierce fighting broke out in the tribal agency of the South Waziristan. The resistance fighters and their tribal sympathisers took on the Pakistani military and para-military troops in a big way and literally routed them.

The Pakistan army and militia resultantly suffered heavy casualties -- at least 50 soldiers including two majors and 17 militiamen were killed and many more sustained injuries. Two junior-level government officers, known as *tehsildar*s, were made hostage by the militants and killed. Twelve Frontier Corps personnel who were made hostage, were luckier. They were freed through the intervention of a *jirga* (council) of tribal elders and religious scholars. The army and militia also lost a number of military vehicles, arms, food and fuel in the ambushes. Eleven non-Pakistani militants were reportedly killed. The number of Pakistani militants killed in the operation remains unclear. Besides, 26 civilians mostly women and children were caught in the fighting and killed. Over 150 persons, a majority of whom were Pakistani tribesmen, were arrested by the troops and

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were to be released later as the Musharraf administration had to cut a deal with the fighters.

No doubt, it was an anti-climax. Instead of launching its next round of military operation against Islamic militants in the troubled South Waziristan tribal region, the Pakistan Army was compelled to change its strategy and instead make peace with tribesmen placed on top of the Most Wanted list. On April 24, 2004, Corps Commander Peshawar Lt. Gen. Safdar Hussain traveled to Wana and decorated former Taliban Commander, Nek Mohammad, while striking with him a peace deal. Interestingly, a day before the deal was struck, Director General Inter Services Public Relations Major General Shaukat Sultan had described Commander Nek and his companions as terrorists.

By a magic wand, sworn enemies became brothers and pledged to remain friends in future. The setting for this grand reconciliation between the law enforcers and the "terrorists" said it all. Most Pakistanis, as well as foreigners, could not believe their eyes when the Corps Commander and other civil and military officers publicly embraced the militants to ink the deal. The militants gave Peshawar Corps Commander so many gifts, including an old sword, Kalashinkov rifles, Waziristani daggers, prayer-mats, copies of the Holy Koran, *tasbeeh* and *maswak*, that his bodyguards needed help to carry the load to his waiting helicopter. The atmosphere was so friendly that one could never imagine that the two sides were daggers drawn only a week ago.

The venue was a *deeni* madrassa, not different from the hundreds of seminaries that had produced thousands of Taliban who eventually captured power in Afghanistan in late 1994 and ruled for more than six years. The place was Shakai, a remote village in the lap of the mountains that had served as a hideout for the wanted tribesmen led by their 27-year old Commander Nek Mohammad. Armed fighters loyal to him ringed the place and some of the most wanted men secretly carried pistols on their persons. Shakai had been the militants' choice to be the venue for the reconciliation agreement that was mediated by two *Muttahida Majlis–e-Amal* parliamentarians from the South Waziristan Agency: Maulana Merajuddin Qureshi and Maulana Abdul Malik Wazir.

While the Shakai reconciliation was widely welcomed in Pakistan, shrill voices started coming from Washington, expressing displeasure over the deal. The top commander of US forces in Afghanistan, Lt. General David Barno, declared that foreign fighters in Pakistan had to be 'killed or captured' instead of being given amnesty by Islamabad. This was a clear indication of Washington's annoyance with the reconciliation at Shakai. The US forces in Afghanistan started crossing the border and indulged in search operations in border villages followed by violation of Pakistani air space. These intrusions were in fact a clear message that

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if Islamabad did not take action in accordance with General Barno's warning, the US was prepared to take unilateral action.

On the other hand, differences had already developed between the government and the militants over interpretation of the terms of the Shakai agreement. Subsequently, on June 10, 2004, the government ordered its security forces operating in the volatile South Waziristan tribal region to 'capture or kill' five tribal militants who had earlier been granted amnesty. A government spokesman said the amnesty has been revoked after the five militants had reneged on their word to get foreign militants under their protection registered with the authorities.

Corps Commander Peshawar Lt-Gen Safdar Hussain had granted amnesty to the five militants namely, Nek Muhammad, Haji Sharif, Noor Islam, Maulvi Abbas and Maulvi Abdul Aziz on April 24, 2004 in return for their pledge to remain peaceful and not to use Pakistani soil against any other country. The government claimed that it was further agreed that the foreigners harboured by the militants must be registered in order to avail themselves of the amnesty under Shakai deal. But Nek Muhammad claimed that registration of foreign militants was not part of the agreement.

A subsequent meeting held in Islamabad and presided over by General Pervez Musharraf was informed that with the help of sympathetic Pashtun tribesmen in the tribal area, the fugitives have established themselves in a belt stretching from North Waziristan to South Waziristan and into Afghanistan's remote area of Shawal, a veritable no-man's land now serving as the base for Afghan resistance movement. Subsequently, besides issuing 'capture or kill' orders against Nek Mohammad and his companions, Musharraf decided to withdraw the amnesty granted to the militants.

As the Pakistani security forces launched a fresh offensive in the tribal areas, Commander Nek Mohammad was their key target who had out-rightly rejected any compromise in handing over foreign fighters to the Pakistani authorities. On June 13, 2004, the ISPR spokesman announced that Pakistan had killed at least 55 militants and dismantled several al-Qaeda compounds in four days of fighting in South Waziristan Agency. He, however, conceded that 17 Pakistani soldiers were also killed and no major arrests were made. Pakistani security forces and militants fought gunbattles in Shakai, a valley northeast of Wana that is the main town of South Waziristan.

In a June 10, 2004 interview with the Pashto service of the BBC, Nek Mohammad threatened to spread his fighting to other cities of the country by making Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar target of his attacks. Born in 1975, Nek Mohammad

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was part of the generation that believed that General Ziaul Haq was Pakistan's perpetual president and jehad a perennial stream of religious emotion that flowed, unlike most rivers in to the trans-Indus region, from Pakistan into Afghanistan. He was trained in the cauldron of battle. During the early 1980s, his formative years, Wana served as the staging post for mujahideen forays into a large swath of Afghan territory from Zabul to Paktia. The town swarmed with CIA and ISI agents who recruited and trained tribal youth, arranged supplies and planned attacks.

Though Nek Mohammad was a great fighter, he was not bigger than his 'intelligence creators'. On June 18, 2004, the former Taliban commander, who was fond of talking, was giving an interview to the BBC radio on his satellite telephone when his hideout near Wana in South Waziristan was pinpointed. A precision-guided missile subsequently hit the home of Sher Zaman Ashrafkhel around 9.45 pm in Dhok village, four kilometres north of Wana. Nek, who received serious injuries in his head, arm and leg, was rushed to a hospital in Wana where he expired at 2.30 am.

While an Inter Services Public Relations Spokesman claimed it was a hundred per cent Pakistani operation with no US involvement, eye-witnesses were quoted by national newspapers as saying that the missile which killed Nek was actually fired from a plane which flew into the Wana area from Afghanistan and went back to Afghanistan after firing the missile. Well-informed sources in the para-military forces deployed in the area say that Nek was actually killed by a missile fired from a Predator plane of the CIA. According to the villagers accompanying him to the Wana hospital, the dying militant recited *'Allah-o-Akbar'* (God is great) while breathing his last. The manner in which Nek was killed may not have been imagined by many of his followers, sympathisers and perhaps himself, but it is the fate many such revolutionaries meet.

The curtain was drawn, at least for the time being, by the killing of Nek Mohammad. But there are those in the government circles who believe that his assassination was not the end of the bloody conflict in South Waziristan but the beginning of a wider insurgency.

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Chapter 35

Is General Musharraf a liberal or a jehadi?

A detailed examination of the international media reports pertaining to General Pervez Musharraf's army career before his October 1999 takeover and his post-coup policies on domestic and foreign fronts sketches an extremely conflicting and contradictory picture of the first commando president of Pakistan who claims to have a liberal worldview and presents himself as a vocal proponent of enlightened moderation.

In the aftermath of 9/11 terror attacks in the United States, General Musharraf affected a complete shift in Pakistan's Afghan policy that was actually devised by the mighty military establishment. Musharraf publicly ditched the Taliban and instantly became a 'trusted ally' of the United States in its global war against the Osama-led al-Qaeda terrorists. But the western media's response to the General's U-turn on its Taliban policy was full of suspicion.

In its October 5, 2001 editorial titled "Pakistan's Double Game", London-based newspaper *Guardian* stated: "The 180-degree turnabout in the Pakistani military regime's Afghan policy since September 11 appears almost complete. General Musharraf has withdrawn his diplomats from Kabul and is on the point of formally cutting ties with his former Taliban protégés. Islamabad says the evidence provided by the US implicating Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda gangsters now convince it. Meanwhile, it continues to pledge full support for the US war on terrorism. All of which suggests that in Pakistan, the US and Britain have discovered a flexible and reliable ally".

In point of fact, the editorial added, matters are somewhat more complicated. "Far from admitting that his pro-Taliban policy was disastrously misconceived, General Musharraf (who vetoed a covert CIA-run operation to capture bin Laden in 1999) still opposes western backing for the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Influential elements within the Pakistani army and the Inter Services Intelligence directorate, the Taliban's mentors, appear to have a foot in both camps. Then there are Pakistan's continuing links to terrorism in Kashmir to consider. For his pains so far in this crisis, General Musharraf has picked up a likely $600m in US aid, a lifting of nuclear weapons-related sanctions, extended IMF credit and debt relief and now a big diplomatic bouquet from Britain. But he is still playing a double game".

In its March 31, 2002 report titled "*The myth of the good General Musharraf*", John Norris wrote that the Pakistani military ruler is telling the western leaders exactly what they want to hear. He, however, pointed out that the West's new

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engagement with Pakistan was based on some dangerous misconceptions. "Since September 11 and the beginning of the war against terror, Pakistan has been transformed from pariah state to a key diplomatic and military partner for the West. President Bush has praised General Musharraf's courage time and again and pledged billions of dollars in aid. Pakistan's assistance certainly facilitated the US-led allied troops' war in Afghanistan. But the West's present engagement with Pakistan is based on some dangerous misconceptions - and could easily backfire."

The *Guardian* report stated: "Uncritical Western support for General Musharraf is driven mainly by fear of the alternative. For the West, Pakistan's military government is thus seen as a bulwark against a tide of chaos and religious extremism. There has long been a symbiotic relationship between Pakistan's military and security agencies, and Pakistani religious extremists. The military has used religious extremists to weaken the influence of its domestic opposition, to promote its influence over Afghanistan and to bleed India in Kashmir. It has been the military's support that has allowed Pakistani religious extremists to become a well-trained and well-armed threat to regional security. The ease with which the Musharraf government quashed street protests by Islamic parties after 11 September, demonstrated that religious extremists pose little menace to a military establishment on which they remain dependent for patronage. Nor does Musharraf face an internal revolt for cooperating in the military campaign in Afghanistan".

In fact, said the *Guardian* report, General Musharraf's image as a moderate leader fighting off a rogue ISI contrasts sharply with his past. "As Director General of Military Operations at Army Headquarters, Musharraf oversaw ISI assistance to the Taliban. After 11 September, Musharraf had no choice in the face of the western pressure but to reverse course on Afghanistan and to put a temporary halt to the jehad in Kashmir. Yet, the logic is clear. Since the Pakistani military is the main beneficiary of this changed posture, gaining western applause and economic rewards, why then would its intelligence arm, the ISI, destabilise the government? The Pakistan army remains highly disciplined and Musharraf should be taken at his word when he emphasises that the ISI remains under firm military control".

In its September 21, 2003 editorial titled "Pakistan, a Troubled Ally", the *New York Time*s stated: "General Musharraf managed to lift Pakistan's status in Washington from pariah to strategic partner by abruptly switching sides in Afghanistan and letting Washington use Pakistani bases to fight the Taliban. Yet, beneath the surface of Washington's new closeness with Islamabad, mutual suspicions continue to fester. General Musharraf has failed to sever all links with international terrorism".

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During the cold war, the editorial stated, Pakistan's geography and anti-Communism made it an American favourite. After that, relations began to sour. Washington grew increasingly unhappy over Pakistan's strong support for the Taliban, links with Kashmiri terrorists and covert development of nuclear weapons. Then, in 1999, Musharraf overthrew a democratically elected government. For a brief time after Musharraf's switch on Afghanistan, there seemed a chance for a healthier relationship. In breaking with the Taliban, the general stood up to some of the most troubling forces in Pakistani society, including military intelligence leaders and Islamic fundamentalists. He promised a timely return to democracy and announced he would expel foreign fundamentalists. Yet, his actions fell short of his words.

"Pakistan's behaviour has fallen well short of what Americans are entitled to expect from an ally in the war on terrorism. Although it has cooperated in the arrest of some leaders of al-Qaeda, Pakistan has never adequately sealed the Afghan border. That made it possible for key al-Qaeda fugitives to escape and now allows Pakistani recruits to join a reviving Taliban. Pakistan has behaved extremely irresponsibly with respect to nuclear weapons. Pakistan's own nuclear weapons are thought to be under Musharraf's control, but in a country whose history has been scarred by repeated military coups, that is not totally reassuring. Democracy remains a distant mirage…. Fighting terrorism effectively requires allies untainted by terror", the editorial concluded.

In its July 9, 2004 editorial titled "Pakistan Without Illusions", the *New York Times* wrote: "General Musharraf is neither a convinced nor a convincing ally of the US in the struggle against radical Islamic terrorism, nuclear weapons proliferation and destructive dictatorship…. Musharraf has done such a good job of repackaging himself as a vital American ally against radical Islamic terrorism that it is easy to forget how alarming Washington rightly found so many of his policies not very long ago. He crushed Pakistani democracy, he was, at the least, recklessly indifferent to safeguards against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and supported the Taliban and the terrorist groups active in Indian-ruled areas of Kashmir. Musharraf publicly broke with the Taliban almost three years ago, but there has been inadequate progress on many of the other issues, and Pakistan has recently appeared to be backsliding on the Taliban".

The editorial further stated: "Many of the biggest dangers America faces over the next few decades are present in General Musharraf's Pakistan, starting with the way arbitrary dictatorships like his have become dangerous pressure cookers of discontent across the Muslim world. Ever since he seized power in a 1999 coup, Musharraf has promised an early return to electoral democracy. Almost five years later, he still shows no inclination to share or yield power eventually, and

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he still derives his authority solely from control of the Army. Leading civilian politicians remain banned. Even the powerless prime minister named to add a veneer of electoral legitimacy to military rule was fired last month (June, 26, 2004) for proving insufficiently docile".

"Pakistan's relationship to radical Islamic terrorism remains dangerously ambiguous. Historically, military leaders, including General Musharraf, openly used the Taliban and terrorist groups in Kashmir to advance Pakistan's strategic objectives. That is now supposed to have stopped. After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States; Musharraf broke ties with the Taliban government and let Washington use bases on Pakistani soil to support the invasion of Afghanistan. Recently, he sent Pakistan's Army into the tribal territories bordering Afghanistan, in a not tremendously successful effort to hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. But General still lets Taliban leaders operate and recruit elsewhere on that border", said the editorial.

According to Musharraf's close circles, he is always conscious to project himself as being very liberal and modern. But his critics say he is a conservative in his approach and liberal in his attitude only. His personal life to some extent bears this out. Unlike orthodox Muslims who consider dogs to be 'unclean', and therefore do not keep them as pets, Musharraf has several dogs. He is quoted to have said in an interview, "My dogs love me. And I love my dogs". In an article in the *Washington Post*, Pamela Constable wrote: "Musharraf's personal life is distinctive in a number of ways. He is a mohajir, one whose family migrated from India in the 1940s, in an army dominated by clannish natives of what is now Pakistan. He enjoys Western music and occasionally drinks alcohol, even in his Islamic country. He speaks precise English, his son and brother live in the United States, and both his parents are naturalised US citizens -- all of which augurs well for his stated desire to develop friendly relations with the United States".

Many western experts shared such a benign view during the Kargil war (1999) and in the aftermath of Musharraf's coup that toppled the elected government of Nawaz Sharif. Most notable in their endorsement of the General were his former colleagues from the CIA-Afghan jehad days and some scholars who had visited Pakistan numerous times during the same period. Reportedly, Milton Bearden, a CIA operative from that period defended the General before the sub-committee of the Senate foreign relations committee for South Asia, reminding its members that Pervez Musharraf had been a part of 19th Baluch/SSG and had trained with US troops and that he had rendered valuable service in the Afghan War. His supporters in the former Clinton administration had later ensured that President Bill Clinton visited Pakistan for as long as he visited India.

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But the most glaring example of Musharraf's backers was General Anthony Zinni, the former Centcom chief. In his statement to the sub-committee of the American congress soon after Musharraf's October 12, 1999 military coup, General Zinni said: "Musharraf may be America's last hope in Pakistan, and if he fails, the fundamentalists would get hold of the Islamic bomb". In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, US officials rallied around Musharraf. The basic idea of the 'last hope' was used to plead his case when doubts were raised in the US about Musharraf's ability to deliver in a war against terror. Stephen Paul Cohen of the Brookings Institute and author of a book on the Pakistan army, went to the extent of comparing Musharraf to the former American President Harry Truman: "His situation is like that of Harry Truman, a man of average abilities but placed in opportune circumstances".

This liking for Musharraf is reportedly shared by segments of the Pentagon and some in the British defence establishment, primarily due to the fact that he has done a higher training course in the United Kingdom and at least one secret training course at Fort Bragg in the United States. However, western observers and diplomats continue to feel that the western goodwill is at the core of General Musharraf's great gamble. They believe that Musharraf is considered a moderate leader by their governments because he is willing to deal with the West since his military take over.

Musharraf used jehadis in Kargil

"The Pakistan Army had planned the Kargil operation in 1999 to scuttle the Indo-Pak peace process initiated by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee, which had led to the 1999 Lahore agreement between the two countries", according to a study conducted by the US-based Centre for Contemporary Conflict (CCC).

"The Kargil operation was an attempt on the part of Pakistan Army for regime sustenance by creating a war-like situation with India", said the study adding: "The political impact of the Kargil was a deepening of mistrust between the Army and the political establishment, which ultimately led to the ouster of the elected government", said the CCC study report.

General Musharraf was the Army Chief at the time of the Kargil conflict while Nawaz Sharif was the prime minister. Sharif has claimed time and again since his 1999 exit from power that the military command had kept him completely in the dark while advancing towards the Kargil heights, where hundreds of Pakistan soldiers died. "This ill-planned and ill-conceived operation was kept so

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secret that besides the prime minister, the corps commanders and the chiefs of navy and air force were also kept in the dark", Sharif has claimed in his July 2004 interview with *India Today*.

Coming back to the Centre for Contemporary Conflict report, "The cause and consequences of the 1999 limited war in Kargil" was the topic of the study conducted through lengthy deliberations during a series of workshops and seminars in the US, Europe, India, and Pakistan. The Office of US Secretary of Defense sponsored the study while the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies and the Asia Foundation provided additional support. The study was meant to develop new insights into the 1999 Indo-Pak confrontation and to draw a better understanding of the Indo-Pak military rivalry and the role of nuclear weapons in crisis dynamics.

Being the first ever effort to study Kargil conflict from a balanced, international perspective, the participants of the research were internationally recognized political scientists, security analysts, and military professionals from the United States, Pakistan and India. In the summer of 1999, India and Pakistan fought a 73-day military conflict in the upper reaches of Kashmir at Kargil, located 120 miles from the capital city of Srinagar. And the US believed the Kargil conflict merits intensive study because it was a major conflict between two countries possessing nuclear weapons.

The study said that the Kargil conflict and the subsequent Indo-Pakistani crises exposed the scope and scale of the Pakistani state's involvement with militant religious outfits. The conflict also brought to the surface the absence of consensus among the highest echelons of Pakistan's political and strategic decision-making. According to the study, the Kargil conflict affected Pakistan's politics and society in many ways: first, it deepened the already brewing distrust between the military and the political establishment; second, it produced tensions between the military and militant groups; third, it raised questions about the responsibility and reliability of the Pakistani state among the community of nations; fourth, it damaged the professional reputation of Pakistan Army, allowed the international media to portray it as a rogue army; and fifth, by deliberately keeping the public in the dark about the government's involvement in the Kargil conflict, the Pakistan government's political strategy had an adverse societal impact. This problem was exacerbated by the Pakistan government's disowning the remains of dead soldiers, causing resentment among families of those who were killed or wounded in combat.

The study quoted Chris Fair of the RAND Corporation as saying that while it seems clear that Pakistan Army's Northern Light Infantry (NLI) executed the preponderance of the Kargil operation, there are significant and compelling

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reasons to believe that various militant outfits were employed. Quoting some Pakistan media reports, Chris Fair observed that the jehadi groups such as *Tehrik-e-Jehad*, *Al-Badr*, *Harkut-ul-Mujahideen*, and *Lashkar-e-Taiba* had participated in the Kargil conflict. She further argued that the role of insurgents was limited to logistical support. For the execution of military operations, Pakistani Army leader relied on the Northern Light Infantry cadres drawn from the Northern Areas of Pakistan.

Another important research task of the US-based Centre for Contemporary Conflict was to ascertain as to why the Pakistan government claimed (and still claims) that the fighters of Kargil were all mujahideen, and also why the Pakistan Army did involve some mujahideen in the operation. What role could jehadi groups play in future Pakistani operations? If nuclear weapons brought symmetry to the India-Pakistan military equation, several discussants noted that the jehadis represent an asymmetric force. However, some of the participants commented during discussion that mujahideen had no major role in the Kargil conflict since they could not have possessed heavy weapons, such as artillery, and long-range communication equipment.

During open discussion, one Pakistani participant commented that it would be prudent to research the literature published by mujahideen groups, in which they had published the list of those who had died in Kargil conflict. In an interview to an Indian television channel in April 2003, General Musharraf's response to a question on the Kargil episode was: "Let me tell you that before Kargil, Kashmir was a dead issue. To avoid Kargils, we need to resolve disputes and much depends on how we proceed on the peace track".

Musharraf trained Afghan mujahideen

A revealing article titled "*The Strange Case of Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll: General Pervez Musharraf*", carried by www.pakistan-facts.com website on September 19, 2003 states that the first commando president of Pakistan has long-standing links with several Islamic fundamentalist groups in Pakistan given the fact that he had been involved in the job of preparing mujahideen for anti-Soviet jehad in Afghanistan.

The article stated: "General Musharraf has been an inseparable part of the jehad machine, which has dominated the Pakistani Military for the past 20 years. He has helped build the *Harkatul Mujahideen*, which according to some analysts comprises the sinews of Osama's international Islamic Jehad organisation. A lot of the people in the dock for helping al-Qaeda operate in Pakistan and

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Afghanistan are associates and colleagues of General Musharraf. The Islamist groups appear to share a synergistic relationship with the dictatorship of Musharraf. By carefully planned acts of terror they project the Pakistani stake in Jammu and Kashmir, thus giving Musharraf the leverage he needs vis-à-vis India. By steadily maintaining a state of sectarian violence in Pakistan, they hold the minorities and political classes in their thrall. It seems perfectly natural that these groups may play a similar role in keeping the American activities in check in Pakistan in the post 9-11 period".

The article claimed: "Musharraf, for his part, understands this relationship quite well. But he is unwilling to do anything to disturb it. He, therefore, chooses the easy option of keeping the boys occupied. This makes him an unreliable ally in the global war against terrorism". The write up described General Musharraf as "an aggressive and sometimes rash commander with a flair for unconventional warfare". In political terms, however, the writer termed him "a very skillful and equally unpredictable manipulator". "And since international politics resembles a game of poker, it is unlikely that Musharraf will ever voluntarily surrender this vital appearance of unpredictability", the article added.

According to the write up, the career chart of Musharraf makes it impossible to see him as being distinct from the pan-Islamist-terror syndicates of Pakistan. "Throughout his career, two basic trends in his handling of armed Islamist groups that are apparent are:

1. He does not seem to exert complete control over their actions. This is evidenced from the vast number of terrorist actions that have had unfavourable results for him personally. In all probability, Musharraf uses a special forces' style of leadership with the Islamic groups. He discusses a wide range of policy guidelines with them, and leaves the operational aspects to them. The act of giving guidelines is most likely done through a steering committee and to some extent a joint planning staff of some sort. It is also quite clear that he maintains a fairly open ended public posture that enables him to deflect criticism for the actions of the groups.

2. On several occasions after the start of the Afghan jehad, the Pakistani Army has faced a jehad surplus, either in manpower itself or in the infrastructure ability to support it. In all cases rather than de-mobilise the jehadis, it has promptly dumped them into another conflict. This occurs first at points during the Afghan war, most notably in 1988 as the Soviet resistance slowed measurably. At this point, the spare-jehadis were used to sort out the Shias of Karakorum. It occurs yet again at the end of the Afghan war, in 1991 when there were a large number of mujahideen with nothing else to do in Pakistan are shipped to Jammu and Kashmir. In 1993, the infrastructure of the madrassas in

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Pakistan and their Saudi funding mechanisms built up from the Afghan war was reused to build the Taliban. In 1998, when the Taliban's hold on Afghanistan was growing pretty strong, the Pakistanis channeled some of the extra manpower into the Kargil operations".

The article pointed out that at all these times, General Musharraf was a part of the decision making process. "Against this backdrop, it is very hard to believe that Musharraf is doing anything serious to curtail growing activities of the jehadi groups. What seems more likely is that General Musharraf may create a zone of conflict (like other Pakistani leaders in the past) that will serve as a venting ground for these groups. He will most likely prefer (due to historical factors) to choose the venting ground in the context of Kashmir. Other choices like Xingjiang or Iran would cause him deeply personal losses".

According to the write up, Musharraf's admiration of Turkish reformist Kamal Ataturk is more a worship of raw power. "General Musharraf does not intend to carry out massive social or political reform. His liberal personal lifestyle is merely a nervous expression of his personal likes-and-dislikes, which are often offensive to his fundamentalist associates and can be carefully hidden from public view by hundreds of armed guards. The same luxury however is not really available to millions of Pakistanis. As Musharraf has stifled democracy and aggrandised power, we have no way of knowing if the rest of Pakistan wants to share his brand of liberal lifestyle. This tendency towards stylish 'absolutism' means that General Musharraf most likely personally holds the nuclear trigger with him at all times".

"With a carefully sculpted public image and the use of Orwellian phrases like 'counter-coup', 'dictatorship to restore true democracy' etc, General Musharraf has achieved acceptance in the West. His skill and ease with the media has enabled him to carry out sophisticated media stunts and psychological war operations. Post 9/11, this ability has enabled him to skillfully project himself as the ultimate powerbroker between 'Islamists' and 'Modernists' in Pakistan. But it is unclear how long he will be able to perpetuate this two-timing style despite all the admiration from western sources".

The article further stated: "In the West a great degree of ignorance about General Musharraf and Pakistan prevails. The bulk of the material presented to western audiences comes in the form of motivated statements from highly entrenched lobbies. The absence of any form of enlightened interest in the details of what General Musharraf is actually doing is sharply felt. Most western observers seem very attached to the notion of South Asia, which dominates their long-term thinking. They fail to grasp the intricacies of Musharraf's position on issues, and a ravenous media has for their benefit turned Mr. Hyde into Dr. Jekyll. All of

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these things cause an extraordinary reliance on double-speak. This reliance makes it impossible to maintain any sort of public posture vis-à-vis Musharraf over any reasonable length of time".

The events after 9/11 speak to an interesting aspect of Musharraf's personality. General Musharraf comes across as a survivor. From crisis to crisis he appears to make hard choices and live out the consequences. The author of the write up cautions against taking this in a broader sense, as with his 'liberalism', 'secularism' etc, his survival instinct is limited to his person alone. The other way of saying this is that General Musharraf only appreciates commitments that force the issue of his personal survival to the fore. Ultimately to the author's eyes, the enduring image, a sum of all the contradictions is that of an urban Mafioso commanding the nuclear-armed Pakistani Army, and of one who is allied with the jehadi terror syndicates. In a gentleman such as this, there is no Dr. Jekyll, only Mr. Hyde.

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