

America's Proxy "War on Terrorism" in Pakistan

Lahore Attack: Dress Rehearsal for The Horrors to Come

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Global Research, April 03, 2009

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 3 April 2009

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Monday's brazen assault on a police academy in Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city and cultural capital, is a grim reminder that the "killing season" has begun in earnest across Central- and South Asia.

At least 13 police recruits were killed and another 100 wounded, according to [Dawn](#).

The Lahore assault followed the horrific Jamrud mosque suicide bombing March 27 in the Khyber Agency that killed upwards of 80 people during Friday prayers.

The raid by as yet unknown gunmen is a stark demonstration to Lahore residents that last month's attack on the Sri Lankan national cricket team, also carried out by heavily armed and well-trained commandos, was not a one-off affair but the opening round in a destabilization operation by any number of suspects.

Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan-Arab database of disposable Western intelligence assets also known as al-Qaeda, as well as militants "trained-up fierce" by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI) and America's CIA have all been named as the responsible parties. Fleshing out the rogues' gallery one finds: Baitullah Mehsud's Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Toiba (LET), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ), or, when all else fails, a "foreign hand," e.g. India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Given the modus operandi of the attack, one cannot preclude Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. LEJ is a virulently anti-Shia sectarian outfit that evolved from the neo-Wahabbi Sipah-e-Sahaba during the 1990s. With strong connections to Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the group served as a training ground for notables such as the operational whiz-kid behind the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, Ramzi Yousef, and the reputed "mastermind" of the 9/11 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

Like LET, the LEJ has aligned itself-and fought alongside-the Afghan Taliban and, according to some analysts, was involved in the 2002 kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* investigative reporter Daniel Pearl; a murder orchestrated by ISI asset and 9/11 bagman, former London School of Economics student [Omar Saeed Sheikh](#).

Historically, LET and LEJ have been ISI proxies and have targeted leftist and secular opponents of the shadowy intelligence agency as well as serving as a cats' paw for plausibly deniable attacks against Pakistan's geopolitical rival India.

On Tuesday however, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan chieftain Mehsud claimed it was the TTP that carried out the assault, [according](#) to *The New York Times*.

Mehsud told the [BBC](#), that the raid was “in retaliation for the continued drone strikes by the US in collaboration with Pakistan on our people”. During a phone call, the TTP’s head honcho told [Reuters](#), “We wholeheartedly take responsibility for this attack and will carry out more such attacks in future.”

But Mehsud went further and claimed that TTP-aligned militants will mount a terror operation in Washington, perhaps targeting the White House. *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) Mehsud told Pakistani journalists from-where else-an “undisclosed location (!) that “soon we will launch an attack in Washington that will amaze everyone in the world.”

As if on cue, CENTCOM commander General David Petraeus of Iraq “surge” fame told the Senate Armed Services Committee Wednesday, that the “government was doing a ‘deep dive’ investigation” into Mehsud’s claims, [according](#) to *The New York Times*. The “newspaper of record” failed however to inform readers whether the “threat level” had been raised in response!

Earlier this month, the U.S. State Department issued a \$5 million bounty for Mehsud, a frequent target of CIA Predator and Reaper drone strikes that have killed scores of innocent civilians in Pakistan’s “lawless” borderlands.

The New York Times [reported](#) April 2, that missiles fired from a CIA drone struck an alleged “militant training camp,” killing at least 10 people. The raid, according to the *Times* targeted Hakimullah Mehsud, one of Baitullah’s top lieutenants.

According to *Times*, Hakimullah’s forces “have been held responsible by Pakistani officials for attacking NATO supply depots in Peshawar used to resupply international forces in Afghanistan. His influence is such that he has imposed Sharia Islamic law in the Orakzai region, residents said.”

However, according to [Dawn](#), “at least 14 people, including 12 militants were killed and 13 injured.” The Karachi-based newspaper reported that “two women and several children were also among the victims of the strikes.”

To further muddy the waters, the *Associated Press* [reported](#) March 31 that Omar Farooq, the spokesman for the little-known jihadi outfit, Fedayeen al-Islami, also claimed responsibility for Monday’s attack.

Claiming the assault was a reprisal raid for U.S. drone strikes and Pakistani Army intervention in the tribal areas, Farooq also demanded the release of former Red Mosque chief cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz.

While Pakistani officials have blamed the TTP for a series of attacks, including the December 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, it is just as likely the police academy raid had been carried out by Punjabi-based militants such as LET or LEJ.

The overwhelming majority of Mehsud’s forces are Pashtun-speaking residents of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). While Shahid Iqbal, the deputy inspector general for operations for the Lahore Police Department claimed the attackers were “Afghans,” many recruits described the attackers as Punjabis speaking a local dialect.

According to *The New York Times*, the militants, some dressed in police uniforms scaled the walls, fired automatic weapons and hurled grenades while shouting "'Oh, Red Mosque attackers, we have come,' a reference to the 2007 takeover by Pakistani authorities of a militant mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital." Meanwhile, "according to militant contacts" *Asia Times Online* [reports](#),

A group of militants once associated with the Harkat-e-Jihad-i-Islami and the Lashkar-e-Taiba-groups with strong roots to the struggle over divided Kashmir—a few days ago traveled to Lahore from a militant camp in the North Waziristan town of Razmak, a year-round hill station situated at the crossroads of North Waziristan and South Waziristan on the Afghanistan border. ...

In light of statements made by some cadets, intelligence agencies maintain that some of the militants came from Pakistani Punjab and spoke three languages—Urdu, Punjabi and Seraiki. (Seraiki is spoken in southern Punjab.) (Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Pakistan braces for more attacks," *Asia Times Online*, April 1, 2009)

The unmistakable message to the Zardari administration and the United States, according to the online publication is that Monday's attack, "mark ominous muscle-flexing by Pakistan's 'original' jihadis, mostly Punjabis trained by the military in the 1990s as the first line of defense for the country, especially in Kashmir."

As I [reported](#) March 29, the corporate media's belated "discovery" of linkages amongst ISI officers, the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the form of "money, military supplies and strategic planning guidance to Taliban commanders," one cannot rule out the possibility that some ISI officers, still committed to Pakistan's policy of seeking "strategic depth" against India may have been complicit in Monday's attack.

However, it is U.S. imperialism which *for decades* nurtured, armed and financed such retrograde outfits to advance its own geopolitical agenda—military bases and resource extraction—that is fueling the far-right insurgency, and the justifiable rage felt by Pakistanis over the continued slaughter.

Cheekily, Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), the chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, perhaps channeling the spirit of the British Raj, said that Pakistan "must prove" it is willing to take on the insurgency "before the U.S. delivers financial aid or weapons to the government there," the *Associated Press* [reported](#) March 31.

Such comments by leading imperialist spokespersons are nothing new and are fully within the framework of American neocolonial arrogance. Calling for "benchmarks" and "metrics" by which Washington power brokers will measure "progress," what are these if not so many flaming hoops through which sovereign nations must jump through like so many trained poodles to curry favor with the Global Godfather.

As if Pakistani workers and farmers, crushed beneath the iron heel of venal, ruling class elites fêted by Pentagon bureaucrats or IMF/World Bank thieves who tout Islamabad's "responsible" policies that line the pockets of international debt merchants beholden to shady American and European banks have but one role, that of mute spectators!

As if to drive home the point, *Daily Times* [reported](#) that "Pakistan has suffered economic losses amounting to \$6 billion during 2007-08 while supporting the global war on terror."

Dr. Hafiz Pasha, heading a panel of Planning Commission economists, told the Pakistan Institute of Development Economists' annual meeting,

"This loss to the economy, according to the government of Pakistan, is over \$8 billion," said Pasha, adding that the US should double the funds being given to Pakistan for its support to the war on terror in view of the massive losses. He said the prevailing economic situation was "not very positive", as tax collection had fallen, imports were very high, real effecting exchange rate was functioning at the level of last year and the ministries' expenses had increased by Rs 100 billion. (Sajid Chaudhry, "'Pakistan suffered \$6bn terror war losses in 2007-08'," Daily Times, April 2, 2009)

Stating that the IMF's role in Pakistan "focused on stability rather than growth," I might add for corporate grifters and comprador elites, Pasha went on to comment that such program's are "not good for Pakistan in the long run". "Pakistan paid a heavy price for stability at the cost of growth during the previous regime's tenure ... and [Pakistan] should not repeat the same mistake."

Committed to so-called "structural adjustment" policies that sacrifice the economic well-being of the Pakistani people so that huge debts incurred by previous military regimes are repaid to international banks, the IMF continues to urge the sell-off of state assets at fire-sale prices even as Western imperialist nations pump trillions of dollars into their failing economies to stave-off the capitalist melt-down.

Let it be said, once again: the entire drive by the United States to "secure" the "Afpak theatre" has very little to do with "fighting them there, so we don't have to fight them here," and everything to do with that most American of motives: greed and plunder.

As analyst Pepe Escobar [points out](#) in *Asia Times*, the "U.S. Empire of Bases" is "still in overdrive and in New Great Game mode—which implies very close surveillance over Russia and China via bases such as Bagram, and the drive to block Russia from establishing a commercial route to the Middle East via Pakistan." Escobar goes on to comment:

Last but not least, the energy wars. And that involves that occult, almost supernatural entity, the \$7.6 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, which would carry gas from eastern Turkmenistan through Afghanistan east of Herat and down Taliban-controlled Nimruz and Helmand provinces, down Balochistan in Pakistan and then to the Pakistani port of Gwadar in the Arabian Sea. No investor in his right mind will invest in a pipeline in a war zone, thus Afghanistan must be "stabilized" at all costs. (Pepe Escobar, "The secrets of Obama's surge," *Asia Times Online*, April 2, 2009)

A dozen dead police recruits? Fifty or a hundred or *thousands* more people transmogrified into corpses by CIA drones or suicide bombers? "So is AfPak the Pentagon's AIG," Escobar wonders. "We gotta bail them out, can't let them fail?"

"Whatever it is, it's not about 'terrorists'. Not really. Follow the money. Follow the energy. Follow the map." Indeed, but whatever we do, *pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!*

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