

CIA chief in Pakistan flees after suspected ISI exposure

By [Narayan Lakshman](#)

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The Islamabad station chief of the Central Intelligence Agency hastily departed from Pakistan on Thursday after his cover was blown through a suspected deliberate leak by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence.

Jonathan Banks was identified as the head of the CIA's Pakistan office, in a lawsuit filed against the United States' secretive spy agency by a resident of North Waziristan. The resident, Kareem Khan, was said to have filed the case against the CIA and Mr. Banks for their role in organising drone strikes that killed his son and brother.

The legal case brought by Mr. Khan called for murder charges to be brought against Mr. Banks and the CIA, and also reportedly said they should be executed for their crimes. Mr. Khan's lawyer was quoted by the Guardian saying he had obtained Mr. Banks' name from Pakistani journalists.

While Pakistan was quick to deny any involvement in leaking Mr. Banks' name, U.S. officials were quoted as saying that since he had been identified publicly Mr. Banks "had received a number of death threats," and they "strongly suspected" that the ISI had a hand in the leak.

CIA operatives' identities are usually classified information given the risks associated with the covert operations that they are often engaged in. Leaks of their names have occurred occasionally, as in the 2003 case of Valerie Plame, a CIA agent who resigned after officials in the Bush administration exposed her identity to the American media.

Intelligence officers here were also quoted by the New York Times as saying that the leak may have been in retaliation for a civil lawsuit filed in New York City last month implicating the ISI chief Ahmad Shuja Pasha in the Mumbai terror attacks of November 2008.

The incident laid bare the deep and growing mistrust between the U.S. and Pakistani spy agencies even as U.S. President Barack Obama made a speech this week in which he warned that "terrorist safe havens within their borders must be dealt with."

This week, the White House also released a progress review for the U.S.' Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, a report that sharply focused on the need for greater Pakistani cooperation in eliminating terrorist safe havens in the tribal border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Following Mr. Obama's speech there were reports of CIA-supported drone attacks that were said to have killed 54 suspected militants in Khyber Agency located in the border area. While drone strikes have enjoyed tacit support from the Pakistani government, they are a

source of widespread resentment in the broader public.

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