

Military Escalation and Obama's "War on Terrorism"

US Officials "Rediscover" ISI-Taliban Nexus

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Long considered the realm of "conspiracy buffs" The New York Times, [citing](#) anonymous "American government officials," have belatedly "discovered" that Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI) is aiding the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

That ISI operatives were reportedly involved in planning the 9/11 attacks, the ostensible reason for the 2001 U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan remains as they say, "off the table." Yet, as The History Commons [reports](#), Operation Diamondback uncovered a 2001 plot jointly-run by ISI operatives and organized crime figures to illegally purchase weapons, including Stinger missiles and nuclear components, for the Taliban and al-Qaeda. According to The History Commons, citing The Washington Post and MSNBC:

Informant Randy Glass plays a key role in the sting, and has thirteen felony fraud charges against him reduced as a result, serving only seven months in prison. Federal agents involved in the case later express puzzlement that Washington higher-ups did not make the case a higher priority, pointing out that bin Laden could have gotten a nuclear bomb if the deal was for real. Agents on the case complain that the FBI did not make the case a counterterrorism matter, which would have improved bureaucratic backing and opened access to FBI information and US intelligence from around the world. ("Sting Operation Exposes Al-Qaeda, ISI, and Drug Connections: Investigators Face Obstacles to Learn More," The History Commons, no date)

In 1999, ISI operative Rajaa Gulum Abbas is recorded telling Glass as he gestures towards the World Trade Center in New York during an earlier phase of Operation Diamondback, "those towers are coming down." Yet authorities fail to stop the plot and two years later, 3,000 people are murdered by terrorists in New York and Washington.

The appearance of these reports in the corporate media arrive as the United States prepares a "surge" of some 17,000 American troops into Afghanistan and as the Obama administration escalates CIA drone attacks inside Pakistan. On March 18, The New York Times [reported](#) that the Pentagon is contemplating "broadening the target area" to include "a major insurgent sanctuary in and around the city of Quetta."

Extending military operations into the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, with the potential for "surging" CIA paramilitary officers and Special Operations troops to "kill or capture" senior Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives represents a significant escalation of the conflict.

In a March 27 announcement outlining America's new regional strategy in the "Afpak theatre," President Obama vowed to send an additional 4,000 troops under cover of

“training” recruits for the Afghan National Army. The Pentagon plans to raise the total strength of the Afghan army to 134,000 by 2011.

Echoing Bush administration pronouncements, Obama told diplomats and soldiers headed to Afghanistan, “I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan.” Employing rhetoric designed to sell the war to a sceptical public, Obama went on to say: “Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that al-Qaeda is actively planning attacks on the US homeland from its safe havens in Pakistan.”

As I [reported](#) March 7, with a recently concluded agreement amongst Pakistani Taliban fighters and their Afghan counterparts, the prospects for a bloody spring offensive are a nettlesome reminder that U.S. regional plans are so many illusions soon to be cast to the four winds.

Orchestrated by Afghan Taliban chieftain Mullah Mohammed Omar in coordination with Baitullah Mehsud’s Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), North Waziristan commander Hafiz Gul Bahadur and South Waziristan “emir” Maulvi Nazeer-grouped under the banner of the Shura Ittihad-ul-Mujahideen (Council of United Holy Warriors, SIM)-the United States and their NATO allies face the prospect of ferocious multi-front attacks.

According to the Times, ISI support “consists of money, military supplies and strategic planning guidance to Taliban commanders.” Despite billions of dollars in military assistance to the corrupt Musharraf regime and the equally venal Zardari administration, Pakistan’s search for “strategic depth” against their geopolitical rival India has only resulted in a furtherance of ISI/Army connivance with the Islamist far-right. The Times avers:

“Support for the Taliban, as well as other militant groups, is coordinated by operatives inside the shadowy S Wing of Pakistan’s spy service, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, the officials said. There is even evidence that ISI operatives meet regularly with Taliban commanders to discuss whether to intensify or scale back violence before the Afghan elections. (Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, “Afghan Strikes by Taliban Get Pakistan Help, U.S. Aides Say,” The New York Times, March 26, 2009)

Citing “electronic surveillance and trusted informants,” anonymous Pakistani officials have denied these ties “were strengthening the insurgency.” While publicly denying state links to Islamist insurgents, the Army and ISI have historical ties-as does the CIA-to organizations such as the Taliban and the Afghan-Arab database of disposable Western intelligence assets known as al-Qaeda.

As readers of Antifascist Calling and websites such as [Global Research](#) and the [World Socialist Web Site](#) are well aware, for three decades the United States has pursued a ruthless policy in pursuit of its own narrow interests. Far from being concerned with the economic and social well-being of the people of Central- and South Asia, America’s imperialist project is designed solely for regional military domination and resource extraction vis-à-vis their geopolitical rivals Russia and China.

Indeed, since the fall of Kabul’s socialist government, the United States has singlemindedly pursued policies to control the vast petrochemical resources of Eurasia.

As researcher and analyst Michel Chossudovsky [pointed out](#), anticipating the current political demonization of the Pakistani people as a selling-point to secure the giant oil and natural gas reserves of Central Asia for American corporations,

“Demonization serves geopolitical and economic objectives. Likewise, the campaign against “Islamic terrorism” (which is supported covertly by US intelligence) supports the conquest of oil wealth. The term “Islamofascism,” serves to degrade the policies, institutions, values and social fabric of Muslim countries, while also upholding the tenets of “Western democracy” and the “free market” as the only alternative for these countries.

The US led war in the broader Middle East-Central Asian region consists in gaining control over more than sixty percent of the world’s reserves of oil and natural gas. The Anglo-American oil giants also seek to gain control over oil and gas pipeline routes out of the region. ...

The ultimate objective, combining military action, covert intelligence operations and war propaganda, is to break down the national fabric and transform sovereign countries into open economic territories, where natural resources can be plundered and confiscated under “free market” supervision. This control also extends to strategic oil and gas pipeline corridors (e.g. Afghanistan).” (“The ‘Demonization’ of Muslims and the Battle for Oil,” Global Research, January 4, 2007)

All of the features described above are in play today. That media outlets such as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal have discovered ISI-Taliban-al-Qaeda “connections”-while glossing over and suppressing-America’s operational links to these same terrorist and narco-trafficking networks, is indicative of the dire straits faced by an economically depleted and politically bankrupt empire.

Drawing (false) distinctions amongst the welter of jihadist groups that American and Pakistan have cultivated since the 1980s, Obama’s Director of National Intelligence, retired admiral Dennis Blair, told Congress that the CIA’s counterparts in crime, the ISI, believe there are some that “have to be hit and that we should cooperate on hitting, and there are others they think don’t constitute as much of a threat to them and that they think are best left alone.”

While pursuing Mehsud and others who threaten the state’s writ, the Army has been loathe to run to ground proxies such as Jalaluddin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, veteran narco-trafficking jihadists’ who were key Pakistani-linked commanders during the anti-Soviet jihad. Considered “strategic assets” by ISI, Haqqani and Hekmatyar’s networks direct fire inside Afghanistan and are therefore considered candidates “best left alone” in Blair’s laconic phrase.

However, according to anonymous officials it was none other than the Haqqani network, in collusion with ISI operatives who helped plan last summer’s Indian Embassy bombing in Kabul that killed 54 and wounded dozens of others.

While American and European officials are hell-bent on finding (or manufacturing) “good Taliban” with whom they can negotiate a climb down, Pentagon analysts are far-less sanguine of the prospects.

A March 1, 2009 [presentation](#) for deploying troops prepared by the U.S. Army Training and

Doctrine Command (TRADOC) G-2 and the TRADOC Intelligence Support Activity (TRISA), posted by the intelligence and security website [Cryptome](#), lays out the formidable problems posed by the insurgency—and the extent of Pakistani involvement. Under the heading, “Insurgent Syndicate Characteristics,” TRISA analysts aver:

The nature of the enemy in AF HAS NOT CHANGED:

- * This enemy is primarily Pashtun in nature and Sunni Muslim (Wahhabi and Deobandi).
- * This enemy is funded by the drug economy and Gulf Arab money (for religious reasons).
- * This enemy is trained and assisted by ISID or ISID affiliated elements (Kashmiris/HuJI/LeT/HuM, with some Uzbeks).
- * They are assisted by AQ [al-Qaeda] in terms of funding, foreign fighters, and other assistance.
- * Logistics is the Achilles heel of ISAF operations in AF. Pak control of FATA and the Torkhum Gate. (“HB 9 Paramilitary Terrorist Insurgent Groups: Afghanistan,” U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, March 1, 2009, p. 5)

As if to drive home the point that “logistics is the Achilles heel” of U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan, Dawn [reported](#) March 29 that “hundreds of suspected Taliban armed with rockets and Kalashnikovs entered the Farhad terminal at about 2am and set on fire four vehicles, three cranes, a mini-truck and six power generators.” The Al-Faisal terminal near Peshawar is a major jump-off point supplying NATO troops in Afghanistan.

TRISA’s “Threat Lay Down” (p. 7) estimates that some 60,000 insurgent fighters are currently arrayed against U.S. and NATO forces. Estimating Afghan Taliban strength at 30,000 fighters, fully half of the estimated number of insurgents are Pakistani. These include: TTP, 15,000; TNSM, 5,000; Lashkar-e-Toiba, 3,000; Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, 2,000.

With 2,000 Al-Qaeda commandos (Brigade 055) and smaller contingents drawn from the former Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and other Central Asian and Middle Eastern factions, it becomes clear that Pakistan’s intelligence services, given continued support to “moderates” such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as well as to terrorist outfits such as LET and LEJ are a major source of support behind the insurgency.

This is all the more remarkable considering that LET commandos, operating in close coordination with ISI and Dawood Ibrahim’s organized crime-linked [D Company](#) carried out last November’s attacks in Mumbai, whilst LEJ was reportedly behind the [assault](#) on Sri Lanka’s national cricket team in Lahore earlier this month.

Significantly, TRISA analysts claim that amongst the “Warlord Militias” (p. 10) currently backing Hamid Karzai’s government, their operations unsurprisingly, are also financed through “crime, narco-trafficking, smuggling, illegal taxation, including illegal road checkpoints for taxation.” One might reasonably infer that U.S. operations amount to little more, despite the role of the narcotics trade on both sides of the “Afpak” divide, than a battle for control over lucrative drug manufacturing and smuggling routes.

Ironically enough, despite the grave threat to Pakistani citizens in Swat Valley, indeed throughout the entire country, the Zardari administration cut a deal last month with local TTP commander Maulana Fazlullah.

The sociopathic son-in-law of Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-i-Muhammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law, TNSM) leader Maulana Sufi Mohammed, a close ally of Mullah Omar, Fazlullah's criminal network has instituted a reign of terror in Swat under the banner of "Sharia law." Despite the truce, TTP militants continue to murder Swat residents and enhance the reach of various criminal enterprises, ranging from extortion, kidnapping and illegal logging through heroin processing for export.

Pakistani workers and farmers continue to pay a heavy price for the state's move to mollify the jihadist Frankenstein. For decades, having proven themselves politically useful when it comes to murdering leftists, trade union activists or uppity women and cultural workers, reactionary forces such as the TTP or the ever-pliant Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed are a shadowy "third force" that can be counted on by "Military Inc." to "keep the rabble in line."

In this context, "holy warriors" linked to the TTP carried out a horrific suicide bombing inside a mosque packed with worshipers in the Khyber region on Friday, killing 50 people and wounding 158 others.

Dawn [reported](#) that the two-storey structure collapsed onto the heads of worshipers after a suicide bomber "jumped into the Friday congregation and blew himself up just when the prayers were about to begin."

Eyewitnesses told Dawn they believe the casualty figures are being under-reported by authorities and that upwards of 70 people may have been killed by the blast and the subsequent collapse of the mosque's ceiling.

The News [reported](#) Saturday that upwards of 76 people had been killed in the vicious blast, including the prayer leader, his brother, as well as truck drivers carrying goods to neighboring Afghanistan.

There were tragic scenes at the site of the explosion. Many of the dead were mutilated beyond recognition. Rescuers and grief-stricken relatives of the missing and the dead were collecting pieces of bodies in the hope of locating their near and dear ones. A goat killed by the blast was also lying near the destroyed mosque. ...

Meanwhile, some residents and injured belonging to the villages of Rekalay and Kufar Tangi said they saw aircraft flying above the area since Friday morning. They feared the blast at the mosque could have been caused by a missile fired by a US drone. (Daud Khattak & Nasrullah Afridi, "76 killed in Jamrud mosque bombing," The News, March 28, 2009)

While eyewitness accounts describe a suicide bomber as the party responsible for the horrendous attack, part and parcel of SIM's campaign to cut NATO supply lines into Afghanistan, America's escalating robot drone wars are a reminder of growing anti-American sentiment amongst Pakistanis who are the overwhelming victims of the CIA's death-from-above air campaign.

If the Swat truce is an indication of what Pakistani citizens will now face at the hands of Mehsud's TTP and their minions, the prospects for a "normal" life—short of smashing the medievalists' and their ISI handlers—are grim.

Even as CIA and Pakistani intelligence officials "are drawing up a fresh list of terrorist targets for Predator drone strikes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border," The Wall Street Journal [reports](#) that ISI officials are "directly supporting the Taliban and other militants in Afghanistan, even as the U.S. targets those groups."

Indeed, as the Times avers, "when the Haqqani fighters need to stay a step ahead of American forces stalking them on the ground and in the air, they rely on moles within the spy agency to tip them off to allied missions planned against them."

An unspoken subtext to the Times and Journal reportage is the continued utilization of these terrorist networks—by the CIA and U.S. Special Operations Command—for covert war against Iran—even as the Obama administration seeks Tehran's assistance in battling the Taliban and al-Qaeda. As investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported last July in [The New Yorker](#) the Pentagon funded the narcotrafficker Baluchi-based Jundullah organization to attack security personnel inside Iran.

While an open secret in Washington, Obama's new product roll-out in the form of an ill-conceived plan to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat" al-Qaeda and the Taliban has everything to do with the construction of the \$7.6 billion dollar "Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline that would cross western Afghanistan east of Herat and advance south through Taliban-controlled territory towards Pakistani Balochistan province," [according](#) to Asia Times. As the World Socialist Web Site [points out](#),

Afghanistan and Pakistan stand at a nexus of pipeline and trade routes between the Middle East, Russia, China and the Indian subcontinent, and US domination of the countries would give it decisive influence over developments in trade and strategic relations between many of Eurasia's largest and fastest-growing economies. In particular, it would cement the US' ability to mount a blockade of oil supplies for China and India in the Indian Ocean. (Alex Lantier, "Obama announces escalation of war in Afghanistan, Pakistan," World Socialist Web Site, March 28, 2009)

And with the imperialist military project going off the rails in Afghanistan as the Taliban's spring offensive looms ever-larger on the horizon, the prospects for a deadly confrontation between nuclear-armed world powers over control of oil and gas will inevitably increase.

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