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Pakistan's Schools of Terror^{*}

By Wilson John

Terror training schools, teaching hundreds of new and young recruits in suicide missions and use of sophisticated weapons like Ak-47, Mi-5 and Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs), have been active in many parts of Pakistan, including Punjab, North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Waziristan and Pak-occupied Kashmir. Different terrorist groups, including Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT), often with the help of ex-Army soldiers, run these schools or camps. The syllabus, the training and indoctrination are far more sophisticated than the pre-9/11 training camps.

The terrorists who attacked Mumbai on November 26, 2008 and killed over 180 people were trained in one or two of these schools where several hundred others, including many from western nations, have been undergoing training for more than two years.

This paper is based entirely on open source information, largely culled from the Pakistani media sources over the past two years. It reveals how Pakistan's duplicitous policy on terrorism threatens, and will continue to threaten, not only India but also the western world in the years to come.

Training camps

Reports of the presence of new terrorist training camps in Waziristan and North West Frontier

Province (NWFP) began to appear in the Pakistan media as far back as late 2006, after President Pervez Musharraf signed a peace deal with the Taliban sheltered in these areas.

Herald, a widely read English monthly published by the Dawn group of publications, reported in June 2006 about the fresh recruitment drive launched by the terrorist groups and the sprouting of training camps. Dozens of aspiring jihadis recruited from the Frontier and FATA towns were sent each month to training camps in Wana in South Waziristan.

According to the report, at least three major jihadi groups maintain their liaison and recruitment offices in the Timergara area of Lower Dir District. These include the Hizb-ul Mujahideen (HM), Al Badr Mujahideen, now re-named as Al Suffa Foundation, and the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, renamed as Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JUD). Other jihadi organisations that have either offices or training camps in the Timergara and Warai areas of Dir include the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM), which now calls itself Al Rahman Trust, the Harkat-ul-Ansar (HUA), the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) and a Kashmiri group called the Pasban Millat.

In August 2006, while President Pervez Musharraf was striking deals with the Taliban and its allies in the

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tribal areas, *Herald* reported the presence of more than a thousand trained militants in three camps in the Hazara region of NWFP alone. Of these, the Hisari and Batrasi camps were located in the Manshera District while a third camp was located in Boi in District Abbotabad. The magazine quoted sources as saying that thousands of other militants were in camps in NWFP and the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir region, run predominantly by Pakistani outfits such as LeT, JeM, HuM and Al Badr Mujahideen.

At about the same time, the Afghan National Television reported (October 5, 2006) that LeT was forming suicide-bombing squads to help the Taliban fight the NATO forces. The report said LeT was recruiting Afghan refugees to take up arms against the Afghan government and the NATO forces. Citing a known case of recruitment, the report said LeT recruits went to the Ahl-e-hadith mosque in the Jalozai refugee camp in Peshawar where the youth were promised training and money if they agreed to join jihad.

The first terrorist leader to acknowledge this development was Jaish-e-Mohammad's Masood Azhar who wrote in his weekly column in an obscure but popular pro-al Qaida Urdu weekly, *al Qalam*, (December 2006) that "Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Jaish-e-Mohammad are working actively in Kashmir and they are giving the Hindus a tough time". He said "mujahideen in Kashmir were coming from Dir, North West Frontier Province "and it was not possible for Musharraf to stop them". Upper Dir is one of the northern most districts in the NWFP and borders Chitral, Swat and Malakand districts of the NWFP, in addition to Bajaur Agency in FATA.

Interestingly, *Herald*¹ also revealed how official channels funded these groups. Smaller outfits like Tehrik-e-Mujahideen, Jamiat-e-Mujahideen, Al Fatah, Al Jihad, Tehrik-e-Jihad and Islamic Front, received between Rs. 400,000 and 700,000 a month. Bigger ones such as HM, LET, JEM and others received between Rs.2 and 3 million a month. This "official funding" was in addition to funds that were paid for logistics, communications, equipment, weapons, and explosives. food and trekking kits.

A major terrorist training camp, which came up on the intelligence scanner in 2005, was the one run by Harkat-ul Mujahideen near Rawalpindi. A Pak-born US citizen, Hamid Hayat, detained on suspicion by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), admitted that he had attended the camp for six months. Hayat said the camp provided "para-military training, including weapons training, explosives training, interior room tactics, hand to hand combat, and strenuous exercise. Classroom instructions included ideological rhetoric detailing opposition towards the US and other non-Muslim countries"². Hayat said there were "hundreds" of recruits at the training camp run by Fazlur Rehman Khalil.

There were other training camps operating with impunity, even after disclosures like the one made by Hayat, in different parts of Pakistan, particularly in the tribal areas. A UN report in 2002 mentioned the presence of several terrorist training camps in the Assadabad region "where a large number of recruits are being trained for the next phase of al Qaida war"³.

The Indian intelligence agencies put the number of terrorist training camps operating in different parts of Pakistan, long after September 11, 2001, at 55. The western agencies were not so sure about the number of such camps, but knew that several existed within Pakistan. In 2006, for instance, the German intelligence officials tracked five Germans travelling to camps in Waziristan where, they disclosed after their arrest, Uzbek trainers taught them how to "prepare chemical explosives and military grade detonators"⁴. The arrest of Germans and, later on, British nationals of Pakistani origin, revealed the increasing recruitment of 'foreigners' by terrorist groups like LeT.

The Daily Times reported in December 2006 that "a 12-member team of westerners was being trained for a special mission at a town called Mir Ali in Waziristan. According to Omar Farooqui, the Taliban's chief liaison man for al Qaida, he had been training a 12-member squad in Waziristan. The report said the squad included two Norwegian Muslims, an Australian along with nine Britishers. Their mission would be to act as underground organisers and operatives for al Qaida in their home countries".

In 2006, US intelligence agencies tracked down a senior LeT operational commander, Zakir Rehman Lakvi alias Chachaji (uncle) who was training suicide bombers for Iraq. Lakvi, who led operations in Chechnya, Iraq, Bosnia and South-east Asia in the past, had sent recruits to Iraq in 2003. Lakvi also raised funds for the group along with Haji Muhammad Ashraf, the group's chief finance manager⁵. At about the same time, the Indian government estimated that 52 terrorist training camps were running in Pakistan..⁶

The presence of these terrorist training camps in the tribal areas and elsewhere in the `settled` provinces was an obvious indicator of the Pakistan State's complicity with the jihadi elements and its non-compliance of its avowal to abandon the use of terrorist machinery for strategic goals. This complicity became even clearer when some terrorist groups were allowed to resurface in April 2008. An American policy research group, Stratfor, quoting *Dawn*, said members of Kashmiri terrorist groups like HuM, al Badr and JeM were ``setting up new offices, changing their names, putting up flags and posters, holding large rallies, and delivering sermons in mosques to publicise the groups' activities''⁷. HuM relocated itself from Islamabad to the outskirts of Rawalpindi and called itself Ansar-ul Ummah. These developments, Stratfor said, could mean "ISI return to commissioning attacks in Kashmir", part of a new phase in its militant proxy saga⁸.

ISI's linkages with these groups, and the training camps, were reported in detail in the Pakistan media as far back as 2003. *Herald* (July 2003) documented how, after their training, the new jihadi recruits were "sent to the ISI which provides trekking kits, communication equipment and weapons for shipment across the LoC. Finally the team goes through the Pakistan Army posts which offer them rest and food on their way in as well as out". The ISI kit includes undergarments, a pair of camouflage uniform, a jacket, a raincoat, a cloth sheet, a pullover, two pairs of trekking shoes, a pocket radio, a canteen and a black painted wooden stick to detect mines.

The magazine also gave details of how porters, who went with the jihadis, were each paid Rs 20,000 for

"carrying about 8 kg of weapons that might include high-intensity explosives, rocket launchers, grenade throwers, assault rifles, grenades and ammunition—all dismantled and packed into knapsacks".

The contents of the investigative article matched with the assessments made by the Indian intelligence officials since 2007. ISI has been active in training 'Agents of Influence' to infiltrate Indian cities and towns, especially in Kashmir, to project the cause of jihad.⁹ A Pakistani JeM terrorist told Indian interrogators¹⁰ that ISI had upgraded its North Wing (which oversees Kashmir proxy war) and created a 'special fund' of Rs 50 crore for setting up 'Agents of Influence' and sleeper cells in Kashmir and other parts of India to raise the bogey of human rights violations and drum up the jihadi propaganda. These groups facilitated terrorist activities by providing hideouts and secret stores for weapons and ammunition besides acting as couriers for smuggling explosives and money.

A serious indictment of Pakistan's complicity came in the UN report on Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan, an analysis of suicide bombings between 2001 and 2007¹¹. Squarely blaming Pakistan for allowing recruitment and training of suicide bombers from the Pashtun belt of FATA and NWFP, the report pointed at the "training camps...sprouting in and around the heavily forested Shawat region in North Waziristan and the Pakistani Taliban recruiting, training, raising money".

The report also took issue with Pakistan's "willingness to tolerate attitudes that encourage and justify the use of suicide attacks" and cited several instances. In August 2007, for instance, the Pakistan Parliament refused to adopt a proposal condemning suicide attacks and instead called for an end to the US intervention in Afghanistan. Some of the parliamentarians blamed the Pakistani government for the suicide attacks, arguing that the counter-terrorism operations in the tribal areas and the military offensive on Lal Masjid in Islamabad were triggering such bombings. Pakistan's Religious Affairs Minister Ejaz-ul Haq (son of Zia-ul Haq) justified the suicide bombings on the ground that "if someone commits suicide bombing to protect the

honour of the Prophet Mohammad, his act is justified"¹². Haq, on another occasion while launching a book titled 'Christian Terrorism and the Muslim World' in 2004, said that anyone who did not believe in jihad was neither a Muslim nor a Pakistani and that he himself was willing to act as a human bomb in the interest of the community¹³.



LeT HQs in Muridke, Lahore.

LeT terror camps

LeT, which renamed itself as Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD)¹⁴ on the advice of ISI, has been actively recruiting its cadres and training them in several schools and camps even after the global crackdown on such groups repeatedly after the September 11 attacks. In 2003, for instance, LeT, despite the pressure on the Pakistan government to dismantle its infrastructure following the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament and the massive troop deployment on the borders in early 2002, put up hundreds of posters in urban and rural areas of Pakistan's Punjab urging young men to join jihad. The posters carried the telephone numbers of the group's scores of offices that remained active.

Jihadi publications reported that between January and June in 2003, groups like LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammad recruited more than 7,000 youngsters aged 18-25 from various parts of Pakistan. LeT and JeM, in particular, claimed to have recruited more than 3,350 and 2,235 boys, respectively. The LeT website claimed that around 800 youngsters had embraced 'martyrdom' while fighting the Indian army in 2002. These are clear indications of the State patronage the group enjoyed several years after the world recognized it as a terrorist group. Hafiz Saeed, chief of LeT, was even paid 'severance pay'

by the ISI to lie low, when the peace process with India began in 2004¹⁵.



Hafiz Saeed's residence in Lahore
Source: www.jamatudawa.org

LeT recruits were first housed either in a guesthouse at Islamabad or one at Yateemkhana Chowk in Lahore before being despatched to training camps in Waziristan. These guesthouses often housed recruits from different countries. A LeT recruit recalled, "at least eight Arab recruits were there, five from Saudi Arabia, and one each from Egypt, Yemen and Morocco"¹⁶ at these safe houses run by the group. These men were then sent to Al Aqsa training camps at Muzaffarabad in PoK for a week's crash course in handling weapons like AK-47, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and grenades. There were reports of recruits being trained at these camps to even take down helicopters¹⁷.

While Muridke, near Lahore, which was the hub of LeT's terrorist activities till 2002, (and has since been widely documented), the terrorist group moved its operations to several other camps, located in PoK, NWFP and Sindh. Of these, least known but a highly structured extensive training facility is the one called Markaz Mohammad bin Qasim, set up near Shehdadpur, not far from Hyderabad city in Sindh. The Qasim complex is one of the four training centres which LeT has been busy setting up in Sindh. Four plots have already been bought in Hyderabad division and six in other parts of Sindh for about Rs 200 million. A 20,000 square feet plot of land has been bought on Khoasi Road, Badin, for Rs 50 lakh. Another 43,000 sq ft has been acquired in Mitali for Rs 1 crore and a new *madrasa* is under construction on Hala Road, Hyderabad city. Similarly, another

plot has been bought in Tando Allan Yar to set up another complex.

But it is the Markaz Mohammad bin Qasim at Maldasi in Shahdampur, near Hyderabad, which merits a closer scrutiny. Built like a fortress, it was here that *jihadi* recruits underwent a 21-day training camp which used to be held every month (between 5th to the 26th of each month) before the crackdown in late 2002. The training course began with indoctrinating the new recruits with the importance and virtues of *jihad*. In the last week of their training, the recruits were sent out to nearby cities and towns to spread the message of Islam, promote civic sense, preach social responsibility and equality among people. Throughout this period, their performance, ability to gather and influence people and public-speaking skills were monitored and evaluated by their mentors. It was part of the LeT strategy--before a recruit qualified to be a Mujahideen, he had to prove his worth as a citizen. Those who qualified were then declared fit to apply for guerrilla training at the Lashkar's camps in PoK (Azad Kashmir) where they were taught all about weapons, from their use and firepower to their origin and manufacturing.



Al-Dawah University (Jamia Al-Dawah) Markaz Taiba, Lahore

LeT also ran similar training camps in Balochistan¹⁸. LeT provincial chief Saeed Athar, in fact, camped in Quetta for six years to oversee the training. The Quetta camp sent a group of 10 or more *jihadis* every Thursday to the group's six training camps in PoK before they were sent to Indian Kashmir. The group began exploring the possibility of expanding its network in NWFP in 2004. According *al Dawa*, a Urdu monthly published by LeT, the group ran a

15-day training workshop at a new training centre, Maksar Khalid bin Walid at Deval village, Havelian, NWFP.

Training in Suicide missions

The military training, which was mandatory, and held quite openly before 9/11, trained recruits in "infantry tactics and small arms - from handguns to assault rifles; rocket-propelled grenade launchers and shoulder-fired Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs) like the Stingers"¹⁹. Pakistani expert Arif Jamal said the *jihadis* "usually follow a basic military course of 21 days to get minimum training in Kalashnikov-handling, hand grenades, ambushing. You come back to get advanced training only when you are planning to practically wage *jihad*. Even those who have minimum guerrilla training are better fighters than the Pakistani policemen"²⁰. Some of the training, organised at Umar Kuka camp and the Abu Bashir camp in Bahawalpur (Punjab), included physical exercises, theory and practice of making bombs, guerrilla warfare and escape and interrogation methods.

LeT was the first terrorist group to introduce suicide attacks in Kashmir. Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki, the foreign affairs head of JuD in his booklet '*Tareek-e-Islam Kay Fadayee Dastay* (published in 2004 Darul Undlas, Lahore) said LeT Mujahid, Hafiz Muhammad Akmal, was the first suicide attacker²². He belonged to Jilala Pur Pir Wala, Multan. He had blown up the Bandi Pura Brigade headquarters in Indian Kashmir in 1999.

A large part of these training patterns, however, underwent significant changes after the US-led NATO forces began a military offensive against the Taliban along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The new terror syllabus included how to conceal weapons and "draw cryptic diagrams that could only be understood by their comrades in case they needed to retrieve the caches.... they mastered a method in which diagrams were drawn using colour-coding, the initials of the location's name and minute symbols for various buildings, railway stations, cemeteries and trees, as well as the quantity and type of weapons dumped." Huge weapon caches dumped in secret locations after the US bombing of Afghanistan in October 2001 were retrieved with the

help of such coded maps²².

The recruits were also trained to "use all means of communication including short messaging services on mobile phones, chatting through internet, central messaging through bulletin boards on the net and electronic messaging"²³. In these training classes, recruits were told to communicate with each other through word of mouth instead of mobiles as often as possible. If mobiles were used, then the sets were to be dismantled once the conversation was over. They also were told to make mobile conversations at crowded locations like commercial centres where "it is difficult for the security agencies to isolate them and listen in to their conversation to detect their whereabouts"²⁴.

There is evidence of LeT training its recruits in amphibious operations. Well-known American scholar, Steve Coll (author of *Ghost Wars*), wrote in the *New Yorker* on December 1, 2008²⁵, that "under the guise of 'humanitarian relief operations, Lashkar practiced amphibious operations on a lake at its vast headquarters campus, outside Lahore. Lashkar has rubber pontoon boats about 15ft long with a large outboard motor.... also useful for infiltrating militants into Indian Kashmir." The terrorists who attacked Mumbai could also have been trained there.

Less tech savvy groups like JeM propagate their agenda through videos of jihadi training and attack footages and speeches, hosted on websites and discussion forums and also through free distribution or nominally-charged publications. The Indian security agencies have seized scores of such CDs from terrorists showing "Video clips with perfect voice over... English sub titles with foot tapping music... Well edited scenes from battlefield, showing *jihadis* destroying Indian installations... battlefield footage of military vehicles being blown up with shouts of religious slogans... musical soundtrack of male choirs performing songs such as 'Caravan of Martyrs'. These scenes downloaded in CDs are new tools that LeT and JeM have been using to attract youngsters into the militancy".

The recruits are first enticed by "will letters" of the suicide bombers and video footages of attacks and sent for training to camps like the Kenza Pangaa

training camp in Wana²⁶. Not all the recruits to such camps are from *madaris*, quite a few are drawn from public schools and government colleges. These recruits are first 'prepared' for suicide missions by "a therapy of sorts, essentially spiritual exercises that includes the recitation of Holy Quran, particularly those chapters which dwell upon *jihad*."²⁷ "Two of the mandatory readings during these training sessions include *Rehbar ki Talaash* (Quest for the Saviour) and *Fidayeen Hamla* (suicide attacks). They are also given the "Guide to Mujahideen"²⁸. After their minds are primed for martyrdom, the recruits are trained to make suicide jackets and carry out attacks. Most of the recruits are in the age group of 18-25 years. They are allowed to go home after training.

The first set often goes through indoctrination and training at different levels, first at *madaris* and then the camps located in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Before the global scrutiny and ban on their activities, many of the *jihadi madaris* included military training as part of the curriculum. LeT-run *madrasas*, for instance, included physical and military training as part of the normal curriculum at its *madaris* and schools. The students regularly attend physical training classes just before sunset and these "exercises include horse riding, swimming, mountaineering, wrestling, judo, karate, boxing and the use of air guns. They are awarded 100 marks for physical exercises. There are some 18 air guns available to the students".

LeT second-in-command, Abdur Rahman Makki, wrote in his book on suicide missions, *Tareek-e-Islam Kay Fidayee Dastay*, that "it can be safely said that a Fidayee action is not suicide, it is not killing oneself. It is only a style of fighting. Now-a-days, we hear of Lashker-e-Taiba Mujahideen carrying out Fidayee actions and returning safely by the blessing of Allaah Al-Mighty. The Fidayee from Sargodha who carried out the 15 Corps Badami Bagh Srinagar Fidayee action, Mujahid Salahud Din who led the Fidayee attack at Srinagar airport and those who conducted the attack on the Delhi Red Fort, all returned safely after accomplishing their mission"²⁹.

An insight into the methodology of training suicide bombers can be gained from the 24-page *Hidayatnama*, or user's manual. "To become a martyr," the manual says, "is the dream of every

mujahid. It is a gift from God and will also send a message to the enemy that the *mujahid* would prefer to die in an interrogation cell rather than disclose any secrets which could harm other *mujahids*³⁰.

The manual, seized from a suicide bomber in Pakistan, contains instructions for training and how to deal with interrogators if arrested. The first chapter begins with a stress on the need for "collective restraint" and says "every *mujahideen* should try not to divulge his personal problems to others in the organisation. Gathering information other than that required should also be avoided. *Mujahideen* should only move according to instructions from the centre". The second chapter focusses on "personal constraint" and, advising *jehadis* to avoid keeping photographs and secret documents, warns "you should try not to tell your family members about your whereabouts and also avoid meeting them as this could land you in trouble. Our relation is with God, whatever we are doing is for God, and all other relationships are meaningless. Therefore, try to avoid making friends and keeping in close touch with your relatives".

Other chapters instruct the *jehadis* about keeping secrets, how to meet people in public places, and not to argue with the traffic police. One chapter details how to avoid using internet and mobile phones to communicate with each other. "Every friend should avoid opening any internet site that could land you in trouble or help others find out about your ideology or strategy like what happened with al Qaida. Always use a café for chatting or sending messages on the email, but avoid sending emails from your own home or a friend's house. Similarly, first write your message on Note Pad or WordPad".

An important chapter in the manual gives detailed instructions about what to do if arrested. "If any friend (*jehadis* are referred to as friends in the manual) gets into trouble he must remember one thing: police or interrogators will give you the impression that they know everything about you, your organisation and other friends but, in reality, they know nothing so don't fall into their trap. You have to remain very composed, particularly when the interrogators threaten to harm your parents or sisters. They can use all kind of methods, but you are answerable only to God, so never betray your friends

or the future plans of the organisation. Never give detailed answers and avoid unnecessary information. Try to confuse them about your friends.... Never be afraid to die, even when interrogators threaten you with death or put you in front of a firing squad. These are mere threats and then, remember, you are a *mujahid*, and whatever you are doing is for the cause of your religion"³¹.

A terrorist's notebook seized in Karachi (in 2004) is rich in details. "All explosives are poisonous and can explode if triggered by fire or pressure.... Always cut your nails properly and do not rub your eyes with your hands during the work... wear protective glasses especially if working with substances that bubble during a chemical reaction... do not rely on memory... write down all your experiments, as well as time, date and weather... in the beginning do not try to make explosives in large quantities..."³²

In the "aims and objectives" section, the handwritten notebook contained "techniques of making explosives and lethal poison from substances easily available in the market anywhere in the world". Through illustrations, the book details methods for converting a washing machine timer into a bomb timer and purifying Aspirin tablets to obtain chemicals for explosives. The book also teaches about the speed of bullets fired by different weapons and the distance at which they could kill or injure. A passage, for example, reads "the bullet of an AK-47 or Kalashnikov travels at the speed of 825 metres per second while that of a G-3 rifle travels at 800 metres per second....a bullet from an automatic pistol can travel a distance of 300 metres at the most, kill up to 50 metres, and injure up to a distance of 150 metres".

Future Threat

Saeed's group, despite the ban on JuD's assets by the US Treasury Department, was openly soliciting funds for *jihad* through its weekly, *Ghazwa*. In an advertisement, the group sought *Ushr* from farmers. Islamic customs urge farmers to keep aside a 20th of his wheat crop for charity, i.e., 'Ushr'. JuD said *Ushr* was needed to support *jihad* in Kashmir, Afghanistan and Iraq. 'Your *Ushr* will support *mujahideen*, their widows, their families, etc. It will also be used in buying weapons for *mujahideen*,' ran the ad.³³ In June 2008, Saeed was quite actively

promoting the cause of *jihad* from his mosque in Lahore. In his Friday sermon (June 20, 2008) at Jamia Masjid al-Qadsia in Lahore, Saeed said: 'Jihad is not terrorism. It is the biggest source of

establishing peace on earth. The state of the world's affairs is changing rapidly because of the sacrifices offered by the Muslims. The Muslims must remain steadfast.'

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This brief is largely drawn from author's yet-to-be published book, ``*Coming Blowback: How Pakistan is Endangering the World*``.
For more details and analysis, please visit www.orfonline.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wilson John is Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation. He can be contacted at wjohn@orfonline.org or wjohn60@gmail.com.

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Observer Research Foundation,
20, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi-110 002
Phone: +91-11-43520020 Fax: +91-11-43520003
www.orfonline.org email: orf@orfonline.org