

Congressional Testimony

Pakistan: Friend or Foe in the Fight against Terrorism?

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Chairman Poe and Chairman Salmon, Ranking Members Keating and Sherman, and other members of the Committees, thank you for inviting me here today to speak about Pakistan and its support for terrorist groups that threaten the security of the United States and its allies.

This Committee rightly asks the question of whether Pakistan is a friend or foe in the fight against terrorism. While Pakistani officials and forces have assisted the U.S. in hunting senior al Qaeda figures at times, Pakistan's overall strategy is pro-jihadist and therefore puts it in the foe category. Pakistan does battle some terrorist groups within its borders, but it only does so because these groups pose a direct threat to the state.

Pakistan myopically supports a host of terrorist groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India to further its goals in the region. Pakistan backs these groups despite the fact that they are allied with and aid the very terrorist groups that fight the Pakistani state. In addition, many of the jihadist groups sponsored by Pakistan are allied with al Qaeda.

Today I will highlight six major groups directly supported or tolerated by Pakistan's establishment: the Afghan Taliban and its subgroup, the Haqqani Network; the Mullah Nazir Group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, and Jaish-e-Mohammed. Each of these groups is used by Pakistan as an instrument of its foreign policy. These six groups are by no means the only terrorist organizations supported by Pakistan, they are merely the most prominent.

Pakistan uses these six groups and others as a counterweight against what its policy makers perceive to be Pakistan's greatest threat: India. However, the jihadist ideology has also spread throughout Pakistan as a result of policies adopted by the country's military elite. Therefore, we should not underestimate the degree to which these groups are supported for ideological reasons.¹

Pakistan, a country of 182 million people, does not possess the manpower to counter India, a nation of 1.25 billion. Pakistan and India have been in a virtual state of war since Partition in 1947. The two countries have fought four active wars in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999. Each of these wars was initiated by Pakistan, and

¹ Ghafour, Hamida. (2013, August 26). Zia ul-Haq's legacy in Pakistan 'enduring and toxic'. thestar.com. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/08/26/zia_ulhaqs_legacy_in_pakistan_enduring_and_toxic.html

ended in defeats. Pakistani strategists have determined that to counter India, it must use unconventional means, including supporting jihadist groups.

Strategic Depth

To compensate for its inability to achieve victory on conventional battlefields against India, Pakistan implemented its own version of “strategic depth” in Afghanistan.² Pakistan has supported groups in Afghanistan in order to deny India influence in its backyard, as well as to allow the nation to serve as a fallback in case of an Indian invasion.

Pakistan capitalized on the chaos in Afghanistan post-Soviet withdrawal and hunted for a group that would serve its purposes. With the rise of Mullah Omar’s Taliban faction in the early 1990s, Pakistan military and intelligence officers assigned to implement strategic depth saw the perfect partner: a powerful jihadist political movement that was gaining popularity throughout the country and was capable of sustaining military advances. Pakistan provided military and financial support to Omar’s faction, which successfully established the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban in 1996 and controlled upwards of 90 percent of the country until the US invasion in 2001.

In addition to securing a friendly government in Afghanistan, Pakistan used the country as both a training and a recruiting ground for a host of jihadist groups that fight in India-occupied Kashmir.

Good vs Bad Taliban

In order to justify its policy of support to jihadist groups, Pakistani elites have attempted to distinguish between what are referred to as “good Taliban” and “bad Taliban.” Simply stated, the so-called “good Taliban” are groups that advance Pakistan’s foreign policy goals and do not threaten the state or wage war within its borders. “Good Taliban” and other groups deemed acceptable by the Pakistani establishment include the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, the Mullah Nazir Group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, and Jaish-e-Mohammed. These groups conduct numerous heinous acts of terrorism in the region, and are directly

² Dalrymple, William. (2013, June 25). A Deadly Triangle. *The Brookings Essay*. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>

responsible for the deaths of thousands of American soldiers and civilians, and yet are supported by the Pakistani state.

“Bad Taliban” are any jihadist faction that challenges the primacy of the Pakistani state. These groups include the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan, the Turkistan Islamic Party, and the weakened Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The Pakistani military has pursued these groups in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with some success. However, when targeting these groups, the military has avoided pursuing groups such as the Haqqani Network, which provided shelter and support for the “bad Taliban.”

Pakistani officials have denied that it pursues a policy of strategic depth and differentiates between “good and bad Taliban”, or alternatively, have claimed it will no longer differentiate between the two.³ However, these claims are false. This is demonstrated in Pakistan’s continuing support for the aforementioned groups and others, as well as an unwillingness to round up leaders and key operatives of these groups.

The Afghan Taliban

Pakistan’s support for the Afghan Taliban is well documented. It helped establish the group in the 1990s and continues to support it to this day. Hamid Gul, the former head of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), Pakistan’s military intelligence agency that developed and implemented the policy of strategic depth, is known as “the father of the Taliban” for his role in directing support to the Taliban. (Gul is also known as the “Godfather of terrorism” for his support of global jihadist groups.⁴) The term “father of the Taliban” isn’t reserved only for Gul; Maulana Sami ul Haq, the director of the radical Darul Uloom Haqqania madrassa, also hold this title.⁵ His madrassa feeds thousands of new recruits to the Taliban on a regular basis.

³ Shahid, Kunwar Khulsune. (2015, January 19). Pakistan: No more ‘Good Taliban’. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/pakistan-no-more-good-taliban/>

⁴ Riedel, Bruce. (2015, August 20). Terrors godfather. *Brookings*. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/08/20-terrors-godfather-hamid-gul-riedel>

⁵ Ali, Imtiaz. (2007, May 23). The Father of the Taliban: An interview with Maulana Sami-ul-Haq. *The Jamestown Foundation*. Retrieved from http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4180&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&cHash=2feb32fe98a6250c9fa2ab6610564cec#.V36AaJMrJZg

Afghanistan's insurgency continues to be fueled by Pakistan's military and intelligence services to this day. The Taliban's Quetta Shura, or supreme decision making council, has been based in the Pakistani city of the same name as well as elsewhere. The Taliban's four regional military commands all are named after Pakistani cities (Quetta, Peshawar, Miramshah, Gerdi Jangal).⁶

The Taliban's top leadership has been based inside Pakistan, with the knowledge and approval of the military and ISI. The Taliban's first two emirs died while in Pakistan. Mullah Omar, the Taliban's founder and first emir, died in a Pakistani hospital near Quetta in April 2013. His successor, Mullah Mansour, was killed by the US in a drone strike in Baluchistan two months ago. They and other senior, middle and lower level leaders have operated inside Pakistan without consequence.

Pakistan's border areas with Afghanistan serve as the life blood of the Taliban.

While all of Pakistan is jihadist friendly, the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan are flush with Taliban recruiting centers, training camps, safe houses, and financial hubs. Taliban commanders freely admit that the ISI arms them and provides safe haven and training camps inside Pakistan.⁷

Meanwhile, radical madrassas throughout the country indoctrinate Pakistani youth into the jihadist worldview and send them off to fight for the Taliban and other allied groups.

The Haqqani Network

The Haqqani Network (HQN) is listed by the US as a Foreign Terrorist Organization for its support of al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. It is an integral part of the Taliban. Its founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani, is a member of the Quetta Shura, while his son is one of the two deputy emirs to Mullah Haibatullah, the new leader of the Taliban. Thirteen senior HQN are listed by the US as specially designated global terrorists; most, including Sirajuddin, have been directly linked to al Qaeda. Several top al Qaeda leaders were killed in US counterterrorism operations while being sheltered by HQN.

⁶ Roggio, Bill. (2010, February 23). The Afghan Taliban's top leaders. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/02/the_talibans_top_lea.php

⁷ Agencies. (2011, October 27). ISI arming and training us, claim 'Taliban commanders'. *The Express Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/283051/isi-arming-and-training-us-claim-taliban-commanders/>

Deadly HQN attacks inside Afghanistan have been directly traced back to Pakistan. In one instance in 2011, HQN handlers, including Badruddin Haqqani, directed an assault on a hotel in Kabul from Pakistan, according to Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security.⁸ A similar attack took place in Jalalabad that same year.

In Pakistan, the HQN is based in North Waziristan and has a presence in other Pakistani tribal agencies, such as Kurram. The Haqqanis run the notorious Manba Ulom madrassa in Miramshah, North Waziristan.

Despite the HQN's overt links to al Qaeda, the group remains a darling of Pakistan's military and ISI. When the Pakistani military conducts operations in the FATA, it deliberately avoids the HQN. While Pakistani leaders insist the Haqqanis are not excluded from operations, not a single senior, mid-level, or junior leader has been killed or captured during Pakistani operations in the FATA from 2008 to date.

The Mullah Nazir Group

The Mullah Nazir Group is a Pakistani Taliban faction that operates in South Waziristan. The US government listed it as a specially designated global terrorist entity in 2013 and said it "has run training camps, dispatched suicide bombers, provided safe haven for al Qaeda fighters, and conducted cross-border operations in Afghanistan against the United States and its allies."⁹ Its current leader, Bahawal Khan,¹⁰ and his deputy, sub-commander Malang,¹¹ are also listed by the US as specially designated global terrorists.

Its former leader, Mullah Nazir, who was killed in a US drone strike, identified himself as a leader of al Qaeda and said he shared the group's views on global

⁸ Joscelyn, Thomas and Roggio, Bill. (2011, September 3). Haqqani Network directed Kabul hotel assault by phone from Pakistan. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/09/haqqani_network_dire.php

⁹ US Department of State. (2013, February 26). Terrorist Designations of the Commander Nazir Group and Malang Wazir. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/02/205195.htm>

¹⁰ US Department of State. (2013, August 6). Terrorist Designation of Bahawal Khan. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/08/212730.htm>

¹¹ US Department of State. (2013, February 26). Terrorist Designations of the Commander Nazir Group and Malang Wazir. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/02/205195.htm>

jihad.¹² Multiple al Qaeda leaders have been killed while sheltering with the Mullah Nazir Group.¹³ The Pakistani military provided the Mullah Nazir Group with direct support when it clashed with rival members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.¹⁴

Despite the Mullah Nazir Group's direct ties to al Qaeda, Pakistan has viewed it as an ally in the tribal areas. Like the Haqqani Network, the Mullah Nazir Group was left untouched when the Pakistani military launched operations that targeted the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan.

Lashkar-e-Taiba

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is perhaps the most blatant example of Pakistan's support for jihadists groups. Listed by the US as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, it was founded by its leader, Hafiz Saeed, along with Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, the godfather of international jihad. Bin Laden helped LeT establish training camps in Afghanistan's provinces of Kunar and Paktia,¹⁵ where it continues to operate to this day. LeT shares al Qaeda's goal of establishing an Islamic state in South Asia and beyond.

LeT operates openly inside Pakistan and has offices throughout the country. Markaz-e-Taiba, its headquarters in Muridke near Lahore, is a sprawling complex that is used to indoctrinate future jihadists before they are sent off for military training. The provincial government of Punjab has financed Markaz-e-Taiba in the past.¹⁶

¹² Shahzad, Syed Saleem. (2011, May 5). Taliban and al-Qaeda: Friends in arms. *Asia Times*. Retrieved from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/ME05Df02.html

¹³ Roggio, Bill. (2011, May 4). 'Good' Pakistani Taliban leader Nazir affirms membership in al Qaeda. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/05/good_pakistani_taliban_leader_nazir_admits_membership_in_al_qaeda.php

¹⁴ Abbas, Hassan. (2007, May 14). South Waziristan's Maulvi Nazir: The New Face of the Taliban. *The Jamestown Foundation*. Retrieved from http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4147#.V36bd5MrJBw

¹⁵ Tellis, Ashley J. (2010, March 11). Bad Company – Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and the growing ambition of Islamist militancy in Pakistan. *Carnegie Endowment*. Retrieved from http://carnegieendowment.org/files/0311_testimony_tellis.pdf

¹⁶ Roul, Animesh. (2013 June 27). Punjab Government Financing Front Group for Lashkar-e-Taiba Terrorists. *The Jamestown Foundation*. Retrieved from http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41078&no_cache=1#.V360HpMrJBw

This terrorist infrastructure was used to conduct egregious terrorist attacks in India and Afghanistan. The most prominent attack took place in Mumbai, India, when a suicide assault team fanned out across the city and targeted multiple locations, including a theater, a train station, hotels and a Jewish center and killed 164 people. The attack lasted for three days. Indian intelligence traced phone calls back to handlers in Pakistan as the assault was ongoing. The handlers directed its fighters to execute non-Muslims, often brutally, and laughed when their instructions were carried out. After the attack, Interpol issued arrest warrants for two serving senior Pakistani army officers and a retired major.¹⁷

Despite LeT's overt ties to al Qaeda and its campaign of terror in India and Afghanistan, the Pakistani government refuses to crack down on this group. Its complexes in Muridke and throughout the country remain open, and its leaders operate unfettered. Hafiz Saeed is feted by Pakistani officials, who refuse to hold him and other LeT leaders accountable for their actions. Not a single member of LeT who has been implicated in the Mumbai attack has been prosecuted.

Harakat-ul-Mujahideen

Harakat-ul-Mujahideen is yet another Pakistan-based jihadist group that has been listed by the US as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Its emir, Fazle-ur-Rahman Khalil, is also named by the US as a specially designated global terrorist.¹⁸

In an update to the US designation of HuM in 2014, the US noted that it “operates in Pakistan, and engages in terrorist activity in Kashmir, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan” and “also operates terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan.”¹⁹ These camps are thought to be in existence to this day.

¹⁷ Nelson, Dean and Swami, Praveen. (2010, October 8). Interpol issues Pakistan army arrest warrants over Mumbai attacks. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/8050866/Interpol-issues-Pakistan-army-arrest-warrants-over-Mumbai-attacks.html>

¹⁸ Treasury Department Targets Senior Official and Support Networks of Two Pakistan-based Terrorist Groups. (2014, September 30). *U.S. Department of Treasury*. Retrieved from <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2653.aspx>

¹⁹ Roggio, Bill. (2014, August 8). Harkat-ul-Mujahideen ‘operates terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan’. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/harakat-ul-mujahidee.php>

Khalil, like LeT's Saeed, is a made man inside Pakistan. In 2011, it was reported that he lived openly near the capital of Islamabad.²⁰ Khalil is one of the jihadists Osama bin Laden consulted before issuing his infamous fatwa declaring war against the US in 1998. Khalil also signed the fatwa. Osama bin Laden's courier was reportedly tied to HuM, which may have played a role in the al Qaeda master's support network inside Pakistan.²¹ HuM has also acted like a feeder organization for al Qaeda's newest regional branch, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), which was officially established in September 2014. Asim Umar, the emir of AQIS, is a former member of HuM.²²

Khalil has “dispatched fighters to India, Afghanistan, Somalia, Chechnya and Bosnia, was a confidante of bin Laden and hung out with 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed,” the Associated Press reported in 2011.²³ “Pakistani authorities are clearly aware of Khalil's whereabouts,” AP continued. But they leave him alone, just as they tolerate other Kashmiri militant groups nurtured by the military and its intelligence agency to use against India.”

And like LeT, Pakistan has done nothing to crack down on HuM and its activities in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Jaish-e-Mohammed

The US government has listed Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) as a Foreign Terrorist organization and its leader, Massod Azhar, as a specially designated global terrorist for their ties to al Qaeda and other jihadist groups.

Like LeT and HuM, JeM is supported by Pakistan's military and ISI because it is hostile to India and wages jihad in Afghanistan. In its 2010 designation of Azhar, the US Treasury Department said that “JeM recruitment posters in Pakistan

²⁰ Terror leader lives freely near Pakistani capital. (2011, June 16). *Dawn*. Retrieved from <http://www.dawn.com/news/636965/terror-leader-lives-freely-near-pakistani-capital>

²¹ Gall, Carlotta, Zubair Shah, Pir and Schmitt, Eric. (2011, June 23). Seized Phone Offers Clues to Bin Laden's Pakistani Links. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/24/world/asia/24pakistan.html> See also: Joscelyn, Thomas. (2011, June 24). Bin Laden's courier tied to Pakistani-backed terror group. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/06/nyt_bin_ladens_couri.php

²² U.S. Department of State. (2016, June 30). State Department Terrorist Designations. Retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/259219.htm>

²³ Terror leader lives freely near Pakistani capital. (2011, June 16). *Dawn*. Retrieved from <http://www.dawn.com/news/636965/terror-leader-lives-freely-near-pakistani-capital>

contained a call from Azhar for volunteers to join the fight in Afghanistan against Western forces.”²⁴

JeM was implicated along with the Lashkar-e-Taiba as being behind the Dec. 13, 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi. Sheikh Ahmed Saeed Omar, a close associate of Azhar, was behind the kidnapping of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl.²⁵ Pearl was later beheaded.

Most recently, Indian officials implicated JeM in the January 2016 assault on an Pathankot Air Force Base in India.²⁶ Like other attacks, Indian intelligence intercepted phone call of Pakistan-based handlers directing the assault team as they attacked the base.²⁷

Despite JeM’s terrorist activities, Pakistan has not taken action against the group. India has made repeated requests for extradition of Azhar, only to be ignored.²⁸

A failure to act

Pakistan’s intransigence towards jihadist groups has not escaped the attention of the US government. In its Country Reports on Terrorism 2015, the State Department issued a scathing rebuke of Pakistan’s failure to police jihadist groups in the region.²⁹

²⁴ Roggio, Bill. (2010, November 4). *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/11/us_treasury_sanction_1.php

²⁵ Suspected Mastermind of Pearl Kidnapping Arrested. (2002, February 12). *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/020212/bn.02.html>

²⁶ Roggio, Bill. (2016, January 2). Jaish-e-Mohammed suspected in assault on Indian airbase. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/01/jaish-e-mohammed-suspected-in-assault-on-indian-airbase.php>

²⁷ Tiwary, Deeptiman. (2016, January 10). Pathankot: For 20 hours, terrorists hid in elephant grass. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pathankot-for-20-hours-terrorists-hid-in-elephant-grass/>

²⁸ Express News Service. (2016, April 9). India to send fresh request to UN against Masood Azhar. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved from <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-to-send-fresh-request-to-un-against-masood-azhar/>

²⁹ Country Reports on Terrorism 2015. (2016, June 2). *United States Department of State Publication*. Retrieved from <http://www.longwarjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-State-Department-Country-Report-on-Terrorism.pdf>

“Pakistan did not take substantial action against the Afghan Taliban or HQN, or substantially limit their ability to threaten US interests in Afghanistan,” the report noted.

“Pakistan has also not taken sufficient action against other externally-focused groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), which continued to operate, train, organize, and fundraise in Pakistan,” State continued. Additionally, State noted that groups continue to fundraise without consequence and Hafiz Saeed “was able to make frequent public appearances in support of the organization’s objectives,” without Pakistan raising a finger to stop him.³⁰

State did not explain why Pakistan refuses to crack down on terrorist groups in its midst, but it is clear that the military and government considers jihadist organizations as a strategic asset and some see the jihadists as their ideological brethren.

³⁰ Roggio, Bill. (2016, June 3). ‘Pakistan did not take substantial action against Afghan Taliban’ or Haqqani Network: State Department. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/06/pakistan-did-not-take-substantial-action-against-the-afghan-taliban-or-haqqani-network-state-department.php>