



ORF POLICY BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2009

POLICY BRIEF # 9

Concerted International Action Needed to Rein in Pakistan Terror Groups

Crackdown claim rings hollow as LeT, others remain active

By Wilson John

Notwithstanding the partial admission of the allegations made by India about the Mumbai attackers, Pakistan's complicity in allowing Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT)¹, the terrorist group behind the Mumbai attack, to retain most of its extensive infrastructure and capability to pursue its terrorist activities calls for an intense global scrutiny. LeT, with footprints in over a dozen countries and affiliation to global jihadi groups like al Qaida, poses a serious threat to the region and the world.

It is quite clear (particularly after the recent disclosures made by Pakistan about the Mumbai attackers) that this lack of action against terrorist groups like LeT which threaten the entire region is not an indication of the Pakistan's inability to rein in these 'state actors' but further evidence of its Army-dominated State policy to use terror as an instrument of foreign policy.

A recent indication of this continuing strategy was the joint meeting of leaders from the Hizb-ul Mujahideen, the Jaish-e-Mohammad and the LeT in Muzaffarabad (Pak-occupied Kashmir) on February 4, 2009 where, among other issues, they

all agreed that 'jihad' was the only way to bring about a solution to the Kashmir conflict². The next day, the group took out a "Kashmir rally" in Lahore under a new name, Tanzeem-e-Azadi-e-Kashmir.

Global threat

LeT has been one such covert instrument of Pakistan's Army for over two decades and, despite the global pressure to neutralise the group, there is no indication of this insidious relationship breaking up. In fact, there have been renewed attempts by the political and military leadership in Pakistan to make a distinction between terrorists, largely Pashtuns, targeting civilian and military targets within the country, besides the NATO forces in Afghanistan, and Punjabi terrorists targeting India. The Punjabi terrorist groups like LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) are being projected as 'freedom fighters'. On January 24, 2009, Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK, Wajid Shams-ul-Hasan, said that "Lashkar-e-Tayyeba was fighting for freedom in the occupied Kashmir". The High Commissioner was only stating the obvious, a stand which has been

Observer Research Foundation is a public policy think-tank that aims to influence formulation of policies for building a strong and prosperous India. ORF pursues these goals by providing informed and productive inputs, in-depth research and stimulating discussions. The Foundation is supported in its mission by a cross-section of India's leading public figures, academics and business leaders.

consistent with the Pakistan Army's Kashmir obsession. Two days before the Mumbai attack, the Army's Vice Chief of Staff, Mohammad Yusuf Khan, (on November 24, 2008) stated that "the international pressures notwithstanding, Kashmir shall remain an inseparable component of our national policy and consequently a vital strand of our strategy"³.

What the policy makers in Washington need to understand clearly is that LeT and JeM are Punjabi terrorist groups, based in Pakistan's Punjab, created, trained and armed to carry out the Pakistan State's proxy war in Kashmir. Neither of them are 'Kashmiri' by any stretch of imagination. What is even more important is the stated agenda of these groups, as evident from enormous literature these groups have produced over the years--to liberate all Muslim lands from non-Muslim countries. The agenda is not India specific; India is merely the starting point and Kashmir the road to global *jihad*. LeT footprints, for instance, have been found in Australia, the US, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, the UK and West Asia. The obvious inference that can be drawn from these stated positions is that even if the Kashmir issue were to be 'resolved', groups like the LeT and the JeM would still retain their utility for the Pakistan Army and its use of terror as an instrument of State policy.

A critical fact that seems to be ignored is the recruitment pattern of these terrorist groups. LeT and JeM, for instance, have a fairly well oiled recruitment mechanism in south and central Punjab (Multan, Sargodha, Jhelum and Lahore, to cite some of the areas). Though the number of recruits may have gone down in the recent times, the infrastructure (madrasas and mosques) remain in place. A survey of 10 major terrorist groups in 2004 showed that over 10,000 '*shabeed*' (or martyrs, a jihadi euphemism for terrorists killed) came from

Punjab. According to an estimate made by Pakistani scholars⁴, about 100,000 to 130,000 men from Punjab had trained at some point of time in the terrorist training camps of Afghanistan, a *jihadi* reserve force waiting to be activated.

What should be of concern is that a large number of the Pakistan Army's men and officers also come from the same area. Over 66 per cent of the officers are recruited from Punjab, a large number of them from south and central areas. Between 1996 and 2005, for instance, 262 officers came from Jhelum, 774 from Lahore, 227 from Multan, 1373 from Rawalpindi and 283 from Sialkot. These are the areas where groups like LeT have considerable presence and acceptability among the low middle and middle class sections of the society.

There is therefore a global stake in ensuring that Pakistan dismantles the huge infrastructure these groups have created over the years in different parts of the country. The evidence on the ground, however, shows that Pakistan is not doing so.

After Mumbai

Today, LeT, despite the crackdown, continues to run a vast network of schools, colleges, hospitals, ambulance services, seminaries, publications and charity organisations throughout Pakistan as freely as before the Mumbai attacks. Its headquarters at Muridke, Lahore, remained open, guarded by armed LeT men, as late as mid-January 2009⁵ until the Punjab government decided to appoint an administrator for the complex. In any case, the Muridke complex, once the hub of trans-national terrorism, has long ceased to be of any critical importance to LeT and the restrictions imposed on its functioning remain at best symbolic.

The true intentions of the Pakistan government are betrayed by its lack of action against LeT's new

What the policy makers in Washington need to understand clearly is that LeT and JeM are Punjabi terrorist groups, based in Pakistan's Punjab, created, trained and armed to carry out the Pakistan State's proxy war in Kashmir.

operational headquarters on Lake Road, Lahore, a double-storied mosque complex called Masjid Jamia Qadisiya, a name which evokes the historic location where the Arabs had defeated the Iranian King in 637 AD. Another major LeT establishment, which has remained untouched, is Markaz Mohammad bin Qasim at Maldasi in Shahdadpur, near Hyderabad (Sindh). It is built like a fort with high walls and has been one of the three LeT training camps in interior Sindh.

Lahore's Masjid Qadisiya is open and Saeed's son, Mohammad Talha Saeed and the LeT leader's close associate, Maulana Saifullah Khalid, lead the Friday prayers, by turn. There has been no let up in the venom of jihad despite Saeed's absence. On January 23, 2009, Maulana Khalid told the gathering at the mosque:

"Muslims under the leadership of Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa will conquer South Asia. Nobody can stop us fighting India. The forces trying to suppress the Jamaat-ud-Dawa and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba themselves will be crushed".

The Pakistan Army's persistence in protecting terrorist groups like LeT for their strategic utility has raised the level of threats these groups could pose not only to the region but also across the world.

Of the hundred and more leaders and members of LeT arrested in Punjab, as claimed by Rahman Malik, Pakistan's de facto Interior Minister, only 12 remained under house arrest for a period of one month. Hafiz Saeed was among them. Three days after his detention, he was allowed to leave his Johar Town home in Lahore and travel to a nearby mosque for offering prayers⁶. There is no restriction on Saeed's family members on visiting him frequently. On January 9, the government extended the detention of six, Saeed included, for another 60 days, allowing the rest to go free.

Besides Saeed, many of the detained leaders of LeT have remained relatively free. They even organised a public rally on the Mall in Lahore in January. The rally was led by Yahya Mujahid, the Central Information Secretary of LeT, one of the

dozen supposed to be under detention. Hundreds of LeT activists in 50 ambulances took out a rally in the heart of Lahore, accompanied by large contingents of Punjab Police. The rally, the government claimed, was taken out without its permission!

Another LeT leader who has remained quite active during the period is Abdullah Muntazir, the official Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) spokesman, who, on January 6, told an interviewer that the government would regret banning his group. Interestingly, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, in January, found out that it was Muntazir who had been

posing as Abdullah Ghaznavi, the LeT spokesman in Srinagar⁷. It was a ruse played by JuD to create the impression of distancing itself from terror activities in Kashmir and other parts of India. JuD had successfully convinced the world, particularly the US and its allies, that it had nothing to do with LeT which was based in Srinagar. Muntazir's identity as the LeT spokesman clearly unmasks this lie.

What further exposed the Pakistan state's complicity with terrorist groups like LeT was the fact that government officials had warned the JuD leaders of the crackdown in advance⁸. In Punjab, the police called up JuD leaders and told them to escape with documents and records before their offices were sealed⁹. So when the police teams reached the site, the offices were either shut or deserted. In Islamabad, for instance, only two JuD activists could be arrested a fortnight after the Mumbai attack although the Capital had considerable presence of the group in its main office in Masjid-e-Qaba and Khidmat-e-Khalaq Foundation in Kuri Shahar. In Rawalpindi, only one activist was arrested during the period whereas at least 39 known leaders went free.

Another telling indication of the complicity was the publication of JuD's venomous weekly,

Ghazva. The December 2008 edition of the weekly termed the Mumbai attack as 'historic' victory for the Muslim warriors. On the back page, the magazine carried an appeal from the group to donate hides. The message read¹⁰:

"Donate the hides for the war against infidels in Kashmir and to teach a lesson to the mean Hindus who have blocked Pakistan's waters...if you give Rs 25 as charity to a roadside beggar, it is not as rewarding as the charity which is used to buy the bullet that will hit the chest and forehead of a Hindu soldier who raped a Kashmiri Muslim woman".

The magazine also carried an article about 4500 women who 'donated' a son each, and 83 mothers who gave two sons each, to the terrorist group for 'the noble cause of promoting, preaching and defending Islam against infidels'.

Similarly, the Pakistani crackdown also left untouched many of the terrorist group's allied organisations, the most prominent being Idara Khidmat-e-Khalaq (IKK, translated as Humanities Services Institution), a charity organisation which became the main conduit for the group's fund collections after the October 2005 earthquake in Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK). IKK's relief and rehabilitation work after the quake firmly established LeT's presence in the area and its popularity as a charity organisation across the country. IKK also became a hub of fund collection from abroad, especially the UK and the US. The British authorities had discovered that the terrorist group had collected money from areas in London, Birmingham and Manchester inhabited by British Pakistanis¹¹.

A part of the collection, the authorities suspected, was diverted to help fund the terrorist plan to blow up as many as 10 commercial airliners taking off from Britain in 2006.

Though the US State Department designated the charity as a terrorist supporter in 2006, it has continued to operate quite freely in Pakistan and

elsewhere in the world, including the US. IKK routed funds through the Bank of New York to its bank accounts in the Lahore branch of the Bank Alfalah Ltd, an Abu Dhabi owned banking network. A fortnight after the Mumbai attack, the terrorist group's Alfalah account was still open to accept donations¹².

A Pakistan finance ministry official was quoted in a newspaper report that the group had moved 'hundreds of thousands of dollars' in the days following the terrorist attack in Mumbai. There are reports that IKK has not stopped its door-to-door collection of 2.5 per cent of each family's savings as donation for the poor. There is also no evidence of any restrictions on the group collecting funds through its sympathisers and supporters in mosques across Europe. IKK's website-- www.dawakhidmat.org-- is also running as ever despite the claims by the authorities of having shut down the websites run by the terrorist group.

Another claim of the Pakistan government's 'crackdown', which fails on a cursory scrutiny of facts, is about controlling the group's vast educational and medical network. JuD runs over 160 schools, 150 health centres, eight hospitals and 50 madrasas across Pakistan. Only 10 of the schools were placed under a government administrator¹³ after the intelligence agencies pointed out the jihadi curriculum taught in those schools. In fact, all the JuD (LeT) schools, with 35000 students on its rolls, follow the same pattern of curriculum and text-books decided by its Department of Education headed by Prof. Zafar Iqbal, a founding member of LeT and close associate of Hafiz Saeed. There is no sign of the government taking over the group's hospitals, health centres and one of the biggest ambulance services which cater to over 6000 patients a day¹⁴.

There has also been no attempt to neutralise LeT's associate organisations like Tanzeem-ul Ikhwan (TI). TI is a body of former Pak Army soldiers and officers which has been sending its recruits for its armed wing, Al-Ikhwan Jihad Force, to LeT for training and terrorist operations. The group shared

LeT's base camp in Rawalakot and Bagh, where LeT members trained the recruits. The group mostly comprised retired soldiers who conducted indoctrination courses and martial arts training for its recruits to run a 'future Islamic state.' The group's growth had been phenomenal till September 2001 when it was asked to remain out of sight.

Policy challenges and recommendations

- **Terrorist threats intensify:** Pakistan Army's persistence in protecting terrorist groups like LeT for their strategic utility has raised the level of threats these groups could pose not only to the region but also across the world. For instance, LeT's footprints have been found in different countries in the recent past and the terrorist group, aligned with global terror networks like al Qaida, have played as a training and indoctrination hub for trans-national terrorists. Having successfully managed to weather the global pressure after the Mumbai attacks, the group is likely to raise its 'charity' profile in the days to come while retaining the capability of attracting new recruits from different parts of the world to its terrorist cause. It is therefore obvious that the task of dismantling the terrorist infrastructure cannot be left to the Pakistan government alone.
- **An international coalition of security experts must be created under the aegis of the United Nation's Counter Terrorism Committee to guide, empower and monitor the action taken by the Pakistan government against terrorist groups like LeT. A coordinated action against these groups must involve denying them funds and money.**
- **Nuclear terrorism:** Terrorist groups like LeT could potentially become instruments for al Qaida to find access to nuclear materials in Pakistan. This threat comes from LeT's strong presence in Punjab province where majority of Pakistan's nuclear assets and installations are located. This fear is further strengthened by LeT's reach in the military-nuclear establishment of

Pakistan. AQ Khan, for instance, has been a regular visitor to LeT's annual congregations in Muridke, Lahore. Saeed has also been talking about nuclear weapons during his Friday prayers in Lahore. Since LeT's association with al Qaida is well documented, it is imperative to prevent such a catastrophic possibility from happening.

- **Besides neutralising LeT and its allied groups, it is critical for the global community to ensure the safety of nuclear weapons, installations and materials in Pakistan, particularly those located in areas known to be the stronghold of terrorist groups like LeT.**
- **Attacks in India:** Terrorist attacks in India are likely to increase in scope and lethality. The threats issued against India after the Mumbai attacks by LeT leaders in Lahore are a clear indication of such a possibility. The videotape of an al Qaida leader making references to a Mumbai-like attack on India only strengthen such a possibility¹⁵. Besides Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi, LeT and its terrorist allies are likely to raise the level of violence in Kashmir where the recent successful elections have been a serious setback to the *jibadi* agenda. In fact, terrorist groups like LeT and the Pakistan State, both Army and the civilian establishment, share the objective of a violent solution to Kashmir.
- **India must be prepared to prevent such attacks on its financial, technical and political hubs. This preventive action cannot be effective unless intelligence and military options are kept active to prevent the attacks. In case such attacks are carried out, India must punish the perpetrators.**
- **India must convey to Pakistan, and its supporters and friends, that any future terrorist attack would be deemed an act of war and dealt with as such.**
- **Urgent steps-political, economic and security-must be taken without delay in**

preventing a resurgence of violence in Kashmir.

• **Regional stability:** Groups like LeT and their terrorist activities make the region unstable. This volatility, as experienced during the Mumbai attacks, has the potential of challenging the military and political decision-making process. A persistent instability will seriously impinge on the social and economic development in the largely impoverished region raising, in the process, the fear

of nascent democratic processes in India's neighbourhood giving way to a radical resurgence.

• **India must, therefore, initiate and engage with its neighbouring countries to prevent terrorist groups and their supporters from undermining the collective political and economic aspirations of the people. This can be achieved through a cohesive regional counter-terrorism mechanism.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

Ends Note:

1. LeT is an ideological affiliate of al Qaida and a covert instrument of Pakistan Army, with considerable support among the poorer as well as the middle class sections of the society for its educational and charitable outreach programmes.
2. Banned Pakistan militants gather, British Broadcasting Corporation, February 4, 2009.
3. Kashmir inseparable part of policy: Pak Army, The Indian Express, November 25, 2008. <http://www.expressindia.com/fullstory.php?newsid=21883>
4. Amir Rana, A to Z of Jehadi Organisations in Pakistan, Mashal Books, Lahore.
5. Half-hearted measures to rein in JuD, The News International, January 10, 2009
6. Richard Opiel and Salman Masood, With house arrest Pakistan curbs, lightly a leader tied to Mumbai attacks, The New York Times, December 13, 2008.
7. Amir Mir, Jamaatul Daawa spokesman impersonates as Lashkar-e-Toiba spokesman, Middle-East Transparent, January 4, 2009. Accessed at http://www.mettransparent.com/<wbr></wbr>spip.php?page=imprimer_<wbr></wbr>article_avec_forum&id_article=<wbr></wbr>5134.
8. Waqar Gillani, Back with a ban, The News on Sunday, December 21, 2008. Accessed at <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/dec2008-weekly/nos-21-12-2008/spr.htm>
9. Agencies given go-ahead to raid Daawa hideouts, The News, December 13, 2008.
10. Shahzada Irfan Ahmed, Popular belief, The News on Sunday, December 21, 2008. Accessed at <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/dec2008-weekly/nos-21-12-2008/spr.htm>
11. Dexter Filkins and Souad Mekhennet, Pakistani charity under scrutiny in plot, The New York Times, August 14, 2006.
12. Mathew Rosenberg, Money eludes Pakistan's crackdown on accused terror group, The Wall Street Journal, December 18, 2008.
13. Amir Mir, Just 10 of the 600 JuD schools taken over by Pak Govt, Middle East Transparent, January 27, 2009. Accessed at http://www.mettransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=5345=en
14. Shahzada Irfan Ahmed, Popular belief, The News on Sunday, December 21, 2008. Accessed at <http://jang.com.pk/thenews/dec2008-weekly/nos-21-12-2008/spr.htm>
15. al Qaida leader threatens India in latest video, The Daily Times, February 10, 2009.



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