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THE KASHMIR CONNECTION

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CHIEF OF STAFF'S NOTE: The following paper was prepared in light of the publication in the Monday, May 16 issue of The Washington Post of an article discussing Pakistan's extensive involvement in rendering support to terrorist elements in Kashmir. That piece revealed the fact of Pakistani involvement, but not the extent. In this paper, and in future papers, the Task Force will seek to explore in-depth Pakistan's role in international terrorism and its profound ramifications for the Central Asian region in general, and India in particular.

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As the rivalry between India and Pakistan has intensified, perhaps no other region has taken on the significance of Kashmir. That province is unique among all the crisis points along the Indo-Pakistani border in that it is not just an area of strategic and economic importance, it is also the object of the ideological passions of the various states in the region. Thus, the following paper will briefly summarize the ongoing rivalry in Kashmir, focussing on Pakistan, Iran, the various Islamist movements, and the military/terrorist dimension of the conflict.

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For Islamabad, the liberation of Kashmir is a sacred mission, the only task unfulfilled since the days of Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. However, Kashmir is equally important in that it serves the domestic interests of the Pakistani Government in three crucial respects. First, tension over Kashmir creates a diversion from frustrations at home. Second, the Kashmir cause allows Islamabad to rally the support of Pakistan's Islamist parties and their loyalists in the military and the ISI, and third, it serves the regime as an important access point to the markets of Central Asia.

Similarly, Iran considers an escalation of the Jihad for the

liberation of Kashmir a key to the assertion of its own strategic prominence, particularly under the auspices of its Islamic Bloc. Indeed, Iran sees Kashmir, because it is the land of the Ayatollah Khomeyni's roots, as sacred ground and is using that fact to instill ideological zeal in the various nationals who make up Tehran's terrorist infrastructure. Not surprisingly, having taken the proverbial tiger by the tail and invested such prestige in the "Islamization" of Kashmir, Tehran now finds itself committed to fighting for it.

Additionally, beyond Iran and Pakistan, the Armed Islamic Movement, as well as several Saudi, Gulf Arab, and other supporters of Islamist causes, put Kashmir high on their list of jihads to be fought. This is not only because of Kashmir's aforementioned material and "spiritual" importance, but also because it is seen as a relatively easy target. Being geographically isolated and chocked full of weapons and terrorists cells, many Islamist groups believe that the wresting of Kashmir from India would be a great prize acquired at minimal cost, and would inspire their followers and further the cause.

Whatever the validity of such an assumption, all of the states and organizations engaged in Kashmir have large, highly trained and well equipped forces, and most have not yet been committed to the Kashmiri Jihad . Thus, there exists an environment in which ideological zeal and strategic and political considerations have coalesced. Specifically, as already noted, Pakistan needs Kashmir as a distraction from its domestic problems, various terrorist 'Afghan' groups are chomping at the bit to move, awaiting only a wink and a nod from the ISI, and Iran and various Arab states stand willing to finance the effort.

Thus, it is safe to assume that the fighting in Kashmir will escalate significantly, with numerous additional highly trained and well equipped mujahideen, many of them professional special forces and terrorists, joining the fight and expanding the struggle into the rest of India. Indeed, there are already in place extensive stockpiles of weapons as well as large sums of money to sustain and support such a conflict.

Consequently, apparently reassured about the steadfastness of its Islamist support, Islamabad has acknowledged openly the futility of its negotiations with India over the Kashmir issue. At the same time, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has begun to accede to demands from her military leaders for further increases in the Pakistani defense budget.

THE TERRORIST DIMENSION

In fact, the rising militancy of Pakistani officials is far from empty rhetoric, for Islamabad has used the increasing tension in Kashmir as a pretext for expanding its terrorist training and

support system for operations in Central Asia and elsewhere in the world.

To that end, the ISI has established the Markaz-Dawar, a center for world wide Islamist activities. Mulavi Zaki, the center's spiritual leader, has told the trainees that their destiny is to fight and liberate "the land of Allah from infidels" wherever they might be. The commanders and instructors at Markaz-Dawar are AIM members, primarily Ikhwan from Algeria, Sudan and Egypt, and most of them have more than a decade of combat experience in Afghanistan.

In early 1992, some of these 'Afghans' were transferred to Azzad Kashmir where new camps were being built for them by the Pakistani Army. By early 1993, there were over 1,000 'Afghan' mujahideen in the Markaz-Dawar alone. Following the completion of their advanced training, the 'Afghans' were sent to Kashmir, Algeria and Egypt. Furthermore, Islamabad's claims to the contrary notwithstanding, the main offices of the Islamist terrorist organizations have remained functioning in Peshawar.

In addition to the transfers noted above, a series of "raids" by police since October 1992 resulted in the shifting of some 200 terrorist operatives, including some wanted by Western police officials, to facilities near Jalalabad, just across the Afghan border. Indeed, in the fall of 1993, an Arab 'Afghan' with first hand knowledge of the situation confirmed that Pakistan had "pushed them out of the door only to open a window for them to return and they come and go as they wish in Peshawar."

In the meantime, in the summer of 1993, the ISI had in the Markaz-Dawar another force of some 200 Afghans -- mainly Jallalluddin Haqqani's people from the Khowst area -- operating under its direct command and earmarked for special operations in Kashmir. According to Muhammad Fazal al-Hajj, a PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] terrorist captured in southern Kashmir in the summer of 1993, additional 'Afghans' and Afghan nationals were being prepared by the ISI for a forthcoming escalation in Kashmir. At least 400 'Afghans' and Afghan nationals were known to have been organized in one camp, where they were trained by the ISI to augment and provide a leadership core for the Kashmiri Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. There was also a corresponding expansion of the preparation of Islamist terrorists for operations in forward bases in Kashmir, with some 600 terrorists, about half of them veteran 'Afghans' and Afghans, already at the final phase of their training.

Indeed, many Arab volunteers continue to arrive in Peshawar almost every day. The preferred port of entry is the Karachi airport. There, a special department run by a Major Amir -- an ISI Major with Afghan experience "turned" director of Immigration at the airport -- oversees the volunteer's "proper" entry into

Pakistan and quick dispatch to Peshawar. The main Ikhwan facility is the Maktaba-i-Khidmat [Services Offices], which was originally established by the late Shaykh Abd Allah Azzam and is now run by his successor, Shaykh Muhammad Yussaf Abbas. The Maktaba-i-Khidmat still processes volunteers for AIM, but at present many of the volunteers are dispatched to the numerous training camps run by Arab 'Afghan' militants inside Afghanistan. The ISI continues to provide the weapons and expertise necessary to support this operation.

Meanwhile, the Government of Afghanistan has also increased its support for terrorist training and preparation. This growing direct involvement is important because the main operating bases for the ISI's activities in Central Asia are in northern Afghanistan. The origins of this arrangement run back to the aftermath of the fall of Kabul. At that time, many Arab 'Afghans' returned to Peshawar where they were organized by the Pakistani government to support various Islamist causes in concert with Iran and Sudan. Many of these fighters later returned to Afghanistan as quality forces or to serve in personal guard details.

Subsequently, in early December 1993, during a state visit to Pakistan, the Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Maulana Arsalan Rahmani, elaborated on Kabul's perception of the Islamist struggles worldwide, and especially in south and central Asia. He hailed Afghanistan's active support for Islamist armed causes and stressed that "we don't consider this support as intervention in any country's internal affairs." Maulana Arsalan Rahmani also admitted that Afghanistan was providing military assistance to various insurgencies because,

"we cannot remain aloof from what is happening to the Muslims in occupied Kashmir, Tajikistan, Bosnia, Somalia, Burma, Palestine and elsewhere. ... We are not terrorists but Mujahideen fighting for restoring peace and preserving honor."

Rahmani acknowledged that Afghanistan has also played a major role in a recent development among the Islamist organizations fighting in Indian Kashmir, namely, the merger of the Harakat ul-Jihad Islami and Harakat ul-Mujahideen into the potent Harakat ul-Ansar group. This support for the unification of the two movements, according to Rahmani, was but part of the active support given by Afghanistan to the Islamist fighters in Kashmir, Tajikistan, and Bosnia. "There are about 8,000 members of Harakat ul-Ansar who are supporting the Kashmiri struggle against Indian occupation," Rahmani stated.

OF MEN AND ARMS

The ISI also provides these and other terrorists with new

weapons. For example, in the summer of 1993, the Kashmiri mujahideen were provided with powerful long range missiles -- called "chemical missiles" by the Sikhs who had learned about them while in training in Pakistan. At that time, the Kashmiri and ISI crews were being trained in the use of these missiles in Pakistani Kashmir. In fact, these are Sagr missiles which were developed in the 1980s with help from the United States for use by the mujahideen in Afghanistan.

Subsequently, there has been a significant expansion in the smuggling of quality weapons from Pakistan into Kashmir and as of late 1993 there has been a corresponding change in the tactics used by terrorists, including the use of hit and run strikes by highly trained and well equipped detachments. Among the new weapons now used in Kashmir are 107mm rockets, 60mm mortars, 40mm automatic grenade launchers (Soviet and Chinese models), a modification of the 57mm helicopter rocket pods with solar-powered timing devices for the delayed firing of rockets, and a LAW-type tube-launched ATMs (Soviet and Chinese models).

In addition, the Kashmiri terrorists have also begun using sophisticated communications systems including small radios (systems with frequency hopping, selective broadcast, digital burst communications, etc.) and collapsible solar-panels for reload systems, as well as frequency scanning devices for detecting and homing in on military-type broadcasts. All the communication systems are of NATO/US origin, with some components made in Japan. All of these systems have been used by the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, having been provided via the ISI.

On top of all of this, there has been a large increase in the quantities of small arms provided to the Kashmiris, including Type 56 ARs (PRC AK-47s), several types of machineguns, long-range sniper rifles, pistols and RPGs, all of Soviet and Chinese manufacture. Also, some of the Kashmiri terrorists have begun receiving highly specialized weapons for assassination projects.

Given this obviously high level of sophistication, it would seem safe to assume that the situation in Kashmir will become increasingly ominous. As Pakistan and India eye each other with rising suspicion, and as other powers come into play, the danger of outright war becomes ever more real. In future reports, the Task Force will examine the full extent of this danger and will explain its ramifications.

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