

Cover-up or Complicity of the Bush Administration?

The Role of Pakistan's Military Intelligence (ISI) in the September 11 Attacks

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Summary

Pakistan's chief spy Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad "was in the US when the attacks occurred." He arrived in the US on the 4th of September, a full week before the attacks. He had meetings at the State Department "after" the attacks on the WTC. But he also had "a regular visit of consultations" with his US counterparts at the CIA and the Pentagon during the week prior to September 11.

What was the nature of these routine "pre-September 11 consultations"? Were they in any way related to the subsequent "post-September 11 consultations" pertaining to Pakistan's decision to cooperate with Washington. Was the planning of war being discussed between Pakistani and US officials?

On the 9th of September while General Ahmad was in the US, the leader of the Northern Alliance Commander Ahmad Shah Masood was assassinated. The Northern Alliance had informed the Bush Administration that the ISI was allegedly implicated in the assassination.

The Bush Administration consciously took the decision in "the post September 11 consultations" with Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad to directly "cooperate" with Pakistan's military intelligence (ISI) despite its links to Osama bin Laden and the Taliban and its alleged role in the assassination of Commander Masood, which coincidentally occurred two days before the terrorist attacks.

Meanwhile, senior Pentagon and State Department officials had been rushed to Islamabad to put the finishing touches on America's war plans. And on the Sunday prior to the onslaught of the bombing of major cities in Afghanistan (October 7th), Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad was sacked from his position as head of the ISI in what was described as a routine "reshuffling."

In the days following General Ahmad's dismissal, a report published in the *Times of India*, revealed the links between Pakistan's Chief spy Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad and the presumed "ring leader" of the WTC attacks Mohamed Atta. The *Times of India* article was based on an official intelligence report of the Delhi government that had been transmitted through official channels to Washington. Quoting an Indian government source *Agence France Press (AFP)* confirms in this regard that: "The evidence we [the Government of India] have supplied to the US is of a much wider range and depth than just one piece of paper linking a rogue general to some misplaced act of terrorism."

The revelation of the *Times of India* article has several implications. The Indian intelligence report not only points to the links between ISI Chief General Ahmad and terrorist ringleader Mohamed Atta, it also indicates that other ISI officials might have had contacts with the terrorists. Moreover, it suggests that the September 11 attacks were not an act of "individual terrorism" organised by a separate Al Qaeda cell, but rather they were part of coordinated military-intelligence operation, emanating from Pakistan's ISI.

The *Times of India* report also sheds light on the nature of General Ahmad's "business activities" in the US during the week prior to September 11, raising the distinct possibility of ISI contacts with Mohamed Atta in the US "prior" to the attacks on the WTC, precisely at the time when General Mahmoud and his delegation were on a so-called "regular visit of consultations" with US officials.

In assessing the alleged links between the terrorists and the ISI, it should be understood that Lt. General Ahmad as head of the ISI was a "US approved appointee". As head of the ISI since 1999, he was in liaison with his US counterparts in the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the Pentagon. Also bear in mind that Pakistan's ISI remained throughout the entire post Cold War era until the present, the launch-pad for CIA covert operations in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans.

The existence of an "ISI-Osama-Taliban axis" was a matter of public record. The links between the ISI and agencies of the US government including the CIA are also a matter of public record. The Bush Administration was fully cognizant of Lt. General Ahmad's role. In

other words, rather than waging a campaign against international terrorism, the evidence would suggest that it is indirectly abetting international terrorism, using the Pakistani ISI as a "go-between".

The Bush Administration's links with Pakistan's ISI -- including its "consultations" with General Ahmad in the week prior to September 11 -- raise the issue of "complicity". While Ahmad was talking to US officials at the CIA and the Pentagon, ISI officials were allegedly also in contact with the September 11 terrorists.

In other words, according to the Indian government intelligence report, the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks had links to Pakistan's ISI, which in turn has links to agencies of the US government. What this suggests is that key individuals within the US military-intelligence establishment might have known about the ISI contacts with the September 11 terrorist "ring-leader" Mohamed Atta and failed to act.

Whether this amounts to the complicity of the Bush Administration remains to be firmly established. The least one can expect at this stage is an inquiry. What is crystal clear, however, is that this war is not a "campaign against international terrorism". It is a war of conquest with devastating consequences for the future of humanity. And the American people have been consciously and deliberately misled by their government. Whether this amounts to the complicity of the Bush Administration remains to be firmly established.

Ultimately the truth must prevail. The falsehoods behind America's war against the people of Afghanistan must be unveiled.

Complete Text

Two days after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, a delegation led by the head of Pakistan's military intelligence agency (ISI) Lt. Gen. Mahmoud Ahmed, was in Washington for high level talks at the State Department.[1]

Most US media conveyed the impression that Islamabad had put together a delegation at Washington's behest, and that the invitation to the meeting had been transmitted to the Pakistan government "after" the tragic events of September 11.

But this is not what happened!

Pakistan's chief spy Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad "was in the US when the attacks occurred." [2] According to the *New York Times*, "he happened to be here on a regular visit of consultations." [3]

Not a word was mentioned regarding the nature of his "business" in the US in the week prior to the terrorist attacks. According to *Newsweek*, he was "on a visit to Washington at the time of the attack, and, like most other visitors, is still stuck there," unable to return home because of the freeze on international airline travel. [4]

General Ahmad had in fact arrived in the US on the 4th of September, a full week before the attacks.[5] Bear in mind that the purpose of his meeting at the State Department on the 13th was only made public "after" the September 11 terrorist attacks, when the Bush Administration took the decision to formally seek the "cooperation" of Pakistan in its "campaign against international terrorism."

The press reports confirm that Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad had two meetings with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, respectively on the 12th and 13th.[6] After September 11, he also met Senator Joseph Biden, chairman of the powerful Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

Confirmed by several press reports, however, he also had "a regular visit of consultations" with US officials during the week prior to September 11, -- i.e. meetings with his US counterparts at the CIA and the Pentagon.[7]

What was the nature of these routine "consultations"? Were they in any way related to the subsequent "post-September 11 consultations" pertaining to Pakistan's decision to cooperate with Washington, held behind closed doors at the State Department on September 12 and 13? Was the planning of war being discussed between Pakistani and US officials?

"The ISI-Osama-Taliban Axis"

On the 9th of September, the leader of the Northern Alliance Commander Ahmad Shah Masood was assassinated. The Northern Alliance had informed the Bush Administration that the ISI was allegedly implicated in the assassination: The Northern Alliance had confirmed in an official statement that:

a 'Pakistani ISI-Osama-Taliban axis' [was responsible] of plotting the assassination by two Arab suicide bombers.... 'We believe that this is a triangle between Osama bin Laden, ISI, which is the intelligence section of the Pakistani army, and the Taliban,'[8]

More generally, the complicity of the ISI in the "ISI-Osama-Taliban axis" was a matter of public record, confirmed by congressional transcripts and numerous intelligence reports.[9]

The Bush Administration Cooperates with Pakistan's Military-Intelligence

The Bush Administration consciously took the decision in "the post September 11 consultations" at the State Department to directly "cooperate" with Pakistan's military intelligence (ISI) despite its links to Osama bin Laden and the Taliban and its alleged role in the assassination of Commander Masood, which coincidentally occurred two days before the terrorist attacks.

Meanwhile, the Western media -- in the face of mounting evidence -- had remained silent on the insidious role of Pakistan's Military Intelligence agency (ISI). The assassination of Masood was mentioned, but its political significance in relation to September 11 and the

subsequent decision to go to war against Afghanistan, was barely touched upon.

Without discussion or debate, Pakistan had been heralded as a "friend" and ally of America.

In an utterly twisted logic, the US media had concluded in chorus that:

US officials had sought cooperation from Pakistan [precisely] because it is the original backer of the Taliban, the hard-line Islamic leadership of Afghanistan accused by Washington of harboring bin Laden.[10]

From The Horse's Mouth

Nobody seemed to have noticed the obtrusive and unsubtle falsehoods behind the Administration's "campaign against international terrorism", with perhaps the exception of an inquisitive journalist who questioned Colin Powell at the outset of his State department briefing on Thursday September 13th:

[Does] the U.S. [see] Pakistan as an ally or, as the "Patterns of Global Terrorism" pointed out, a place where terrorist groups get training. Or is it a mixture?"[11]

"Patterns of Global Terrorism" referred by the journalist (at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/>) is a publication of the US State Department which confirms that the government of President Pervez Musharraf has links to international terrorism:

The United States remains concerned about reports of continued Pakistani support for the Taliban's military operations in Afghanistan. Credible reporting indicates that Pakistan is providing the Taliban with materiel, fuel, funding, technical assistance, and military advisers. Pakistan has not prevented large numbers of Pakistani nationals from moving into Afghanistan to fight for the Taliban. Islamabad also failed to take effective steps to curb the activities of certain madrassas, or religious schools, that serve as recruiting grounds for terrorism.[12]

Behind Closed Doors at the State Department

The Bush Administration had sought the "cooperation" of those, who were directly supporting and abetting the terrorists. Absurd, but at the same time consistent with Washington's broader strategic and economic objectives in Central Asia.

The meeting behind closed doors at the State Department on September 13 between Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad was shrouded in secrecy. Remember President Bush was not even involved in these crucial negotiations:

"Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage handed over [to ISI chief Mahmoud Ahmad] a list of specific steps Washington wanted Pakistan to take". [13] "After a telephone conversation between [Secretary of State Colin] Powell and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Pakistan had promised to cooperate." [14] President George W. Bush later confirmed (also on the morning of

September 13th) that the Pakistan government had accepted "to cooperate and to participate as we hunt down those people who committed this unbelievable, despicable act on America".[15]

Former Iran-Contra Officials Call the Shots

Bear in mind that Richard Armitage had served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security under the Reagan Administration. "He worked closely with Oliver North and was involved in the Iran-contra arms smuggling scandal."[16]

In many regards, the pattern of Bush Junior appointments replicate the Iran-Contra team of the Reagan and Bush senior administrations:

The same kind of appointments are being made in foreign policy. Bush has been choosing people from the most dubious part of the Republican stable of the 1980s, those engaged in the Iran-Contra affair... Armitage served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Reagan years, but a 1989 appointment in the elder Bush administration was withdrawn before hearings because of controversy over Iran-Contra and other scandals.[17]

Armitage was one of the main architects behind US covert support to the Mujahedin and the "militant Islamic base, both during the Afghan-Soviet war as well as in its aftermath. US covert support was financed by the Golden Crescent drug trade.

This pattern has not been fundamentally altered. It still constitutes an integral part of US foreign policy by the Bush Administration and the basis of CIA covert operations.

Pakistan's Chief Spy on Mission to Afghanistan

On September 13th, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf confirmed that he would send chief spy Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad to meet the Taliban and negotiate the extradition of Osama bin Laden. This decision was at Washington's behest, most probably agreed upon during the meeting between Dick Armitage and General Mahmoud at the State Department.

Pakistan's chief spy is rapidly whisked back from Washington to Islamabad:

At American urging, Ahmed traveled ... to Kandahar, Afghanistan. There he delivered the bluntest of demands. Turn over bin Laden without conditions, he told Taliban leader Mohammad Omar, or face certain war with the United States and its allies.[18]

Mahmoud's meetings on two separate missions with the Taliban were reported as a "failure." Yet this "failure" to extradite Osama was part of Washington's design, providing a pretext for a military intervention which was already in the pipeline. If Osama had been extradited, the main justification for waging a war "against international terrorism" would no longer hold. And the evidence suggests that this war had been planned well in advance of September 11, in response to broad strategic and economic objectives.

Meanwhile, senior Pentagon and State Department officials had been rushed to Islamabad to put the finishing touches on America's war plans. And on Sunday prior to the onslaught of the bombing of major cities in Afghanistan by the US Air Force (October 7th), Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad was sacked from his position as head of the ISI in what was described as a routine "reshuffling."

"The Missing Link"

In the days following Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad's dismissal, a report published in the *Times of India*, which went virtually unnoticed by the Western media, revealed the links between Pakistan's Chief spy Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad and the presumed "ring leader" of the WTC attacks Mohamed Atta. In many regards, the *Times of India* report constitutes "the missing link" to an understanding of who was behind the terrorist attacks of September 11:

While the Pakistani Inter Services Public Relations claimed that former ISI director-general Lt-Gen Mahmoud Ahmad sought retirement after being superseded on Monday [8 October], the day the US started bombing Afghanistan], the truth is more shocking.

Top sources confirmed here on Tuesday [October 9], that the general lost his job because of the "evidence" India produced to show his links to one of the suicide bombers that wrecked the World Trade Centre. The US authorities sought his removal after confirming the fact that \$100,000 were wired to WTC hijacker Mohammed Atta from Pakistan by Ahmad Umar Sheikh at the instance of Gen. Mahmoud.

Senior government sources have confirmed that India contributed significantly to establishing the link between the money transfer and the role played by the dismissed ISI chief. While they did not provide details, they said that Indian inputs, including Sheikh's mobile phone number, helped the FBI in tracing and establishing the link.

A direct link between the ISI and the WTC attack could have enormous repercussions. The US cannot but suspect whether or not there were other senior Pakistani Army commanders who were in the know of things. Evidence of a larger conspiracy could shake US confidence in Pakistan's ability to participate in the anti-terrorism coalition.[19]

According to FBI files, Mohamed Atta was "the lead hijacker of the first jet airliner to slam into the World Trade Center and, apparently, the lead conspirator".[20]

The Times of India article was based on an official intelligence report of the Delhi government that had been transmitted through official channels to Washington. *Agence France Press (AFP)* confirms in this regard that:

A highly-placed government source told *AFP* that the "damning link" between the General and the transfer of funds to Atta was part of evidence which India has officially sent to the US. 'The evidence we have supplied to the US is of a much wider range and depth than just one piece of paper linking a rogue general to some misplaced act of terrorism,' the source said.[21]

Pakistan's Military-Intelligence Agency behind September 11?

The revelation of the *Times of India* article has several implications. The report not only points to the links between ISI Chief General Ahmad and terrorist ringleader Mohamed Atta, it also indicates that other ISI officials might have had contacts with the terrorists. Moreover, it suggests that the September 11 attacks were not an act of "individual terrorism" organised by a separate Al Qaeda cell, but rather they were part of coordinated military-intelligence operation, emanating from Pakistan's ISI.

The *Times of India* report also sheds light on the nature of General Ahmad's "business activities" in the US during the week prior to September 11, raising the distinct possibility of ISI contacts with Mohamed Atta in the US in the week "prior" to the attacks on the WTC, precisely at the time when General Mahmoud and his delegation were on a so-called "regular visit of consultations" with US officials. Remember, Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad arrived in the US on the 4th of September.

US Approved Appointee

In assessing the alleged links between the terrorists and the ISI, it should be understood that Lt. General Mahmoud Ahmad as head of the ISI was a "US approved appointee". As head of the ISI since 1999, he was in liaison with his US counterparts in the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the Pentagon. Also bear in mind that Pakistan's ISI remained throughout the entire post Cold War era until the present, the launch pad for CIA covert operations in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans.[22]

In other words, General Mahmoud Ahmad as head of the ISI was serving US foreign policy interests. His dismissal on the orders of Washington was not the result of a fundamental political disagreement. Without US support channeled through the Pakistani ISI, the Taliban would not have been able to form a government in 1996. *Jane's Defense Weekly* confirms in this regard that "half of Taliban manpower and equipment originate[d] in Pakistan under the ISI," which in turn was supported by the US.[23] Moreover, the assassination of the leader of the Northern Alliance General Ahmad Shah Masood -- in which the ISI is alleged to have been implicated -- was not in contradiction with US foreign policy objectives. Since the late 1980s, the US had consistently sought to side-track and weaken Masood who was perceived as a nationalist reformer, by providing support to both to the Taliban and the Hezb-I-Islami group led by Gulbuddin Hektmayar against Masood.

Corroborated by Congressional Transcripts

Corroborated by the House of Representatives International Relations Committee, US support funneled through the ISI to the Taliban and Osama bin Laden has been a consistent policy of the US Administration since the end of the Cold War:

...[T]he United States has been part and parcel to supporting the Taliban all along, and still is let me add... You have a military government [of President Musharraf] in Pakistan now that is arming the Taliban to the teeth....Let me note; that [US] aid has always gone to Taliban areas... We have been supporting the Taliban, because all our aid goes to the Taliban areas. And when people from the outside try to put aid into areas not controlled by the Taliban, they are thwarted by our own State Department... At that same moment, Pakistan initiated a major resupply effort, which eventually saw the defeat, and caused the defeat, of almost all of the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan.[24]

Cover-up and Complicity?

The existence of an "ISI-Osama-Taliban axis" is a matter of public record. The links between the ISI and agencies of the US government including the CIA are also a matter of public record.

Pakistan's ISI has been used by successive US administrations as "a go-between." Pakistan's military-intelligence apparatus, constitutes the core institutional support to both Osama's Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Without this institutional support, there would be no Taliban government in Kabul. In turn, without the unbending support of the US government, there would be no powerful military-intelligence apparatus in Pakistan.

Senior officials in the State Department were fully cognizant of General Mahmoud Ahmad's role. In the wake of September 11, the Bush Administration consciously sought the "cooperation" of the ISI which had been supporting and abetting Osama bin Laden and the Taliban.

In other words, the Bush Administration's relations with Pakistan's ISI -- including its "consultations" with General Mahmoud Ahmad in the week prior to September 11 -- raise the issue of "cover-up" as well as "complicity". While Ahmad was talking to US officials at the CIA and the Pentagon, the ISI allegedly had contacts with the September 11 terrorists.

According to the Indian government intelligence report (referred to in the *Times of India*), the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks had links to Pakistan's ISI, which in turn has links to agencies of the US government. What this suggests is that key individuals within the US military-intelligence establishment might have known about ISI contacts with the September 11 terrorist "ring-leader" Mohamed Atta and failed to act.

Whether this amounts to the complicity of the Bush Administration remains to be firmly established. The least one can expect at this stage is an inquiry. What is crystal clear, however, is that this war is not a "campaign against international terrorism". It is a war of conquest with devastating consequences for the future of humanity. And the American people have been consciously and deliberately misled by their government.

Ultimately the truth must prevail. The falsehoods behind America's war against the people of Afghanistan must be unveiled.

Notes

1. *The Guardian*, 15 September 2001.
2. *Reuters*, 13 September 2001.
3. *The New York Times*, 13 September 2001.
4. *Newsweek*, 14 September 2001.
5. *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 14 September 2001,
6. *The New York Times*, September 13th 2001 confirms the meeting on the 12th of September
7. *The New York Times*, 13 September 2001.
8. The Northern Alliance's statement was released on 14 September 2001, quoted in *Reuters* 15 September 2001.
9. For further details see Michel Chossudovsky, "Osamagate", Centre for Research on Globalisation (CRG), at globalresearch.ca, October 2001.
10. *Reuters*, 13 September 2001.
11. Journalist's question to Secretary of State Colin Powell, State Department Briefing, 13 September 2001. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/4910.htm>
12. US State Department, "Patterns of Global Terrorism", State Department, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/>, Washington 2000.
13. *Reuters*, 13 September 2001
14. *Ibid.*
15. Presidential Papers, Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and New York Governor George Pataki and an Exchange With Reporters, 13 September 2001.
16. *The Guardian*, 15 September 2001.
[See Also: "Secret Agent Man, Iran-Contra operative Richard Armitage is now Colin Powell's No. 2", by Jim Naureckas, *In These Times*, 5 Mar 2001, "Players on a rigged grand chessboard: Bidas, Unocal and the Afghanistan pipeline," by Larry Chin, *Online Journal*, 6 Mar 2002 --ratitor]
17. *United Press International*, Face-off: Bush's foreign policy warriors, by Peter Roff and James Chapin, *UPI*, 18 July 2001.
18. *The Washington Post*, 23 September 2001.
19. *The Times of India*, Delhi, 9 October 2001, at http://www.timesofindia.com/articleshow.asp?catkey=-2128936835&art_id=1454238160&sType=1
local copy of above article
20. *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 7, No 7, October 2001.
21. *AFP*, 10 October 2001
22. For further details see Michel Chossudovsky, Who is Osama bin Laden, Centre for Research on Globalisation, 12 September 2001

23. Quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 September 1998.
 24. US House of Representatives: Statement by Rep. Dana Rohrbacher, Hearing of The House International Relations Committee on "Global Terrorism And South Asia", Washington, July 12, 2000.
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