

National security vs scoops

by Paul Wolf, 23 February 2003

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Introduction

Beware the leaked intelligence report -- seldom are they really "scoops". They are not, ordinarily, stolen from secret vaults by individuals who just can't live with themselves anymore, knowing that the public is unaware of a great secret, such as this story about Pakistan providing nuclear weapons to North Korea and other unspecified countries.

This is not the Pentagon Papers, this is how intelligence agencies work with the press. The reporters write about the material they are given. That is not the way our government or press are supposed to work. In the case of your typical *Washington Post* article, no bones are made about what's going on, but I become aggravated when this kind of activity is packaged as "investigative journalism." The problem is that intelligence agencies do not report news, and are often on the front lines of the war over men's minds.

I must say I'm an admirer of Hersh's work on the first Gulf war, particularly his story about General McCaffrey's great armor battle, in which hundreds of retreating Iraqi vehicles were destroyed and many killed. Technically, the slaughter occurred after the war had ended and a cease fire was in effect.

In this article, Hersh relies on CIA reports and anonymous sources. But has he done any real investigative reporting? Or is he just selling a story handed to him by the CIA?

My rule of thumb is to judge whether the person leaking the report is putting him or herself at personal risk in doing so. After all, this is a very serious crime. What would you think about a person working at the CIA who leaks a report about nuclear weapons proliferation to Seymour Hersh?

It's impossible to even contemplate this, owing to the "cult of secrecy" atmosphere at the CIA, compounded by the state of emergency we're supposedly in. If this happened on a regular basis -- and some reporters make a living off a steady stream of leaked documents -- then a lot of people would be going to jail for espionage, on the CIA side anyway. But that is not happening.

Hersh's own source explains the nature of the business:

"It was held very tightly," an official told me. "Compartmentalization is used to protect sensitive sources who can get killed if their information is made known, but it's also used for controlling sensitive information for political reasons."

Paul

National security vs scoops

By Anjum Niaz, *AOPP*, 2003-02-01

<http://www.paknews.com/articles.php?id=1&date1=2003-02-01>

Moral certitude aside, should a hard-nosed writer embrace as gospel truth what the American mainstream media oozes out about his country and announce it to much hoopla back home without commenting and analyzing it or should he challenge its contents to present a fair and balanced view? That there are always three sides to a story: your story, their story and the real story goes without saying.

Why then call the leaked exposes "investigative" that are revved up in screaming headlines anchored to the national security interests of, say, Pakistan, India or even America? Lately, The *Los Angeles Times* imploded with facts alleging Pakistan helping North Korea with its nuke programme and accusing Dr A.Q. Khan as the facilitator.

When the story broke, US-based Indian and Pakistani reporters routinely reported the contents back home while some South Asian Internet and E-mail discussion forums reflexively designated the Pakistani nuclear scientist as the punching bag. As was expected, the Indians salivated at such a coop' dropping right in the middle of their laps giving grist to the Indian lobby on Capitol Hill to demand sanctions against Pakistan. Oddly, a New-York based Pakistani forum hosted by well-heeled but self-righteous liberals repeated the Indian encore by pouring yet more scorn on President Musharraf.

Pummelling the army properly, the forum moderator wryly commented: "I have no idea why "patriotism" and "nuclearized Pakistan" go together. In any case the whole concept of "patriotism", which conservatives all over the world appear to hijack as their cause celebre (and we know whose last refuge that is) has an easy answer: The army remains the first cause of wrecking disaster on Pakistan."

However, another New York-based think tank that executes strategies for engaging the American media and the US government in a more informed and educated view of Pakistan,

known as the Association of Pakistani Professionals (AOPP) riposted to drown out the sanctimonious chatter eddying among Indians and Pakistanis, who wanted Pakistan national security compromised.

India was next on *The Los Angeles Times* hit list. The world woke up recently to the news of an Indian firm having sold chemicals to Iraq over the last four years to produce or deliver weapons of mass destruction. New Delhi abysmal failure in its export controls stood roundly exposed. But shielding India, the Bush administration go-soft approach was clearly evident despite, the State Department imposing sanctions against the company founder, Hans Raj Shiv, making him the first and only person cited under the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of 1992. The soporific Pakistanis failed to seize this damning evidence, while the American media let it go, much to the relief of the Indians.

Is this not aiding and abetting terrorism at its starkest? Yet not a squeal from the self-appointed custodians of Pakistan here who are too busy flagellating their own army and its chief to take note of what mischief India has up its sleeve against Islamabad in the months to come.

Meanwhile, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who writes on the failure of US intelligence and American policy toward Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan, has handed Indians a composite of newly invented body of evidence incriminating A.Q. Khan and Islamabad. In *The New Yorker* issue of January 27, Hersh quotes CIA sources on Pakistan "helping North Korea build the bomb."

Interestingly, a heft of Hersh conclusions spring from his two Pakistani sources: an unnamed "former senior Pakistani official" and "a Web-based Pakistani-exile newspaper opposed to the Musharraf government". Sums up Hersh, "Right now Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world" and "if we're incinerated next week, it'll be because of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) that was given to Al Qaeda by Pakistan."

The Editor of *Jane Intelligence Digest London*, Eric Margolis has dismissed the story as "biased" and "not credible". He says the CIA, because of its human intelligence resources, relies heavily on foreign intelligence services, particularly India RAW intelligence service and Israel Mossad. Was Seymour Hersh suborned by his Pakistani and CIA sources?

When it comes to America own security issues, its skittish mainstream media, renowned for journalistic high jinks, shuck off the sensitive bits and pound on the banal. Take the case of the intelligence machismo Scott Ritter, former UN arms inspector, who has proved to be a one-man demolition squad for Bush on Iraq. Well, finally the spooks have found a way to shut the loudmouth forever: they have dug up a two-year-old sexual misdemeanour charge against Ritter where he had solicited a sixteen-year old girl for sex over the Internet. Although the case was sealed off, it has now been leaked to the media and properly publicized to the world at large. Ritter face has fallen and his tongue is tied.

Russ Baker, an award-winning journalist covering media and politics, gives us a helicopter view of what the foreign journalists think of American media. Quoting Serbian journalists who had just returned from the United States where, on the invitation of the US government, they were able to observe 'freedom of the press' at work. To them it comprised the Bush

administration stirring up of patriotic fervour around security issues which was "unpleasantly reminiscent of the way Slobodan Milosevic incited nationalist sentiment among the Serbs".

The media here is manipulated by the establishment and it has to play by its rules. The leaks provided by the State Department or other powerful agencies on Pakistan and India appear alternately in their national press -- more like a "media calendar" where various themes concepts are rolled out to coral the two.

The problem begins when our press faithfully reproduces these leaks without reservation or comment. For all the negative reportage on Dr A.Q. Khan, did anyone consider the question: what would Pakistan position be today without a nuclear deterrent? When India had a million troops on our border, would they have tamely retreated as they have done?

ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The Cold Test

What the Administration knew about Pakistan and the North Korean nuclear program.

By Seymour M. Hersh, *The New Yorker*, 27 January 2003

http://newyorker.com/printable/?fact/030127fa_fact

Last June, four months before the current crisis over North Korea became public, the Central Intelligence Agency delivered a comprehensive analysis of North Korea's nuclear ambitions to President Bush and his top advisers. The document, known as a National Intelligence Estimate, was classified as Top Secret S.C.I. (for "sensitive compartmented information"), and its distribution within the government was tightly restricted. The C.I.A. report made the case that North Korea had been violating international law -- and agreements with South Korea and the United States -- by secretly obtaining the means to produce weapons-grade uranium.

The document's most politically sensitive information, however, was about Pakistan. Since 1997, the C.I.A. said, Pakistan had been sharing sophisticated technology, warhead-design information, and weapons-testing data with the Pyongyang regime. Pakistan, one of the Bush Administration's important allies in the war against terrorism, was helping North Korea build the bomb.

In 1985, North Korea signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which led to the opening of most of its nuclear sites to international inspection. By the early nineteen-nineties, it became evident to American intelligence agencies and international inspectors that the North Koreans were reprocessing more spent fuel than they had declared, and might have separated enough plutonium, a reactor by-product, to fabricate one or two nuclear weapons. The resulting diplomatic crisis was resolved when North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Il, entered into an agreement with the Clinton Administration to stop the nuclear-weapons program in return for economic aid and the construction of two light-water nuclear reactors that, under safeguards, would generate electricity.

Within three years, however, North Korea had begun using a second method to acquire

fissile material. This time, instead of using spent fuel, scientists were trying to produce weapons-grade uranium from natural uranium -- with Pakistani technology. One American intelligence official, referring to the C.I.A. report, told me, "It points a clear finger at the Pakistanis. The technical stuff is crystal clear -- not hedged and not ambivalent." Referring to North Korea's plutonium project in the early nineteen- nineties, he said, "Before, they were sneaking." Now "it's off the wall. We know they can do a lot more and a lot more quickly."

North Korea is economically isolated; one of its main sources of export income is arms sales, and its most sought-after products are missiles. And one of its customers has been Pakistan, which has a nuclear arsenal of its own but needs the missiles to more effectively deliver the warheads to the interior of its rival, India. In 1997, according to the C.I.A. report, Pakistan began paying for missile systems from North Korea in part by sharing its nuclear-weapons secrets. According to the report, Pakistan sent prototypes of high-speed centrifuge machines to North Korea. And sometime in 2001 North Korean scientists began to enrich uranium in significant quantities. Pakistan also provided data on how to build and test a uranium-triggered nuclear weapon, the C.I.A. report said.

It had taken Pakistan a decade of experimentation, and a substantial financial investment, before it was able to produce reliable centrifuges; with Pakistan's help, the North Koreans had "chopped many years off" the development process, the intelligence official noted. It is not known how many centrifuges are now being operated in North Korea or where the facilities are. (They are assumed to be in underground caves.) The Pakistani centrifuges, the official said, are slim cylinders, roughly six feet in height, that could be shipped "by the hundreds" in cargo planes. But, he added, "all Pakistan would have to do is give the North Koreans the blueprints. They are very sophisticated in their engineering." And with a few thousand centrifuges, he said, "North Korea could have enough fissile material to manufacture two or three warheads a year, with something left over to sell."

A former senior Pakistani official told me that his government's contacts with North Korea increased dramatically in 1997; the Pakistani economy had foundered, and there was "no more money" to pay for North Korean missile support, so the Pakistani government began paying for missiles by providing "some of the know-how and the specifics." Pakistan helped North Korea conduct a series of "cold tests," simulated nuclear explosions, using natural uranium, which are necessary to determine whether a nuclear device will detonate properly. Pakistan also gave the North Korean intelligence service advice on "how to fly under the radar," as the former official put it -- that is, how to hide nuclear research from American satellites and U.S. and South Korean intelligence agents.

Whether North Korea had actually begun to build warheads was not known at the time of the 1994 crisis and is still not known today, according to the C.I.A. report. The report, those who have read it say, included separate and contradictory estimates from the C.I.A., the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Department of Energy regarding the number of warheads that North Korea might have been capable of making, and provided no consensus on whether or not the Pyongyang regime is actually producing them.

Over the years, there have been sporadic reports of North Korea's contacts with Pakistan, most of them concerning missile sales. Much less has been known about nuclear ties. In the

past decade, American intelligence tracked at least thirteen visits to North Korea made by A. Q. Khan, who was then the director of a Pakistani weapons-research laboratory, and who is known as the father of the Pakistani nuclear bomb. This October, after news of the uranium program came out, the *Times* ran a story suggesting that Pakistan was a possible supplier of centrifuges to North Korea. General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's leader, attacked the account as "absolutely baseless," and added, "There is no such thing as collaboration with North Korea in the nuclear area." The White House appeared to take the Musharraf statement at face value. In November, Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters he had been assured by Musharraf that Pakistan was not currently engaging in any nuclear transactions with North Korea. "I have made clear to him that any . . . contact between Pakistan and North Korea we believe would be improper, inappropriate, and would have consequences," Powell said. "President Musharraf understands the seriousness of the issue." After that, Pakistan quickly faded from press coverage of the North Korea story.

The Bush Administration may have few good options with regard to Pakistan, given the country's role in the war on terror. Within two weeks of September 11th, Bush lifted the sanctions that had been imposed on Pakistan because of its nuclear-weapons activities. In the view of American disarmament experts, the sanctions had in any case failed to deal with one troubling issue: the close ties between some scientists working for the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and radical Islamic groups. "There is an awful lot of Al Qaeda sympathy within Pakistan's nuclear program," an intelligence official told me. One American nonproliferation expert said, "Right now, the most dangerous country in the world is Pakistan. If we're incinerated next week, it'll be because of H.E.U." -- highly enriched uranium -- "that was given to Al Qaeda by Pakistan."

Pakistan's relative poverty could pose additional risks. In early January, a Web-based Pakistani-exile newspaper opposed to the Musharraf government reported that, in the past six years, nine nuclear scientists had emigrated from Pakistan -- apparently in search of better pay -- and could not be located.

An American intelligence official I spoke with called Pakistan's behavior the "worst nightmare" of the international arms-control community: a Third World country becoming an instrument of proliferation. "The West's primary control of nuclear proliferation was based on technology denial and diplomacy," the official said. "Our fear was, first, that a Third World country would develop nuclear weapons indigenously; and, second, that it would then provide the technology to other countries. This is profound. It changes the world." Pakistan's nuclear program flourished in the nineteen-eighties, at a time when its military and intelligence forces were working closely with the United States to repel the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The official said, "The transfer of enrichment technology by Pakistan is a direct outgrowth of the failure of the United States to deal with the Pakistani program when we could have done so. We've lost control."

The C.I.A. report remained unpublicized throughout the summer and early fall, as the Administration concentrated on laying the groundwork for a war with Iraq. Many officials in the Administration's own arms-control offices were unaware of the report. "It was held very tightly," an official told me. "Compartmentalization is used to protect sensitive sources who can get killed if their information is made known, but it's also used for controlling sensitive

information for political reasons."

One American nonproliferation expert said that, given the findings in the June report, he was dismayed that the Administration had not made the information available. "It's important to convey to the American people that the North Korean situation presented us with an enormous military and political crisis," he said. "This goes to the heart of North Asian security, to the future of Japan and South Korea, and to the future of the broader issue of nonproliferation."

A Japanese diplomat who has been closely involved in Korean affairs defended the Bush Administration's delay in publicly dealing with the crisis. Referring to the report, he said, "If the intelligence assessment was correct, you have to think of the implications. Disclosure of information is not always instant. You need some time to assess the content." He added, "To have a dialogue, you really have to find the right time and the right conditions. So far, President Bush has done the right thing, from our perspective." (The White House and the C.I.A. did not respond to requests for comment.)

President Bush's contempt for the North Korean government is well known, and makes the White House's failure to publicize the C.I.A. report or act on it all the more puzzling. In his State of the Union address in January of last year, Bush cited North Korea, along with Iraq and Iran, as part of the "axis of evil." Bob Woodward, in "Bush at War," his book about the Administration's response to September 11th, recalls an interview at the President's Texas ranch in August: "'I loathe Kim Jong Il!' Bush shouted, waving his finger in the air. 'I've got a visceral reaction to this guy, because he is starving his people.'" Woodward wrote that the President had become so emotional while speaking about Kim Jong Il that "I thought he might jump up."

The Bush Administration was put on notice about North Korea even before it received the C.I.A. report. In January of last year, John Bolton, the Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control, declared that North Korea had a covert nuclear-weapons program and was in violation of the nonproliferation treaty. In February, the President was urged by three members of Congress to withhold support for the two reactors promised to North Korea, on the ground that the Pyongyang government was said to be operating a secret processing site "for the enrichment of uranium." In May, Bolton again accused North Korea of failing to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the group responsible for monitoring treaty compliance. Nevertheless, on July 5th the President's national-security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, who presumably had received the C.I.A. report weeks earlier, made it clear in a letter to the congressmen that the Bush Administration would continue providing North Korea with shipments of heavy fuel oil and nuclear technology for the two promised energy-generating reactors.

The Administration's fitful North Korea policy, with its mixture of anger and seeming complacency, is in many ways a consequence of its unrelenting focus on Iraq. Late last year, the White House released a national-security-strategy paper authorizing the military "to detect and destroy an adversary's WMD assets" -- weapons of mass destruction -- "before these weapons are used." The document argued that the armed forces "must have the capability to defend against WMD-armed adversaries . . . because deterrence may not succeed." Logically, the new strategy should have applied first to North Korea, whose

nuclear-weapons program remains far more advanced than Iraq's. The Administration's goal, however, was to mobilize public opinion for an invasion of Iraq. One American intelligence official told me, "The Bush doctrine says MAD" -- mutual assured destruction -- "will not work for these rogue nations, and therefore we have to preempt if negotiations don't work. And the Bush people knew that the North Koreans had already reinvigorated their programs and were more dangerous than Iraq. But they didn't tell anyone. They have bankrupted their own policy -- thus far -- by not doing what their doctrine calls for."

Iraq's military capacity has been vitiated by its defeat in the Gulf War and years of inspections, but North Korea is one of the most militarized nations in the world, with more than forty per cent of its population under arms. Its artillery is especially fearsome: more than ten thousand guns, along with twenty-five hundred rocket launchers capable of launching five hundred thousand shells an hour, are positioned within range of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. The Pentagon has estimated that all-out war would result in more than a million military and civilian casualties, including as many as a hundred thousand Americans killed. A Clinton Administration official recalled attending a congressional briefing in the mid-nineties at which Army General Gary Luck, the commander of U.S. forces in Korea, laconically said, "Senator, I could win this one for you-- but not right away."

In early October, James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, flew to Pyongyang with a large entourage for a showdown over the uranium-enrichment program. The agenda was, inevitably, shaped by officials' awareness of the President's strong personal views. "There was a huge fight over whether to give the North Koreans an ultimatum or to negotiate," one American expert on Korea told me. "Which is the same fight they're having now." Kelly was authorized to tell the Koreans that the U.S. had learned about the illicit uranium program, but his careful instructions left him no room to negotiate. His scripted message was blunt: North Korea must stop the program before any negotiations could take place. "This is a sad tale of bureaucracy," another American expert said. "The script Kelly had was written in the N.S.C." -- the National Security Council -- "by hard-liners. I don't think the President wanted a crisis at this time." The C.I.A. report had predicted that North Korea, if confronted with the evidence, would not risk an open break with the 1994 agreement and would do nothing to violate the nonproliferation treaty. "It was dead wrong," an intelligence officer told me. "I hope there are other people in the agency who understand the North Koreans better than the people who wrote this."

"The Koreans were stunned," a Japanese diplomat who spoke to some of the participants told me. "They didn't know that the U.S. knew what it knew." After an all-night caucus in Pyongyang, Kang Suk Ju, the First Vice Foreign Minister of North Korea, seemed to confirm the charge when he responded by insisting upon his nation's right to develop nuclear weapons. What he didn't talk about was whether it actually had any. Kang Suk Ju also accused the United States, the Japanese diplomat said, of "threatening North Korea's survival." Kang then produced a list of the United States' alleged failures to meet its own obligations under the 1994 agreement, and offered to shut down the enrichment program in return for an American promise not to attack and a commitment to normalize relations. Kelly, constrained by his instructions, could only re-state his brief: the North Koreans must act first. The impasse was on.

But, as with the June C.I.A. report, the Administration kept quiet about the Pyongyang admission. It did not inform the public until October 16th, five days after Congress voted to authorize military force against Iraq. Even then, according to Administration sources quoted in the *Washington Post*, the Administration went public only after learning that the North Korean admission -- with obvious implications for the debate on Iraq -- was being leaked to the press. On the CBS program "Face the Nation" on October 20th, Condoleezza Rice denied that news of the Kelly meeting had been deliberately withheld until after the vote. President Bush, she said, simply hadn't been presented with options until October 15th. "What was surprising to us was not that there was a program," Rice said. "What was surprising to us was that the North Koreans admitted there was a program."

"Did we *want* them to deny it?" a former American intelligence expert on North Korea asked me afterward. He said, "I could never understand what was going on with the North Korea policy." Referring to relations between the intelligence service and the Bush Administration, he said, "We couldn't get people's attention, and, even if we could, they never had a sensible approach. The Administration was deeply, viciously ideological." It was contemptuous not only of the Pyongyang government but of earlier efforts by the Clinton White House to address the problem of nuclear proliferation -- a problem that could only get worse if Washington ignored it. The former intelligence official told me, "When it came time to confront North Korea, we had no plan, no contact -- nothing to negotiate with. You have to be in constant diplomatic contact, so you can engage and be in the strongest position to solve the problem. But we let it all fall apart."

The former intelligence official added, referring to the confrontation in North Korea in October, "The Kelly meeting and the subsequent American statement have tipped the balance in Pyongyang. The North Koreans were already terrifically suspicious of the United States. They saw the Kelly message as 'When you fix this, get back to us.' They were very angry. That, plus the fact that they feel they are next in line after Iraq, made them believe they had to act very quickly to protect themselves."

The result was that in October, as in June, the Administration had no option except to deny that there was a crisis. When the first published reports of the Kelly meeting appeared, a White House spokesman said that the President found it to be "troubling, sobering news." Rice repeatedly emphasized that North Korea and Iraq were separate cases. "Saddam Hussein is in a category by himself," Rice said on ABC's "Nightline." One arms-control official told me, "The White House didn't want to deal with a second crisis."

In the following months, the American policy alternated between tough talk in public -- vows that the Administration wouldn't be "blackmailed," or even meet with North Korean leaders -- and private efforts, through third parties, to open an indirect line of communication with Pyongyang. North Korea, meanwhile, expelled international inspectors, renounced the nonproliferation treaty, and threatened to once again begin reprocessing spent nuclear fuel -- all the while insisting on direct talks with the Bush Administration.

One Clinton Administration official who was involved in the 1994 talks with Kim Jong Il acknowledged that he felt deeply disappointed by the North Korean actions. "The deal was that we'd give them two reactors and they, in turn, have to knock off this shit," he said. "They've got something going, and it's in violation of the deal." Nonetheless, the official

said, the Bush Administration "has got to talk to Kim Jong Il." Despite the breakdown of the 1994 agreement, and despite the evidence of cheating, the C.I.A. report depicted the agreement as a success insofar as over the past eight years it had prevented North Korea from building warheads -- as many as a hundred, according to some estimates.

Last week, President Bush gave in to what many of his advisers saw as the inevitable and agreed to consider renewed American aid in return for a commitment by North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. However, the White House was still resisting direct negotiations with the Kim Jong Il government.

In a speech in June, Robert Gallucci, a diplomat who was put in charge of negotiating the 1994 agreement with Pyongyang, and who is now dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, recalled that Bush's first approach to North Korea had been to make it "a poster child" for the Administration's arguments for a missile-defense system. "This was the cutting edge of the threat against which we were planning and shaping our defense," he said. "There was a belief that North Korea was not to be dealt with by negotiation.

"But then September 11th happened, and September 11th meant that national missile defense could not defend America, because the threat was going to come not from missiles but from a hundred other ways as well," he said. "And so we've come full circle. . . . North Korea and other rogue states who threaten us with weapons of mass destruction threaten not only because they themselves might not be deterrable but because they may transfer this capability to those who can't be deterred or defended against."

One American intelligence official who has attended recent White House meetings cautioned against relying on the day-to-day Administration statements that emphasize a quick settlement of the dispute. The public talk of compromise is being matched by much private talk of high-level vindication. "Bush and Cheney want that guy's head" -- Kim Jong Il's -- "on a platter. Don't be distracted by all this talk about negotiations. There will be negotiations, but they have a plan, and they are going to get this guy after Iraq. He's their version of Hitler."

Transcript: Jane Wallace Interviews Seymour Hersh

21 February 2003

http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript_hersh.html

JANE WALLACE: Thank you for joining us.

SY HERSH: Glad to be here.

JANE WALLACE: It might be safely said that the one country for whom the war on terror has been a bombless bonanza is Pakistan. In a matter of two weeks they went from being an international pariah, to being our new best friend.

The aid started flowing. It is flowing in the billions. Are they worthy of our friendship and our aid, the Pakistanis?

SY HERSH: In a perfect world, sure, it would be great if Musharraf, the head of the country can hold it together and they can become secular. And we can avoid having an Islamic republic with a lot of nuclear weapons. But it's dicey.

JANE WALLACE: What kind of dicey?

SY HERSH: I think it's a losing game. I think it's a losing game and I think there's a lot of evidence that Musharraf is certainly much more interested in his own survival than ours. I can't give you chapter and verse of things. He came to America when and when there was tremendous concern about the fate of Danny Pearl, the *Wall Street Journal* reporter.

And he was here about a week or so before it became known that Pearl was dead. And the whole time, we later learned, that he was here, when he was saying, you know telling us that he was doing everything he can. He was sure he was alive. He knew that Pearl was dead. We now know that. We knew he was deceiving us.

JANE WALLACE: How do we know that?

SY HERSH: Because--

JANE WALLACE: Time of death on Pearl?

SY HERSH: More than that. There's-- we were able to unravel a lot of information, WALL STREET JOURNAL reporters and others about when he died. And there was, if you remember, there's been a trial. And everything that showed up in the trial indicated that-- witnesses told about telling the government things-- weeks before we thought they had.

JANE WALLACE: There is a man facing death, facing hanging, Saeed Sheikh, in the murder of Daniel Pearl. Saeed Sheikh is reported, in various quarters, to have been an ISI Pakistani intelligence agent.

SY HERSH: Asset. Yeah.

JANE WALLACE: Do you believe that?

SY HERSH: This certainly is a case when he gave up, he turned himself

in basically eventually to ISI and-- who-- not-- not right away, but pretty immediately. He turned a-- he was made available to the ISI and they debriefed him first.

JANE WALLACE: Why would he turn himself in to Pakistani intelligence as opposed to the police?

SY HERSH: There's no question he has some connection. There's no question he had some deep standing-- long standing connection to Pakistani intelligence.

JANE WALLACE: Now let me draw the picture . . . If in fact he has a deep long standing connection to Pakistani intelligence, we are supporting a government that has some responsibility in the murder of an American reporter?

SY HERSH: What can you do?

JANE WALLACE: Let's talk about Konduz. During the war with Afghanistan--

SY HERSH: Great story.

JANE WALLACE: -- you reported that during a key battle our side in that battle had the enemy surrounded. There were a reported perhaps 8,000 enemy forces in there.

SY HERSH: Maybe even more. But certainly minimum that many.

JANE WALLACE: It's your story, take it.

SY HERSH: Okay, the cream of the crop of Al Qaeda caught in a town called Konduz which is near . . . it's one little village and it's a couple hundred kilometers, 150 miles from the border of Pakistan. And I learned this story frankly-- through very, very clandestine operatives we have in the Delta Force and other very . . .

We were operating very heavily with a small number of men, three, 400 really in the first days of the war. And suddenly one night when they had everybody cornered in Konduz-- the special forces people were told there was a corridor that they could not fly in. There was a corridor sealed off to-- the United States military sealed off a corridor. And it was nobody could shoot anybody in this little lane that went from Konduz into Pakistan. And that's how I learned about it. I learned about it from a military guy who wanted to fly helicopters and kill people and couldn't do it that day.

JANE WALLACE: So, we had the enemy surrounded, the special forces guys are helping surround this enemy.

SY HERSH: They're whacking everybody they can whack that looks like a bad guy.

JANE WALLACE: And suddenly they're told to back off--

SY HERSH: From a certain area--

JANE WALLACE: -- and let planes fly out to Pakistan.

SY HERSH: There was about a three or four nights in which I can tell you maybe six, eight, 10, maybe 12 more-- or more heavily weighted-- Pakistani military planes flew out with an estimated-- no less than 2,500 maybe 3,000, maybe mmore. I've heard as many as four or 5,000. They were not only-- Al Qaeda but they were also-- you see the Pakistani ISI was-- the military advised us to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. There were dozens of senior Pakistani military officers including two generals who flew out.

And I also learned after I wrote this story that maybe even some of Bin Laden's immediate family were flown out on the those evacuations. We allowed them to evacuate. We had an evacuation.

JANE WALLACE: How high up was that evacuation authorized?

SY HERSH: I am here to tell you it was authorized -- Donald Rumsfeld who -- we'll talk about what he said later -- it had to be authorized at the White House. But certainly at the Secretary of Defense level.

JANE WALLACE: The Department of Defense said to us that they were not involved and that they don't have any knowledge of that operation.

SY HERSH: That's what Rumsfeld said when they asked him but it. And he said, "Gee, really?" He said, "News to me." Which is not a denial, it's sort of interesting. You know,

JANE WALLACE: What did we do that? Why we would put our special forces guys on the ground, surround the enemy, and then-- fly him out?

SY HERSH: With al Qaeda.

JANE WALLACE: With al Qaeda. Why would we do that, assuming your story is true?

SY HERSH: We did it because the ISI asked us to do so.

JANE WALLACE: Pakistani intelligence.

SY HERSH: Absolutely.

JANE WALLACE: Yeah.

SY HERSH: Yeah. That's why. You asked why. Because we believe Musharraf was under pressure to protect the military men of -- the intelligence people from the military, ISI, that were in the field. The Pakistanis were training the Taliban, and were training al Qaeda.

When the war began, even though this is-- again, you know, this is complicated. Musharraf asked, as a favor, to protect his position. If we suddenly seized, in in the field, a few dozen military soldiers, including generals, and put them in jail, and punished them, he would be under tremendous pressure from the fundamentalists at home.

So, to protect him, we perceive that it's important to protect him, he asked us-- this is why when I tell you it comes at the level of Don Rumsfeld, it has to. I mean, it does. He asked-- he said, "You've got to protect me. You've got to get my people out."

The initial plan was to take out the Pakistani military. What happened is that they took out al Qaeda with them. And we had no way of stopping it. We lost control. Once there planes began to go, the Pakistanis began-- thousands of al Qaeda got out. And so-- we weren't able to stop it and screen it. The intent wasn't to let al Qaeda out. It was to protect the Pakistani military.

SY HERSH: What else can you do? We need the idea of some sort of country as a bulwark to what's going-- look, Afghanistan is smoking today. You know if you want another reality, the reality that nobody wants to hear about is that probably from Khandhar to Jalalabad and all of the southern part of Afghanistan is cowboy and Indian territory.

It's ISI. It's Taliban. It's Pashtun. Some al Qaeda. You

know you don't find our troops-- a little bit in-- on the coast near-- you know in the north-- the northern territories. We're -- it's-- we have un-- we're-- we're really at square one even in Afghanistan.

JANE WALLACE: Okay, I'm gonna slow you down because you know your material very well. The northwestern part of Pakistan--

SY HERSH: Right.

JANE WALLACE: --that borders on Afghanistan now is where the-- the al Qaeda forces are said to be regrouped?

SY HERSH: Along with Kashmir. They probably are there too.

JANE WALLACE: Yes. This is where some of our American troops-- we have about 8,000 left in Afghanistan, are facing some of the heaviest fighting they've seen in a year.

SY HERSH: The forces that are seeing heavy fighting are a few special forces that are there and some elite units from the 82nd Airborne. Most of our troops are just guarding bases. But we have some elite units in contact. Yes.

JANE WALLACE: What you're saying is that then part of the forces our guys are facing are forces that are being supported by or intermixed with Pakistan intelligence which is a government we support. And al Qaeda, which is supported by a government we support. In other words we're doing battle with ourselves to some degree?

SY HERSH: I'll make it better. We have reason to think, from intelligence-- I haven't written this that-- that the Saudi's are financing some of this all the way.

JANE WALLACE: Financing what?

SY HERSH: Saudi's put a lot of money into Pakistan to religious aspects. I'm not saying the Saudi's necessarily-- the Saudi government knows that the money they're putting in is ending up supplying the forces that are in contact with our forces in the northern territories. But the fact is the Saudi's are still a supplier of a great deal of funds to Pakistan. We've got a country that's teetering on the edge, we don't want Pakistan to go Islamic. We don't want the weapons to get out of control.

JANE WALLACE: How exactly did the Pakistanis acquire nukes?

SY HERSH: They stole the technology from Europe-- to-- basically-- they used enriched uranium, Enriched uranium makes as perfectly a good a bomb as plutonium without a big nuclear reactor that anybody can see and-- and get intelligence on. They began turning out warheads. We now know I-- as they say, we estimate up to 40-- and that's just a rough guess.

JANE WALLACE: Forty warheads means what in terms of destructive power?

SY HERSH: Well, it depends the average warhead probably-- takes out New York. A good chunk of New York.

JANE WALLACE: So forty warheads is a lot--

SY HERSH: Yeah.

JANE WALLACE: --for a country the size of Pakistan?

SY HERSH: I would say one isn't a lot if you can fire it. Yes, if you know how to do it and-- and-- it's a lot. They--

JANE WALLACE: So formidable, especially in a third-world country where we're not entirely sure--

SY HERSH: It could--

JANE WALLACE: --who's in charge of the switch?

SY HERSH: Well, we'd like to think that the military and Musharraf is in charge of the switch. That makes us very happy to think that. That's the whole issue. The issue is making sure and reinforce Musharraf being in charge of the switch, which--

JANE WALLACE: But the--

SY HERSH: It's--

JANE WALLACE: --on the--

SY HERSH: --it's a--

JANE WALLACE: -- issue--

SY HERSH: --it's a crap game. It's a roll of the dice. That's what it is.

JANE WALLACE: You reported recently that not only do the Pakistanis have the nukes, the international community knew that. That's why they were ostracized for many years, because they wouldn't stop developing their own nuclear program. So they were blackballed by the rest of the world. Forget it, we're not trading with them anymore.

They were in that position when 9/11 struck. Not only do they have these nuclear weapons, but then they go one further to put it in our face and start helping North Korea develop the same cheaper, more efficient warheads. What is that about? These are our new best friends?

SY HERSH: Well, this started before they became our new best friends. This isn't-- this started in '97. What I did is I wrote about an intelligence report that the White House had for, what, eight months before it became known.

I love the story that this administration does live in a sort of a web of its own sort of stories. They-- the story they put out was last fall one of our guys goes to North Korea, the Pyongyang and-- and confronts the North Koreans. And they admit they have it. And we're stunned. They've admitted they have it. Something we've known they've had for a year.

What they did is in '97-- they buy missiles from North Korea. The North Korean government is insane. Half the people starve and meanwhile they have a tremendously efficient missile system. They-- they-- if-- if the leader of that country decided that he wanted to-- to get rid of the missiles and start spending money on-- on-- on food, they could all live. There's enough there. But it's-- it's a madness society.

And so the North-- the North Koreans are supplying missiles for-- for Pakistan for years. And in '97, Pakistan had some serious economic problems. And I can tell you right now i-- if nu-- if Pakistan's economy is-- is in the toilet, North Korea's deep in the sewer.

So here they are. North Korea's-- one of their great exports is missiles for cash and then they sell some missiles to the Paks. And the Paks come to the North Koreans in '97 and they say, "Hey guys, we can't pay. We got no money. We're broke too. But we've got something in kind. I'm giving you the most--" this is actually an interpretation the community-- intelligence community, same people in the

American intelligence community.

And by the way, there's a lot of good people in our system. And awful lot. And they must be very frustrated with it, because I think things at the top-- it's a very strange world at the top of this government. It's a cocoon. And no bad information invited. I'm talking about in a-- in the-- in the leadership.

JANE WALLACE: What do you mean cocoon, no bad information invited?

SY HERSH: Oh, I just don't think it was hard-- I don't think they could sell this story of the-- the-- I don't think the intelligence community was-- was able to get the President and the Vice President and other people to focus on North Korea-- for a year before it became known. It was just-- they didn't wanna focus on it. They had other issues.

But the Paks then start giving the fruits of their 10, 15 years, 20 years of nuclear labor to the North Koreans. And you have to understand, to start with a centrifuge and some designs and get to the point where you can actually make bomb-grade material is a 12, 15 year process. The Paks--

JANE WALLACE: It's very sophisticated?

SY HERSH: Oh. The Paks cut it way down to a couple years, three, four, maybe five years.

JANE WALLACE: So you could really spin 'em out?

SY HERSH: You can kick it out. You can put it in high gear. They gave 'em prototypes of the centrifuges that they made. They gave 'em prototypes of the warheads. They gave 'em test data.

There's something called cold testing. You can actually test natural uranium in a warhead and it gives you a lot of information about the real stuff-- enriched stuff would work.

JANE WALLACE: So both third-world powers become more dangerous?

SY HERSH: To put it mildly.

JANE WALLACE: Colin Powell did not deny your story. He did go out of his way to say, the Secretary of State, that Musharraf has assured the State Department that this is not happening

now.

SY HERSH: Right.

JANE WALLACE: That's all-- well, what do you make of that?

SY HERSH: It's the-- it's the-- it's the-- the three-card Monty we have going, which is that, "What are you going to do with this guy? Are you going to say--" it's clear that some of the help that Musharraf gave the North Koreans took place after 9/11. That is a continuum.

Musharraf's answer to us was a-- you know, "Oh my god. There's gambling on the premises?" You know shades of Casablanca. And, "I'll stop it right now." And we say, "Great." What else are we gonna do?

Are we gonna take a run at this guy and make it-- make him more vulnerable to his critics that are there already? The fundamentalists-- the Islamic-- the mujahadin? So we--

JANE WALLACE: Or are we gonna pretend it didn't happen or-- or at least it's stopped?

SY HERSH: We-- the rationalization for pretending it didn't happen or that it's stopped-- and it probably has stopped. The rationalization-- first of all, why shouldn't it stop? They've got what they need already?

The rationalization is that we can't jeopardize Musharraf. We've gotta keep him going. Prop him up as much as possible.

JANE WALLACE: This is getting to be a very costly prop up.

SY HERSH: Absolutely. But you know, let me give you another-- theory. Why do you think Pakistan has only helped North Korea with nuclear weapons? Why haven't they helped other countries?

JANE WALLACE: I don't know why.

SY HERSH: Well, the answer is, they probably have. They're interested in spreading it to the Third World. How much control does Musharraf have?

JANE WALLACE: Do you have any evidence?

SY HERSH: No, no. I'm just telling you-- heuristically, I'm just telling you-- I'm telling what I-- my instinct tells me that in a perfect world, if our editor of the world's newspaper, I would-- I would want to look at our-- is Pakistan-- I'd look at Pakistan and Iran, look at Pakistan and-- and Indonesia. Look at Pakistan even and Lebanon. There's a lot of ties that I'm interested in. Are they gonna be spreading nuclear technology into the Muslim world above and beyond their own country?

JANE WALLACE: If we were really going after the people who sponsored al Qaeda, wouldn't we be bombing Pakistan?

SY HERSH: Well, it'd be attacking Pakistan is not like attacking Afghanistan, or Iraq. They have an air force. They have nuclear weapons, of course. They have a-- very strong powerful Army. We're not gonna attack Pakistan. That would be-- that would be an impossible chore. If you said to me, "Are we better off in Pakistan or in Iraq in terms of beating terrorism?" I would say to you-- if you'd asked me that question, I would say, "No question. Let's forget about Iraq and let's focus on Pakistan and start doing-- the money we're gonna spend if we go to war there, even in moving troops, if we tried to use some of that money in-- in positive ways in Pakistan, we might be able to accomplish more than we are right now."

JANE WALLACE: The picture you are painting here is that we're dealing with the devil.

SY HERSH: It's not a perfect world.

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