

# Ishaq Khan's ISI and drug lords behind Bombay bombing

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The annual report of the Indian Defense Ministry, released on April 15, has named both Pakistan and Iran as threats to India's national security. The report noted that there were "difficulties" caused by Pakistan because it had introduced "mercenaries from other countries" into the ranks of terrorists, which had added a new external dimension contributing to militancy in Punjab and Kashmir. For the first time, the annual defense paper also noted the negative impact of the military buildup in Iran, a country with which India otherwise has friendly relations. "The modernization and expansion of the Iranian Armed Forces presents the possibility of Iranian assistance to Pakistan in a future conflict situation."

The defense paper is but one reflection of the way in which Indian intelligence and its Armed Forces are viewing the security panorama in the wake of the March 12 terror bombings in Bombay, which killed 300 people and injured many more. Since the bombing, Indian intelligence has increasingly pointed the finger at the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence as the culprit. Within the context of the de facto dictatorship of Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the ISI functions not as an instrument of state policy, but as an independent rogue power-base within the military, which answers, if to anyone, to President Ishaq Khan.

Secondly, the Indian government investigation has ascertained that the ISI's partners on the scene in Bombay and India are not Pakistani agents per se, but the foot soldiers of the Bombay drug mafia. As Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao told Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai in Bangkok on April 7, "My country is a victim of terrorism that finds haven and sustenance beyond our borders. And when it combines with the illegitimate profits earned from smuggling narcotics, we confront the abomination of narco-terrorism."

Any Pakistani involvement in such narco-terrorism represents not only a direct attack on India, but also on Pakistan itself. By assaulting the integrity of India, through succor to separatist movements and assists to the drug-mafia, ISI operatives, perhaps unbeknownst to themselves, are doing the bidding of the British Bernard Lewis Plan, which seeks to break up the nation-states of the subcontinent into contending, powerless ethnic entities.

Indian intelligence sources further say that the Anglo-American game, of which the Bombay bombing is a feature, is to further provoke an Indo-Pakistan war. Specifically, it is hoped by the Anglo-Americans that continuous provocations

against India will give the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) opposition party the leverage to force the Indian government to display its [nuclear weapons capability].

## Leads traced to drug mafia

The thread of evidence that leads to the drug mafias that criss-cross the Indian borders began with the discovery soon after the bombings of a scooter filled with explosives traced to the Memon family, a family of hoteliers in Bombay. The Memon brothers, it was soon learned, had all left India between March 3 and the morning of March 12, right before the bombings, heading for Dubai, United Arab Emirates. *The Hindu* newspaper correspondent in Bahrain, Khergamvala, reported that the Memon family runs a hotel in Dubai and that the head of the family, Ismail "Tiger" Memon, is known as the front man for the leading India mafia don, Daewood Ibrahim, who has been living in exile in Dubai.

In subsequent sweeps of Bombay criminal elements, Indian authorities arrested 50 people who are believed to be involved in the second and third tiers of the bombing operation. On March 17, the police arrested two people who had procured vehicles and sold them to the Memon family for Rs 1.5 million, without papers and receipts, two weeks prior to the blasts. The Bombay police also claimed that they have arrested the courier who transported the explosives into Bombay. They reported that in February the explosives were landed along the coast in Raigad district and stored in a warehouse in New Bombay. The warehouse owner has been arrested, and two men who were involved in bringing the explosives into Bombay were also apprehended.

According to those arrested, the plan was carried out under the supervision of Daewood Ibrahim from Dubai. The operation was begun in January, when explosives first started to pour into the western coast of Maharashtra state. In the meantime, 20 people were reportedly ferried to Pakistan via Dubai, where they were given training in explosives for 10 days, returning to India on March 4. Ibrahim Abdul Razzak Memon visited Dubai three times in the same period.

One of the trainees, who reported that he had gone to Dubai, said the trainees were kept at a safehouse on Al-Hasan road in Dubai. He reported that he went to Pakistan from there with another 19 people in two groups on Feb. 13 and 20. According to this witness, his group was received at Islamabad Airport and was driven off in a covered vehicle

without going through the usual immigration procedures. Training took place under an instructor who spoke both Punjabi and Urdu. The training consisted of physical exercises, use of incendiary explosive devices, handling of grenades, and firing Kalashnikov assault rifles. The trainees were reportedly briefed especially to target shopping centers, bridges, car parking lots, crowded localities, and temples.

In addition to detainees' testimony, the Indian police sweep has resulted in the seizure of massive amounts of explosives and weaponry held by persons associated with the Bombay mafia and the Memon brothers.

- On March 15, explosives bearing Pakistani markings were reportedly discovered in the home of the Memon family, along with cash exceeding Rs 10 million. Keys of an explosive-laden scooter, which was parked in Dardar in Bombay, were also found in the Memon household.

- On March 23, the Bombay police seized a cache of arms at central Bombay, recovering 12 AK-56 assault rifles, 5,308 rounds of ammunition, 195 hand grenades, and 600 detonators. The hand grenades were manufactured in Europe, according to press reports.

- On March 26, on a tip-off, the police raided a home in the suburbs of Bombay and found 41 bags containing explosive materials, including 32 bags of RDX. The total confiscated was 1,500 kilos, seven times the amount used in the Bombay bombings.

- On April 2, some 2,380 kilos of explosives were discovered in Mumbra in Thane on the coastline near Bombay. RDX, the explosive used in the Bombay bombings, comprised 1,440 kilos of the total seized, and commercially manufactured plastique comprised the rest. The explosives were found in marked bags in a creek.

Criminal investigators in Dubai say that such large amounts of RDX and other explosives easily could have been procured by the Memon brothers in the area where Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan meet. In this region, anyone with enough money can acquire anything, from shoulder-fired missiles to tanks to RDX explosives. Bombay is no more than a 24-hour journey from this area by fast boat from the Iran-Pakistani coastline. This Makran coastline is known as a major depot for shipment of Afghan and Chinese drugs.

The involvement of the Memon brothers in the Bombay bombings and the recurring reports from those arrested that Daewood Ibrahim was the mastermind behind the operation points to the notorious Bombay mafia. Maharashtra chief minister and former Defense Minister Sharad Pawar told the state legislature that Delhi had cleared him to launch an all-out offensive against the Bombay drug mafia using the police, the Navy and Coast Guard, and customs. Over the years, Pawar said, the narco-mafia had entered the film business and real estate. "It is imperative to finish this force."

### ISI role

However, on March 22, evidence emerged that added to the notion that the Pakistani ISI might be involved. Dubai

police informed Indian investigators that although the Memons possessed visas to enter Dubai, they had not. They had transited at the Dubai Airport and boarded a Pakistani International Airline (PIA) flight from Dubai to Karachi. Dubai officials, wishing to skirt a fight between two of their friends, India and Pakistan, reportedly then erased all computerized departure data at the Dubai Airport over the last few days.

Within a week, Pakistan sent a formal denial to India, stating that it was not giving shelter to the Memon family. The Pakistan high commissioner in Delhi said: "I repeat with all authority at my command that these people are not there, definitely not there. I assure you that we will not admit them. They are not our responsibility."

Later, Pakistani Foreign Affairs Secretary Akram Zaki accused India of fabricating evidence to implicate Pakistan in the Bombay bombings. According to Zaki, the Memons were scheduled to board the PIA flight from Dubai but were no-shows. "There is no record of persons with these names having entered Pakistan," he said. "But if somebody wants to disappear, things do happen, especially when the people in question have underworld links."

Pakistani unwillingness to cooperate with the Indian investigation has only intensified Indian suspicions of ISI involvement. Furthermore, it is known that the Pakistani ISI is both involved in a campaign of irregular warfare against India in the Indian states of Punjab and Kashmir, and massive amounts of evidence have accumulated over the years to show its involvement in drug trafficking in the region.

The rationale for this irregular warfare is revenge for India's role in severing East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from Pakistan in 1971. Under conditions in which the Pakistani military does not believe that it can win a conventional war against India, irregular warfare and terrorism have become the *modus operandi* against India. In the early 1980s, when arms and money began to pour into Pakistan to help fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and when heroin and hashish began to pour out of Pakistan, the ISI actively began to support the Sikh separatists (Khalistanis) in the Indian state of Punjab. As in the case of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, the Khalistanis receive aid from Pakistan, but are also headquartered in London. The Sikh separatists have also been nabbed in dope trafficking.

In the late 1980s, the ISI began a campaign to support Muslim militants in the state of Kashmir, disputed between India and Pakistan. Reportedly, Afghan mujahideens were also brought in by the ISI to help fight the Indian security forces in Kashmir.

In Bombay, riots in January believed to have been instigated by gang war between the Muslim mafia of Daewood Ibrahim and the Hindu chauvinist Shiv Sena, left many Muslims and Hindus homeless. Indian investigators believe that the major goal of the Bombay bombings was to enhance communal tensions, and mobilize Muslims in India against the government.

The ISI's reputed involvement in drug trafficking has

## India in deals with Oman

On March 13, a day after the city of Bombay was rocked with bombs, the governments of India and Oman signed an agreement to set up petroleum refineries near Bombay, at an estimated cost of \$4-5 billion. The deal signifies that, despite its problems with Pakistan, India has not broken its ties to the Islamic world.

Also, a memorandum was signed between the Oman and India in February for laying a 1,400-kilometer undersea pipeline from Oman to Gujarat, India, which will supply more than 50 million cubic meters of gas to India a day. It is expected that other West Asian countries like Iran and Qatar will also supply gas through the pipeline.

And, in what will be the biggest joint venture of its kind abroad, Kribhco and RBF, two major fertilizer manufacturers in India, are working on agreements with Oman for construction of two urea fertilizer units in the Persian Gulf country. Each of the complexes will have a capacity of 1,350 tons a day; total investment is \$800 million. The Indian companies will each hold 26% equity in the ventures. The Oman government and private partners will subscribe to the rest of the capital. A buyback arrangement between Oman and the two Indian companies will likely be incorporated, with preferential prices for the urea supplied to India.

gained notoriety throughout the region in the last year. In the past six months, Pakistanis have found themselves expelled from various Arab nations on various charges. The oil-rich kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported that it had beheaded 40 drug smugglers, most of them Pakistanis. Iran has arrested 60 drug smugglers who were equipped with modern weapons; numbers of these are also known to be Pakistanis. After the Hindu assault on the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, India on Dec. 6, the U.A.E. has deported several thousand Pakistanis for violent attacks on Hindus and Hindu temples in the country.

Some years ago, the U.A.E. was shocked to discover that senior members of Pakistan's Armed Forces, in collusion with some of their colleagues on secondment to Abu Dhabi, were using the U.A.E. President's personal aircraft to move narcotics from Lahore to the Persian Gulf.

At the end of December, Tariq Massoud, regional director of the Pakistan Narcotics Control Board at Lahore, told reporters that as many as 86 Pakistani nationals, including two women, were executed for smuggling drugs into countries where the offense carries the death penalty. In late 1992,

Thai police arrested 10 Pakistanis in Bangkok and recovered a large number of fake passports, stationery used for counterfeiting travel documents, and arms and ammunition.

In part, this expansion of Pakistani drug operations is prompted by the saturation of the Pakistani market itself since the early 1980s, when drugs began to flood the country. In one city in Punjab, for example, out of 1.3 million residents, there are 200,000 officially registered heroin addicts.

The result of the uninhibited drug trafficking out of Pakistan is the country's increasing isolation within the Muslim world. Announcing his resignation from the cabinet on April 6, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Sardar Aasef Ahmed Ali told a press conference, "I have been writing on the presence of terrorists from Muslim states in Pakistan. Nothing has been done about their presence in the country. This issue does not agitate the western countries as much as it agitates the Muslim countries. Today, we are the most isolated nation in the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Arab League, and the Gulf Cooperation Council."

However, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, now in the process of being unceremoniously ousted by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, is hardly capable of leashing the ISI, which reports not to him but to the President.

The evidence in the Bombay bombing presented so far by Indian authorities at least points to the intersection of the ISI, drug-trafficking networks, and the "Afghansi," the collection of militants brought into Peshawar, Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet Union. As the Pakistani daily *The Muslim* described this nexus on April 13: "When the United States trapped a willing dictator of Pakistan, that is, General Zia, into their Afghan war against its arch enemy Soviet Union, every ruffian and shady character, mercenary and petty adventurer from every dark nook and corner of the world, was welcome. The U.S. government, through its Pakistani surrogates, gave these disreputable elements money, weapons, and the freedom to kill and plunder in the name of jihad in Afghanistan.

"Military men under U.S. supervision and command turned them into fiendish terror merchants, a truly multinational community of terror-mongers. The government of General Zia had neither the inclination nor perhaps the imagination to round up these highly dangerous elements, once the war was ended. . . .

"The U.S. abandoned the Afghanistan theater as if they had never been there and had never had anything do with it. Later, the government of Ms. Benazir Bhutto was told by the powers in effective control of Afghanistan affairs [headed by President Ishaq Khan] to keep off this area. It remained with the President and his close aides who were too busy feathering their own nests. . . . Suddenly, deprived of their targets, these terrorists spread out into the wide world. The whole story is a stinking scandal, and the Americans cannot in honesty pretend that their hands are untainted. In fact, they have been the chief promoters of this brand of terrorism."