

Dangerous Saudi Input Into Afghan Bloodshed

by Ramtanu Maitra

One of the least discussed aspects in the ongoing bloodshed in Afghanistan is the Saudi support for the foreign terrorists who are part of al-Qaeda and the newly-formed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or the Pakistani Taliban, who are now waging war against both the foreign troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

When U.S. troops invaded Afghanistan to eliminate both al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, they walked into situation which was much more complex than what the Bush Administration had conveyed to the American people. It is not clear whether Washington was fully aware of the realities on the ground, but by moving into Afghanistan, U.S. troops had clearly run into a hornet's nest.

To begin with, Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which was serving both Saudi and the British interests, was unwilling, and has become increasingly so, to give up the Afghan Taliban. ISI "needs" Afghanistan as its "strategic depth" against its "mortal enemy," India, and the Afghan Taliban were willing to agree to the ISI's arrangement. In other words, the ISI believed that the elimination of the Afghan Taliban would undermine "Pakistan's interest," to the benefit of India.

The British interest, expressed through MI6 operations, was to maintain various terrorist groups that found shelter in the Afghan Taliban-dominated, and Pakistani ISI-protected Afghanistan. These included Uzbek separatists, Chechen terrorists, and Uighur terrorists, among others. Britain harbors these terrorists for a number of destructive reasons, such as breaking up the southern flank of Russia, securing a foothold in the oil-and-gas-rich Central Asia, and breaking up the increasingly powerful nation of China. In addition, the growing cooperation among Russia, China, and India, to maintain a stable and peaceful Eurasia, is anathema to the colonial forces within Britain; these separatist and terrorist forces were built up and maintained as a bulwark against such a development.

The Saudi Charade

The third force, the Saudis, has an altogether different agenda. The Saudi objective is to organize the Sunni sects of Islam under Wahabi doctrine and to use them not only to dominate the Islamic world, but also to set up a Wahabi-dominated caliphate. While the ISI has little interest in either the British or Saudi plans, the British like the Saudi plan because it would split the Islamic world.

Years before Washington considered al-Qaeda a threat, and before the Afghan Taliban emerged on the scene, Saudi money was coming in to set up cells inside Pakistan—the gateway to Central Asia and beyond, including China—to preach the Wahabi form of Islam in the countries where Muslims were considered "oppressed," such as in Central Asia and China. Saudi money has also flowed into various Pakistani Sunni jihadi cells to "rejuvenate" the Muslims in the state of Jammu and Kashmir—a territory claimed by both Pakistan and India.

Saudi money, however, does not flow out of the Saudi government treasury, but from various charities. One such charity is Al-Haramain. After Al-Haramain figured among a number of Saudi charities accused by Washington of financing terrorism after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, the foundation was closed in Saudi Arabia in 2005. Al-Haramain was said to have received between \$45 and \$50 million each year in donations, and has spent some \$300 million on humanitarian work overseas.

However, the U.S. accusation has no effect on the donors. The foundation and other private groups that have been dissolved, and their international operations and assets folded into a new body, have been named the Saudi National Commission for Charitable Work Abroad, which will employ all those who were working for Al-Haramain and those charities that were closed because of their support to terrorist groups. In other words, the more it changed, the more it remained the same.

The 'Al-Yamamah' Link

Where British and Saudi operations converge in the most profound way, is through the longstanding "Al-Yamamah" covert operations slush fund, established through the arms-for-oil barter scheme, first negotiated between the Thatcher government in Great Britain, and Saudi Arabia's Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, in 1985, and still operational today. As *EIR* has exclusively revealed,



US Army/Staff Sgt. Justin Holley, 982 Combat Camera Company

U.S. troops ran into a hornet's nest, when they invaded Afghanistan to eliminate al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. Shown: A U.S. Army soldier prepares to enter a Taliban safehouse near the Pakistani border, March 2007.

Al-Yamamah has generated hundreds of billions of dollars in off-budget, offshore funds, that were one critical source of Anglo-Saudi funding to the Afghan mujahideen, who battled the Soviet Army in Afghanistan throughout the 1980s. In a 2006 official biography, Prince Bandar's ghostwriter boasted that Al-Yamamah was a geopolitical partnership between London and Riyadh, to "combat communism" through the buildup of the covert funding conduit. As recently as 2006, the funds were used to stage a number of attempted coups d'état in Africa—that had nothing to do with fighting communism, and everything to do with British schemes to engulf that continent in perpetual, genocidal war. The Anglo-Saudi schemes for South Asia are identical, and there is good reason to believe

that Al-Yamamah is an active feature of the ongoing destabilizations.

Washington, with Blinders on

In the United States, whenever the Saudi funding of jihadists is discussed, it is in the context of the financial support lent to the Afghan mujahideen in the 1980s, following the Soviet Red Army's invasion of Afghanistan. However, such support was considered legitimate, if not altogether "patriotic," by Washington. But long before the Soviet invasion, the Saudis had begun to fund various Pakistani militant groups, who had set their eyes on "liberating Kashmir" from India.

Former *Washington Post* managing editor Steve Coll, in his book *Ghost Wars*, pointed out that, as when Osama bin Laden became involved with the mujahideen resistance in Afghanistan, he also developed close ties to the Saudi intelligence agency, the GID. There was evidence that Saudi Intelligence Minister Prince Turki al-Faisal played a middleman role between Saudi intelligence and mujahideen groups. Saeed Badeeb, Turki's chief analyst, had been one of bin Laden's teachers when bin Laden was in high school. Badeeb later said, "I loved Osama and considered him a good citizen of Saudi Arabia." Coll said that while the Saudi government denies bin Laden was ever a Saudi intelligence agent, and the exact nature of his connections with the GID remains murky, "it seems clear that bin Laden did have a substantial relationship with Saudi intelligence."

While there is no doubt that Osama bin Laden was once a stalwart protecting "our allies," he became a bad egg at some point. Billions of dollars in aid from Saudi Arabia and the CIA to the Afghan mujahideen were siphoned off by the Pakistani ISI, and began to protect and strengthen the groups who later jelled into what is now known as al-Qaeda. Melvin Goodman, a CIA analyst in the 1980s, was quoted, in the May 1996 *Atlantic Monthly*, saying, "They [the Saudis] were funding the wrong groups, and had little idea where the money was going or how it was being spent."

They were the wrong groups, no doubt. But it took "those-who-matter" many years to find that out, and a few more years to make it public. During this period of "I see nothing, I hear nothing, and I know nothing," a lot of damage was done. It was "discovered" only later that various accounts held at the notoriously corrupt and now-defunct BCCI bank, later identified as a "drug

bank,” were distributed to the ISI and the A.Q. Khan nuclear network.

Hizb ut-Tahir—A Dirty Link in Saudi-British Ties

Saudi funding has always benefitted those whom British intelligence has nurtured and used. Take, for instance, Saudi funding to spread Wahabism in Central Asia. The funding was done through a group headquartered in London, the Hizb ut-Tahrir. As soon the Soviet Union collapsed and the “stan” countries (Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) broke off, Saudi money poured into Pakistan to print hundreds of thousands of copies of the Holy Koran to be distributed in the “stan” countries through the Hizb ut-Tahrir network. These white-robed religious individuals, sworn to the Wahabi-form of Islam, moved in the “stans,” funded by the Saudis.

The Dutch Intelligence Service (AIVD), however, kept its eyes peeled, and at a conference of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, in 1998, pointed out that Saudi Arabia was funding a number of European departments of Hizb ut-Tahrir. According to a staff member who spoke at the conference, “The Saudis are still poised to play an active role in radically Islamic movements. They have great sums of money at their disposal, and it is difficult to refuse the Saudi dollars.”

While some might defend the right of charities to help spread religion, the fact is that Hizb ut-Tahrir is more than meets the eye. According to Ahmed Rashid, a senior Pakistani journalist, “the Hizb-e Tahrir (HT), which has growing support in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan reflected by the increasing number of arrests of HT members by the internal security apparatus of these states, operates a highly secretive cell system which makes it difficult for the authorities to contain their spread. They have a vision of uniting Central Asia in an Islamic Caliphate—which would re-establish the idealized period of Islam just after the death of the Prophet Mohammed.”

Rashid said the HT has established thousands of five-man cells across Central Asia to achieve its aims. It believes in peaceful change through a mass movement against the Central Asian regimes, but does not rule out the possibility of eventually having to take up arms if the repression against it continues. HT claims that it has nothing to do with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU); a terrorist outfit involved in regime

change through violence in Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and has shown up in the Chinese western province of Xinjiang. However, many, if not all, IMU members were former members of the HT.

Rashid pointed out that the IMU was also bankrolled by the Afghan drug trade, Osama bin Laden, and Islamic groups in Pakistan, along with the Arab Gulf states. Its strength grew from some 600 fighters who first came to Afghanistan in the Spring of 1999, to nearly 3,000 by 2001. It recruited widely from all the Central Asian and Caucasian ethnic groups—especially the Chechens—as well as Uighur Muslims from the Chinese region of Xinjiang.

What makes the Saudi funding dangerous is that it goes to the groups who work directly for the British colonial interest, and against Washington’s interest. To begin with, the violent movement that has sprung up on the Pakistan side along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, is led by the Pakistani Taliban and the foreign terrorists commonly identified as al-Qaeda. All these groups were beneficiaries of Saudi charities. Now, of course, with the millions of poppies blooming in southern Afghanistan, money is no object. It is plentiful.

The Pakistani Taliban, aided by the ISI and MI6, are involved in an effort to break up Pakistan and create an independent state, which may later blossom into a “Greater Pushtunistan,” to fragment the area further and deepen the conflicts. This would be welcomed by the colonial forces in Britain.

Saudi charities have also helped the anti-Beijing Uighurs. Reports indicate that the Uighur Diaspora, based in Turkey, is beneficiary of Saudi grants. The Aug. 4 terrorist act which killed 16 Chinese policemen in Kashgar in Xinjiang, was orchestrated by the Uighurs and IMU members, coming into China from the Tajik borders.

This blatant terrorist act was repudiated by almost all nations, but not by Britain. An editorial in the *Financial Times* of London on Aug. 6, made clear colonial Britain’s intent. It said that both the Uighurs, and the Tibetans, are citizens of independent nations subjugated by the Chinese. Calling for a break-up of China, the editorial said: “Their restiveness is a flickering if forlorn hope that something like the break-up of the Soviet Union might happen to China. . . . But if Beijing continues its bulldozer approach to minorities and robs the Uighurs of their identity, it would incite jihadism. . . .”

Not even Al-Haramain could say it better!