

TESTIMONY

Antecedents and Implications of the November 2008 Lashkar- e-Taiba (LeT) Attack Upon Several Targets in the Indian Mega-City of Mumbai

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Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection on
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Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection
United States House of Representatives**

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Introduction

On November 23, 2008 ten Pakistani terrorists associated with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)/Jamaat ul Dawa (JuD), operating in four attack teams, rampaged across some ten different targets in the Indian port city of Mumbai. In part due to the complexities of the counterterrorist operations, the tenacity and training of the attackers, and the inadequate capabilities of the Indian security forces, it took some four days to end the terrorist campaign which claimed the lives of at least 172 victims.

In this testimony, I have been asked to focus upon four specific concerns emerging from this attack and its perpetrators. First, I contextualize LeT among the proliferating expanse of militant groups operating in and from Pakistan. Second, I provide specific information about LeT, the militant group responsible for this and many other attacks within India. Third, I draw out both the antecedents and innovations of the 2008 Mumbai attack. I conclude with a discussion of some of the important implications that emerge from this and other LeT activities for regional and international security generally and U.S. security in particular.

While LeT was banned in 2002, the LeT began operating under the banner of JuD, which was overtly operational until the Pakistan government formally banned it following immense international pressure in late 2008, including a resolution in the U.N. Security Council that JuD is a terrorist organization. In the service of brevity, I use LeT and JuD somewhat synonymously even though there are a few important technical differences.⁴

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² This testimony is available for free download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT320/>.

³ The author is grateful to Peter Chalk, Lisa Curtis, James Dobbins, and Praveen Swami who reviewed earlier drafts of this testimony.

⁴ Technically, LeT remained the militant wing while JuD engaged in a wider array of charitable activities such as establishing hospitals, clinics, schools, and madrassah and other poverty relief activities. Since LeT was

Pakistan's Myriad Militants: Situating Lashkar-e-Taiba

Pakistan has given rise to numerous militant groups in recent decades that operate to secure Pakistan's state interests in India and Afghanistan. In addition, Pakistan has sustained numerous covert operations campaigns in Indian-administered Kashmir since 1947.⁵ Many—if not most—of these militant groups have enjoyed the specific patronage of the Pakistani state intelligence and military agencies to prosecute Islamabad's interests in India (with particular focus upon Kashmir) and Afghanistan.⁶ These varied militant groups, until circa 2002, could largely be disaggregated according to religious ideology (school of Islamic thought) and operational goals.⁷

Among Pakistan's various Islamic interpretative schools, the Deobandi school of thought claims the most militant groups. Key Deobandi militant groups include the Taliban (Afghan and the Pakistani), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JM), Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HUJI), Harkat-ul-Ansar/Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUA/HUM), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan (SSP) among numerous offshoots. The Deobandi tradition emerged as a puritanical movement to uplift Muslims by purifying Islamic practice through discouraging mystical beliefs such as intercession by saints and veneration of graves and shrines. Deobandi institutions, notably a burgeoning archipelago of Deobandi madaris across the Pashtun belt and beyond, received support from the Pakistani government and others to produce mujahideen for Afghanistan both in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.⁸ These Deobandi militant groups also have enjoyed both close connections to and overlapping membership with Deobandi political organizations including personalized factions of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI). Until the February 2008 elections, JUI factions comprised

outlawed, it largely operated under the umbrella of JuD. Proponents of JuD's innocence assert the separation of the organizations.

⁵ In their most maximal objectives, these campaigns have aimed to wrest from New Delhi the portion of Kashmir which it administers. (India controls about two-thirds of the collective area known as Jammu and Kashmir.) These campaigns have sought to secure Pakistani sovereignty over the expanse of the disputed territory. In their most minimalist objectives, these campaigns have sought to "bleed India" by requiring it sustain a large (often locally resented) counter-insurgency grid in Jammu and Kashmir. For a discussion of the various covert campaigns, see Praveen Swami, *Indian Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947-2004* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁶ Ashley J. Tellis writes on this point that "In fact, of all the Pakistani- sponsored Deobandi [sic] terrorist groups operating against India in Kashmir and elsewhere, only one entity— the Hizbul Mujahideen— began life as an indigenous Kashmiri insurgent group; the others, including the most violent organizations such as the Lashkar- e-Toiba, the Jaish- e- Muhammad, and the Harkat- ul- Mujahideen, are all led, manned, and financed by native Pakistanis." See Ashley J. Tellis, *Pakistan and the War on Terror Conflicted Goals, Compromised Performance* (Washington D.C.: CEIP, 2008), p. 5. Also see among numerous other sources Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2009); See Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan Between and Military* (Washington D.C.: CEIP, 2005); Hassan Abbas and Jessica Stern, *Pakistan's Drift Into Extremism: Allah, then Army, and America's War Terror* (New York: M.E. Sharpe 2004).

⁷ This draws from C. Christine Fair, "Who Are Pakistan's Militants and Their Families?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (January, 2008).

⁸ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004). Pakistan developed and supported Islamist proxies in Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion by mobilizing those Islamists who had been ousted by President Daud after 1973.

important partners in the Islamist coalition (*Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* or *MMA*) that formed the provincial government in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), a coalition government with President Musharraf's political ally (the Pakistan Muslim League-Q) in Balochistan, and the loyal opposition in the national parliament.

A second important school of thought that animates militancy in Pakistan is the Ahl-e-Hadith interpretative tradition. The most prominent Ahl-e-Hadith militant group is the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Ahl-e-Hadith is a Sunni interpretative tradition associated with Hanbali school of jurisprudence, which in Pakistan is sometimes called Salafist or derogatorily "Wahabbist." The Ahl-e-Hadith tradition is the South Asian variant of the theological tradition motivating core al-Qaeda ideologues. While LeT is most known for its militant activities, one of the organization's crucial functions is the expansion of the market share of Ahl-e-Hadith adherents in Pakistan. For this reason, LeT trains many more potential militants than it will ever deploy for operations. LeT expects these recruits to return to their localities and continue propounding support for LeT and its creed.⁹

Several groups operating in Kashmir (e.g. Hizbul Mujahideen and related factions such as Al Badr) are associated with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), which is a supra-sectarian school of thought and Islamist political party in Pakistan. Jamaat-e-Islami, while formally a political party, espouses the ideological leanings of its founder Maulana Maududi. Jamaat-e-Islami is similar in goals and outlook to the Muslim Brotherhood. JI was, until the 2008 elections, a member of the Islamist bloc (the MMA) despite growing differences between JI and the Musharraf government and with other Islamist leaders within the MMA who continued to support Musharraf. JI boycotted the 2008 elections.

In addition to these schisms across interpretative traditions, Pakistan's militant groups can in some measure be distinguished by their historical and current goals. As will be discussed herein some of these goals have changed or have not always been stable. For example, groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) have traditionally focused upon the Kashmir issue. *Only the HM and other JI-related groups have limited their operations to Indian-administered Kashmir.*¹⁰ From 1999 if not earlier, LeT and JM began operations in the Indian hinterland both in the name of "liberating Kashmir" but also in the name of a wider jihad in India and exacerbating Hindu-Muslim discord within India to undermine India's

⁹ See C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al-Qa'ida and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (November/December 2004).

¹⁰ There have been some reports that these groups are operating in Afghanistan. I have been unable to confirm these reports.

claims to be a diverse democracy that accommodates the aspirations of its varied religious and ethnic groups.¹¹

In addition, Pakistan hosts a number of sectarian groups such as the Deobandi Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan (SSP) which traditionally focused upon anti-Shia targets. These groups have also had a historical presence in Afghanistan as well. In the past, Iranian-backed Shia militias such as the Tehreek-e-Jafria and the Sipah-e-Muhammad have targeted Sunnis, especially those propounding an explicit anti-Shia agenda. These groups were particularly active throughout the 1990s. While the Deobandi-Shia axis garners the most attention with respect to sectarian violence, it should be noted that considerable violence and discord exists among Pakistan's various Sunni traditions (*maslaks*).

From as early as 2002, some elements of Pakistan's varied Deobandi groups (e.g. JM, HUJI, LeJ, SSP) began targeting the Pakistan state as evidenced by the attacks on then President Musharraf, various civilian leaders including the Ministry of Interior and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and numerous military, police and intelligence individuals and organizations. Analysts believe that these groups disagreed with President Musharraf's policies of supporting the United States and its military campaign in Afghanistan as well as Musharraf's policy of "moderated jihad" in Kashmir. Musharraf adopted this approach due to, inter alia, increased international pressure in the wake of the Indian Parliament attack in December 2001 by Pakistan-based militants. That attack triggered the largest amassing of Indian and Pakistani troops and stoked international fears of an Indo-Pakistan war. Indian diplomatic fortitude was again tested when the LeT massacred wives and children of army personnel in Kaluchak. The United States engaged in vigorous diplomacy to dampen the compound crisis and avert conflict. In response to the Indian mobilization, Pakistani troops swung from the west to the east which compromised U.S. operations in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's various Deobandi groups have also been responsible for numerous attacks against *international* targets such as the various attacks on the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, the suicide attack against numerous French naval engineers working in Karachi, a church in Islamabad frequented by foreigners, among numerous others.¹² Notable among these groups attacking Pakistani and international targets within Pakistan are JM, HUJI, and LeJ/SSP.

¹¹ In 1999, the LeT attacked an intelligence outpost attached to the Red Fort, a high profile tourist destination in New Delhi. In 2001, Jaish-e-Mohammad attacked India's parliament building.

¹² For an inventory of post-9/11 "western" attacks in Pakistan, see South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Post-9/11 Attacks on Western Targets in Pakistan," no date. Available at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/westerntargets.htm>.

Following Pakistan's military operations in the Pashtun belt and U.S. military operations in Afghanistan, a series of Pashtun-led militant commanders emerged that began targeting the Pakistani security forces including the regular army, paramilitary organizations such as the Frontier Corps and police. In late 2007, many of these commanders coalesced under the banner of the "Pakistani Taliban" (e.g. Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan) under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsood based in South Waziristan in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Mehsood claims many allies all of whom to seek to establish in various degrees sharia (Islamic governance) across the Pashtun belt in Pakistan including the FATA and settled areas such as Swat.¹³ In late February 2008, two dissident commanders (Mullah Nazir of South Waziristan and Gul Bahadur of North Waziristan) set aside their differences with Baitullah Mehsood and forged the Shura Ittehad-ul-Mujahiden.¹⁴

In addition to the above noted Pakistani groups, Pakistan also hosts elements of the Afghan Taliban, with leadership committees (shuras) in Quetta, Peshawar, and Karachi.¹⁵ The Afghan Taliban remains focused upon ousting foreign forces in Afghanistan, overthrowing the Karzai regime, and restoring their role in governing Afghanistan. As is well known, Pakistani territory is also used by al Qaeda. Al Qaeda operatives are known to reside in North and South Waziristan and Bajaur among other areas in the Pashtun belt. Moreover, many al Qaeda operatives (such as Abu Zubaidah, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad among numerous others) have been arrested in Pakistani cities.¹⁶

Pakistan has rightly noted that it is a victim of sanguinary terrorist violence that has escalated since joining the U.S.-led war on terror. Indeed, the TTP and other sectarian and ethno-nationalist

¹³ See Hassan Abbas, "Increasing Talibanization in Pakistan's Seven Tribal Agencies," *Terrorism Monitor* Vol. 5, No. 18 (September 27, 2007), pp. 1–5; Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan" *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 1, No. 2, January 2008, pp. 1–4; Syed Shoaib Hasan, "Profile: Baitullah Mehsud," BBC News, December 28, 2007. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7163626.stm.

¹⁴ Pakistan has considered Maulvi Nazir an ally because he helped oust or kill numerous Uzbeks in South Waziristan. He is considered to be a dedicated foe of U.S. and NATO forces as he dispatches fighters to Afghanistan. Gul Bahadur has had a number of differences with Baitullah Mehsood. It is not clear what this alliance means for Pakistan or for the U.S. and allies in Afghanistan. See Saeed Shah, "Taliban rivals unite to fight US troop surge," *The Guardian*, March 3, 2009. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/03/taliban-pakistan-afghanistan-us-surge>.

¹⁵ See, inter alia, Senator Carl Levin, "Opening Statement of Senator Carl Levin, Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing on Afghanistan and Pakistan," February 26, 2009. Available at <http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/release.cfm?id=308740>; Ian Katz, "Gates Says Militant Sanctuaries Pose Biggest Afghanistan Threat," *Bloomberg News*, March 1, 2009. Available at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aehmlRXgKi2o&refer=home>; Barnett R. Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2007. Available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070101faessay86105-p0/barnett-r-rubin/saving-afghanistan.html>;

¹⁶ See comments made by National Intelligence Director John Negroponte cited in "Al-Qaeda 'rebuilding' in Pakistan," *BBC News Online*, January 12, 2007. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6254375.stm; K. Alan Kronstadt, *U.S.-Pakistan Relations* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2008). Available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/115888.pdf>.

militants in Pakistan have wreaked considerable havoc in Pakistan with 63 suicide attacks and an astonishing 2,148 attacks or clashes with security forces in 2008 alone.¹⁷

Howsoever horrific these facts are, the LeT has never targeted the Pakistani state or international targets within Pakistan. This has led many analysts within and without the region to intuit that LeT continues to enjoy special relations with Pakistan's intelligence and military agencies notwithstanding much-touted Pakistani efforts to proscribe LeT's activities and those of its cover organization, the Jamaat ul Dawa (JuD). The March 2, 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore may signal an important shift in LeT operations and its ties to the state. In that incident, several heavily armed men viciously assaulted the team, umpires, and related officials as well as their police escort in the Punjabi city of Lahore, killing six police officers and two civilians. Speculation is rife that the commando operation may have been the handiwork of the LeT. If so, this attack will be the first LeT attack on Pakistani soil. At the time of writing, it is too early to inveigh upon the evidence for or against these allegations of LeT involvement.

While the verdict is out on perpetrators of the attack on the Sri Lankan cricketers, few analysts and journalists interviewed during my recent trip to Pakistan believed that Pakistan could or would decisively eliminate JuD despite its late 2008 ban on the organization. This is both because JuD/LeT is still considered to be an important asset in Pakistan's quest to secure its regional objectives and because it, unlike the proliferating morass of Deobandi groups, has never targeted the state. However, even if Pakistan were to resolve to eliminate JuD/LeT, few believe that Pakistan has the ability to do so.

Lashkar-e-Taiba: Origins, Operatives and Operations

The LeT has focused the attention of policy makers in recent months because it perpetrated the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. As this section narrates, the LeT has a long-standing presence in Pakistan and South Asia. Since 2001, it has increasingly established a presence well beyond the region. LeT emerged as the military wing of the Markaz Daawat ul Irshad (MDI), headquartered in Muridke near the Punjabi city of Lahore. MDI was founded in 1986 by two Pakistani Engineering professors, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and Zafar Iqbal. Abdullah Azzam, a close associate of Bin Laden who was affiliated with the Islamic University of Islamabad and the Maktab ul Khadamat (Bureau of Services for Arab mujahideen), also provided assistance. He was killed in Peshawar two years after the Markaz was founded. MDI, along with numerous other militant groups, was involved in Afghanistan from 1986 onwards and established militant training camps for this purpose. One camp was known as Muaskar-e-Taiba in Paktia (in Afghanistan

¹⁷ See Pak Institute for Peace Studies, *Pakistan Security Report 2008* (Islamabad: PIPS, 2009) p. 3.

bordering Pakistan) and a second known as Muaskar-e-Aqsa in the Kunar province of Afghanistan.¹⁸ (Kunar is known to be home to numerous Ahl-e-Hadith adherents in Afghanistan, which overall has few followers in that country. For this reason, Kunar has been an attractive safe-haven for Arabs in Afghanistan.) Pakistan-based analysts note that MDI/LeT's training camps were always separate from those of the Taliban, which hosted Deobandi militant groups such as HUJI and Harkat ul Mujahideen. This has led some analysts to contend that LeT has not had the sustained and organic connections to Al Qaeda as enjoyed by the Deobandi groups, many of which became "out sourcers" for al Qaeda in Pakistan.¹⁹

In 1993, MDI divided its activities into two related but separate organizations: MDI continued the mission of proselytization and education while LeT emerged as the militant wing. The ISI is believed to have funded the organization and analysts continue to believe that LeT is a close proxy of Pakistani intelligence agencies.²⁰ After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, LeT/MDI shifted focus to Indian-administered Kashmir. It staged its first attack (against a jeep carrying Indian air force personnel) in Kashmir in 1990. The vast majority of LeT operatives are Pakistanis (often Punjabis) and the organization has spawned a vast training infrastructure throughout the country to support its dual mission of training militants and converting Pakistanis to the Ahl-e-Hadith interpretative tradition. For much of the 1990s (with few exceptions), LeT operations were restricted to Indian administered Kashmir.

A perusal of LeT literature demonstrates a commitment to targeting Indian Hindus, Jews, Americans and other infidels and apostate Muslims; stoking larger Hindu-Muslim discord in India;

¹⁸ See Yoginder Sikand, "The Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of the Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Aparna Rao et al. Eds. *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp.215-238; Mariam Abou Zahab, "I Shall be Waiting at the Door of Paradise: The Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure), in Aparna Rao et al. Eds. *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp.133158; Saeed Shafqat, "From Official Islam to Islamism: The Rise of Dawat-ul-Irshad and Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Christophe Jaffrelot Ed. *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2002), pp. 131-147.

¹⁹ In 1998, the United States bombed several al Qaeda/Taliban training camps in retaliation for the al Qaeda attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa. Militants of several Pakistani Deobandi groups were killed including operatives of HUJI and HuM among others. See Barry Bearak, "After The Attacks: In Pakistan; Estimates Of Toll In Afghan Missile Strike Reach As High As 50," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1998. Also see Dexter Filkins, "'All of Us Were Innocent,' Says Survivor of U.S. Attack on Camp," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1998. Available at <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/aug/24/news/mn-16045>.

²⁰ Analysts believe that the LeT, with its explicit Islamist and pro-Pakistan orientation, was established to counter the ethno-nationalist and pro-independence militant group Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The JKLF eventually abandoned militancy and assumed political activism. For more information about LeT's origins, see Yoginder Sikand, "The Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of the Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Aparna Rao et al. Eds. *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp.215-238; Mariam Abou Zahab, "I Shall be Waiting at the Door of Paradise: The Pakistani Martyrs of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure), in Aparna Rao et al. Eds. *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp.133158; Saeed Shafqat, "From Official Islam to Islamism: The Rise of Dawat-ul-Irshad and Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Christophe Jaffrelot Ed. *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation* (London: Zed Books, 2002), pp. 131-147.

and liberating all of India and establishing a caliphate.²¹ MDI claims that it has had a leading role in armed struggles across the Muslim world, first in Afghanistan, then in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kosovo, the Philippines, and Kashmir among other venues.²² While there is no independent verification of these claims, as discussed herein, many LeT-associated individuals and cells have appeared in Iraq, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and several European countries.

LeT has a hallmark modus operandi which has often been misconstrued as “suicide operations.” In fact, LeT does not do suicide operations per se in which the goal of the attacker is to die in the execution of the attack. Rather, LeT’s “fidayeen” missions are more akin to high-risk missions in which well-trained commandos engage in fierce combat during which dying is preferable to being captured. While martyrdom is in some sense the ultimate objective of LeT operatives, the LeT selects missions where there is a possibility (howsoever slim) of living to kill more of the enemy. The goal of LeT commandos therefore is not to commit suicide in the execution of an attack. Rather, they seek to kill as many as possible until they either succumb to enemy operations or manage to survive, perhaps by decisively eliminating the enemy in the battle.

Zahab has described a typical LeT encounter in the following way “the fighters are well trained and highly motivated and they engage the enemy on its own territory. Small groups of fedayeen...storm a security force camp and kill as many soldiers as possible before taking defensive positions within the camp and engaging security force personnel till they attain martyrdom. Battles often last twenty hours, if not more.”²³ She further notes that these spectacular and well-planned attacks bring the LeT maximum publicity, expands recruiting and donations and demoralizes the enemy which must resort to heavy fire, which destroys their own buildings and causes substantial collateral damage in the process. While LeT claims that it has only assaulted hard targets, their record demonstrates an absolute willingness to kill civilians in cinemas, hotels, tourist destinations, airports, etc.

Consonant with the rigor of a typical LeT mission, LeT recruits *do not* predominantly draw from Pakistan’s madaris (pl. madrassah). Rather LeT recruits are generally in their late teens or early twenties and they tend to be better educated than Pakistanis on average or even other militant groups such as the Deobandi SSP or JM. A majority of LeT recruits have completed secondary school with good grades and some have even attended college. This reflects both the background of LeT’s founding fathers who were engineering professors and their commitment to

²¹ The author has collected LeT poster work and written materials since 1995.

²² Sikand, “Islamist Militancy in Kashmir,” P. 219. Also see discussion of LeT in Muhammad Amir Ranan (trans. Saba Ansari) *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2004), pp. 324.

²³ Zahab, “I Shall be Waiting,” p. 138.

technical and other education. Many LeT operatives likely came into contact with LeT through proselytization programs on college campuses, which in turn lured the potential recruits to the large “ijtema” (congregation) held annually in Muridke. The fraction of madrassah-educated LeT operatives is believed to be as low as ten percent.²⁴ Clearly not all LeT cadres are well-educated as attested by the lone surviving Mumbai gunman, Azam Amir Kasab, a Punjabi with only a fourth grade education. By comparison, the mean years of schooling for males in the Punjab is 4.7 years.²⁵ LeT also actively targets women both to expand their recruitment base of males and reportedly to recruit women for militant operations.²⁶ In sharp contrast, many of the Deobandi groups including the Afghan Taliban rely upon madrassah and mosque-based networks.²⁷

Since the late 1990s, LeT has cultivated significant operational reach beyond Kashmir and into India. While Indian citizens were always required for facilitating LeT and other militant groups’ actions within Indian-administered Kashmir and the Indian hinterland, LeT has successfully cultivated active cadres and figures preeminently in founding of the Indian Mujahideen. In 2002, at least 14 young men from Hyderabad left for Pakistan for training, reportedly motivated by the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. (Praveen Swami reports that even as early as 1992 some Indian Muslims sought training in Pakistan in response to the demolition of the Babri Masjid by Hindu extremists.) The Hyderabad operatives received training in LeT and JM camps and enjoyed operational assistance from Bangladesh-based Harkat-ul-Jihad-Bangladesh (HUJI-B). This cell was responsible for the May 18, 2007 terrorist attack in Hyderabad’s Toli Chowki area.²⁸ LeT has moved Indian personnel into and out of Pakistan via Bangladesh and other countries through criminal syndicates as well as other Islamist and militant groups such as the Students Islamist Movement of India (SIMI) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-Bangladesh (HUJI-B) among others.²⁹

Despite the rhetoric surrounding the horrific events in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, there were important antecedents of that attack. Most recently, in July 2006, LeT working with local operatives, detonated seven explosions across Mumbai’s commuter rail system. That 2006 assault was even more lethal than the 2008 carnage, killing at least 187. While that attack focused the public’s attention upon LeT’s ability to strike deep within India, LeT had reportedly

²⁴ Zahab, “I Shall be Waiting,” p. 140, Shafqat, “From Official Islam to Islamism,” p. 142.

²⁵ Data on mean years of schooling is given for 2005. See Social Policy Development Center. *Social Development in Pakistan: Annual Review* (Karachi: SPDC, 2007), p. 152. Available at <http://www.spdc-pak.com/pubs/sdip0607.pdf>.

²⁶ Farhat Haq, “Militarism and Motherhood: The Women of the Lashkar-i-Tayyabia in Pakistan,” *Signs*, vol. 32, no. 4, Summer 2007, pp. 1023-1046.

²⁷ For a more throughout discussion of the connections between militancy and education, see C. Christine Fair, *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: USIP, 2008).

²⁸ Praveen Swami, “Terror Junction,” *Frontline*, Vol. 24, No. 11, June 2-15, 2007. Available at <http://www.hindu.com/fline/fl2411/stories/20070615002303500.htm>.

²⁹ Praveen Swami, “Lashkar-trained Indian Terrorists Pose Growing Threat,” *The Hindu*, December 19, 2008. Available at <http://www.hindu.com/2008/12/19/stories/2008121956141200.htm>.

established networks in Mumbai as early as August 1999. India's intelligence Bureau disrupted a pan-India network led by LeT-operative Amir Khan who was tasked with recruiting from India's communal-violence afflicted communities. In 2000, Indian authorities intercepted three Pakistani LeT cadres who had planned to kill Bal Thackeray, leader of a Hindu nationalist group called the Shiv Sena.³⁰

In 2004, another LeT cell was disrupted that aimed to attack the Bombay Stock Exchange. (The Bombay Stock Exchange had been attacked previously in 1993. The then India-based Mafioso, Dawood Ibrahim, orchestrated that attack using Indian militants with Pakistani support.) In June 2006, the Maharashtra police arrested an 11-member LeT cell that shipped some 43 kilograms of explosives, assault rifles and grenades to India using sea routes. Several of those militants had ties to SIMI. Indian analysts believe that LeT, working with SIMI and smuggling rings, have been able to successively move large amounts of explosives and weapons by sea along the Gujarat coast.³¹ The movement of explosives through the Maharashtra and Gujarat coastlines was reminiscent of logistical routes used to supply explosives for the 1993 Bombay Stock Exchange.³²

Needless to say, these are only illustrative—not exhaustive—examples of LeT's penetration of India and cultivation of Indian networks to conduct terror operations. With respect to the November 2008 attack, at least two Indian operatives played critical roles: Fahim Arshad Ansari, a key LeT operative from Mumbai, and Sabahuddin Ahmad of Uttar Pradesh. Both men helped prepare maps and videotapes to guide LeT's operatives to their targets. Their contributions—perhaps more so than the use of GPS devices—likely guided the terrorists' movements through Mumbai.³³

Finally, the early connections between MDI/LeT to Azam, along with the organization's Salafi-jihadi outlook, fosters suspicion that LeT and al Qaeda enjoy tight linkages. These suspicions are buttressed by a number of developments and observations. First, al Qaeda operatives (e.g. Abu Zubaidah) have been arrested in LeT safe houses. In addition, LeT has been operating against U.S., NATO and Afghan forces in Kunar and Nuristan in close proximity to al Qaeda, which

³⁰ Praveen Swami, "Road to Unimaginable Horror," *The Hindu*, July 13, 2006. Available at <http://www.hindu.com/2006/07/13/stories/2006071303420800.htm>.

³¹ In May of 2006, Mohammad Iqbal, an LeT activist from Bahawalpur (a city in southern Punjab in Pakistan), was shot dead by Delhi Police. Iqbal had worked through mafia-linked traffickers to ship a consignment of explosives through Gujarat that was used in the February 2006 attack on an Ahmedabad (Gujarat) train platform. See Praveen Swami, "Road to Unimaginable Horror," *The Hindu*, July 13, 2006. Available at <http://www.hindu.com/2006/07/13/stories/2006071303420800.htm>.

³² See Praveen Swami and Anupama Katakam, "Investigators Shut Down Terror Cells Tasked with Executing Strikes in Gujarat, but the Threat Remains," *Frontline*, Vol. 23, No. 10, May 20-June 2, 2006.

³³ Y.P. Rajesh and Sagnik Chowdhury, "26/11 The Indian hand," *Indian Express*, February 27, 2009. Available at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/26-11-the-indian-hand/428565/>.

operates in the same region.³⁴ Third, in recent years, LeT operatives have appeared in small numbers in other theatres. For example, British forces captured two Pakistani LeT operatives in Iraq and rendered them into U.S. custody.³⁵ A number of Australians (including apparent converts to Islam) have been trained in LeT camps and have plotted to attack Australian targets, discomfiting Australian authorities.³⁶ Reports persist that a wide array of American, Canadian and British nationals have trained in LeT camps.³⁷ At least one of the bombers (Shahzad Tanveer) in London's "7/7" subway attack is alleged to have contacted LeT officials while in Pakistan as well as those associated with JM. Apart from that incident, British officials contend that LeT has numerous links with many terror cells and plots disrupted in the United Kingdom. For example, Dhiren Barot, a Hindu convert to Islam and LeT activist was arrested in the U.K. and charged with planning several chemical and radiological attacks on financial offices in the United States. LeT is also tied to Richard Reid (a.k.a. "the shoe bomber") as well as a Virginia-based "paintball jihad" cell in which several Islamists, including an American Muslim convert named Randall "Ismail" Royer, trained to participate in LeT's campaign against India. Royer, who was convicted, dispatched recruits to an LeT camp in Pakistan where they learned to use small arms, rocket-propelled grenades, among other military resources to fight in India.³⁸

Pakistan-based analysts of LeT, among others, tend to discount the claims of explicit al Qaeda-LeT linkages and note that al Qaeda operatives have been arrested in Jamaat Islami safe houses as well and note that LeT infrastructure in Afghanistan, as described above, was separate from that of Al Qaeda and their patrons, the Taliban.³⁹ Thus the actual degree to which LeT is allied to

³⁴ Author fieldwork in Afghanistan between June and October 2007; Kathy Gannon, "Pakistan militants focus on Afghanistan: Jihadist groups are increasingly attacking U.S., NATO forces in Afghanistan," Associated Press, Web site, July 14, 2008.

³⁵ Richard Norton-Taylor, "Britain aided Iraq terror renditions, government admits," *The Guardian*, February 26, 2009. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/26/britain-admits-terror-renditions>.

³⁶ Recently, during a trial of several men plotting to attack the United States from Sydney, a participant (a Korean-American Muslim convert) alleged that an Australian citizen known as Abu Asad trained with Lashkar-e-Taiba at a camp in Pakistan in 2001. See Geesche Jacobsen, "Australian in training camp named," *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 13, 2009. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/australian-in-training-camp-named/2009/01/13/1231608682540.html>. For information on another collective of Australians trained in LeT camps, see Ashok Malik, "Lashkar link in Aussie terror net," *Indian Express*, June 12, 2004. Available at <http://www.indianexpress.com/oldstory.php?storyid=48832>. Perhaps the most famous Australian to train at an LeT camp is David Hicks who was recently freed from Guantanamo. See "David Hicks: 'Australian Taliban,'" BBC News, May 20, 2007.

Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3044386.stm>.

³⁷ See for example "Lashkar training in US, Canada, UK, Australia," *Rediff.com*, December 10, 2008. Available at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2008/dec/10mumterror-lashkar-training-in-us-canada-uk-australia.htm>.

³⁸ For more details about the "paintball jihad" cell, see Stephen Schwartz, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in America: A convicted terror recruiter plays victim of the NSA," *The Weekly Standard*, December 16, 2006. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/015/927uxqry.asp>.

³⁹ See Yoginder Sikand, "The Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of the Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Aparna Rao et al. eds. *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp.215-238; Saeed Shafqat, "From Official Islam to Islamism: The Rise of Dawat-ul-Irshad and Lashkar-e-Taiba," in Christophe Jaffrelot Ed. *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation*

al Qaeda remains an important empirical question. *However, LeT threatens U.S. interests irrespective of its formal ties—or lack thereof—to al Qaeda. LeT has well-established linkages to international terrorism and it espouses goals that are similar to those of al Qaeda as the foregoing discussion illustrates.*

Implications of the November 2008 Mumbai Attack: Antecedents and Innovations

The November 2008 attack bares many hallmarks of previous LeT attacks. The assault employed dedicated and well-trained commandos who used explosives, small arms and grenades—all but one of whom fought until their deaths. While the available evidence suggests that the main operators were Pakistani, the attack relied upon crucial domestic assistance. Like previous LeT attacks in Mumbai and elsewhere, this assault involved exclusively *soft* targets with little or no defenses. Several of the targets (such as the Taj and Oberoi hotels) were Indian icons and reflected the opulence of India's elite. They also attracted wealthy international visitors. Other targets such as the Chatrapati Shivaji Station rendered India's middle and lower-middle classes vulnerable. (The train station was previously known as Victoria Terminus and was renamed after an important 17th century Hindu leader who re-established Hindu political dominance in the region after a long period of Muslim rule.) Other targets, such as the Chabad House, reflect an explicit expansion of LeT's focus as described below.

Most accounts of the attack dilate upon the daring infiltration of the attackers who traveled from Pakistan by sea. While the sea-based landing of the ten militants was exceptionally daunting, the concept was not entirely new even if the complexity of the movement was. As noted, mafia syndicates and Islamist militant groups have moved explosives, guns, grenades and other illicit cargo through similar routes since at least 1993. In the conduct of the 1993 Bombay Stock Exchange, mafia leader Dawood Ibrahim working with an associate named Tiger Memon, arranged for considerable illicit cargo to move into a small fishing village near Mumbai via a small motorboat. In one of the few comprehensive accounts of that conspiracy, S. Hussain Zaidi describes how Memon and his crew boarded a small motorboat which "sailed towards the open sea" where it "rendezvoused [sic] with a large red speedboat," from which it loaded the weapons and other materials (including AK-47s, large quantities of a military grade explosive called RDX, pencil detonators, grenades, pistols) used for the attack. They then returned to the fishing village and offloaded the cargo. While the operatives of the 1993 blast exploited the widespread belief that that Mumbai security forces were inept, the locally recruited participants were ill-prepared for

(London: Zed Books, 2002), pp. 131-147. Why their infrastructure was apart from the other Deobandi camps is an important question even if there are no solid answers. Two possible explanations include: 1) be deliberate ISI decision to keep MDI/LeT separate from other groups' camps or, 2) more likely, the deep-seated hostility that MDI/LeT has historically had towards Deobandis and vice versa.

the operation and unfamiliar with the weapons to be used. Dawood Ibrahim and Tiger Memon arranged for their transportation to and from Pakistan where they were reportedly trained by Pakistani intelligence.⁴⁰

However, other aspects of this attack were notable and distinctive. While LeT has been operating against U.S., NATO and Afghan forces in Kunar and Nuristan⁴¹ and while LeT operatives went to fight allied forces in Iraq, this was the first known LeT assault upon American and international civilians. While it is now believed that LeT did not single out foreigners across the targets, one target in particular was distinctive: the Chabad Center. Mumbai, among other cities, hosts a historical albeit shrinking Jewish population and boasts many historical synagogues and Jewish cultural facilities. Despite the decades of Islamist violence perpetrated by a range of groups espousing an anti-Semitic agenda, no Islamist militant group had ever targeted India's Jewish community. Chabad was distinctive because it was not merely Jewish, but also associated with Israelis and other international Jewish visitors.⁴² This target is most curious of all as few from or familiar with Mumbai have ever heard of this institution.⁴³

While LeT and other groups have often posited and resisted the "Brahmanic-Talmudic-Crusader" alliance, no militant group within South Asia violently operationalized this agenda until the Mumbai 2008 attack. In the case of LeT, it is puzzling that despite advocating this agenda since the late 1980s, it took nearly two decades to act upon it. Possible explanations for the choice of that target include the growing Indo-Israeli military, counterterrorism and intelligence relationship which has long irritated Pakistan and animated the rhetoric of Islamist militants across the region.⁴⁴ Moreover, Israeli lobby apparatus in the U.S. has nurtured India's own emergent

⁴⁰ S. Hussain Zaidi, *Black Friday: The True Story of the Bombay Bomb Blasts* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002), pp. 50-67.

⁴¹ Author fieldwork in Afghanistan between June and October 2007; Kathy Gannon, "Pakistan militants focus on Afghanistan: Jihadist groups are increasingly attacking U.S., NATO forces in Afghanistan," Associated Press, Web site, July 14, 2008.

⁴² Yair Ettinger, "Mumbai attack sends shock waves through Chabad community worldwide," *Haaretz*, November 29, 2008. Available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1041785.html>; Anshel Pfeffer, "9 dead in Mumbai Chabad house attack; Israel to help identify bodies," *Haaretz*, November 30, 2008. Available at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1041834.html>.

⁴³ Conversations with Indian journalists and others during a recent trip to India and based upon conversations with a relative who lives in Mumbai.

⁴⁴ Military and intelligence ties have in many ways formed the backbone of the Indo-Israeli relationship and Israel is now India's pre-eminent arms supplier. For an early account of the emerging relationship see P.R.Kumaraswamy, "Strategic Partnership Between Israel and India," *MERIA Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, May 1998. Available at <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1998/issue2/jv2n2a6.html>. See Embassy of Israel, New Delhi, "Indo-Israel Relations," n.d. Available at <http://delhi.mfa.gov.il/mfm/web/main/document.asp?SubjectID=2010&MissionID=93&LanguageID=0&StatusID=0&DocumentID=-1>; P R Kumaraswamy, "Indo-Israeli military ties enter next stage: A US\$2.5 billion Indo-Israeli defense project marks a new phase in the two countries' relations," *ISN*, August 3, 2007. Available at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?ots591=4888CAA0-B3DB-1461-98B9-E20E7B9C13D4&lng=en&id=53611>; Efraim Inbar, "The Indian-Israeli Entente," *Orbis*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Winter 2004, Pages 89-104.

lobbying organizations and is rightly or wrongly associated with helping India achieve the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal.⁴⁵ Thus the selection of the Chabad center—rather than any of India’s domestic Jewish institutions—may have sought to undermine this important bilateral relationship.

Transcripts of the phone intercepts of the attack at the Chabad house buttress this explanation. The Pakistan-based caller encouraged the attacker to kill the hostages arguing that “If the hostages are killed, it will spoil relations between India and Israel.”⁴⁶ Another explanation may be that LeT was emboldened by its attacks against U.S. forces in Afghanistan and influenced by al Qaeda co-located with LeT in Afghanistan’s Kunar and Nuristan provinces. Of course, both may be valid.

Conclusions: Implications for U.S. Regional, and International Security

U.S. policymakers and analysts have pondered whether LeT could or would undertake such operations within the U.S. As the foregoing suggests, a number of individuals (including converts) who appear to have radicalized in the diaspora have traveled to Pakistan to train with the LeT and other militant groups (e.g. JM). LeT and other militant groups in the Punjab, comprise an important link between those who have radicalized in the diaspora and Pakistan’s tribal areas where al Qaeda is ensconced. (In turn Pashtun militants from the tribal areas rely upon Pashtun networks as well as Punjabi networks to execute attacks throughout Pakistan.) During my recent trip to Pakistan, one interlocutor described these Punjab-based groups as the “escalator for foreigners to get to FATA.”⁴⁷ *As FATA remains an important epicenter for international terrorism, the importance of groups like LeT (among others) cannot be understated and should motivate Washington to insist that Pakistan cease all forms of active and passive support for these groups and act decisively to eliminate them.*

A smaller number of Pakistani LeT operatives have found their way to other theatres such as Iraq. Given the tenacity of opposition to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, it is surprising that only two LeT operatives made their way to Iraq suggesting limited capacity or will. Given the difficulty in Pakistan-based operatives to obtain a visa to visit western countries, the strategy of pulling in operatives from the west is likely to be the most productive strategy as these individuals speak English, have the appropriate passport, and are more likely to gain access to targeted countries. Thus even if LeT (and other such groups) may be less capable of dispatching

⁴⁵ This judgment is based upon numerous visits to Pakistan since the discussion of the deal emerged.

⁴⁶ Andrew Buncombe and Omar Waraich in Islamabad, “Mumbai siege: ‘Kill all the hostages – except the two Muslims’ Phone conversations between Mumbai attackers and their ‘Pakistani handlers’ cast chilling new light on massacre,” *The Independent*, January 8, 2009. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/mumbai-siege-kill-all-the-hostages-ndash-except-the-two-muslims-1232074.html>.

⁴⁷ Author interviews with Pakistani and foreign journalists, analysts and diplomats in Islamabad in late February 2009.

Pakistan-based militants outside of the South Asian theatre, LeT and other militant camps in Pakistan remain destinations for international jihadists who are not so restricted in reaching their desired theatre of operation. Given the terrorist cells that have been disrupted in the U.S., U.K., Europe, and Australia (among other venues) and in light of the challenges posed by the visa-waiver program, one cannot rule out an LeT-facilitated attack within the United States. After Mumbai, one absolutely cannot rule out further attacks against U.S. citizens or interests abroad or those of U.S. allies.

Even if an LeT attack within the United States may be a low-probability event, LeT poses a number of concerns for the United States not the least of which include ongoing operations against U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, the likelihood of future attacks in India with the ever-present possibility of prompting yet another Indo-Pakistan military crises, and “copy cat” attacks in the United States or elsewhere.

The challenges faced by the Indian security forces are also illuminating.⁴⁸ First, the Indian authorities lacked basic information about the floor plan. Second, the Indian counterterrorism forces were undermined by the media coverage which televised in real time their efforts to eliminate the terrorists. The Pakistan-based handlers, during ongoing phone conversations with the militants, relayed critical information gleaned from the coverage, as the intercepted phone conversations attest. Third, given that many of these targets are deeply embedded within organic urban growth, even under the most optimistic assumptions, many of India’s numerous high-value civilian (e.g. tourism, commercial, industrial) targets will be difficult to secure.

Finally the Mumbai attack and its sustained media coverage reminds one that militants need not use extravagant suicide bombs to wreak havoc. Rather militants waging coordinated attacks, against several, soft and poorly defended—if not utterly indefensible targets—targets using only small-arms can inflict considerable damage.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Some of the challenges faced by the Indian authorities also stemmed from particular enduring lapses in Indian internal security apparatus. These include, among other durable problems, the inability of the National Security Guards to get to Mumbai, police ineptitude, poor means to share intelligence between and across external and domestic intelligence agencies, a deficient system for naval and coastal security. See Angel Rabasa et al. *The Lessons of Mumbai* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008).

⁴⁹ Notably, the Indian government did not limit the televised images of the attack even as Indian commandos began their offensives against the militants.