

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

The top ten most wanted Jihadis

Tuesday, September 01, 2009

By By Amir Mir

LAHORE: The death of Baitullah Mehsud in a US drone attack is unlikely to give Pakistan a reprieve in its military operations in the hostile tribal areas as there are many more hardcore militants with guns in their hands and Jihad on their mind — who are still at large and adamant to pursue their Jehadi agenda.

According to well-placed Interior Ministry sources in Islamabad, Pakistan's top ten most wanted terrorists belong to six militant and sectarian organisations linked to al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Four of the ten wanted militants are affiliated with the TTP; two belong to the LeJ while one each is associated with the TNSM, the JeM, the HUJI and the LeI. They include **Maulana Fazlullah**, the fugitive Ameer of the Swat chapter of the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), **Hakimullah Mehsud**, **Qari Hussain Mehsud**, **Maulvi Faqeer Mohammad** and **Waliur Rehman** of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), **Matiur Rehman** and **Qari Zafar** of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), **Maulana Ilyas Kashmiri** of the Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI), **Rashid Rauf** of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and **Mangal Bagh** of the Lashkar-e-Islami (LeI).

With Baitullah Mehsud already down, **Maulana Fazlullah** has become **No 1** most wanted terrorist. He is the son-in-law of Maulana Sufi Mohammed, the TNSM founder. Born on March 1, 1975, Fazlullah is widely known as Mullah Radio for using illegal FM channels to broadcast vituperative speeches, threatening people with dire consequences should they not adhere to Shariat and instigating the residents of Swat into taking part in Jihad. He has been missing since April 2009 after the Pakistan Army launched a massive operation to dismantle his Jehadi infrastructure following the collapse of a peace agreement between Sufi Mohammed and the government. Though the Army has reclaimed Swat, Fazlullah remains at large. He carries a reward of **Rs 5 million** on his head.

A close confidant of Baitullah Mehsud, **Hakimullah Mehsud**, is the new Ameer of the TTP who ranks **No 2** in the most wanted list. Born in 1980, he used to command TTP fighters in Orakzai, Khyber and Kurram tribal agencies of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Hakimullah, also known as Zulfikar Mehsud alias Gudu, has been leading operations against Nato's supply lines in Khyber and Peshawar. His forces have been behind raids that have led to the destruction of more than 600 Nato vehicles and shipping containers. He had taken credit for a series of suicide attacks and complex assaults in Lahore and Peshawar, including the March 2009 attack on the Manawan Police Training Academy in Lahore. Interior Minister Rehman Malik had claimed after the death of Baitullah that Hakimullah too had died in a gun battle. But he is still alive.

Another close aide of Baitullah, **Qari Hussain Mehsud ranks No 3**. He is a key commander of the TTP in South Waziristan, and known as the Ustad-e-Fidayeen (the trainer of suicide bombers). He runs camps that train children to become suicide bombers. Children are indoctrinated to wage Jihad in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as shown in a video taken at one of his camps in Spinkai area which was released by himself. The two major suicide hits claimed on the video were the March 11, 2008 suicide attack on the FIA building in Lahore and the November 24, 2007 twin suicide attacks in Rawalpindi, in front of the ISI headquarters. The Pakistani military demolished Hussain's suicide nursery in January 2008 and claimed that he too had been killed. But he mocked the military hardly a week later during a press conference, saying, "I am alive, don't you see me?"

The No 4 in the most wanted list, **Ilyas Kashmiri**, the chief of the Azad Kashmir chapter of al-Qaeda-linked Jehadi organisation Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI), is a veteran of the Kashmir Jihad who spent several years in an Indian jail. He was arrested after the December 2003 twin suicide attacks on General Musharraf's presidential cavalcade in Rawalpindi, but released a few weeks later due to lack of evidence. He later shifted his base to the Waziristan region and joined hands with Baitullah Mehsud. He later established a training camp in the Razmak area of Waziristan and

shifted most of his militants from his Kotli training camp in Azad Kashmir. He has been named in a charge-sheet filed by the Islamabad police for masterminding the November 2008 murder of Major General (retd) Amir Faisal Alvi, the former general officer commanding (GOC) of the elite Special Services Group (SSG).

No 5 in the most wanted list, **Rashid Rauf** is an alleged al-Qaeda linked British national of the Pakistani origin who is wanted by Pakistani and Britain for being a central figure in an August 2006 plot to blow up some US-bound trans-Atlantic airplanes. A close relative of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Maulana Masood Azhar, Rashid has been accused of forming multiple cells, comprising 12 terrorists each, which had been dispatched in 2008 from Pakistani tribal areas to conduct a series of bomb attacks in the major cities of several European countries. Rashid was reportedly killed on November 22, 2008 after a missile fired from a CIA predator drone destroyed a mud-built bungalow in Alikhel village of North Waziristan. But it later transpired that he is alive and operating from the Waziristan region.

The **No 6** most wanted terrorist is **Mangal Bagh Afridi**, who is the founder of the Lashkar-e-Islam, an Islamic militant group operating in Khyber Agency which claims to be a reformist organisation trying to promote virtue and prevent vice. Born in 1973 in the Bara Tehsil of Khyber Agency, Mangal used to be a bus conductor who now preaches extremism on his privately-run FM radio stations. If one were to believe, his Lashkar-e-Islam has 120,000 armed men who control most parts of Khyber Agency. Already declared a proclaimed offender, he had left a trail of bloodshed, pillage and mayhem when his men attacked unarmed villagers in Sheikhan, near Peshawar, in early 2009 and killed dozens.

Born in 1977, **Matiur Rehman** alias Samad Sial, the chief operational commander of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, ranks **No 7**. He is a Pakistani national, but identified as al-Qaeda's planning director, wanted by both the FBI and FIA. Known as an extremely fine bomb-maker, he comes from Bahawalpur district of the Punjab and carries a bounty of **Rs 10 million**, as announced by the Pakistan government. He had been linked with the August 2006 transatlantic plot to destroy US-bound British aircrafts. Suspected for his involvement in the September 2008 Marriott Hotel suicide bombing in Islamabad, Matiur Rehman is described as extremely dangerous because of his role as the liaison between al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Jehadi community.

Born in 1970 in the Bajaur Agency, **Maulvi Faqir Mohammed** is a member of the Mohmand tribe and the deputy commander of the TTP who ranks **No 8** in the most wanted list. Formerly affiliated with the TNSM led by Sufi Mohammad, he is wanted due to contacts with the Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. Faqeer has publicly stated that he has close ties to Osama's No 2 Dr Ayman Zawahiri. After Baitullah's death, he had first announced assuming temporary command of the TTP, but later declared that Hakimullah had been selected leader of the TTP. He is accused of orchestrating the November 8, 2006 suicide attack on an Army training centre at Dargai in NWFP which killed 45 recruits of the Punjab Regiment Centre.

Waliur Rehman, the commander of the South Waziristan chapter of the TTP, has emerged as a key Jehadi figure after the death of Baitullah who ranks **No 9** on the Most Wanted list. Born in 1974, Waliur is a cleric who studied at a religious seminary in Faisalabad - the Jamia Islamia Imdadia — before teaching for seven years in a Madrassa in South Waziristan. He had joined the Taliban movement in 2004 to become one of Baitullah's trusted aides who used to look after the financial matters of the TTP. At one stage in his life, Waliur Rehman was associated with Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and had pursued peaceful politics. Wali was a main contender for Baitullah's job as the TTP head and his selection as the TTP head for South Waziristan has made him the pivotal figure in the organisation.

The **No 10** most wanted militant is **Qari Mohammad Zafar**, who is largely believed to be the acting Ameer of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi who runs a suicide bombing squad in Pakistan. Presently operating from South Waziristan, Zafar was alleged to be the mastermind of the September 2008 Marriott Hotel bombing. Hailing from Karachi, he is reported to have become one of the members of al-Qaeda's hardline inner circle in Pakistan and enjoying the protection of the TTP. In 2007, Zafar had escaped from the custody of security services in Lahore. He is also wanted for questioning in connection with the March 2, 2006 car bomb attack on the US consulate in Karachi.