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Lashkar-e-Zil behind Azad Kashmir suicide hits

By [Umer Toor](#) • Jan 11th, 2010 • Category: [Politics](#) • One Response

Investigations carried out by the Pakistani authorities into the rising incidents of suicide bombings in Azad Kashmir indicate the involvement of the Lashkar-e-Zil (LeZ) or Shadow Army, which is a loose alliance of the al-Qaeda and Taliban-linked anti-US militant groups active in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

According to those investigating the recent suicide bombings in Azad Kashmir, there are clear indications that the January 6, 2010 attack targeting a military installation in the Sudhnoti district of Azad Kashmir, which killed four Pakistani soldiers, and the December 31, 2009 suicide attack on the Forward Operating Base of the American Central Intelligence Agency in Khost, Afghanistan, killing seven CIA officers, were masterminded by the Lashkar-e-Zil. Instead of indulging in traditional warfare, the Lashkar has distinguished itself by carrying out unusual guerrilla operations, like the one targeting the CIA base in Khost. While the LeZ is mainly active in Pakistani tribal areas of North and South Waziristan, Bajaur, Peshawar, Khyber, and Swat in the NWFP, it has already carried out several deadly bombings against the US-led allied forces in the Afghan provinces of Khost, Kabul, Kandahar, Nuristan, Nangahar, Wardak, Paktika, Ghazni and Kunar, killing dozens of people.

The sources say the Lashkar-e-Zil mainly consists of Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP) led by Commander Hakimullah Mehsud, the Azad Kashmir chapter of the Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami

(HUJI) led by Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) led by its jailed leader Akram Lahori, the Afghan Taliban militia led by its Amir Mulla Omar, the Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HeI) led by Gulbadin Hikmatyar and the Haqqani militant network.

While the LeZ seeks guidance from Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri, the second-in-command of Osama bin Laden, the chief of the HUJI (Azad Kashmir chapter) Ilyas Kashmiri happens to be its chief operational commander, currently based in North Waziristan, which borders Khost.

Despite the ongoing spate of terrorist activities by the Taliban militants across Pakistan, there was hardly any such activity in Azad Kashmir till June 2009. But the last six months have seen four incidents of suicide attacks in Azad Kashmir between June 26, 2009 and January 6, 2010, killing 20 people, 10 of them security forces personnel and 10 civilians.

In the first ever incident of suicide bombing in Azad Kashmir on June 26, 2009, four soldiers were killed and three wounded when the bomber blew himself up near an Army vehicle in Muzaffarabad.

While ruling out the possibility of Indian involvement in these attacks, investigators say the bombing close to the 5-AK Brigade headquarters in Azad Kashmir on June 26, 2009 was carried out by Abid, who actually belonged to the TTP, which is a component of the Lashkar-e-Zil.

The 5-AK Brigade of Azad Kashmir Regiment is taking part in the ongoing milita-

ry operation against the militants in Swat and its adjoining areas. In the second incident of suicide bombing on November 21, 2009, three suspected militants blew themselves up after the police gave a chase and surrounded them in a mountainous area of Muzaffarabad.

All the three seemed to be Pashtuns. In third such incident on December 28, 2009, a suicide bomber blew himself up amid a Muharram procession, killing 10 people, including three policemen.

The investigators say the procession was targeted by the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a component of the Lashkar-e-Zil. In the fourth such incident on January 6, 2010, a bomber blew himself up outside a military installation in the Tararkhel town of the Sudhnoti district of Azad Kashmir, killing four soldiers of the Pakistan Army.

The investigators say the bomber was a member of the Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Azad Kashmir chapter), a component of the Lashkar-e-Zil. The Pakistani investigators say the Lashkar-e-Zil has not only been instrumental in the Tehrik-e-Taliban's consolidation of power in the Pakistani tribal areas and in the NWFP, it is also believed to be behind the Taliban's recent successes in eastern and southern Afghanistan.

The effectiveness of the LeZ has placed this terrorist alliance in the crosshairs of the ongoing American drone attacks in Pakistani tribal areas, focusing the North and South Waziristan. The Lashkar has distinguished itself by carrying out unusual guerrilla operations, like the one targeting the CIA base in Khost, instead of indulging in traditional warfare.

Source: The News

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