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By Mazhar Tufail

ISLAMABAD: The captors of two former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) officials and a British journalist, who went missing in North Waziristan Agency nearly three weeks ago, are unlikely to spare the two former ISI sleuths as they are sure that they have been spying on them.

Two former ISI officers, Colonel (ret'd) Imam and Squadron Leader (ret'd) Khalid Khwaja and a journalist Asad Qureshi, went missing in North Waziristan where they had gone to work on a documentary on the Taliban.

“All the efforts made by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Afghan Taliban) to secure release of the two former ISI officials and the British journalist have failed,” said Qari Ziaur Rehman, a Taliban commander in Kunar.

Qari Ziaur Rehman said it had been confirmed that the trio was not in the captivity of the (outlawed) Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan but one of the scattered groups of the Pakistani militants, either the Punjabi Taliban or any other group. He said the captors of the three seemed to be very close to the former clerics of Lal Masjid -- Maulana Abdul Aziz and Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi.

“This is the reason that they forced Khalid Khawaja into making the confessional statement that he worked for the CIA and ISI,” he argued. “Thus, it has been confirmed that Khalid Khwaja had been helping the Musharraf regime when it launched operation at Lal Masjid,” he added.

Qari Zia said the captors of the trio believed that by detaining the two former ISI officials and a British journalist, they had succeeded in smashing a network that had been spying on them. He said different groups of the Afghan Taliban made hectic efforts for the release of the kidnapped men but the captors did not oblige them.

“The Taliban commander said the Punjabi Taliban groups, including the one led by Ilyas Kashmiri, were extremely annoyed with the two former ISI officials, particularly Khalid Khwaja, because they believed that they played an important role in the arrest of all their operatives and leaders by the Pakistani authorities,” Qari Zia said.

“I look like a modest, religious and sympathetic person but in fact I have been working for the ISI and the CIA. I am shameful of my deeds and am paying the price of my sins. I remember burnt bodies of the small girl and boy students of Lal Masjid because I forced Maulana Abdul Aziz, Pesh Imam of Lal Masjid, to escape. Maulana Abdul Aziz is a very simple person and sincere in implementation of true Islam in the country. We trapped this simple person and he got arrested,” reports quoted him saying in the video.