



JAMES A. BAKER III INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY
RICE UNIVERSITY

QUESTION AND ANSWER:
LASHKAR-E-TAYYIBA

BY

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Question and Answer: Lashkar-e-Tayyiba

Joan Neuhaus Schaan is the fellow in homeland security and terrorism at the Baker Institute. Since late 2004, she has served as the executive director of the Houston-Harris County Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council, a joint effort of Harris County, the City of Houston and Rice University. Her first involvement in the field of terrorism and homeland security came as an officer with the United States Naval Reserve, where she became an antiterrorism training officer for her squadron and was responsible for the force protection briefings for deployments to the Americas and Pacific. Neuhaus Schaan received her B.A. from Williams College and her M.B.A. from the Jesse Jones Graduate School at Rice University.

Below she answers a few questions about Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, the terrorist group that Indian authorities blame for the recent deadly attacks in Mumbai that killed nearly 200. The group has denied responsibility for the attacks.

What is the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba?

Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) is a Pakistan-based terrorist group that has perpetrated and/or been implicated in many attacks over the years against India, including the October 2006 Mumbai train attacks, the hallmark multiple bombings (approximately 10) of the Mumbai Stock Exchange in 1993 and many attacks in between.

The goal of LeT with regard to India, as put forth by its leader Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, is to “liberate” the Muslims of not only Kashmir, but also the rest of India, from what it contends is Hindu control. While Deccan Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, this would not be the first time a LeT-associated group coined a name at the time of a specific attack.

While initially established to counter Indian forces in Kashmir, the LeT organization has since expanded to play a major role in training foreign fighters. Fighting Indian troops in Kashmir has become part of the training curriculum.

What is the LeT's relationship with al-Qaida?

Since February 1998, LeT and other groups, including al-Qaida, have joined the International Islamic Front (IIF) for Jihad against the Crusaders and the Jewish People.

LeT's parent organization is believed to be Markaz Ad-Dawa Wal Irshad (MDI). MDI was founded in Pakistan in 1987 by three university professors: Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, Zafar Iqbal and Abdullah Azzam. The group reportedly received \$200,000 in seed money from Osama bin Laden, due to the involvement of Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden's mentor.

By early 2002, MDI changed its name to Jamaat-ul-Dawa (JUD) in response to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's designation of LeT as a terrorist organization on Jan. 15, 2002.

What does LeT have to do with the United States and North America? Has this group previously attacked U.S. interests?

To date, no attacks have been made against U.S. interests in the United States.

Resources within the United States have been tapped for recruitment and logistical support, and probably financing. North American residents have been among the foreigners trained by LeT. Many have been arrested, including the Virginia Jihad Network (a.k.a the Virginia Paintball Network), the Toronto 17, and Hamid Hayat of Lodi, Calif.

Generally speaking, how much does the intelligence community know about LeT and its strengths and vulnerabilities?

A significant amount of information about LeT is in the public domain. Its strength and resilience is a function of its historic ties to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's intelligence agency, and reported funding through narcotics, namely from Dawood Ibrahim. These strengths could conceivably be weaknesses in the future.

What do you think we will see next from LeT?

There is the possibility that the Mumbai attacks will be a truly watershed event that will lead to progress in dealing with the Pandora's box that Pakistan represents. To effectively combat LeT, there must be the will within Pakistan to rein in the organization.

What should the intelligence community take away from the Mumbai attacks and LeT's alleged role? How will this attack shape terrorism risk assessment and preparations?

The time has come to think more broadly about extremist organizations that are active in Pakistan. Historically, each group within the IIF for Jihad has been viewed as independent of the others, instead of being treated as a coordinated federation. A more accurate assessment may be to consider each organization as a subsidiary of a large multinational organization based in South Asia.