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## **Pakistan's 3/30: Tracing Munawan Attack in Lahore**

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**Center for Research and Security Studies**  
House # 60, Main Nazim-ud-Din Road, F-6/1, Islamabad  
Tel: (+92-51) 8314801-3. Fax: (+92-51) 8314804  
Email: [pager@crss.pk](mailto:pager@crss.pk). Web: [www.crss.pk](http://www.crss.pk)

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**What happened:** Munawan police training facility is on the road to the international border between India and Pakistan and border is hardly a few kilometers away. On 30 March 2009, at 7:30 a.m. local time, nearly a dozen gunmen, some faking as police officials, attacked and took control of the training facility. The militants killed five police recruits & two trainers and injured dozens others. It took Punjab Police's special anti-terrorist force called "Elite Force" 8 hours to recapture the school buildings. At least 3 of the militants reportedly blew themselves up while 3 others were taken into custody, one of them arrested from just outside the building when he tried to blow up an Army helicopter. Identified later as Hijratullah, he turned out to be an Afghan national from Paktika and was sent on a mission by Baitullah Mehsud's Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The following day, Fedayeen-e-Islam, a little-known but Taliban affiliated group, claimed responsibility. It should be noted that the same group had claimed responsibility for the bombing at the Marriott Islamabad on 20 September 2008. The same day, Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (formed: December 2007), called The Associated Press and Reuters to claim responsibility.

**Three pronged situation building:** Like many other terrorist incidents, it would be difficult to trace all the trails of the planning, execution and funding of this terrorist operation but three scenarios could be built on the basis of the publicly available open information:

**1. Did Baitullah Mehsud's TTP do it?** On February 21, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani left for a week-long official visit to the U.S. just when the Obama Administration was in the process of reviewing America's Pak-Afghan strategy. On February 27, Chairman U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen told a news conference at Pentagon that the visit of Pakistan Army Chief to the U.S. was "fruitful". On March 25, the U.S. Department of State authorized a reward of "up to \$5 million for information leading to the location, arrest, and/or conviction of Baitullah Mehsud the senior

leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan." The same day, CIA drones fired two missiles and killed eight in an attack on a Taliban convoy in Makeen, the hometown of Baitullah Mehsud. Baitullah Mehsud, during his conversation with Reuters, said that he attacked the police academy in response to drone attacks.

**2. Or was it Lashkar-e-Taiba executed operation?** Lashkar-e-Taiba – the organization that has been banned by Pakistan, India, the U.S., the U.K., the European Union, Russia and Australia – or disgruntled elements within the Lashkar. Although the Lashkar has little or no past history in directing its attacks against Pakistan but given the recent history of the militant organizations in Pakistan, it could be established that the LeT may have orchestrated this activity. None from LeT thus far has claimed any responsibility.

**3. Any chance of Indian involvement?** Four months ago, at 2120 local time, Wednesday the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, seven trained gunmen attacked Taj Mahal Hotel. At about the same time, Oberoi Hotel was also stormed. Then there was indiscriminate firing at the busy Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station. At about the same time, Nariman House, with the Jewish Chabad Lubavitch outreach center in it, was also taken over by militants. Then diners at Café Leopold came under heavy fire. The well-coordinated bombing and shooting attacks went on till November 29. Bahukutumbi Raman – the former head of the counter-terrorism division of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) and also a former member of the Special Task Force of the Government of India for the Revamping of the Intelligence Apparatus – within hours of the Mumbai tragedy presented his recommendations to the Government of India. B. Raman proposed that when Ashok Chaturvedi, then Director RAW who retires on 31 January 2009, must be replaced by someone from outside RAW preferably a top-notch

covert operator to re-energize RAW's covert capabilities to undertake operations inside Pakistan. On January 25, K.C. Verma, a career officer of the Intelligence Bureau, India's internal intelligence agency, was named as the new chief of the Research & Analysis Wing. K.C. Verma's appointment came as a surprise to India's bulging intelligence bureaucracy because P.V. Kumar was the senior-most RAW officer after Ashok Chaturvedi's retirement. It also amazed the intelligence observes in India as the the real competition was said to be between P.V. Kumar and Sanjeev Tripathi, another senior RAW officer.

interesting assessment as most of the militant organizations operating in Pakistan have their ideological, logistical and financial base operation from Afghanistan.

B. Raman, in a previous paper, raised the question of "how to make Pakistan pay a price..." made this recommendation: "Through covert action, which is deniable para-political and para-military action meant to make Pakistan's sponsorship prohibitively costly to it. Such a covert action would be directed against the Pakistan State and society and not against terrorists."<sup>1</sup> Raman, known for his bellicose oratory and research on Pakistan enjoys a close and trusted association with India's official security apparatus.

Dr C. Raja Mohan, widely acknowledged as one of "India's leading foreign policy" analyst, has argued that if Pakistan is "not willing or is unable to deliver an end to cross-border terrorism" then perhaps India ought to execute alternatives. On 10 December 2008, the Hindustan Times carried a column by Gurmeet Kanwal, head of the Center for Land Warfare Studies, recommending that "To achieve a lasting impact and ensure that the actual perpetrators of terrorism are targeted, it is necessary to employ covert capabilities....." against Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

**Another angle:** Christine Fair, Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation, suspected the Indian involvement in Balochistan has increased with encouragement from Kabul.<sup>3</sup> It is an

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.saag.org/common/uploaded\\_files/paper1893.html](http://www.saag.org/common/uploaded_files/paper1893.html) - last accessed on April 4, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> <http://hindustantimes.com>

<sup>3</sup> The News, April 6, 2009.