

22,000 fighters deployed by the ChRI more than a decade ago.²⁸ Foreign fighters are also in short supply. Since 2003, jihadist syndicates have eschewed the Caucasus in favor of more promising fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁹ Yet while the aggregate number of militants in the North Caucasus has decreased, the relative intensity and extensity of their operations remains relatively consistent.

This consistency reflects longstanding flaws in Russia's counterinsurgency strategy. Characterized by corrupt regional leaders, a repressive security apparatus, and two decades of protracted civil strife, conditions in the North Caucasus present fertile ground for Umarov's appeals to pan-Islamic solidarity. The operations tempo also reflects emerging recruitment patterns. Although exiled ChRI leaders such as Akhmed Zakayev have openly denounced Umarov's Salafist agenda, the Caucasian Front now attracts a new generation of Islamic militants from across the former Soviet Union.

The life and death of Said Buryatsky is a case in point. Born Aleksandr Tikhomirov in the western Siberian city of Ulan-Ude, the ethnic Buryat abandoned his region's Buddhist heritage and converted to Islam at age 15. In 2008, he joined the Caucasian Front, using videos, blogs, and other social networking media to document his experiences as a guerrilla.³⁰ In 2009, he helped reconstitute Riyadus-Salikhin, launching a series of suicide operations targeting Ingush President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov. By the time of his death in 2010, Buryatsky had gained international prominence as an impassioned advocate of jihad, with a following among self-identified "internet mujahidin" in Afghanistan,

28 "Federalniim cilam v. Chechne protivostoyat 22 tiic. boevikov," Cyr.ru, November 4, 1999.

29 Despite the presence of foreign fighters in the North Caucasus during the first and second Russo-Chechen wars, geographic isolation, linguistic barriers, and strong border controls limited substantial Arab infiltration. See Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31:5 (2008).

30 Kevin Daniel Leahy, "Sheikh Said Buryatski and the Fresh Cult of the Suicide Bombing in the North Caucasus," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, September 16, 2009.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and even the West.³¹

These developments pose complex challenges for Russian officials. A diffuse insurgency is more difficult to defeat using conventional military means. A delocalized insurgency, in turn, is more likely to attract disaffected Muslims from other regions. In this sense, the decade-long devolution from *tariqat* to *jama`at* produced a movement that is more ethical than political—one preoccupied with idealized notions of violence rather than the creation of social and political institutions.

These attributes indicate chronic weakness. The Caucasian Front cannot seize and hold territory. It cannot mobilize sustained indigenous support. It cannot even articulate a coherent vision of the political future. Reduced to a self-styled virtual emirate, it lacks the attributes associated with successful insurgencies. This weakness will not translate into a more passive or quiescent adversary, however. By engaging in provocative terror, Umarov actively courts violent reprisal. The more repressive the Russian response, the more radicalized the Caucasus will become. Against this backdrop, the Moscow metro bombings suggest the same kind of "vexation and exhaustion" strategies adopted in other theaters along the *umma's* cultural and geographic periphery.³² Unable to use force to achieve political ends, Umarov has embraced force as an end unto itself.

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31 Paul Quinn-Judge, "Russia's Terror Goes Viral," *Foreign Policy*, March 29, 2010.

32 Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, translated by William McCants, Combating Terrorism Center, West Point.

After Pune, Details Emerge on the Karachi Project and its Threat to India

By Animesh Roul

THE 14 MONTHS of calm after the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks were shattered when militants bombed the Indian city of Pune on February 13, 2010. The attack targeted a popular German bakery located in the Koregaon Park area. The bakery is situated near a Hindu spiritual center (Osho Rajneesh) and a Jewish cultural center (the Chabbad House) that are frequented by foreigners and affluent Pune-kars. Seventeen people were killed in the bombing, including five foreign nationals.¹ Among the injured were Iranian, Sudanese, Taiwanese, German, Yemeni and Nepalese citizens. Forensic investigations into the incident suggest that the militants used a remotely-detonated improvised explosive device comprising a mixture of ammonium nitrate, RDX explosives and petroleum hydrocarbon oil.²

The bakery was likely targeted because it is located in a crowded area and more vulnerable to attack. It was a popular meeting place, and the timing of the blast coincided with the peak evening hours when foreigners and Indian visitors frequent the area. It is likely that the militants selected the bakery either due to heightened security measures at the respective spiritual and cultural centers nearby, or as a last minute change in strategy based on the size of the crowd at the restaurant.

After the attack, a flurry of conflicting reports surfaced about the terrorist groups responsible for the blast as multiple unknown groups claimed credit for the operation. Suspicion, however, remains on Pakistan-based Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LT) and its Indian homegrown affiliate, the Indian Mujahidin (IM). Details continue to emerge suggesting that the plot may have been part of the LT's so-called "Karachi Project." The

1 "Pune Blast: Toll Rises to 17," *Outlook India*, February 17, 2010.

2 Vishwas Kothari and Asseem Shaikh, "Terror Formula: RDX, Ammonium Nitrate, Oil," *Times News Network*, February 17, 2010.

project entails Pakistan-based militant groups training and deploying Indian Muslims for attacks in the Indian heartland. This article provides insight into the Karachi Project, and how it possibly played a role in the Pune blast.

The Karachi Project

Information about the Karachi Project was revealed by David Coleman Headley, a Pakistani-American who in March 2010 pled guilty in the United States to terrorist offenses.³ According to information revealed by Headley, who played a key role in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, the Karachi Project was reportedly conceived in 2003 after the closure of the Inter-Services Intelligence's (ISI) Forward Section 23 wing in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.⁴ The Karachi Project has allegedly mobilized militant and criminal syndicates—both Pakistani and fugitive Indian nationals—as part of a new wave of proxy wars targeting Indian urban centers from Karachi. The purpose of the project is to deploy Indian Muslims to carry out attacks in India using locally available bomb material so that the attacks are not traced back to Pakistan.⁵ As part of the project, discontented Muslims are

3 David Coleman Headley was born Daood Sayed Gilani and changed his name to hide his Muslim identity. According to Headley's earlier confessions, Karachi has been a hub for anti-Indian activities spearheaded by ISI/LT elements. Being part of that larger conspiracy, Headley surveyed targets for the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. He also surveyed Pune, Delhi, Goa and Mumbai for future terrorist plots. Headley visited Pune in July 2008 and March 2009. For details, see "Nine Killed, 45 Injured in Pune Terror Attack," *Hindustan Times*, February 13, 2010; "Headley Twisted Facts While Applying India Visa: Report," Rediff.com, December 8, 2009; "US Citizen David Headley Admits Role in Mumbai Attacks," BBC, March 18, 2010.

4 ISI's Forward Section 23 monitored subversive anti-India operations from Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The Forward Section 23 unit was allegedly involved in training militants and providing logistics for the proxy war against India. Under U.S. pressure, the ISI reportedly terminated its operations in 2003 by shutting down training camps and operations offices in the region. It supposedly moved its anti-India infrastructure to Karachi to continue its agenda. For details, see Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Ceasefire Will Not Hold, With Same Game, New Rules," *South Asia Tribune*, November 30-December 6, 2003.

5 Raj Narayan, "Karachi Project: A Nefarious Plan to Destabilize India," *India Syndicate*, March 28, 2010.

recruited in India, sent to Pakistan via third-party countries, trained in military tactics, and then deployed back to India to execute attacks. Established Pakistani militant groups—such as the LT—continue to serve as the planners of these attacks, but by using Indian Muslims they are able to strike deeper into the Indian heartland. Moreover, the use of Indian citizens also helps obfuscate the role of Pakistan-based groups in the attacks.

Some recent arrests have helped shed more light on the activities of the project. The interrogations and confessions of Mohammed Abdul Khwaja (known as Amjad) and Salman Ahmed (known as Chottu) revealed detailed information on how Pakistan-based, anti-Indian terrorist cells are collaborating to attack India.⁶ The arrests revealed a lethal LT-HuJI⁷ and IM nexus. The goal of these cells is to attack Indian-administered Kashmir as well as the Indian heartland. Khwaja is a self-styled HuJI commander with active ties to LT, Jaysh-i-Muhammad and IM mastermind Riaz Bhatkal. Like Headley, Khwaja revealed that a number of Indian nationals are housed in Karachi and are undergoing indoctrination and training for jihadist activities in India as part of the Karachi Project.⁸ Khwaja himself recruited at least 24 Muslim youth and reportedly sent them for terrorist training in Pakistan—it is not clear, however, whether his personal recruits were part of the project.⁹

6 For reports on these arrests, see "Hyderabad STF Catch Was In-Charge of Terror Recruitments, Say Police," *Mid Day*, January 21, 2010; "MP ATS to Question 'IM Terrorist' Salman," Rediff.com, March 9, 2010.

7 Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI) was founded by Qari Saifullah Akhtar in the early 1980s. The organization has been active in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh with active support from Pakistan-based deobandi religious bodies. It carried out many attacks in India, including the March 2006 Sankatmochan Temple blast in Varanasi and the May 2007 twin blasts in Hyderabad. In March 2008, the U.S. blacklisted HuJI's Bangladesh franchise as a global terrorist organization. For details, see Ahmed Khaled, "The Biggest Militia We Know Nothing About," *Friday Times*, May 20, 2002.

8 "ISI, LeT Getting Indian Jihadis Together in Karachi for Attack," *Indian Express*, February 1, 2010.

9 Ibid.; "Khwaja Planned to Bomb IOC Depot in Hyderabad," *Express Buzz*, January 20, 2010.

Khwaja's account also matches Salman Ahmed's statements about future terrorist plots targeting India. Salman reportedly confessed that IM cadres were being used in the ISI-LT's Karachi Project.¹⁰ According to Salman, the leaders of the project remain intent on executing bomb attacks in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.¹¹ The cells are trained to target foreigners in these attacks.¹² Salman also said that Amir Raza Khan, one of the IM's founders, is in charge of the Karachi Project, along with senior IM operatives Riyaz Bhatkal and Iqbal Bhatkal who hold vital operational positions. The ISI also allegedly plays a role, and collaborates with the LT in supporting IM operatives.¹³

Indian authorities believe that the Pune blast was part of this project.¹⁴ The men that Indian authorities suspect of having a direct role in the Pune attack have ties to both the LT and the IM, as well as to the Karachi Project.¹⁵ Mohsin Ismail Chaudhary, for example, has been identified as an IM operative and a recruiter of the organization's Pune cell.¹⁶ Indian authorities suspect that he is part of the Karachi Project and is controlling sleeper cells in Pune and other cities in Maharashtra state from his safe haven in Karachi.¹⁷

Another suspect in the Pune attack is Mohammed Yasin Bhatkal. Yasin is considered to be the IM's explosives expert, and authorities believe he is currently in Karachi.¹⁸ Known to

10 Salman reportedly confessed during his interrogation that the IM cadres were being used for the ISI-LT's Karachi Project. See "Terror Alert Sounded in Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata," *Economic Times*, March 9, 2010.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Khwaja told his interrogators that his accommodation and other facilities were arranged by a "Colonel Ahmed" who had been assigned by the ISI to look after the food, accommodation and needs of militants who fled from India and were now sheltered in Karachi. See, "ISI Colonel Takes Care of Karachi Logistics," *Express Buzz*, March 12, 2010.

14 "Pune Blast Part of Lashkar's 'Karachi Project?'" Times News Network, February 15, 2010.

15 Vishwa Mohan, "IM Man's Pune Accounts Frozen," Times News Network, April 1, 2010.

16 Ibid.; "Hunt Begins for Mohsin, Missing IM Recruiter," *Indian Express*, February 15, 2010.

17 Ibid.

18 "Yasin Bhatkal is IM Bombmaker, Now in Karachi: Probe Team," *Indian Express*, February 22, 2010; "IM

intelligence agencies as “Shah Rukh,” Yasin was identified as a terrorist following the September 13, 2008 blasts in New Delhi that killed 30 people.¹⁹ Yasin and Mohsin Chaudhary are close aides of Riyaz Bhatkal and Iqbal Bhatkal, two senior IM operatives believed to be operating from Dubai and Karachi.²⁰

Continued Threats to India

As details emerge about the Karachi Project, it is clear that militants inside Pakistan are posing an ongoing threat to India. Both Khwaja and Salman reportedly told their interrogators that IM operatives in Karachi were under pressure from the ISI-LT leadership to organize fresh terrorist attacks in India.²¹ Like Khwaja, Salman was instructed to reactivate dormant IM cells in India.²² As stated by an Indian intelligence official, the IM has become a potential resource base that the “LT hopes to use right from identification and reconnaissance of targets to arranging logistics for terror attacks.”²³

Shortly after the Pune attack, the Mumbai police’s Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) foiled another major LT-IM plot in March by arresting Abdul Latif and Riyaz Ali, who were allegedly planning to attack the headquarters of the Indian oil major ONGC, along with the bustling Mangaldas Market and Boralvali’s Thakkar Mall in Mumbai.²⁴ The subsequent probe revealed a “strategy” and “recruitment” pattern

quite consistent with the Karachi Project.²⁵ Even though the ONGC and German Bakery plots are different, and perhaps schemed by separate terror modules, authorities believe that the ONGC conspiracy was also hatched in Karachi.²⁶

Despite pressure from the United States, it does not appear that elements within Pakistan’s government will completely crack down on the activities of the LT. Pakistan is already suffering from its own jihadist violence from various Pakistani Taliban groups, and it risks making more domestic enemies by turning against militant cadres focused on the country’s rival, India.²⁷ As a result, it appears only a matter of time before the LT and IM execute another attack on the Indian homeland.

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Suspect in Pune Blast,” *Telegraph* [Kolkata], April 9, 2010.

19 “Hunt Begins for Mohsin, Missing IM Recruiter.” For details on the September 13, 2008 New Delhi blasts, see Rahul Tripathi, “Serial Blasts Rock Delhi; 30 Dead, 90 Injured,” *Times of India*, September 14, 2008.

20 “ISI Colonel Takes Care of Karachi Logistics.”

21 “Terror Alert Sounded in Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata.”

22 Ibid.

23 “IM has ‘Hostels’ in Gulf, Nepal & Bangladesh Too,” *Economic Times*, March 11, 2010.

24 According to the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Mumbai police, the accused were in touch with one Karachi-based “Uncle,” identified as Khan Abdul Bashir Ainul Haq Khan, a fugitive himself accused of involvement in the 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts case. This “Uncle” reportedly directed the two men to recruit Indian youth and arrange them to be sent to Pakistan for training and to carry out terrorist attacks in India. For details, see “Two Held for Planning Attacks in Mumbai,” *Financial Express*, March 15, 2010; “Court Extends Custody of Suspects in ONGC Fire Plot,” *Indian Express*, April 14, 2010.

25 “Phone Calls Made by Mumbai Terror Suspects Traced to Karachi,” *PTI*, March 15, 2010.

26 Ibid.

27 Narayan.

Assessing the Recent Terrorist Threat to the Malacca Strait

By Peter Chalk

ON MARCH 4, 2010, NAVAL authorities issued a threat advisory of a potential terrorist plot targeting shipping interests transiting the Malacca Strait. Malaysia’s navy chief, Admiral Abdul Aziz Jaafar, warned that “terrorists are targeting specific tankers in the Malacca Strait and Singapore Strait.”¹ Singapore’s home affairs minister, Wong Kan Seng, said, “We received intelligence from our liaison partners about this possible plot to go and attack vessels coming through Singapore waters through the Strait of Malacca.”² The warning came on the heels of the arrests of 14 suspected terrorists at an alleged Jemaah Islamiya (JI) training camp on Indonesia’s Sumatra Island, which forms the eastern boundary of the waterway.³ The incident has heightened regional and international concerns that the Malacca Strait could become a focus of Islamist maritime terrorism.⁴

In light of these recent threats, this article examines the likelihood of sea-based extremist violence in the region, JI’s capacity to operate in an offshore environment, and whether Southeast Asia is a place that al-Qa`ida would seek to exploit in terms of maritime attacks. It finds that the risk of a decisive maritime strike in the Malacca Strait is low, especially in the context of disrupting shipping interests as part of an economic war against the West.

1 Alex Kennedy, “Tankers Warned of Terror Threat in Malacca Strait,” *Associated Press*, March 4, 2010.

2 “Singapore Raises Security Alert Levels After Malacca Strait Threat,” *Reuters*, March 5, 2010.

3 Ibid.; “14 Suspects Charged Under Indonesia’s Anti-Terror Laws,” *ChannelNewsAsia.com*, March 4, 2010.

4 The Joint War Council of the Lloyds Market Association designated the Malacca Strait an area of Perceived Enhanced Risk in July 2005. For details, see Peter Chalk, *The Maritime Dimension of International Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), p. 33; Martin Murphy, *Small Boats, Weak States, Dirty Money* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 83-84; Graham Gerard Ong-Webb, “Introduction: Southeast Asian Piracy: Research and Developments,” in Graham Gerard Ong-Webb ed., *Piracy, Maritime Terrorism and Securing the Malacca Straits* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006), p. xxxiv.