

'Headley Confession Shows Close Al Qaeda, LeT Ties'

Washington: (IANS) Pakistani-American terror suspect David Headley's confession about his involvement in the Mumbai terror attack reveals the close relationship between Al Qaeda and Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, according to a former CIA analyst.

Headley's revelations about an European cell of Al Qaeda were also disturbing, Bruce Riedel, who was a member of the National Security Council in the Clinton administration and is now at the Brookings Institution, was quoted as saying by the New York Times recently.

They showed that "Al Qaeda still has a significant operational infrastructure somewhere in Europe", he said.

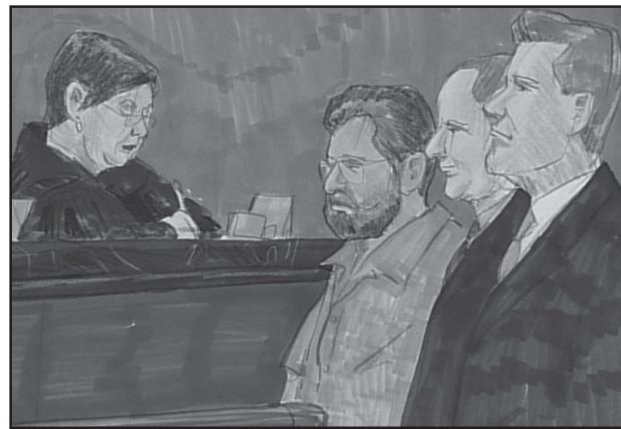
Details of Headley's activities, contained in his plea agreement with US authorities, "raise troubling questions about how an American citizen could travel for so long undetected from his home base in Chicago to well-established terrorist training camps in Pakistan", the Times said in a report from Islamabad.

Charged with helping plan the 2008 terror attack in Mumbai, Headley, 49, moved effortlessly between the US, Pakistan and India for nearly seven years, training at a militant camp in Pakistan on five occasions, according to the plea agreement.

Headley started his career as a militant scout

with LeT, a terrorist group established decades ago with the help of the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies.

Lashkar was supposed to have been outlawed in Pakistan in 2002, but it remains active behind



the veil of a public charity in Pakistan. According to Headley's plea, it continues to be assisted by former Pakistani military officials.

The plea names a retired Pakistani military officer, Col. Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed, known as Pasha, as Headley's main contact with Lashkar.

Earlier prosecution documents said that Colonel Syed was arrested last year in Pakistan on unspecified charges but then released.

In early 2009, Colonel Syed introduced Headley to Muhammad Ilyas Kashmiri, an Al Qaeda operative in North Waziristan, according to the document.

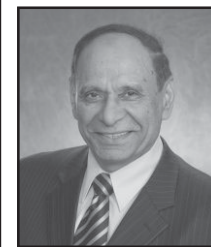
The visit in February 2009 may finally have put Headley on the radar of the American authorities, who started tracking him in the late spring of last year, Riedel was quoted as saying.

Headley's plea agreement with the government was not his first. After being sentenced for drug trafficking in the 1990s, he served as an informant in Pakistan for the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as part of a deal for a lighter sentence, the US daily said.

He was in Pakistan for DEA from the late 1990s until at least 2001.

By 2002, he was training with Lashkar, raising the possibility that he had made contact with the militants while still working for DEA, the Times suggested.

Obama Names Indian American To Key Agri Post



Washington: (IANS) After waiting for months for the Senate to act, President Barack Obama has announced he would bypass a vacationing senate to make recess appointments of 15 nominees, including an Indian American agricultural scientist as chief

agricultural negotiator in trade talks.

Siddiqui, named Chief Agricultural Negotiator in the Office of the US Trade Representative, is currently vice president for Science and Regulatory Affairs at CropLife America, where he is responsible for regulatory and international trade issues related to crop protection chemicals.

Previously, Siddiqui also served as CropLife America's Vice President for agricultural biotechnology and trade. Before joining USDA, Siddiqui spent 28 years with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. He has MS and PhD degrees in plant pathology, both from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

India Opening Excites Some US Varsities, Others Cautious

Washington: (IANS) American universities are excited by prospects of expanding their presence in India's growing education market but some prestigious Ivy league institutions like Yale University don't expect to open a campus in the country any time soon.

Vivek Wadhwa, an Indian American entrepreneur turned academic, associated with Duke, Harvard and Berkeley, all with strong interest in India, described the Indian cabinet's approval of a bill allowing foreign varsities to set up campuses in India as a "win-win".

The legislation expected to be introduced in parliament next month for a vote would potentially open a huge market to international educational institutions. "For them, this provides an ability to expand their programmes and make their students and faculty more globally aware," Wadhwa told IANS.

"They will probably end up doing some of their research in India also for the same reasons that major corporations are doing R&D in India - it is much cheaper and brings them closer to growth markets."

But Wadhwa wished "the government hadn't put unnecessary restrictions into the bill, like the requirement that universities not repatriate profits and requiring an \$11 million minimum investment.

"Tens of billions are already flowing out of the country. So what if some universities make a profit? This is win-win," he quipped.

Yale University, which is currently in discussions with the Ministry of Human Resource Development to advise the government on its plans to set up 14 new national universities in the next few years, however, had a different take.

"We have no intention or plan to open a campus in India at present," said George Joseph, assistant secretary for

international affairs at Yale University. "Our

focus is on building research collaborations, partnerships, as well as student exchanges."

Declining to comment on the pending legislation, he said Yale preferred other ways of working with Indian institutions.

Joseph also thinks very few top US institutions would take up the campus model. As for Yale, it will continue its existing partnerships like the Yale Parliamentary Leadership Programme and Yale School of Management Leaders Forum.

Blair Sheppard, Dean of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, however, welcomed



Vivek Wadhwa

the bill to allow foreign universities to establish study locations in India.

"India continues to be a major source of our MBA applicants and represents a significant portion of our student body, and we hope these latest developments make it possible for us to continue to nurture and expand our various partnerships with India," Sheppard stated.

Duke University already has strong relationships within India for many years with "many varied levels of engagement between Duke and India, spanning business, public policy, the environment, and medicine," he said.

The programmes include a collaborative arrangement with the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, to deliver custom corporate

education programmes to organizations throughout India and a programme to provide training to Indian Administrative Service officers.

Dr. Mukesh Hariawala, an Indian American cardiac surgeon and healthcare economist, considered the proposed legislation as a very important first step forward.

"I think this will lead to healthy competition and significant improvements to the Indian education system," he said. "After all, tens of thousands leave India to study abroad every year and this leads to an outflow of billions of dollars of capital."

However, Hariawala said India should apply caution in opening the doors very wide to overseas educators initially and suggested running a pilot project to ensure that Indian students and universities are benefiting by this relationship with American universities.

Hare Krishna Soliciting At Airport Barred; Court Upholds Ban

Washington: (IANS) The California Supreme Court has upheld a Los Angeles International Airport ordinance barring Hare Krishnas from soliciting donations inside airport terminals.

"Soliciting the immediate receipt of funds at a busy international airport like Los Angeles is particularly problematic," the court said Thursday in a ruling written by Justice Carlos Moreno.

"The problems posed by solicitations for the immediate receipt of funds that arise in any public place would be exacerbated in the often crowded and hectic environment of a large international airport."

This ruling is apparently the final defeat in 13-year legal effort by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) to secure the right to solicit in Los Angeles airport under the First Amendment, the Christian Science Monitor said.

After two decades of legal challenges against similar measures in other airports nationwide, it also points to the religious organizations' narrowing legal options.

In 1992, ISKCON brought suit against New York City airports claiming that a ban on solicitation in terminals violated their First Amendment right to free speech. After winning in district court



and losing in circuit court, ISKCON lost its case in the US Supreme Court, the daily recalled.

The Supreme Court ruled 6 to 3 that the city's prohibition was constitutional because an airport

terminal is not a "public forum." Furthermore, wrote Chief Justice Rehnquist for the majority, solicitation is disruptive in crowded, busy spaces and negatively affects business there, the Monitor recalled.

In 1999 the Krishnas brought suit against Miami International Airport's ban on solicitation and the selling of literature anywhere in the vicinity of the airport.

The federal district court and appeals court ruled against the Krishnas, and the Supreme Court declined to hear the decision, leaving the Miami International Airport's restriction - and similar restrictions across Florida, Alabama, and Georgia - intact and legal.

Most recently, the Krishnas tried again in California. A federal judge ruled in their favor, but on appeal the US circuit court referred the case to the California Supreme Court because the statute in question was a state law rather than a federal law. The court upheld the ban recently.