

American Foreign Policy Council



LASHKAR-E TAIBA

QUICK FACTS

Geographical Areas of Operation: South Asia

Numerical Strength (Members): Exact numbers unknown; estimated several thousand members in Pakistan and India

Leadership: Hafiz Muhammad Saeed

Religious Identification: Sunni Islam (Wahhabi)

(Quick Facts courtesy of the U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism)

Of the many terrorist groups operating in South Asia, Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT) represents the greatest threat to regional and global security, second only to al-Qaeda. Founded in Pakistan in the mid-1980s, LeT was generously supported by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) as a proxy in its conflict with India. Since then, LeT has built a substantial infrastructure running schools and social services throughout Pakistan, while carrying out deadly, sophisticated attacks throughout India and Afghanistan. From its founding, LeT's ambitions were global in nature, and the group now boasts a presence in some twenty-one countries. After the November 2008 massacre in Mumbai, India—a terrorist attack which claimed the lives of over 180 people and specifically targeted foreigners—the international community recognized that LeT represents a global threat.

HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY

Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), variously translated from Urdu as Army of the Pure, Army of the Righteous, or Army of the Good, is technically the name of the armed wing of the radical Pakistani Islamist charitable group *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* (JuD), i.e., the Society for Preaching. Prior to the 2008 Mumbai attack, LeT was primarily viewed as an actor in the ongoing conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. However, from its founding, LeT voiced global ambitions and viewed undermining Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir as a stepping-stone to the dissolution of India and ultimately the reinstatement of

Muslim rule over the Indian sub-continent and beyond.¹ (Throughout this article, for clarity, LeT will refer to the group's entire network of linked charitable and terrorist organizations.)

LeT itself was formally founded in 1990, but its origins go back to 1985, when a pair of professors at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore, Hafiz Mohammed Saeed and Zafar Iqbal, founded JuD, a small missionary group dedicated to spreading the *Ahl-e-Hadith* (AeH) interpretation of Islam. (The *Ahl-e-Hadith* interpretation of Islam is closely related to the Wahhabis of the Arabian Peninsula and is a minority sect within Pakistan.)² In 1986, JuD merged with an organization founded to facilitate the participation of Pakistani followers of the *Ahl-e-Hadith* sect in the *jihad* against the Soviets in Afghanistan. This new organization was called *Markaz al-Da-wa-wal-Irshad* (MDI), the Center for Preaching and Guidance.³ Among MDI's cofounders was Osama bin Laden's religious mentor, Abdullah Azzam.⁴ Hafiz Saeed became the emir of both MDI and of LeT, when it was established in 1990 as MDI's armed wing.⁵

LeT is unique among the *Ahl-e-Hadith* groups in Pakistani because it holds *da'wa* (preaching) and *jihad* (fighting) as equal and essential components of Islam. LeT's charitable wings carry out extensive outreach in an effort to convert Pakistanis to their interpretation of Islam. Many LeT recruits undergo military training, and some are sent to fight for LeT in Jammu and Kashmir, or more recently, Afghanistan. At the same time, LeT's armed operations help its recruitment and outreach efforts by inspiring disaffected Pakistanis.⁶

LeT's first front was Afghanistan. But by the time LeT was founded, the war against the Soviets was waning and LeT only had limited participation. According to one report, only five LeT operatives were killed fighting in Afghanistan before LeT withdrew as different factions of the Afghan *mujahideen* turned on each other.⁷

When the people of the disputed Indian province of Jammu and Kashmir rebelled against India in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence agency (ISI) sought to take advantage of this turmoil and destabilize its neighbor. One of the lessons Pakistan's generals had drawn from the Afghan war was how to use proxy forces against a more powerful enemy and how to hurt the enemy without provoking them into full-scale war.⁸

Initially, Pakistani strategists supported the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, but found it supported an independent Kashmir, rather than Kashmiri accession to Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan shifted its support to Islamist

groups that the ISI believed would be more effective and easier to control.⁹ In this regard, LeT was an ideal proxy because it was ideologically committed to *jihad*, had an ethnic composition similar to that of the Pakistani military, swore its loyalty to the state, and represented a minority sect within Pakistan.¹⁰

For its part, LeT readily shifted its focus to Jammu and Kashmir, which it saw as the closest of many open fronts in the global *jihad*. Despite its focus on Jammu and Kashmir, LeT's ultimate goal was the "liberation" (meaning establishment of Muslim rule) of the Indian subcontinent. To facilitate plausible deniability for Pakistan's role in fomenting violence in Jammu and Kashmir, the ISI urged MDI to split its operations, formally establishing LeT as the militant wing of the organization.¹¹

The earliest known LeT operation in India took place in 1990, when LeT operatives ambushed a jeep carrying Indian Air Force personnel.¹² In 1993, LeT attacked the army base in Poonch, a major coup in terms of their ability to carry out attacks against hard targets.¹³ However, the group's presence was not publicly recognized until early 1996, when a group of LeT terrorists carried out the first of many massacres targeting minority groups within Kashmir, killing 16 Hindus in Kashmir's Doda district.¹⁴ These massacres, which generally targeted ethnic and religious minority communities within Jammu and Kashmir such as Sikhs and Hindus, were intended to provoke ethnic strife and to polarize communal relations within Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁵ Perhaps the most notable of these massacres occurred on March 20, 2000, on the eve of President Bill Clinton's official visit to India, when LeT terrorists (along with members of *Hizbul Mujahideen*, another Pakistan-backed terrorist organization) massacred 35 Sikhs at Chattisinghpora in Anantnag.¹⁶

Besides its deadly massacres, LeT has carried out innumerable attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, targeting Indian government and military installations and disrupting elections by intimidating voters and targeting political leaders. LeT developed bomb-making skills, building and planting IEDs to target Indian army vehicles and adeptly mixed high and low technology to communicate and carry out operations.¹⁷

One of LeT's signature tactics has been *fidayeen* attacks, in which small, heavily armed and highly motivated two to four-man squads strike significant or symbolic targets in an effort to cause mass casualties and humiliate the enemy. One early *fidayeen* operation occurred in November 1999, when a team of LeT terrorists infiltrated the supposedly secure headquarters of India's 15 Corps at the Badami Bagh cantonment in Srinagar (the capital of Jammu and Kashmir) killing the Public Relations Officer and seven

of his staffers. The attackers then fought off Indian soldiers for almost 10 hours before being killed.¹⁸ A month later, LeT terrorists attacked the Police Special Operations Group Headquarters and killed a dozen Indian security personnel. These attacks were not limited to security forces. In January 2001, six LeT operatives attempted to enter Srinagar Airport, and in August 2001, three LeT *fidayeen* killed 11 inside the Jammu Railway station.¹⁹ LeT has carried out dozens of such *fidayeen* attacks over the years.

Although violence in Kashmir peaked in the mid-2000s and has decreased substantially since, LeT has remained active. In January 2010, for example, LeT operatives held off security forces for 22 hours after storming a hotel in Srinagar and killing a civilian and a policeman.²⁰

Fidayeen attacks are distinct from suicide bombings, a tactic that LeT has refrained from using. Unlike suicide bomb attacks, the *fidayeen* (translated as “those who sacrifice themselves in order to redeem themselves”) can, at least theoretically, survive the attack. These attacks are a subject of some controversy because suicide is forbidden under Islamic law. In a lengthy argument in LeT’s house organ, *al Dawa*, Hafez Abdul Rehman Makki (top deputy and brother-in-law of LeT chief Hafez Mohammed Saeed) wrote a lengthy article justifying *fidayeen* attacks because the attackers die at the hands of their enemy, not by their own hand. Makki also notes that the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad also used *fidayeen*, tactics so therefore the tactic must be legitimate.²¹ *Fidayeen* attacks are an important LeT recruiting tool. LeT publishes their exploits, and substantial numbers of *fidayeen* do survive and return to Pakistan, where they help recruit new members.

Although the bulk of LeT operations have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir, they were never confined to that arena. From its beginning, LeT sought to target India. As early as 1992, Hafez Saeed sent Azam Cheema, a top LeT commander, to India to recruit Indian Muslims. Taking advantage of Hindu-Muslim communal tensions, Cheema had some success, and his network carried out a number of low-level bombings across India.²² Karim Abdul Tunda, who was arrested on the Indian-Nepal border in August 2013, was one these early LeT recruits. He is suspected of involvement in over 40 terror cases in India, both directly and coordinating operations from Pakistan.²³ Indian police arrested LeT operatives in the 1990s, however LeT was not well known at the time and Indian authorities did not realize the extent of the LeT operation in their country.²⁵

LeT also targeted India directly with *fidayeen* strikes. The first of these attacks outside of Jammu and Kashmir was on December 22, 2000, when a pair of gunmen attacked Red Fort in Delhi, killing two soldiers and a civilian

employee of the Indian military. The attack had a deep symbolic meaning, as Red Fort had been the palace of the Mughal emperors, the last Muslim rulers of the Indian sub-continent. In a speech about a year before the attack, Hafez Saeed had vowed to “unfurl the Islamic flag over the Red Fort.” In attacking the Red Fort, LeT was striking a blow for Islamist ascendancy across the Indian sub-continent.²⁵ On the *Eid* (festival) after the Red Fort attack, LeT carried out a re-enactment at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore in front of an enormous crowd of supporters.²⁶ This was not LeT’s deadliest attack, but it shocked the Indian public and established LeT as an Islamist terror threat not only in Jammu and Kashmir, but also in India itself.

Almost a year later (and just months after 9/11), gunmen attacked India’s parliament, killing seven. Hafez Saeed denied that LeT was responsible, stating that LeT attacks were more competently organized. Another Pakistani terrorist group, *Jaish-e-Mohammed* (JeM), was also held responsible. Stephen Tankel, author of *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba*, notes that none of the individuals convicted in India for the attack were LeT members, but that LeT and JeM networks overlap and individuals linked to LeT probably provided logistical support for the attack.²⁷ Regardless of culpability, the attack touched off a lengthy confrontation between India and Pakistan. The United States declared LeT a “Foreign Terrorist Organization” shortly thereafter.²⁸ Under international pressure, the Pakistani government formally banned LeT on January 13, 2002. In response to these actions, Hafez Saeed declared that LeT and its social services counterpart, MDI, had split and that he was no longer affiliated with LeT. MDI changed its name to *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* (JuD). However the split was strictly pro forma, as JuD offices throughout Pakistan continued to be used as LeT offices.²⁹

LeT and JuD continued to insist that they were separate organizations, but time and again it was shown that the groups were effectively the same. For example, in January 2009, the FBI discovered that JuD’s Pakistan-based spokesman, Abdullah Muntazir, operating through anonymous phone numbers, had been claiming to be LeT’s Kashmir-based spokesman, Abdullah Ghaznavi.³⁰

LeT has continued to deploy its *fidayeen* against targets throughout India. On September 24, 2002, two LeT operatives stormed the Akshardham Temple when it was packed with worshippers, killing over 30 and wounding over 70. The attack was intended to avenge attacks on India’s Muslims.³¹ On December 28, 2005, a pair of LeT terrorists attacked a conference at the Indian Institute of Science, killing a professor and wounding five attendees. Bangalore was targeted because it was a key center of India’s booming high-tech sector.³²

The most infamous LeT action was the November 2008 attack on Mumbai (generally referred to as 26/11). It deployed the *fidayeen* tactic but on a previously unseen scale, holding a major international city under siege for several days. On November 22, 10 gunmen departed Karachi on a boat, hijacked an Indian fishing trawler, killed four of its crew, and arrived in Mumbai on November 26. On landing in Mumbai, the attackers divided up into teams of two, storming five preselected targets: the train station, two iconic hotels, a restaurant popular with foreigners, and the Nariman House, a community center that hosts Jewish visitors. Over the course of 60 hours, 166 people were killed and this major economic center was brought to a standstill before Indian security forces killed nine of the attackers and captured one.³³ The intentional targeting of foreign tourists in India and particularly of Jews and Israelis highlighted LeT's worldview and global ambitions. Besides its scale and audacity, the 26/11 attack highlighted LeT's ability to use technology in innovative and deadly ways. The attackers used consumer electronic technology and services such as satellite phones and Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) to remain in communication with their command center in Karachi, which the attacker's handlers monitored events on the news and provided real-time intelligence and direction to the attackers.³⁴

Thereafter, Hafez Saeed and his organization denied any role in the attack, claiming that the attackers were from splinter groups.³⁵ To avoid international scrutiny, several LeT spinoff groups had been created, but there was little question that these were merely fronts for the old organization.³⁶ The testimony of the surviving Mumbai attacker Ajmal Kasab (who was executed on November 21, 2012) and of Pakistani-American LeT operative David Coleman Headley, left little doubt that the 26/11 attacks were an LeT operation planned with the support of Pakistan's ISI. Kasab described meeting top LeT officials, including Saeed, during his training.³⁷ Headley (who will be discussed in greater detail below) also described how Pakistani intelligence agents aided LeT operations, including having a frogmen from Pakistan's Navy provide training for the 26/11 attackers. Headley, like many LeT operatives, had his own ISI handler and received specialized training directly from the ISI.³⁸

Just as the ISI supports LeT as a proxy in order to maintain plausible deniability, LeT fosters proxies in India among radical Islamist militias in India. LeT's most important ally within India is the Indian Mujahideen (IM). Established by Indian Muslims radicalized by communal violence, IM's members are primarily drawn from the ranks of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).³⁹ LeT, along with several other Pakistani terror groups, provided support to IM, including training, cash, weapons, explosives,

and false travel documents. One of IM's founders, Mohammed Sadiq Israr Sheikh, is believed to have traveled to Pakistan in part on a legitimate Pakistani passport supplied by ISI through LeT; he met with LeT leaders in Pakistan, attended an LeT training camp, and recruited other Indian Muslims to attend LeT training camps.⁴⁰ In another instance, Sarfaraz Nawaz, a radicalized SIMI member living in Oman encountered an IM cell on a return trip to India. Back in Oman, Nawaz got in touch with a LeT financier and coordinated between the IM cell and LeT. Nawaz obtained funds from LeT for an IM cell in the Indian state of Kerala and helped arrange for cell members to train with Pakistani *jihadists* in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴¹

Some analysts argue that IM is little more than an outgrowth of LeT and the ISI, which was established when Pakistan, under U.S. pressure, reduced its support for armed operations in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴² According to these analysts, IM was an outgrowth of "The Karachi Project" which brought together a number of Pakistani militant groups including LeT to attack India.⁴³ Other analysts view IM as an independent organization, but allied with LeT. In the words of scholar Stephen Tankel, "...most Indian militants did not perceive themselves as proxies for either Lashkar or Pakistan.... In other words, the group [LeT] was a force multiplier for Indian militancy, rather than a key driver of it. Further, while Lashkar was the chief external outfit providing support for Indian jihadism, it was not the only one."⁴⁴ The Gulf is often a critical region of LeT-IM communications and recruitment because many Indians travel to the Gulf for work and can then relatively easily travel on to Pakistan.

IM has been held responsible for many attacks throughout India, killing over 700 individuals in the past decade. While LeT's preferred tactic is the *fidayeen* assault, IM's specialty has been IEDs made with pressure cookers packed with ammonium nitrate and fuel oil. It is difficult to determine if an attack was a LeT operation in which IM provided support, an IM-LeT joint operation, or an IM operation that received LeT support. There may also have been attacks by IM in which they did not receive direct LeT support, but LeT training and support helped IM build the necessary organizational capabilities to carry out the attack. The following are few of the IM/LeT operations in India:

- August 25, 2003—Two bombs detonated at the Gateway of India and Zaveri Bazaar in Mumbai, killing 52 and wounding over 200.
- October 29, 2005—A triple bombing at crowded markets in New Delhi just two days before the Hindu festival of Diwali, which killed 62 and injured 210.
- March 7, 2006—Two near simultaneous blasts in the Hindu holy

city of Varanasi, which struck a Hindu temple and the city's train station on an important pilgrimage day, killing over 20 people and wounding over 100.

- July 11, 2006—Seven bombs detonated on commuter trains throughout Mumbai, killing 209 people and wounding 714.

On November 23, 2007, IM announced its presence to the world with three near-simultaneous bombings at courthouses in three cities in the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh. Minutes before the bombs went off, IM emailed a manifesto to media outlets outlining its grievances and stating its attacks were revenge for violence against Indian Muslims. The multiple simultaneous attacks, accompanied by emailed manifestos, became IM's *modus operandi*. Similar bombings occurred throughout 2008 in Jaipur, Bangalore, Ahmadabad, and New Delhi. Over 160 people were killed in these attacks.⁴⁵

In September 2008, Indian security forces began to crack down on IM and after 26/11 Pakistan restrained LeT. But in February 2010, IM and LeT launched another deadly attack in India, bombing the German Bakery in the city of Pune. This attack explicitly targeted foreign nationals, who were known to frequent the bakery; five of the 17 killed were foreign nationals. With the German Bakery bombing, IM and LeT began a new campaign within India. Although the tempo and scale were reduced, they remained an effective and deadly terror threat to India, killing over 50 people since the German Bakery bombing.⁴⁶ Yassin Bhatkal, mastermind of IM's recent terror attacks, was arrested on the Nepal-Indian border in August 2013. Under interrogation, Bhatkal described his training by LeT as well as how LeT provided money for Bhatkal's terror plots.⁴⁷

Jihad is central to LeT's worldview, but so is *da'wa* (preaching). LeT runs a vast network of offices, schools, medical centers, and media outlets within Pakistan to proselytize LeT's Ahl-e-Hadith theology. LeT's headquarters are at a 200-acre compound in Muridke, outside of Lahore, designed to be a "pure" Islamic city with a *madrassa*, a hospital, a market, residences, and farmland. To demonstrate the purity of the city, televisions and pictures are banned, with entertainment limited to cassettes of warrior songs.⁴⁸

LeT runs a network of primary and upper-level schools that serve over 18,000 students. They are not, technically, *madrassas*; while LeT pushes its view of Islam, the schools also teach other subjects. However, LeT's worldview is infused into every component of education. The former head of LeT's education department explained that in the basic reader the alphabet is used to emphasize *jihad*, "'Alif' for Allah, 'Be' for Bandoq (gun), 'Te' for toop (cannon) and so on." Because of the poor state of Pakistan's public educa-

tion, LeT schools are an attractive alternative. LeT also subsidizes the fees for those who cannot pay.⁴⁹

LeT is also a major healthcare provider, running hospitals, mobile medical centers, and an ambulance service. Over 2,000 doctors volunteer their services part-time and are trained to use their contact with patients as an opportunity to proselytize. LeT believes these activities are necessary to counter-act the influence of NGOs and Christian missionaries. As in LeT's education system, the organization is providing a service desperately needed by many impoverished Pakistanis.⁵⁰ LeT has also been on the forefront of disaster relief, which also raises the organization's profile and reputation in Pakistan. LeT was one of the first organizations to respond to the 2005 Kashmir earthquake⁵¹ and has delivered aid to refugees who were displaced by the fighting in the Swat Valley in 2008 and the 2010 floods.⁵²

LeT has an extensive media arm, publishing several magazines in Urdu, English and Arabic with publications targeted to specific communities such as women and students. The flagship publication, *Majalah al-Dawa*, is an Urdu-language monthly with a circulation of about 60,000.⁵³ *Jihad* is a regular theme in these publications, and they regularly feature testimonials from "martyrs," LeT operatives killed in the service of *jihad*.⁵⁴ LeT has used the internet to propagate its message, broadcasting an internet radio show and maintaining websites and Facebook pages. However, international scrutiny has led the Pakistani government to shut down these sites. LeT also holds conferences and rallies throughout the country.⁵⁵ These have continued despite the supposed ban on LeT and often feature speeches by Hafez Mohammed Saeed, notwithstanding the \$10 million bounty on him under the U.S. Rewards for Justice program.⁵⁶

LeT's large social service and paramilitary operations are expensive to operate. However, the organization has been both creative and systematic in its fundraising efforts. According to one report donation boxes for the jihadi groups are present in every third or fourth shop in Pakistani markets throughout the country. LeT publications include calls for donations. LeT also raises money from wealthy supporters in the Arabian Peninsula and from the large Pakistani expatriate community around the world. Often these donations are channeled through a variety of international Islamist charities, such as the International Islamic Relief Organization and the al-Rashid Foundation.⁵⁷

One notable LeT fundraising operation is collecting the skins of sacrificial animals after holidays and selling them to tanneries. In 2010, JuD reportedly collected 100,000 skins, netting a profit of \$1.2 million.⁵⁸ LeT uses a range of low and high-tech means to involve people in this campaign. For example,

within Pakistan, LeT announces this campaign via loudspeaker, but internationally, it allows individuals to contribute to the purchase of a sacrificial animal online and then donate the skin to LeT.⁵⁹

Besides the ISI stipend, the Pakistani civilian government has also contributed to LeT. In June 2010, the Punjab provincial government allocated 80 million rupees (about \$1 million) to LeT-affiliated schools and hospitals.⁶⁰

GLOBAL REACH

Although the vast majority of LeT's operations have been in India, it is a terrorist group of global reach and ambitions. LeT's global network has multiple components. LeT has allied with other Islamist groups around the world, including al-Qaeda, and has developed its own network of supporters internationally for fundraising and logistical support. LeT has also become a magnet for Islamists worldwide seeking training. Finally, and most worrisome, LeT is increasingly operating against NATO forces and India in Afghanistan and has on several occasions directed plots outside of the Indian sub-continent.

While LeT's rhetoric focuses on India, it has never discussed India exclusively. LeT statements have long vilified a coalition of Hindus, Jews, and Christians, colorfully termed the "Brahmanic-Talmudic-Crusader" alliance that seeks to destroy the *ummah*, the international Muslim community.⁶¹ In a 1998 speech, Hafez Saeed stated:

Lashkar-e-Taiba will ultimately plant the flag of Islam on Delhi, Tel Aviv, and Washington. All evil in the world emanated from the White House which would be blown up and if the US Army took action against the Muslims it would be opposed by Lashkar-e-Taiba.⁶²

LeT communications call for *jihad* to overthrow the oppressors of Muslims everywhere. LeT rhetoric frequently targets Israel and at one point called for Pakistan to deploy a hydrogen bomb to "make the USA yield before Pakistan."⁶³

LeT's affiliation with the international Islamist terror movement is deep and extensive. As discussed above, LeT's links to al-Qaeda, the leading organization of the *jihadist* movement, go back to the very founding of the organizations and the joint legacy of Abdullah Azzam, who was instrumental in the creation of both al-Qaeda and LeT's predecessor, MDI. Osama bin Laden may have provided seed money to MDI and LeT very early in its existence,

and he allegedly attended several of LeT's first annual conferences.⁶⁴

The connection between LeT and al-Qaeda was more than rhetoric. LeT has sheltered and trained many notable al-Qaeda figures. Ramzi Yusuf, the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and nephew of 9/11 organizer Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, is known to have been sheltered in LeT safehouses.⁶⁵ After 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, LeT assisted with the exfiltration of al-Qaeda personnel from Afghanistan into Pakistan and beyond, providing safe houses, safe passage, travel documents, and logistical support.⁶⁶ One of the most notable al-Qaeda figures to take shelter with LeT was Zayn al-Abidin Mohammad Husayn, better known as Abu Zubaydah, who was captured in a LeT safe house in Faisalabad, Pakistan in March 2002.⁶⁷ In September 2003, Pakistani authorities raided a Karachi *madrassa* linked to LeT and one of the students they arrested was the brother of al-Qaeda's southeast Asia affiliate *Jemaah Islamiyah's* operational commander, Riduan Isamudin.⁶⁸

Even after 9/11, several al-Qaeda operatives trained with LeT. Richard Reid, the infamous terrorist who attempted to detonate his shoes as part of an al-Qaeda plot on a U.S.-bound flight, had trained with LeT prior to joining al-Qaeda. Two of the 2005 London subway bombers, Mohammad Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, may also have received training from LeT.⁶⁹

While focused on its anti-India objectives, LeT was embedded in an international network of Islamist organizations. It has long offered support to other extremist groups battling those it perceives as enemies of Islam. LeT has offered rhetorical and occasionally financial support to Islamists in Chechnya, Gaza, the Philippines, and the Balkans.⁷⁰ The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a group with the goal of overthrowing the Uzbek regime and replacing it with a Sharia-based government, has long-standing ties with LeT and receives support from the organization.⁷¹ LeT is also plugged into the international networks of Islamist fundraisers such as the Al Akhtar Trust or the Al Rashid Trust, which were founded to fund militant groups, including LeT.⁷²

When al-Qaeda's training infrastructure in Afghanistan was destroyed, LeT's camps, largely untouched due to Pakistan's protection, took up the mantle of training militants from across the international Islamist movement.⁷³ This training support is provided to militants from numerous organizations in South Asia, such as *Hizbul Mujahideen* (HuM), *Jaish-e-Mohammed* (JeM), *Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami* (HuJI), and the Taliban, among others.⁷⁴ Further, radical Muslims worldwide have travelled to Pakistan to train with the LeT. Even before 9/11 radical Muslims were documented visiting LeT camps in

Pakistan.

Besides being a magnet for Islamists worldwide, LeT has established its own global footprint to support its terror activities. Within the Indian sub-continent, LeT has safehouses and supporters in Bangladesh, Nepal,⁷⁵ and the Maldives⁷⁶ that facilitate the infiltration of operatives into India. LeT also has supporters in the Gulf region who raise funds, but also recruit Indians working in the Gulf and coordinate travel to Pakistan for training. But LeT's network extends far beyond Asia, into Europe and even the United States. There is evidence that LeT opened an office in Lodi, California, and counterterrorism officials "cite evidence in recent years of fundraising or recruiting efforts in Canada, Britain, Australia and the United States."⁷⁷ There has also been evidence of LeT activity in Germany, as stated by the German Interior Minister,⁷⁸ a cell that raised money and was armed with explosives was arrested in Spain,⁷⁹ and (as will be discussed below) LeT had an active presence in France.⁸⁰

Despite its international network, vast resources, and unmitigated rage against the West for most of its existence, LeT has almost exclusively targeted India. However, this is beginning to change. The attacks in Mumbai in which foreigners, and particularly Israelis and Americans, were targeted was one example. But LeT is becoming increasingly involved in the fight against NATO and the United States in Afghanistan. More ominously, LeT operatives have, on several occasions, hatched plots beyond the Indian sub-continent that directly target Western interests.

The vast majority of attacks LeT has executed other than in India have occurred in Afghanistan. In part, these attacks have been consistent with LeT's willingness to serve as a proxy for Pakistani intelligence. Pakistan's military leadership is deeply concerned that increased Indian influence in Afghanistan will leave Pakistan surrounded. Several LeT attacks have reflected this Pakistani concern. At first, LeT's support for the Afghan Taliban in their fight against NATO forces was informal, granting LeT fighters leave to travel to Afghanistan and join the Taliban on their own initiative. This was a useful safety valve for LeT. Many LeT members were frustrated that the Pakistani government had allied with the Americans and was cracking down on LeT activities against India in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2004 and 2005, LeT began to formally support its members traveling to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban.⁸¹ LeT fighters played a significant role in an attack on a U.S. base in Wanat, Nuristan in which insurgents nearly overran the base.⁸²

LeT has also carried out a number of high-profile strikes against Indian

targets in Afghanistan, including a July 2008 car-bombing of the Indian Embassy⁸³ and a February 2010 *fidayeen* attack on Kabul guesthouses hosting Indians. Similar to the 26/11 assault, in this attack, the *fidayeen* used cellphones to coordinate operations with controllers outside of the country.⁸⁴

LeT has also begun to act operationally within the West. A notable case of an attempted LeT attack in the West is that of Willie Brigitte, a French convert to Islam. Initially Brigitte sought to enter Afghanistan to join the Taliban. When he could not do so, Brigitte spent several months training at a LeT camp in Pakistan in late 2001. He then was dispatched to Australia, where he linked up with other LeT operatives to carry out a series of attacks, with potential targets including a nuclear reactor and Australian military bases. Ultimately, after France alerted Australia's domestic intelligence agency, ASIO, of the threat posed by Brigitte, he was deported to France where he was convicted of providing support to terrorists and sentenced to nine years in prison.⁸⁵

In spring 2004, LeT dispatched several operatives to Iraq to fight the Americans and British. Led by a high-level LeT operative named Danish Ahmed, the team was arrested by British forces in April 2004. LeT was exploring the possibility of sending fighters to Iraq but ultimately did not have the right links to the clandestine networks. Nonetheless, this incident highlights that LeT was taking a more expansive view of its conflict with the West.⁸⁶

David Headley, a Pakistani-American, is probably the most notorious Western LeT operative. He is both an example of a Western recruit to LeT and of attempts by the organization to directly attack the West. Headley's involvement with LeT lasted for seven years, during which time he trained at least five times at LeT camps in Pakistan, shuttled back and forth between the United States, Pakistan, and India on the organization's behalf, and, perhaps most integrally, selected and scoped out attack locations for the Mumbai attack.⁸⁷ After the attacks, Headley scouted *Jyllands-Posten*, the Danish newspaper that published the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, as well as several other targets in Copenhagen with the goal of carrying out an attack. He claims to have been supported by LeT among others in this endeavor.⁸⁸ He was ultimately arrested in Chicago a year after the 26/11 attacks and was convicted in January 2013 to 35 years in federal prison for his role in the attacks.⁸⁹

RECENT ACTIVITY

Lashkar-e-Taiba currently finds itself in a difficult position. Unlike many of the other Islamist groups in Pakistan it has remained loyal to the Pakistani

state, and even serving Pakistan's government as an intermediary to other radical groups.⁹⁰ At the same time, LeT's primary arena for *jihad*, Jammu and Kashmir, has been increasingly closed off to it. Violence in that troubled region has collapsed from hundreds of civilians killed annually by terrorists only a decade ago to less than a score killed annually.⁹¹ Jammu and Kashmir remain restive, and LeT and other Pakistani extremists continue to attempt to wage their battle there. But they are receiving far less support from the government of Pakistan, which is under international pressure and is seeking to improve relations with India.⁹² The 26/11 assault on Mumbai may have been one outgrowth of this internal tension (as well as an effort to derail warming Indian-Pakistani relations.)

LeT's expanded international profile since the 26/11 attacks has also hurt the organization's ability to carry out terror attacks. The 2012 arrest of Abu Jundal highlighted increased Saudi-Indian counter-terror cooperation.⁹³ India's arrests of Karim Abdul Tunda and Yassin Bhatkal will reduce, although not eliminate, LeT's ability to carry out attacks within India. Finally, expanded international scrutiny in general will make it more difficult for LeT to move operatives and plan major attacks.

At the same time LeT continues to operate openly in Pakistan. Despite a \$10 million bounty under the U.S. Rewards for Justice program, LeT chief Hafez Muhammed Saeed continues to travel throughout Pakistan and speak at rallies. Several top LeT leaders are being tried in Pakistan for their role in the 26/11 attacks. But the extremely slow pace of the judicial process suggests that the Pakistani government is not committed to seeing justice done.⁹⁴

In recent years LeT rallies have protested NATO transports traveling through Pakistan, U.S. drone strikes, Indian water policies, and improved trade relations with India. LeT has spearheaded a coalition of Islamist groups opposed to these efforts, which is known as the *Difa-e-Pakistan Council* (Defense of Pakistan.)⁹⁵

LeT however holds the values of *jihad* as a central tenet of its ideology. Its current period of relative restraint will be difficult to maintain. Either the organization will again seek to launch terrorist spectacles, possibly farther afield from its previous areas of operation. Alternately, frustrated LeT cadres may begin to plot attacks on their own initiative. This may have been the case when David Coleman Headley, the key plotter of the Mumbai attacks, began scouting targets in Denmark.⁹⁶ LeT likewise remains ideologically committed to violence and is a formidable organization with the resources and skills needed to launch major, deadly terror attacks.

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