

Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ)

(Also known as: Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Jhangvie, Laskar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkare Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Jhangwi, Lashkar-i-Jhangwi, Jhangvi Army, Lashkar Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Jhanvi, Lashkar-i-Jangvi, Lashkar e Jhangvi, Lashkar Jangvi, Laskar e Jahangvi).

The following information is based on publicly available details about Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ). The LeJ is listed in the UN 1267 Committee's consolidated list and as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the governments of the UK, the US, Canada and Pakistan.

Current status of the LeJ

Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) is a Sunni Deobandi Islamic terrorist group based primarily in Pakistan's Punjab region and the city of Karachi. The group was formed in 1996 by Akram Lahori, Malik Ishaque, and Riaz Basra of the radical sectarian organisation, the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), who accused the SSP's leadership of deviating from the ideals of its co-founder, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi.

Sectarian terrorist groups have been responsible for over 4,000 deaths in Pakistan since the late 1980s, and LeJ has established a reputation as the most violent Sunni extremist organisation in the country, killing hundreds of Shias since its formation. Among the Shias LeJ has targeted for killing have been doctors, lawyers, teachers, politicians, lobbyists, and scholars. LeJ attacks have also targeted Christians, including attacks on a Christian church and a Christian school in Islamabad in 2002, and Iranian nationals in Pakistan, accusing the latter of funding groups in Pakistan perceived as trying to establish Shia dominance.

While sectarian attacks remain LeJ's primary driving force, it has broadened its focus to target the Western presence in Pakistan, such as the abduction and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi in 2002, the car bomb attack on French nationals in Karachi in May 2002, and car bombings outside the US Consulate in Karachi in June 2002 and March 2006.

LeJ has also been involved in attacks on Pakistani government targets, including two failed assassination attempts against President Musharaff in 2003, and the failed assassination attempt against former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007. LeJ chief Qari Zafar is suspected of involvement in the September 2008 truck bombing of the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad.

A large portion of LeJ's funding comes from wealthy supporters in Karachi. Additional funding is derived from sources in Saudi Arabia, as well as from criminal activities, such as protection rackets and extortion from both Shia and Sunni banks and businesses.

Pakistani government security crackdowns on sectarian groups have been only partially successful, as fear of retaliation means that some judges are reluctant to hear sectarian cases, and police officers investigating sectarian murders have been killed. The large increase in the number of Deobandi madrassas (religious schools) in Pakistan provides a pool of manpower from which LeJ can recruit.

LeJ operated major training camps in Muridke and Kabirwal, Pakistan, and in Sarobi, Afghanistan. However, the camp in Afghanistan was destroyed during the US invasion in 2001, and the camps in Pakistan have reportedly been closed due to pressure from the police. LeJ has reportedly been one of several terrorists groups that have set up eight training camps in the Darra Adam Khel area of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, and LeJ was described as the most active group in the area.

As part of the Sunni militant community, LeJ can rely on the assistance of other Pakistani terrorist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Harakat ul-Mujahideen, Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami, Jaish-e-Mohammad, all of which are members of Usama bin Laden's International Islamic Front.

LeJ also has an extremely close relationship with the Afghan Taliban, having fought with them against the Northern Alliance and participated in killings of Shias during the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Objectives

LeJ's goals are to establish an Islamic Sunni state in Pakistan based on Sharia law, through the use of violence if necessary; to have all Shias declared non-believers; and to eliminate followers of other faiths, especially Jews, Christians, and Hindus.

Leadership and membership

The current leader of LeJ is reportedly Qari Zafar of Karachi, who also has links to al-Qa'ida. He probably assumed the role in early 2007, following the 4 February 2007 arrest of former leader Rizwan Ahmad in Lahore on suspicion of planning suicide attacks.

LeJ is estimated to have around 300 active members. It maintains a multi-cellular structure, made up of loosely co-ordinated regional sub-units, further divided into several small cells of five to eight members each that operate independently of one another.

Terrorist activities

Recent events confirm LeJ's continued existence and involvement in terrorist attacks and planning for future attacks:

- 26 September 2008: three LeJ-trained terrorists were killed in a police raid. The police also found bomb-making material and LeJ literature, as well as the body of a Pakistani businessman who had been kidnapped and killed by the terrorists.
- 26 September 2008: LeJ member Raheemullah was arrested. He had been involved in past attacks and had been planning attacks against police officers and Shias.
- 20 September 2008: suicide bombing of the Marriott hotel in Islamabad; LeJ leader Qari Zafar is suspected of involvement in the attack.
- 8 September 2008: LeJ member Zeeshan was arrested again. He had previously been arrested for a 7 July 2008 bombing in Karachi, and is also suspected of involvement in the Nishtar Park bombing in Karachi on 11 April 2006.

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- 27 July 2008: senior LeJ member Shafiqur Rehman was arrested in Quetta. He confessed to seven assassinations in Quetta, and is suspected of involvement in over 100 cases of sectarian terrorism.
- 20 June 2008: two LeJ members were among five men arrested in Lahore who confessed to planning suicide attacks in Lahore and other cities.
- 27 February 2008: three LeJ members were arrested for planning attacks on several important political leaders in the district of Jhang.
- 26 February 2008: four LeJ members were arrested for planning attacks on political and religious leaders and senior police officers in Lahore.
- 5 February 2008: LeJ member Fida Hussain, believed to have been involved in the suicide bombing of a Pakistan Air Force bus in October 2007, was arrested in Lahore.
- 27 January 2008: a bombing near a mosque in Peshawar that killed a police chief and 14 others was attributed to LeJ.
- 17 January 2008: a suicide attack on a Shia mosque in Peshawar that killed 10 people was attributed to the LeJ.
- 10 January 2008: 40 LeJ members were arrested in Lahore with several weapons recovered.
- 18 October 2007: attempted assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto; the Mati-ur-Rehman group, which includes LeJ members, was suspected of involvement in the attack.
- 16 June 2007: Karachi police announced the arrest of two LeJ members suspected of involvement in the Nishtar Park bombing on 11 April 2006.
- 24 February 2007: three would-be suicide bombers, travelling by bicycle, were killed when a speed bump set off the explosives they were carrying. The bombers were LeJ members attempting to attack a prayer meeting in Chechawatni, where a large number of police officers were expected to be in attendance.
- 13 February 2007: two LeJ members were arrested in connection with several attacks, including a raid on a Shia community centre in Rawalpindi in 2002 that killed 15 people.

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