

Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ)

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

The following information is based on publicly available details about Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ). These details have been corroborated by material from intelligence investigations into the activities of the LeJ. ASIO assesses that the details set out below are accurate and reliable.

LeJ is listed in the UN 1267 Committee's consolidated list and as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Pakistan.

Current status of LeJ

Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) is a Sunni Islamic terrorist group based in Pakistan. The group was formed in 1996 as a more militant splinter group of the radical sectarian organisation, the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and follows the Deobandi tradition of Sunni Islam. Under the leadership of Riaz Basra, the LeJ quickly distinguished itself as the most violent and radical sectarian force in Pakistan.

LeJ is based primarily in the Punjab and Balochistan regions of Pakistan, and the port city of Karachi. It is responsible for numerous targeted killings and massacres. The group has targeted for assassination, not only opposing Shiite activists, but prominent Shiite officials, professionals and businessmen. It has assassinated Iranian nationals in Pakistan and was involved, along with the Jaish e-Mohammad (JeM), in the abduction and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl in January 2002. It has also instigated attacks, including small-arms attacks and suicide bombings, on Shiite mosques and processions, and Christian churches resulting in the random killing of hundreds of people.

While sectarian attacks remain LeJ's primary driving force, elements within LeJ have broadened the group's focus to include the targeting of members of the Pakistani State and the Western presence in Pakistan. As members of a previously unknown group "Jundallah," LeJ trained members were among a number of militants drawn from several Pakistani extremist groups responsible for the twin car-bomb attack near the US Consulate in Karachi on 26 May 2004. On 9 June 2004, the same terrorist cell was involved in a terrorist attack against a heavily-armed military convoy carrying Karachi's military commander resulting in seven deaths. More recently the LeJ was linked to the 2 March 2006 suicide car bombing on the US Consulate in Karachi that killed a US diplomat.

LeJ derive a considerable portion of funding from wealthy benefactors in Karachi. Extortion from Shia banks and businesses is another significant means by which the LeJ raises finances for terrorist operations.

Pakistani government security crackdowns since late 2001 have had some success,

but the group continues to recruit new members to replace those arrested or killed. Over half of Pakistan's madrassas (religious schools) are Deobandi run and they provide a fertile pool of manpower susceptible to LeJ recruitment.

The present status of LeJ training facilities is not known. LeJ training camps in Afghanistan were destroyed by the United States and their training facilities in Pakistan have been disrupted by local police. Being part of a broader Deobandi movement, however, the LeJ can rely on the assistance of other militant Deobandi groups including its parent the SSP, JeM, the Jamiat ul-Ansar (JuA - also known as Harakat ul-Mujahideen or HuM) and Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI).

The LeJ has an extremely close relationship with the Taliban and confirmed links with al-Qa'ida. LeJ operatives are thought to have received training from al-Qa'ida.

Objectives

The LeJ's ultimate objective is the establishment of an Islamic state in Pakistan based on a radical interpretation of Sharia law, through the use of violence. Part of a broader Sunni extremist movement, LeJ's membership harbour an intense hatred of all foreign, or non-Islamic influences. The group is also fervently anti-Shia and aim to have them declared a non-Muslim minority.

Leadership and membership

Muhammad Ajmal (aka Akram Lahori) is reportedly the present leader of the LeJ. Ajmal succeeded Riaz Basra following Basra's death in May 2002 as a result of a shootout with Pakistani police. Ajmal is himself in custody following his arrest in June 2002 for his alleged involvement in 38 cases of sectarian killings. Although Ajmal is officially considered the head of LeJ, Mufti Eid Mohammed is now believed to lead the organisation and operational command is understood to have passed to minor figures.

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

LeJ engagement in terrorist activities

The LeJ has been involved in a number of terrorist attacks, including targeted assassinations and suicide bombings against, Shia, Christian, Western and government targets.

Recent terrorist attacks for which responsibility has been claimed by, or reliably attributed to, the LeJ have included:

- January 2005: the attack on Shiite religious leader, Syed Agha Ziauddin Rizvi, in Gilgit, resulting in three deaths
- 28 September 2005: Two LeJ leaders arrested for planning the 27 and 30 May 2005 suicide bomb attacks on a Shiite mosque in Karachi and the Bari Imam shrine in Islamabad which killed a total of twenty-four people
- 2 March 2006: suicide car bombing on the US Consulate in Karachi killing a US Diplomat
- 11 April 2006: suspected involvement in the bomb attack on Shiite worshippers at Nishtar Park in Karachi killing more than sixty people
- 14 July 2006: suicide bomb attack on Shiite cleric, Allama Hassan Turabi, in

Karachi which also killed Turabi's nephew, and injured three security guards;
and

- 1 January 2007: Pakistani Intelligence agencies claim uncovered documentary evidence indicates LeJ plan to accelerate their targeting of Shiite mosques and prominent Shiite leaders and scholars.

Conclusion

The Criminal Code provides that for an organisation to be listed as a terrorist organisation, the Attorney-General must be satisfied that:

- (i) the organisation is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur); or
- (ii) the organisation advocates the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur).

On the basis of the above information, ASIO assesses that LeJ is directly preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of terrorist acts. It is submitted that the acts attributable to LeJ are terrorist acts as they:

- (i) are done with the intention of advancing a political cause, namely, the establishment of a Islamic state in Pakistan
- (ii) are intended to coerce or influence by intimidation the government of foreign countries, including Pakistan and/or intimidate sections of the public; and
- (iii) constitute acts which cause serious physical harm to persons, including death, as well as serious damage to property.

This assessment is corroborated by information provided by reliable and credible intelligence sources.