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[Home](#) > ARREST OF ANOTHER AL QAEDA OPERATIVE IN PAKISTAN'S PUNJAB+

ARREST OF ANOTHER AL QAEDA OPERATIVE IN PAKISTAN'S PUNJAB+

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by B.Raman

The Punjab Police had announced on July 26, 2004, that following an exchange of fire lasting 14 hours at an area called Islamnagar in Gujrat, a town in Punjab, about 175 km (110 miles) southeast of the capital Islamabad, the previous day, they had arrested 13 persons, suspected of links with Al Qaeda, of whom three were women and six children. The names of the four men arrested were given as Abdullah, Tanveer, Feroze and Saleem. One of the arrested men was described as a Pakistani national from Okara and the others were described as nationals of Kenya, Sudan and South Africa. One of the arrested women was described as an Afghan national and a 12-year-old girl as a Saudi national.

2. It was stated that the police received the tip-off, which led to the raid and arrests, from an employee of a courier service through which the inmates of the house, who had been living there for 45 days, were receiving mail from abroad. The Police claimed to have recovered two Kalashnikovs, chemicals, dollars, euros and two laptop computers from the hide-out. According to another version, following the interrogation of a suspected Al Qaeda member, who had been arrested earlier, the police had picked up Tanveer from a hotel on July 24 and he had led them to the hide-out.

3. The Police also claimed that one of the women was wearing a suicide jacket filled with explosives.

4. Faisal Saleh Hayat, Pakistan's Interior Minister, announced on July 29, 2004, that two of the arrested persons had since then been identified as Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a Tanzanian national born in Zanzibar, who is wanted by the USA's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and his Uzbek wife. He carried a reward money of US \$ five million for his arrest. Hayat said they would be handed over to the FBI

after interrogation by the Pakistani agencies.

5. Ahmed Ghailani had been indicted in the Southern District of New York on December 16, 1998, for his alleged involvement in the August 7, 1998, bombings of the US Embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya.

6. Addressing a press conference at Washington DC on May 26, 2004, John Ashcroft, the US Attorney-General, had said: "Credible intelligence from multiple sources indicates that Al Qaeda plans to attempt an attack on the United States in the next few months. This disturbing intelligence indicates Al Qaeda's specific intention to hit the United States hard. After the March 11 attack in Madrid, Spain, an Al Qaeda spokesman had announced that 90 per cent of the arrangements for an attack in the United States were complete."

7. An FBI bulletin issued subsequently said that public statements by Al Qaeda leaders suggested that plans for a U.S. attack were nearly complete, and that any of several upcoming high-profile events -- such as the G8 Summit in Sea Island, Georgia, already over), the national political conventions in Boston (about to be over) and New York, and the November presidential election -- were possible targets.

8. "The face of Al Qaeda may be changing," the bulletin said. "It is possible Al Qaeda will attempt to infiltrate young Middle Eastern extremists into America, as they did prior to September 11." At the press conference, which was also attended by FBI Director Robert Mueller, they distributed photographs of seven people who, they alleged, were associated with Al Qaeda.

9. "They all are sought in connection with the possible terrorist threats in the United States. They all pose a clear and present danger to America. They all should be considered armed and dangerous," said Ashcroft. Of these, six had figured in earlier FBI bulletins, but the seventh---Adam Gadahn, an American convert to Islam-- figured for the first time. He was described as a close friend of Abu Zubaidah, a top Al Qaeda operative who is presently in US custody. According to Ashcroft, he had attended a training camp in Afghanistan and worked in the past as an English translator for Al Qaeda.

10. Of the seven named in the bulletin, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani were described as involved in the Al Qaeda bombings of U.S. Embassies in East Africa in 1998. They are listed among the 22 most-wanted terrorists. The other five had been placed under the category "seeking information," meaning the FBI sought more information on them, but had no evidence so far of their involvement in terrorism.

11. The particulars of the seven persons figuring in the FBI bulletin are as follows:

* ADNAN G. EL SHUKRIJUMAH: A Saudi native who reportedly left the Miami area for Morocco in May 2001. He is suspected of

being a leader of a terrorism cell or an organizer similar to Mohammed Atta, who was involved in the 9/11 terrorist strikes. Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (KSM) was reported to have referred to him in his interrogation. FBI officials said he may be carrying passports from Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Canada. According to them, El Shukrijumah, who was born in 1975, is of particular interest because of his familiarity with the United States, his ability to use fake documents and his fluency in English.

* AAFIA SIDDIQUI: Born in Pakistan in 1972, she was described by FBI Director Robert Mueller as an Al Qaeda operative and facilitator. Her name also reportedly figured in the interrogation report of KSM. She fled Boston last year, and the FBI believes she is in Pakistan, but this has been denied by the Pakistani authorities. She received a degree in biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1995 and wrote a doctoral thesis on neurological sciences in 2001 at Brandeis University. Her husband, Dr. Amjad Mohammed Khan, is also wanted for questioning.

* FAZUL ABDULLAH MOHAMMED: Born between 1972 and 1974 in the Comoros Republic in the Indian Ocean, he is described by the FBI as Al Qaeda's ringleader in eastern Africa. He has been indicted in the US in the 1998 Al Qaeda bombings of U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The FBI reportedly suspects he may be hiding in Kenya or Somalia.

* AHMED KHALFAN GHAILANI: Born between 1970 and 1974 in Tanzania, he also goes by the names Foopie, Fupi and Ahmed the Tanzanian.

* AMER EL-MAATI: Born in Kuwait in 1966, he is wanted by the FBI for questioning about possible Al Qaeda links.

* ABDERRAOUF JDEY: Born in Tunisia in 1966, Jdey obtained Canadian citizenship in 1995; his last known address was in Montreal. He was among five men who allegedly left suicide messages on videotapes recovered in Afghanistan at the home of Mohammed Atef, said to be Osama bin Laden's military chief, who was killed in a U.S. air strike in 2001. Jdey also goes by the names Farouq Al-Tunisi and Abd Al Rauf bin Al-Habib bin Yousef Al-Jiddi.

* ADAM YAHIYE GADAHN: A 25-year-old U.S. citizen who is also known as Adam Pearlman. Reportedly grew up on a California goat ranch.

12. This is the sixth arrest of a top Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda allied operative from major towns of Pakistan since March 2002. Three were arrested from towns in the Punjab province--Abu Zubaidah in Faisalabad, KSM in Rawalpindi, the twin town of Islamabad, where the General Headquarters of the Army are located, and Ghailani in Gujrat--- and three were arrested in Karachi--Ramzi Binalshibh, Walid bin Attash and Hambali's brother. Three --Abu Zubaidah, Hambali's brother and Ghailani--had been given shelter by the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LET) and the

remaining three by the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI).

13. There has so far been not a single arrest of any top Al Qaeda operative from the tribal areas near the Afghan border. bin Laden had also reportedly been given shelter in the Binori madrasa of Karachi till August 2002. His present whereabouts are not known, if he is still alive, but one should not be surprised if he is also living in one of the towns of Pakistan and not in the remote tribal areas, as often claimed by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military dictator, and as believed by the US.

14. A perusal of the report of the US National Commission, which had enquired into the 9/11 terrorist strikes in the US and which contains some details of the interrogation of KSM, Abu Zubaidah and others, indicates that the main hide-outs of the Al Qaeda operatives in Pakistan before 9/11 were in Karachi and Quetta. Islamabad, the capital, also figures. Abu Zubaidah was reported to have run a guest house there in 1999.

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