

BIN LADEN AND THE PAKISTANI DOUBLE GAME

*By Claude MONIQUET
ESISC PRESIDENT*

One could think that with allies like Pakistan, you don't need enemies.

The “last moments” of Osama Bin Laden (OBL) highlight particularly the double game played by Islamabad for years in the counter terrorism issue. And it underlines the embarrassment of Washington in this complex relationship with a partner “crucial” for the war against terror but that cannot be trust enough to share intelligence with...

Let's take just a single example. It is known that the United States acted unilaterally in Pakistan to search and kill OBL, and it was officially said that “no prior intelligence was shared with any country”, including Pakistan. But, **actually, the U.S. didn't inform Islamabad government until after its forces had exited Pakistani airspace... Did you said “allies”?**

On Monday, **both President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did their best to convince the American public opinion** that the “cooperation with Islamabad helped lead to compound” where OBL was killed. Probably because **it would be too complicate to explain why the U.S. spent so much money in supporting Pakistani army and intelligence and still cannot rely on Islamabad to help hunt High Value Targets (HVT).**

But a very different and much less enthusiastic stance was perceptible in other circles of the U.S. administration. Since the very beginning of Monday morning, “high level” intelligence or security sources multiplied anonymous statements to the media to underline how much Pakistani intelligence was not reliable. **The number of those sources shows how deep the U.S. intelligence and security community resentment toward Pakistan is.**

Today, May 3, in an unusual editorial in the *Washington Post*, **Pakistan's President Ali Zaradari defends his country role and try to restore its prestige.** Pakistan, Mr Zaradari says “has never been and never will be the hotbed of fanaticism that is often described by the media. Such baseless speculation may make exciting cable news, but it doesn't reflect fact (...), Pakistan had as much reason to despise al-Qaeda as any nation. The war on terrorism is as much Pakistan's war as it is America's”. **Nobody could and will discuss the fact that scores of innocent Pakistani civilians were killed by Osama Bin Laden associates and**

followers. And nobody will discuss the fact that a part of the security intelligence Pakistani apparatus is genuinely dedicated to counter terrorism. But it just makes the attitude of other Pakistani top executive more questionable.

U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin said on Monday that “Pakistan’s army and intelligence service have many questions to answer after the death of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan”. He is right and the questions are, indeed, numerous.

Homeland Security Adviser John Brennan said Monday night, in a press conference in the White House that “the United States is investigating how Osama bin Laden managed to remain undetected in Pakistan for so long and whether he had any sort of support system within the country”. He added **it was “inconceivable that bin Laden did not have some form of support.”**

U.S. administration sources with a knowledge of the OBL file told ESISC, last night that Osama Bin Laden “has lived for three years, at least, at the compound he ended his life”. They added that the large villa was very likely “especially build for him in 2004-2005”.

Thus it is crucial to answer the following interrogations:

- **Where did OBL and its associates hid between December 2001** (the last time OBL was spotted, in Tora Bora, Afghanistan) **and the yet unknown moment he entered his compound**, three years ago or more?
- How did he manage to travel Pakistan to join the Compound without being caught by **ISI** (Inter Services Intelligence) surveillance?
- **How was it possible that this high profile villa** – it is described as “8 time larges” than the others, with its own system to destroy the garbage and avoid them to be searched, without any TV, internet or even telephone connections and with its 5 feet high walls with barbed fire and all the neighbours seem have known it was inhabited by “Arabs” - **was not found and considered suspect by ISI or its rivals, the Military Intelligence?**

This last point is particularly relevant as the villa was located a few hundreds meters from the Military academy (the “Pakistani Sandhurst”, as the British media said) where most of the Pakistani officers are trained. If you had that thousand of military personnel – some of them of high rank -, live in Abbottabad, **this intelligence failure is purely inconceivable.**

The only explanation is that the Pakistani intelligence must be very very very bad OR corrupted and highly penetrated by the Jihad sympathisers.

Let’s assume that the second term of the proposition is the most probable.

In the last 15 years, **ISI has largely and clearly demonstrated its sympathy with the Jihad cause.** Just as a reminder:

- ISI is known to have been **instrumental in the establishment of the Taliban power** in Afghanistan in the second half of the nineties.
- In **August 1998, five ISI officers were killed when the U.S. bombed OBL's training camps** in retaliation for the terrorist attacks against its embassies in Eastern Africa.
- Since 2001, **U.S. intelligence sources have repeatedly complained that information sharing with Pakistan compromised operations** against HVT.
- ISI was **very likely involved in the kidnapping and the savage assassination of the U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl** in January 2002.
- ISI **obviously protected (and very likely benefited) from the long time nuclear traffic** of Abdul Qadeer Khan.
- Some ISI high level officers were in **“extremely good relations” with the Red Mosque leaders** when the mosque was one of the hotspots of Pakistani Jihadism.

Those are only some of the ISI achievements in this field.

The United States feel **they need Pakistan support to fix the situation in Afghanistan and find an acceptable exit strategy. They think also that they need Pakistani intelligence to fight extremism in Pakistan.** They are probably right on both accounts. On the other hand **no real progress will be made, neither in Afghanistan nor in Pakistan, until the deep corruption of ISI isn't clearly and fully exposed. And its links with extremism cut.**

This is **the only price President Zardary has to pay** if he wants to be credible when he describes Pakistan as an “ally” of the United States.

A step in the goof direction could have been made, as **Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Husain Haqqani** said yesterday night his country will do **“a full inquiry as to why its intelligences services were not able to track al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden earlier”**. AFP said that the ambassador underlined that **OBL “obviously had support within Pakistan but it is unknown if that support came from the state or the society”**.