

## **Scenario 89**

### **OSAMA'S KILLING - PAKISTAN SUFFERED:**

#### **OSAMA DRAMA – WHY SO:**

If at all we believe that Osama was there in Abbotabad and was actually killed in 2<sup>nd</sup> May's '**Operation Geronimo**', we can safely presume that he was simply a fugitive, sitting idle in a hide out and waiting for his last breath. He was not controlling Al Qaeda rather somebody else was managing it from somewhere else; how one can run a world level terrorist organisation without a telephone connection or internet. Even a corner grocery shop is not run without such electronic gadgets.

Al Qaeda in original shape may be a dead horse now and dead since long. It had been a decentralized organization, a loose collection of groups distributed throughout the conflict zones, each with its own leaders, programs, tactics and strategies. It was never a centralized international organization dependent on a 'central command' directed by a single person.

It remained a cogent fact that al Qaeda was a brainchild of CIA, used to spread terror for a few occasions and then split into groups; groups concentrated in various countries or different regions of one country, controlled by local group leaders, performed little activities, eaten up their budgets given by CIA and then died at their own. No legend, no history to mention and nothing to leave for perspective hiding criminals commonly labelled as terrorists. Most of these mercenaries were killed by the CIA snappers themselves when their jobs accomplished.

The other face of America could be seen in Libya of 2012-13. Who was fighting with Col Gaddafi in Ben Ghazi, it was Al Qaeda aided and backed by the US forces. There Al Qaeda was good but anywhere else, it remained a curse. When the Libya's war was over, the same Al Qaeda was targeted, attacked and buried in sands by the settling American companies and soldiers there.

By making extra tall claims what the America wanted to tell the world and at the same time terrifying the poor people of Pakistan. The US wanted to take over the control of Pakistan by playing a broken orchestra of '**Al Qaeda's chase**' and '**hot pursuits**' in Pakistani territories. America was perhaps mistaken; the 84% of Pakistan's population had already marked hatred for the super power but then the leadership went fed up, too. ISI had already nearly dissociated from the CIA intelligence sharing formulae and Pak-army was ready to fire back. All they were determined that AL Qaeda blame would no more be allowed to prevail upon strategies.

An extract taken from '**The Assassination of bin Laden: Its Use and Abuse**' written by *James Petras in Axis of Logic* on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011 deserves attention here:

*'Contrary to this immense propaganda campaign and despite whatever symbolic value the killing (of Osama) may have in the eyes of his executioners, there is no evidence that the death will have any impact on the deteriorating military and political position of the US in South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa or elsewhere.'*

Then why that drama of killing Osama, raising slogans so high and blowing Al Qaeda's trumpet loud again. Because America had decided to quit the region in the back drop of its strategic military and political defeats, especially during 2010-11 in Afghanistan. **On 27<sup>th</sup> April 2011**, nine senior US military officers were assassinated by a 'trusted' Afghan fighter pilot in the high security Kabul airport. Four majors, two captains and two lieutenant colonals were killed in that single event. A big blow and a great catastrophe; in the face of major strategic losses, as evident in such unexpected elimination of top military officials, Obama had to mount a political spectacle; a 'military success story' to satisfy the American public, military and its NATO followers.

In the words of James Petras again:

*'Several facts mark this out as a strategically important event. It took place in a high security installation, suggesting that no place in Afghanistan is safe from deadly armed attacks by the Taliban or the armed resistance. Secondly, all US military, no matter how high their rank, are vulnerable to deadly attack. Thirdly, no US trained Afghan military official or soldier can be considered 'loyal' – even those most closely in collaboration can and will turn their guns on their mentors.'*

Just two weeks earlier to the above mentioned killing spree; with the collaboration of jail officials, almost 500 jailed Taliban fighters and leaders escaped via a 350 meter tunnel to a dozen waiting trucks. Only two years earlier 900 prisoners had also escaped from the same prison. Karzai government was helpless; perhaps he was also waiting for his end.

#### **SHABQADR ATTACKED – 91 DEAD:**

In what appeared to be the first retaliatory attack by Pakistani Taliban [TTP] since the US Navy SEALs killed the al-Qaeda Chief Osama bin Laden in Pakistan's garrison town of Abbotabad, twin-suicide blasts ripped through outside the gate of the Frontier Constabulary [FC] paramilitary training centre at Shabqadr in District Charsadda of Khyber PK **on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011**, killing 91 people, most of them paramilitary personnel, and injured more than 120 others.

The Pakistani Taliban [TTP] took the responsibility of the attack to avenge the death of Osama BL earlier that month. The said attack came hours before the country's COAS, Chief of the PAF and the ISI Chief attended the parliament to explain their actions over bin Laden's operation.

The bombings happened as newly trained cadets from the FC were getting into buses after completing their course. They were in plain clothes and were happy that they were going to see their families. Both attacks were of 'suicide nature'; the first suicide bomber came on a motorcycle and detonated his vest among the FC men. When other contingent of the FC came to the rescue to help their dead and wounded colleagues, the second bomber came on another motorcycle and blew him up.

At least 69 of the dead were recruits while the rest of the dying lot was of civilians; twenty-six civilians exactly while four dead bodies were not identified.

***"It's the first revenge for the martyrdom of... bin Laden. There will be more,"*** Taliban spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan had told the Reuters news agency by telephone from an undisclosed location. The security forces had often been the target of such attacks but this bombing was the deadliest attack that year.

### **PAK-ARMY IMAGE AFTER OSAMA'S KILLING:**

Pakistan's armed forces suffered a fatal blow to their respect and honour after Osama bin Laden's killing operation at Abbottabad on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011. The ISI and the Pakistan's Air Force became the first targets. ISI was known as one of the world's competent, proficient and skilled intelligence unit AND PAF was identified as diligent and meticulous hawks before that event but both went utterly disgraced [and exposed too] in Pakistan as well as before the global competitors.

**BBC, in its deliberations of 6<sup>th</sup> May 2011**, displayed text messages allegedly doing the rounds then in Pakistan which were read as:

- ***"For Sale: Obsolete Pakistan army radar; can't detect US 'copters but can receive Star Plus; only 999 rupees."*** [Star Plus is a popular television channel from India]
- ***"What a country! Even Osama is not safe here."***
- ***"This is what they are paid for, to defend the borders, not to run bakeries and banks and real estate empires"*** [from Nasir Khan, a Swat resident]
- ***"Why do we spend more than \$6bn (£3.65bn) annually on the army when it can't do its job,"***

For the first time in decades, the powerful Pakistani military establishment had failed to find an excuse to pin the blame on the "bloody civilians" in power. The military took three days to issue a response, and the most prominent part of its statement from the Pakistani point of view was the admission that it did not know about the raid. However, the people believed their contention that it also did not know about bin Laden's presence in Abbottabad.

Pakistani media, though extremely critical of the civilian government at times, steered clear of controversies surrounding the powerful security establishment. It was the media which had first high - lighted the military's role in March [2011] in the aftermath of release of Raymond Davis.

*[While the civilian government made a few passive noises that Mr Davis enjoyed diplomatic immunity, his continued detention was due to the army's intervention. To many, his release came as a shock, and as evidence that even the military had bowed to American wishes.]*

Many people in Pakistan, especially those who live in areas overrun by Taliban militants over the last few years are sure suspected a link between the military and the Islamist militant groups operating in Pakistan and Afghanistan; though they had no tangible proof. In Swat, there was a time when the army and the Taliban running their respective checkpoints literally yards away from each other.

The BBC, however, frankly quoted that ***'most people dislike the US, and they feel their own army has let them down.'***

### **MEHRAN NAVAL BASE ATTACKED:**

A fatal loss of men, capital, and honour it was.

**On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011**, a group of militants assaulted the PNS Mehran Base in Karachi, killing 12 people, injuring 15 others and blowing up at least two P-3C Orion, estimated to be worth \$36 million each, used for maritime patrolling, and a helicopter. The attack reportedly started at 10:30 pm and the siege continued for 16 hours.

More than 15 Taliban or Al Qaeda militants [*as per weekly TIME dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011*] stormed the said premises with guns and grenades but the government brief said they were six; four killed in encounter while two fled away. {*The Mehran naval base is also the headquarters of the Pakistan navy's air wing*}

The foreign actors, including certain friends of Pakistan in association with the above mentioned, through Pakistani Taliban or Al Qaeda [*Al-Qaeda had warned of Pakistan strike*' appearing in **ASIA TIMES ONLINE dated 27<sup>th</sup> May 2011** is referred here], had carried out this bold and blatant attack on Mehran Naval Base. That attack was launched after a series of talks failed between the navy and al-Qaeda over the release of naval officials arrested on suspicion of TTP / al-Qaeda links in the backdrop of three suicidal attacks done on the navy buses a month earlier.

The said attacks were planned by Ilyas Kashmiri's 313 Brigade, the operational arm of al-Qaeda. Ilyas Kashmiri was later killed in a drone attack in Southern Waziristan on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2011; the details of which are given on other pages of this book separately.

The Al Qaeda militants, dressed in black and resembling 'Star Wars characters', had entered from a residential district abutting the base. Using two ladders placed in a spot obscured from security cameras, they scaled the walls and clipped the barbed wire at the top, then headed for the hangar containing American-made P-3C Orion airplanes.

The attackers fired on one plane and the resulting explosion destroyed the second plane too. Pakistani naval commandos and marines eventually cornered the militants in an office building and killed four of them whereas two others might have escaped.

Till 2.30 PM next day, after about 16 hour's siege, the armed forces were able to regain control of that naval base back. One of the worst assault on a military base and arsenal since GHQ Rawalpindi was besieged in October 2009 for two days, killing 22 people and raising serious questions over why it took the military so long to put down the assault.

The said event of Karachi Naval Base had piled further embarrassment for armed forces just twenty days after Osama's episode in Abbottabad. The militants used ladders to climb the boundary walls and dropping them into the naval air base in dark setting off a series of explosions. 11 Chinese and six American maintenance contractors were also there in that naval compound but evacuated safely.

The militants exercised tactics they had been using in previous attacks on other security installations, and even in the March 2009 attack on the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore. However, when Pakistani commandos' regained control of that naval air base back after armed fighters launched an audacious attack; almost all the live TV shows were blowing trumpets high that **'it was a successful operation.'**

The official sources confirmed 10 (not 11 as per media news) security personnel were killed, including one navy officer, three navy firemen, three navy commandos, a sailor and two paramilitary soldiers, and 15 others wounded.

*By what standards it was successful.* The 20-22 years old six men held the whole garrison of world's no:1 army hostage for sixteen hours, killed their 10 men including one commissioned officer, made 15 soldiers to sustain injuries, put two expensive Orion aircrafts on fire and the most importantly made the Pakistan army a laughing stock for the whole world.

The lapses in security issues had turned into talk of the town telling the whole world that our Navy was 'perfectly trained' to keep the multi-million dollars air-fighters in reckless open. So near to the 5 feet high outer boundary that even a child playing in the adjacent street could hurt it with a piece of brick.

Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik refused to acknowledge any security lapse, saying the "rapid" response had prevented bigger losses. What a positive approach it was. A similar

contention was heard on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2007 after Benazir Bhutto's assassination from the same golden lips of her Chief Security Officer.

Enemies got enough evidence that even Pakistan's army bases were not secure from Al Qaeda's attacks and thus from terrorism. Pakistan placed words in the enemy's lips that Pakistan army was not able to secure their own garages and barracks how they would protect their nuclear arsenal for which the US and the West have been crying since a decade.

A Navy spokesman Commander Salman Ali himself told the media that *'the attack was also likely to raise further concerns about the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, which reportedly number more than 100.'*

The American Congress and Senate were conveyed that their billions of Dollars aid were not being spent under appropriate heads due to certain constraints. Even otherwise the analysis of Dollar-aid accounts portrayed:

*"The US takes back 64% of this aid back to Washington under the heads of 'expenditure and salaries of American Trainers in Pakistan'. For the residual 36%, the dollar-accounts of their NGOs and Pakistani leadership, civil and military, are considered a safe & better place than schools or water-wells for the poor people."*

### **TROUBLE STARTED IN PAK-NAVY:**

Karachi is Pakistan's largest city by population and financial hub and the assault was the fourth on the navy in row. Three bombings on Navy buses in the last week of April [2011] had killed nine people. Those three attacks were in fact warning shots for navy officials to accept al-Qaeda's demands over the detained suspects. Pakistan armed forces had shown retaliation to al-Qaeda affiliates within the navy because the naval intelligence had traced an al-Qaeda cell operating inside several navy bases.

*'Islamic sentiments are common in Pakistan's armed forces and the officers never felt threatened by that. All armed forces around the world, whether American, British or Indian, take some inspiration from religion to motivate their cadre against the enemy. ....*

*Nonetheless, the higher naval hierarchy observed an uneasy grouping on different naval bases in Karachi. While nobody can obstruct armed forces personnel for rendering Islamic rituals, the grouping was against the discipline of the armed forces as such.*

*That was the beginning of an intelligence operation in the navy to check for unscrupulous activities.'*

That said alliance was against the then military leadership and opposed to its nexus with the US against Islamic militancy. When some messages were intercepted hinting at attacks on visiting American officials, the Naval Intelligence [PNI] planned their action and after careful evaluation at least 10 people, mostly from the lower cadre, were picked up for interrogation in a series of operations; thus the trouble started.

The arrested ones were held in the PNI office near the Chief Minister House in Karachi, but immediately after, the in-charge of the investigation team received direct threats from the militants thus indicating that militants know the 'detention centre'. The detainees were promptly moved to a safer location, but the threats continued.

Al Qaeda militants feared that interrogation of those ten detainees would lead to the arrest of more of their loyalists in Pakistan Navy [PN]; therefore, they had no choice other than to launch attacks on un-secure naval installations. The thing to be worried the most was that Taliban or Al Qaeda militants were receiving fresh inside information constantly as they always knew where the suspects were being detained and what the interrogation was about.

It also proved that sizeable al-Qaeda infiltration within the navy's ranks had already taken place.

Hurriedly, a senior level meeting was called; matters discussed and resolved that the issue be handled with great care; also decided, amongst other steps, to open communication with al-Qaeda. Immediately a Karachite named Samad Mansoori, a former student union activist and later part of 313 Brigade of Ilyas Kashmiri residing in North Waziristan was approached and talks opened.

Al-Qaeda demanded the immediate release of their arrested officials which was straightaway rejected. The detainees were allowed to speak to their families and kept well treated, but the interrogation continued to get information about the strength of al-Qaeda's penetration. The militants were told that they would be discharged from the service and freed once interrogation was completed.

Al-Qaeda rejected PNI's stance and expressed its displeasure by launching attacks on the navy buses on **26<sup>th</sup> April 2011**. These incidents pointed to more than one al-Qaeda's intelligence cells tracked in the PN. Meanwhile the Americans went more worried and apprised the Pak Armed Forces with the fear that if the problem was not addressed on immediate basis:

- The trade supply lines upwards could face a new threat.
- NATO supply line could be obstructed and damaged.
- The visiting Americans to Pak-naval facilities in the city would be in danger.

Another crackdown was conducted and more people having different ethnic backgrounds were arrested. One naval commando, hailing from South Waziristan's Mehsud tribe, was believed to have received direct instructions from the TTP Chief Hakeemullah Mehsud.

Referring to **MSN News dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2011**:

*'The al Qaeda terrorists had managed to gain not only sympathisers, but also recruits in the naval ranks. The Pakistan Navy were worried that how many of these militants were in contact with the navy staff. It was unfortunate that people within their ranks had been found to have links with extremists.*

*The navy is not the only Pakistani institution whose personnel were found to be involved in terrorism.*

*A former Army male nurse-turned-jihadi [alias Dr Usman] had played a key role in the October 2009's attack on GHQ, just like some senior Pakistan Air Force (PAF) officers, including one SSG commando, who was found to be involved in the attack on the then army chief Gen Musharraf in 2004.'*

Thus a strategy to deal with the menace was to be worked out by the Pak-army seriously.

Defence analysts offered varying explanations for why the Taliban had struck a naval air base in Karachi, a city that is far from the terrorist bases in the mountainous borderlands but is still viewed as a militant hideout. Some said the American-made airplanes, which were delivered by the US military in the previous summer, were the clear target.

Some opined that the destroyed planes were probably used for surveillance of Indian submarines and thus the attack was Indian sponsored. Others floated the view that as there were 11 Chinese engineers working at that base; the Americans suspected the copying of their surveillance technology by the Chinese, thus that demise.

There were some who surmised that militants sought to discourage the Pakistan Navy's participation in an international coalition that used to monitor the Arabian Sea and waters off

North Africa. Nothing clear till today except that it was Ilyas Kashmiri's 313 Brigade of Al Qaeda who had done it; of course for whatever reasons.

Coming back; since the slaying of Osama BL, Al Qaeda militants escalated their terrorism campaign with deadly attacks on the Pakistani paramilitaries on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011, killing over 90 recruits, attack on Shabqadr School is referred. Nine days later, they bombed a US consular convoy in the northwest city of Peshawar, killing a bystander. Days after bin Laden's death, the Pakistani Taliban had vowed to exact revenge.

***Weekly the 'TIME dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011'*** remarked:

*'This attack appeared to have been long planned, given its sophistication, even if the cue for its execution was the militants' avowed campaign to avenge Osama's death.'*

*'The naval-base attack would serve as a further embarrassment to heavily decorated officers who have long prided themselves on being the guardians of Pakistan's [external & internal] security.'*

Osama BL was killed by American Navy Seals in Abbottabad on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011 and Al Qaeda decided to strike back on immediate basis. Of course, they were not strong enough to hit back America in any way because it was beyond their reach. The militants were not capable enough to hit the US Embassy in Islamabad either; nor could they launch attacks of US Consulates in Lahore or Karachi. They opted to attack Pakistan taking plea being America's ally and started from Pakistan's Navy. Within a week, insiders at Mehran Base provided maps, pictures of different exit and entry routes taken in daylight and at night, the location of hangers and details of likely reaction from the Naval security contingents whose strength was also conveyed at times.

Al Qaeda militants were able to enter the heavily guarded facility where one group targeted the aircraft, a second group took on the first strike force and a third finally escaped with the others providing cover - fire. Those who stayed behind were killed.

To add fuel to the Pakistani nation's fury, US President Obama, while on tour to UK those days, told the BBC that he was inclined to order a similar mission (like that of Abbottabad) if another high - value target was discovered in Pakistan, again without notice. The intelligentsia had questioned that threat in the backdrop of unanimous resolution passed by Pakistan's sovereign Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and John Kerry's joint statement during his visit to Pakistan a week after [*saying that in future any attack would be launched jointly, if needed*].

### **NO GIMMICKS; FIND OUT CULPRITS:**

An important aspect; that whenever a terrorist activity or suicidal attack was reported, the responsibility was immediately claimed and owned by the Pakistani Taliban [TTP]. Why so; no agency seriously looked into it that who were the actual culprits behind the curtain. Taliban should normally be concerned with the loss and counts of lives and not with the strategic army gadgets. Suicidal attacks on shrines, public gatherings or in busy markets could be attributed to them but what about attack on GHQ, training camp of SSG in Dargai and on two Orion war-planes at Karachi.

The later types of attacks were in fact referred to the state enemies having 'armed skills or militarised minds' on their back. Al Qaeda or Taliban, or a group of youngsters in the name of Taliban, were being used by a very skilful military mind of Pakistan's enemy state. Pakistan mostly felt shy in naming India, Afghanistan or its so-called friend US too.

The three states referred above were openly and jointly playing the orchestra that ***'Pakistan is a terrorist state'*** whereas the Pakistan government always hesitated to name them. They

betrayed each other in the name of 'intelligence sharing' with the US but, simultaneously, continuing talks with India on the bilateral trade. Pakistan army was bent upon reminding Afghanistan about 'Muslim brotherhood', kept on hiding in sheepish skin whereas the wolves continued biting it. Breakfast events were seen around; lunch and dinners were on their way.

It was evident that Osama's killing of 2nd May 2011 in Abbottabad had prompted al-Qaeda contingents in Pakistan to take revenge for the death of their leader. Karachi Naval Base was considered the most easy and vulnerable being un-secure.

Foreign hand in supplying sophisticated weaponry and intelligence gadgets to the militants proved that [might be] India had killed many birds in one shot; so many suicidal attacks and terrorist assaults were in addition. Someone could have taken account of 'gun-powder' (*Barood*) used in all those events and sum up. That killing substance invariably travelled through Pakistan under the garb of NATO supplies or Afghan Trade.

It was enough; Pakistan's Tax Ombudsman Dr Shoaib Suddle's inquiry report was on record that during 2010 only, about 4000 containers were 'lost' on their way to Afghanistan. The ISI and the Pak-Army should have been worried more about those containers and their contents.

**Earlier**, Bomb attacks hit two buses carrying Pakistani navy officials in Karachi **on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2011**, killing four people in the latest sign of rampant insecurity in the whole nation. Four Naval employees' dead and nearly 60 people were wounded when remote-controlled bombs exploded beside the buses at rush hour at various places in Karachi. The four dead included a lady doctor, a sub lieutenant, a sailor and a civilian employee; and amongst wounded there were 50 navy officials. First bomb was planted on a motorbike parked in the Supermarket of Defence Housing Scheme and the second hidden in rubbish in the Baldia Town neighbourhood; both bombs were triggered by remote control when the buses passed through those target points.

Two days later, **on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2011**, four more navy personnel were killed and about twelve injured when attackers bombed another naval bus taking them to work in Karachi. This attack was launched at Faisal Avenue, one of the main roads of Pakistan's economic capital. A passing motorcyclist was also killed in the blast. Taliban and Al-Qaeda were again officially blamed.

People could recall the moments of 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011's Parliamentary meeting wherein the Pakistan's Air Chief had openly and loudly pointed out towards the sitting PM Gilani that ***'if they tell us to check drone attacks there would be none; you decide and give us orders'***. PM Gilani and whole of the cabinet had gone pale. No decision was conveyed. Result: within one week there were launched five drone attacks leaving behind tens of killings; one had occurred on the same evening.

The speeches, sorrows and '*muzammats*' brought a shining label of a '**failing state**'; with a total of 6,142 persons, including of 2,797 un-identified, 2,580 civilians and 765 Security Forces personnel killed in year 2011 only. This worrying total had constituted an improvement of 17.75% over the preceding year of 2010 when 7,435 persons, including 1,796 civilians and 469 Security Forces personnel, had been killed.

Pakistani people, more or less, were always ready to welcome it but the question was that ***'what was the Pakistani political & military elite doing about this?'***

Pakistan's foresightedness remained confined up to their Interior Minister Rehman Malik's fiery speeches, as **on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011**, he informed the Parliament that the Security Forces had arrested 3,143 alleged terrorists in the country and recovered 4,240 weapons from them over the preceding three years. The irony of fate was that none of them could be convicted by the mighty courts of that country; salute to over delays in submission of charge sheets, frequent adjournments and 150 years old evidence laws being played by millionaire prosecuting and defence counsels in trial courts.