

## Scenario 87

### **ABBOTABAD COMMISSION REPORT:**

The Abbotabad Commission on Osama Bin Laden's killing AT LAST submitted its report to the Government of Pakistan in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October 2012. The then Prime Minister Raja Perwaiz Ashraf might have seen it or read it but, placed it on the wheels of bureaucratic order to be dealt with 'in due course'.

High-ups in the government returned the said report back to the Commission to verify certain things in detail. After doing the needful, **on 2nd January 2013**, the Judicial Commission finally handed over their findings again covering that how Osama lived in Pakistan undetected for years until his killing by US special forces on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011 but the report, on this particular aspect, might never be revealed declaring it **classified**.

However, due to unknown reasons, the PPP government had not opted to make it public; like Hamood ur Rehman Commission Report it was sent to the cold room of the PM Secretariat; the general public also lost sight of it – the country continued to run in routine.

### **COMMISSION'S REPORT LEAKED:**

**On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013**, the Commission's Report suddenly appeared on the official website of **Al-Jazeera**, a middle-eastern media stalwart. On the same evening all the media anchors conducted special talk shows on the subject. Next day's newspapers carried editorials, opinions and excerpts of the Commission's Report cursing openly the then PPP government and the army for their wrong policies relating with Afghanistan and America.

Shortly after the report published, Al-Jazeera website was blocked in Pakistan; Pakistanis were supposed to live in dark – pushed back to the stone age of American Colin Powell of 2001. Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report on 1971's atrocities was also suppressed AND only emerged in portions decades later, in 2000, in leaks to the Indian media from where the Pakistani press had picked links and references.

Suddenly news appeared in print media on 10<sup>th</sup> July that '**a very responsible bureaucrat of the PM Secretariat had sold the Abbotabad Commission Report to Al-Jazeera for \$15,000. The seller bureaucrat allegedly tried to sell it to "the Washington Post" & "the New York Times" but failed. Ultimately it was sold to al-Jazeera.**'

Nobody named that bureaucrat; rather no body believed so. Three days later, the PML(N) official spokesman issued statement that the original Abbotabad Commission Report was lying intact and secure in PM Secretariat. On the same evening of 10<sup>th</sup> July, Dr Shahid Masood in a live talk show at ARY News TV, told the viewers that:

***'The said report was openly offered to all TV anchors and bureau chiefs of leading newspapers in Islamabad in clandestine way – for free – but all of them refused to take it as a matter of policy. The media wanted it that the state should make it open OFFICIALLY; at last Al-Jazeera's correspondent accepted it.'***

The insiders knew it that the Abbotabad Commission Report had been ***purposefully leaked out by the PML(N)*** to revengefully hit the Pak-Army and ISI below the belt – due to obvious reasons; recall 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999's military coup. The then PPP regime was its additional target. The Commission had interviewed senior civilian and military officials and the three widows of bin Laden before they were deported to Saudi Arabia in April 2012.

Pakistan-US ties drastically deteriorated over Osama BL's raid, which had prompted accusations of incompetence or complicity against the military. Relations slumped to more low after botched US air strikes killed 24 Pakistani soldiers ***on 26th November 2011*** at Salala check post at Pak-Afghan border, but diplomats say the relationship improved when Pakistan reopened its Afghan land crossings to NATO goods after a seven-month suspension in early January 2013.

The people of Pakistan had high expectations from the Commission of Justice Javed Iqbal but the way it had been wasting time by recording statements of hundreds of local residents, media persons and politicians; it could not deliver anything except disappointment. Commission could have proceeded by collecting evidences through the help of cyber and signal records of mobiles companies and tele-organizations, from the visitors' details and army's record etc. The hearsay statements of general people or of politicians did not serve the purpose.

On either way, the people believed that some of the intelligence personnel of ISI and Army were having actual sympathies with Osama. In ordinary course of nature, the army high command keeps a settled policy and cannot allow adopting different conduits for individuals at their own. Possibility could be there that some middle level or lower ranks might have known Osama but no cogent evidence was available to believe that.

Fact remained that Osama was living in that premises of Abbottabad; other agencies like Intelligence Bureau, Special Branch of Police, local police station crew, and army's Field Intelligence Unit (FIU) might know the reality. They might have reports that Osama was living there for about five years but never bothered because since 2003 he was going inactive regarding Al Qaeda affairs. The local MNA, MPA and Union Council representatives, postman, water supply, Gas and Wapda officials all took it just a normal residence.

One critic maintained that:

*'..... Although leaders of the ISI might not have known about Bin Laden's presence, someone among the country's retired Generals, Military Intelligence or local police must have known something. If Pakistan had taken this breach of sovereignty – by which I mean the head of Al Qaeda sitting in a cantonment so close to the capital – we should have seen a very vigorous investigation. It was a joke.'*

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had two clear choices. He could forget about the report, and shelve it alongside Hamoodur Rahman's inquiry into the 1971 war, and let the state slide further into chaos and 'Failing State' status. Alternately, he was supposed to [repeatedly] recite and examine the report's contents and heed the clarion call for massive institutional reform – rather than worrying about the source of the leak.

### **OSAMA'S STAY – BACKGROUND EVENTS:**

Osama's family moved from Afghanistan's Kandahar to Karachi shortly after the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 attacks on Twin Towers in America. "They kept a very low profile and lived extremely frugally. They never exposed themselves to public view. They had minimum security. OBL successfully minimised any 'signature' of his presence. His wives, children and grandchildren hardly ever emerged from the places where they stayed. No one ever visited them, not even trusted Al-Qaeda members.

*[Whenever OBL felt unwell (unofficial US accounts indicate he suffered from Addison's disease), he treated himself with traditional Arab medicine ... and whenever he felt sluggish he would take some chocolate with an apple.]*

Osama Bin Laden spent about two years in a rented house at Haripur; then a piece of land was purchased in Abbotabad through his courier cum personal servant Abrar al-Kuwaiti under a false identity [of Muhammad Arshad], with a fake old style [hand written] national identity card (NIC) in July 2004. During buying process his identity was not verified nor it was a mandatory requirement then *[even now the NICs are not normally verified in routine transactions or buying or selling processes in Pakistan]*.

After the completion of construction of the two-storey structure in 2005, an additional, unauthorised storey and 18ft (5.5m) high walls were added in 2005; that unauthorised construction had never been inspected by local Cantonment Board officials, as required by law. In at least one government land survey, the compound, which, at one time, housed 27 people, was listed as being 'uninhabited'. No property tax had been collected on the compound since 2004-05 – a gross negligence on part of the Abbottabad Cantonment Board.

Osama's residence had also been fitted with four separate meters for electricity and natural gas respectively but then how shown as un-occupied – nobody bothered ever. Either Osama BL was extremely fortunate or there was a complete collapse of local governance.

While the IB professed total ignorance about Osama's presence, the ISI, however, had carried out a number of operations in Abbottabad. In January 2011, they captured Umar Patek, the mastermind behind the 2002 Bali bombings in Indonesia. Patek was found in a house in the *Aram Bagh* area of Abbottabad, just three kilometres away from Osama's compound.

Earlier in 2003, ISI had raided a location at two kilometres from Osama's compound in a failed attempt to capture Abu Faraj al-Libi, a known al-Qaeda commander. Al-Libi was later captured from FATA and was handed over to US authorities; he was straightaway sent to Guantanamo Bay.

The Commission noted that the ISI had "closed the file" on Osama BL after the CIA reportedly stopped sharing information on their hunt in 2005. According to ISI assessments, Osama was either dead or inactive, and the lack of intelligence sharing from the CIA was seen as indicative that this was the US view, as well. In fact, the CIA had not stopped chasing Osama - it had just stopped sharing information with the ISI.

When US SEALs had completed their 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011's operation, the police were quickly sidelined from carrying out their responsibilities; they were relegated to forming an outer cordon around the site, which was later taken over by the military and ISI, too. None, including senior police officials, demanded that they be allowed to investigate what was ostensibly the scene of at least four additional killings besides Osama BL. NO FIR was filed.

The Commission found that the decision on the FIR had been discussed in a high level meeting between the chief minister, provincial police chief and other senior officials. It was decided there that **it was not "in the national interest" to register a case, as the matter "appeared to be an act of war"**. No written report in the Police Record; hats off to the country's military and their intelligence services as being the responsible authorities.

The Abbotabad Commission Report paints a picture of Pakistan as manipulated and undermined by the Americans.

### **EXTRACTS FROM COMMISSION'S REPORT:**

The Commission's report was fiercely critical of the "illegal manner" in which the US conducted the raid. **"The US acted like a criminal thug,"** the report said.

A US SEAL's raid on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011 that left Osama bin Laden and four other people dead inside his huge residence in Abbottabad had triggered a global controversy on certain key questions regarding the fateful event. On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013, as noted in earlier paragraphs, Al Jazeera published an exclusively obtained copy of the findings of the Abbottabad Commission. According to Al Jazeera, the report "was buried by the government and never made public" after it was finished in May 2012.

Here are some fascinating details from the Commission's report.

On his last night, Osama was with Amal al-Sadah, a 28-year-old Yemeni woman who was the youngest of his three wives. Both husband and wife went on the balcony to investigate about the roaring choppers but there was nothing except the moonless sky and pitch black surroundings. When Sadah reached to turn on a light, bin Laden said, "No". After reciting the Kalma and some verses from the Holy Qura'an with some of his children, Osama told his family that American helicopters had arrived and urged them to leave his room.

Ibrahim Al-Kuwaiti, Osama's Pakistani home servant, was shot and killed by US forces when he opened the door after hearing a knock at it [he thought the knock was from his brother Abrar, Osama's courier]. Abrar was also fatally shot during the raid.

Kuwaiti's wife, Maryam, was shot and wounded during show of aggression. Later, when Maryam resisted efforts to comply with her body search, things turned violent; Maryam cursed at the American team, prompting them to slap her.

In 2005, when an earthquake struck the area, the boundary wall of the compound lay collapsed in rubble for months, and yet bin Laden somehow managed to remain unexposed.

An investigator from Abbottabad police swore before the Commission that he was "100% sure" that bin Laden wasn't present in the property, he could have been brought there as part of a "CIA plot." The Commission, however, described that police officer as unprofessional and incompetent.

Some of the police officers simply shrugged that it wasn't their job; the ISI was responsible for security matters.

The ISI maintained that Bin Laden was not operational since 2005 and his Egyptian deputy Ayman al Zawahiri was running al Qaeda's affairs; therefore, everyone, including the US, thought that Bin Laden was dead. The ISI abandoned its search as soon as it thought the US had stopped looking for Ben Laden.

Amongst other items the Americans seized, Osama's purse evidently contained the will of the Al-Qaeda leader. Since then, there have been disputed reports on what it actually contained. Osama's eldest wife, Khairiyyah Sabar, was quoted saying that it dealt only with familial matters. Other accounts suggested that Osama used the will to assert that his children should not assume leadership positions with Al-Qaeda.

Osama kept very few clothing with him; despite having spent six years hiding in Abbottabad, his wardrobe included three pairs of *Shalwar + Kameez* [Pakistani suit] for the summer, three for the winter, a black jacket, two sweaters and one cowboy hat, which he used to wear

while strolling in his compound, might be to **"avoid detection from above"**. Osama's wives told the Commission that he was not fond of possessions.

There was in fact a wall separating Osama's family from the families of Ibrahim [Al-Kawaiti] and Abrar. Their children never played with each other and the families did not 'mix or socialize.' Once, Ibrahim's daughter saw Osama's picture on TV, leading her to recognize him as the '*Miskeen Kaka*' [poor uncle] who lived upstairs.

Panic-stricken, Ibrahim attempted to bar the women and kids from watching TV, but his wife argued. He eventually relented and admitted that the man living upstairs was in fact Osama. This had also prompted a hurried security conference inside the compound, which ended with Osama giving up his exercise routine in a covered part of the courtyard.

Before re-locating to Abbottabad, Osama spent some time, about two years, in Haripur where he did not host any guests — he had decided to terminate all contacts with 'Al-Qaeda fellow Mujahideen' in the wake of [allegedly a master mind on 9/11 episode] Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's arrest in March 2003. Sheikh was then shifted to Guantanamo Bay for further interrogation.

In calling on the country's leaders to apologize to the Pakistani people for "dereliction of duty," the Commission's report concluded that:

*'..... political, military intelligence and bureaucratic leadership cannot be absolved of their responsibility for the state of governance; policy planning and policy implementation that eventually rendered this national failure almost inevitable.'*

In the Nine - Eleven incident of New York, three narratives were made available to the public: that firstly, it was the work of an NGO called al-Qaeda secondly, it was the work of Israeli Mossad; thirdly, it was a 'false flag' operation by a US agency or insider connivance. The media fell in line with the 'official view' that it was the work of an 'Islamist NGO'. The Pakistan Government also endorsed that line but the people of Pakistan continued to believe that it was the work of Mossad or the American insiders.

Several books and innumerable articles were on record discrediting the official US line. Evidence was available to the Commission from Pakistani sources to challenge the credibility of the US narrative. The most important of these was an interview at ***Samaa TV*** with an eyewitness much later. American writer Paul Craig Roberts had it transcribed by his own sources and published three articles based on its contents on web sites of ICH and elsewhere; the videos were later removed from Youtube.

In a rare inside look at how the Pak-military spies operated, the report detailed the police and other officials being constantly shunted aside. Referring to the ***TIME magazine of 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013***:

*'The work of the commission itself was being tracked. At an invitation-only meeting with local journalists, one spy [of ISI] managed to inveigle entry, before being spotted and asked to leave.'*

*'The rogue elements within the ISI abetted bin Laden during his stay in Pakistan. "The possibility of some such direct or indirect and 'plausibly deniable' support cannot be ruled out, at least, at some level outside formal structures of the intelligence establishment," the report reads.'*

The lack of a coordinated strategy is said to be one of the reasons behind the failure to catch bin Laden. In one of its hardest-hitting passages, the Commission's report said: **"It is a glar-**

***ing testimony to the collective incompetence and negligence, at the very least, of the security and intelligence community in the Abbottabad area. The ISI had perhaps closed its books on bin Laden in 2005."***

The report's authors — a retired Supreme Court judge, a retired army corps commander, a former envoy to Washington and New Delhi, and a retired top cop of Police — described their report as neither a "witch hunt nor a whitewash." Indeed, it was an admirable attempt at collective scrutiny described suitable to all concerned.

### **PRESIDENT ZARDARI KNEW IT?**

Usman Khalid, in his essay of 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013, available on internet media, pointed out that:

*'The contradictory statements given before the Commission, intimidation of eyewitnesses to stop them from appearing before the Commission, suspicious death of the entire SEAL team that carried out the Abbotabad operation in an air accident in Afghanistan, were quite adequate to discredit the US narrative.'*

Subsequently it was known to all that:

- President Zardari was 'informed' before hand of the US clandestine operation against a 'high value' target inside Pakistan.
- PAF detected the presence of US F-15 aircraft in the air on Pak-Afghan border and sought instructions but President Zardari could not be contacted until well after the US operation had ended.

However, the military did not issue any statement but the Prime Minister Gilani hailed it as a 'victory' against terrorism.

The press in USA and Canada has been reporting that the top "Special Operations Commander" ordered the files about the Navy SEAL raid on Osama bin Laden's hideout to be washed out from Defence Department's computers and sent to the CIA. The secret move, described briefly in a draft report by the Pentagon's Inspector General, set off no alarms within the Obama administration even though it had violated the federal rules and also the Freedom of Information Act.

The American Press had asked US government for copies of Osama's death certificate and autopsy report as well as the results of tests to identify the body; the Pentagon could not locate the files and the CIA never responded. The AP was informed in March 2012 that they could not locate any photographs or video taken during the raid or showing Osama's body.

The Pentagon also said it could not find any images of bin Laden's body on the USS Carl Vinson, the aircraft carrier from which he was buried at sea. The above detail indicated towards new strategy of the US government to shield its sensitive activities from public scrutiny.

Contrarily, the Pakistani media gave extensive coverage to strong criticism in the Commission's report which accused authorities of complacency, collective failure and negligence that allowed Osama to live undetected in the country for more than nine years and his subsequent killing by the US troops in a covert operation. The said report concluded that:

*'OBL was able to stay within the limits of Abbotabad Cantonment due to a collective failure of the military authorities, the intelligence authorities, the police and the civilian administration. How the entire neighbourhood, local officials, police and security and intelligence officials all missed the size, the strange shape, the barbed wire, the lack of cars and visitors etc over a period of nearly six years.'*

In Pakistan, the general populace took it as a strong evidence of having prior knowledge of the American plans when they saw President Zardari's essay cum tribute in **'the Washington Post' of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011**, just twelve hours after Osama's killing in Abbotabad. So quick it was – which transpired that at least Mr Zardari in Pakistan's government had known about the US attack before hand; time might not be in mind. That was why the essay was written and kept ready to be faxed to the top newspaper of the United States and it happened. See some parts of the essay:

- 'His country [Pakistan] provided initial help that ultimately led to al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, but he had no clue about the terror mastermind's whereabouts and didn't participate in the US raid to kill the top militant.
- That the raid was "**not a joint operation**" and bin Laden "*was not anywhere we had anticipated he would be.*"
- And we in Pakistan take some satisfaction that our early assistance in identifying an al Qaeda courier ultimately led to this day.
- US politicians and military officials have roundly criticized Pakistan for not being more robust in the fight against al Qaeda.....[but there stands] "*a decade of cooperation and partnership between the United States and his country that ultimately led to bin Laden's death.*"
- He "endorses the words" of and "appreciates the credit" from US President Barack Obama about Pakistan's role.'

*[In his announcement of bin Laden's death, Obama said "it's important to note that our counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan helped lead us to bin Laden and the compound where he was hiding."]*

Mr Zardari had further urged in his essay that "*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. And though it may have started with bin Laden, the forces of modernity and moderation remain under serious threat.*"

President Zardari had further emphasized in his essay that:

*"Justice against bin Laden was not just political; it was also personal, as the terrorists murdered our greatest leader, the mother of my children, Benazir Bhutto. The Taliban reacted to bin Laden's death by blaming the government of Pakistan and calling for retribution against its leaders, and specifically against me as the nation's president..... but Pakistanis won't be intimidated."*

Mr Zardari knew another cogent fact that **'the Taliban would react to Osama's death'**, therefore, he got the relevant message incorporated in his essay before hand as can be seen in above lines – hats off to the foresightedness of Pakistani leadership.

**On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2010**, while talking to a private TV channel, Justice (ret'd) Javed Iqbal refuted the foreign media claims [the Commission report being baseless and misleading] saying that the report not only identified those who were responsible for the incident but also reviewed the role of different institutions; the main purpose of the commission was to review performance of country's institutions.

### **PAK-ARMY'S BOARD OF INQUIRY:**

Pak-Army had already completed their enquiries against allegations of lapses and lethargic attitudes of their ISI wing in connection with the Osama's un-noticed living in Abbotabad since six years.

Abbotabad Commission was told that Pak-Army's board of inquiry was established under Lt Gen Javed Iqbal to dig out the reasons and to fix the responsibility. Gen Javed Iqbal told the Commission that the local *Nawan Shehar* police station was located close to Osama's compound; but the police failed to observe anything unusual about the place and no report on anything suspicious was ever filed neither by the police nor Special Branch's contingent, which were responsible to maintain a close watch on the area.

The Board of Inquiry maintained that the police ignored or failed to take note of the visible violation of cantonment regulations; for construction of a third storey at the compound. It was totally a wrong presumption – basically it was the civil administration of Cantonment Executive Office which, under rules, works in liaison with the Army's Station Commander posted there. Yes – local police and the special branch crew were responsible for ignoring the inhabitants of such unique and high walled residence; especially the suspicious activities of the two brothers, Ibrahim and Abrar. However, the special branch was understaffed and under-equipped to do a proficient job.

'Al-Jazeera' dated 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013 categorically stated that:

*'Osama was able to evade detection in Pakistan for nine years due to the "collective failure" of the Pakistani state's military and intelligence authorities, and "routine" incompetence at every level of the civil governance structure.*

*The failure was so complete that, by page 87 of its report, the Commission investigating the circumstances around Bin Laden's killing in the Pakistani city of Abbotabad in May 2011 was forced to coin a term for it: **'Governance Implosion Syndrome'**.*

Referring to '***the Express Tribune' dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013***, the Army's Inquiry Board maintained that '*due to poor coordination among agencies, duplication of work, qualitative and quantitative inadequacies of training, skills and equipment were among the reasons that made it possible for Bin Laden to evade detection in Abbotabad.*'

Contrarily, Hussain Haqqani [referring to '***The Economic Times' of Washington dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013***] accused Pakistan's security establishment of its incompetence and lax attitude that allowed Osama bin Laden to live undetected inside Pakistan for nine years.

Haqqani told the Commission during his interview on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011 that he was accused of issuing visas to American personnel as the Pakistan's Ambassador in US without any authorisation. He maintained that '*the figures for visas were provided by officials at the embassy and the foreign ministry after he had resigned. Why did the intelligence agencies fail to track down those who were issued visas is another question that has been ignored.*'

{The worthy former ambassador, however, forgot to enlighten that ***when the dozens of American visitors were issued the visa with their 'address of stay' as Zardari House F-8/2 Islamabad or Presidency Islamabad*** then who fool would keep track of them.}

The '***Gulf News' of 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013*** opined that '*the depth of the distrust between Pakistan and the US is made clear by [Gen] Pasha's assertion that CIA did not share intelligence with*



*ISI because they did not trust it and in fact wanted to use the capture or killing of Bin Laden "to have the ISI declared a terrorist organisation" because of its alleged collusion with Bin Laden.'*

### **EX-ISI CHIEF BLASTS ALL:**

During his briefing to the Abbotabad Commission on Osama, the former DG ISI Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha opened indiscriminate fire on all. The former spy chief blasted Gen Musharraf for caving in before Americans, the political leadership for ignorance, indifference and its lack of reading culture, all security and intelligence agencies for not performing diligently and **journalists as being 'heavily bribed with money, women and alcohol'** for launching campaigns against the ISI.

The Commission was told that former PM Mr Gilani's statement of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2011 at the Parliament's floor calling ISI as '*state within state*' and **asking who had given a visa to Osama bin Laden** had angered the army beyond imagination. Mr Gilani only once asked him for a briefing during his entire premiership. Gen Pasha continued with that:

*'The Defence Ministry never sent a request for information sharing. No one, including the defence minister [ever] read policy documents on defence and there is no culture of reading among the political leadership. A thinking process does not exist; hence there is no formulation of any policy.'*

Gen Pasha, however, admitted before the Commission that:

- The ISI had brutalised many, even 'decent people' at times as a necessity.
- That **'the ISI had no legal authority for enforced disappearances'**.
- The Americans had pressurised Pakistan through Saudi Arabia for the release of Dr Shakil Afridi but both failed to get him.
- The ISI had **links with Haqqani network** but it was a brain child of ISI and CIA created after the Soviet invasion. Besides Pakistan, other countries like UK and Italy were also in touch with that group in all respects.
- The CIA had infiltrated many foreign NGOs in Pakistan including *Save the Children* that has '**a history of involvement with the CIA**' and concluded that they were NOT CLEAN. The CIA's Director had personally requested him not to expose '**Save the Children's role**' in Pakistan.
- Gen Musharraf **had caved in so promptly and so completely to the US demands that Shamsi Airbase was given to them for drone strikes against people in Pakistan.**
- In Drone Attacks massacre both the **political and military elite were equally responsible for the lapse** throughout the years.
- The **Abbotabad incident was a result of lack of capacity, inadequate knowledge and wrong attitude** on the part of both Generals and politicians in-charge.
- The ISI used to report to the President and the PM but **'the information is shared on a demand basis'**; they never received a demand from the PPP rulers or their Defence Ministry for briefing on any issue.
- The PM had [only] once asked for an update on the security situation.
- **That the ISI knew foreign miscreants lived in Karachi's no-go area** but police dare not venture there.
- **The police protected those who attacked the Qadianis in [Garhi Shahu] Lahore in 2010** and even directed them to the hospital where the wounded were being treated; '**venal political influence intervened everywhere**'.

- That ISI's record was not without blemish; many 'decent people' had been harmed by some of its errors. But the ISI learned from experiences and reformed itself through '**change to its mindset, culture and methodology**'.
- That the **journalists were also found involved in the vilification campaign against the ISI launched by the US and many journalists were 'heavily bribed with money, women and alcohol'**; nearly '**every one of our elite was purchasable.**'
- **That the ISI had arrested people without any legal authority, it was a mal-practice but the police mostly leaked the information provided to it; thus the ISI preferred to act alone.**
- That all the intelligence agencies must be held accountable for their failure **including Military Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, Naval Intelligence, Intelligence Bureau, Criminal Investigation Department and the Special Branch.**

*'Gen Pasha held that very little coordination exists for terrorism-related information sharing with military intelligence services. The CID, Special Branch and the police have advantage over the ISI because of their spread, area coverage and local knowledge but nothing was done by them.'*

- Pakistan had reached an understanding with the United States on drone strikes targeting militants and those attacks were useful. There were no written agreements - only a political understanding. Admittedly, the drone attacks had their utility, but they represented a breach of the national sovereignty.
- Shamsi Airbase in Baluchistan was being used for US drone strikes against the people in FATA. Pakistan ordered the US personnel to leave the base only after US air strikes killed 24 Pakistani soldiers at Salala check post on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011.
- The US arrogance 'knew no limits' and accused the Americans of waging 'psychological warfare' over the whereabouts of Taliban leader Mullah Omar and bin Laden's successor Ayman al-Zawahiri.

While describing Pakistan's conduct with the US, particularly in light of what the Commission deemed "an act of war", Gen Pasha said: **"We are a very weak state, also a very scared state."**

Gen Pasha had understood that the issues the Commission was investigating were not so much of specific individual or institutional failure, but with a problem of collective and systemic failure. He told that the US CIA had 'deeply penetrated' Pakistani society, quoting a US intelligence officer as having allegedly told him: **"You are so cheap... we can buy you with a visa, with a visit to the US, even with a dinner... we can buy anyone."**

Accordingly, Gen Pasha testified that: **"We are a failing state, even if we are not yet a failed state."** Moreover:

- It is not clear if the unscheduled electricity load shedding in Bilal Town Abbotabad at the starting moments of the raid was coincidental or deliberate, suggesting possibly connivance; though the US SEALs had night capability. Osama bin Laden and his family were fumbling in the dark.
- That most of the officers posted in the IB are from police and do not know the basics of intelligence who did not have any intelligence experience either when appointed as DG.
- That the **government never tasked the ISI to deal with counter-terrorism**; the agency had assumed this responsibility '*in response to the dysfunctionality of the prevailing system and the ineffectiveness of other state organs*'.
- That the Haqqani network was jointly created by the CIA and ISI against the Soviet occupation. The ISI was in '**contact with its non-sanctioned members**' who

were responsible for administrative and other matters; its fighting factions were under UN control; UK, Italy and some other countries were also in touch with them.

- That the CIA had a history of using NGOs and there were 1300 foreign NGOs working in Pakistan; the CIA was extremely worried that its nexus with NGOs might be publicly exposed, especially of **'Save the Children'**.

In short Gen Pasha opened a barrage of allegations against anyone he could when he appeared before the Abbotabad Commission probing into the US raid that killed Osama bin Laden. He had also hurled a warning, saying there were people who continued criticizing the ISI against national interests, and **that they should fear the ISI**. He had out-rightly rejected the idea of putting ISI under civilian control, saying an earlier attempt to bring it under the Interior Ministry was disastrous.

For intelligentsia, Gen Pasha should have been reprimanded on the issue **'that Pakistan had an understanding with the US on drones'**; seemingly an odd admission for an army General. As said earlier, there was no written agreement, but a political understanding on the drones did exist. National sovereignty was indeed violated by the drones, what were the parameters of 'their utility'.

Meanwhile, talking to Al-Jazeera TV the same day, former US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said that **'drone attacks could stop if Pakistan so wished'**. He helped give a kind of oblique confirmation to what Gen Pasha told the Commission, that the drone attacks were found useful by the Pakistanis, not just in some of the targets they focused on, but also to twist the arm of the frustrated public. One could deeply feel strategic necessities and compulsions under which the security services and armed forces had to operate in the recent past.

The said precarious arrangement, which was constructed by the military itself, needed an urgent correction and visualised direction by a civilian government. The new incumbent PM Nawaz Sharif, holding the defence portfolio himself, was required to speak with knowledge and authority, to keep fears of a civil-military power tussle at bay and to prove the civilians were the rightful leaders of Pakistan's security policy. Going by Abbotabad Commission report, and the bureaucracy, police and intelligence had to mend themselves too, but there was total darkness all lurking around.

### **QUESTIONS - STILL TO BE ANSWERED:**

There are certain questions, of course more volatile, which had never been answered by the Pak Army or by the investigative media of Pakistan. Most important were:

- When Osama evaded American attack on Tora Bora Mountains in Afghanistan in 2002, how he managed to travel into Pakistan along with whole of his family. How he escaped the American hawks around to reach Swat valley straightaway.
- Was it possible that none of the Pak Army troop, or any member of Intelligence community, civil or military, had seen the whole family travelling so long way.
- How he managed to get living in Swat, then travelled to Haripur, settled there for about two years and no intelligence person could take notice of it.
- Since about 2005, he resided in Abbotabad, just at 500 yards from the Pakistan's Military Academy, in big premises having 18 ft high walls and could not be noticed by Military or Civil Intelligence, local police, Wapda people supplying power to the house, Council people supplying water and sewerage facilities etc.
- The local Cantonment authorities had not even completed their routine formalities that whether Osama's house was built according to the approved plan; whether the said property was properly taxed; whether the votes were brought on electoral role; whether the municipal road to that residence was properly maintained or not AND many more things.

- Near Osama's residence in Abbotabad, there was a base office of US Aid, where Dr Shakil Afridi used to roam about and often seen visiting that US Aid Office despite the fact that Dr Afridi was posted in Peshawar.
- Why the PAF leadership failed to provide any rational response to the intruding choppers during this attack.

*[The US SEALs had come there on helicopters. Admitted that the radars were on 'silence mode' but the thundering roar of choppers was loud; they landed on ground, the SEALs walked through, used megaphones, they blasted their damaged chopper – but how the security people around Kakul Academy, the officers inside, Army's Station Commander of the Cantonment or the local police, the Deputy Commissioner or the SSP or the DIG of Police had not heard the roars and rumbles for one hour – very strange.]*

- Why the Joint Staff HQ of Armed Forces was totally missing in action throughout this episode.
- Why no one noticed the preparations on the ground with trees being cut around Osama's residence.
- Why there was an unscheduled power cut at the time of the US attack; the electricity of that area went off at 00.01AM and came back only when the US operation was complete.
- Under what circumstances, Pakistan's High Commissioner at London, Wajid Shamsulhasan, was forced to make that announcement; who was responsible for that dis-information; if it was so.
- Why the 'American Ambassador in Washington', Hussain Haqqani was allowed to play a crucial part in abetting the CIA, allowing the US to gain excessive intrusive accesses in Pakistan and setting up of a vast CIA operative network.

Just 100 yards away from Osama's house, one serving army officer named Maj Amir Aziz was residing. Later it transpired that:

*"At about 00.30 AM that night, Maj Amir heard helicopters roaming over their home, got out curiously, then heard bullets fired in succession; telling that about 150 fires were there. Immediately rang up his Admin Officer Maj Adnan and told the whole event.*

*Admin Officer passed the worried information to his Commandant Brig Shuja. The Commandant Brigadier heard the event patiently and instructed them **'to calm down as the situation is not clear'.***

Maj Amir Aziz told the Commission later that Dr Shakil used to visit that US Aid Office frequently with local and foreign ladies.

It was also available on file that one Col (Rtd) Saeed Iqbal [apparently owning a private security agency] had previously visited Maj Amir Aziz at least thrice in his expensive bullet-proof car. During his short stay with Maj Amir, Col Saeed used to look at Osama's residence through his very modern digital camera, might be making video or taking snaps.

The fact remained that one of the sons of Col Saeed was the ADC to Gen Musharraf during his rule; later worked as Private Secretary of Gen Musharraf. Col Saeed's security agency was mostly comprised of retired ISI personnel, officers and men. Subsequent investigations lead to believe that Col Saeed [might have] provided full ground support to the Americans in association with Dr Shakil Afridi before launching that 2<sup>nd</sup> May's attack. Dubious roles of Dr Afridi, Col Saeed Iqbal and of Major Amir Aziz could have been scrutinized in detail to find out their criminal intent.

Another hard reality, that after 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011, Col Saeed closed his so called security agency, sold out his assets at reduced prices and left Pakistan; most probably to settle in the US – mission accomplished.

## **OSAMA'S KILLING - LESSONS TO BE LEARNT:**

In nut shell, the Abbotabad Commission Report was a derogatory condemnation of Pakistan's civil and military elite - its state institutions.

Referring to Shireen Mazari's conclusion [appeared in '***the News' of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013***], three aspects of about 337-pages report were striking – and disturbing for Pakistanis:

- About the deep inroads made by the Americans and foreign NGOs into both government and state institutions.
- The then DG ISI Gen Pasha's admission before the Commission that Pakistan had become "too weak" and a US diktat.
- Despite knowing that the US had ended intelligence cooperation after 2005 with the ISI, we continued to give them a free run of the land.

Some media-men, who had once pointed out the questionable US presence near Tarbela, were ridiculed but then one could recall the Raymond Davis episode which had failed to quell our ruling military and civilian elite's passion for servitude to the US. No one questioned the heavy movement of US agents from Islamabad to Abbotabad, Peshawar and back – nor the hundreds of houses rented by the US embassy / USAID in Islamabad.

The Commission observed that the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the country's main civilian intelligence agency, had completely failed to respond to multiple irregularities in the case of Osama's compound in Abbotabad. Instead of being one of the main security institutions of Pakistan, the IB had become little more than a Post Office.

The IB's lack of professionalism was clear from its '***media based***' intelligence reports; only served as a political arm of the PM's office, nothing beyond. The interior ministry had the Americans running its aviation squadron, manned by DynCorp. The ISI was the primary agency responsible for tracing OBL in Pakistan but it miserably failed. Even though the US stopped intelligence cooperation with it, this should not have paralysed the ISI.

The political leadership was equally culpable because it never sought any briefing from the ISI on the issue. The Federal Defence Minister, Ahmed Mukhtar, acknowledged before the Commission that '***he knew little of what went on in his ministry since that was regarded as the domain of the military.***'

On the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011, the Defence Minister came to know of the raid not through the military or government chain of command, but through media reports and a phone call from his daughter in New York.

Ahmed Mukhtar's was not an atypical case. When the US made contact with Pakistan following the raid, it was through a phone call between the then US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Admiral Mike Mullen and Pakistani COAS Gen Kayani. It was left to Gen Kayani to then inform the civilian government of what had happened, several hours later.

Abbotabad Commission Report revealed how all institutions, from the lowest rank right to the top, were in a mess with no one owning up to their burden of responsibility. Height of lethargy was that the DGMO informed about the US intrusion to the COAS by 2AM although the choppers were in Abbotabad by 00.25AM. The COAS called the CAS asking him to scramble aircraft at 2.07AM but nothing happened.

Referring to '***the News' dated 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013***, it emerged from the internal correspondence that members of the Abbottabad Commission had compromised integrity to favour the accused; certain duly verified documents revealed later.

There was seen internal friction among members of the commission; hard-line position taken by one member pitting himself against three colleagues whom he accused of being '*soft on*

*certain institutions.* 'One of the members went abroad on the pretext of illness as he was not contented with the report but did not want to write a note of dissent even.

One member of the Commission was considered very critical of his views about army and the ISI. As he wrote a dissenting note, two of his colleagues made all possible efforts to counter his argument and kept the 'bosses in uniform' updated about their continuing efforts to save their skins.

The Commission members prepared their separate drafts in June 2012 which were reduced to two in August that year and were ***shared with the GHQ to let them know about intensive efforts to bail them out.*** Frustrating efforts were made by two members to convince the colleague of dissenting note in order to come to a point where the note was significantly reduced and certain cogent comments were taken out from the report.

As the IB and ISI people confided with one member over his assessment about the chances of possible reactions, he said he was confident to convince the other members of the Commission about their 'innocence'. While the entire record was opened to the GHQ with regular briefing, no member was ready to face the media on the veracity of allegations that came out of the secret memos.

Chairman of the Commission, Justice (R) Javed Iqbal initially promised to meet the media but later stopped taking calls. AND that was why the Commission did not hold anyone directly responsible; as the report repeatedly stated:

***"..... the Pakistani military and political leadership displayed a degree of incompetence and irresponsibility that was truly breathtaking and indeed culpable".***

Abbotabad Commission Report [compiled by Justice (Rtd) Javed Iqbal] on Osama Ben Laden's killing on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011 in Pakistan concluded that:

*"..... It was primarily the intelligence – security failure that was rooted in political irresponsibility and military exercise of authority and influence in policy and administrative areas for which it neither had constitutional or legal authority, nor the necessary expertise and competence."*

Concurrently, most international law experts, even the Americans, including former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, kept the opinion that ***'what the US did was illegal and criminal'***. Shamefully, Pakistan's president and the PM welcomed this disgrace.

However, Pakistanis are waiting for a better tomorrow with the same like stuff; is'nt astonishing.

### **US QUILTS – WOT ENDS:**

The intelligentsia and historians keep the opinion that the year 2011 contributed much in calling an end to American occupation of Afghan soils and Pakistan's cold shoulders during 2011-12 played a pivotal role in writing that American policy document of 'the US exit till 2014'.

Referring to the ***TIME of 14<sup>th</sup> April 2013***, good days of Pak-US relations took a new start on one evening in June 2009, when Richard Holbrooke [later died in December 2010] paid his first visit [as Obama's envoy for Pak-Afghan lands] to Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari at the presidency in Islamabad to know his ideas about how Washington could help. Mr Zardari told Holbrooke that:

*"Pakistan is like AIG [comparing his country to the US insurance giant that was bailed out in 2008] assuming it 'too big to fail'; the US government had given AIG \$100 billion. You should give Pakistan the same."*

And Holbrooke kept on smiling throughout the meeting; he had not liked the image of Pakistan holding a gun to its own head and begging from America.

In 2011, three major incidents brought the Pak-US relationship crashing to its lowest-point ever: a CIA contractor Raymond Davis killed two people in Lahore; US Navy Seals killed Osama without informing the people of Pakistan; and toward the end of the year, 26 Pakistani troops were killed in a cross-border incident at Salala, a check post at Pak-Afghan border.

Till ending 2010, the security relationship worked better when there were other efforts alongside. The US had security interests and Pakistan was concerned with economic and civilian interests. Both countries were better off in 2009-10 when the conversation was not just about drones and terrorists, but it was also about energy and clean water in Pakistan.

The CIA and the Pentagon had seen the benefits of the military cum economic cooperation but Obama's nearest lobby wanted over-night results. They started applying constant pressure that 'threatened to break up the relationship.' At one point, Holbrooke turned to Vali Nasr [his 2<sup>nd</sup> in command] shaking his head, and said: *"Watch them [the CIA] ruin this relationship. And when it is ruined, they are going to say, 'We told you, you can't work with Pakistan!' We never learn."*

As opined by **Ayaz Amir** in his essay **dated 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013** appeared on media pages:

*"Incompetence and negligence are the two watchwords of the report and those caught by the patriotic fever are using them as ammunition against everything in sight, chiefly the ISI and the army command.*

*There is, however, a fine line between embarrassment and humiliation. .... The real embarrassment was his presence [here] .... no point in dwelling too much on the loss of national honour in the American assault."*

Osama was a blazing priority for the Americans but not for Pakistanis because for many people in Pakistan he was not a villain but a hero. Even almost every major Al-Qaeda catch – Abu Zubaydah, al-Libbi, Ramzi and Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, were caught here; Pakistan paid for its involvement in Afghan War of 1980s not being complicit with Al-Qaeda. Then *Jihadi* HQ shifted to FATA, Pakistan became major battlefield, even more than Afghanistan, not only did Osama move here much of the Al-Qaeda leadership like Haqqanis did so as well.

Irony of fate was that the leadership, both army and civilian, went happy.

Difficult to differentiate if the America has been Pakistan's friend or foe. The fact remains that he behaved arrogant after his designs and perception of being 'the ONLY super power' after Russia's defeat in 1980s went gradually blurred, tempered and mitigated; it was because of three factors: *'the Sunni resistance to the American occupation in Iraq; the Taliban resistance in Afghanistan; and Iran's refusal to succumb to American threats'*, as Ayaz Amir suggested.

No one knows why Pakistani leadership went on constantly creeping under American's toes then.