

Pakistani, European officials charge US manufactured terror scare

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Britain's *Guardian* newspaper published comments Friday from a high-ranking Pakistani government official and European intelligence officials, stating that the recent US terror alert was politically motivated. Wajid Shamsul Hasan, Pakistan's high commissioner to Britain, told the *Guardian* that the terror alert was being used by the United States to justify an escalation of the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

His statement follows those by several leading European politicians publicly denying the claim by the Obama administration that the threat of terrorist attack was imminent somewhere in Europe.

On October 3, the US State Department issued an amorphous statement warning American citizens in Europe of the danger of attacks by organisations linked to Al Qaeda. No specific country was mentioned, and there only existed "the potential for terrorist attacks". Britain, Japan, Sweden and Canada promptly issued alerts to their own citizens in Europe to take extra precautions.

However, a number of European politicians, particularly in Germany, came forward to deny that an imminent threat existed, including European Union Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding and German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere.

Wajid Shamsul Hasan is close to Pakistani President Asif Zardari. He told the *Guardian* that, despite the US issuing the alert and warning of possible Al Qaeda sponsored plots to attack famous landmarks and cities in Western Europe, the Pakistani government had been provided with no definite information. "If the Americans have definite information about terrorists and Al Qaeda people, we should be provided [with] that, and we could go after them ourselves", he said.

"Such reports [from the United States] are a mixture of frustrations, ineptitude and lack of appreciation of

ground realities. Any attempt to infringe the sovereignty of Pakistan would not bring about stability in Afghanistan, which is presumably the primary objective of the American and NATO forces".

Hasan's comments express the concerns of the Pakistan government that indiscriminate military actions by the US, including the use of helicopters and drone planes in Pakistan, are provoking mass opposition. The Zardari regime knows that every escalation of US operations in Pakistan is further undermining its rule. The Pakistani government is complicit in Washington's now innumerable war crimes. The US drone and helicopter attacks had "set the country on fire", said Hasan. "Why are they putting so much pressure on us? It is a threat to the democratic system.... But people in Pakistan feel Washington does not care".

Hasan warned that future US military attacks could spark reprisals in which US citizens in Pakistan could be targeted. "The government does not want to go down this road", he said. "But people feel abused. If they [the Americans] kill someone again, they will react. There is a figure that there are 3,000 American personnel in Pakistan. They would be very easy targets".

Such targets could include those US personnel based at the Pakistani air force base at Jacobabad. The base is located on the border between Sindh and Baluchistan provinces, and has been used by the US military on a permanent basis since September 11, 2001. Jacobabad is where US Central Intelligence Agency forces are based and is the location of the hangars where drones are launched.

Drone attacks have dramatically intensified since Barack Obama came to office. In the first year of his administration, US drone missile attacks claimed the

lives of over 700 Pakistani civilians. On Monday, four German nationals were killed in a US drone attack in the North Waziristan region of Pakistan near the border with Afghanistan. Pakistani security officials said that eight people were killed in total.

On Wednesday the BBC reported that, “five suspected militants were killed in a drone strike in north-west Pakistan”. The BBC stated that that US “has now carried out 27 drone strikes in the area since early September”.

The drone attacks began in June 2004 and were given the go-ahead by the Pakistani government.

The *Guardian* cited another Pakistani diplomat who stated that the drone operations were now beyond Pakistan’s control. The diplomat told the *Guardian*, “We have always denied it in the past. But everybody knows this is happening. We need to wake up”.

The *Guardian* report also contained comments by European intelligence figures, who poured cold water on the claims emanating from Washington that a coordinated plot to attack prominent locations in at Britain, France and Germany was underway. The *Guardian* reported, “They [the European intelligence officials] said Washington was the ‘driver’ behind claims about a series of ‘commando-style’ plots, and that the CIA—perhaps because it was worried about provoking unwelcome attention to its drone strikes—was also extremely annoyed by the publicity given to them”.

One official told the newspaper, “To stitch together [the terror plot claims] in a seamless narrative is nonsensical”.

The report cited a “counter-terrorism official” who dismissed the hysteria that had whipped up over Abdul Jabbar, a Briton, since his death. Jabbar was killed along with others in a US drone assault on September 8 in North Waziristan. A resident of Birmingham, he was reported as boasting he would bring holy war to Britain by recruiting hundreds of terrorists to a new group, “The Islamic Army of Great Britain”.

According to the Pakistani government account of events, Jabbar was targeted to be killed after he was supposedly overheard saying to a meeting of some 300 people near Miranshah, Pakistan, that he wanted to attack the UK. Pakistani intelligence informed the UK government of Jabbar’s whereabouts, and the UK authorities then informed the US. But the

Guardian cited a UK government official who said of the supposed plan, “Not a huge amount of weight was put to it”. A “counter-terrorism official”, quoted in the same report, said there was “no corroboration” of Jabbar’s claims.

In the *Guardian*’s Friday article an intelligence official was quoted saying, “You have discussions about all sorts of things—that does not necessarily mean there is anything concrete. It is not easy to set up groups”.

Two days earlier the *Sun* had reported a UK security source stating that Jabbar “fancied himself as a much bigger fish than he actually was. And his boasting cost him his life. A genuinely senior Al Qaeda figure would not have made such a foolish mistake”.



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