

Pakistan: Tensions rise as Raymond Davis revealed to be a CIA operative

Ali Ismail**24 February 2011**

Only hours after the British daily the *Guardian* reported that Raymond Davis, the American national charged with gunning down two Pakistani youths in Lahore, was employed by the US Central Intelligence Agency to carry out surveillance and other covert activities, the *New York Times* revealed it had long known of Davis's CIA ties.

Given Davis's actions, his ten years in the US Special Forces, and the vehemence with which the US has demanded he immediately be returned to the US, it is hardly surprising that Washington's claim that Davis is a diplomat has proven to be a lie. Nevertheless, his outing as a covert operative further complicates the efforts of Washington and the Pakistan Peoples' Party-led coalition government to prevent Davis from having to stand trial on the grounds that he is protected from prosecution by diplomatic immunity.

The *Guardian*, in its February 20 report "American who sparked diplomatic crisis over Lahore shooting was CIA spy," said Davis's identity had been confirmed through interviews in the US and Pakistan. "It's beyond a shadow of a doubt," that Davis was working for the CIA, a senior Pakistani intelligence official told the newspaper.

In its report, "American held in Pakistan Shootings Worked with the CIA," the *New York Times* said that it withheld information about Davis's links to the agency at the request of the Obama administration, which claimed that exposing Davis's CIA ties would put the operative's life in danger. This is in keeping with the *Times* longstanding practice of censoring the news to serve the interests of the US government.

The *Washington Post*, the Associated Press and other US media outlets had also agreed to not disclose Davis's links to the CIA. However, prior to publication of the *Guardian* article, several Pakistani and international news outlets discussed Davis's possible ties to agency. Colorado-based television station 9NEWS made a link between Davis and the CIA after speaking to his wife. She referred the television station to a phone number in Washington that turned out to be that of the CIA. But the CIA reference was removed from the station's website at the request of the US government.

Unnamed US sources are now claiming that Davis is a "protective officer," employed as a CIA contractor. This contradicts the *Guardian* and *Times* reports, which contend that Davis was involved in surveillance including of people in Pakistan's border areas, and is in all likelihood also a lie.

US officials who declined to be identified told Reuters news agency that Davis's duties involved providing physical security to US embassy and consular officers and to American dignitaries visiting Pakistan. Two unidentified US sources familiar with the matter also confirmed to Reuters

that Davis had previously worked as a security officer for Xe Services, the notorious private contractor formerly known as Blackwater.

The revelation of Davis's status as a CIA employee has done nothing to soften Washington's aggressive stance on the issue. Asked if Davis was a CIA employee, a senior Obama administration official told reporters, "The only relevant question is: Was he notified as a member of the administrative and technical staff upon entry to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? And the answer to that question was yes. At that point he acquired privileges and immunities."

The exposure of Davis's CIA status has infuriated ordinary Pakistanis, already outraged by US bullying in the aftermath of the Davis killings, the US occupation of Afghanistan, drone strikes and other violations of Pakistani sovereignty, and Washington's support for a succession of military dictatorships, including that of General Pervez Musharraf, which unraveled just three years ago.

Raymond Davis was arrested on January 27, one day after he had gunned down two Pakistani youths on a motorbike in a busy market area of Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city. Davis had been driving a Honda Civic while armed with a semi-automatic pistol. When two young men, Mohammad Faheem and Faizan Haider, pulled up beside his car on a motorbike, Davis opened fire on the youths, killing both of them on the spot. At the time of the incident, Davis and the US Embassy in Islamabad claimed that one of the men was carrying a gun and that, out of fear that he was about to be robbed, Davis shot them in "self-defense."

A third man, Ibadur Rahman, was killed when he was run over by US officials rushing to the scene to prevent Davis from being arrested. Rahman was struck by their unmarked Toyota Land Cruiser which was speeding in the wrong direction on a one-way street. Rahman was left to die by the US officials, who fled the scene without bothering to assist him.

When Davis was arrested the following day, a murder case was registered against him. He was also charged with illegal possession of a firearm. A murder case was also filed against the driver of the vehicle that killed the bystander Rahman, but the culprit has yet to be apprehended. According to a Reuters report published yesterday, the two men in the Land Cruiser were also both CIA contractors and have been spirited out of Pakistan. From the outset, US consular authorities in Lahore rebuffed all attempts by the Pakistani police to make inquiries about Rahman's death, refusing to even provide the name of the driver.

US claims that Davis was acting in self-defense have been contradicted by the evidence. Police and forensics reports have shown that the two men were shot several times in the back.

According to Pakistani prosecutors, Davis fired at the men through his windshield, and then stepped out of his car and shot one of the men twice in the back to make sure he was dead. One of the men's bodies was discovered 30 feet away from his motorbike. Davis allegedly took photographs of the men before calling the US consulate in Lahore for assistance. "It went way beyond what we define as self-defense. It was not commensurate with the threat," a police official involved in the case told the *Guardian*.

Neither of the two men killed by Davis has a criminal record and the claim that they are thieves has been adamantly denied by the victims' families. The pistols they were carrying were licensed and the bullets were in the guns' magazines, not the chambers. There were no fingerprints on the guns, challenging Davis's claim that one or both of the victims had waved their pistols in his direction.

According to the *Guardian*, "Pakistani suspicions about Davis's role were stoked by the equipment police confiscated from his car: an unlicensed pistol, a long-range radio, a GPS device, an infrared torch and a camera with pictures of buildings around Lahore."

"This is not the work of a diplomat. He was doing espionage and surveillance activities," said Punjab law minister Rana Sanaullah.

According to the *New York Times*, Davis was part of a covert, CIA-led team responsible for gathering intelligence and conducting surveillance on militant groups in Pakistan. Operating out of a safe house in Lahore, Davis carried out scouting and reconnaissance missions for CIA technical experts and case officers in charge of the operations. The *Washington Post* quoted a US official who declined to be identified: "At the time of his arrest, Davis was based at a house with five other CIA contractors as well as an agency employee."

Several Pakistani and US officials have stated that the CIA team to which Davis was attached was tasked with tracking the movements of Pakistani militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, which the US and India claim is used by Pakistan's security forces, or at least elements within it, as a proxy force against India. Call records of Davis's cell phone allegedly establish his link to 27 Taliban militants and the militant group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, according to the *Toronto Star*.

The Davis affair has exacerbated longstanding tensions between the CIA and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In December, the CIA Islamabad station chief was forced to leave the country after he was named in a civil lawsuit.

According to the *Times*, "One senior Pakistani official close to the ISI said Pakistani spies were particularly infuriated over the Davis episode because it was such a public spectacle. Besides the three Pakistanis who were killed, the widow of one of the victims committed suicide by swallowing rat poison." The official added that the ISI was embarrassed by the case because it has revealed the impunity with which the US operates in Pakistan. "We all know the spy-versus-spy games, we all know it works in the shadows," he said, "but you don't get caught, and you don't get caught committing murders." There have been several reports suggesting that the two men killed by Davis were in fact low-level ISI operatives tasked with tailing Davis.

Yesterday, the Associated Press reported that the ISI fears that the CIA has flooded the country with hundreds, if not thousands, of covert operatives in recent months, without its knowledge or that of the government. It cites a "Western diplomat in Pakistan" as agreeing that a

"floodgate" recently opened to new US diplomatic personnel in Pakistan.

The unnamed "senior Pakistani intelligence official" who spoke with the Associated Press said his agency works with "the bona fide CIA personnel" in Pakistan, but now the CIA is using large numbers of secret personnel. "They have to start showing respect, not belittling us, not being belligerent to us, not treating us like we are their lackeys."

While the Pakistani bourgeoisie is subservient to imperialism and views its decades-long partnership with the US as crucial to its geo-political strategy, it resents Washington's bullying tactics and the endless violations of the country's sovereignty. The main fear is that the ongoing crimes of US imperialism and the Pakistani elite's collusion will result in a social explosion. Several analysts have warned of Egypt-style protests if Davis is released on the basis of diplomatic immunity.

The US is continuing to pressure Pakistan to release Davis. Last week, President Obama called for his immediate release, referring to him as "our diplomat." There have been threats from congressional leaders to reduce economic and military aid to Pakistan and even to take the case to the International Court of Justice.

If US officials have been somewhat less obstreperous in recent days, it is probably because they recognize that their public threats were only inflaming public opinion. On Tuesday, US State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said the US is "very mindful of the difficulty that the government of Pakistan faces in terms of public opinion in this case. It's why we have, on an ongoing basis for the past month, engaged them constructively and forthrightly."

At the request of Pakistan's government, a Lahore court last week postponed until March 14 a hearing into whether Davis is protected by diplomatic immunity. The deputy attorney-general said the government needed more time to prepare its arguments. This is a patent attempt to play for time, in the hope that popular feelings will abate and the opposition parties can be coaxed into coming to the government's aid in justifying Davis's release.

Protests, however, continue against the brazen killing of the two youths in a crowded market. Rallies were held across the country last Friday, including in Lahore. Hundreds of demonstrators there burnt effigies of US Senator John Kerry, who had just completed a three-day bullying-mission to Pakistan, and Raymond Davis. According to the *News*, "The demonstrators, including students, lawyers, workers, political activists and local traders raised slogans against Washington's growing interference in Pakistan 'courtesy of the agent rulers and top bureaucrats'." Some protesters have called for a nationwide general strike to prevent Davis's release.



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