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Saga of Times Square Bomber Continues

Now over a week since the event, the details and background of Faisal Shahzad and his attempt to explode a car bomb in New York's Times Square is still unraveling. One issue still being investigated since the beginning is: Who financed him, who trained him, who sent him – and why?

In order to settle it, according to the *Washington Post*, the [FBI landed a team in Islamabad, Pakistan](#), last Friday, May 7. A legal attaché office of the FBI is located there, which coordinates efforts with Pakistani law enforcement and intelligence officers, whose cooperation is considered crucial. The article says American officials continue to speak with anyone having connections of interest with Faisal Shahzad here in the U.S., while authorities in Pakistan attempt speaking not only with militants, but also Shahzad's father and his father-in-law. According to this report the suspect himself continues to cooperate and more is being learned about how he has been influenced:



Several days after his arrest, Shahzad continued to cooperate with interrogators, to the point where they keep returning to ask follow-up questions, officials said. One issue complicating the probe: Shahzad had multiple e-mail addresses. Investigators are having to unravel thousands of messages, which in turn lead to more e-mails and Web sites, officials said.

Investigators continue to believe that elements of the Pakistani Taliban trained Shahzad, but they are uncertain about his claims to interrogators that he met higher-ups within the group, including Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud, U.S. officials said. A senior Pakistani official said Friday that no evidence has emerged of ties between Shahzad and Mehsud, but there are "strong indications" that Shahzad, during his trips to Pakistan, was in touch with Jaish-i-Muhammad — an al-Qaeda-linked group that is part of a mosaic of extremist organizations in the country.

A federal law enforcement official said Friday that Shahzad had listened to speeches by radical Islamic clerics in the years since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Among those Shahzad has cited as inspiring him is Anwar al-Aulaqi, the American-born cleric in Yemen who has been tied to the suspect in the attempted Christmas bombing on a Detroit-bound plane as well as the man charged in last year's fatal shootings at Fort Hood, Tex. Shahzad himself does not appear to have communicated with Aulaqi.

Regarding the money aspect, the *Post* report went on to say:



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Here and abroad, a key focus was the money trail. Investigators were tracking a money courier who may have helped funnel cash to Shahzad from overseas, but they cautioned that any links were uncertain. Shahzad also may have obtained money to fund the Times Square operation from a hawala, an informal money-transfer network popular in South Asia and the Middle East, according to a former U.S. official briefed on the investigation. Hawalas have been linked to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

"There is a lot of money," said the senior law enforcement official, who noted that Shahzad brought \$80,000 in cash into the United States when he returned from trips overseas between 1999 and 2008, and is thought to have had additional sources of funds. "To get that kind of money, the theory is you have someone help you move it," the official said.

The New York *Daily News* is saying that, according to investigators questioning him, Shahzad states he trained in the lawless tribal areas of Waziristan. The Pakistani Taliban functions there as well as al-Qaida. Officials are wondering if the Times Square bombing attempt was just the latest in the [effort of Pakistani terrorists to leave their home base](#) and bring terrorism to the U.S. and other world-wide locations. Said the *Daily News*:

If those suspicions prove correct, it suggests that groups based in Pakistan, including the Taliban along the Afghan border, may be taking on a more global approach after years of focusing attacks largely on government or coalition forces in their region.

That focus could stem from the Taliban's continued close association with senior al-Qaida leaders, who are believed to be hiding in the lawless regions on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, said one former Obama administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the investigation is continuing.

This former official said the Pakistan Taliban may be another potential al-Qaida affiliate that wants the U.S. out of Afghanistan and the Pakistan Army out of their villages. After months of intensified attacks from drone aircraft, mainly by the CIA in a classified program, Taliban leaders may be more intent on going after the U.S.

The counterterrorism officials say the Times Square attempt also shows a continuing shift to opportunistic attacks by the Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups that don't have much money for overseas operations. So they use whatever method they can afford, wherever they happen to find a willing operative.

There is further thought that terrorist organizations may begin to send "trainers" over to America in order to instruct willing candidates, instead of having the candidate go overseas for such training.

Geoff Morrell, press secretary for the Pentagon, is also referenced in this report as saying that because Faisal Shahzad may have a connection with the Pakistani Taliban is no reason to create a change with the manner in which the United States has approached cooperation with Pakistan, nor with Pakistan's "step-by-step" approach to dealing with terrorism threats within its borders. Morrell is quoted as saying, "We are in the passenger seat, they are behind the wheel. They are the ones who are going to determine the direction, the pace, the speed of their operations."??

But on Saturday, May 8, [Reuters relayed a New York Times report](#) that the U.S. was now pressing Pakistan indeed, urging it to real action in its tribal regions and against the Islamic militants there. The account stated a Pakistani official as saying that after the failed attempt in Times Square, U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Anne Patterson, met Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and used "forceful"



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language to convey "that Pakistan must move more assertively against militants threaded through society." In what appears a real turnaround to the previous American approach, the Times reported:

Another official, referring to the highly sensitive prospect of U.S. ground troops within Pakistan, was quoted as saying, "We are saying, 'Sorry, if there is a successful attack, we will have to act' " inside Pakistan.

Currently, U.S. troops in Pakistan are already extremely unpopular.

Regarding the influences on Faisal Shahzad, on Friday, May 7, [*Foreign Policy* observed](#) that:

Shahzad was reportedly inspired by the online sermons of the Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, who had contact with Ft. Hood shooter Nidal Hasan and failed underwear bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (Wash Post, NYT). And though Shahzad claims to have met with TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud, some officials believe the failed bomber had at most "incidental contact" with militants, who may have suspected him of being a CIA spy (Guardian, Tel, McClatchy, Wash Post). Pakistani's interior minister continues to say he has seen no evidence of TTP involvement (AP).

It adds that Azam Tariq, spokesman for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), asserted once more that while praising Shahzad's actions, his group neither trained him nor knew him.

As to what time table applies to Shahzad and his terrorist involvement, *Foreign Policy* adds:

The timing of Shahzad's radicalization trajectory remains murky; the Post reports it "was a gradual thing that started years ago," according to an intelligence official, while CNN writes that Shahzad appears to have become more religious over the last year, which the Times corroborates (Wash Post, CNN, NYT). U.S. investigators are chasing down leads about who may have helped Shahzad finance his plan, and have traveled to Pakistan to interview several alleged members of Jaish-e-Muhammad (AP, ET).

A further issue still furiously discussed is Faisal Shahzad and his Miranda rights. Strictly speaking, as an American citizen, he enjoys the full protection of the law, as guaranteed by the Constitution, and is innocent until proven guilty, etc. But he did attempt an act of terror on U.S. soil. On this score, many believe that the issue should not be the secondary one of Miranda rights, but the primary one of who we allow to become American citizens in the first place.

Photo: FBI agents inspect evidence linked to the Times Square bomb case in the garage of a house in Bridgeport, Conn., on May 4, 2010: AP Images



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