U.S. Officials Say Pakistan Terrorists Behind Times Square Bomb Attempt

Gen. David Petraeus, who oversees the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, told the Associated Press on Friday, May 7, that the Times Square bomb attempt suspect, Faisal Shahzad, acted as a "lone wolf." The Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, was calling the attack a "one-off" on her Sunday show appearances last week. Today, other U.S. officials scuttled that theory.

But appearing on ABC's This Week for Sunday, May 9, Atty. Gen. Eric Holder (photo, left) said that evidence has been developed showing that "the Pakistani Taliban was actually behind the attack." Later on *Meet the Press*, he described the Taliban in Pakistan as having "directed this plot" and asserted they may have also financed it.

The *New York Times* quoted John Brennan, Pres. Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser, as saying that it appeared Mr. Shahzad was working for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TPT.

On Friday, May 7, *Foreign Policy* had quoted Azam Tariq, spokesman for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), as denying this, saying not only did they not train Shahzad, but they did not even know him. Tariq added, however, that they praised the attempt of Mr. Shahzad to blow up a car in Times Square, New York City.

According to the *New York Times* report:

> The TTP is believed by some military intelligence officials to have joined forces with Al Qaeda and may be hiding some of its senior leaders, including Osama bin Laden, who was the motivating force behind the 9/11 attack.

> "He [Shahzad] was trained by them," Mr. Brennan said on CBS's *Face the Nation*. "He received funding from them. He was basically directed here to the United States to carry out this attack."

Until now, American officials have speculated that the Pakistan Taliban may have trained Mr. Shahzad during his visit to Pakistan, but Sunday's statements were their most definitive about the Taliban's role.

After some U.S. officials were receiving criticism for attempting at first to take credit that law enforcement had "thwarted" Faisal Shahzad's attempt to detonate his car bomb — when witness facts and video showed the problem bomb simply would not work — Mr. Brennan, on *Face the Nation*, revamped the "thwarting" theory Sunday according to the *Times*:

> Mr. Brennan said he saw the failure of the Times Square bombing as proof of the United States'

ability to weaken the Pakistani Taliban rather than solely as evidence of the incompetence of the bomber.

"They have not been able to receive the type of training that would have allowed them to carry out an attack successfully," he said on *Face the Nation*. "We've been able to degrade the capability to train at these camps in south Asia and the Pakistan-Afghan border. So I think they're opting for these less sophisticated attacks because of the tremendous blows that they have taken."

With Senior officials asserting the association of the Pakistan Taliban with this latest U.S. terrorist attempt, there will be increased pressure on the government of Pakistan to clean up the terrorist stronghold in its North Waziristan's lawless tribal region. This is the area that Faisal Shahzad has said he received his training.

Though officials began at first to think Mr. Shahzad may have only received training from the Pakistan terrorists, today they were firmer, saying that the terrorists were much more involved. Said Mr. Brennan: "He was trained by them. He received funding from them. He was basically directed here to the United States to carry out this attack."

The *Times* article continued:

> The Pakistani Taliban was formed in 2007, according to Western diplomats and intelligence officials, with a goal of using tribal areas along the Afghan border to train fighters who would stage assaults against American and NATO forces in Afghanistan. They have also launched bombings and other attacks in Pakistan in an effort to discourage the Pakistan military from overthrowing their refuges in tribal areas like North Waziristan.

While American Predator drone strikes have apparently killed leaders like Baitullah Mehsud, the organization has formed loose alliances with Al Qaeda and other groups to make up what one intelligence official recently called a "witches' brew," sharing money and bomb experts and makers. Pakistan's military offensive and America's expanded program of drone strikes have hurt the group's ability to operate in the open, but it also seems to have broadened its mission to strike overseas.

"The Taliban is the local partner of Al Qaeda in Pakistan," Amir Rana, the director of the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, who has tracked militant networks for years, recently said in an interview. "It has no capacity for an international agenda on its own."

The Pakistani Taliban was mostly active in the Swat Valley and South Waziristan, but after a campaign by the Pakistani army, it relocated largely to North Waziristan. The Obama administration has been exerting pressure on Pakistan to enlarge its offensive to North Waziristan.

Especially so, following last week's Times Square attempt.

It appears that praise given recently to Pakistan by [President Obama](#)will be held back in the foreseeable future.

Obama praises Pakistan for continuing assault on Taliban 'strategic' valley

The news site AntiWar.com stated:

> At the start of 2009 only tiny Bajaur was being attacked by Pakistan's military, after considerable US harranguing Pakistan now has ongoing offensives in half the tribal areas and lingering hostilities in Malakand, in the NWFP (Now Khyber-Pakhtoonwa), with some 200,000 troops committed along its northern frontier in US-demanded wars.

Once touted as proof of the floundering Zardari government's loyalty to the US, the offensives and the almost ridiculous lengths to which the military has suspended civil liberties in the tribal areas are falling so short of American expectations that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton yesterday threatened "very serioues consequences" against Pakistan over the Times Square bombing and said she expected the Zardari government to do more against militants.

On CBS' *60 Minutes* Sunday show, Clinton insinuated that things would go badly for Pakistan if it were found that terrorists from there were involved with the NYC bomb plot. Her threat could mean among other things, increasing an already unpopular presence of U.S. military in Pakistan.

The AntiWar.com article continued:

On the other hand it is unclear what, if anything, Pakistan could theoretically do to placate the US. Constantly having to commit a significant portion of its force to its eastern border with India, the nearly bankrupt Pakistani government would be hard pressed to commit many more troops to the Afghan frontier. Even if they do, the offensives have done little but chase tribesmen out of their homes, and the militant leaders, from the TTP and other groups, simply blend into the background and reemerge at a later date.

Much as the failed Christmas Day attack led to knee-jerk calls to launch a full scale invasion of Yemen, or at the very least a large number of air strikes (ironically the US launched two major air strikes against Yemen before the ostensive casus belli came along), Times Square now has people openly talking about a reaction against Pakistan, up to and including the threat of putting "boots on the ground."

As with Yemen, however, the US has really been attacking Pakistan all along, killing some 700 civilians in 44 drone attacks in 2009 alone. And perhaps even moreso than with Yemen, the evidence is overwhelming that the attack didn't happen in a vacuum, and that the US attacks and constant US meddling in Pakistan is actually fueling the insurgency, which didn't exist in any serious form until the 2001 US invasion of neighboring Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, in another *New York Times* article entitled, "Obama Seeks to Ease Rules on Questioning Terror Suspects," the issue of Miranda rights for anyone suspected of committing an act of terror is again coming under rapid scrutiny. The *Times* states in part:

Even before the attempted Times Square attack, the administration had been stretching the traditional limits of how long suspects may be questioned without being warned of their rights.

After the attempted bombing of a Detroit-bound jet on Dec. 25, for example, the F.B.I. questioned the suspect in that case, Umar Abdulmutallab, for about 50 minutes without reading him his rights.

Mr. Brennan [Administration chief counter-terrorism advisor] said that last week, the F.B.I. interrogated Mr. Shahzad for approximately three or four hours before delivering a Miranda warning.

In both cases, the administration relied on an exception to Miranda for immediate threats to public safety. That exception was established by the Supreme Court in a 1984 case in which a police officer asked a suspect, at the time of his arrest and before reading his rights, about where he had hidden a gun. The court deemed the defendant's answer and the gun admissible.

There are, however, fears that stripping or delaying an American citizen of his Miranda rights — even

for attempted terrorism, as was done to Faisal Shahzad in New York last week when reading him his rights was stalled — could be just the beginning of authorities sallying forth pretexts why other citizens "for other reasons" should not have their rights read to them, much less applied to them.

Photo: Attorney General Eric Holder responds to questions about the Times Square car bomb incident in Arlington, Va., on May 3, 2010.: AP Images

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