



Written by on July 15, 2009

Bin Laden Deputy Incites Pakistanis Against U.S.

Said al-Zawahiri: "I believe that every honest and sincere Muslim in Pakistan should seriously contemplate ... Pakistan's present state and expected future, because the blatant American crusader interference in Pakistan's affairs ... has reached such an extent that it now poses a grave danger to Pakistan's future and very existence."

AFP reported that al-Zawahiri's eight-minute, 49-second English-language (which is more widely spoken in Pakistan than Arabic) video was entitled "My Muslim Brothers and Sisters in Pakistan." In his message, the number-two al Qaeda leader said that U.S. intervention in Pakistan's military and politics could break up the nuclear-armed nation.



Zawahiri told Muslims that they have a religious duty to support Islamic fighters. "It is the individual duty of every Muslim in Pakistan to join the mujahedeen, or at the very least to support the jihad in Pakistan and Afghanistan with money, advice, expertise, information, communications, shelter and anything else he can offer," said al-Zawahiri.

"If we stand by passively without offering due support to the mujahedeen, we shall not only contribute to the destruction of Pakistan and Afghanistan, but we shall also deserve the painful punishment of almighty Allah," the al Qaeda leader said.

In a direct reference to Pakistani military forces engaged in clearing al-Qaeda's Taliban allies from Northwest Pakistan, Al-Zawahiri pointed his finger at "a clique of corrupt politicians and a junta of military officers who are fighting to remain on the American pay list by employing Pakistan's entire military and all its resources in the American Crusade against Islam."

A survey of Pakistanis carried out in May showed that 82 percent of Pakistanis thought that al-Qaeda posed a "critical threat" to their country, up from 34 percent in late 2007. Observers believe that al-Zawahiri's latest message is a form of damage control to shore up flagging support for his organization.

The British *Guardian* newspaper reported that al-Zawahiri's message echoes a widely believed conspiracy theory in Pakistan that Washington is orchestrating violent chaos so U.S. troops can storm in and disable the country's nuclear arsenal, estimated to number between 60 and 100 warheads. The paper cited analysts who believe that Zawahiri had hit a sensitive spot by accusing the United States of having designs on Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.

"It's a very subtle move," said Talat Masood, a retired army general and defence analyst. "They are saying, 'The Americans are coming after your nuclear weapons and we can protect them.' "

Like other analysts, the al Jazeera network's Imran Khan, reporting from Islamabad, said that al-Zawahiri was hoping to provoke a reaction to Pakistan's campaign against Taliban fighters in Swat.



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According to Khan:

[Al-Zawahiri is] talking about the American "occupation" of Pakistan.... Pakistan isn't occupied by anybody. What he means is the operations against the Pakistani Taliban by the Pakistani army.

He says that these operations are run by the U.S. — that this is not a Pakistani war, this is a U.S. proxy war. It's that kind of inflammatory language that he's hoping will get people riled up.

An AP report observes that the Pakistani military has recently stepped up its operations against militants along the border with Afghanistan, including in South Waziristan where some suspect al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden could be hiding.

If Pakistanis have been following the U.S.-led "war on terrorism" carefully, they probably will not take al-Zawahiri's statements too seriously. U.S. efforts to hunt down bin Laden have so far been elusive, and there is no logical reason to think that a takeover of Pakistan's military for that purpose would be any more successful.

Photo of al-Zawahiri: AP Images



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