

Pakistan Interviews Usama Bin Ladin

Islamabad Pakistan in Urdu 18 Mar 97

[Interview with Usama Bin Ladin by Hamid Mir; in Jalalabad; date not given; first paragraph reporter's introduction]

[FBIS Translated Text] On 25 February 1997, Saudi Defense Minister Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Saud met President Bill Clinton in Washington. Usama Bin Ladin came under discussion during this meeting. The Saudi defense minister told the US president that Usama Bin Ladin, the alleged terrorist responsible for bomb blasts in Riyadh and Al-Khobar, is staying in Afghanistan and is continuing to threaten more bomb blasts will be conducted if US troops are not removed from Saudi Arabia. The next day, on 26 February, the Saudi defense minister met the US Secretary for Defense, Mr. Cohen and on 27 February he met Secretary of State Albright. In each of these meetings strategies to arrest Usama Bin Ladin were discussed. The Saudi government informed the US

authorities that appropriate measures must be taken for the security of US troops, diplomats and other US citizens in Saudi Arabia because Usama Bin Ladin is very dangerous.

Consequently the US Embassy in Riyadh and US Consulates in Dhahran and Jeddah advised US military personnel and other US citizens to restrict their movements. Later, the US State Department contacted the Taleban government in Afghanistan requesting that Usama Bin Ladin be handed over to the United States. The Taleban did not deny the presence of Usama Bin Ladin in Afghanistan because the United States already has documents, photographs taken from satellites and other sources which prove that Bin Ladin is in Afghanistan. The Taleban flatly refused to hand Bin Ladin over to the United States. The Taleban's position astonished the whole Western world because it was generally believed that they were being supported by the United States and that the United States is trying to counterbalance Iran's influence in Afghanistan through the Taleban. After this declaration regarding Usama Bin Ladin, we decided to meet the person who is wanted in various cases, not only in the United States and Saudi Arabia, but also in Egypt and Yemen. Usama Bin Ladin is not only accused of being involved in the bomb blasts in Riyadh and Al-Khobar in which several US military personnel were killed but he was also allegedly involved in the killing of more than 125 US troops in Somalia. He is also alleged to have masterminded the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Husni Mubarak. He reportedly established three bases in northern Sudan where Sudanese military commandos provided military training to hundreds of Arab youth. These people were then sent to Egypt, Algeria, Tunis, Yemen and Saudi Arabia while some of them joined Hamas and started fighting against Israel. US authorities say that Ramzi Yusuf, accused in bomb blast at World Trade Center in New York, is also a disciple of Usama Bin Ladin. A few weeks ago, some people affiliated with organizations called "Al-Jihad" and "Jama'at al-Islamia" were arrested in Egypt. During interrogation it came out that they received military training from Usama Bin Ladin in Afghanistan. Usama Bin Ladin has gained international importance. This interview was conducted in view of his important role. There was no way to contact Usama Bin Ladin in Islamabad or in Peshawar. So I [Hamid Mir] decided to visit Jalalabad along with Pakistan's photographer Mazhar Ali Khan. From there I reached Usama Bin Ladin with the help of a representative of Maulvi Yunus Khalis. In the dark of night we could not tell what route we took to reach Usama Bin Ladin. It was a long distance, quite difficult, and it was dark. We stayed with Usama Bin Ladin for one night. The next day we had a four hour session and then returned in the afternoon. Our return journey was even longer and we could not tell in which direction we were heading. We could only make out that Usama Bin Ladin lives in mountain caves located at a distance of several hours from urban settlements. The interview with Usama Bin Ladin follows. It was conducted with the help of an interpreter as Usama speaks Arabic.

PAKISTAN: Mr. Bin Ladin, thank you very much that you granted US an interview. It was quite difficult to get here, but it is a good experience for us. We would like to know about your family background.

Ladin: My father, Mohammad Bin Oud Bin Ladin, was a minister during the reign of King Faisal. He was the owner of a construction company. He undertook the work of extension of Haram Sharif in Mekkah and the Masjid-i-Nabawi. King Faisal was still alive when my father died. King Faisal cried at the death of only two persons, one was Mohammad Bin Ibrahim and the other was my father Mohammad Bin Oud Bin Ladin. King Faisal said upon death of my father that today I have lost my right arm. For 40 years, my father kept on waiting for the appearance of Hazrat Mahdi [It is a belief among the Muslims that a Hazarat Mahdi will appear at some point in history and will revive the glory of Islam. Under his leadership the Muslims will be able to establish Islamic rule all over the world]. He had set apart some 12 million dollars for the Mahdi. I started working for my father at an early age. I was educated in Hijaz. I took my degree in economics. I supervised the work of the extension of the Masjid-i-Nabawi. So at an early age, for construction purposes, I receive training in explosives in blasting mountains.

PAKISTAN: Who was involved in King Faisal's assassination?

Ladin: Faisal Shaheed's brother Mutallib Bin Abdul Aziz believes that King Fahad knew about the conspiracy. We believe that the United States was behind his killing.

PAKISTAN: You are a businessman. How come you took up the Kalashnikov?

Ladin: We were 25 brothers. My father used to say that he gave birth to 25 sons for Jihad. The spirit of Jihad was invigorated when the Jews desecrated Baitul Maqdas. In December 1979, we learned that Russian troops entered Afghanistan. At that time I decided to wage jihad against Russia and came to Afghanistan.

PAKISTAN: During the war against the Russian forces in Afghanistan, the United States and Saudi Arabia helped the Mujahidin. So why have you turned against United States and Saudi Arabia?

Ladin: The United States was not interested in our Jihad. It was only afraid that Russia would gain access to warm waters. The United States helped the Mujahidin in order to contain Russia. The Mujahidin started their resistance much earlier. The United States and the head of Saudi Intelligence, Turki al-Faisal, used to get money from the government and give it to the CIA. The CIA used to buy ammunition and give it to the Mujahidin. The CIA embezzled quite a bit in the arms purchases. As soon as Gorbachev announced the withdrawal of Russian forces from Afghanistan, the United States and Saudi Arabia stopped their assistance for Mujahidin. The United States does not want an Islamic government in Afghanistan. Therefore an attempt was made to establish a coalition government consisting of Najibullah and Mujahidin groups. In 1992, Butrus-Butrus Ghali came to Islamabad for this purpose. But I made all the Mujahidin groups agree on the point that an alliance with Najibullah is not acceptable. We were fighting against the communists and now the United States was pressuring US to cooperate with those very same communists. The United States has no principles. To achieve its own interests, it forgets about every principle.

PAKISTAN: Najibullah is dead. Why are the Mujahidin still fighting each other?

Ladin: In Afghanistan, the Mujahidin are not fighting each other. Borhanoddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masud have gone to Tajikistan and Golbodin Hekmatyar has taken refuge in Iran. Only Dostum is in Afghanistan. But he is not a Mujahid. He was an associate of atheist General Najibullah. Rabbani, Masud and Hekmatyar had made an alliance with him but now he is left alone. The Taleban have to fight against Dostum only. Rabbani, Masud and Hekmatyar participated in Jihad. They played a good role, but it was not good that they started this infighting in Afghanistan. Rabbani and Masud started getting assistance not only from their former enemy, Russia, but also collaborated with India. It is sad that even Hekmatyar joined this anti-Pakistan alliance. But now the government in Afghanistan is not anti-Pakistan

PAKISTAN: The US State Department considers you responsible for the bomb blasts in Riyadh and Al-Khobar. What do you say in this regard?

Ladin: Only Americans were killed in the explosions in Riyadh and Al-Khoba. No Saudi citizen suffered any injury. When I got the news about these blasts, I was very happy. This was a noble act. This was a great honor but, unfortunately, I did not conduct these explosions personally. But I would like to say to the Saudi people that they should adopt every tactic to throw the Americans out of Saudi territory.

PAKISTAN: It is alleged that you were involved in terrorist action against the US troops in Somalia.

Ladin: It is true that my companions fought with Farah Adid's forces against the US troops in Somalia. But we were fighting against US terrorism. Under the cover of United Nations, the United States tried to establish its bases in Somalia so that it could get control over Sudan and Yemen. Every Islamic country is our home. The United States had forcefully entered our home. In Palestine and Iraq it had massacred Muslims but in Somalia it claimed that it would provide shelter to the Muslims. The United States is a deceiver. We waged Jihad against it. My associates killed the Americans in collaboration with Farah Adid. We are not ashamed of our Jihad. You will be astonished that Farah Adid had only 300 soldiers while I had sent 250 Mujahidin. We got moral support from local Muslims. In one explosion one hundred Americans were killed, then 18 more were killed in fighting. One day our men shot down an American helicopter. The pilot got out. We caught him, tied his legs and dragged him through the streets. After that 28,000 US soldiers fled Somalia. The Americans are cowards. We made it clear to the world that we will not let America's new world order work.

PAKISTAN: The UN peace-keeping force appointed in Somalia included Pakistani contingents too. Were Pakistani soldier also killed in fighting against your men?

Ladin: Not at all. US soldiers used to keep Pakistani troops in front for their own safety. The Pakistani troops were sent to attack a radio station. There were landmines in that area. The Pakistani soldiers were killed by those landmines. The Islamic countries who

sent their troops to Somalia, acted as US agents. The present US Government is under the influence of Jews.

The US Secretaries of Defense and State are both Jews. Cooperation with United States is in fact, cooperation with the Jews. I believe that the Government of Pakistan and the United States are responsible for the death of Pakistani soldiers in Somalia.

PAKISTAN: How did you go to Sudan from Afghanistan and then come back to Afghanistan?

Ladin: After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, I went to Sudan for some construction work. After our Jihad in Somalia, the United States asked Sudan to expel me. Sudan was promised that economic assistance to it will be restored. So I came back to Afghanistan but assistance to Sudan was not restored.

PAKISTAN: Western media have been giving an impression that the Taleban were being supported by the United States but the Taleban have refused to hand you over to the United States. What is the reason for that?

Ladin: I don't believe that Taleban are being supported by the United States. In fact, the previous government in Pakistan misled the US Government. Benazir Bhutto and Nasirullah Babar gave an impression that they were supporting the Taleban. This gave the Taleban a bad name. The Taleban were definitely fighting against the enemies of Pakistan but they cannot be labeled as agents of Pakistan or United States. The reason Pakistan supports the Taleban is that Pakistan is sure that Taleban will never collaborate with India.

PAKISTAN: Iran says that the Taleban are being supported by United States and they are fighting to safeguard US interests?

Ladin: The United States considers me the most dangerous threat. If the Taleban do not hand me over to the United States then how can they be US agents? In fact, Iran wanted to establish its influence over Kabul through Abdul Ali Mazari. After Mazari's murder the plan failed and misunderstanding emerged between Iran and Taleban. The United States is the common enemy of both Iran and the Taleban. One day, relations between Iran and Afghanistan will improve. The United States wants to incite conflict between China and the Muslims. The Muslims of Xinjiang are being blamed for the bomb blasts in Beijing. But I think these explosions were sponsored by the American CIA. If Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and China get united, the United States and India will become ineffective. The Taleban have established the rule of Allah in Afghanistan. The United States is opposed to the rule of Allah. I appeal to the Muslims all over the world to support and assist the Taleban. Differences among the Muslims will be removed through their belief in one God and one Book. The Muslim must think that the Ka'aba facing which they say their prayers is under the siege of Jews and Christians. If your son falls from the roof top and suffers injuries to his head and his foot, you will have to treat the head first. Just like that, the biggest problem of the Muslims should be the top priority.

We have to drive out the United States from the Arabian peninsula because this is the root of all problems.

PAKISTAN: How should we drive the United States out of the Gulf?

Ladin: If robbers break into your house, what will you do?

PAKISTAN: If I have a gun I will shoot at them.

Ladin: Correct! This is the right method to throw America out of the Gulf. The United States is beefing up its forces in the Gulf in a bid to control the oil resources. Since 1973, prices of all other items have increased but oil prices did not rise much. Since 1973, the price of petrol has increased only 8 dollars per barrel while the prices of other items have gone up three times. The oil prices should also have gone up three times but this did not happen. Price of American wheat has increased three-fold but the price of Arab oil has not risen three-fold. The increase was not more than a few dollars over a period of 24 years because the United States is dictating to the Arabs at gunpoint. We are suffering a loss of 115 dollars per barrel every day. Only Saudi Arabia produces 10 million barrels oil per day and thus the loss is one billion dollar per day. Total loss is more than 2 billion dollars. In the past 13 years, the United States has caused US a loss of more 1100 billion dollars. We must get this money back from the United States. The total population of Muslims all over the world is more than 1 billion. If every Muslim family is given 11,000 dollars then the 1100 billion dollars will be repaid. Muslims are starving to death and the United States is stealing their oil. It buys oil from US at a low prices and then makes US buy its tanks and fighter airplanes by projecting Israel as a threat. In this manner the United States takes all its money back.

PAKISTAN: But there are pro-US governments in all the Arab countries except Libya, Sudan and Iraq. How then will US influence be removed?

Ladin: Russia was the head of the communist bloc. With the disintegration of Russia, communism withered away in the Eastern Europe. Similarly if the United States is beheaded, the Arab kingdoms will wither away. The biggest crime, the United States has committed is that it has infiltrated our Holy Land. Against whom are the 120,000 US soldiers fighting in Saudi Arabia? What has happened to the Muslim self-esteem? Can't they defend their Holy Ka'aba themselves? Before the dawn of Islam, when Abraha had invaded at Ka'aba, God Almighty had sent birds (Ababeels) which dropped pebbles on them and made them run away. Now there are 1 billion Muslims in the world. God will not send birds, Muslims will have to rise themselves. The Muslims should be worried about Ka'aba rather than the White House.

PAKISTAN: Which is your ideal personality in present age?

Ladin: Shiekh Salman Oudah. He is imprisoned in Saudi jails because he had demanded expulsion of US troops from Saudi Arabia. I am sure that by the beginning of the next

century the United States will no longer be a super power. Next century is the century of the Muslims.

PAKISTAN: Rafsanjani, Saddam Husayn, Qadhdhafi and Hafez Al-Asad are also opposed to the United States. What is your opinion of them?

Ladin: Muslims need a leader who can unite them and establish the "pious caliphate". The pious caliphate will start from Afghanistan. Interest-free banking will be started here. Allah's rule will be established. We are against communism as well as capitalism. Accumulation of wealth in a few hands is un-Islamic.

PAKISTAN: Will women be allowed to get education under the pious caliphate?

Ladin: I know you have asked this question under the influence of Western propaganda. The Taleban do not oppose education for women. Hazrat Aisha was a great scholar of Islamic law. She is the narrator of largest number of Hadith. Therefore, we are not against the education of women but we are against creating un-Islamic conditions in the name of education.

PAKISTAN: What is the difference between the pious caliphate and the present democratic system?

Ladin: They are totally different from each other. Consultation is very important in Islam but the consultation can be held only to appoint a pious and wise person as ruler. Under the present democratic system such people become rulers who are not pious. The parliaments make such laws which are un-Islamic. Getting military training is a duty of every Muslim but democratic governments hand persons like Ramzi Yusuf over to the United States. Four of my sons are imprisoned in Saudi Arabia on the instructions of the United States who claims to be the champion of democracy and human rights. My three years old daughter is not allowed to travel. I am told to stop talking against Fahad and United States the I will be forgiven. I do not beg for mercy from United States. If the United States has courage, it should come here and arrest me. I will die by the will God not by the will of United States. I appeal to the Muslims to boycott US products. They should give up the American democratic system too. This democracy has not given anything to the Muslims.

PAKISTAN: Tell US about an unforgettable incident of your life.

Ladin: During the Jihad in Afghanistan, Russian made a forceful attack on Jaji area. Tanks attacked from the front and air force also started bombing. I remained confined in an entrenchment for several days. We could hear the enemies' footsteps. Despite the situation, I fell asleep. When I awoke the enemy had disappeared. Perhaps I could not be seen by them. On another occasion a SCUD missile exploded very close to me but I remained safe. Such incidents have removed my fear of death. But the Americans are afraid of death. They are like little mice. If Russia can be destroyed, the United States can also be beheaded.

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PAKISTAN: Thank you very much

On our return from Afghanistan at Torkham border we saw a sign board which read American and Afghan people will reconstruct Afghanistan jointly. Let's see what policy the Taleban do adopt.