

MUMBAI TWO IN BANGLADESH

## Saudi Attempt To Assassinate Hasina Fails; Threat Remains

by Ramtanu Maitra

March 5—The Feb. 25 massacre, conducted by individuals wearing Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) uniforms, at Dhaka at the BDR headquarters, killed at least 70 senior Army officers; it is evident that it was an attempted assassination of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed. The killings were carried out at the order of Riyadh, with adequate support from London, and put in place by a global terrorist network which includes a number of other players, such as the renegades in the Pakistani ISI, Wahhabi jihadis, and the foot soldiers of the British MI6-ISI-Saudi-protected international drug- and gun-runner, Dawood Ibrahim.

In essence, this is exactly the same network that orchestrated the Mumbai, India attack in late November of last year, and there is little doubt that this network will strike again, unless world leaders take initiatives to dismantle this Killers, Inc.

The first wave of killings in Dhaka did not succeed in eliminating either the Chief of the Army Staff (CAS) or the Prime Minister, but the devastation that the killings caused to the military means the threat to them remains as high now as it was at the time of the killings. In fact, on March 4, Hasina said there is a risk of further attacks “to foil the country’s democracy,” and added that her own safety was also at risk. She said the 33-hour mutiny was part of a wider plot to destabilize the country. “Conspiracies against Bangladesh are not over yet ... the game is still on,” she warned at a seminar speech, later published in an online newspaper.

### Positive Response from New Delhi

Because of this persistent threat and its potential to endanger India, New Delhi has airlifted “elements” of its Independent Parachute Brigade, based in West Bengal, to deal with any contingency which might arise due to the internal turmoil in Bangladesh. Sources said over one battalion strength (over 1,000 soldiers) of the 50th Parachute Brigade was re-deployed on March 1, from Agra to Kalaikunda, which has a large Indian Air Force base.

“Depending on the situation, more could follow. With the Bangladesh army progressively taking over from the paramilitary BDR in posts along the Indo-Bangladesh border, it’s a precautionary move,” said a source. Dhaka has requested New Delhi to disarm and hand over Bangladesh Rifles mutineers trying to flee into India pursued by the Bangladesh Army, officials in Dhaka told *The Telegraph* of Kolkata. Other reports indicate that it is likely that a number of BDR personnel have already infiltrated the border areas of India.

In addition, on March 4, the director general of the Border Security Forces (BSF), India’s paramilitary forces deployed along the India-Bangladesh border, M.L. Kumawat, said the Security Forces are on high alert along the border to ensure that BDR soldiers on the run do not enter the country. Speaking on the sidelines of a function at the National Industrial Security Academy in Hyderabad, Kumawat pointed out that there are some areas along the 4,096 km India-Bangla-



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*Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed, after the unsuccessful assassination attempt against her, warned that there is a risk of further attacks, "to foil the country's democracy."*

desh border which are porous, and if the BDR soldiers manage to enter, the force will apprehend them, he said, adding "they will be disarmed and handed over back to Bangladesh government." "We are with Bangladesh Government in this regard," he said.

Beyond these measures, Hasina has called off her scheduled March 7 visit to Saudi Arabia, the source of financing of the assassins in Bangladesh. This would have been her first foreign trip since she assumed office in late December.

### **Saudi Terrorist-Financing Exposed**

On Feb. 7, the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's office had announced she would be visiting Saudi Arabia. The purpose of her visit, as explained by Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, was to urge the Saudis to stop the funding of terrorists. "She is expected to request the Saudi government to take special measures so that no militant outfit in Bangladesh gets funds from any Saudi organization or individual," Faruk Khan told

the Bangladeshi *Daily Star*.

During the trip, "she is also likely to explain the issue of trying war criminals," a senior minister told the newspaper, speaking on condition of anonymity. This refers to the top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's largest Islamist party, which has strong connections to Saudi authorities, and is accused of leading gangs that killed hundreds of unarmed civilians during the 1971 freedom movement.

Hasina's father, the acknowledged founder and first President of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was assassinated along with almost his entire family, in 1975. Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana, were out of the country at the time, and were the sole survivors of the killings, carried out by a pro-Pakistan, pro-Saudi Arabia killer gang with the ostensible blessing of then-U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia, working hand-in-glove with the coup plotters, sheltered at least one of the cold-blooded killers, A.K.M. Mohiuddin Ahmed, a former army major, when he was on the run.

Following the failed assassination attempt of Sheikh Hasina and the top Army brass, according to a report published in Dhaka's leading vernacular daily *Manabzamin*, on March 2, four killer BDR personnel fled the country on Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight number BG-049 to Saudi Arabia. With the help of powers-that-be inside the Bangladeshi government, not only was the flight delayed for two hours, but the killer BDR men boarded the aircraft through a special passage, just minutes before the flight took off, the report said. Subsequently, members of Bangladeshi intelligence agencies arrested another BDR member, Rafiqul Islam, as he was attempting to flee to Saudi Arabia on Saudia flight number SB-801.

### **Indians Hit Saudis on Mumbai**

The Saudi involvement in the Mumbai attack of Nov. 26-29, 2008 has come to light simultaneously. On March 1, the Mumbai Police claimed that the Mumbai terror attacks were financed by a Saudi national, identified as Mahmoud Mohammed Bahaziq. An India-born Saudi citizen, Bahaziq raised money in Saudi Arabia for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the terrorist group identified as the attackers in Mumbai. Bahaziq's front organizations for the banned Al Rashid and Al Akhtar trusts, which raised funds for LeT, are also included in the UN Security Council's terror list. "Aid Organization of the Ulema, Pakistan," "Al Amin Welfare Trust," and "Al-

Madina Trust” are among the front organizations that Bahaziq created.

The U.S. Department of Treasury, in a report on May 27, 2008, said that Bahaziq was identified as the main financier behind the establishment of the LeT and its activities in the 1980s and 1990s, and continues to fund them today. He has also served as the leader of LeT in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, Bahaziq was in touch with Dubai-based terrorist Dawood Ibrahim. Bahaziq, also known as Abu Abd al-Aziz, approached Dawood in the late '90s to fund the LeT. Sources in the Indian Intelligence Bureau said Dawood acceded to Bahaziq's demands and also promised him foot soldiers for the LeT in India. Bahaziq was a popular visitor to the Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD)'s center in Pakistan. The parent body of the LeT, JuD has been identified by the United Nations as a terrorist group.

It is important that Hasina has recognized the Saudi role in helping the perpetrators to assassinate her, but the threat will not go away unless Dhaka effectively attacks both the Saudi and the British masterminds who have endangered her life.

## The Set Up

Prior to the BDR-led assassination attempt, a number of attempts were made on Sheikh Hasina's life. And, yet, these murderers' nests were not torn down and, instead, were allowed to flourish.

The Feb. 25 set-up to kill senior army officers and then pull a coup by eliminating Hasina and Gen. Moeen U. Ahmed, centered on the ongoing demands of the BDR personnel for better pay and better working conditions. This was the pretext on which the discussions began, and then, the killers moved in.

A day after the killing, the New Delhi-based daily *The Times of India* reported the spread of the BDR “rebellion” to other parts of the country, from Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, and Naikhongchari in the South, Sylhet in the Northeast, Rajshahi and Naogaon in the Northwest, and Dinajpur. The *Times of India* correspondent said that “it became clearer that there was a larger, more insider design to the rebellion. The rebels were seen wearing distinctive orange-colored bandanas, colors belonging to a U.K.-based Islamist organization, Hizb ut-Tahrir. According to terrorism analysts, Tahrir has been focused on Bangladesh for the past couple of years to turn the nation into an Islamist caliphate.”

This is the British hook into the flesh of Bangladesh, and if this is not pulled out, neither the Army nor Sheikh

## Bangladesh



Hasina will ever be safe. To begin with, Hizb ut-Tahrir is a terrorist outfit, born, nurtured, and protected in Britain. Like the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka and the Mirpuri terrorists demanding independent Kashmir, Hizb ut-Tahrir is also controlled and used by Her Majesty's Service to assassinate leaders and destabilize nations.

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) is banned in Russia, Germany, and many other nations because of its terrorist activities. In Britain, from time to time, questions have been raised about its terrorist activities, but Prime Minister Tony Blair, earlier, and now Gordon Brown, made clear that HuT is to be given a free hand.

In fact, the British government was actively helping the HuT to overturn the German government's banning of the party in 2003 because of its vicious anti-Jewish activities. According to the press release, HuT had recruited the services of Barristers Chambers, and the team includes Keir Starmer QC (Doughty Street Chambers) Matthew Ryder, Keiron Beal (both of Matrix Chambers) and Tayab Ali (McCormacks Solicitors). The use of such legal methods, institutions, and persons close to the British government is unprecedented even in HuT's history.

That was Blair's role in keeping the killers alive and well. Then, on July 4, 2007, Tory Party chief David

Cameron, in his first public exchange with Prime Minister Gordon Brown, launched an attack on the government for not having proscribed the Islamic movement Hizb ut-Tahrir. Brown said there was no evidence against the HuT. Then, Brown leaned on former Home Office Minister John Reid, who argued that there had been two reviews carried out by the government, following which, it had decided not to ban the group.

Brown has taken one step further. On Jan. 20, the news agency ANI reported that Brown had allocated £1 million to an anti-extremist group, the Quilliam Foundation. What is interesting to note, is that the Quilliam Foundation chiefs, Ed Husain and Maajid Nawaz, were both former HuT leaders, who “now have seen the light.” What Brown did is the classic British intelligence operation: set up a countergang and fund the original gang (HuT) by funding the countergang (Quilliam).

HuT operates almost everywhere from Tajikistan to the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, in the form of Quran-distributing, white-robed Islamists who “peacefully” preach elimination of all non-Muslims. Central Asia is chock full of terrorist outfits like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, and Chechen rebels, among others. In fact, most of the individuals recruited by these terrorist groups come from the Hizb ut-Tahrir.

HuT began flexing its muscles in 2007 in Bangladesh, when the country was under the state of emergency. HuT’s links with al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Central Asia have been widely recorded. HuT initially began its campaign in Bangladesh to boycott products from Denmark, citing the publication of anti-Muslim cartoons in a Danish newspaper. Now, it is also campaigning for boycotting products from the United States and some of the European countries. For obvious reasons, this organization never says a word against its protector, Great Britain.

In Bangladesh, HuT is headed by Mohiuddin Ahmed, a professor with Dhaka University. Ahmed is recruiting members for Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh from various madrassahs (Islamic schools). The Bangladesh government is aware of such activities, but is maintaining a kind of silence, allowing the dangers to proliferate.

### **Recruiting of BDR Personnel**

Many of the Bangladeshi Rifles personnel were educated in madrassahs, which preach the Wahhabi ver-

sion of Islam. Much of the financing of the madrassahs comes from Saudi Arabia. In addition to one big contributor, Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), a Kuwait-based organization, money also comes from Pakistan and South Africa. In 2002, the U.S. State Department blacklisted some RIHS offices, citing their support of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

However, the foreign support to these terrorist outfits could not have been sustained without a tacit approval of Dhaka. In fact, extremism in Bangladesh flourished because Islamist politics has gained ground since 1975; and the former ruling BNP party, under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia, came to power in 2001 by forming a coalition with two Islamist parties, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikye Jote, which together held 20 seats in the parliament.

However, the rise of extremism and terrorism in Bangladesh has also attracted other nasty mercenaries offering their services. In 2006, the Kolkata-based Bengali-language news weekly *Desh* reported on Dawood Ibrahim’s involvement in Bangladesh. It was evident that Dawood was holding meetings with renegade Bangladeshis to bring in large caches of arms.

The article also said that on June 6, 1999, a meeting took place at St. James Court Hotel in London, to plan the assassination of Sheikh Hasina, who was prime minister at the time. A decision was taken to pay the Tamil Tigers \$10 million for its suicide bombers. LTTE was the perfect organization for this kind of assassination, using suicide bombers, who would leave no trace of their origins. The quid pro quo for LTTE was that, if the opposition party BNP, a soft-on-fundamentalism party, came to power, the Tigers would get use of some of islands in Bangladesh. They had used two islands (Qutubdia and Sonadia) earlier as their arms warehouses and safe houses in 1994. The plan was to store their arms in these two islands for their campaign against the Sri Lankan government, and to sell arms to the various secessionist and separatist groups operating in northeastern India.

*Desh* says the meeting was also attended by a former Pakistani Army officer and front person for the ISI, Col. R.M. Ahsan, who owns Ahsan TradEx, a Karachi-based export-import firm; and two Bangladeshis, Lt. Col. Khondakar Abdur Rashid and Lt. Col. S.H.M.B. Noor Chowdhury. Both Rashid and Noor Chowdhury were involved in the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and were hiding in London at the time. The plot fell through when the Indian intelligence the drift of it, *Desh* said.