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www.afgazad.com

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afgazad@gmail.com

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Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence [ISI]

The Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence [ISI] was founded in 1948 by a British army officer, Maj Gen R Cawthome, then Deputy Chief of Staff in the Pakistan Army. Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the president of Pakistan in the 1950s, expanded the role of ISI in safeguarding Pakistan's interests, monitoring opposition politicians, and sustaining military rule in Pakistan.

The ISI is tasked with collection of foreign and domestic intelligence; co-ordination of intelligence functions of the three military services; surveillance over its cadre, foreigners, the media, politically active segments of Pakistani society, diplomats of other countries accredited to Pakistan and Pakistani diplomats serving outside the country; the interception and monitoring of communications; and the conduct of covert offensive operations.

The ISI has become a state within a state, answerable neither to the leadership of the army, nor to the President or the Prime Minister. The result is there has been no real supervision of the ISI, and corruption, narcotics, and big money have all come into play, further complicating the political scenario. Drug money was used by ISI to finance not only the Afghanistan war, but also the proxy war against India in Punjab and Kashmir.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee deals with all problems bearing on the military aspects of state security and is charged with integrating and coordinating the three services. Affiliated with the committee are the offices of the engineer in chief, the director general of medical service, the Director of Inter-Services Public Relations, and the Director of Inter-Services Intelligence.

Staffed by hundreds of civilian and military officers, and thousands of other workers, the agency's headquarters is located in Islamabad. The ISI reportedly has a total of about 10,000 officers and staff members, a number which does not include informants and assets. It is reportedly organized into between six and eight divisions:

- **Joint Intelligence X (JIX)** serves as the secretariat which co-ordinates and provides administrative support to the other ISI wings and field organisations. It also prepares intelligence estimates and threat assessments.

- The **Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB)**, responsible for political intelligence, was the most powerful component of the organisation during the late 1980s. The JIB consists of three subsections, with one subsection devoted to operations against India.
- The **Joint Counter Intelligence Bureau (JCIB)** is responsible for field surveillance of Pakistani diplomats stationed abroad, as well as for conducting intelligence operations in the Middle East, South Asia, China, Afghanistan and the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.
- **Joint Intelligence / North (JIN)** is responsible for Jammu and Kashmir operations, including infiltration, exfiltration, propaganda and other clandestine operations.
- **Joint Intelligence Miscellaneous (JIM)** conducts espionage in foreign countries, including offensive intelligence operations.
- The **Joint Signal Intelligence Bureau (JSIB)**, which includes Deputy Directors for Wireless, Monitoring and Photos, operates a chain of signals intelligence collection stations along the border with India, and provide communication support to militants operating in Kashmir.
- **Joint Intelligence Technical**

In addition to these main elements, ISI also includes a separate explosives section and a chemical warfare section. Published reports provide contradictory indications as to the relative size of these organizational elements, suggesting that either JIX is the largest, or that the Joint Intelligence Bureau is the largest with some sixty percent of the total staff. The Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) is the ISI's main international financial vehicle.

The Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence is of particular importance at the joint services level. The directorate's importance derives from the fact that the agency is charged with managing covert operations outside of Pakistan -- whether in Afghanistan, Kashmir, or farther afield. The ISI supplies weapons, training, advice and planning assistance to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir, as well as the separatist movements in the Northeast frontier areas of India.

The 1965 war in Kashmir provoked a major crisis in intelligence. When the war started, there was a complete collapse of the operations of all the intelligence agencies, which had been largely devoted to domestic investigative work such as tapping telephone conversations and chasing political suspects. The ISI, after the commencement of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, was apparently unable to locate an Indian armored division due to its preoccupation with political affairs. Ayub Khan set up a committee headed by General Yahya Khan to examine the working of the agencies.

The ISI has been deeply involved in domestic politics and has kept track of the incumbent regime's opponents. Prior to the imposition of Martial Law in 1958, ISI reported to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (C-in-C). When martial Law was promulgated in 1958, all the intelligence agencies fell under the direct control of the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, and the three intelligence agencies began competing to demonstrate their loyalty to Ayub Khan and his government. The ISI and the MI became extremely active during the 1964 presidential election keeping politicians, particularly the East Pakistanis, under surveillance.

The ISI became even more deeply involved in domestic politics under General Yahya Khan, notably in East Pakistan, where operations were mounted to ensure that no political party should

get an overall majority in the general election. An amount of Rs 29 lac was expended for this purpose, and attempts were made to infiltrate the inner circles of the Awami League. The operation was a complete disaster.

Mr. Bhutto promoted General Zia-Ul-Haq in part because the Director of ISI, General Gulam Jilani Khan, was actively promoting him. General Zia, in return, retained General Jilani as head of ISI after his scheduled retirement. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto established the Federal Security Force and gave it wide-ranging powers to counter the influence of ISI, but the force was abolished when the military regime of Zia ul-Haq seized power in 1977. When the regime was unpopular with the military and the president (as was Benazir Bhutto's first government), the agency helped topple it by working with opposition political parties.

The ISI became much more effective under the leadership of Hameed Gul. The 1990 elections are widely believed to have been rigged. The Islami Jamhoori Ittehad [IJI] party was a conglomerate formed of nine mainly rightist parties by the ISI under Lt General Hameed Gul to ensure the defeat of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the polls. Gul denies this, claiming that the ISI's political cell created by Z.A. Bhutto only 'monitored' the elections.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made Pakistan a country of paramount geostrategic importance. In a matter of days, the United States declared Pakistan a "frontline state" against Soviet aggression and offered to reopen aid and military assistance deliveries. For the remainder of Zia's tenure, the United States generally ignored Pakistan's developing nuclear program. Pakistan's top national security agency, the Army's Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, monitored the activities of and provided advice and support to the mujahidin, and commandos from the Army's Special Services Group helped guide the operations inside Afghanistan. The ISI trained about 83,000 Afghan Mujahideen between 1983 to 1997 and dispatched them to Afghanistan. Pakistan paid a price for its activities. Afghan and Soviet forces conducted raids against mujahidin bases inside Pakistan, and a campaign of terror bombings and sabotage in Pakistan's cities, guided by Afghan intelligence agents, caused hundreds of casualties. In 1987, some 90 percent of the 777 terrorist incidents recorded worldwide took place in Pakistan.

The ISI thereafter continued to actively participate in Afghan Civil War, supporting the Taliban in their fight against the Rabbani government.

ISI is currently engaged in covertly supporting the Kashmiri Mujahideen in their fight against the Indian authorities in Kashmir. Reportedly "Operation Tupac" is the designation of the three part action plan for the liberation of Kashmir, initiated by President Zia Ul Haq in 1988 after the failure of "Operation Gibraltar." The designation is derived from Tupac Amru, the 18th century prince who led the war of liberation in Uruguay against the Spanish rule.

According to a report compiled by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) of India in 1995, ISI spent about Rs 2.4 crore per month to sponsor its activities in Jammu and Kashmir. Although all groups reportedly receive arms and training from Pakistan, the pro-Pakistani groups are reputed to be favored by the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence. As of May 1996, at least six major militant organizations, and several smaller ones, operate in Kashmir. Their forces are variously estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000 armed men. They are roughly divided between those who support independence and those who support accession to Pakistan. The oldest and most widely known militant organization, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), has spearheaded

the movement for an independent Kashmir. Its student wing is the Jammu and Kashmir Students Liberation Front (JKSLF). A large number of other militant organizations have emerged since 1989, some of which also support independence, others of which support Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. The most powerful of the pro-Pakistani groups is the Hezb-ul-Mujahedin. The other major groups are Harakat-ul Ansar, a group which reportedly has a large number of non-Kashmiris in it, Al Umar, Al Barq, Muslim Janbaz Force and Lashkar-e Toiba, which is also made up largely of fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to press reports, several hundred fighters from Afghanistan and other Muslim countries have also joined some of the militant groups or have formed their own. The Harakat ul-Ansar group, a powerful militant organization which first emerged in 1993, is said to be made up largely of non-Kashmiris.

ISI is reported to operate training camps near the border of Bangladesh where members of separatist groups of the northeastern states, known as the "United Liberation Front Of Seven Sisters" [ULFOSS] are trained with military equipment and terrorist activities. These groups include the National Security Council of Nagaland [NSCN], People's Liberation Army [PLA], United Liberation Front of Assam [ULFA], and North East Students Organization [NESO].

ISI is said to have intensified its activities in the southern Indian States of Hyderabad, Bangalore, Cochin, Kojhikode, Bhatkal, and Gulbarga. In Andhra Pradesh the Ittehadul Musalmeen and the Hijbul Mujahideen are claimed to be involved in subversive activities promoted by ISI. And Koyalapattinam, a village in Tamil Nadu, is said to be the common center of operations of ISI and the Liberation Tigers.

The ISI's involvement in the September 1992 election campaign period is well-known in Pakistan. Major-General Ehtesham Zamir, supposedly sidelined after the 30 April referendum, emerged as a key behind-the-scenes player in selecting and cultivating 'pro-government' candidates. Tariq Aziz, General Musharraf's powerful principal secretary, and Brigadier (retd.) Ejaz Shah, Punjab home secretary and a former ISI officer, were also heavily involved in shoring up the PML(Q), the Grand National Alliance, and independent candidates considered to be 'pro-military'. Politicians throughout the country reported visits by ISI and other government officials, during which they were urged to join a government-backed party and sometimes threatened with future corruption charges if they didn't comply. These tactics, which essentially amount to pre-poll rigging, further reduced public faith in Musharraf's promise to hold impartial elections.