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Pak's dirty double game nailed, ISI 'officially' supporting Taliban insurgency

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In a damning proof of Pakistan's sinister double game which it is playing in Afghanistan, a report by the London School of Economics (LSE) has established a clear link between the Afghan Taliban and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI).

The report, which is based on several interviews and is backed by two top western security officials, said that supporting the Taliban was the 'official' strategy of the ISI, and that 'Pakistan appears to be playing a double game of astonishing magnitude in Afghanistan.'

"As the provider of sanctuary and substantial financial, military and logistical support to the insurgency, the ISI appears to have strong strategic and operational influence - reinforced by coercion. There is thus a strong case that the ISI orchestrates, sustains and shapes the overall insurgent campaign," the report said.

The 'magnitude' of ISI's support can be gauged from the fact that up to seven of the 15-man war council (shura) of the Taliban are said to be Pakistani intelligence agents.

Even the former head of Afghanistan's intelligence agency, Amrullah Saleh, who resigned last week after President Hamid Karzai questioned his loyalty, put a stamp on this nefarious strategy of Pakistan.

"The ISI is part of the landscape of destruction in this country, no doubt, so it will be a waste of time to provide evidence of ISI involvement. They are a part of it," The Times Online quoted Saleh, as saying.

The report prepared by Matt Waldman, a Harvard analyst, also claimed that even President Asif Ali Zardari was hand in gloves in the crime.

It said that Zardari had held a meeting with some of captured Taliban leaders and assured them that the insurgents have the full support of his 'democratic' government.

A senior Taliban source, who is in constant touch with the Taliban's Quetta shura, also confirmed that in early April Zardari and a senior ISI official met about 50 high-ranking Taliban members at a prison in Pakistan.

Sources revealed that the Taliban commanders were treated like state guests in Pakistani jails.

"Prison guards wearing dark glasses served the Taliban captives traditional Afghan meals three times a day. They wanted to make the prisoners feel like they were important and respected," sources said.

During the meeting Zardari told the captive extremist leaders that Islamabad was under tremendous pressure from the US to dismantle the Taliban's terror sanctuary in Pakistan and nab the ringleaders, nevertheless the Pakistan government would continue backing the Afghan insurgency.

"You are our people, we are friends, and after your release we will of course support you to do your operations," sources quoted Zardari, as saying.

During his visit, Zardari is also said to have met Mullah Ghani Barader, Taliban's second in command, who was captured near Karachi in January this year.

Five days after Zardari's visit, a handful of Taliban prisoners were driven into Quetta and set free, in line with the 'president's pledge', the report said.

"This report is consistent with Pakistan's political history in which civilian leaders actively backed jihadi groups that operate in Afghanistan and Kashmir," it added.