Meeting with the Muj

By Jessica Stern

Last June I visited Jamia Manzoor ul Islamiya, a radical religious school (madrisa) in Lahore, Pakistan. Pakistan is a poor country whose plight has been worsened by a series of corrupt regimes. In many rural areas free government schools are not available. By educating, clothing, housing, and feeding the poorest of the poor for free, the madrisas fill a desperate need.

Pakistan has tens of thousands of madrisas. Often the students learn only the Koran. They will not be taught much math and probably no science or literature— or any other secular subject regarded in the West as important for functioning in modern society. Many of these schools preach jihad—holy war—with varying degrees of militancy. Pakistani officials estimate that 10 to 15 percent of the country’s madrisas promote extremist ideologies.

The principal of Jamia Manzoor ul Islamiya is Pir Said ulla Khalid. He met me in a large receiving room lined with bookshelves, but the shelves were devoid of books. Four hundred and fifty students lived at the school and another 100 were day students. Most of them, Pir Khalid said, came from families so poor they could not feed their children.

I asked Pir Khalid how he had come to be the principal of a school. He had studied in a madrisa, he said. Did he have a favorite book? The Koran is the best novel, he replied.

I mentioned a popular Sufi singer, Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan, and asked whether he knew of him. "I don't need music. Music is for those who have an addiction within them."

We moved to science. Had he heard of Albert Einstein? No, he told me, he saw no need for science.

"I want to talk to you as I would talk to my own daughter," he suddenly said. "You believe too much in science. Science turns a cheap thing like a piece of metal into something valuable, like an airplane.

"Have you ever thought that you could become precious yourself? The way for a human being to become precious is to obey the principles of the one who created us. The way to become precious is through jihad. Nobody knows when he will die, so you must start the journey toward Islam," he told me kindly.

I found two students at Pir Khalid's madrisa who wanted to be doctors rather than mujahideen. Pir Khalid was embarrassed. They had only been there a few months. "By the time I've worked on them for a year, they will want to be mujahideen too." I believed him; he was an intense man with near-hypnotic power. A poor child might do anything to please him.

Although some madrisas claim to offer a broader curriculum than Jamia Manzoor ul Islamiya, the teachers are often barely educated. One teacher I interviewed at another school was able to add but unable to multiply seven times eight.

Decades ago, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, Pakistan's most important Islamist and founder of the political party Jamaat i Islami, warned of the disadvantages of a system of education that focused exclusively on religious subjects. "Those who choose the theological branch of learning generally keep themselves utterly ignorant of [secular subjects, thereby remaining] incapable of giving any lead to the people regarding the modern political problems," he

Although Maududi's observations seemed sensible to me, several principals of madrisas scolded me for being so picky, for having an "obsession" with science and math. Sami ul-Haq, the chancellor of Darul Uloom Haqqania, said Pakistani critics of madrasas, who frequently call for a broadening of the curricula, were simply playing "a game of diplomacy with the West." Besides, the chancellor added, "America has assessed Pakistan's army wrongly. The army is now Islamic. It is committed to the madrisas."

"This is the first time," he added giddily, "that I am revealing the truth to a foreigner."

The supply line

As part of a research project on violent religious extremism, I have been interviewing Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim militants around the world for the last two years. Last June I returned to South Asia to visit the Line of Control, the always tense and often bloody border between Indian-held and Pakistan-held Kashmir. I wanted to meet with mujahideen and to learn more about Pakistan's radical madrasas, which churn out so many of the mujahideen, boys who court death in the name of god.

I also met with families of "martyrs," Pakistani boys who have lost their lives fighting in Kashmir. I had been communicating with a few mujahideen over the past two years, trying to understand what motivates them to become cannon fodder in what appears to be a losing battle.

Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Inqalabi, a leader of Pakistan's Sunni sectarian party, Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan, told me that the United States had finally figured out that madrasas comprise the base for jihad. Because of that, the United States was pressuring Pakistan to shut them down. It won't work, he said.

"Madrasas are the supply line for jihad. Where the state controls madrasas, as in Egypt and Jordan, the voices for jihad are shut down. Pakistan and Afghanistan are now the only countries where it is possible to preach jihad in the schools. The terrorist activities in America, like the World Trade Center bombing and Mir Amal Kansi's attack at the CIA, are a reaction to the U.S. attempt to impose a new world order on the rest of the world.

"America is trying to crush jihad, but this will only lead to more terrorism. We are also training foreigners to preach Islam and fight in jihad in their own countries. It would be against Islam for us not to teach them. We have no intention of giving in to the whims of the U.S. government by expanding our curricula."

Donating sons

What happens to families whose children become martyrs? Most of the mothers I interviewed said they were happy to have donated their sons to jihad because their sons could help them in the next life--the "real life."

Syed Qurban Hussain, the father of a martyr, said, "Whoever gives his life in the way of Allah lives forever and earns a place in heaven for 70 members of his family, to be selected by the martyr."

Families of martyrs become celebrities after their children die. "Everyone treats me with more respect now that I have a martyred son," Hussain added. "And when there is a martyr in the village, it encourages more children to join the jihad. It raises the spirit of the entire village."

Foundations have been set up to help the families of martyrs. For example, the Shuhda-e-Islam Foundation, founded by Jamaat i Islami, claims to have disseminated 13 million rupees in Pakistan since 1995.

One family I visited lived on a street lined with open sewers. But the house, which is made of unpainted concrete, was partly paid for by the foundation. It is a large improvement over their
earlier home, a mud hut. After son Zafar Iqbal died in Kashmir, the foundation helped pay the family's substantial debts, and it helped Habeeb Iqbal, the martyr's father, to start a business. He now owns two shops in the village.

When Zafar Iqbal died, 8,000 people attended his funeral in Kashmir, his mother told me. "God is helping us out a lot," she said, pointing to her home and smiling. They also plan to donate their youngest "to God," her husband added, pointing to their 10-year-old son.

After completing fifth grade in a government school, the boy will study in a madrasa full time to prepare himself mentally and physically for jihad. I asked the boy what he wants to do when he grows up. "Be a mujahed," he said.

Afghan roots

A jihadi culture is forming in Pakistan, the roots of which are entangled in the Afghan civil war in the 1980s, when the United States set up camps in Pakistan to train mujahideen to fight Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

"The Soviet forces left Afghanistan in 1989 . . . but the idea of jihad--an armed struggle of Muslim believers that had all but died out by the twentieth century--had been fully resuscitated," the late Pakistani scholar Eqbal Ahmad explained.

By financing and training the Afghan mujahideen, the United States created what it now regards as a major threat to its own security. "Sensing its enormous opportunity, traders in guns and drugs became linked to the phenomenon, creating an informal but extraordinary cartel of vested interests in guns, gold, and god," Ahmad wrote in 1999.

Since the 1980s, jihad has become a way of life for unknown numbers of Pakistanis and Arab-Afghans. Smuggling weapons has become big business, now fueled largely by the war in Kashmir. Through negligence more than active intervention, the Pakistani government allows the jihadi culture to grow. Despite government warnings of the dangers of "religious exploitation" of public sentiment, Pakistan's Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf continues to allow the jihadi groups and madrasas to indoctrinate Pakistani youth, sending them to fight in a losing war in Kashmir (see "Moderate Jihad?" July/August 2000 Bulletin).

It is not possible to promote jihad in Kashmir without inadvertently promoting sectarian violence within Pakistan, because the two movements--jihad against the Indians in Kashmir and jihad against the Shia in Pakistan--are inextricably linked. Sectarian terrorists have killed or injured thousands of Pakistanis over the last 10 years, even attempting to murder then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif last year.

Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan, the Sunni sectarian party, has a "profound influence on all Deobandi madrasas," according to Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Inqalabi, one of the party's leaders. Deobandi madrasas provide "mental training" to a significant fraction of the mujahideen in Kashmir.

Pakistan's most wanted sectarian terrorist, Riaz Bazra, spends at least part of his time hiding out at an Afghan camp that trains mujahideen for Kashmir, according to Pakistani officials. The sectarian terrorists arrested in connection with the plot to assassinate Sharif had reportedly been trained at a camp at Khost, which the jihadi group Harkat-ul-Mujahideen used to train mujahideen for Kashmir. In June, I met militants who had moved from Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan to groups fighting in Kashmir, without any apparent ideological or political difficulty.

Estimates of the size of the jihadi groups vary widely, but most U.S., Pakistani, and Indian experts believe there are tens of thousands of trained mujahideen ready, if necessary, to go to Kashmir. Indian officials claim to have a slightly better handle on the number of trained mujahideen already inside Indian Kashmir: between 2,000 and 4,000.

The Indian government claims that the jihadi groups have become more violent and more sophisticated in recent years. They have switched from guns and bullets to remotely detonated explosives. They communicate with encrypted wireless systems, changing signals and locations constantly. (I first learned of this system from the fathers of two mujahideen,
who had to travel to Muzzaferabad to speak to their sons.)

The sources of guns and explosives, which are smuggled in, are often unknowable, Indian officials say, because AK-47s are made in 19 different countries, and because there are no taggants in the explosives to identify their origin.

A leader of one Pakistani group active in Kashmir told me how his organization recycles men from active fighting to undercover work.

"Our troops swim across the river Ravi from Azad Jammu into Indian-held Jammu. A typical mujahed will kill nine or 10 Indian border policemen. Then we make him a 'sleeper.' He takes an apartment in a residential colony in Jammu, takes a job, and tries to disappear."

After staying in Jammu for some time, my source said, the sleepers "often move to Delhi, where they try to pass as Punjabi Hindus." The number who actually make it to Delhi depends on how much help the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Agency provides, he added. "The movement of our sleepers is so scientific that no Indian agency can even smell them."

Once they get to Delhi, he said, "they seek out the poorest Kashmiri Muslims in India to teach them about their constitutional rights. Some laborers, for example, live in small rooms fitted with eight beds. Each tenant gets one eight-hour shift per day, so that 24 people sleep in each room.

"My sleepers help these people. Some of them are ignorant of Urdu. Some of them were converted to Hinduism or Sikhism. We provide them with religious literature, we help them come back to Islam."

It is a difficult process, he says, because worldly temptations are everywhere. "Young Rajasthani girls and alcohol are available [for small amounts of money]. They think they are in heaven. They don't want to go back to Kashmir and face the poverty there. We want them to support Kashmir, to earn money, and to send some of it back to help Kashmiris."

"When [Hindu nationalist organizations] announced their plan to build a temple in place of the destroyed Babri Mosque, my sleepers were involved in organizing Muslims."

**Jihad or terrorism?**

Pakistani Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf's ambivalent attitude toward fundamentalism is nowhere more evident than in his government's relationship with the mujahideen. The Pakistani government denies supplying material support to the jihadi groups, a claim challenged by the U.S. State Department in its most recent annual report on terrorism.

But Pakistani officials do admit, at least privately, to "facilitating" the activities of jihadi groups, including assisting them in crossing the Line of Control into Indian-held Kashmir. If Musharraf intends to ensure that a "moderate Islam" guides Pakistan's future, as he claimed in his first speech after coming to power last October (see "Moderate Jihad?"), he will have to start by ending this assistance.

So far, there is little evidence that he plans to do so. He will also have to persuade the radical madrasas to change their curricula and stop preaching violent jihad. Although officials claim to be cracking down on the madrasas, especially when speaking to Western reporters, few of the radical principals I talked to had any intention of complying with the government's demands.

More important, Pakistani officials admit privately that Pakistan needs the mujahideen to persuade the Indian government that a military solution to the Kashmiri conflict is impossible.

Although India's conventional forces vastly outnumber those of Pakistan, Indian security forces "suffer from a siege mentality," according to a Pakistani commander at the Line of Control. That makes their spirit "weak."

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Meanwhile, the mujahideen, he says, have a just cause and a stronger spirit. Although they are far less numerous than the Indian Army at the Line of Control, man for man they are much stronger. The idea that the Indian Army fears the "muj" is common not only among boastful mujahideen, but also in Pakistani military circles.

Musharraf calls the mujahideen "freedom fighters," not terrorists, castigating the West for confusing jihad with terrorism. But there are problems with this line of argument. To begin with, incursions by the mujahideen are not lessening India's determination to hold on to Kashmir. On the contrary, they have hardened India's views toward Pakistan. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has repeatedly stressed his refusal to hold talks with Musharraf until Pakistan curbs the violence of the mujahideen.

The jihad promoted by Pakistani radicals is a misinterpretation of the term, a senior Pakistani official conceded to me in June. Mainstream Islamic scholars interpret the Prophet Muhammad's teachings as emphasizing that spiritual jihad--the inner struggle to follow God's will--as the "greater jihad"; holy war is the "lesser" one. Islamic scholars argue further that the Koran prohibits killing civilians under any circumstances, including in a defensive jihad. Human rights organizations claim that both parties to the Kashmiri conflict--the Indian security forces and the mujahideen--have increasingly targeted civilians in random attacks since the early 1990s.

Several Pakistani operatives, when captured, have confessed to carrying out operations inside India, according to Indian interrogation reports. Tufail Rashid Rajput was reportedly caught trying to explode a bomb at the Bombay Central Railway Station in 1993. Abdul Matin, captured in 1997, reportedly confessed to the bombing of the Jaipur Stadium in January 1996, as well as to the murder of a Swedish tourist at Agra at about the same time.

Matin also disclosed a plot by Harkat-ul- Ansar, a mujahideen organization, to blow up the Taj Mahal to draw attention to the Kashmiri issue. Human rights organizations report that jihadi groups also carry out random attacks inside Kashmir, bombing buses, stores, and other public places.

Is this terrorism? When jihadi groups attack noncombatants, the answer is "yes," according to both Islamic and Western just-war traditions. Under jus ad bellum criteria, war is permissible when there are no better means for securing the peace--if the cause is just and if the good achieved by the war would exceed the unavoidable harm caused by fighting it. Both Islamic and Western traditions also require decisions made by the right authority. Maulana Abul A la Maududi argued in the late 1940s that as individuals, mujahideen could not legitimately declare jihad.

Similarly, jus in bello requires that the belligerents' methods be proportional to their ends and that they not directly target noncombatants. Islamic just-war theory implies similar requirements.

The mujahideen have a far broader definition of legitimate targets. They consider Indian government officials to be combatants and they also target Kashmiris whom they consider to be "collaborators." This is clearly at odds with international law. Moreover, when alleged collaborators are attacked in markets or on buses, innocent bystanders often die in large numbers, a predictable outcome.

The jus in bello criteria apply equally to Indian security forces, however. By these standards, terrorism is being perpetrated by both sides in Kashmir.

Tragic cycle

Terrorism thrives in much of the world--not only in lingering conflicts, but in areas where the state fails to provide basic services, especially education. Solving this problem will therefore require a lot more than resolving the conflict in Kashmir. It will require curbing the jihadi culture that took root in Afghanistan in the 1980s and is now spreading to Pakistan. That culture is fueled by money from all over the world.

There are winners and losers in this jihad. For the winners--the gun-runners, the leaders of militant groups, and the managers of the training camps--jihad is, at least in part, a profit-
making business.

The mujahideen "believe their bosses are motivated by pure religious principles," a
disillusioned mujahed explained to me. "They expect their followers to live by strict moral
standards, but they have a different set of standards for their own behavior."

The countries--particularly the United States--that planted the seeds of the jihadi culture in
the 1980s ought to be thinking seriously about how to promote its end. Helping to educate
Pakistani youth might turn out to be among the wisest investments the United States could
make.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani conflict with India continues, deepening an already tragic cycle.
Pakistan feels it must spend more than a quarter of its budget on defense, leaving little
money for educating the poor. The poor, in turn, send their children to the free madrasas,
where they learn a dangerously virulent version of jihad.

"The rich donate money," a disenchanted mujahed told me, "and the poor donate their sons."

SIDEBAR: Meet the players

Last spring the U.S. State Department announced in its annual report on terrorism that South
Asia had replaced the Middle East as the leading "locus of terrorism." Yet very little is known
in the West about the Pakistani mujahideen, in part because many of the groups have only
recently emerged and, in part, because attention has been focused elsewhere.

Further, leadership crises, mergers, and splits are regular occurrences, making the accuracy
of any typology short-lived. Even Pakistani intelligence officials have difficulty keeping the
groups straight. Given those caveats, here is a brief description of the major groups.

Deobandism arose in British India in 1867 as an anti-colonial, reformist, intellectual branch of
Sunnı Islam. Its aim was to harmonize classical texts with the demands of secular life in pre-
partition India. It is now, Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid explains, the most orthodox
branch of Sunnism.

The movement has its own political party in Pakistan, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). The
party promotes the enforcement of Hanafi (Sunnı) law under the guidance of the righteous
ulama, religious scholars. Anti-Shia fatwas (religious decrees) and texts are promoted by
Deobandi madrasas, and students coming out of Deobandi schools are often virulently
sectarian. The sectarian party Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) is an offshoot of JUI

Personality clashes have split JUI into three camps: JUI-F, run by Fazlur Rahman; JUI-S, run
by Sami ul-Haq; and JUI-Q, run by Ajmal Qadri. The rival camps now compete as to which is
the most anti-Shia and anti-American.

Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM)--the "Holy Warriors Movement"--is Deobandi, and it is currently
the only Pakistani jihadi group listed by the U.S. State Department as a foreign terrorist
organization. The movement has been highly successful in guerrilla operations against
Indian security forces in Kashmir, and it allegedly cooperated with the Pakistani Army in the
1999 Kargil incursion.

Some of HUM's activities, including the training of militants in Afghanistan, are widely
believed to be partly funded by Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born radical with whom the
group maintains open ties. Fazlur Rahman Khalil, founder of the group--and until recently its
leader--told me in June that he met bin Laden early in the Afghan war.

At least seven HUM operatives died in August 1998, when U.S. cruise missiles and bombers
struck bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan. Shortly after the attacks, Khalil said: "Osama's
mission is our mission. It is the mission of the whole Islamic world."

Khalil was a signatory to bin Laden's 1998 fatwa against the United States and a member of
bin Laden's international network known as the "International Islamic Front for Jihad Against
the Jews and Crusaders."
Early this year, Farooq Kashmiri, formerly head of HUM's Kashmir operations, assumed leadership. Other militants told me that a Kashmiri was given the job because of pressure to look more like an indigenous group than a Pakistani-based organization. There is growing recognition that the Pakistani jihadi groups have usurped the indigenous movement which, in 1989, was both secular and Kashmiri based. Some observers believe that the Kashmiris are victimized by aggression from both sides.

Harkat-ul-Mujahideen claims to be active in Bosnia, Chechnya, India, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Tajikistan. U.S. government officials allege that HUM has targeted Western military officials in Bosnia, and India accuses HUM of carrying out "dirty tricks," including murders in India on behalf of Pakistan's Interservice Intelligence Agency (ISI). (In turn, the ISI accuses India's intelligence agency of similar activities in Pakistan, usually in connection with sectarian or ethnic violence.)

Before 1997, HUM was known as Harkat-ul-Ansar or HUA, an organization formed in 1993 with the merger of two smaller groups. After the State Department listed HUA as a foreign terrorist organization, the group took the name of one of its earlier subsidiaries, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. One of HUM's predecessor organizations, Harkat ul Jihadi-I-Islami (HUJI), is reportedly still active and thought to be particularly violent.

The various Harkat groups are suspected by the State Department of carrying out a series of kidnappings and killings of Western tourists in Kashmir, as well as killing two American diplomats in Karachi in 1995 and four American oil company workers in 1997, also in Karachi.

The hijackers of Indian Airlines Flight IC814 in December 1999 demanded the release of the group's chief ideologue, Maulana Masood Azhar, who was being held in an Indian prison, in exchange for freeing the hostage passengers and crew.

After his release, Azhar formed a new Deobandi group, Jaesh e Mohammad, which is more openly sectarian than HUM. Jaesh e Mohammad reportedly relies on the SSP Party to assist it in raising money. It competes with HUM for operatives, funding, and official support. A leader of a rival group told me in June that the Interservice Intelligence Agency supports HUM, but Military Intelligence supports Jaesh e Mohammad.

Other Deobandi groups include Tehriq e Jihad and Jamiat-ul-Ulema Mujahideen (JUM). Tehriq e Jihad was founded in 1997 by three small groups: Insar-ul-Islam, Hizb-ul-Jihad, the Muslim Mujahideen, as well as by disaffected members of HUA.

Jamiat-ul-Ulema Mujahideen is reportedly less active than some of the other groups, although it is still training and launching mujahideen, according to its leader.

Ahle Hadith is another branch of Sunni Islam. Ahle Hadith (Wahhabi) theology stresses literal belief in the Koran and the Hadith (traditional reports of the actions and beliefs of Muhammad). Like Deobandis, Wahhabis are highly conservative and deeply resentful of the "corrupting" influences of the Western world.

Lashkar-e-Taiba ("Army of the Pure") was founded in 1993 from a small Afghan group as the militant wing of an Ahle Hadith organization known as Markaz-Dawa-Wal-Irshad (MDI). Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, a retired engineering professor, runs MDI.

The Indian government views Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) as the most important jihadi group because of its extraordinary growth in size, wealth, and popularity. Its annual convention, held every November at its headquarters in Muridke, attracts several hundred thousand visitors.

LET claims to train 40,000 youth per year, many of whom do not become full-time mujahideen, and it boasts of having 2,500 recruiting offices throughout Pakistan. It has 125 of its own madrisas, a senior member told me. More than 80 percent of the graduates are sent to mujahideen training camps, he said.

When I asked how LET manages to send such a high percentage of graduates to training camps, when JUI-Q, for example, sends only 10-15 percent, LET told me that funding is not
a problem for them, unlike other militant groups. LET will train anyone who requests it.

(Although many of the militant groups are heavily funded by individuals in the Persian Gulf, LET appears to be particularly successful at fundraising. LET and its parent organization have reportedly raised so much money they are planning to open their own bank.)

Recently LET released this announcement: "In our jihad camp we impart training for three weeks in which newcomers are introduced to the Kalashnikov up to the missile. Then we train them for three weeks more for Da'wa, which is called 'Suffah Tour.' Following this there comes the 'Special Tour' comprising of three months in which they are trained for guerrilla war and mine blast, fighting, and firing the missiles and rockets. After the completion of guerrilla training, a man is enabled to be launched in Kashmir. . . . After this practice, some of the boys are selected for specialization in making remote control bombs and missiles. In the course of guerrilla war, weather as well as the Indian Army's movements are also observed. There is no restriction to go for jihad training. We observe that a boy must possess strong muscles and body because the same are required [for] performing hard exercises. Presently boys of eight years of age are mostly taking part in jihad."

Lashkar-e-Taiba literature encourages youth to fulfill their religious duty by becoming mujahideen in Burma, Chechnya, Kashmir, Kosovo, Palestine, and the Philippines, where Muslims are "not free." Defensive jihad is "obligatory" in all these countries, according to the literature. Women are also encouraged to go door-to-door to convince other women "to send their brothers and sons for the cause of jihad."

The organization is also active on the Internet. Computer literacy is emphasized at its madrasas, although no other secular subjects are taught. (LET members have e-mailed me their press releases and other literature regularly over the past couple of years.) The group's bank account numbers are listed on its web sites, which has greatly enhanced its fundraising, a senior LET member told me.

The organization advertises its high-tech prowess to attract youth to join the cause. "Mujahideen have got access to the Indian army web site where they worked against the Indian forces," says its literature. "Lashkar-e-Taiba also made a remote control airplane that was caught in Occupied Kashmir. We are developing the modern technology. We can make modern devices."

Jamaat i Islami, led by Qazi Hussein Ahmad, is neither Wahhabi nor Deobandi. It is non-sectarian and the most mainstream Islamist party in Pakistan. According to Vali Nasr, an American political scientist who has studied the party extensively, Jamaat i Islami's militant wings were key players during the Afghan war. Money and guns were funneled into the wings, now known as Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and al-Badr. An al-Badr member estimated that the two groups have a combined membership of about 10,000, only a fraction of which are active in Kashmir at any given time.

Last July, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen announced a three-month cease-fire in Kashmir. But a few days later that cease-fire was broken, with a series of attacks that killed more than 80 people.

Secular Kashmir-based groups, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which promote Kashmiri independence rather than accession to Pakistan, are no longer as active in Kashmir as the Pakistan-based groups, according to the Indian government.

One reason for this, explains prominent Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, is that the Liberation Front is not supported by Pakistan's Interservice Intelligence Agency. But a Liberation Front splinter group known as al Umar Mujahideen is likely to reemerge now that its leader, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, has been released from prison.

Zargar was one of three militants freed in exchange for the release of the hostages on the hijacked Indian airliner in December 1999. Indian government officials describe Zargar as unusually cruel, claiming he has been observed blowing up the bodies of men already killed by his group.
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