



**Pakistan Cricket Attack:  
The Next Chapter of Terrorists Targeting Sport**

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Terrorism Studies Network (TSN) first learned of the attack at 0630 GMT (0130 EST) on 090303 and posted an alert on TWITTER. For more information, sign up to follow KirkhopeTSN on Twitter.com.

Within the first 24 hours of the attack, no claims of responsibility have been made regarding the strike by 12 heavily armed gunmen upon the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team in the midst of a 5-day match in Lahore, Pakistan. At first blush, although two groups – one Pakistani and one Sri Lankan – first jump to mind as possible culprits, Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT or LeT; Army of the Righteous) is most likely the perpetrator in an attack reminiscent of the Mumbai coordinated attack in November 2008.

LeT is a militant Islamist group based in Pakistan and Pakistan-held Kashmir dedicated to the unification of Kashmir of which 2/3 is held by India. The group has been active on various fronts since the early 1990s including spectacular strikes against India including the December 2001 armed assault on the Indian Parliament and July 2006 attack on multiple Mumbai commuter trains.

**POSSIBILITY OF LTTE AS ATTACKERS**

Sri Lanka has been locked in a civil war for nearly 30 years which has featured extraordinarily brutal terrorist attacks by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (aka LTTE, Tamil Tigers) including most notably the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993. Terrorists attacks in Sri Lanka persuaded international matches to be rescheduled or cancelled in 1987, 1996, and 2001, and a suicide bomber targeted the visiting New Zealand team at a hotel in Colombo in 1992. The LTTE possesses a wide range of assets including small boats and small aircraft. On February 20, 2009 two LTTE Air Tiger airplanes were shot down by air defenses in the capital city of Colombo, Sri Lanka and crashed into a building killing two and injuring 40.

The LTTE would be motivated to attack the Sri Lankan cricket team since it represents the Sinhalese majority government of Sri Lanka. In recent months, Sri Lankan



government troops have made significant gains against LTTE-held territory leading analysts to predict that the civil war might conclude this year with the military defeat of the Tamil Tigers. An attack overseas against the Sri Lankan government would signal an ominous warning that the Tigers might be moving towards an international terrorist campaign now that insurgency based in the countryside appears to near defeat.

### **LeT AS PRIME SUSPECTS**

Nonetheless, the scale and modus operandi of the cricket attack featuring 12 heavily armed gunmen are more in line with recent LeT attacks. Additionally, there are numerous LeT motives for the attack:

#### **LeT Motivations**

- Attack embarrasses Pakistan's current civilian government which is unable to provide adequate security for visiting tourists and sportsmen.
- Attack strikes against western economic and cultural influence on Pakistan since cricket is seen as a decadent western activity by fundamentalist Muslims of the region.
- Attack may also be in response to the tacit acceptance by Pakistan government allowing the new Obama administration of the U.S. increased use of unmanned aircraft to strike suspected Taliban and al Qaeda strongholds in Pakistan's tribal areas.
- Attack is a shot across the bow of India warning against the vulnerability of the second season of the new extremely lucrative India Premier League (IPL) cricket organization as well as both Pakistan and India's plans to co-host the 2011 Cricket World Cup with Sri Lanka.

### **TERRORISTS TARGETING SPORT**

In 2006, the Terrorism Study Group commissioned a review of terrorist attacks on sporting facilities and events and developed case studies of 19 sporting event threats and attacks dating back to 1972 including:

- October 19, 2006 – NFL Stadiums
- October 1, 2005 – University of Oklahoma football stadium
- June 25, 2005 – Madrid, Spain
- Spring, 2005 – NCAA tournament games
- February 9, 2005 – Madrid, Spain



- August 4, 2004 – Metamorposi, Greece (Olympics)
- July 22, 2004 – Athens, Greece (Olympics)
- May 19, 2004 – Athens, Greece (Olympics)
- May 13, 2004 – Athens, Greece (Olympics)
- April 27, 2004- Athens, Greece (Olympics)
- May 5, 2004 – Athens, Greece (Olympics)
- 2001 – Madrid, Spain
- 2000 – Sydney, Australia (Olympics)
- October 19, 1998 - Vail Colorado
- July 27, 1996 – Atlanta, Georgia, USA (Olympics)
- 1992 – Barcelona, Spain (Olympics)
- 1987 - Burma
- September 14, 1986 – Seoul, South Korea
- September 5, 1972 – Munich, Germany (Olympics)

In addition, it is notable, too, that the entire international Dakar Rally which was to cross Europe and north Africa was cancelled in 2008 due to the threat of terrorism and moved in 2009 to South America.

As a corollary, a TSG follow-up study was developed which explored the burgeoning U.S. Security Efforts for Major Sporting Events.

### **Terrorists Targeting Cricket**

International cricket has suffered due to strained relations between Pakistan and India. As the countries have veered towards war, they have often cancelled tours and matches both as political protests as well as for security concerns. Additionally, international cricket has been the target of terrorists as early as 1987.

- April 1987, a car bomb at a bus station in Colombo killed 100 people prompting the New Zealand team to depart Sri Lanka in the midst of a three-test tour.
- November 1992, the New Zealand team continued a tour of Sri Lanka despite a suicide bomber attack outside a hotel where the New Zealand team was having breakfast.
- February 1996, a bomb blast in the Sri Lankan capital city of Colombo killing 80 people and injured 1,200 prompted Australia and the West Indies sit out preliminary World Cup cricket matches.



- July 2001, New Zealand played in Sri Lanka despite the fact that a suicide attack closed the airport in Colombo.
- October 2001, New Zealand team postponed a trip to Pakistan following the September 11 attacks in the U.S. and the subsequent U.S. military operations in neighboring Afghanistan.
- 2002, a suicide bomb attack on a bus outside the New Zealand team's hotel in Karachi led to the abandonment of the second Test match of the series against Pakistan.
- March 2008, the Australian national cricket team postponed their first planned tour of Pakistan in a decade due to a rash of suicide bombings across the country.
- August 2008, due to security threats in Pakistan, the International Cricket Council (ICC) postponed the scheduled biennial Champions Trophy until October 2009. In light of the March 2009 Lahore attacks, this tournament is now in jeopardy.
- September 2008, Cricket Australia affirmed the decision to tour India despite recent multiple bombings in New Delhi.
- November 2008, The England team was elsewhere in India during the Mumbai attacks and promptly cut their tour short and returned home.
- November 2008, The Sri Lankan team had agreed to tour Pakistan after India pulled out in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai last November when more than 160 people died in a three-day siege.
- 2008, South Africa withdraws from cricket competitions held in Pakistan citing security issues.
- February 2009, at the behest of England, New Zealand and Australia, the ICC began investigating venues outside Pakistan for matches against the Pakistan national team due to security concerns.

In sum, the success of international cricket can be viewed as a measure of security and stability across South Asia. Regrettably the recent attack in Lahore against the Sri Lankan national team signals how far Pakistan has fallen. While the assassination of Prime Minister elect Benazir Bhutto in December 2007 identified obvious security gaps and implicated complicity of security forces, it could still be viewed as a political attack. This attack on the sporting world of cricket strikes against the secular middle class



culture of Pakistan and significantly threatens neighboring India and the future of similar public sporting events across the region for the foreseeable future.

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