

HAS AAFIA SIDDIQUI'S DAUGHTER SURFACED?

Aafia Siddiqui has been at the center of one of the many mysteries flowing from the Bush and Obama administrations' conduct of intelligence operations. A Pakistani native and former MIT scientist, background on Siddiqui can be found several places, including a Seminal diary by [ondelette](#) here.

The stories of Siddiqui's disappearance and her recent trial in the US are too convoluted to easily summarize. For purposes of the story now emerging – the possible appearance of Siddiqui's daughter – the bare bones are that, after returning to Pakistan from the US, Aafia Siddiqui was named by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in his US-run torture interrogations. Shortly thereafter, in March, 2003, Siddiqui disappeared. Her three children – oldest son Ahmed, 4-year-old Maryam and her infant son, Suleman – disappeared with her.

After seven years, Siddiqui suddenly reappeared in Afghanistan, where the US alleged she was involved in the attempted shooting of an American soldier as she was being detained for interrogation. When Aafia was apprehended in Afghanistan, a boy was with her. The US handed off the boy to Afghan intelligence while they shipped Siddiqui to the US for trial.

Pakistan became involved diplomatically over the child and demanded his return. He was handed over to Siddiqui's family in Pakistan, but her other children have remained missing. There has been controversy in Pakistan over the status of the boy and whether he truly was Siddiqui's son or not.

Last weekend a girl approximately 12 years old, who spoke only English and Persian and claimed her name was "Fatima," was dropped off in front of the home of Siddiqui's sister. Some stories indicate an American named "John" may have been

with her. Dawn reported a senior policeman described that the girl was:

... wearing a collar “bearing the address of the house in case she wandered off”.

That was last week.

This week, April 11 marks the start of a visit by Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani, to the US. He had been under pressure from the Pakistani press, Senate, courts and Siddiqui’s family (who have been highly critical of Gilani) to take up the case of Aafia Siddiqui in his meetings with the administration scheduled for this week. Today, as those meetings are about to begin, Pakistan’s Interior Minister, Rehman Malik has confirmed that the young girl left in the street with a collar on her neck is Maryam.*

While this stands in contrast with earlier statements by Siddiqui’s sister that “the finger prints of teenage girl were not matched with the prints of her niece, Mar[y]am” the Interior Ministry’s statement is based upon DNA testing. Those results reveal that Siddiqui’s ex-husband, Amjad Khan, “cannot be excluded” as the father of the two children:

“The DNA profile obtained from blood samples of Maryam Khan alias Fatima, Ahmad Muhammad – her brother – share the STR Genetic Markers with the DNA profile obtained from blood sample of Dr Amjad Khan. Based on the DNA analysis, Dr Amjad cannot be excluded as the biological father of Maryam alias Fatima,” concludes the National Forensic Science Agency’s report, an exclusive copy of which is available with Daily Times. The laboratory is run by the Interior Ministry.

My online search for a US source discussing the story originally came up with a reference in a WaPo story, buried at the end of the story on

Pakistani forces battling Taliban. But the link for the cached reference ("Separately, Interior Minister Rehman Malik said a Pakistani girl left outside a house in Karachi on Sunday was the daughter of *Aafia Siddiqui*, a Pakistani...") no longer includes that reference.

In any event, this story about the possible return of Maryam had been getting cautious play throughout the middle east when the girl appeared, last week. Now, with the Interior confirmation that the girl is Maryam, the story is been receiving much more play. Some headlines (and a Pakistan Senator) assert that the girl had been held the last seven years at Bagram.

The *Pakistan Ledger* (caveat: not necessarily an unbiased or hard core news site) ran as it's headline, "US Bagram Air Force base girl prisoner, 12 released" and also ran the information on the DNA report

According to reports, the girls' DNA matched that of Ahmed, Dr Aafia's son. The report has been handed over to the investigation police.

Several reports, including the *Ledger*, are mentioning that the release of the young girl might be linked to intervention by Afghan President and Obama ex-bff, Hamid Karzai.

Mr. Karzai had told the family that if no questions were asked, he would return the child to the family.

From another report,

Terming the visit of Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, a key factor in making the efforts of the government and the Interior Minister productive, (Siddiqui's sister) said that the rehabilitation of Maryam would be started soon

And from the Indian Express, earlier, when the girl had been discovered but not DNA tested:

Claiming that Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai had indicated recently that Aafia's daughter would return home, Fauzia (Siddiqui's sister) said, "If this girl is my sister's daughter then now this issue will be settled in Islamabad."

Meanwhile, Press TV reports that a Pakistani Senator and chairman of the Pakistani Senate's Standing Committee on Interior, Senator Talha Mehmood, "slammed the US for keeping the child in a military jail in a cold, dark room for seven years."

Almost everything you hear about the targeted story (Maryam's discovery) and the larger story (Siddiqui's disappearance and subsequent US conviction) should, imo, but taken with a grain of salt. But what we do have are some strongly competing narratives at work.

Karzai and the US administration have severe rifts. Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani is on his way to the US (and had apparently earlier refused to put any discussions of Siddiqui on his scheduled talks with the US). Karzai is reported as making some claims about the return of the girl. A girl appears and, as the Prime Minister is arriving in the US, Pakistan's Interior Minister and a Pakistani Senator are holding press conferences, one confirming that the girl is Siddiqui's long missing daughter and the other alleging she was held in a dark cell at Bagram by the US military.

Meanwhile, the Secretaries, Gates and Clinton, are out in force today, calling Karzai a "reliable partner."

The cast of characters and plot lines in the Siddiqui mystery are complex – courts in Pakistan, the CIA, competing political factions, KSM, large street rallies and protests, a Pakistani Prime Minister and

Interior Minister, Afghan leader Karzai, the US Department of Justice, Charles Swift who handled the Hamdan case (and represented Siddiqui in her trial), courts in the US, missing bullets, missing children, competing fingerprint and DNA information, and more.

The only thing missing from this international tale of intrigue? Dedicated reporting by the US press.

*A Reuter's slide show of yesterday's meeting between Malik, Siddiqui's sister and the young girl can be found [here](#).