

DID PAKISTAN PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE AGAINST HAQQANI NETWORK?

As I mentioned on Tuesday, the head of Pakistan's spy agency is in the US for meetings with the CIA and other US intelligence interests. Those meetings started yesterday and appear to be slated to go through tomorrow. I had predicted that if the meetings, and particularly the discussions regarding the Haqqani network, don't go well, we will see a poorly targeted drone attack in Pakistan's tribal area within the first day or two after the meetings conclude. Developments today, however, point in the opposite direction, with it looking as though perhaps the ISI has decided to share intelligence on the Haqqani network.

There is word today out of Kabul that a pre-dawn raid has disrupted plans for a major attack by the Haqqani network. Wire services are attributing the raid to Afghan security forces, but as I have pointed out more than once, there is a definite push by the US to over-state the capabilities of Afghan forces so that the best possible spin can be kept on US plans to withdraw from Afghanistan. It seems likely that the US had a large role in the raid but is pushing the story that Afghan forces pulled it off on their own.

Here is the Reuters story on the raid:

Afghan security forces killed five insurgents and wounded one during a pre-dawn raid in Kabul on Thursday, with authorities saying they had thwarted a mass attack and captured intelligence pointing to the militant Haqqani network.

Soldiers from Afghanistan's spy agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), launched the raid just after midnight, entering a single-story house

compound on the fringes of Kabul which the insurgents were using as a base.

"They planned mass attacks in different parts of Kabul disguised in burqas," the NDS said in a statement, referring to the head-to-toe covering worn by many Afghan women and sometimes used by insurgents to evade detection.

With that raid occurring in the very early hours of this morning, statements coming out of the meeting later this morning between the US commander in Afghanistan, General John Allen, and Pakistan's army chief, Ashfaq Kayani, take on added significance. From the Express Tribune:

The US commander in Afghanistan said Thursday that "significant progress" was being made in improving cooperation with Pakistan, after his first visit since Islamabad ended a blockade on Nato supplies.

The talks between General John Allen and General Ashfaq Kayani focused on improving security along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and cooperation between Afghan, Pakistani and Nato troops, said a statement released by both sides.

"I look forward to these visits and am pleased with the upward spiral in our relationship they represent," Allen said.

"We are making significant progress toward building a partnership that is enduring, strategic, carefully defined, and that enhances the security and prosperity of the region."

A bit later in the article we have this:

US officials have called repeatedly on Pakistan to move against the Haqqani network whose leaders are based on

■ Pakistan's side of the border.

Did the ISI provide information that allowed the Haqqani network team in Kabul to be found? That would certainly explain the optimism that Allen is voicing after today's meeting. However, obtaining intelligence on a forward operating team is nothing compared to the real goal the US wants, which is actionable intelligence on the leaders of the Haqqani network. It still seems very unlikely the ISI would hand over information on the Haqqani leaders, so perhaps their "compromise" position will be rein in the network and prevent them from carrying out attacks in Afghanistan until after the US departs. Such a position by the ISI might even achieve their goal of reducing drone strikes in the tribal regions by the US if it becomes clear that Haqqani network forays into Afghanistan have been reduced dramatically.