

# Blast That Killed U.S. Diplomat Tied to Qaeda



Syed Zargham/Getty Images

The aftermath of a suicide car bombing in Karachi, Pakistan, that killed a United States diplomat on March 2, 2006, two days before a visit to Pakistan by President Bush. Two men accused in the plot are on trial.



- 
- SIGN IN TO E-MAIL OR SAVE THIS
  - PRINT
  - SINGLE PAGE
  - REPRINTS
- 
- SHARE

ARTICLE TOOLS  
SPONSORED BY

CHRIS ROCK

By CARLOTTA GALL

Published: February 24, 2007

KARACHI, [Pakistan](#), Feb. 22 — The suicide bombing that killed an American diplomat here last March, just before a visit by President Bush, was organized by a small cell of Pakistani militants and masterminded by an operative of [Al Qaeda](#) based in the Pakistan's tribal areas, Pakistan says.



The New York Times

The charge is being made by Pakistani officials as they present evidence — the result of months of investigations by the police, assisted by [F.B.I.](#) investigators — at the trial of two men accused in the plot.

The men, Anwar ul-Haq, 27, and Usman Ghani, 26, both ethnic Pashtuns from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, grew up in the teeming working-class neighborhoods of Karachi and fought with the [Taliban](#) in Afghanistan, the investigators say. On Thursday, they sat behind bars, wearing long beards and knitted prayer caps, at the back of a courtroom in Karachi's central jail, listening intently to an investigator outline the evidence against them.

The case is one of the first in Pakistan to underline in court the links between splinter cells of Pakistani jihad groups and Qaeda operatives in Waziristan, part of Pakistan's tribal areas, which have come under increasing scrutiny as a staging area for suicide bombers and Taliban insurgents battling [NATO](#) and American forces in Afghanistan.

Publicly, Pakistani leaders have sought to play down the importance of the tribal areas as havens for militants. But the evidence being presented by Pakistani investigators makes clear the threat contained in Waziristan, not only for Afghanistan but for Pakistan itself, which has suffered six suicide bombings in the last five weeks.

Two assassination attempts against President [Pervez Musharraf](#) in December 2003 were also traced to Qaeda and militants who enjoyed a haven in the same region, where the government has little control and foreign and Pakistani militants operate almost unimpeded, according to the home secretary of Sindh Province, Ghulam Mohatarem, a retired army brigadier.

“They mostly come from the north,” he said of the bombers that have plagued Karachi and other cities. “But they are provided with logistics from small local cells that come up and then disappear.” United States officials in Pakistan declined to be interviewed for this article.

The investigators’ conclusions, which are largely drawn from a confession by Mr. Haq and from the infiltration of terrorist cells, are the latest indication that Al Qaeda and its local operatives are still able to operate from Waziristan.

Brigadier Mohatarem, the home secretary, said that the police in Karachi, a sprawling and violent city of about 16 million, tracked down and disrupted the activities of numerous terrorist splinter groups in recent months.

Although Karachi has seen some of the worst terrorist attacks in Pakistan since 2001, there have been no Qaeda-linked attacks here for nearly a year since the consulate bombing.

“We are slightly more confident because the logistics have become more difficult for them,” Brigadier Mohatarem said. Yet the threat of terrorism remains, he and others agreed. “We cannot say it has been wiped out,” a senior police official said of Al Qaeda.

Family members denied in interviews that the two defendants had gone to Afghanistan, knew the bomber, Raja Tahir, 23, also from Karachi, or had any jihad links. Both men are pleading not guilty, their lawyers said.

But the police say there is little doubt that the suicide bombing of March 2, 2006, which killed the diplomat David Foy, his driver and three others, had a Qaeda connection because of the timing, just two days before Mr. Bush's visit to Pakistan.

Investigators say they have traced other leads to Waziristan as well. The stolen car used in the attack was packed with explosives there and driven down to Karachi, according to one police report.

The police say all the suspects had spent time in Taliban ranks fighting the [Northern Alliance](#) in Afghanistan, and all three had links with the now banned Pakistani jihadi group, Jaish-e-Mohammed.

The mastermind of the plot, Qari Mohammed Zafar, a man from Karachi with known links to Al Qaeda, remains at large in Waziristan, the home secretary said. "Behind him we don't know who is there, if he is a puppet in a chain," he added.

Mr. Zafar is a local leader of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an outlawed militant group that has been found to provide the manpower for Qaeda bomb attacks in Pakistan in the past.

He bears the religious title of Qari, meaning he has memorized the Koran. He fought in Afghanistan with the Taliban in the 1990s, and forged links there with Al Qaeda, officials said, some of them speaking on condition of anonymity because of their work in counterterrorism.

After the Taliban government fell, Mr. Zafar took refuge in South Waziristan and sometimes has ventured into rural parts of Sindh Province, Brigadier Mohatarem, the home secretary, said. Three men arrested in Karachi this week with weapons and a suicide vest were also a splinter cell sent by Mr. Zafar, he said.

Mr. Zafar is accused of recruiting the three men who carried out the consulate bombing, in which Mr. Tahir reversed his car into a diplomatic convoy, detonating an enormous blast that tore through the armored plating of the diplomat's car, killing him and his driver immediately.