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## **HAQQANI NETWORK AS FTO: WHAT IMPACT? INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM MONITOR: PAPER NO. 762**

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Wed, 09/12/2012 - 06:38

**Paper no. 5202**

**8-sept-2012**

By

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In a report to the US Congress on September 7, 2012, Mrs. Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State, intimated it of her decision to designate the Haqqani Network, an affiliate of the Afghan Taliban operating from the Kurram—North Waziristan areas of Pakistan, as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

2. She said in a separate statement:

“Today, I have sent a report to Congress saying that the Haqqani Network meets the statutory criteria of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) for designation as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). This action meets the requirements of the Haqqani Network Terrorist Designation Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-168). Based on that assessment, I notified Congress of my intent to designate the Haqqani Network as an FTO under the INA. I also intend to designate the organization as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity under Executive Order 13224.

“The consequences of these designations include a prohibition against knowingly providing material support or resources to, or engaging in other transactions with, the Haqqani Network, and the freezing of all property and interests in property of the organization that are in the United States, or come within the United States, or the control of U.S. persons. These actions follow a series of other steps that the U.S. government already has taken against the Haqqanis. The Department of State previously designated key Haqqani Network leaders under E.O. 13224, and the Department of the Treasury has designated other militants with ties to the Haqqanis under the same authority. We also continue our robust campaign of diplomatic, military, and intelligence pressure on the network, demonstrating the United States’ resolve to degrade the organization’s ability to execute violent attacks.

“I take this action in the context of our overall strategy in Afghanistan, the five lines of effort that President Obama laid out when he was in Afghanistan in May: increasing the capacity of Afghan security forces to fight insurgents; transitioning to Afghan security lead; building an enduring partnership with Afghanistan; pursuing Afghan-led reconciliation; and putting together an international consensus to support peace and stability in the region. We will continue to work with both Afghanistan and Pakistan to move these efforts forward and build a more peaceful and secure future.”

**3.** For some weeks now, the State Department had been under pressure from sections of the Congress to declare the Haqqani Network as an FTO because of its role in killing US and other NATO troops in Afghanistan. The State Department was resisting the pressure because US intelligence reportedly believed that Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl of the US Army, who disappeared from southern Afghanistan in June, 2009, might be in the custody of the Network. They were worried that the designation of the Network as an FTO could hamper efforts to rescue him. The decision now to designate the Network as an FTO would indicate that the US intelligence is pessimistic about its chances of being able to rescue him.

**4.** The Agence France Presse (AFP) reported as follows on September 8, 2012:

“The network’s founder is Jalaluddin Haqqani, a disciplined Afghan guerrilla leader bankrolled by the US to fight Soviet troops in Afghanistan in the 1980s and now based with his family in Pakistan.

“In the 1980s, Jalaluddin was close to the CIA and Pakistani intelligence. He allied himself to the Taliban after they took power in Kabul in 1996, serving as a cabinet minister under the militia’s supreme leader, Mullah Omar.

“When American troops arrived after the 9/11 attacks, Haqqani looked up old friends and sought refuge in North Waziristan, becoming one of the first anti-US commanders based in Pakistan’s border areas.

“He has training bases in eastern Afghanistan, is close to al Qaeda and his fighters are active across east and southeastern Afghanistan and in Kabul.

“Militarily the most capable of the Taliban factions, the network operates independently but remains loyal to Omar and would probably fall behind any peace deal negotiated by the Taliban.

“Now in his late 70s and frail, Jalaluddin’s seat on the Afghan Taliban leadership council has passed to his son Sirajuddin, who effectively runs a fighting force of at least 2,000 men.

“The United States blames the network for some of the most spectacular attacks in Afghanistan, such as a 2011 siege on the US embassy and, in 2009, the deadliest attack on the CIA in 25 years.

“Washington has long since designated Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin “global terrorists” but in July Congress urged the State Department to blacklist the entire network.

“Supporters of the designation say the financial sanctions will help disrupt the Haqqani network’s fundraising activities in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

“But Pakistanis fear it could further worsen ties between Islamabad and Washington just as cooperation had resumed after a series of major crises in 2011, particularly the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan.

“Any such decision will take the relationship back to square one, ruining the improvement seen in ties between the two countries during the last couple of months,” a senior Pakistani security official said.

“Last year, the outgoing top US military officer, Admiral Mike Mullen, called the Haqqanis the “veritable arm” of Pakistan’s ISI, although other American officials later distanced themselves from the remarks.”

**5.**The designation of an organisation as an FTO impairs its ability to collect funds from the diaspora in the US. Where an organisation does not depend on flow of funds from the diaspora in the US, it has very little impact on its operational capabilities.

**6.** The US started the practice of declaring foreign terrorist set-ups as FTOs in 1997. Since then, there has not been a single instance of any terrorist organisation withering away due to drying-up of funds because of its being declared an FTO. All organisations declared by the US as FTO continued to maintain their terrorist activities without any problem.

**7.**The US declared the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as an FTO in 1997. It had no impact on the activities of the LTTE. The LTTE was crushed 12 years later in May 2009 not by the US designation, but by the counter-insurgency operations of the Sri Lankan Army.

**8.** Since 1997, the US has declared the Harkat-ul-Ansar also known as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LET) and the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) of Bangladesh as FTOs. The declarations have had no impact on their activities. They continue to be as active as before

**9.** This is because the jihadi terrorist organisations based in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan get their funds not from the diaspora in the US, but from the diaspora in the Gulf, from so-called charitable organisations in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries and from the intelligence agencies sponsoring them such as those of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They also get their funds from the narcotics trade in the Af-Pak region.

**10.** Unless these real sources of funding are tackled, just designating an organisation as an FTO and making it illegal for persons in the US to help it financially will not help.

**11.** The US war of attrition based on precise intelligence, which has been effective against Al Qaeda in the tribal areas, has not been that effective against the Haqqani Network. Al Qaeda is perceived largely as an Arab organisation. Some Pashtuns have had no qualms over co-operating with the US against Al Qaeda as one saw in the case of the Pashtun doctor, now in Pakistani custody, who allegedly collaborated against Osama bin Laden. But the Haqqani Network is a Pashtun organisation. It has been more difficult to find Pashtun sources willing to collaborate against the leadership of the Network.

**12.** Only the Shias of Kurram, who have been suffering due to the atrocities committed by the Afghan Taliban and the Network, and the Tajik remnants of Ahmed Shah Masood's pre-2001 organisation might be in a position to help in neutralising the Haqqani Network through ground and air operations. The suspicions between the US and the former followers of Masood have come in the way of such operations. The US has been reluctant to seek the co-operation of the Shias of Kurram because of their reported links with Iran.

**13.** New ideas, new operational methods and new allies are required to neutralise the Network without having to depend on Pakistan. The US has been bereft of such ideas, methods and allies. Designating the Haqqani Network an FTO alone will not help.

**14.** The US and other NATO forces have been facing problems in Afghanistan because of the mix of conventional and terrorist strikes adopted by the Afghan Taliban and the commando style complex terrorist strikes in which the Haqqani Network specialises. Unless an effective answer is found to the capabilities and techniques of the Afghan Taliban, there is unlikely to be an improvement in the ground situation in Afghanistan.

**15.** Only punitive pressure against Pakistan can help in neutralising the Haqqani Network. The Network operates from sanctuaries in North Waziristan and Kurram. It maintains close links with the ISI, which is well-informed regarding the location and movements of its leaders. The ISI is in a position to help the US in neutralising the Network, but is hesitant to do so as it looks upon the Network as its strategic ally for recovering its influence in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the US and other NATO forces from there.

**16.** The US is not prepared to declare Pakistan a state-sponsor of terrorism for its collusion with the Network. Declaration of Pakistan as a State-sponsor of terrorism could entail follow-up steps such as a rupture of diplomatic relations with Pakistan, termination of all military-military and intelligence-intelligence co-operation and suspension of all economic and military assistance. No US Government would be prepared to take such actions. The US has to tolerate Pakistan and find ways of getting along with it whatever the difficulties and consequences of such a policy.

**17.** In the absence of a capability to mount an Abbottabad style unilateral strike against the Haqqani leadership, the only transit option left to the US is to have the Network designated as an FTO. That is what it has done without any illusions that it will lead to the neutralisation of the Network.

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