

# Asian Tigers

## AT A GLANCE

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## HOW TO CITE

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## SUMMARY

**Formed:** 2010

**Disbanded:** Likely inactive.

**First Attack:** May 2010: Abduction of former ISI officials Khalid Khwaja and Colonel Imam, in North Waziristan Agency.<sup>1</sup>

**Last Attack:** The Asian Tigers' abduction of former ISI officials in North Waziristan Agency in May 2010 was the group's first and last known attack.

## OVERVIEW

The Asian Tigers was a militant group operating in Pakistan as a front of Hakat-ul-Jiahdi-Islami (HuJI). The overall strength of the organization is unknown. Its most famous operation involved the kidnapping of Pakistani intelligence officials in May 2010, which is often cited as the group's first and last attack. There has been no reported activity for the Asian Tigers since 2011, and the group is likely to be inactive.

## NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Asian Tigers was a group of ethnically Punjabi militants in Pakistan that first gained attention in April 2010. Members appear to have originated from Hakat-ul-Jiahdi-Islami (HuJI), led by Ilyas Kashmiri, and the Asian Tigers was likely a front for HuJI. The organization had between 30 and 40 members. Although the Asian Tigers aligned

themselves with Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) Pakistan, the exact nature of their relationship was unknown.<sup>2</sup>

The emergence of Asian Tigers in North Waziristan was seen by some as an indication of the increasing influence of ethnically Punjabi militants as well as increasing resistance by Punjabi groups to the Pakistani State.

The Asian Tiger's first known act was the April 2010 abduction of Khalid Khawaja and Colonel Imam, both retired officials of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency (ISI) . The two had gone to North Waziristan to convince Taliban leaders to do two things: sever ties with jihadis carrying out suicide attacks in Pakistan, and hand over 14 Taliban leaders linked with the Asian Tigers to Pakistan. Before their efforts could reach a decisive stage, the Asian Tigers kidnapped Khawaja and Imam. The Asian Tigers claimed the responsibility for the kidnapping in a telephone conversation with media personnel, giving demands and a deadline for the release of the captives.<sup>3</sup> The group accused Khawaja being the informer of a drone strike on TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud's vehicle. After the kidnapping, the Asian Tigers released a video tape in which Khawaja admitted to being an intelligence mole of CIA and ISI.<sup>4</sup> Khawaja also claimed in the video that groups such as Laskhar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammed, and Harkatul Mujahideen operated on the whim of the Pakistani intelligence service. After the deadline for release passed, the Asian Tigers executed Khwaja.

This incident drew extensive media attention. The accusations that Pakistani intelligence had built alliances with other militant groups were particularly newsworthy. Although little had been reported on the group since the kidnappings, Asian Tiger spokesman Mohammed Omar (also known as Usman Punjabi) accepted responsibility for the May 28, 2010 bomb attacks on the Ahmadi mosques in Lahore. However, this claim remains unverified.<sup>5</sup> There has been no reported group activity since 2011, and the group is likely to be inactive.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### A. LEADERSHIP

**Mohammed Omar**, alias Usman Punjabi (2010 to Unknown): Omar was the spokesman for the Asian Tigers. Little else is known about him.

### B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

### C. SIZE ESTIMATES

- 2010: 30-40 (The News)<sup>6</sup>

### D. RESOURCES

Not much is known about where the group got its resources. However, it is public knowledge that the group used kidnapping for ransom as one of its resource-generating tactics.<sup>7</sup>

## **E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS**

**Disclaimer:** This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

The group operated in North Waziristan Agency, which is a part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan.

## **STRATEGY**

### **A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS**

The Asian Tigers shared its ideology with other Deoband Sunni groups, such as Hakat-ul-Jiahdi-Islami (HuJI). The group's main goal was to wage Jihad in Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Its other stated goal was to fight Pakistan Army and Pakistani state assets.<sup>8</sup>

### **B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

The group was not known to have political links; however, Maulana Abdul Aziz, member of Jamat-e-Ulema-Islami (F), a mainstream religious political party of Pakistan, was known to have had links with the Asian Tigers. He reportedly pressured the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to expel 14 militants belonging to the Asian Tigers.<sup>9</sup>

### **C. TARGETS AND TACTICS**

The main targets of the group were Pakistan Army, Pakistan state assets, and intelligence conduits. The only publicly known tactic employed by the group has been kidnappings for ransom.

## **MAJOR ATTACKS**

**Disclaimer:** These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

**May 2010:** The Asian Tigers kidnapped retired ISI officials Khalid Khawaja and Colonel Imam. In May 2010, the group killed Khwaja in Mir Ali, North Waziristan (1 killed).<sup>10</sup>

## **INTERACTIONS**

### **A. DESIGNATED/LISTED**

This group has not been designated as a terrorist organization by any major national government or international body.

### **B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

The Asian Tigers was primarily composed of Punjabi militants and drew support from Punjabi communities. Additionally, it was also supported by elements of the Mehsud tribe of the North Waziristan Agency.<sup>11</sup>

### **C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS**

Little is known about the Asian Tigers' relationship with other groups. The Asian Tigers was comprised of former members of TTP, HuJI, and LeJ. The group maintained links with these other organizations.<sup>12</sup> The Asian Tigers wielded considerable influence in North Waziristan agency. This power came from the backing of HuJI and 313 Brigade chief Ilyas Kashmiri. Additionally, the Asian Tigers are known to be vehemently opposed to groups receiving Pakistani state support – either directly or indirectly through intelligence agencies – such as Lashkar-e-Taiyba.<sup>13</sup>

Following the group's 2010 kidnapping of two ISI officials, the Asian Tigers demanded the release of two senior Afghan Taliban commanders in exchange for the release of its hostages. The Afghan Taliban publicly distanced itself from the Asian Tigers following this incident and stated that it had "nothing to do with the group."<sup>14</sup>

### **D. STATE SPONSORS/EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**

There is no observable evidence that this group receives external support from foreign governments or third parties

## **MAPS**

- Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Confessions of a Pakistani spy," Asia Times Online, April 24, 2010, [http://atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/LD24Df04.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LD24Df04.html).

<sup>2</sup> Arif Jamal, "The Asian Tigers – The New Face of the Punjabi Taliban," Terrorism Monitor, May 20, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> "Afghan Taliban Distance Themselves from 'Asian Tigers'." World | Thenews.com.pk |, TheNews International, 22 Apr. 2010, [www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/233104-afghan-taliban-distance-themselves-from-%E2%80%98asian-tigers%E2%80%99](http://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/233104-afghan-taliban-distance-themselves-from-%E2%80%98asian-tigers%E2%80%99).

<sup>4</sup> "In Pakistan, ex-spy Khalid Khawaja's killing is surrounded by mystery", May 3, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/02/AR2010050202801.html>

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- <sup>5</sup> Waqar Gillani and Jane Perlez, "Attackers Hit Mosques of Islamic Sect in Pakistan," The New York Times, May 28, 2010, sec. World / Asia Pacific, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/29/world/asia/29pstan.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/29/world/asia/29pstan.html?_r=1).
- <sup>6</sup> Mushtaq Yusufzai, "'Asian Tigers' kill Khalid Khwaja on expiry of deadline," The News, May 1, 2010, [http://www.thenews.com.pk/top\\_story\\_detail.asp?Id=28577](http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=28577).
- <sup>7</sup> Arif Jamal, "The Asian Tigers – The New Face of the Punjabi Taliban," Terrorism Monitor, May 20, 2010.
- <sup>8</sup> Arif Jamal, "The Asian Tigers – The New Face of the Punjabi Taliban," Terrorism Monitor, May 20, 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> Arif Jamal, "The Asian Tigers – The New Face of the Punjabi Taliban," Terrorism Monitor, May 20, 2010.
- <sup>10</sup> "In Pakistan, ex-spy Khalid Khawaja's killing is surrounded by mystery", May 3, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/02/AR2010050202801.html>
- <sup>11</sup> Mushtaq Yusufzai, "'Asian Tigers' kill Khalid Khwaja on expiry of deadline," The News, May 1, 2010, [http://www.thenews.com.pk/top\\_story\\_detail.asp?Id=28577](http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=28577).
- <sup>12</sup> Mushtaq Yusufzai, "'Asian Tigers' kill Khalid Khwaja on expiry of deadline," The News, May 1, 2010, [http://www.thenews.com.pk/top\\_story\\_detail.asp?Id=28577](http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=28577).
- <sup>13</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Confessions of a Pakistani spy," Asia Times Online, April 24, 2010, [http://atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/LD24Df04.html](http://atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LD24Df04.html).
- <sup>14</sup> "Afghan Taliban Distance Themselves from 'Asian Tigers'." World | Thenews.com.pk |, TheNews International, 22 Apr. 2010, [www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/233104-afghan-taliban-distance-themselves-from-%E2%80%98asian-tigers%E2%80%99](http://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/233104-afghan-taliban-distance-themselves-from-%E2%80%98asian-tigers%E2%80%99).