

# Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

## AT A GLANCE

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## HOW TO CITE

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## SUMMARY

**Formed:** 1996

**Disbanded:** Group is active.

**First Attack:** February 20, 1997: LeJ set off a bomb in the Iranian Centre in Multan, killing an Iranian diplomat and two dozen others (25 killed, unknown wounded)<sup>1</sup>

**Last Attack:** June 23, 2017: LeJ claimed responsibility for an attack against a Bazaar in Parachinar city, Pakistan (67+ killed, 200+ wounded).<sup>2</sup>

## OVERVIEW

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) is a militant group in Pakistan most known for its frequent, violent attacks against Shiites in the region. The group is a splinter of the Deobandi Sunni organization Sipah-i-Sahaba (SiS). Former SiS militants Riaz Basra, Malik Ishaq, and Akram Lahori founded LeJ in 1996 after breaking away from SiS, claiming that SiS had deviated from its founder’s teachings. Since then, LeJ has fueled sectarian violence in the region by killing hundreds of Shiites, while also targeting high-level politicians, other ethnic minorities in the region, and Western interests and influences. LeJ strives to establish a Sunni state in Pakistan and rid the country of Shiite influence. LeJ is often classified as one of the world’s most secretive organizations and little information is known about it.<sup>3</sup>

## NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) is a prominent militant group in Pakistan that is most known for its anti-Shiite attacks and is responsible for much of the sectarian violence in Pakistan and limited areas of Afghanistan since its founding.<sup>4</sup> It was founded in 1996 by Riaz Basra, Malik Isaq, and Akram Lahori, former members of the Sunni group Sipah-e-

Sahaba (SiS). The founders claimed that SiS had been deviating from the principles of its founder and LeJ's namesake, Maulana Jhangvi, who was killed by Shiite militants in 1990.<sup>5</sup>

Sectarian violence increased significantly in Pakistan in the 1970s and early 1980s, when a government Islamization program appeared to many Shiites to be an attempt to make the country more Sunni, and as Iran attempted to export the 1979 Iranian Revolution to Shiites abroad.<sup>6</sup> Since its creation, LeJ has often been responsible for fueling sectarian violence. Its version of the Deobandi movement considers Shiites infidels and aims to drive them from the region. Beginning in 1996, the group promoted its sectarian anti-Shiite agenda through violent means including suicide bombings, assassination attempts, armed assaults, and kidnappings.<sup>7</sup> One of its first attacks was a 1997 assault on the Iranian Centre in Multan, which killed an Iranian diplomat and two-dozen others.<sup>8</sup>

A government crackdown on a variety of Sunni militants in 1998 and 1999 was largely ineffective.<sup>9</sup> After a military coup in Pakistan in 1999, sectarian violence in the country briefly declined. Qari Abdul Hai, a chief on LeJ's advisory council, reportedly argued against restarting anti-Shiite attacks, because he believed they would be harmful to national solidarity within Pakistan and could result in a government crackdown that could provide harmful to LeJ. Basra allegedly disagreed and sought to resume the anti-Shiite attacks and in 2001, as a result of growing tension between leaders, LeJ reportedly split into a faction led by Basra with a Punjab militant majority, and another led by Abdul Hai, based in Karachi. LeJ remained under the leadership of Basra.<sup>10</sup>

The Pakistani government banned LeJ in 2001. After the ban, some LeJ members fled to Afghanistan for Taliban protection and used the region as a base to plan attacks in Pakistan.<sup>11</sup> Analysts also believe that LeJ began to cultivate a relationship with Al Qaeda (AQ) in the early 2000s.<sup>12</sup> LeJ's relationship with both groups remained collaborative throughout the 2000s, and LeJ and AQ still share overlapping membership, notably high-level operatives like Qari Mohammad Zafar and Qari Hussain Mehsud.<sup>13</sup>

LeJ lost two leaders in quick succession in 2002, when Basra died in May and was succeeded by Lahori, who was arrested just a month later in Karachi.<sup>14</sup> Basra was allegedly killed in a firefight with Pakistani security forces, although some wondered whether he had been executed and the battle staged, since he had been captured by Pakistani authorities prior to the alleged battle.<sup>15</sup> It is unclear who assumed leadership after Lahori's arrest, and the group now conceals its leadership structure.<sup>16</sup>

Around this time, LeJ began to target Western actors and interests in Pakistan in addition to its primary focus on Shiites. It became linked to the 2002 abduction and murder of U.S. reporter Daniel Pearl.<sup>17</sup> In 2003, it carried out a failed attempt to assassinate Pakistani President Musharaff. Four years later, it also carried out an unsuccessful assassination attempt against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.<sup>18</sup>

The group continued to carry out sectarian attacks throughout the 2000s, and likely collaborated with other Sunni militant groups, such as the Afghan Taliban, in those

attacks. Some analysts believe that many attacks claimed by the Afghan Taliban in the late 2000s were actually carried out by LeJ operatives.<sup>19</sup>

There are reports that Qari Zafar took over the group's leadership in 2005, while others claim that Rizwan Ahmad was LeJ's leader until his February 2007 arrest, and still other reports claim that Lahori remained the emir of the group despite his incarceration.<sup>20</sup> Malik Ishaq reportedly took operational command of the LeJ as a whole after being released from prison in 2011 but was again arrested by Pakistani police in February 2013.<sup>21</sup>

The year 2012 saw the beginning of a surge in anti-Shiite attacks in Pakistan, which was largely fueled by LeJ, despite its leadership challenges. Pakistan now faces a renewed sectarian crisis.<sup>22</sup> Lahori was executed by Pakistani authorities in January 2015.<sup>23</sup> In 2016, the group carried out attacks in coordination with the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (IS-KP), most notably during the 2016 Quetta attack. The group has remained active and has continued to carry out attacks within Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### A. LEADERSHIP

**Riaz Basra (1996 – May 2002):** Basra was a co-founder of LeJ and one of the senior leaders of the group. He led the organization until his death in 2002, allegedly in a firefight involving Pakistani authorities.<sup>24</sup>

**Akram Lahori (1996-2002):** Lahori was a co-founder of LeJ who assumed leadership of the group after Basra was killed in 2002. Lahori was arrested a month after Basra's death and hanged in January 2015 by Pakistan.<sup>25</sup>

**Qari Abdul Hai (1996-2001):** Abdul Hai was a leader of LeJ's advisory council. He split from the group due to strategic differences with Basra.<sup>26</sup>

**Rizwan Ahmad (unknown – February 2007):** Ahmad was a leader of LeJ who played a large role in planning suicide attacks in the group. He was arrested in 2007.<sup>27</sup>

**Qari Zafar (unknown-2010):** Zafar reportedly led LeJ during the early 2000s. He was killed by an American drone strike in February 2010.<sup>28</sup>

**Malik Ishaq (1996 – 2013):** Ishaq was a co-founder of LeJ who may have taken operational command of the group after being released from prison in 2011, only to be arrested again in 2013. He was killed in a July 2015 gunfight after gunmen allegedly tried to free him from prison. The attack raised suspicions that Pakistani officials staged the fight in order to kill Ishaq, since they had been unable to convict him in court.<sup>29</sup>

### B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

## **C. SIZE ESTIMATES**

- 2001: Several dozen fighters operating in Afghanistan assisting the Afghan Taliban (Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy)<sup>30</sup>
- 2008: Less than 500 (Zahid Hussain)<sup>31</sup>
- 2010: Less than 1000 total (Hassan Abbas)<sup>32</sup>
- 2013: Low hundreds (U.S. State Department)<sup>33</sup>

## **D. RESOURCES**

LeJ attains most of its funding from wealthy donors in Pakistan, particularly from Karachi. The group also reportedly receives financial assistance from private Saudi Arabian firms.<sup>34</sup> The group also engages in criminal activities that fund its operations, such as extortion.<sup>35</sup> Most of LeJ's members are recruited from Sunni madrassas in Pakistan.<sup>36</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.

LeJ is primarily active in Pakistan's Punjab province, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Karachi, and Baluchistan.<sup>37</sup> It also trains fighters in camps in Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup>

## **STRATEGY**

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

LeJ follows a Wahhabi-influenced version of the Deobandi movement and seeks to establish a Sunni state in Pakistan.<sup>39</sup> LeJ is virulently anti-Shiite, declaring Shiites infidels and directing most of its attacks against them. It also advocates the destruction of other religions, including Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism.<sup>40</sup> In the 2000s, it began to work toward an additional goal of driving Western influences from the region.<sup>41</sup>

### **B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

LeJ as a group does not have any evident political affiliations. Its co-founders were originally members of Sipah-i-Sahaba (SiS), a former political party.<sup>42</sup>

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

LeJ primarily targets Shiites, and its large-scale attacks often target schools, security buildings, and other government property.<sup>43</sup> Because Iran is a Shiite state, LeJ has also carried out attacks against Iranian nationals and Iranian interests in Pakistan but has not pursued attacks outside of Pakistan.<sup>44</sup> The group has also attacked other minorities, including Christians, and began to target Western interests and influences after the

invasion of Afghanistan in the early 2000s.<sup>45</sup> LeJ primarily carries out armed attacks and bombings, and in particular often employs suicide bombing tactics.<sup>46</sup>

## 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.

**February 20, 1997:** LeJ set off a bomb in the Iranian Centre in Multan, killing an Iranian diplomat and two dozen others (25 killed, unknown wounded).<sup>47</sup>

**May 9, 2002:** LeJ operatives exploded a car bomb outside the Sheraton Hotel in Karachi, targeting a shuttle bus of French civilians working on a submarine project for Pakistan's government (14 killed, 20 wounded).<sup>48</sup>

**July 4, 2003:** Three LeJ gunmen attacked a Shiite mosque in Quetta, Pakistan before one detonated a suicide bomb (47+ killed, 65 wounded).<sup>49</sup>

**September 18, 2009:** LeJ was responsible for detonating a bomb that contained more than 300 pounds of explosives in Uztarzai, Pakistan (25 killed, 36 wounded).<sup>50</sup>

**January 9, 2010:** Three back-to-back suicide bombing attacks targeted Shiite locations on the anniversary of Hazrat Ali's death. Both Tehrik-e-Taliban and LeJ claimed responsibility for the attack (40 killed, 200+ wounded).<sup>51</sup>

**March 12, 2010:** Two IEDs targeted an army patrol in the middle of a market in Lahore, Pakistan. LeJ and TTP both claimed responsibility (45 killed, 100+ wounded).<sup>52</sup>

**May 19, 2012:** LeJ gunmen shot and killed the chief warden of the Quetta district, claiming that he was targeted because he tortured LeJ members in prison (2 killed, 0 wounded).<sup>53</sup>

**July 4, 2012:** LeJ ambushed a vehicle carrying government officials, claiming that one of the vehicle occupants had testified against LeJ in court (3 killed, unknown wounded).<sup>54</sup>

**January 10, 2013:** An LeJ suicide bomber detonated inside a snooker hall in Baluchistan, Pakistan, and a second bomb targeted first responders (105+ killed, 169+ wounded).<sup>55</sup>

**January 10, 2013:** LeJ detonated an explosive device in the Tablighi Jamaat Center in the city of Mingora in Swat, Pakistan during evening prayers (31+ killed, 70+ wounded).<sup>56</sup>

**February 16, 2013:** LeJ was responsible for an explosive water tanker that detonated in Baluchistan, Pakistan. The attack was meant to kill members of Pakistan's Hazara minority (91 killed, 169 wounded).<sup>57</sup>

**May 12, 2013:** A car bomber drove into the private residence of police chief Mushtaq Sukhera in Baluchistan, Pakistan causing 11 deaths and 76 injuries. Both LeJ and Islamic Movement of Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack (11 killed, 76 wounded).<sup>58</sup>

**June 15, 2013:** A female suicide bomber attacked a bus full of female university students in Quetta, killing fourteen. Four gunmen then attacked the hospital where the wounded were being treated, killing at least six before they were killed by security forces (20+ killed, unknown wounded).<sup>59</sup>

**October 23, 2014:** Gunmen opened fire on a bus carrying Hazaras, a Shiite minority group. At least eight were killed and LeJ was suspected of the attack, although they did not claim it (8+ killed, unknown wounded).<sup>60</sup>

**August 16, 2015:** Two suicide bombers detonated explosives at the home of Punjab Interior Minister Shuja Khanzada outside of the Pakistani capital of Islamabad. The attack appeared to be retaliation for the killing of LeJ leader Malik Ishaq by Punjab police (20 killed, 23+ wounded).<sup>61</sup>

**October 24, 2016:** Three armed militants attacked a police training college in Quetta, Pakistan. The Islamic State in Khorasan Province (IS-KP) claimed responsibility for the attack, and LeJ claims to have collaborated with them (62 killed, 165+ wounded).<sup>62</sup>

**June 23, 2017:** LeJ claimed responsibility for an attack against a Bazaar in Parachinar city, Pakistan (67+ killed, 200+ wounded).<sup>63</sup>

## INTERACTIONS

### A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

- April 11, 2003: Australia designated LeJ as a terrorist organization in accordance with Division 103 of the Criminal Code.<sup>64</sup>
- January 30, 2003: The U.S. Secretary of State designated LeJ as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.<sup>65</sup>
- August 2001: Pakistan banned LeJ and categorized it as a militant organization.<sup>66</sup>
- February 3, 2003: The U.N. listed LeJ under the Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee.<sup>67</sup>
- March 2001: The U.K. designated LeJ as a terrorist organization.<sup>68</sup>

### B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

LeJ is feared in Pakistan, particularly by members of the judicial system. Prosecutors and judges who have heard cases involving LeJ and other sectarian groups have been threatened and killed, leading many to flee the country or refuse to participate in sectarian cases<sup>69</sup>. LeJ does not seem to have many links with local tribes, nor does it offer services for Pakistani communities. It does, however, draw the majority of its cadres from the numerous Sunni madrassas in Pakistan.<sup>70</sup>

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

LeJ often provides support and protection to other Islamic terrorist groups in Pakistan like Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Harakat ul-Mujahideen, Harakat ul-Jihad al-Islami, and Jaish-e-Mohammad.<sup>71</sup> LeJ has also collaborated with groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Ahle Sunnat Waljamaat on several attacks in the region.<sup>72</sup>

Many LeJ members also served in both Al Qaeda (AQ) and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).<sup>73</sup> For example, one jihadist commander, Qari Rehman (also known as Abdul Samad) served as both a chief operational commander for LeJ and a planning director for AQ before merging his LeJ cell into TTP in May 2015.<sup>74</sup> The group often collaborates with TTP in Karachi-based attacks.<sup>75</sup> LeJ also has ties to the Taliban in Afghanistan, and some LeJ members fled there for Taliban protection after LeJ was banned in Pakistan in 2001.<sup>76</sup> Now, collaboration between the two groups has sometimes made it difficult for security forces to distinguish between them; in the late 2000s, analysts found that many attacks claimed by the Taliban in the late 2000s were actually carried out by LeJ operatives.<sup>77</sup>

Since 2015, the group has continually operated in coordination with the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (IS-KP). In 2016, LeJ claimed it had conducted the Quetta Attack on a police college while working in tandem with IS-KP. Spokesmen for both groups have confirmed the alliance.<sup>78</sup>

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

LeJ does not appear to have a state sponsor or any external influences.

### **MAPS**

- Global al Qaeda map
- Pakistan – All
- Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> “Lashkar-e-Jhangvi” GTD 2014 Web. 21 Feb 2015 < <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?page=1&search=Jhangvi&count=100&expanded=no&charttype=line&chart=overtime&ob=GTDID&od=desc#results-table> > ; Rubin, Barry M., and Judith Colp. Rubin. *Chronologies of Modern Terrorism*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008. 270. Print.

- <sup>2</sup> "Lashkar-e Jhangvi" Australian National Security, 3 Mar. 2018, <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/listedterroristorganisations/pages/lashkar-e-jhangvi.aspx>
- <sup>3</sup> "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ/LJ)" GlobalSecurity.org, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/lej.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> "Lashkar-e-What? Tehrik-i-Who?" Slate 12 April 2011. Web. 20 Feb 2015 <[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/explainer/2011/04/lashkarewhat\\_tehrikiwho.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2011/04/lashkarewhat_tehrikiwho.html)>
- <sup>5</sup> "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" SATP. Web 21 Feb 2015 <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/LeJ.htm>>
- <sup>6</sup> Rafiq, Arif. Pakistan's Resurgent Sectarian War. Rep. United States Institute of Peace, 5 Nov. 2014. Web. 30 June 2015. <<http://www.usip.org/publications/pakistan-s-resurgent-sectarian-war>>. ;
- <sup>7</sup> "Chapter 6. Foreign Terrorist Organizations" U.S. State Department. 20 May 2013. Web. 29 Jan 2015 <<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209989.htm>> ; "LASHKAR-E-JHANGVI (LJ)." Counter Terrorism Guide. National Counterterrorism Center, Sept. 2013. Web. 22 June 2015. <<http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/lj.html>>.
- <sup>8</sup> "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" GTD 2014 Web. 21 Feb 2015 <<http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?page=1&search=Jhangvi&count=100&expanded=no&charttype=line&chart=overtime&ob=GTDID&od=desc#results-table>>
- <sup>9</sup> Rafiq, Arif. Pakistan's Resurgent Sectarian War. Rep. United States Institute of Peace, 5 Nov. 2014. Web. 30 June 2015. <<http://www.usip.org/publications/pakistan-s-resurgent-sectarian-war>>.
- <sup>10</sup> "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" SATP. Web 21 Feb 2015 <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/LeJ.htm>>
- <sup>11</sup> "Chapter 6. Foreign Terrorist Organizations" U.S. State Department. 24 June 2015. Web. 29 Jan 2015 <<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209989.htm>> ; Rafiq, Arif. Pakistan's Resurgent Sectarian War. Rep. United States Institute of Peace, 5 Nov. 2014. Web. 30 June 2015. <<http://www.usip.org/publications/pakistan-s-resurgent-sectarian-war>>.
- <sup>12</sup> "Profile: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" 11 Jan 2013 Web 20 Feb 2015 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-20982987>>
- <sup>13</sup> "LASHKAR-E-JHANGVI (LJ)." Counter Terrorism Guide. National Counterterrorism Center, Sept. 2013. Web. 22 June 2015. <<http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/lj.html>>. ; Rafiq, Arif. Pakistan's Resurgent Sectarian War. Rep. United States Institute of Peace, 5 Nov. 2014. Web. 30 June 2015. <<http://www.usip.org/publications/pakistan-s-resurgent-sectarian-war>>.
- <sup>14</sup> "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" SATP. Web 21 Feb 2015 <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/LeJ.htm>>
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- <sup>16</sup> Khattak, Daud. "A Profile of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi Leader Malik Ishaq." CTC Sentinel. Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 14 Jan. 2013. Web. 23 June 2015. <<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-lashkar-i-jhangvi-leader-malik-ishaq>>. ;
- <sup>17</sup> "Lashkar-e J Hangvi (LeJ)." Terrorist Organizations. Australian National Security, n.d. Web. 22 June 2015. <[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:GcstrIugp7AJ:www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_committees%3Furl%3Dpjcis/six%2520terrorist/LeJ.pdf+&cd=27&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:GcstrIugp7AJ:www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_committees%3Furl%3Dpjcis/six%2520terrorist/LeJ.pdf+&cd=27&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)>. ; "Missile 'kills Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Leader' in Pakistan." BBC News. N.p., 02 Mar. 2010. Web. 23 June 2015. <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8544744.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8544744.stm)>.
- <sup>18</sup> {"Lashkar-e J Hangvi (LeJ)." Terrorist Organizations. Australian National Security, n.d. Web. 22 June 2015. <[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:GcstrIugp7AJ:www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_committees%3Furl%3Dpjcis/six%2520terrorist/LeJ.pdf+&cd=27&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:GcstrIugp7AJ:www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_committees%3Furl%3Dpjcis/six%2520terrorist/LeJ.pdf+&cd=27&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)>.
- <sup>19</sup> "Missile 'kills Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Leader' in Pakistan." BBC News. N.p., 02 Mar. 2010. Web. 23 June 2015. <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8544744.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8544744.stm)>. ;
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<sup>21</sup> "Lashkar-e J Hangvi (LeJ)." Terrorist Organizations. Australian National Security, n.d. Web. 22 June 2015.

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<sup>23</sup> Naqvi, Hassan. "20th Executions and Counting: SSP Convicted Murderer Hanged in Lahore Jail - The Express Tribune." The Express Tribune. N.p., 18 Jan. 2015. Web. 24 June 2015.

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<sup>24</sup> Riaz Basra, 3 others die in encounter' awn May 15 2002 Web 20 Feb 2015 <<http://www.dawn.com/news/34264/riaz-basra-3-others-die-in-encounter>>

<sup>25</sup> "Lashkar-e J Hangvi (LeJ)." Terrorist Organizations. Australian National Security, n.d. Web. 22 June 2015.

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<sup>26</sup> "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi" SATP. Web 21 Feb 2015

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