

Pakistan is Reluctant to Host U.S. Military Bases

by Abdus Sattar Ghazali, published on Countercurrents, June 13, 2021

Pakistani officials have privately begun confirming a secret visit to Islamabad of CIA Director William Burns and are suggesting that he was firmly told that Pakistan would not host the spy agency's drone bases on its territory, according to the daily Dawn.

This comes after New York Times in an article published on June 6 claimed that Mr Burns had travelled to Pakistan for meetings with Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI Director General Lt Gen Faiz Hamid to explore the possibility of counterterrorism cooperation between the two sides.

The Central Intelligence Agency is said to be looking for bases around Afghanistan from where it could gather intelligence on Afghanistan and execute counterterrorism strikes after the completion of troop withdrawal from there, the Dawn said.

The purpose of quietly sharing of information by the Pakistani officials with select journalists at this stage apparently looked to dispel the impression that the two sides were engaged in negotiations on hosting of US drone bases by Pakistan.

New York Times article had at one point said that American officials believed that Pakistan wanted to allow the US to access a base. But, it indicated that Pakistani officials were setting very stringent conditions.

"In discussions between American and Pakistani officials, the Pakistanis have demanded a variety of restrictions in

exchange for the use of a base in the country, and they have effectively required that they sign off on any targets that either the CIA or the military would want to hit inside Afghanistan, according to three Americans familiar with the discussions,”

as per the NYT article.

Dawn quoted officials as saying that the CIA chief wanted to meet Prime Minister Imran Khan, but was plainly told that only counterpart meeting between heads of government of the two countries was possible.

The officials further said the CIA chief was categorically conveyed that no US operation would be allowed from Pakistani territory. They rather suggested to have asked the Americans to hand over the drones to them for carrying out the strikes against terrorist targets.

Three factors

There are three factors that will account for Pakistan's perseverance and inflexibility on extending basing rights to the United States, according to Dr. Syed Ali Zia Jaffery of the Diplomat.

First, the consistency with which Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has vociferously opposed his country's past dealings with Washington has left little room for his government to acquiesce to U.S. requests. Before coming into power, Khan was a staunch critic of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, even launching a campaign against them.

Second, Pakistan aiding the United States in its efforts to keep an eye on the Taliban would likely vitiate the country's ties with the powerful Afghan group. Pakistan can ill-afford to attenuate its relationship with the Taliban because it is becoming abundantly clear that they are the most dominant

player in the Afghan political landscape.

Having already warned Afghanistan's neighbors against making the historic mistake of allowing the U.S. to operate military bases, the Taliban would certainly not welcome Pakistan taking such a step. They could accuse Pakistan of wilting under U.S. pressure.

Third, Pakistan allowing the U.S. to use military bases for carrying out combat missions will likely be a cause of concern for two of Pakistan's neighbors: China and Iran. That both countries are adversaries of the United States is all the more troubling. Washington has termed Beijing the biggest threat to U.S. national security.

Coupled with the U.S. aversion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this means that should Pakistan allow U.S. forces to operate out of its territory, Washington would almost certainly use that advantage to keep tabs on CPEC, which is expected to expand and gain momentum. Both Pakistan and China would not like to see the U.S. physically lurking around CPEC hotspots, including the critical Gwadar port.

Other than China, Iran will also be directly affected if Pakistan were to let the U.S. ensconce itself in close proximity to that country, Dr. Syed Ali Zia Jaffery, a strategic affairs and foreign policy analyst, concluded.

Airspace access

Pakistan has allowed the US military to use its airspace and given ground access so that it can support its presence in Afghanistan, a Pentagon official said last month.

David F. Helvey, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Affairs, told the US Senate Armed Services Committee last month that the United States would continue its conversation with Pakistan because it had a critical role in restoring peace to Afghanistan.

The official was replying to a question from Senator Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, who asked him to “*outline your assessment of Pakistan, and particularly of Pakistani intelligence agencies, and the role you expect them to play in our future*”.

“Pakistan has played an important role in Afghanistan. They supported the Afghan peace process. Pakistan also has allowed us to have over-flight and access to be able to support our military presence in Afghanistan,”

Mr Helvey said.

“We will continue our conversations with Pakistan because their support and contribution to the future of Afghanistan, to future peace in Afghanistan, is going to be critical,”

he added.

Diplomatic sources in Washington told Dawn that Pakistan had always allowed over-flights and ground access to the US to facilitate its military presence in Afghanistan and would continue to do so.

***Featured Image:** *Predator unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), carrying a Hellfire air-to-surface missile lands at a secret air base in the Persian Gulf region on January 7, 2016. The U.S. military and coalition forces use the base, located in an undisclosed location, to launch airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. (Photo by John Moore/Getty Images)*

Abdus Sattar Ghazali is the Chief Editor of the Journal of America (www.journalofamerica.net)
email: asghazali2011@gmail.com

A Forgotten Drone Victim And the U.S. War on Indigenous Peoples

by Judith Bello, 2017



Malik Jalal in Islamabad in 2012.

In Pakistan in October of 2012, my group of peace activists met Malik Jalal, who spoke to us about the effect of drones on his community in Waziristan and later accompanied our caravan up to Tank, a town on the edge of Waziristan, where we joined a lively anti-war rally. I specifically remember Malik Jalal as a handsome man in the prime of life, accustomed to having authority. He had a full beard and wore the garb of a Tribal leader, and spoke about the suffering of his people living under drones. There was humor in his expression and I remember that he laughed and his eyes twinkled when members of our delegation told of being arrested for sitting outside a military base demanding an end to drone wars. Only in

response to a direct question did he talk about his own experience. He said that he sometimes slept in the mountains so as not to put his family at risk.



Click the Photo to read Malik Jalal's story in his own words.

Last summer, in 2016, I saw a photo of a man visiting London to share his experience with living under drones and demand that the drones stop flying over Waziristan. His name was Malik Jalal. I thought I recognized the man I had met in Pakistan, but an organizer with my group dismissed the possibility out of hand. I waited a little, then went to my photos and took out a photo to compare with the one in the British news article. ** I was then certain it was the same man. He had aged, and his beard was shorter. He was dressed in ordinary Afghan and Pakhtun garb rather than the robes of a Chieftain. But it was the same Malik Jalal we had met in Pakistan. It was sad, really, to see him so much aged in the few years since I had met him.

This week, when I was researching the story of Faisal bin Ali Jabar, I noticed an article on the Reprieve website about Malik Jalal. They are the ones who hosted him in London last summer, and also hosted the CodePink Peace Delegation to meet Waziri Drone victims in Pakistan. I think the headline I saw last summer was in the Guardian. In any case, what

interested me were the details of Malik Jalal's story. When we met him in Pakistan, he had primarily focused his remarks on the suffering of his people. I imagine he did the same when he was in London. However, the article on the Reprieve website described how he was targeted and stalked by US drones. On repeated occasions, people were blown up by drone in proximity to Jalal's path; a friend expecting him for dinner, people at a meeting he was on his way to attend, a family member who was driving his car, and even a random car the same color as his own traveling down the road behind him.

Malik Jalal is not an Al Qaeda operative or member of the Taliban. As a Malik, he is a tribal leader on the payroll of the Pakistani government. He works as a moderator in resolving tribal disputes and is a senior member of the North Waziristan Peace Committee. While carrying out his duties, he might occasionally attend a meeting with a Taliban member present. They too belong to local tribes, and some hold positions of authority. But there is no possible justification for stalking Malik Jalal to try to kill him, terrorizing his family and killing a number of innocent people who were mistaken for him. But Malik Jalal says that the reason he is being targeted is because he came forward and spoke out against the drone strikes on other members of his community.

In 2011, Reprieve called a Jirga with a lawyer named Shahzad Akbar to bring together the people of Waziristan who wished to end the drone killing in their towns and villages. Another person who came forward to try to end the drone strikes in Waziristan, and they were many, was a teenage boy who offered to search for missile parts in the vicinity around his home town. The Jirga (town hall meeting) must have been infiltrated by CIA agents because within a few days this 16 year old boy was incinerated by a drone strike while driving down the road with his 11 year old cousin. Reprieve and Shahzad Akbar, however, have persevered in their efforts to

end drone killing in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere, and they have continued to work with members of the community like Malik Jalal who are willing to come forward with information and to demand that the murderous drone strikes end.

Today, we don't hear about this issue very often in the mainstream news. The war in Afghanistan is going badly. After hearing Malik Jalal's story, this is not surprise. It may be that there are less drone strikes in Pakistan this year, but although the drone strikes in Afghanistan are neither tracked or recorded, they are surely occurring at an accelerated pace. If we are loosing there, perhaps we should look at other solutions than war. There is no moral justification for the US war in Afghanistan and no moral or legal justification for bombing people in the tribal region of Pakistan, a country which is not at war with us. Code Pink invited Shahzad Akbar to come and speak in the US in 2013, but he was unable to get a visa. The Afghan Peace Volunteers and their mentor, Hakim were invited a couple of years later, but also failed to receive visas. These are all peace activists who can inform us about the damage done by US wars in their countries.

Drone wars have drifted out of our attention, but that is not an accident. Since the early days of broad political resistance to the use of drones for targeted killing (execution of suspects) and surveillance, it is become more and more difficult to get specific information about drone strikes. They are reported together with manned air strikes in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. But what they don't tell us is that over time, drone strikes have become the majority of aerial attacks. Drone strikes in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan are not reported at all. Google doesn't bring in the news from foreign news outlets about local drone strikes the way it used to. The news is disappearing before our eyes.

How can we support a peace that will allow a country like

Afghanistan to reintegrate? Malik Jalal's story gives us some ideas. The tribal councils can go a long ways towards restoring balance if they can be safely held. Americans have a strongly negative understanding of tribes because they are the indigenous power structure in countries like Afghanistan that have been resistant to westernization. But is westernization right for Afghanistan, or Pakistan? Maybe not. The United States works through militarization. That is strong suit of U.S. foreign policy. Therefore, the only tribal representatives who are empowered through U.S. intervention are violent warlords. These same men are then brought together with westernized rulers to govern the country.

Malik Jalal and his ilk are grass roots leaders who come from the communities they govern and take personal responsibility for the welfare of the people. Tribal leaders at this level actually do represent the people. They can lead an independence movement that really is independent of foreign intervention. These are the men who attend tribal councils and support the public welfare. Warlords and western educated ideologues only have coercive relationships with the people. Grass roots movements are dependent on the people on the ground and their local representatives, men like Malik Jalal. Unfortunately, they cannot safely meet with US drones on the wing. In 2011, a US drone strike in Waziristan killed 54 men at a tribal Jirga where they were meeting to discuss a local mine.

Men like Malik Jalal are deemed terrorists, threatened and targeted by drone strikes, and driven from their homes. Why? They represent the people and not the power structure the U.S. is attempting to impose on their countries. This is true in many places. Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sadrist movement in Iraq are both engaged in the national political system as well as supporting powerful militias that are determined to protect their countries and their people. So

called 'Signature' strikes which target 'suspicious' gatherings make any kind of meeting or gathering dangerous. People are isolated and alienated. Grass roots governance is not the worst basis for the blasted tribal society of Afghanistan. But, drones cause a barrier to that possibility.

I liked Malik Jalal so I wanted to tell you his story. Unfortunately, though the Independent covered his visit in a respectful manner as did the Daily News, they along with some members of the U.S. press wonder why he is in London and has not been arrested. Clarissa Ward, a bold modern woman, a professional journalist, became a friend of Al Qaeda in Syria, willing to report from East Aleppo while it was still held by Ahrar Al Sham, Al Nusra and ISIS last fall, standing in an empty street dressed in a black dress with veil and hijab in a city where women were liberated from that requirement decades ago.

Under the Tabloid style headline: I'm on the U.S. Kill List Pakistani Elder Claims. Clarissa Ward tells you that she doesn't buy his claim. Ms. Ward criticizes Malik Jalal as paranoid and a complainer. She wonders how he could he have got a visa to the UK if he were on the U.S. 'kill list'. Malik Jalal didn't jump on a plane to NY because he could never get a visa there, and men identified for targeted killing are routinely not arrested. The idea is to avoid the complexity of a legal confrontation. Dead men tell no tales.

Clarissa Ward is both arrogant and ignorant. She doesn't listen. Clarissa Ward didn't meet Malik Jalal near the beginning of his ordeal when he spoke to a group of foreign peace activists on behalf of his community without mentioning his own suffering. Her world is firmly under control unlike the real world she pretends to unveil for her listeners. Ms. Ward pretends. That is her job. Malik Jalal lives the nightmare the pretenders want to erase. Jalal was brought to London by Reprieve, an organization that defends drone strike victims, Guantanamo prisoners and men on death row. Reprieve

is the real deal. Malik Jalal represents the real people of Waziristan.

Jalal came to London for relief nearly 4 years after sharing his story, along with several other survivors of drone strike victims, with my delegation in Islamabad. He had come forward to a meeting arranged and facilitated by Shahzad Akbar to reach a broader audience. We brought their stories back but it wasn't enough to end the killing and was soon dropped by the ever busy news cycle. Malik Jalal says that he fears to go home now. He doesn't want to die and he wants his family to be safe. Imagine! What if your friends and family members were regularly killed when they attempted to interact with you? It was sad for me to see the man who so proudly represented his people 4 years before, now terrorized into leaving his country to seek relief. It was heartbreaking to see his face lined with stress to the point where those who had met him with me did not recognize him, and so did not support him.

But this is, and has been from the start, the U.S. pretense of 'a War on Terrorism'. Peace loving leaders of indigenous communities, men like Malik Jalal, are threatened, stalked and then ridiculed. Extremist murderers holed up in East Aleppo flying ISIS and Al Nusra (Al Qaeda) flags and shelling civilian housing and schools that happen to border their territory in West Aleppo are presented as noble 'rebels' and their defeat continues to be mourned by the U.S. mainstream media and some alternative venues, even as residents of liberated communities return home in the hundreds of thousands. In Syria, Clarissa Ward happily complied with the oppressive demands with regard to women's dress asserted by a mostly foreign force controlling the area. She presents this as adopting to a 'Syrian' cultural requirement. Apparently she never took the time to research the common culture of Syria before the war began.

In Yemen, the drone strikes against AQAP (Al Qaeda in the

Arabian Peninsula) were gobbled up by a war against all the people of Yemen. Now AQAP, a Saudi ally on the ground, controls vastly more territory in Yemen than before the war, while the United States gives unbounded support to the Saudi air war that is tearing the country apart. They claim to be fighting AQAP with a deadly drone strike here and there, while they are all in supporting the Saudi war against Houthi 'Shia terrorists', an indigenous militia that is a broadly popular movement in the north part of the country who are allied with the remnants of the Yemeni army. The 'internationally recognized' government of Yemen that the Saudis and their allies claim to fight for is a joke; one man; a single, unpopular, temporary 'president' who refused to call an election when his term had ended, for some reason internationally recognized as the rightful ruler of Yemen. The United States and the United Nations are ready to stand by while Yemen is subjected to a genocidal mix of famine and disease caused by U.S. assisted bombing of public infrastructure and a siege enabled by U.S. and western European ships in the Arab Sea blocking access to Yemeni ports.

We call Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sadrists in Iraq 'terrorists' despite the fact that both organizations are deeply involved in the politics of their respective countries, both support secular governance despite the fact that they are movements lead by Shia clerics, and both groups have political alliances with movements backed by other religious organizations. Muqtada al Sadr has met with the Kurdish government and with the respected Council of Sunni Scholars. Hezbollah is allied with one of the Christian currents in Lebanon, supports the liberation of Palestine and has seen the danger of a regional wave of extremist violence. Both Hezbollah and the Sadrists are popular grass roots organizations that grew out of civil wars initiated by western interventions. Both have powerful militias, but neither has fought beyond the mandate to protect their own country. Yet

the U.S. designates them as the most dangerous of terrorists in league with their sworn enemies in ISIS and Al Qaeda because Hezbollah is capable of defending Lebanon against Israel, and the Sadrists support a secular socialist government in Iraq.

Populist leaders and grass roots leaders are the ultimate enemy of American hegemony. They operate below the radar when they are at their best. They are trusted because they are men who come from the people and who have not forgotten their roots, and because they choose to support the welfare of the people above their own. They can't be bought and they don't make good proxies for empire.

And so dear Malik Jalal, you have my highest respect wherever you are, in London or somewhere in Pakistan. I pray that one day you will be able to go home and live in peace with your family. And that all the victims of U.S. aggression and the violence of U.S. allies will be restored to your homes and your lives. I bow to your suffering and to your dignity. I raise your name so that you and the others like you will not be forgotten.

*****Featured Image: Malik Jalal with his family ~Printscreen From CNN/Reprieve Video, April 22, 2016***

**** Note:** I went to look for a video recording I made of Malik Jalal in Pakistan in late 2012, but YouTube had removed (deleted) it from my account since the last time I looked – some time in the last few months.

Peace Not War

Peace is the Way

Guest post by Rob Mulford, cross-posted from the News-Miner Community Perspective

The Daily News Miner of Interior Alaska, Jan 3, 2016

Editor's note: Some of us met Rob in Pakistan where we both participated in a peace delegation which took us into Waziristan and gave us an opportunity to talk to people from different segments of society in Pakistan. Rob has been watching the growth of the drone program in Alaska, and his initiative to infiltrate the planning has resulted in an inside perspective on the overweening hubris behind US militarism and the imperialist drive to rule the world.

What our Leaders are Saying

On Nov. 15, the News-Miner quoted Alaska Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan as well as former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton regarding the recent "terror" attacks in Paris.

"The truth is... they hate us for who we are, what we stand for. Democracy, religious freedom, tolerance, equality... What we need to do is ... take the fight to them, so they don't show up on our shores." – Senator Dan Sullivan

"The desire of radical Islam to attack our nation remains ever so present. This is not the time to reduce investment in our national security, whether abroad or here in the homeland." – Senator Lisa Murkowski

"This election is not only about electing a president, it's about choosing our next commander in chief. All the other issues we want to deal with depend on us being secure and

strong. We are at war with violent extremism.” – Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

An Inside View of the Military Planners



In December 2011, I attended the Institute for Defense and Government Advancement (IDGA) Special Operations Summit in Tampa, Florida, a yearly event held for the military, private contractors and government agencies involved intelligence and special operations. I did this surreptitiously as a control systems integrator. The conference forbade members of the press from attending, and we were assured that no one was recording the sessions so the attendees were free to

openly discuss their clandestine programs.

One of the presentations, covering the technology end of the summit's focus, Human Geography, included PowerPoint slides depicting automated models of human communities. These models look somewhat like organic molecules. I learned that individual atoms in the models represent actual individual human beings, although dehumanized by reclassification as agents. Clusters of atoms represented actual groups of human beings such as villages, tribes, families, professional associations, businesses and religious groups. Each agent and cluster had associated with it data, both historical and dynamic, of that particular object's cultural, religious, economic, political and military characteristics. The interconnecting lines represented interrelationships between the various objects. Near real-time dynamic data driving these models was supplied by: "human intelligence" like that gathered by Human Terrain Systems field teams; signals intelligence coming from sources like the monitoring of cell phone traffic and drone sensors.

This technology, known as Dynamic Network Analysis, is one of the instruments used to generate drone targets. The people that do this they call “human geographers” and “targeters.” I receive several help-wanted ads every week from companies looking to fill these positions.

During the session’s discussion period, one of the special operators said the term “high value target” is generally misconceived to mean a leader of a terrorist cell or someone responsible for acts of terror. He said, “If we take out a leader, they just replace him in short order.” He explained they found it much more useful to use the models to find inter tribal and inter familial connections, like those made by marriage. He said when we take out one of these connections, it disrupts their network (i.e. inter-tribal and inter-familial relations) and has more tactical value. He explained that they were using this method presently to target the Haqqani (tribal) network in Pakistan.

Meeting the Victims

In the fall of 2012, I had the honor and privilege to be a member of a Code Pink peace delegation, invited to Pakistan by Pakistani human rights attorney Shahzad Akbar, to witness the devastation caused by U.S. drone warfare there.

One of the highlights of our visit was an 11-hour caravan to Waziristan. En route we stopped at many villages where we were greeted by crowds of Pakistanis, most in their youth, returning our peace sign salutes in kind. When we reached Dera Ismail Khan, in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Area it was glowing in the moonlight. Once again crowds of youth lined the street. I placed my hands on the window of the bus. A Pakistani placed his opposite mine. Soon the bus was rocking from others on the bus and in the crowd sharing this loving expression. The next morning we joined thousands of Pakistanis on a farm near the village of Tank chanting, “We want peace”. My tears welled.

If we symptomatically diagnose “their” reaction to “their” pain, how can we in all honesty claim, “They hate us for who we are”, if our actions toward “them” have indeed been guided by, “Democracy, religious freedom, tolerance, equality”? To do so defies logic as well as common decency.

Peace Not War

US “investment” in military solutions from 2001 to the present total more than \$8.7 trillion. The world is no less broken today. If your car were malfunctioning, how long would you go on paying a mechanic to beat it with a sledgehammer, 14 years plus? The world “invested” more than 75 million lives in World War II. That’s the equivalent to 40,000 violent deaths per day for five years. Do we really want to go there again? Are these, in themselves, not examples of violent extremism?

I believe that we can do very well without a commander in chief. After all, the Department of Defense is no older than I am. We cannot, however, even begin to address those issues that we need to deal with, like global climate change, while we remain on this deathly path. Let’s begin forging swords into ploughshares by demilitarizing our local economy. As the ever spiritually mindful A. J. Muste said, “There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.”

Rob Mulford is an Interior resident and peace activist.