



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Three Plead Guilty to Conspiracy to Provide Material Support To the Pakistani Taliban**

WASHINGTON – Three Pakistani citizens pleaded guilty today in the District of Columbia to conspiracy to provide material support to the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), often referred to as the Pakistani Taliban, a designated foreign terrorist organization.

The guilty pleas were announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr.; Assistant Attorney General for National Security Lisa Monaco; Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division; John Morton, Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and John V. Gillies, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Miami Division.

At a hearing today before U.S. District Judge John D. Bates in Washington, D.C., Irfan Ul Haq, 37; Qasim Ali, 32; and Zahid Yousaf, 43, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization. At sentencing, which is scheduled for Dec. 9, 2011, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. As part of their plea agreements, the defendants have agreed to a stipulated order of removal to Pakistan upon the completion of their criminal sentences.

“These criminals were willing to use their human smuggling network to help a terrorist slip across our border without any regard for the consequences,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “Ten years after 9/11, this case reminds us that we must remain aggressive to stop terrorists from infiltrating our homeland and harming our nation.”

“Today’s case underscores the threat posed by human smuggling networks that facilitate terrorist travel,” said Assistant Attorney General Monaco. “I thank the many agents, analysts and prosecutors who were responsible for this successful investigation.”

“These defendants sought to smuggle someone they believed to be a member of a terrorist organization from halfway around the world into the United States,” said Assistant Attorney

General Breuer. “For financial profit, they were willing to jeopardize the safety and security of the American people. Human smuggling operations pose a serious risk to our national security, and we will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners at home and abroad to combat this dangerous threat.”

“ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents will continue to use every available resource to protect the American public from terrorist organizations and individuals who support them,” said ICE Director Morton. “Today’s announcement demonstrates our international resolve to ensuring that our nation is safer and more secure. I applaud the outstanding work conducted by our HSI attaché office in Ecuador who led this extensive investigation. I would also like to commend our HSI office in Atlanta, along with our law enforcement partners in the United States and Ecuador, who assisted us in this case.”

“These criminals said they didn’t care if the men they smuggled ‘swept floors or blow up’ something. As long as they got paid, they did not care if innocent people would be killed in a potential terrorist attack,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Gillies. “The FBI’s number one priority is counterterrorism and we will continue to work with our partners to protect the U.S. and its people from harm.”

Ul Haq, Ali and Yousaf were arrested in Miami on March 13, 2011, on an indictment filed in the District of Columbia charging them with one count of conspiracy to commit alien smuggling. Based on the defendants’ guilty pleas to terrorism conspiracy charges, the government will dismiss at the sentencing hearing the charges of conspiracy to commit alien smuggling against the defendants.

Ul Haq, Ali and Yousaf admitted that between Jan. 3, 2011, and March 10, 2011, they conspired to provide material support to the TTP in the form of false documentation and identification, knowing that the TTP engages in terrorist activity and terrorism. According to court documents, Ul Haq, Ali and Yousaf conducted a human smuggling operation in Quito, Ecuador, that attempted to smuggle an individual they believed to be a member of the TTP from Pakistan into the United States. The TTP was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the State Department on Sept. 1, 2010.

Court documents indicate that law enforcement agents directed confidential sources to ask the defendants, who were residing in Ecuador at the time, for their assistance in smuggling a fictitious person from Pakistan to the United States. Over the course of the ensuing negotiations, the defendants were made aware that the person to be smuggled was a member of the TTP who was blacklisted in Pakistan.

According to the court documents, the defendants agreed to move this person from Pakistan into the United States, despite his purported affiliation with the TTP. Ul Haq, according to the court documents, told the confidential sources that it was “not their concern” what the men “want to do in the United States – hard labor, sweep floor, wash dishes in a hotel, or blow up.

That will be up to them.” The defendants accepted payment from the confidential sources for the smuggling operation and procured a false Pakistani passport for the purported TTP member.

The investigation was conducted by the HSI attaché office in Quito, Ecuador, with the HSI office in Atlanta, the Miami Division of the FBI and the Ecuadorian National Police.

The investigation was conducted under the Extraterritorial Criminal Travel Strike Force (ECT) program, a joint partnership between the Justice Department’s Criminal Division and HSI. The ECT program focuses on human smuggling networks that may present particular national security or public safety risks, or present grave humanitarian concerns. ECT has dedicated investigative, intelligence and prosecutorial resources. ECT coordinates and receives assistance from other U.S. government agencies and foreign law enforcement authorities.

The Criminal Division’s Office of International Affairs, the U.S. National Central Bureau of INTERPOL, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Embassy in Quito and the Government of Ecuador provided invaluable support.

The case was prosecuted jointly by prosecutors from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section of the Criminal Division, and the Counterterrorism Section of the National Security Division.

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