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Faisal Shahzad: The Fallout Continues

Though Faisal Shahzad has not been seen in more than a week, he still remains a hot topic — and subject of both controversy and curiosity. Shahzad is the Pakistan/American suspect who drove a bomb-laden Nissan Pathfinder into Times Square on Saturday, May 1, with the intention of having it explode in that busy and crowded area.

Except for the too-weak firecrackers and non-combustible grade level of fertilizer he purchased as part of the bomb's necessary paraphernalia — as well, perhaps, as the wiring and timing devices not being up to code, either — it may well have worked, turning that bustling tourist center into a genuine Saturday night killing field. Instead, he remains a suspect accused of terror and weapons of mass destruction charges, still undergoing interrogation at an undisclosed location, presumably in Manhattan. He has yet to make any kind of court appearance. According to the Associated Press and Huffington Post on May 11:



Federal authorities say 30-year-old Shahzad voluntarily waived his right to an initial court appearance and agreed to answer questions, possibly without a lawyer and while in custody at an undisclosed location.

His decision to talk and the open-ended undetermined duration of the hidden dialogue - one week and counting - are allowed by law. But they're also uncommon for a suspect without a formal plea deal with prosecutors.

"You usually don't see a defendant cooperate this quickly, because his cooperation is really his only bargaining chip," said Robert Mintz, a former federal prosecutor now in private practice.

Authorities "will continue to question him for as long as it takes to get important and time-sensitive information," Mintz added. "But they won't interrogate him indefinitely, even with his cooperation. At some point, it's in the government's interest to get him counsel and have him appear before a judge to ensure his waiver was done knowingly."

Joked civil rights lawyer Ron Kuby, "He's the magic jihadist. First you see him and then he disappears into some Manhattan version of Guantanamo, but with worse weather and better coffee."

Two days after the attempt, late Monday night, May 3, Shahzad was pulled off a flight bound for Dubai as it was leaving the gate at New York's JFK Airport to taxi towards the runway. Not long before this, officials had actually lost track of him; it was only because his newly-added name was recognized on a



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no-fly list at the last moment, that he was able to be apprehended before leaving the country.

According to Kuby, the questioning of Shahzad was just to garner all the information possible from him, as the evidence against him was so compelling that it left little doubt he was the perpetrator. Kuby speculated that Shahzad was probably resigned to not gaining much leniency in his sentencing.

Ordinarily, defendants are arraigned in court very shortly after their arrest in order to be formally charged. A statement by prosecutors in the early hours of Sunday, May 2, said Shahzad would indeed appear later. But by May 4, further word was given that because the suspect was cooperating with officials and talking, his court appearance was being postponed indefinitely.

[Continues the Huffington Post:](#)

Since then, the U.S. Attorney's office in Manhattan and FBI have steadfastly refused to discuss Shahzad's whereabouts or conditions of confinement. His name is absent from a U.S. Bureau of Prisons online database. Justice Department spokeswoman Tracy Schmalzer declined to say where Shahzad is being held.

Shahzad would have had to sign a written waiver and keep reiterating that he was sticking to it in order for his cooperation to continue, said William H. Devaney, another former federal prosecutor.

That's something he could do on his own. But enough time has passed that prosecutors "would probably want to play it safe and make sure he has counsel," Devaney said

A criminal complaint made public last week gave some clues about Shahzad's cooperation: It said he had admitted receiving bomb-making training in the lawless tribal areas of Waziristan, where both al-Qaida and the Pakistani Taliban operate.

But this does not mean Faisal Shahzad has been forgotten on the outside. Various theories and accusations regarding him continue to swirl.

Within hours after the bombing attempt, word came that the Pakistani Taliban claimed to be behind the event. Indeed, a [Newsweek blog](#) stated that a well-known jihadist media expert even asserted that there appeared to be a real link between a new message in which Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud (formerly assumed dead) claimed to still be alive — and another message was posted overnight on the Saturday of Mr. Shahzad's failed attack, in which the Pakistani Taliban appears to claim credit for the event. This claim the Taliban later discounted, even to the extent of saying that they did not know Faisal Shahzad.

At that time, government officials appeared to blow off the original claim from the Pakistan Taliban as a possible mere attempt at garnering attention; it is not considered as able or as sophisticated an organization as al Qaeda. Not only that, but many American officials — from Homeland Security Chief Janet Napolitano, to New York Sen. Chuck Schumer, to New York City Mayor Bloomberg, to even Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan — all made it a point during the hours after the bombing failure to specifically say it was the work of only one person, not a group or organization.

As Faisal Shahzad was tracked, lost, found, then arrested, then interrogated, that official theory changed. Last Sunday, May 9, many members of the Obama Administration made the TV talk shows rounds to say that, indeed, Mr. Shahzad was working in some kind of concert with terrorists. The reason for this turnaround is yet unclear, but conjecture concerning it abounds, as does other stray theories and pieces of information regarding Shahzad. [CBS News](#) made known that:

Faisal Shahzad had appeared on a government "travel lookout list" (Traveler Enforcement



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Compliance System - TECS) between 1999 and 2008, due to his bringing about \$80,000 in cash or cash instruments into the U.S., apparently putting him in the government's sights before his recent arrest.

In the [Pak Tea House website](#) for, May 11, Yasser Latif Hamdani, a Pakistani himself, speculates how Mr. Shahzad became "radicalized." Explaining that Pakistan was not always a driving, militant Islamic nation, he goes into the country's change, growing militancy, and where he feels Shahzad was influenced, saying:

A much more plausible explanation has to do with the transformation during General Zia's rule in Pakistan in the 1980s when Pakistan was the most allied ally of the US in the war against the Soviets. He not only Islamised the state in a very fundamental way but also helped arm illiterate and uneducated tribes in the northwest. In this it may well be said that Pakistan's FATA regions have become hotbeds of militant activity, not necessarily always ideological mind you. This is a problem that Pakistan must urgently deal with as well as undoing the Islamisation put into process by the US's favourite General Zia for his own sinister objectives.

Yet while this may explain how Faisal Shahzad, the son of a top-ranking PAF official, got access to bomb-making know-how, it cannot, I am afraid, explain how he got radicalised. The argument that Zia Islamised the education system is no doubt a strong one but one that falls short in this case because Shahzad presumably did not go to a state school or a madrassa. He was most probably educated in a westernised institution and took his British O Level and A Level examinations before proceeding abroad. Unlike the murderer Kasab, he never was associated with a lashkar or a militant organisation. So, where was he radicalised?

The answer is one that no one in the Obama administration is willing to consider. However, those Pakistanis — especially of Mr Shahzad's age — who went to the US in the late 1990s for an education know the answer very well. Mr Shahzad was probably indoctrinated not in a madrassa in Pakistan or by the TTP in 2009 suddenly but rather on campus in the US. As a 30-year old Pakistani who went to college around the same time, I know this from personal experience.

According to a [Newsweek blog](#), a top N.Y. intelligence analyst says that when Faisal Shahzad set out from Connecticut for his Pakistani homeland late last year, (when it is felt he received his major terrorist training) he originally wanted to join insurgents fighting in Afghanistan against U.S. and NATO troops. Blowing up a car bomb in Times Square was not his intention. According to Deputy Inspector John Nicholson of the NYPD Counterterrorism Bureau, Shahzad instead connected with militants in the Waziristan tribal region. It was from this he may have decided to attack America from within.

On May 8 the website [Right Truth](#) aired another theory about what was going on. Wondering if Faisal Shahzad was "a double agent," it recounts an example of how such a double agent works:

[O]n December 30, 2009, the Jordanian physician Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, a double agent acting for the CIA and serving the Pakistani Taliban, showed his true colors too late by blowing himself up among a group of senior Central Agency operatives stationed in Afghanistan when they met at their Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost - Eastern Afghanistan. Seven elite American agents and a Jordanian officer were killed.

The American agents neglected to take the most rudimentary precautions necessary when interviewing a double agent. The result was the deadliest attack the CIA had suffered in a quarter of a century.?



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Again, like the Time Square incident, the Khost attack could have been foreseen and forestalled, because the writing was on the wall, or rather, its virtual version was - on the Internet.

Fifteen months earlier, on March 28, 2009, Baitullah Mehsud, at 35, supreme commander of Taliban- Pakistan (Tehrik-i-Taliban - TTP), gave interviews to Pakistani news outlets and international wire services claiming credit for a string of terrorist attacks - one in Lahore, in which 30 police recruits were killed, and suicide bombings against security forces in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Bannu.

Mehsud said these attacks were the Taliban's revenge for the US drone strikes in the tribal areas of Waziristan, adding to an AFP interviewer: "There will be more such attacks, including strikes inside the US. Very soon we will take revenge from America, not only in Afghanistan but in Washington, which will amaze the entire world."

Finally amidst all the hype, along comes the Pakistan envoy to the UN, Hussain Haroon. In an interview on CBS television quoted by Pakistan's [Daily Times](#), he goes back to the original theory, saying that Faisal Shahzad was indeed working alone in his car bombing attempt. This, of course, is not what the Pakistan Taliban's early message asserted, nor what American officials are currently stating, nor what Shahzad himself is reported as saying about himself. But Ambassador Haroon claims that his evidence points to Shahzad as being a solitary.

Meanwhile, the [World News Examiner](#) reports that, for the third time since the arrest of Faisal Shahzad on May 3, the United States used pilotless CIA drones to fire more than a dozen missiles at militant training bases in northwest Pakistan. At least 14 people were killed. This would be in line with the U.S. government's belief that this area is where Shahzad was trained and where Pakistan Taliban and al Qaeda allies are operating.

Not only is the presence of the U.S. military unpopular in Pakistan, but the Pakistani government itself publically objects to these strikes, claiming they are a violation of its sovereignty. Tension is rising as U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, is pressuring Pakistan to more effectively address the terrorist bases there, or there will be U.S. reprisals. Pakistan claims to be doing all it can, especially in the midst of simultaneously dealing with its own civil war.

In 1999 on Frontline, PBS offered a chilling look into the mind of the militant Muslim with its program, Hunting Bin Laden. Not only did it explain the importance and ability of Osama Bin Laden, then a relative unknown, but many other Muslims were interviewed, with one unifying thought among them: We consider these our lands to be holy, and if you are not Muslim you should not be here. For this we will fight.

Between this and the assertions above — said just last March by Pakistan Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud, concerning revenge for the U.S. drone attacks there — Pat Buchanan's most recent article "[Is the War Coming Home?](#)" is most timely. He says in part:

American's toxic culture may be a reason devout Muslims detest us. It is not why they come here to kill us. Mohammed Atta's friends did not target Hollywood, but centers and symbols of U.S. military and political power.

U.S. Marines were not attacked by Hezbollah until we inserted those Marines into Lebanon's civil war. No Iraqi committed an act of terror against us before we invaded Iraq. And if the Sept. 11 killers were motivated by hatred of the immorality of our society, what were they doing getting lap dances in Delray Beach?



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Osama bin Laden declared war on us, first and foremost, to end the massive U.S. presence on sacred Saudi soil that is home to Mecca and Medina.

Some may insist this was not his real motive. But, apparently, the Saudis believed him, for they quickly kicked us out of Prince Sultan Air Base.

As for the Taliban, they would surely make short work of Lady Gaga. But their stated grievance is the same as Gen. Washington's in our war with the British: If you want this war to end, *get out of our country*. (Emphasis added.)

And back home, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg believes that a major answer to this terror issue is in ramping up the amount of surveillance cameras in the city, similar to the "ring of steel" in London. The mayor visited London on Tuesday in order to study their layout for himself. Says the [Associated Press](#):

The system covering the streets of lower Manhattan eventually will have 3,000 police and private cameras — far fewer than in London. But the NYPD officials said they hope to make their system much more sophisticated by using computer software that can program cameras to automatically detect suspicious packages or activity picked up by the cameras and alert police. Unlike London, where video data is "fragmented and decentralized," police using the New York system already can "pull up any camera and scroll back for 30 days on any (computer) terminal on the network," said Jessica Tisch, an NYPD counterterrorism official. Several hundred cameras linked to the vast fiber-optic network are monitored at a command center in a lower Manhattan high-rise. The department will begin to expand the system to midtown Manhattan in the fall, Kelly said.

With the terrorists warning quite clearly that they intend to further attack America here at home, Mayor Bloomberg seems to think that New Yorkers will sleep ever more soundly knowing they are surrounded by an army of surveillance cameras.

Photo: Supporters of the youth wing of the Pakistani religious party Jamat-e-Islami rally to support Faisal Shahzad, in Karachi, Pakistan on, May 6, 2010: AP Images



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