

Interviewee: **Secretary Tasneem Noorani, Ministry of Interior**

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Participants: Zelikow, Scheid, Darby (US Embassy Islamabad)

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Additional Info:

The Secretary of Interior met us in a main conference room of the Ministry of Interior headquarters in Islamabad. He had not received much information on the Commission's work and was curious about our mission. After a brief introduction he provided the following history and comments. The Ministry is responsible for all law enforcement in the country at the Federal level and is most closely aligned with the US Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary Noorani was at the Ministry in a different capacity on September 11, 2003 and he has seen the changes that have occurred in Islamabad during the entire period. He indicated that he and the entire Ministry were in shock by the 9-11 attacks and were struck by the scale and scope of the attacks. They couldn't image that the attacks could be connected with Pakistan. The initial reaction was a total blank. They didn't know how to react.

Only after the US began discussing Usama bin Laden did the Ministry become aware of UBL and that the region, Pakistan and Afghanistan, was somehow involved. UBL was not known in Pakistan. He is an eccentric Saudi and was not understood by most people.

There is confusion about several issues in the western media.

- For example, anyone who might have fought in Afghanistan is now being called al Qai'da in this country. But there were many people who fought against the Soviets who settled in Peshawar or the surrounding regions. After the Soviets left, many of them help with the rebuilding efforts of Afghanistan until they too were thrown out by the fighting and the Taliban.
- The institutions of the madrassas are 100 years old in this country. They are in many respects day care for the poor. They care for the youngsters and provide them religious training. Now they have taken on a nefarious purpose if you read the western press.

If we look for reasons for 9-11, or the fundamental motivations for why extremists or other groups would do such a thing, Noorani offers two reasons. First, the US is seen as anti-Muslim in many of its policies – Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Indonesia. It sends a terrible signal to the Muslim world when we support these activities without a clearer policy. Second, the US left Afghanistan and allowed it to become a lawless area where

criminals could develop their plans out of the reach of normal civilization. America lost sight of the strategy – you gave them a place to collect and plan their attacks.

Since 9-11 the role of Pakistan is very clear, anyone who commits terrorism will not be tolerated. The government had investigated, captured and jailed Pakistani citizens involved in terrorism and it has extradited foreigners caught in our country. But as Pakistan takes this stand America must know that there is a lot of anti-Americanism among the moderates in this country. The President has taken a very difficult stance, which is risky in Pakistan. The President is politically vulnerable. We have had public demonstrations. The law enforcement agencies have taken casualties in this war on terrorism, which makes it difficult as well to continue our support.

The military has done a great deal as well. In the tribal areas the military has moved in to help control the border for the first time in the history of the country. This is a serious effort in the region. Securing the border is a tough job. The Secretary cited the problem of controlling terrorism against US troops in Iraq and there you have overwhelming force. In the tribal areas you have an expanse of territory with a limited number of military posts and limited resources. The Secretary felt that Pakistan has taken tough steps against terrorism and that these steps in the tribal areas after 53 years of leaving them alone is proof of Pakistan's commitment.

US aid to support these efforts like helicopters have been slow in coming. The US has committed \$73 million to date, but this is taking too long. Mobility and communications are the two biggest problems to accomplishing this control of the border regions.

Baluchistan is yet another concern. The government doesn't have much control in that area as well. There are "settled" areas and there are tribal areas. There is a total of 2,400 kilometers of border with Iran and Afghanistan and they can't control the entire stretch. The Pakistani government can't realistically do more without helicopters and vehicles. There was recently an attack just 40 kilometers from Quetta. If the police had had helicopters they would have been on top of it in five minutes; without helos they take hours to cover the same territory because of the extremely difficult terrain.

The Secretary concluded by saying that the Pakistani government has done a lot to help with the war on terrorism – killing people, arresting people, changing laws, harassing suspected people, and increasing security on the border – whatever needs to be done. But we need to recognize that al Qai'da will return if we allow them to regroup and rebuild their strength.

The Secretary seemed completely surprised by evidence that KSM had been active in Karachi and that he celebrated the 9-11 attacks in there and was actually interviewed by a journalist in Karachi about the attack. This information was a surprise to the Secretary. He asked for proof. He didn't believe any accounts of journalists in this regard.