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Pakistani Reporter Killed following Controversial Investigation

Tom Aagaard

A shocking story about the Islamist attack on a Pakistani naval air base reveals troubling information for NATO and may have cost a reporter his life. On May 27, Syed Saleem Shahzad, a respected Pakistan investigative reporter, published an article in the *Asia Times* concerning the bold May 22 attack on Pakistani Naval Station Mehran, where a small group of heavily armed militants penetrated the base and wreaked havoc for a full fifteen hours. Statements from different branches of the Pakistani government report that the group of assailants killed at least ten people and destroyed two new patrol aircraft.

The incident made headlines due to a combination of spectacular imagery, the boldness of the attack, and the apparent inability of the Pakistani military to successfully defend or clear a highly sensitive facility only dozens of kilometers from its nuclear arsenal. Moreover, this seeming incompetence was all the more galling in light of the similarity between this event and the embarrassing 2009 attack inside the Army Headquarters in Rawalpindi. While the attack was initially considered to be a response to the Abbottabad raid that killed Osama bin Laden, Shahzad appears to have uncovered a different set of motivations.

According to Shahzad's investigation, the attack was launched in an attempt to coerce the Pakistani Navy (PN) into releasing members of a militant Islamist cell it had discovered within its ranks. He reports that sometime in March or April, Navy Intelligence discovered a network of radicals at a number of Navy installations around the port of Karachi. After intercepting messages suggesting that attacks on visiting American officials may occur, at least ten people were arrested. According to an anonymous Navy officer, "this was the beginning of huge trouble." Shahzad reports that immediately after the arrests, the lead investigator on the case received threats of attacks if the Navy continued to hold the detainees. These threats were particularly worrying because they indicated that the militants knew where they were being held, suggesting significant infiltration of the Pakistani Navy.

Eventually a group of high-level officers agreed to negotiate with the militants through a known *jihadi* living in North Waziristan, but the talks broke down when the Navy refused to release the detainees without interrogating them first. Shortly after, busses transporting PN personnel in Karachi were attacked by roadside bombs in three separate incidents. While not dismissing the role of the Abbottabad raid in provoking that attack, Shazad suggests that the continued detention of the suspected radicals plus a second crackdown was the primary motivation.

If correct, Shazad's discoveries could have repercussions for NATO's operations in Afghanistan. According to the Jamestown Foundation, approximately seventy-five percent of all supplies for NATO travel from the port of Karachi to Afghanistan. And since Russia refuses to allow the transport of munitions and other military equipment through its northern route, the Pakistani supply line is even more important than the numbers suggest. Traditionally, militants have targeted the supply convoys in the rugged Khyber Pass and northern transport hub of Peshawar. However, in the past several years, militants have expanded their attacks further south where the convoys are generally less protected. The Pentagon is so concerned about the viability of this supply line that it has started pouring millions of dollars into renewable energy technology in an attempt to reduce the number of vulnerable oil

tankers required to travel the dangerous route. If a major militant network does exist within PN bases around Karachi they could cripple the supply route by attacking transport ships or the crucial infrastructure required to offload them. In 2009, approximately 80 militants attacked the main transport terminal in Peshawar in a coordinated rocket attack. This event, along with the previously discussed attacks, reveals that local radicals have the confidence to attempt bold, large-scale operations.

Tragically, Shahzad was murdered days after he published this article. His body, bearing obvious signs of torture, was dumped in a canal about 150 kilometers south of his hometown of Islamabad. As an investigative journalist specializing in Al-Qaeda and militancy, Shahzad undoubtedly had a fair share of enemies, but allegations of the involvement Pakistan's notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency are unnerving. Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a statement claiming that Shahzad had previously been threatened by the ISI on at least two occasions. In one instance, Shahzad was allegedly threatened after reporting on the release of an aide to Mullah Omar, the alleged leader of the Taliban. Shortly after, a HRW researcher released an e-mail from Shahzad which detailed an encounter with two ISI agents last fall and included instructions on what to do should anything happen to him. In response to outrage from media outlets around the world, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has ordered an inquiry into Shahzad's kidnapping and murder.

Further Readings: [The Story that Killed Shazem Shahzad](#), [Missing Journalist Shahzad Found Dead](#), [Al-Qaeda had warned of Pakistan strike](#), [Operation at PNS Base in Karachi comes to an end](#), [Militants blow up NATO oil tankers in Pakistan, 16 killed](#)

Ending Canada's Combat Mission in Afghanistan

Melanie Clarke

Last week Prime Minister Stephen Harper, along with Defense Minister Peter MacKay, Chief of Defense Staff General Walter Natynczyk and Calgary Flames captain Jerome Iginla, travelled to Afghanistan and met with Canadian troops in Kandahar province, marking the beginning of the end of a decade-long combat mission in Afghanistan, Canada's longest to date.

The bulk of Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan has been in coordination with NATO's International Security Assistance Task Force (ISAF), in partnership with NATO members and other allied countries. The ISAF was originally formed in 2001 after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1396, with the "mandate to maintain security in and around Kabul so employees of the Afghan Interim Authority and the United Nations could operate in a secure environment." The ISAF officially became a NATO operation in 2003 and its mandate was expanded to include strengthening security and governance, and supporting reconstruction and development in Afghanistan.

Canadian forces have primarily served in and around Kandahar province, arriving in Afghanistan in January of 2002 under the Canadian military's official contribution to fight international terrorism. Their capacity was expanded in 2005 with the creation of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT); a security, development and reconstruction project consisting of diplomats, development workers, military personnel, and police and corrections officers, tasked with promoting "the policies and priorities of Afghanistan's national government with local authorities," and coordinating provincial reform and development projects. Since then, Canada has been intimately involved in Afghan development initiatives, with approximately CA\$317 million in official development assistance going to Afghanistan in 2009-2010, making Afghanistan Canada's "largest-ever bilateral aid recipient."

Although, Canada's combat mission is slated to end July 2011, Canada's role and involvement in Afghanistan is not over. Prime Minister Harper stated that Canada will remain in Afghanistan with "up to 950 military Canadian Armed Forces Trainers and support personnel" for the development and training of Afghan Security Forces that build on "progress in the areas of security, diplomacy, human rights and development" until March of 2014. During last week's visit to Afghanistan, Harper announced that "Afghanistan is no longer a threat to the world," but emphasized that it remains "a violent place, a dangerous place for its citizens, and we're working to improve things for them." In addition, according to a recent CBC article, Canadian troops and their commanders state that despite recent progress, the Afghan Army still "lacks some of the more sophisticated elements of a modern army, including tanks, helicopter transports and jets" and training personnel remains a "work in progress."

The end of the combat mission is welcomed by Canadians whose public support for the military intervention in Afghanistan, according to Angus Reid Public Opinion, "has dropped to the lowest level recorded (32%)," and who have come to recognize,

through this decade long mission and the death of 156 members of the Canadian Forces, that “[t]he days of Lester B. Pearson, peacekeeping, of lightly armed soldiers standing around on ceasefire lines looking at people on the other side of the wire are over.”

With the end of Canada’s combat mission by July 2011 and NATO announcing the end of the Afghan mission for 2014, the success of the Afghan combat mission remains to be seen. Moreover, the NATO and Canadian led development projects, and Afghan security training initiatives cannot be fully assessed until responsibility is officially handed over to Afghan security forces in 2014, and until the international community has left “Afghanistan to the Afghans.”

Further Reading: [Afghan army still work in progress: Canadian Military](#), [Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan](#), [Canadian Forces' Casualties \(Afghanistan\)](#), [PM's farewell to Kandahar: 'Afghanistan is no longer a threat to the world'](#)

NATO and Russia hold Unprecedented Joint Training Exercise

Jonathan Preece

On Tuesday June 7, NATO and Russian fighter jets participated in an unprecedented joint training exercise. Designed to prevent a recurrence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Tuesday’s exercises began with a civilian transport aircraft departing Krakow and heading towards St. Petersburg at which point a simulated hijacking took place. The pilots were ordered to act as if the terrorists had damaged the plane’s navigation system before overpowering the crew. Two Polish F-16s then scrambled to intercept the renegade aircraft before handing the mission over to Russian Sukhoi jets, which escorted the hijacked vessel back to Polish airspace. A similar style exercise was also held on Wednesday between Russian and Turkish fighter jets. In both instances, NATO representatives stated that NATO and Russian air traffic controllers as well as pilots and other military personnel had demonstrated excellent cooperation and communication. These joint drills were undertaken as part of the four-day NATO-Russia “Vigilant Skies 2011” program which includes various training missions over Poland and the Black Sea area.

The Vigilant Skies program was organized through the NATO-Russia Council’s wider Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI). Designed to enhance European and Russian aerospace security, the CAI utilizes two coordination centres in Warsaw and Moscow, in addition to local cities in Russia, Poland, Norway and Turkey. Together, these installations provide a shared picture of NATO-Russia air traffic, allowing for early warning of suspicious air activities and thereby enhancing anti-terrorist measures. “In situations when an aircraft starts behaving erratically, the air traffic coordination system offers increased information sharing and communication to ensure rapid, joint responses to terrorist threats,” a NATO statement said.

As part of the CAI, this week’s training exercises were specifically designed to improve NATO-Russia information sharing and interception capabilities. It is also hoped that these drills will help to build trust between NATO and Russian troops and thereby enhance their ability to cooperate at an operational level. Reflecting on Tuesday’s monumental joint exercise, Georges D’hollander of the NATO Consultation, Command and Control Agency stated; “Today was an important step for NATO-Russia relations, and therefore in my opinion, also an important step for the world because the threat of terrorism is a common one.” In August 2004, Russia suffered a major terrorist attack when explosives were detonated on two Russian passenger jets. Since that time, the threat of terrorist attacks originating from the Caucasus region has been a significant concern for Russia.

This week’s showpiece exercises come at a time when NATO is struggling to improve ties with its Cold War foe. NATO-Russia relations took a major hit following Russia’s war with Georgia in 2008. Although relations have thawed since that time, disagreements have persisted over plans for a European missile defence system. Joint training programs are thus seen as a critical means of improving NATO-Russia relations by demonstrating that these former enemies are able to cooperate with one another and respond to collective threats such as terrorism. As the first of its kind, the Vigilant Skies training initiative is thus considered a major milestone in NATO’s larger efforts to engage with Russia. Whether or not such initiatives will have a significant impact on future NATO-Russia relations remains to be seen.

Further Reading: [NATO, Russia Jets hold first ever joint exercises](#), [First Stage of Russia-NATO Air Drills is Over](#), [NATO-Russia Drill Aims to Prevent September 11 Attack](#), [NATO, Russia Team up in Anti-Terror Exercise](#), [NATO, Russia hold Unprecedented Joint Anti-Terrorism Operation in Poland](#).

Arctic Foreign Ministers meet in Greenland

Ryerson Neal

On 11th May, foreign ministers and their entourages descended upon the remote town of Nuuk, Greenland, for the seventh biennial meeting of the Arctic Council. The Council includes eight arctic states, five of whom are NATO members. The forum for arctic countries and their indigenous peoples was formed in 1996 to increase scientific cooperation and address northern environmental problems. Member states take decisions by consensus and discussion of military or strategic matters is proscribed. The Council is generally not considered an international organisation as it is not based on an international treaty; declarations made at ministerial meetings express commitment and encourage the adoption of recommendations, but are not technically binding. This most recent meeting, however, might represent an evolution of sorts for the body.

The most marked change at this ministerial was the presence of Hillary Clinton, the first US Secretary of State to attend a Council meeting. While other members have consistently sent foreign ministers to Council meetings, the US has traditionally relegated its business with the Council to officials at the Department of Oceans. Under the Bush administration, US policy sought for the council to remain within its mandate and not become a formal international organisation, particularly one with assessed commitments. The Obama administration, on the other hand, appears to be showing greater interest in strengthening the forum; last year, in a move widely seen as an expression of support for the Council, Secretary Clinton publicly admonished Prime Minister Harper for organising a meeting of the Council's five coastal states to the exclusion of three other members. In this vein, Assistant Secretary of State James Steinberg announced prior to the Nuuk meeting that the US would, "... be strengthening the Council institutionally by using it as the convening body for negotiations among Arctic states...."

With the signing of an internationally binding search and rescue treaty this May, it appears that the Council has adopted this new role. The agreement commits the eight signatories to increasing openness and cooperation in arctic search and rescue operations and is the first treaty to emerge from the Council. While some hope that this represents the beginning of a more authoritative role for the body, the text of the agreement binds signatories to cooperative action which can hardly be called controversial. Further, the agreement specifically mentions that it should not be seen as precedent-setting for the resolution of tougher questions, like sovereignty claims. Nonetheless, using the Council as a framework for the development of treaties represents an evolution from the past. In addition, Council members agreed to establish a permanent secretariat and funding scheme for it, possibly representing a greater willingness for assessed funding and formalisation.

The other major development at the Council meeting was with regard to the granting of "observer" status to non-Arctic countries and NGOs. The status has already been granted to several non-arctic countries and NGOs, giving them the right to sit in on Council deliberations. The issue has grown controversial in the last two years as bids for observer status by Italy, the EU, and China have all been denied. In the past few years, the arctic states have jealously guarded their exclusive positions; some reports have identified the Canadians and Russians as being especially obstinate about granting observer status to the EU. To formalise the process, Council members adopted a set of guidelines – what Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs calls "transparent and principled rules of the game" – to assess an applicant's suitability for observer status. Whatever the case, it seems that at least some of the Council's members are keen to continue using the power to bestow observer status as a means to reinforce the exclusivity of their jurisdiction in northern matters. As Russia's foreign minister suggested, the guidelines adopted at Nuuk mean that any country wishing to become an observer would first have to admit the "sovereignty and sovereign rights of the Arctic states in the region."

The next ministerial meeting will take place in 2013.

Further reading: [Text of Search and Rescue Treaty](#), [Secretary Clinton's remarks on Council meeting](#), [Text of Nuuk Declaration](#), [Senior Arctic Officials Report, 2009](#), [Report on Canadian and Russian Opposition to EU observer status bid](#), [Foreign Minister Lavrov's remarks](#), [Deputy Secretary of State's remarks](#), [CBC News Analysis of Council meeting](#)



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