
Saudi Officials Linked to Jihadist Group in WikiLeaks Cables

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The documents, which couldn't be independently verified, say the Saudi ambassador to Pakistan met in 2012 with Nasiruddin Haqqani, the chief fundraiser for the jihadist group who has been on a United Nations terrorism watch list since 2010.

In the meeting, Mr. Haqqani requested medical treatment in Saudi Arabia for his father, Jalaluddin Haqqani, the founder of the terrorist organization, the diplomatic correspondence says. The documents indicate the elder Haqqani carries a Saudi passport.

The Saudi embassy in Islamabad wasn't available to comment, and Afghan officials didn't immediately respond to the allegations. Senior U.S. officials said they were reviewing the reports but they had no immediate comment. Earlier this month, Osama Nugali, a Saudi foreign ministry spokesman, said that many of the documents [published by WikiLeaks](#) "have been clearly fabricated." But he also said that the documents "didn't give any information other than that formerly announced by the ministry" on international or regional issues.

Washington's ties with Saudi Arabia have been strained for years over U.S. concerns that funding for the Afghan insurgency and other terrorist groups in the Middle East comes from donors in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations. Successive U.S. administrations have been careful not to accuse Gulf governments of complicity in sponsoring terrorism, however.

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A document dated Feb. 15, 2012, and signed by the then-Saudi envoy to Islamabad, Amb. Abdul Aziz Ibrahim Saleh Al Ghadeer, says the diplomat met with Nasiruddin Haqqani, who asked the ambassador to convey to the Saudi king his father's wish to be treated in a Saudi hospital. The cable also mentions Jalaluddin Haqqani's Saudi passport.

In a separate document, dated Feb. 25, 2012, a senior official from Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry recommends treating Jalaluddin Haqqani in a Saudi hospital. It was unclear whether the treatment ever took place.

The Haqqani network is believed by U.S. and Afghan officials to be responsible for carrying out the most brazen attacks in the Afghan capital over the last decade, including a September 2011 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. This month, Afghan officials blamed the Haqqani network for an unsuccessful attempt to storm the parliament in Kabul.

The network traces its origins to the 1980s, when the U.S. and Saudi Arabia backed Afghan mujahedeen factions fighting the Soviets with the assistance of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency, or ISI. In [an interview with The Wall Street Journal](#), former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf described the Haqqanis as "our champions of the uprising against the Soviet Union."

The U.S. broke off support for the mujahedeen after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, but Saudi Arabia and Pakistan maintained active links with various mujahedeen factions. After the Taliban government was ousted by the U. S-led invasion in 2001, the Haqqanis became a key military ally of the Taliban, who have waged a deadly insurgency against the U.S.-backed government of Afghanistan following the collapse of their regime.

Jalaluddin Haqqani's listing on the U.N. terror watch list is supposed to bar his international travel and impose a financial freeze on him. Nasiruddin was placed on the same U.N. list in 2010. The U.S. designated the Haqqani network as a "Foreign Terrorist Organization" in 2012.

"It just shows how acceptable it is to the Saudi hierarchy that the ambassador thought nothing of reporting this in an official cable, and indeed meeting them, or needing to seek instructions before doing so," said Zafar Hilaly, Pakistan's former ambassador to Yemen.

Official U.S. anger over support for the Haqqani network has largely focused not on Saudi Arabia but on Pakistan, where the group had a base for years in the North Waziristan tribal area along the border with Afghanistan. In 2011, U.S. Navy Adm. [Mike Mullen](#), then the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the Haqqanis as "a veritable arm" of the ISI, a characterization Islamabad has disputed. A Pakistan army operation launched last year has driven many militants out of North Waziristan.

The Afghan government has also considered the Haqqanis an irreconcilable foe. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai often addressed the Taliban as "brothers," when urging them to end their armed opposition -- but didn't extend the same courtesy to the Haqqanis, according to his former spokesman, Aimal Faizi.

“They killed a large number of Afghans, civilians and military,” Mr. Faizi said.

Simbal Khan, a security analyst based in Islamabad, said that Afghanistan was part of the proxy war being waged across the Muslim world between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has also [supported insurgent groups in Afghanistan](#), including parts of the Taliban.

“The Saudis cannot not support the old Taliban, the ones they at least had good relations with,” said Ms. Khan. “If they gave them up, and Iran kept funding their elements, how does that make sense for the Saudis?”

Nasiruddin Haqqani was assassinated on the outskirts of Islamabad in November 2013, a shooting that [Pakistan says was orchestrated by Afghan intelligence](#). It isn’t clear whether Jalaluddin, who is known to have been ill for years, is still alive. Another one of his sons, Sirajuddin, is currently the group’s military commander.
