

Al-Qaeda's Hidden Arsenal: Interview with Hamid Mir

By: Ryan Mauro

Hamid Mir truly has deep access inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. He is best known as the last journalist to interview Osama Bin Laden, and the only one to do so after the attacks of September 11, 2001. He is currently the Bureau Chief of Islamabad for Geo TV and is writing a biography on Osama Bin Laden. He has interviewed countless members of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in many countries over the years.

Mir has had remarkable reliability. For example, most recently he said that Osama Bin Laden was going to issue a new tape, but the mainstream media did not report it. A few days later, a tape was released. He was the only one to predict the event.

RM: What governments have sponsored Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden over the years?

HM: I think it was the Taliban government which sponsored Al-Qaeda from 1996 to 2001. In between, the U.S. government engaged the Taliban in talks, some of which were arranged by Pakistan. Islamabad and Washington started covert operations against Al-Qaeda in 1999 (under Clinton and Nawaz Sharif) but they failed. After 9/11, it is the present Iranian regime which is secretly helping Al-Qaeda because the U.S. is supporting Israel openly.

RM: What governments have been friendly to Al-Qaeda in the past? Were/are there links between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, Syria, North Korea, etc?

HM: I don't think that Iraq had any direct link with Al-Qaeda. Saddam tried to contact Osama Bin Laden in 1998 but he was not entertained. Syria is a safe haven for Al-Qaeda now but the Syrian government is not trusted by the Al-Qaeda commanders in Iraq. I will not comment on North Korea. This is a point on which I am still not clear and am still trying to investigate.

RM: Can you give us some detail about the Russians advisors you said were helping the Taliban? Why would the Russians help them? What are they helping them with? And how long has Russia provided assistance to radical Islamic movements like Al-Qaeda?

HM: What I said was that Russia is covertly supporting Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan. The spokesman of the Afghan Interior Ministry, Lutaffulah Mashal, told me in September 2005 in Kabul that the Taliban are getting modern Russian-made weapons. He suspected that Russia may be taking revenge on the U.S. for supporting the Afghan Mujahideen against Russia in the 1980s.

I met a Taliban commander in Ghazni last year who showed me a small mobile phone bomb. He said that they will use that bomb against the British troops very soon in southern Afghanistan. How can they make mobile phone bombs on their own? The Taliban are receiving weapons from Al-Qaeda also, which are being smuggled in from Iran.

RM: It has been reported that you believe Al-Qaeda has nuclear weapons. How did you come up with this conclusion?

HM: I came up with this conclusion after eight years of investigation and research in the remote mountain areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I traveled to Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Uzbekistan, and Russia and met dozens of people. I interviewed not only Al-Qaeda operatives but met scientists and top

U.S. officials also. I will have the details in my coming book.

At least two Al-Qaeda operatives claimed that the organization smuggled suitcase nukes inside America. But I have no details on who did it. But I do have details about who smuggled uranium inside America and how.

I am very careful when speaking about Al-Qaeda's nuclear capabilities. I've met many people in Al-Qaeda who have claimed that uranium and nuclear bombs were smuggled to America, and I'll quote them in my book. However, when I speak for myself, I don't rely on claims by Al-Qaeda. I rely upon my own investigations.

RM: What's the name of your book? Will new details and proof of Al-Qaeda's acquisition of nukes be presented?

HM: My publisher has not authorized me to disclose the name of the book, but it will be a biography of Osama Bin Laden in which I will disclose his future plans and details of his nuclear designs. The world will come to know that which is the real Al-Qaeda.

RM: How many nuclear weapons does Al-Qaeda possess?

HM: As far as I know, they smuggled three suitcase nukes from Russia to Europe. They smuggled many kilos of enriched uranium inside America for their dirty bomb projects. They said in 1999 that they must have material for more than six dirty bombs in America. They tested at least one dirty bomb in the Kunar province of Afghanistan in 2000.

They have planned an attack bigger than 9/11, even before 9/11 happened. Osama Bin Laden trained 42 fighters to destroy the American economy and military might. 19 were used on 9/11, 23 are still "sleeping" inside America waiting for a wake-up call from Bin Laden.

RM: If Al-Qaeda has tactical suitcase nukes, not just "dirty bombs," why would they deploy them to Europe instead of the United States?

HM: Actually, I lost track of the three suitcase nukes after they were smuggled into Italy. I tried my best to get more information about those bombs but I am only one man. I only received one tip that Chechen members of Al-Qaeda wanted to smuggle one bomb into London, one into Paris, and one into California, but some dispute developed with the Italian underworld over the method of payment. This was in the year 2000.

RM: Were actual tactical nukes deployed to the US? And is the leader of the nuclear plot Adnan el-Shukrijumah as believed by some experts?

HM: Al-Qaeda leaders claimed to have deployed their tactical weapons inside America. But when I tried to track the transportation of those weapons from Georgia, I lost track in Italy. I don't know the location of these today because my source left Afghanistan for Iraq last year. On the other hand, they claimed to me that weapons were smuggled to America through Mexico.

According to my notes, the man responsible for organizing the nuclear attacks inside America is not Adnan but is Muhammed Sher Khan, but this may be an alias for Adnan.

RM: When is your book coming out?

HM: I am just putting on some finishing touches to the manuscript. I am planning to publish the book this year. I am going to reveal the secret world of Osama Bin Laden through my own eyes. I don't think it would be difficult for you to understand that writing some facts about Osama Bin Laden is not an easy job in Muslim countries today.

Yes, our governments are against him but he is popular among the masses. Common Muslims do not

believe he is responsible for the 9/11 attacks, and I am going to write about how 9/11 was planned and implemented by Osama Bin Laden. What happened to Osama Bin Laden after 9/11? How did he escape from Tora Bora? Where has he spent his last four years? Where and how did he organize the new insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq?

I think I will face a lot of criticism for my Iran/Al-Qaeda chapter from the Muslim media. I am going to reveal facts that nobody can deny. I am very careful. I wrote each and every word only after many cross-checks. I even cross-checked the claims made by Osama Bin Laden. I will definitely raise some issues like why he is still at large, and I'll have to talk about the weaknesses of the Pakistani and American secret services. I will not enjoy the publication of my book because I do not live in an ideal democracy. I am not bothered by who might benefit from my research. I have only one objective in mind; to keep the historical record straight.

RM: How can you be positive that the information regarding Al-Qaeda's nuclear capabilities isn't disinformation meant to frighten their enemies?

HM: That was the argument many U.S. experts presented in 1998 when Osama Bin Laden declared war on the U.S. Don't underestimate your enemy. You may dislike them but they don't lie. They may give a deadline to Muslims sometime to leave America and then they will attack. That is what was discussed in one of the Al-Qaeda meetings in Kunar in 2003.

RM: In a recent interview, you described a nuclear test in Kunar province in the year 2000 where an Egyptian scientist lost an eye. Was it a radiological "dirty bomb" or a more serious tactical nuclear weapon?

HM: It was a radiological dirty bomb.

RM: You have said that you think Al-Qaeda may use the nukes once Iran is bombed by the U.S. Is that your opinion or is this what you've been told?

HM: This is my opinion. No Al-Qaeda leader has ever admitted that they are working with Iran. I also think that, maybe, the Iranians will organize some attacks inside America and you will accuse Al-Qaeda.

RM: Do you know when Al-Qaeda's nuclear weapons were forward deployed?

HM: I think they transferred their materials inside America between 1999 and 2001, before September the 11th.

RM: Why hasn't Al-Qaeda used nuclear weapons if they possess them?

HM: They are waiting for the proper time. They want the U.S. to be involved in a mass killing of Muslims, so that they will have some justification. That is what I was told by a top Al-Qaeda leader in the Kunar Mountains of Afghanistan.

RM: Where did Al-Qaeda get the training to handle and detonate nuclear weapons? Some experts believe that Soviet-era nukes have sufficient security measures to stop their unauthorized use.

HM: They trained dozens of boys who can make dirty bombs by purchasing material from some medical stores and then they will detonate these materials with some uranium and X-Ray machines. They are not just dependant on Soviet nukes.

RM: How would Al-Qaeda be able to defeat American capabilities to detect the nuclear weapons? Are they disguised?

HM: I think that these materials are disguised. The U.S. needs some political strategy to address this issue. It is not only the U.S., but many European countries that are the targets of Al-Qaeda's nuclear

attacks. The world is not safe. An attack in California or London will not affect only the West, but it will affect the whole Muslim world.

There needs to be a well-coordinated effort to make the world safe. I am very much concerned because I have a lot of friends in America. I like common Americans. They are a good and frank people. Why should they pay the price of their government's bad policies? We have to move to stop both Al-Qaeda and Bush.

RM: The Muslim world was in an uproar after the US invaded Iraq. Why wasn't that viewed as appropriate justification?

HM: Saddam Hussein was not popular in the Muslim world. Osama hated him. Iran hated him. He was once considered an American agent. The majority of Muslims were initially happy that Saddam was dislodged, but then anger spread against the U.S. after the Abu Ghraib jail scandal. Now Muslims think that America invaded Iraq for oil, not for WMDs. Where are the WMDs? America must answer this question NOW.

RM: Does Al-Qaeda possess advanced chemical and biological weapons?

HM: They can make anthrax but they don't have advanced biological weapons. Their plus point is their suicide bombers. They have planned nuclear and biological attacks using suicide bombers.