



Local

**Aussie links to Mumbai terrorists**

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1 - All-round Country

8

English

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LASHKAR-E-TOIBA, the Pakistani terrorist group blamed for the attacks in Mumbai, has long been plotting to launch a terrorist attack in Australia.

The closest it came was when terrorist Willie Brigitte was dispatched on a mission to Sydney to plan an attack on either the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor in Sydney's south or the national electricity grid.

He was sent by an LET terrorist known as Sajid Mir, who is understood to have recruited, controlled and trained numerous Australians.

Among them was convicted terrorism supporter David Hicks and Sydney architect Faheem Khalid Lodhi, who has been sentenced to 20 years in jail for his part in the Brigitte plot.

Terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna has told The Weekend Australian that LET now poses as much of a threat to Australia as al-Qa'ida. LET was founded in Pakistan and is made up of mostly Pakistani Punjabis with a smattering of Afghans, Arabs, Bangladeshis, southeast Asians and the occasional Western or Indian Muslim recruit.

Although it was a Pakistan-based group with a focus on Kashmir, it had close links to al-Qa'ida and was ideologically close to the concept of global jihad.

LET was only placed on the federal Government's list of banned terrorist organisations in 2003. It has increasingly established a presence in Australia, Europe, the US and Indonesia, where an alliance had been formed between Brigitte and Gun Gun, the brother of Jemaah Islamiah terrorist Hambali.

Police interviews with Gun Gun confirmed that Brigitte, now jailed in France, was a senior LET member and they had joined up to bring hundreds of southeast Asian recruits to LET training camps. The authorities are aware a number of Australians have trained with LET, including some who have never been charged.

Hicks is thought to have been one of the first Australians to have arrived.

But he was soon followed by others, including Lodhi and a Canberra man known by the alias Abu Jihad.

Hicks, who joined the group in early 2000, told friends and family in letters that he had attended terrorist training at LET's Mosqua Aqsa camp in Pakistan.

He spent about 16 weeks with LET before the organisation helped him to travel to Afghanistan and attend a series of al-Qa'ida training camps prior to joining the battle against the Northern Alliance and, later, coalition forces.

Medical student Izhar ul-Haque was recruited by Lodhi and encouraged to join an LET camp, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. But he was shocked by what he saw and soon changed his mind, returning to Australia and his medical studies.

In 2004 he was charged with training with a terrorist organisation. Last year the charges against him were dropped. He then completed his medical degree.

Melbourne taxi driver Jack Thomas, who has been cleared of terrorism charges, stayed in guest-houses run by LET as did former Guantanamo Bay detainee Mamdouh Habib, who has also never been charged with any terrorism offence.

In his book *My Story -- The Tale of a Terrorist Who Wasn't*, Mr Habib tells how he first met Hicks at an LET guesthouse.

Mir was accused of planning Brigitte's Australian mission to carry out bomb attacks on key Australian targets. Brigitte was deported from Australia to France in 2003 and convicted last year on terrorism charges. Experts such as Professor Gunaratna have warned that LET is posing an increasing threat as it evolves and becomes more like al-Qa'ida.

Willie Brigitte, was sent by LET to Sydney to plan an attack on either the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor in Sydney's south or the national electricity grid

Faheem Khalid Lodhi, accused of being an LET operative in Australia, was sentenced to 20 years' jail for his part in the Brigitte plot

David Hicks, convicted terrorism supporter who trained with LET in Pakistan

Others of note:

Izhar Ul-Haque, who trained with LET but changed his mind and came back to Australia.

The charges against him were dropped Jack Thomas, who was cleared of terrorism charges, stayed in guesthouses run by LET Mamdouh Habib, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee who has never been charged with any terrorism offence, also stayed in LET guesthouses in Pakistan

INSIDE

It may be that since the 9/11 attacks in New York, the world has completely misconceived the age of terror

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