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Mossad Canard Warmed Over

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PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Oct. 28 (UPI) -- Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, organized the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in order "to start a war between Muslims and Christians," according to the Chief Minister of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province.

In an interview with United Press International, Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani, who heads his province's ruling coalition of six politico religious parties, said he agreed with a colleague in the government of Baluchistan who had blamed 9/11 on an Israeli conspiracy.

"It is inconceivable that a power like the United States, which has enormous technological means at its disposal, would not know ahead of time what was being planned," Durrani said, adding, "There must have been some local people in America who were involved in the planning and execution" who "used zealots (who) did not act on their own."

Hafiz Husain Ahmed Sharodi, a turbaned religious scholar who is the provincial Information Minister in Baluchistan, where the religious alliance shares power but still dominates the political landscape, said last week 9/11 was "a conspiracy by the Israeli intelligence service Mossad to start a war between Muslims and Christians." Durrani said he did not disagree with his Baluchi colleague.

The canard that Mossad and the CIA plotted the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon is widely believed in the Muslim world. Even well educated Pakistani fundamentalists repeat as fact the preposterous allegation that all the Jews working in the Twin Towers were instructed to stay away from work.

The first prominent Pakistani to suggest a Mossad-CIA plot was retired Gen. Hamid Gul, a former head of the country's Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Within 10 days of 9/11, Gul, who acts as "strategic adviser" to the religious alliance, told this reporter "the U.S. Air Force was also involved."

For the past two weeks, Gul has been touring towns and villages in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas along the Afghan border. At the request of the United States, and for the first time since independence half a century ago, Pakistani troops have entered FATA to track down resurgent Taliban and al-Qaida fighters who stage hit-and-run guerrilla attacks in Afghanistan.

Durrani has slowly been establishing the sharia as the Islamic law of the NWFP province, which shares a long border with Afghanistan. A public opinion survey taken in NWFP in December 2001 indicated that over 80 percent male adults in the province believed Osama Bin Laden was a "freedom fighter," not a "terrorist."

Nine out of Taliban's top 10 leaders were "educated" at the "University for the Education of Truth," a large madrassa (Koranic school) near Peshawar. This madrassa is directed by Sami ul-Haq, a prominent member of the ruling religious coalition.

Ranking former Taliban officials have long considered Peshawar and Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan, as their second home. Durrani said the original talibs (students) of the Taliban movement never numbered more than 1,000.

Asked if Taliban was staging a comeback in Afghanistan, Durrani said, "America wanted to be the sole superpower and the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was the sine qua non of its quest. Then came Taliban in the vacuum that followed the Soviet withdrawal. Taliban are not just students from madrassas. They are the same jihadis (holy warriors) who chased the Russians out. Many came from Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries to fight against the Russian invader. But when they tried to go home, they were treated as criminals and terrorists. Some were barred from returning home and others were sentenced to death or life imprisonment. So they returned to the region where they knew they would be welcome."

Asked if he was suggesting that Taliban are for the most part foreigners, Durrani said, "in the literal sense (they) were no more than 1,000 at the outset. Later Taliban came to symbolize the entire Afghan nation. You might ask where did Osama Bin Laden come from? Who brought him back to Afghanistan after Sudan asked him to leave? The United States didn't seem too concerned about him in 1996 when he decided to go to Afghanistan. Later America was not interested in a negotiated solution. Imagine what the United States could have done if it had devoted the money it spent on bombing Afghanistan -- about \$8 billion according to published reports -- to the reconstruction of the country after two decades of warfare. That would have been statesmanship of

rights organizations. Afghan prisoners of war were caged like dangerous animals. This, too, was covered up for a long time. Your reason for attacking Iraq was weapons of mass destruction that did not exist. It is now obvious that the Bush government's objective was Iraq's oil resources that will now be under American control."

Durrani firmly rejected the accusation that the NWFP's ruling coalition comprises Taliban-like religious zealots. "We are true democrats," he responded, "witness the way we conduct our policies in NWFP, in sharp contrast to the military dictatorship at the center. We also advocate peace with India over Kashmir; again witness the recent journey to New Delhi by one of our three top leaders with an offering of peace. As a result, India has responded with 12 confidence-building measures. The Holy (Koran) book teaches us peace, love and cooperation."

News reports recently said the coalition workers had attacked movie theaters and torn down billboards while police stood idly by. "That is not our policy," said Durrani. "We are not closing down movie theaters. But a few emotional zealots, acting on their own, did tear down some salacious billboards. And the police who did not interfere were suspended. We apologized on the floor of our provincial assembly and compensation was voted for damage done. We also eliminated discrimination between the coalition assembly members who were getting five million rupees (\$83,300) and the others who were getting one million rupees (\$16,600). And the women who were all at one million regardless of party affiliation are now also at five million. We have promoted female education and female sports. So Taliban is definitely not our cup of tea."

Asked what he thought of President Pervez Musharraf's pro-American policies, Durrani said, "The people of Europe are against America's Iraqi policy and the American people are also beginning to turn against the Bush government's policies now that they realize WMDs were a hoax. That is why we (the coalition) demand that Musharraf doff his uniform and compete as a civilian politician. That would bring about an end to the military dictatorship."

The Chief Minister rejected charges that coalition was trying to hasten the establishment of the sharia in NWFP. "We are leaning over backward to avoid being accused of anything that might be seen as rash," he said. "First we explain in detail to the people what we have in mind to make sure they agree to the content and then we debate it in the provincial assembly where the coalition has a