

Pak stopped support to Harakat-ul-Ansar to avoid terror tag: CIA documents

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Washington: Pakistan backed away from supporting Harakat-ul-Ansar terror group which it used as a proxy against India in the late 90s fearing that its backing would land it on the US list of "State Sponsors of Terrorism", according to recently declassified CIA documents.

In its report of August 1996, the CIA acknowledges the role played by the Harakat-ul-Ansar (HUA) in a number of terrorist attacks inside Kashmir and other parts of India including the May 1996 blasts in Lajpat Nagar market in Delhi.

Referring to some diplomatic reports, CIA said the Pakistan's spy agency ISI provided "at least USD 30,000 - an possibly as much as USD 60,000 - per month" to HUA.

A redacted version of the report 'Harakat ul-Ansar: Increasing Threat to Western and Pakistani Interests' was posted by the CIA on its website in June under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which is similar to India's Right to Information Act.

Based on its intelligence information obtained by the US Embassy in New Delhi, the report said HUA was planning to undertake terrorist actions against civilian airliners. This was three years before the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Flight from Kathmandu to New Delhi in December 1999.

"Attacks on civilian aircraft in India could well involve Western casualties, given the numbers of Western tourists in that country," the CIA report said. Important sentences of this part of the report have been redacted by the CIA.

However, the CIA warned that sudden decline in Pakistani support to HUA could be detrimental to the security of Pakistan itself.

"Islamabad's compliance with US and UK demand to cease its support for the HUA and crack down on the group's activities could be costly to Islamabad," it said.

"Pakistan is unlikely to accede fully, but any strong actions aimed at stopping the group's activities might prompt the HUA to retaliate," CIA warned.

"Although the HUA's operations are primarily targeted against India, some of the group's rhetoric and past actions demonstrate a hostility toward Islamabad that could be fueled by a loss of Islamabad's patronage," said the report.

- PTI