

Pakistan behind rise of international Jihadi forces: NYT

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New York: Pakistan's powerful intelligence service has long acted as the "manager" of international Jihadi forces and it may have been involved in the rise of the ISIS, a leading US daily today said, in a stinging commentary on Pakistan's "intervention" in a number of foreign conflicts.

Underlining that experts have found "a lot of evidence" that Pakistan facilitated the Taliban offensive, an op-ed in the New York Times said, "This behaviour is not just an issue for Afghanistan. Pakistan is intervening in a number of foreign conflicts."

"Its intelligence service has long acted as the manager of international mujahedeen forces, many of them Sunni extremists, and there is even speculation that it may have been involved in the rise of the Islamic State."

It said that though Pakistan denies harbouring the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and points out that it, too, is a victim of terrorism, "many analysts have detailed how the military has nurtured Islamist militant groups as an instrument to suppress nationalist movements, in particular among the Pashtun minority, at home and abroad."

"Pakistan regards Afghanistan as its backyard. Determined not to let its archrival, India, gain influence there, and to ensure that Afghanistan remains in the Sunni Islamist camp, Pakistan has used the Taliban selectively, promoting those who further its agenda and cracking down on those who don't. The same goes for Al Qaeda and other foreign fighters," wrote Carlotta Gall, the North Africa correspondent for NYT.

It said there are reports that Pakistan had a role in the rise of the Islamic State.

"....it might come as a surprise that the region's triumvirate of violent jihad is living openly in Pakistan," Gall said as she listed out top terrorist leaders living openly in Pakistan.

"First, there's Sirajuddin Haqqani, the leader of the Haqqani network, and second in command of the Taliban. He moves freely around Pakistan, and has even visited the Pakistani intelligence headquarters of the Afghan campaign in Rawalpindi," she said.

Then there is the new leader of the Taliban, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, who has openly assembled meetings of his military and leadership council near the Pakistani town of Quetta, the author said.

"Finally, Al Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, enjoys sanctuary in Pakistan - one recent report placed him in the southwestern corner of Baluchistan. He has been working to establish training camps in southern Afghanistan," Gall wrote.

The daily alleged that the madrasas in Pakistan, "a longtime instrument of Pakistani intelligence, has been training people from the ethnic minorities of northern Afghanistan alongside its standard clientele of Pashtuns."

"The aim is still to win control of northern Afghanistan through these young graduates. From there they have their eyes on Central Asia and western China. Pakistani clerics are educating and radicalising Chinese Uighurs as well, along with Central Asians from the former Soviet republics," Gall said.

Pakistan, she alleged, was "cooperating with Qatar, and perhaps others, to move international Sunni jihadists (including

300 Pakistanis) from Pakistan's tribal areas, where they were no longer needed, to new battlefields in Syria".

"It is just another reminder of Pakistan's central involvement in creating and managing violent jihadist groups," she quoted an unnamed Pakistani politician as saying.

"No one has held Pakistan to account for this behaviour. Why would Pakistan give it up now?" Gall said.

- PTI