

## **Top al Qaeda leader behind attack on Sri Lankan cricket team killed in US drone strike: Pentagon**

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**Washington:** A US counter-terrorism airstrike earlier this month in Afghanistan killed top al Qaeda leader Qari Yasin, responsible for multiple deadly attacks in Pakistan which claimed dozens of innocent lives, the Pentagon said Saturday.

The confirmation comes a few days after the Pakistan Taliban confirmed that Yasin had been killed in a US drone strike.

Yasin, who is said to be responsible for plotting the September 20, 2008 bombing on a Marriott Hotel in Islamabad and attack on a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2009 in Lahore, was killed on March 19 in Paktika Province of Afghanistan.

"The death of Qari Yasin is evidence that terrorists who defame Islam and deliberately target innocent people will not escape justice," US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis said yesterday.

Pentagon said Yasin was killed in a US counter terrorism strike and the senior leader was responsible for the deaths of dozens of innocent people, including two American service members.

The senior terrorist figure from Balochistan had ties with Tehrik-e Taliban and had plotted multiple al Qaeda terror attacks, including the Marriott Hotel bombing in Islamabad in which US Air Force Maj Rodolfo I Rodriguez and Navy Cryptologic Technician Third Class Petty Officer Matthew J O'Bryant were killed, it said in a statement.

Yasin was also responsible for the 2009 attack on a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore. Six Pakistani policemen and two civilians were killed and six members of the team injured, the Pentagon said.

Pakistan Taliban had a few days ago said that Yasin had been killed in a US drone strike.

Describing Yasin as a "close assistant" of the Pakistani Taliban, spokesman of the outfit Mohammad Khurasani said the senior al Qaeda leader was a "trainer of Mujahideen." Three of Yasin's "companions" were also killed in the US drone strike, he said.

The US had been hunting Yasin for at least four years, according to Long War Journal.

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