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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Pakistan says captures al Qaeda leader (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Monday, September 05, 2011 12:50 PM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
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Subject: Pakistan says captures al Qaeda leader (Reuters)

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan said on Monday it has captured a "senior al Qaeda leader" named Younis al-Mauritani who was responsible for conducting international operations and ordered by Osama bin Laden to hit U.S., European and Australian economic targets.

The United States helped Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) spy agency conduct the arrests, the military said, suggesting ties heavily damaged by the killing of bin Laden had improved.

"He was planning to target United States economic interests including gas/oil pipelines, power generating dams and strike ships/oil tankers through explosive laden speed boats in international waters," the military said in a statement.

Pakistan, describing the capture as "another fatal blow" to the militant group, added that two other senior al Qaeda operatives were also detained in the operation on the outskirts of the southwestern city of Quetta.

They were identified as Abdul Ghaffar al-Shami and Messara al-Shami. No further details were provided. It was not possible to immediately verify the captures.

U.S. officials have said al Qaeda's deputy chief, Libyan national Atiyah abd al-Rahman, was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan near the Afghan border on Aug. 22. But Pakistan officials have not confirmed his death.

Pakistan has been under intense pressure from its ally the United States to crack down harder on al Qaeda and other militant groups since U.S. special forces found bin Laden in a Pakistani town in May and killed him in a secret raid.

Although much international attention has been focused on U.S.-led efforts to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan, U.S. officials believe regional stability will not be possible unless Pakistan roots out militants operating on its soil.

The military has failed to break the back of militant groups operating along the unruly border with Afghanistan despite a series of offensives.

Pakistan joined the U.S. war on militancy after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. It has captured major al Qaeda figures since then, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, self-professed mastermind of

the September 11 attacks.

But Washington often questions Pakistan's commitment to the campaign, saying it must do more to tackle militants who cross into Afghanistan from Pakistan to attack Western forces there.

IMPROVED TIES?

Relations sunk to a low after the United States kept Pakistan in the dark over the bin Laden operation and suspicions grew in Washington that elements of the ISI knew the al Qaeda leader was living in Pakistan.

But the military statement said the capture of al-Mauritani was a joint operation, raising the possibility that Islamabad and Washington were working to improve ties.

"This operation was planned and conducted with technical assistance of United State intelligence agencies with whom (Pakistan's) Inter-Services Intelligence agency has a strong, historic intelligence relationship," the statement said.

"Both Pakistan and United States intelligence agencies continue to work closely together to enhance security of their respective nations."

Imtiaz Gul, a prominent Pakistani security analyst, said the joint operation means intelligence sharing has been restored after Pakistan took steps to limit CIA activities here.

"This is what the situation demanded," he said.

"The entire Pakistan-U.S. relationship basically revolves around the CIA and ISI and now it appears they are resuming their normal contacts."

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