

## Refugee Review Tribunal

### AUSTRALIA

#### RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

**Research Response Number:** IND30814  
**Country:** India  
**Date:** 1 November 2006

Keywords: India – Sikh Youth Federation – Abductions – Khalistan Kashmir Jihad Force – Forced recruitment

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Questions

- 1. What documented evidence is there of a Sikh Youth Federation or a new organisation Khalistan-Kashmir Jihad Force conducting military style training camps?**
- 2. Is there any evidence of the kidnapping or abduction of Sikh youths to be forcibly trained in military matters?**
- 3. What information is available to suggest that Sikh youths who do not agree to join either of the above organisations are subjected to violence or threats of violence from other Sikhs?**

#### RESPONSE

- 1. What documented evidence is there of the Sikh Youth Federation or a new organisation Khalistan-Kashmir Jihad Force conducting military style training camps?**

Information on the Sikh Youth Federation is extremely limited. Two sources provide general information on the Sikh Youth Federation (SYF), including its possible links with another militant Sikh organisation as well as with mainstream Sikh political parties. A 1995 Country Research Response on the Indian government's attitude to the SYF contains the following information provided by DFAT to the RRT in 1994:

[The] Sikh Youth Federation (SYF) ... is a banned organisation and was formed by a breakaway group from the All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF). Elements of the SYF may be associated with Babbar Khalsa International (BKL), also currently banned (RRT Country Research 1995, *Research Response IND10223*, 17 February – Attachment 1).

During the 1999 national elections in India, the president of the Sikh Youth Federation, Mr Narinder Singh Khalsa, indicated that the SYF would support 4 candidates running for *Lok Sabha* seats in the state of Punjab: Mr Simranjit Singh Mann from the seat of Sangrur, Harcharan Singh Rode from Faridkot, Bibi Paramjit Kaur Khalsa from Tarn Taran, and Mr Kuldeep Singh Wadala from Jalandhar ('Third Front' 1999, *The Tribune*, 2 September <http://www.tribuneindia.com/1999/99sep02/head6.htm> – Accessed 26 October 2006 – Attachment 2). S.S. Mann represented and won the seat of Sangrur as leader of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Mann) Party; Harcharan Sing Wadala ran as an Independent; Parmjit Kaur Khalsa ran for the Sarb Hind Shiromani Akali Dal Party; and Kuldip Singh Wadala was an Independent (Election Commission of India 1999, 'Statistical Report on the General Elctions, 1999 to the Thirteenth Lok Sabha', Election Commission of India website [http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS\\_1999/Vol\\_I\\_LS\\_99.pdf](http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS_1999/Vol_I_LS_99.pdf) – Accessed 31 October 2006 – Attachment 3).

Evidence of the Sikh Youth Federation's participation in military activities is limited to two newspaper reports from late 1998. They indicate that members of the Sikh Youth Federation in Punjab were arrested for allegedly possessing weapons and explosives originating from Pakistan with the intention of attacking sites in India. In November 1998, police in the Punjab district of Gurdaspur arrested Manjit Singh, a member of the Sikh Youth Federation belonging to the Chaheru faction. Chaheru is a city in the Punjab district of Kapurthala ('Punjab', Maps of India CD-Rom – Attachment 4). He was arrested with a member of the Sikh militant group, the Khalistan Commando Force, whose chief Paramjit Singh Panjwar was based in Pakistan. They were caught for trying to smuggle arms from Pakistan. The article states that:

Manjit's outfit provid[ed] **the manpower** for carrying out violence and the Panjwar group supplying arms to them. The Panjwar group needed help of another group as it was short of manpower ('Punjab militants bid to smuggle arms foiled' 1998, *The Times of India*, 6 November – Attachment 5).

In October 1998 the Indian police arrested persons belonging to 10 "outfits" sponsored by Pakistan's External Intelligence Agency (ISI), including 7 activists of the "Indian Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF)" in Jalandhar in Punjab. Quantities of explosives and weapons were seized during the arrests, allegedly to be used for attacking military installations and VIPs ('Police unearth 10 ISI-backed outfits', 1998 *The Times of India*, 31 October – Attachment 6).

Reference to the Khalistan-Kashmir Jihad Force (KKJF) is limited to one newspaper report from 1999, where it is referred to as the Khalistan Kashmir *Jehad* Force. The detailed account indicates that young men from the Punjab had received training in the use of weapons and explosives in Pakistan. The report refers to the arrest of one Balwinder Singh who was caught with explosives in the Hoshiarpur district in Punjab, allegedly to be used to blow up public places and VIPs in the state. The KKJF is described as being supported by a second group, Babbar Khalsa Jathebandi, on which no further information could be found. The Senior Superintendent of Police is reported as stating that during 1998-1999, Balwinder Singh was in contact with Didar Singh of Babbar Khalsi Jathebandi in various places in the Punjab, including the district of Fatehgarh Sahib, and that he had travelled to Pakistan where, with other "Punjabi boys", he received training in using weapons:

The district police has successfully foiled a conspiracy of the Babbar Khalsa Jathebandi to blast important public places and eliminate VIPs in Punjab when it arrested a member of this force last night.

Mr R.P. Mittal, SSP, Hoshiarpur, disclosed to mediapersons here today the **Khalistan Kashmir Jihad Force** which was being supported by the Babbar Khalsa Jathebandi had a plan to blast important public places and murder VIPs in Punjab. He said keeping in view this information and in order to foil this conspiracy special checks had been started. He said that during a special check by the sadar police at about 11.30 pm last night a scooter driver was instructed to stop. The pillion rider at once jumped from the scooter and escaped under cover of darkness. The naka party caught the driver who was later identified as Balwinder Singh, alias Billu, alias Baj, son of Dalip Singh Jat, resident of Bhagowal village in Haryana. The scooter was without a number plate.

A search of the scooter revealed 16 packets of RDX weighing about 8 kg, 10 electronic detonators, 10 non-electronic detonators, two plastic caps, two pencil bombs and one roll of tape. He said a case under Section s 3, 4 and 5 of the Explosives Act was registered in this connection.

The SSP said during preliminary interrogation Balwinder Singh confessed his relations with Punjab terrorists. **He came in contact with Didar Singh, alias Dari, alias Baba, of Babbar Khalsa Jathebandi and remained in touch with him in Hoshiarpur, Fatehgarh Sahib and Hazoor Sahib.** He came with Jarnail Singh to Jalandhar in October 1998 where he met two persons sent by Didar Singh from Pakistan. All of them went to Jammu in a bus from where they went to Kathua in the evening. From Kathua they left for Pakistan and after crossing the forests they entered the Pakistani territory at 4 a.m. Two main leaders of Babbar Khalsa Jathebandi were present in a car there to receive them. They took them to Lahore where they stayed in a house for a month. **At least seven to eight Punjabi boys were already residing there but they did not disclose their identity. Later, they were imparted training in handling different weapons, including AK-47 rifles and bombs etc, in forests. They were also imparted training in blasting bridges and railway lines and murdering important leaders so that maximum damage could be done to the government after their return to India.**

After three weeks they were again brought in the house where they had stayed earlier. In January 1999 he along with Bittu, alias Cheema, and one more person who seemed to be Pakistani crossed the border adjoining Samba. After entering Indian territory Cheema kept the weapons and handed over the ammunition to Balwinder Singh. He was told to make links with the sources whose names were given to him by Didar Singh, alias Dari, to receive further information about the future programme. He informed the source that he had reached with ammunition at his destination safely.

The SSP said Balwinder Singh dumped the ammunition in the forest area of his village. When he again approached the source he was advised to slip away due to intensive checking by the police. He then went to Madhya Pradesh to his relatives and after three months came back to Punjab.

About four-five days back an unidentified boy came to him with a message from Didar Singh, asking him to be ready for an operation. He said yesterday the same boy on scooter met him on the Jalandhar Pathankot road. Both came to his village, dug up the ammunition and were going on a scooter when the police naka party arrested him and his accomplice escaped. The SSP said interrogation was going on ('Bid to blast public places in Punjab' 1999, *The Tribune*, 18 June <http://www.tribuneindia.com/1999/99jun18/punjab.htm> – Accessed 27 October 2006 – Attachment 7).

A less detailed *Times of India* newspaper report on the arrest of Balwinder Singh describes the Khalistan-Kashmir *Jehad* Force as “newly-floated” (‘Militant held –eight kg of RDX seized’ 1999, *The Time of India*, 18 June – Attachment 8).

Reports of other Sikh and pro-Khalistan militant groups conducting military training with young Sikh men in Pakistan do exist. These groups include the Babbar Khalsa International, referred to in Attachment 1 as possibly associated with the Sikh Youth Federation. While the earliest reports of Pakistani operated training camps for Khalistani and Sikh militants date from the mid 1980s (Anil G.C., ‘Persistence and Death of Intense Armed Secessionist Movements: An Analysis of the War for Khalistan and the First round of the War for Eelam’ (undated), Columbia University website, pp.26-7 [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/polisci/pdf-files/apsa\\_gc.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/polisci/pdf-files/apsa_gc.pdf) – Accessed 30 October 2006 – Attachment 9), reports also exist for such camps between 2000 and 2005. The Danish Immigration Service’s *Report on the Fact-finding Mission to Punjab (India): The Position of the Sikhs, 21 March to 5 April 2000*, includes remarks by Ramesh Chhabra from the Indian Department of Home Affairs and Justice and Amrinder Singh from the Congress Party:

*Ramesh Chhabra, Department of Home Affairs and Justice*, remarked that there were still **breakaway groups from Babbar Khalsa** which the police believed might resume [militant] activities. **This was not a very large group – a maximum of two to three hundred active members, who were being trained in Pakistan.** Chhabra would not dismiss the possibility that this group was now active in Punjab but if so its activities were not visible.

*Amrinder Singh, Congress Party*, commented that there were still some militant organisations in Pakistan which belonged to the **Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarawl group) amongst others**, and referred to an article in that day’s newspaper stating that there were **some young Sikh men in Pakistan who wanted to return to Punjab. Nowadays there was no support for the militant groups and no recruitment took place in Punjab** (Danish Immigration Service 2000, *Report on the Fact-finding Mission to Punjab (India): The Position of the Sikhs, 21 March to 5 April 2000*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, 1 September <http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/3ae6a5ea0.pdf> – Accessed 30 October 2006 – Attachment 10).

In 2002, the South Asia Terrorist Portal website detailed that the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* group had opened at least 8 camps with the help of Pakistan’s external intelligence agency, the ISI, with the aim of training pro-Khalistan groups:

According to a media report, Pakistan’s external intelligence agency, the ISI, has directed the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) with the task of reviving terrorism in Punjab. Quoting intelligence sources, the report said that according to the ISI plan, **the LeT will impart arms training to pro-Khalistan outfits such as the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) and the Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF).** The LeT has reportedly opened at least eight camps in Pakistan to train the Khalistanis. These are at Kot Lakhpat, Chakwal, Gujranwala, Mianwali, Peshawar, Attock, Shahidan Da Banga and Gulbarg in Lahore (‘Punjab Timeline’ 2002, South Asia Terrorism Portal website, 9 April <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/punjab/timelines/2002.htm> – Accessed 27 October 2006 – Attachment 11).

A media report first appearing in *The Hindustan Times* on 9 April 2002 refers to the same information in Attachment 11 as deriving from an Indian intelligence report. This media report includes the further point that nearly 200 Sikh youth had been recruited in the first half of 2001 as part of ISI’s plans to operate military camps (Nandy, C. 2002, ‘Lashkar to train Khalistan militants at ISI’s behest’ Hindu Vivek Kendra website, 9 April

<http://www.hvk.org/articles/0402/75.html> – Accessed 30 October 2006 – Attachment 12). The Pakistani ISI was also allegedly involved in the “training of Sikh youth ...at huge private farmhouses in Muscat, Thailand, Dubai and Iran” around this time (Gill, K.P.S. 2004 ‘Khalistan in Waiting’ *The Pioneer*, 21 February, The Sikh Times website [http://www.sikhtimes.com/news\\_022104a.html](http://www.sikhtimes.com/news_022104a.html) – Accessed 30 October – Attachment 13).

An undated *Note on Global Terrorism* on the website of the Indian embassy in Washington D.C. makes reference to Sikh and pro-Khalistan groups operating in Pakistan. It also states that the groups are trying to “motivate” Sikh youth from the Punjab to engage in extremist activities:

It is a well documented fact that leaders of some of the most extremist Sikh terrorist groups are in Pakistan and are continuing to try and **motivate Sikh youth** from the UK, Canada as well as from **Indian Punjab** to take recourse to extremist activities. **Wadhawa Singh of the Babbar Khalsa, Paramjit Singh Panjwar of the Khalistan Commando Force (Panjwar), Gajender Singh of the Dal Khalsa, Pritam Singh Sekhon of the Khalistan Liberation Force, Lakhbir Singh Rode of the International Sikh Youth Federation**, are all presently in Pakistan and continue to try and engineer terrorist activity with Pakistani help in India. Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, one of the most wanted people in India for his terrorist activities in Punjab, remained in Pakistan for a long time and then surfaced in Switzerland, seeking asylum.

Lal Singh Manjit Singh arrested for his role in the bombing of the [1985] Air India Boeing ‘Kanishka’ revealed to the authorities in India and Canada **the operation of a massive base of Sikh terrorism in Pakistan**. Yousef Bodansky of the United States House Republican Research Committee’s Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare had published a report “The New Islamist international” which gave details of how Pakistan had been training Sikh and Kashmiri (‘A Note on Global Terrorism’, (undated) Embassy of India – Washington D.C website [http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Terrorism/pak\\_terrorism.htm](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Terrorism/pak_terrorism.htm) – Accessed 27 October 2006 – Attachment 14).

The most recent reports of Sikh youth involved in militant activities derive from interviews with the head of Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), Jagtar Singh Hawara, following his arrest his mid-2005. Hawara reportedly revealed that “foreign-based militants” as well as Sikh youth suspected of being members of the BKI were trying to “revive terrorism” in the Punjab, and that one such Sikh youth had travelled to Pakistan (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2006, *IND100772.E India: The security situation in Punjab, including patterns of violence, the groups involved, and the government’s response (2002 – 2005)*, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada website, 23 January <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=449827> – Accessed 30 October 2006 – Attachment 15; and Reddy, B., 2005, ‘A secret alliance of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Pakistan based Babbar Khalsa International to implement suicide bombings in America? Why is Pakistan’s former ISI chief’s name mentioned?’ *India Daily* website, 15 June <http://www.indiadaily.com/editorial/3168.asp> – Accessed 27 October 2006 – Attachment 16). The subsequent head of Babbar Khalsa International, Paramjeet Singh Bheora, was also arrested (in March 2006) with arms and ammunition sent from Pakistan. Police alleged that Paramjet had “motivated a woman to become a human bomb, besides roping in several young men to take to terrorism” (‘Babbar Khalsa militants captured in Delhi’ 2006, *The Hindu*, 21 March <http://www.thehindu.com/2006/03/21/stories/2006032114480100.htm> – Accessed 31 October 2006 – Attachment 17).

## **2. Is there any evidence of kidnapping or abduction of Sikh youths to be forcibly trained in military matters?**

No sources were found indicating that Sikh youth have been kidnapped or abducted with the intention of being forcibly trained in military matters.

## **3. What information is available to suggest that Sikh youths who do not agree to join either of the above organisations are subjected to violence or threats of violence from other Sikhs?**

No information was found suggesting that Sikh youth who resist joining either the Sikh Youth Federation or Khalistan-Kashmir Jihad Force are subject to violence or threats of violence from other Sikhs.

### **List of Sources Consulted**

#### Internet Sources:

##### **Government Information & Reports**

Election Commission of India website <http://www.eci.gov.in/>

Embassy of India Washington D.C website <http://www.indianembassy.org/>

##### **United Nations (UN)**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website <http://www.unhcr.org>

##### **International News & Politics**

*The Tribune* website <http://www.tribuneindia.com/>

*The Sikh Times* website <http://www.sikhimes.com>

*India Daily* website, 15 June <http://www.indiadaily.com/>

*The Hindu* website <http://www.thehindu.com/>

##### **Region Specific Links**

South Asia Terrorism Portal website <http://www.satp.org/>

##### **Topic Specific Links**

Hindu Vivek Kendra website <http://www.hvk.org/articles/>

##### **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

##### **University Sites**

Columbia University website <http://www.columbia.edu/>

#### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

### **List of Attachments**

1. RRT Country Research 1995, *Research Response IND10223*, 17 February.

2. 'Third Front' 1999, *The Tribune*, 2 September  
<http://www.tribuneindia.com/1999/99sep02/head6.htm> – Accessed 26 October 2006.
3. Election Commission of India 1999, 'Statistical Report on the General Elections, 1999 to the Thirteenth Lok Sabha' Election Commission of India website  
[http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS\\_1999/Vol\\_I\\_LS\\_99.pdf](http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS_1999/Vol_I_LS_99.pdf) – Accessed 31 October 2006.
4. 'Punjab' and 'Kapurthala', Maps of India CD-Rom.
5. 'Punjab militants bid to smuggle arms foiled' 1998, *The Times of India*, 6 November. (FACTIVA)
6. 'Police unearth 10 ISI-backed outfits', 1998 *The Times of India*, 31 October. (FACTIVA)
7. 'Bid to blast public places in Punjab' 1999, *The Tribune*, 18 June  
<http://www.tribuneindia.com/1999/99jun18/punjab.htm> – Accessed 27 October 2006.
8. 'Militant held –eight kg of RDX seized' 1999, *The Time of India*, 18 June. (FACTIVA)
9. Anil G.C., 'Persistence and Death of Intense Armed Secessionist Movements: An Analysis of the War for Khalistan and the First round of the War for Eelam' (undated), Columbia University website, pp.26-7  
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10. Danish Immigration Service 2000, *Report on the Fact-finding Mission to Punjab (India): The Position of the Sikhs, 21 March to 5 April 2000*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, 1 September  
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11. 'Punjab Timeline' 2002, South Asia Terrorism Portal website, 9 April  
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12. Nandy, C. 2002, 'Lashkar to train Khalistan militants at ISI's behest' Hindu Vivek Kendra website, 9 April <http://www.hvk.org/articles/0402/75.html> – Accessed 30 October 2006.
13. Gill, K.P.S. 2004 'Khalistan in Waiting' *The Pioneer*, 21 February, *The Sikh Times* website [http://www.sikhtimes.com/news\\_022104a.html](http://www.sikhtimes.com/news_022104a.html) – Accessed 30 October.
14. 'A Note on Global Terrorism', (undated) Embassy of India – Washington D.C website [http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Terrorism/pak\\_terrorism.htm](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Terrorism/pak_terrorism.htm) – Accessed 27 October 2006.
15. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2006, *IND100772.E India: The security situation in Punjab, including patterns of violence, the groups involved, and the government's response (2002 – 2005)*, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada website, 23 January <http://www.irb->

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16. Reddy, B., 2005, 'A secret alliance of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Pakistan based Babbar Khalsa International to implement suicide bombings in America? Why is Pakistan's former ISI chief's name mentioned?' *India Daily* website, 15 June  
<http://www.indiadaily.com/editorial/3168.asp> – Accessed 27 October 2006.
17. 'Babbar Khalsa militants captured in Delhi' 2006, *The Hindu*, 21 March  
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