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12/08 13:48

Pakistan Detains Nuclear Scientist Group's Associates (Update1)

By Kate Linebaugh and Vernon Silver

Islamabad, Pakistan, Dec. 8 (Bloomberg) -- Pakistan authorities have detained at least five people who sat on the board of an organization that marketed its nuclear expertise to the Taliban, a Pakistan government spokesman said.

In addition to two nuclear scientists detained since October, "five or six people who were part of the governing body of the (organization) have also been detained for questioning," Army spokesman Rashid Qureshi told a press briefing today.

The people were on the board of a consultancy that offered to build an oil refinery in Afghanistan in partnership with the former Taliban government and also said it could provide nuclear skills, according to a 21-page business proposal obtained by Bloomberg News.

The consultancy, called Consortium of Experts & Industries, was run by Bashiruddin Mahmood, a Pakistan nuclear scientist who served as director-general of nuclear power at the Atomic Energy Commission and designed the Khushab nuclear reactor.

Mahmood along with the others has been in detention since October. Mahmood and Abdul Majeed also worked with a charitable organization with an office in Kabul. Majeed is also in detention.

S.M. Tufail, chief executive of F.W Fabrication Ltd. of Lahore, Pakistan, was picked up on Oct. 23 and has been held since, said Rashid Mukhtar, office assistant to F.W. Fabrication's manager of administration, Azhar Chaudhry.

Ties to Taliban

Mirza Yousaf Beg, director of the International Fabrication Group in Lahore, also was picked up on the same date, according to his son, Sajjad Beg. Beg said three others were also in detention.

Mahmood is being questioned by Pakistani authorities about his ties to the Taliban regime, which include running a charity in Kabul called Ummah Tameer-e-Nau. Pakistan says Mahmood and Abdul Majeed, co-founder of the charity and a fellow nuclear scientist, were detained because Ummah Tameer-e-Nau wasn't properly registered.

Tufail, the executive from Lahore, is being held in a "safe house" by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, his employee, Mukhtar, said in a telephone interview. F.W. Fabrication is in the power generation business and has been operating since 1960, according to a business listing on Pakistan's South Korea embassy Web site.

Afghan Oil

Tufail and F.W. Fabrication are named in the undated business proposal, which lays out an oil refinery project in Afghanistan and was given to Bloomberg by an associate of Mahmood who asked not to be identified. It was prepared in July and August, said the associate, who said he helped write the document.

The group can help prepare "feasibility reports, projects planning and implementation in nuclear and non-nuclear fields," the document reads.

The proposal says the oil project in Afghanistan, in which the Taliban also would have been an investor, was desirable because: "Helping an Islamic state to get up is going to be a great act in the eyes of God. This is our responsibility that we do anything within our resources, whatever the God has given to us, to work for Islam."