**Hamid Gul, a Pakistan Spy Master Tied to Militants, Dies**

ISLAMABAD — Aug 16, 2015, 2:51 PM ET

By ZARAR KHAN Associated Press

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Associated Press

Hamid Gul, who led Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency as it funneled U.S. and Saudi cash and weapons to Afghan jihadis fighting against the Soviets and later publicly supported Islamic militants, died late Saturday of a brain hemorrhage. He was 78.

Gul's tenure at the ISI and his outspoken backing of al-Qaida leader [Osama bin Laden](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/iraq/osama-bin-laden.htm) and other extremists highlighted the murky loyalties at play years later when the Sept. 11 attacks and their aftermath tested the U.S.-Pakistani alliance.

Gul came to be seen as an increasingly out-of-touch braggart later in life, as he appeared on countless Pakistani television programs warning of conspiracies and demanding his country militarily confront its nuclear-armed neighbor India.

"The unruly mujahedeen commanders obeyed and respected him like no one else," Gul's online autobiography reads. "Later on with the advent of the Taliban's rise he was equally admired and respected."

Gul died late Saturday night at the hill resort of Murree near the capital, Islamabad, his daughter, Uzma Gul, told The Associated Press. She said Gul suffered a brain hemorrhage.

Funeral prayers were offered at an army base in the garrison city of Rawalpindi near the capital, Islamabad. Pakistani army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif attended alongside other serving and retired military officers.

Born Nov. 20, 1936, near Sargodha in eastern Pakistan, Gul served in the army and fought in two wars against India. He viewed India with suspicion for the rest of his life, claiming it wanted to seize Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Many believe he helped shape Pakistan's policy of funding Islamic militant groups to attack India's interests in the disputed Kashmir region.

Gul became the chief of the ISI in 1987, at a time when the U.S. and [Saudi Arabia](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/saudi-arabia.htm) were using the spy agency to funnel billions of dollars to militants fighting the Soviets during their occupation of neighboring Afghanistan.

Those militants later became the backbone of the Taliban and included a young Saudi named Osama bin Laden.

The government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto forced Gul out in 1989. He later acknowledged having forged an alliance of Islamist political parties to challenge Bhutto in the 1988 elections that brought her to power.

Despite being stripped of his office, Gul remained influential. Though unnamed in the Sept. 11 commission report, U.S. officials at the time said they suspected Gul tipped bin Laden off to a failed 1998 cruise missile attack targeting him in Afghanistan. The operation came in response to al-Qaida attacks on embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people. The officials said he contacted Taliban leaders and assured them that he would provide three or four hours of warning before any U.S. missile launch.

Gul also was a close ally of Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who received U.S. assistance during the Soviet occupation and was a bitter rival of Taliban figurehead Mullah Mohammad Omar. The U.S. declared Hekmatyar a "global terrorist" in 2003 because of alleged links to al-Qaida and froze all assets he may have had in the United States.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, Gul became an outspoken opponent to the U.S. while cheering the Taliban in public and media appearances. There were allegations, however, that Gul had a more hands-on approach. U.S. intelligence reports later released by [WikiLeaks](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/news/iraq/wikileaks.htm) allege he dispatched three men in December 2006 to carry out attacks in Afghanistan's capital.

"Reportedly Gul's final comment to the three individuals was to make the snow warm in Kabul, basically telling them to set Kabul aflame," the report said.

Gul at the time described the documents as "fiction and nothing else." Some of the reports, generated by junior intelligence officers, did include far-fetched claims, including an allegation in 2007 that militants teamed up with the ISI to kill Afghan and NATO forces with poisoned alcohol bought in Pakistan.

But Gul's anti-Americanism was by then well-known. At one point in 2003, Gul boasted that Pakistani officials would "turn a blind eye" to any Taliban or al-Qaida fighters who escaped Afghanistan.

"The intelligence and security agencies are a part of the ethos of the country and the national ethos today is a hatred of America," he said.

When U.S. special forces killed bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011, Gul helped spread a rumor that U.S. forces actually killed the al-Qaida leader in Afghanistan and brought his body to Pakistan to humiliate the country.

"My feeling is that it was all a hoax, a drama which has been crafted, and badly scripted I would say," he said.

In conspiracy-minded Pakistan, many believed him. As the last line of his online autobiography reads: "People wait to listen to his direction before forming their own opinions."

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Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Cairo and Kathy Gannon contributed to this report.

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This story has been corrected to show Gul's age as 78, instead of 79.