

peaceful at all. It went on, ‘You are the son of a religious cleric but you are not a good Muslim. The mujahideen will find you wherever you go.’ When my father received the letter he seemed worried for a couple of weeks, but he refused to give up his activities and was soon distracted by other things.

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In those days it seemed like everyone was talking about America. Where once we used to blame our old enemy India for everything, now it was the US. Everyone complained about the drone attacks which were happening in the FATA almost every week. We heard lots of civilians were being killed. Then a CIA agent called Raymond Davis shot and killed two men in Lahore who had approached his car on a motorbike. He said they had attempted to rob him. The Americans claimed he was not CIA but an ordinary diplomat, which made everyone very suspicious. Even we schoolchildren know that ordinary diplomats don’t drive around in unmarked cars carrying Glock pistols.

Our media claimed Davis was part of a vast secret army that the CIA had sent to Pakistan because they didn’t trust our intelligence agencies. He was said to be spying on a militant group called Lashkar-e-Taiba based in Lahore that had helped our people a lot during the earthquake and floods. They were thought to be behind the terrible Mumbai massacre of 2008. The group’s main objective was to liberate Kashmir’s Muslims from Indian rule, but they had recently also become active in Afghanistan. Other people said Davis was really spying on our nuclear weapons.

Raymond Davis quickly became the most famous American in Pakistan. There were protests all over the country. People imagined our bazaars were full of Raymond Davises, gathering intelligence to send back to the States. Then the widow of one of the men Davis had murdered took rat poison and killed herself, despairing of receiving justice.

It took weeks of back and forth between Washington and Islamabad, or rather army headquarters in Rawalpindi, before the case was finally resolved. What they did was like our traditional *jirgas* – the Americans paid ‘blood money’ amounting to \$2.3 million and Davis was quickly spirited out of court and out of the country. Pakistan then demanded that the CIA send home many of its contractors and stopped approving visas. The whole affair left a lot of bad feeling, particularly because on 17 March, the day after Davis was released, a drone attack on a tribal council in North Waziristan killed about forty people. The attack seemed to send the message that the CIA could do as it pleased in our country.

One Monday I was about to measure myself against the wall to see if I had miraculously grown in the night when I heard loud voices next door. My father’s friends had arrived with news that was hard to believe. During the night American special forces called Navy Seals had carried out a raid in Abbottabad, one of the places we’d stayed as IDPs, and had found and killed Osama bin Laden. He had been living in a large walled compound less than a mile from our military academy. We couldn’t believe the army had been oblivious to bin Laden’s whereabouts. The newspapers said that the cadets even did their training in the field alongside his house. The compound had twelve-foot-high walls topped with barbed wire. Bin Laden lived on the top floor with his youngest wife, a Yemeni woman named Amal. Two other wives and his eleven children lived below them. An American senator said that the only thing missing from bin Laden’s hideaway was a ‘neon sign’.

In truth, lots of people in Pashtun areas live in walled compounds because of purdah and privacy, so the house wasn’t really unusual. What was odd was that the residents never went out and the house had no phone or Internet connections. Their food was brought in by two brothers who also lived in the