

What is the Raymond Davis imbroglio?

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A few days ago, a Security Consultant employed by the US consulate in Lahore, shot and killed two young boys in Lahore in broad daylight. He was overtaken by the two dead boys, riding a motorcycle; when he halted at a traffic light that had turned red. A back-up vehicle summoned by him, from the Consulate, jumped the curb on the wrong side of the road, crushing and killing an innocent bystander on a motorcycle. The back-up vehicle escaped but Raymond was apprehended.

That Raymond was no ordinary technician, as was initially claimed, was immediately obvious to the discerning from his ability with a handgun. Anybody who has used one can tell you that it requires considerable expertise to put one bullet in a target, even at short range. Raymond fired eight rounds and each one found its mark; four to each dead body. What is more, after killing them, Raymond walked up to calmly photograph the dead bodies on his mobile phone; all the hallmarks of a true professional.

Both dead boys also had hand guns on them; one in a holster, the other lying on the road; *but neither weapon had been discharged!* Raymond claimed self-defense with the plea that he had only just withdrawn a large sum of money and these boys on a motorbike were seeking to rob him; which is well within the realms of possibility. Such incidents are not uncommon on our roads. However, foul play was suspected when it was discovered that each body had two bullets in the back; probably the ones resulting in their deaths. Now, if one is experienced with the use of weapons, one is aware that if the first round hits an individual let us say, on the shoulder, it will turn him around, though usually not 180 degrees; even if the latter were possible; two bullets in the back of each? That would make anyone suspect!

What is more if they were seeking to rob him; he could only be certain if at least one had drawn a weapon. The fact that one weapon was lying on the ground makes it a possibility that the weapon was in the hands of one of the boys, alternately, it could have fallen from his belt, if it was not in a strap down holster. However, even if the boys were amateurs, which also is distinctly possible, and the first bullet to hit one only injured him, he should still have been able to release at least one round, even if it was in the ground!

Raymond has been charged under section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code, PPC, i.e. murder with intent. If convicted, he could be sentenced to life imprisonment or death.

Ironically, despite the fact that the incident took place in broad daylight, witnessed, presumably, by hundreds of people, the public has not been made aware of any details of the incident: was it a robbery, did the boys draw their weapons first, or were they even facing Raymond threateningly? Admittedly, people may not have been paying attention initially, but even a true professional would take a few seconds to let loose eight rounds at two different targets, even if they were close together. Time enough for neighboring pedestrians and commuters to see some details. If they did, the media has not carried much. Consequently, we have to make assumptions from the known facts, and give Raymond the benefit of doubt, if and where, it is due. From the known facts, the evidence appears fairly damning.

Finally the US Consulate has admitted that Raymond Davis is not his real name, but has not disclosed the real one. We shall, therefore, continue to address him by his pseudonym. We also now know that he is an employee of Hyperion Protective consultants; a Security firm, though less well known than its famous and far larger competitor; Xe.

As expected, the US Administration is exerting considerable pressure on Pakistan demanding that Raymond be granted diplomatic immunity, even though he is not a diplomat and was in possession of an ordinary passport when arrested; later, a diplomatic passport was offered to the police! This by the US, which has an impeccable record of denying diplomatic immunity for a century and a half! As recent as the period of the Clinton administration, a Georgian diplomat who killed an American citizen in a traffic accident was refused immunity and sentenced to 21 years imprisonment.

Domestically, there is a peculiar tussle going on. Had the incident occurred in Islamabad, the central government might well have granted Raymond diplomatic immunity. However, the incident occurred in the jurisdiction of the Punjab police. Despite the US pressure, the central government is helpless, having no jurisdiction. The Sharif brethren stand firmly in defiance, and insist that 'the courts will decide'. So far, it seems likely that Raymond will have to face the music and the likelihood of conviction. PPP is quite happy so long as the US ire is directed at the Sharif

brethren. Like many other politicians, they labor under the fond belief that Pakistani elections take place in Washington DC; and this incident might seal the next election in their favor! To add flavor to the whole affair, our Honest Interior Minister has finally 'admitted' to the Senate that Raymond did, in fact have a diplomatic visa; ironically his last visa on this 'diplomatic' passport was issued in Islamabad!

This is not the only instance that employees and diplomats of the US Embassy have been found in possession of weapons, sometimes more lethal ones than a Gluck. Some have even brandished them to threaten locals; though this is the first instance of a weapon having been fired.

Some people are quick to accuse our intelligence agencies; unfairly, I think. The real culprit is the central government, under whose instructions our embassy in Washington issues visas to all and sundry, no questions asked. With so many well-armed American citizens roaming our streets, this was a disaster waiting to happen. Raymond must face the music to send a message to Washington: we have, to our shame, given you carte blanche to kill our citizens with drone attacks but we will not permit murder in our streets. If we don't, Raymond will only be the first of others!