

Missile Strike Said to Kill 10 in Pakistan

New York Times, 1 April 2009

PESHAWAR, Pakistan -- Missiles fired from a suspected American drone struck a militant training camp in northwest Pakistan on Wednesday, killing at least 10 people in an attack apparently aimed at one of the area's most important Taliban leaders, Hakimullah Mehsud, according to news reports, militants and an intelligence official. Mr. Mehsud escaped unhurt, the intelligence official said, speaking in return for anonymity. The attack was the first of its kind in the Orakzai region, which lies southwest of Peshawar and close to the border with Afghanistan, residents said.

US reserves 'right of last resort' in Pakistan

Daily Times, 1 April 2009

WASHINGTON: General David Petraeus, the head of the US Army's Central Command, said on Monday his country reserved right of last resort for attacks inside Pakistan. Speaking to the FOX News in the context of the Obama administration's preparations for stepping up the fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, the general added however that the US government would prefer to enable the Pakistani military to do the job itself

Manmohan, Obama concerned over growing terror in AfPak

Hindu, 1 April 2009

London (PTI): Setting the tone for their first meeting, U.S. President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday voiced deep concern over the growing hold of terrorist elements in Pakistan and Afghanistan with the Indian leadership getting increasingly worried over the dangerous situation in its neighbourhood. Mr. Singh, who will meet the new American leader here on Thursday immediately after the conclusion of the G20 summit, said that "the epicentre of terrorism" was in Pakistan and "the world community has to come to grips with this harsh reality"

Militants Storm Government Office in Afghanistan, Killing 13

New York Times, 2 April 2009

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Five suicide bombers stormed a government office in Kandahar on Wednesday morning, killing 13 people, including two provincial government officials, and wounding 14. One militant detonated a car bomb at the entrance gate of the provincial council office, as the others stormed the compound with assault rifles and hand grenades. Seven civilians and six police officers were killed in the 20-minute gun battle, which ended when two of the militants blew themselves up in the main hall, said the provincial police chief, Matiullah Qati

Al Qaeda is planning attacks on US from Pakistan: Obama

Daily Times, 2 April 2009

LAHORE: United States President Barack Obama on Wednesday said Al Qaeda was planning attacks on the US from its hideouts in Pakistan, a private TV channel reported. Obama said the US would "chase and defeat the terrorist organisation wherever it is present in the world", the channel said. Addressing a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in London, Obama said US policy was clear for both Pakistan and Afghanistan and Kabul would not be allowed to become a safe haven for Al Qaeda

Editorial: In whose name?

Indian Express, 2 April 2009

Editorial: In whose name?

The diplomatic big tent at The Hague this week yielded an expected but nonetheless significant achievement. At a meeting of delegates from about 70 countries to discuss

Afghanistan, American and Iranian representatives met on the sidelines. The US and Iran have a record of cooperation, however brief, on countering the Taliban in the months after 9/11. But a meeting on the sidelines between Richard Holbrooke, US President Barack Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Mohammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh, who headed the Iranian delegation, has the potential to ease the confrontationalist tension in West Asia. But as the global community tries to get a grip on the slide in Afghanistan, a law proposed by the Hamid Karzai Government must arrest their attention.

Judge Rules Some Prisoners at Bagram Have Right of Habeas Corpus
New York Times, 3 April 2009

WASHINGTON — A federal judge ruled on Thursday that some prisoners held by the United States military in Afghanistan have a right to challenge their imprisonment, dealing a blow to government efforts to detain terrorism suspects for extended periods without court oversight. In a 53-page ruling that rejected a claim of unfettered executive power advanced by both the Bush and Obama administrations, United States District Judge John D. Bates said that three detainees at the United States' Bagram Air Base had the same legal rights that the Supreme Court last year granted to prisoners held at the American naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba

Mullen says he is comfortable with Pakistani nukes
Daily Times, 3 April 2009

NEW YORK: The top United States military officer on Thursday said he was 'reasonably comfortable' about Pakistan's nuclear weapons being secure amid a rising tide of insurgent violence aimed at the government. Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said the US had invested in an effort to keep the weapons secure and that Pakistan had "taken significant steps in recent years, so I'm comfortable". "If Pakistan gets to a point where it implodes, you've got a country that could be an Islamist... country with nuclear weapons. One of our goals is to make sure that doesn't happen," Mullen said

US Senate okays \$4bn increase in aid to Pakistan
Business Line, 3 April 2009

WASHINGTON: The US Senate voted on Wednesday to boost aid to Pakistan by \$4 billion next year. As the US lawmakers continued work on a \$3.5 trillion budget blueprint for the upcoming fiscal year, Senator John Kerry, a Democrat, won adoption of a \$4 billion increase next year in aid to Pakistan, a key ally in the war on terror. Earlier, the Associated Press had reported that the Obama administration plans to seek as much as \$3 billion over the next five years to train and equip Pakistan's military and is considering sending 10,000 more troops to battle the Taliban in Afghanistan

No NATO troops for Pakistan: Obama
Daily Times, 4 April 2009

BADEN-BADEN/STRASBOURG: US President Barack Obama said on Friday he did not expect NATO troops to have to enter Pakistan. "My focus on Pakistan does not envision NATO troop activities," Reuters quoted him as telling a news conference following talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. However, addressing a rally of thousands of European youth in France, he said Europe must do more to help the US win the war in Afghanistan. "Europe should not simply expect the United States to shoulder that burden alone," he said. Obama said Al Qaeda posed more of a threat of Europe than it did to the United States. "...It is probably more likely that Al Qaeda would be able to launch a serious terrorist attack on Europe than on the United States because of proximity," he said

Partnership with U.S. to be strengthened, says Manmohan
Hindu, 4 April 2009

London: At their meeting in London after the G20 summit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and United States President Barack Obama affirmed their commitment to move the relations between the two countries forward in a wide range of areas. Addressing a press conference later, Dr. Singh described the meeting as one marked by "exceptional warmth and cordiality" and said they discussed several positive and constructive steps to take the India-U.S. global partnership forward. He said India had a global strategic partnership with the U.S. and this was an excellent opportunity to strengthen it and make it productive and durable in diverse fields

Pakistan aid tied to tackling terrorism threat, says Obama

Daily Times, 5 April 2009

STRASBOURG: Release of additional US aid for Pakistan will be dependent on how Islamabad tackles the threat of terrorism, US President Barack Obama said on Saturday at the end of a NATO summit. "I informed our allies that despite difficult circumstances we are going to put more money into Pakistan, conditional on action to meet the terrorist threat," he told a news conference

More Drone Attacks in Pakistan Planned

New York Times, 7 April 2009

WASHINGTON — Despite threats of retaliation from Pakistani militants, senior administration officials said Monday that the United States intended to step up its use of drones to strike militants in Pakistan's tribal areas and might extend them to a different sanctuary deeper inside the country. On Sunday, a senior Taliban leader vowed to unleash two suicide attacks a week like one on Saturday in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, unless the Central Intelligence Agency stopped firing missiles at militants. Pakistani officials have expressed concerns that the missile strikes from remotely piloted aircraft fuel more violence in the country, and some American officials say they are also concerned about some aspects of the drone strikes

Zardari, Holbrooke, Mullen discuss security

Daily Times, 7 April 2009

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is fighting the war on terror for its survival and will not surrender to pressure by the Taliban, President Asif Ali Zardari said during a meeting with US Special Representative Richard Holbrooke and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen on Monday to discuss regional security. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi also attended the meeting.

U.S. concerned over reports of Taliban trying to enter India

Hindu, 8 April 2009

New Delhi (PTI): The U.S. on Wednesday voiced "grave concern" over reports that Pakistani army is helping Taliban to infiltrate into Kashmir and said Washington was making efforts to address issues related to support for terror groups. "I have seen the same reports which you speak about ... Those are grave concern and we continue to address those," U.S. Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen told reporters here when asked to comment on reports that Taliban fighters are trying to cross over into Jammu and Kashmir with the help of Pakistan army.

U.S. not negotiating between India, Pak: Holbrooke

Hindu, 8 April 2009

U.S. not negotiating between India, Pak: Holbrooke

New Delhi (PTI): As it begins implementation of its new strategy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, the U.S. on Wednesday underlined the critical role of India in the success of the policy as there was a "common threat". U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, who held talks with Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan,

underlined that he was not visiting the region to "negotiate" between India and Pakistan."The answer is no," Mr. Holbrooke said at a press conference here when asked whether he had asked his Indian interlocutors to resume talks with Pakistan.

News

Daily Times, 9 April 2009

America's special envoy to our region, Richard Holbrooke, is a busy man. Prior to his appointment by President Obama he had been working with, among other organisations, the New York-based Asia Society's Task Force; which he both set up and led. The group had a distinctly heavyweight feel to it and included Barnett Rubin, Thomas Pickering (a past ambassador to India) and General James Jones, a national security adviser. Holbrooke and Jones have stepped down since their appointment to the Obama administration but the report that they both have had a hand in is set to generate a frisson of unease in India. Titled "A Strategy for Stabilising Afghanistan-Pakistan" it is reflective of the willingness of the Obama presidency to consider 'other options.' The task force which prepared the report is recommending that the Obama administration find ways to incorporate Pakistan into the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and enter into a dialogue with it to discuss how its nuclear status could be acknowledged

Biden says Osama hiding in FATA

Daily Times, 9 April 2009

Biden says Osama hiding in FATA

LAHORE: Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders, including Osama Bin Laden, are hiding in Pakistan's Tribal Areas, US Vice President Joe Biden said on Wednesday. "In the FATA ... that is a war on terror. That's where Al Qaeda lives. That's where Bin Laden is. That's where the most radicalised part of the Taliban is," Biden told CNN's Wolf Blitzer. "The situation ... in other parts of the world, they aren't all related to terror," he said in response to a question if the Obama administration had stopped use of the phrase "global war on terror".

Pakistan needs a Marshall Plan: Haqqani

Daily Times, 9 April 2009

LAHORE: Ambassador to the US Husain Haqqani on Tuesday called for a \$30 billion Marshall Plan for Pakistan and Afghanistan over the next five years to fight Al Qaeda, blunt anti-Americanism and secure Pakistan from extremists. Haqqani told The Washington Times that the cost to the West was negligible compared to that of rescuing failing banks and corporations. "...the cost of a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan is going to be minuscule [compared] to the bailouts being given to American car companies," Haqqani said. "And the impact in terms of American security and in terms of the longer term stability of the world in a very precarious region will be far greater. Pakistan has the will to fight terrorists, it needs the means and the United States should provide those."

US has promised no drone strikes in Balochistan: Zardari

Daily Times, 9 April 2009

LAHORE: The United States has assured Pakistan it will not carry out drone attacks in Balochistan, President Asif Ali Zardari said in an interview with Daily Times Editor Najam Sethi for Dunya TV on Wednesday. "Not only the people of Pakistan, but also the government is concerned over the drone attacks," Zardari said. He said the US had incorporated several of Pakistan's suggestions in its new policy for Afghanistan, but the two countries disagreed on the drone strikes. However, he said Washington "has assured us it will not carry out drone attacks in Balochistan"

No AfPak solution without India: US

Asian Age, 9 April 2009

April 8: The United States expects India to play a bigger role regionally and globally, and a top American official said here on Wednesday that New Delhi's involvement was vital for stabilising the situation in Afghanistan. "We can't settle issues like Afghanistan [and] many other issues without India's full involvement," US special envoy for the AfPak region Richard Holbrooke said towards the end of a five-day tour of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India

Obama Seeks Quick Approval of More Money for Overseas Military Operations
New York Times, 10 April 2009

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration on Thursday asked Congress for quick approval of \$83.4 billion to pay for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and other overseas initiatives through Sept. 30. President Obama has pledged to end the Bush administration's practice of paying for the two wars through special so-called supplemental funding requests instead of including the costs in the annual budget. But White House officials said one final supplemental war bill was necessary because the legislation passed under the Bush administration provided only enough money to pay for the conflicts through mid-year

US embassy, foreign agencies suspend services over security threat
Daily Times, 10 April 2009

ISLAMABAD: The US embassy on Thursday decided to suspend all consular services for today (Friday) due to heightened security in the federal capital, spokesman Lou Finton said. He said emergency services would be available to US citizens and they would be able to contact the embassy. Also, Islamabad-based offices of international donor organisations would remain closed today due to the security threats.

Obama to avoid Bush's Musharraf mistake
Daily Times, 10 April 2009

LAHORE: Bruce Riedel, adviser to US President Barack Obama, said on Wednesday that while the United States under President Obama was determined about its relationship with Pakistan's elected leadership, it was not "hooking our fate to any particular individual. The Bush administration made this mistake with Pervez Musharraf and we saw what a disaster that was". In many ways, he said, Pakistan was the harder part of the Afghanistan problem. "After all, the sanctuary for Al Qaeda is in Pakistan. The leadership of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, is in Pakistan. That is the more critical territory for them."

Editorial: Listening in
Indian Express, 10 April 2009

The US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke's statement in New Delhi that the US is making no demands on India, and his public disavowal of any pressure on Kashmir, may well be true — in a technical sense. A serious discussion on what India's next step can be is likely to begin only when Holbrooke succeeds in getting Islamabad to accept the Obama administration's terms for fighting the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. At the moment it is unclear if Pakistan's military and civilian leaders have the stomach for that arduous fight. Nor is it a secret that there is growing tension between Holbrooke and his Pakistani interlocutors on how to stabilise Afghanistan. The US is demanding Pakistan's adherence to specific benchmarks in return for a massive increase in its military and economic aid. Pakistan wants American money with no strings attached. Islamabad hopes to continue with the pretence of a fight against terrorism.

Obama's new war strategy not enough: Pak, Afghan envoys
Daily Times, 11 April 2009

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama's anti-terror escalation may not prove enough to break the back of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, Pakistani and Afghan envoys warned on Thursday. Both ambassadors called on the United States (US) and its allies to provide more

cash and military tools to defeat terrorism on the battlefield and alleviate the poverty and ignorance that sustained extremism

PM reveals: Told all concerned I would quit if n-deal fell through
Indian Express, 11 April 2009

New Delhi: Called the "weakest prime minister ever" by the Opposition BJP in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today struck back. Revealing he had "told all concerned" that he would quit rather than let the Indo-US nuclear deal fail, Singh said he did not consider L K Advani worthy of being "an alternative prime minister". He conceded that the decision of some Congress allies to form a separate front could affect the electoral outcome and said the Left parties and the Third Front were "unwittingly" helping the BJP. "I would like the Samajwadi Party and Lok Janshakti Party to work together (with Congress). This could affect the electoral outcome to some extent," he said during an interaction with the Indian Women's Press Corps. Allies RJD, LJP and SP have formed a front and are contesting against the Congress in 134 constituencies in UP, Bihar and Jharkhand.

US to make aid pledge for Pakistan but backs 'strings'
Daily Times, 15 April 2009

WASHINGTON: The United States said on Tuesday that it planned an aid pledge to Islamabad at this week's conference in Tokyo, but rejected pleas that the assistance be without conditions. "We'll be making a pledge," State Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters. He declined to give details ahead of Friday's conference in the Japanese capital

Nizam-e-Adl against rights, democracy: US
Daily Times, 15 April 2009

WASHINGTON/LAHORE/PESHAWAR: The White House said on Tuesday the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation accord signed by the Pakistani government with the Taliban to put part of the country under Islamic law was against human rights and democracy, AFP reported. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said President Barack Obama's administration believed that "solutions involving security in Pakistan don't include less democracy and less human-rights. The signing of that denoting strict Islamic law in Swat valley goes against both those principles"

Extremists serious threat to Pakistan's existence: US
Daily Times, 16 April 2009

LAHORE: Al Qaeda and other militant groups within its territory pose "an ever more serious threat to Pakistan's very existence", General David Petraeus, head of US Central Command (CENTCOM), has said. In an interview with Trudy Robin of the Philadelphia Inquirer, he said US President Barack Obama had made Afghanistan and Pakistan the focus of his foreign policy because of the presence of Al Qaeda in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan. To questions on why troops were being increased in Afghanistan if the real threat were in Pakistan, he said: "You have to ensure that Afghanistan doesn't become once again a place where Al Qaeda establishes safe havens." If Taliban ideologues regain control of Afghanistan, it would further destabilise Pakistan, he added

Turning Tables, U.S. Troops Ambush Taliban With Swift and Lethal Results
New York Times, 17 April 2009

KORANGAL OUTPOST, Afghanistan — Only the lead insurgents were disciplined as they walked along the ridge. They moved carefully, with weapons ready and at least five yards between each man, the soldiers who surprised them said. Last week, members of Second Platoon, Company B, surprised a Taliban column and killed at least 13. Behind them, a knot of Taliban fighters walked in a denser group, some with rifles slung on their shoulders —

"pretty much exactly the way we tell soldiers not to do it," said Specialist Robert Soto, the radio operator for the American patrol.

China and US to work together for Pak-Afghan peace
Daily Times, 17 April 2009

BEIJING: The United States and China have agreed to work together on bringing peace to Afghanistan and Pakistan, officials said on Thursday following a visit to Beijing by US special envoy Richard Holbrooke. Holbrooke left China after holding talks with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and leading cabinet official Dai Bingguo during a two-day trip

Anti-terrorism policy to be shared with US next month: PM
Daily Times, 19 April 2009

KARACHI: Pakistan will share its counter-terrorism policy with the United States during forthcoming talks next month, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said on Saturday. He told a press conference at Chief Minister's House after presiding over a special session of the Sindh cabinet that it was wrong to assume Pakistan did not have a policy on the war on terror, APP reported. "Our policy is ready," he said, adding that Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi would visit the US in the first week of May to share this policy with the American administration. President Asif Ali Zardari might also visit the US in this regard, he added

US does not want to see Osama in Swat: State Dept
Daily Times, 22 April 2009

LAHORE: A spokesman for the US government has said Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar should not be welcome in Swat. Asked to comment on a statement by the Taliban that the two were welcome there, the State Department spokesman said: "... This is not a place where they should be welcome. ... Violent extremists need to be confronted." He said the US would work with Pakistan and Afghanistan to help root out such extremists

Obama to Host Talks With Afghan, Pakistani Presidents
Washington Post, 22 April 2009

The presidents of Pakistan and Afghanistan will travel to Washington early next month for meetings with President Obama as the administration struggles against daunting hurdles to implement its new strategy for the region. The visits, on May 6 and 7, will elevate to summit level a trilateral exchange begun by the administration with senior aides from each government in late February. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Afghan President Hamid Karzai will meet separately with Obama, and the three will also sit down together, officials said yesterday

US urges Pakistanis to oppose ceding territory to Taliban
Daily Times, 23 April 2009

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Wednesday that Taliban advances pose "an existential threat" to Pakistan and urged Pakistanis worldwide to oppose a government policy yielding to them. Pakistanis "need to speak out forcefully against a policy that is ceding more and more territory to the [Taliban]," Clinton said, underscoring "the seriousness of the existential threat posed to the state of Pakistan by the continuing [Taliban] advances, now within hours of Islamabad.

Reservists Might Be Used in Afghanistan To Fill Civilian Jobs
Washington Post, 23 April 2009

Military reservists may be asked to volunteer to fill many of the hundreds of additional U.S. civilian positions in Afghanistan called for in the Obama administration's strategy for that nation and neighboring Pakistan, officials said yesterday. Although the State Department is still recruiting agronomists, engineers, accountants and other experts for Afghanistan,

"pressure coming from the president for action is making us consider that some of the people might come from the reserves," one senior administration official said.

India ties 'advance' due to Pak threat: US Asian Age, 24 April 2009

April 23: The situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan tops the reasons why the United States is "advancing its relationship with India", secretary of state Hillary Clinton said, while accusing the Pakistani government of "abdicating to the Taliban" and warning that the deterioration of security in Pakistan poses a "mortal threat" to the world. "The US is advancing its relationship with India as part of a wide-ranging diplomatic agenda to meet today's daunting challenges topped by the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan," Ms Clinton told the House foreign affairs committee on Wednesday. "I think the Pakistani government is basically abdicating to the Taliban and to the extremists," she said, calling disgraced Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan "probably the world's greatest proliferator", though she appeared reluctant to link aid to Islamabad with getting information from him.

U.S. Questions Pakistan's Will to Stop Taliban New York Times, 24 April 2009

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — As the Taliban tightened their hold over newly won territory, Pakistani politicians and American officials on Thursday sharply questioned the government's willingness to deal with the insurgents and the Pakistani military's decision to remain on the sidelines. Some 400 to 500 insurgents consolidated control of their new prize, a strategic district called Buner, just 70 miles from the capital, Islamabad, setting up checkpoints and negotiating a truce similar to the one that allowed the Taliban to impose Islamic law in the neighboring Swat Valley.