



IRS Regional Brief
November-December 2013
No. 39

**The India-Pakistan
Peace Process**

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Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif's visit to India in December 2013 extended positive vibes from Islamabad. The trip underlined Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's keen desire for breaking the logjam for resuming the process of composite dialogue, disrupted after the recent ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. However, a series of informal, high-level interactions in November 2013 on the sidelines of multilateral conferences — an Asia Europe meeting (Asem) in Delhi and the Commonwealth Summit in Colombo — yielded no outcome.

Asem of FMs

On 12 November, Pakistan's National Security and Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz met Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) of Foreign Ministers in New Delhi. The two diplomats discussed proposals on strengthening and expanding the existing border supervision mechanism to ensure peace on LoC as well as reviving and upgrading the joint anti-terrorism institutional mechanism. However, nothing was finalised and both sides agreed to follow up through diplomatic channels for certain decisions.⁽¹⁾ Besides, Khurshid firmly told Aziz that Islamabad "must respect India's sentiments, points of view and sensitivities" if it was serious about "a meaningful dialogue" between the two countries.⁽²⁾

Sartaj Aziz also held a brief meeting with Indian PM Manmohan Singh at his residence the same day, and said later, "We reviewed the whole spectrum of relations briefly as Dr Singh expressed his pleasure about the move forward pertaining to the functioning of working groups and progress in relations attained in the recent days."⁽³⁾

Peace Process

On 11 December, while talking to Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan TCA Raghavan, PM Sharif stressed that Islamabad and New Delhi should institutionalise a mechanism of meetings between their national security advisers to discuss matters related to terrorism as it would help allay concerns of the two sides. Regarding the increase in the ceasefire line violations, he said that the existing mechanism on LoC meetings needed to be further strengthened. He remarked: "We have no option but to live in peace in the interest of the people of Pakistan and India... I believe that sincere and constructive measures need to be taken to reduce tension on the LoC and to ensure that the ceasefire agreement of 2003 remains intact."⁽⁴⁾

On 10 December, in his address to the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, PM Sharif said Pakistan and India need to develop mutual trust and shed the burden of the past to ensure peace in the region.

He stated, "The people of Pakistan seek nothing more than peace, both within Pakistan and with all of Pakistan's neighbours. They want safety, security and stability."⁽⁵⁾

On 23 November, speaking at the inaugural session of a three-day 4th Alhamra International Literary and Cultural Conference at the Alhamra Hall in Lahore, PM Nawaz Sharif said that his government was keen to normalise relations with India in order to realise the dream of a peaceful and prosperous sub-continent.

He said, "If India takes one step for good relations, Pakistan will take two. We even want to put an end to visa requirements between the two countries....We want peace with India. We have good relations with China and Iran while our relations with Afghanistan are improving. Hence, we look forward to having good relations with India too."⁽⁶⁾ He also lamented 'Pakistan-bashing' during campaigning for elections in India, which he said would prove counterproductive.⁽⁷⁾

Shahbaz Sharif's visit to India

During 12-16 December, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif visited India at the invitation of his counterpart, (Indian Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. He also met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh effectively as a special envoy of Pakistani PM. The diplomatic nature of Shahbaz's mission was

underscored by the fact that he was accompanied by Tariq Fatemi, the PM's foreign policy adviser. In addition, the presence of Minister of State for Commerce Khurram Dastagir at this meeting and Shahbaz's discussions with the Indian commerce minister signal the keenness of the Nawaz government to move forward on the trade issue.⁽⁸⁾

Upon his arrival in New Delhi, Shahbaz Sharif emphasized that war was not an option for the two countries and called for cooperation between India and Pakistan to combat terrorism and stamp it out from the region. He stated: "'Pakistan itself is a victim of militancy and terrorism. We strongly condemn all shades of militancy.'⁽⁹⁾

At his meeting with Dr. Manmohan Singh, Shahbaz delivered a message from Nawaz to the Indian PM "reaffirming Pakistan's desire for the resumption of the suspended bilateral dialogue, the resolution of disputes over Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek and water issues and for the expansion of trade." Shahbaz and Fatemi also conveyed the PM's wish that Manmohan Singh should visit Pakistan before 2014 parliamentary elections in India. A letter was delivered by Fatemi to Dr. Singh on behalf of PM Sharif which included a roadmap for reviving the peace process and suggested a meeting between the two countries' national security advisers "over the resumption of composite dialogue." Nawaz Sharif, in his letter said his government was willing to go "the extra mile" to improve ties with New Delhi.⁽¹⁰⁾

A joint statement was issued after the interaction between Pakistan's Punjab Chief Minister and his Indian counterpart, wherein "it was mutually agreed to promote cooperation for the common interest of peace, harmony, economic growth and leveraging each other's potential. Recognising the benefits of mutual cooperation, both sides agreed "to facilitate exchange of academicians, experts and researchers and to promote community contacts and understanding through exchange of delegations consisting of professionals and practitioners from different sectors, including agriculture, trade, industry and commerce."⁽¹¹⁾

Eager to ease the power situation in Pakistan, Mr. Sharif paid visits to several coal and solar energy power generation plants in various Indian cities. He was also the chief guest at the World Kabaddi Championship final in Ludhiana.⁽¹²⁾

Trade Talks

On 13 December, a 10-member delegation of Pakistani traders and bureaucrats joined the visiting Pakistani Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif. The visit was aimed at boosting trade ties between Indian and Pakistani Punjab and exploring trade opportunities of mutual interest in sectors "pertaining to agriculture, power, livestock and energy."⁽¹³⁾

While answering media queries, Taariq Bucha, co-chairman of the Task Force on Agriculture of Indo-Pak Business Forum said the most favoured nation (MFN) status granted by India to Pakistan was a mere eyewash as all the duties were still being levied in trade with Pakistan. He added, "If the Indian Government had started levying taxes as per the SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) agreement, the Pakistan government would have moved further by granting the MFN status to India."⁽¹⁴⁾

On 12 December, speaking during an event organized by Sustainable Policy Development Institute (SDPI), Minister of State for Commerce and Textile Industry Khurram Dastagir Khan said that 'stakeholders' in Pakistan are not in favour of liberalising trade regime with India. However, he advocated closer trade links with the neighbouring country, asserting that even "a 10 per cent share in Indian market" will boost the local economy. He emphasised the need for India to remove the non-tariff barriers, saying that trade will create inter-dependency that will eventually lead to peace.⁽¹⁵⁾

On 26 November, a conference to bolster Indo-Pakistan trade talks was organised at Karachi by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) in collaboration with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and Institute of Business Administration (IBA). According to a working paper published by ICRIER, the trade potential between India and Pakistan is estimated to be "around US\$20 billion against the current around \$3bn." In a special meeting on Non-Tariff Barriers at the event, members agreed that both countries should work jointly "to facilitate traders on each side of the border, ease visa regimes, improve customs clearance procedures, open more bank branches near the border, hold business-to-business meetings at sector level to improve understanding of requirements and invest in port infrastructure, among other things." Besides the discussion on non-tariff barriers, three separate parallel discussions were held on "banking, trade in textiles and trade in agriculture."⁽¹⁶⁾

Peace Process and international responses

On 12 December, Special United States Representatives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, James Dobbins, told a congressional hearing that Pakistan had indicated to the US its intention of providing MFN status to India, but might do so after the May 2014 Indian elections. Dobbins said, "The Pakistanis have indicated their intention is... to grant MFN to India. The question is one of timing... I think they may be waiting until a new Indian government takes office." He added the US has been encouraging India and Pakistan to overcome their differences on Kashmir dispute and Afghanistan, while emphasizing that such a course would have a positive effect on Afghan stability.⁽¹⁷⁾ Moreover, he said that the US and India believed that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif could succeed in improving relations with both New Delhi and Kabul.⁽¹⁸⁾

Kashmir and Peace Process

On 4 December, in a brief address at the budget session of the AJK Council, Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif reportedly said that the J&K issue could set off a fourth war with India. The remark drew a prompt retort from PM Manmohan Singh that there was no scope of Pakistan winning any such war in his life time. Almost immediately after the report, Nawaz Sharif's office clarified that the media account was inaccurate. It added that any issue of conflict between Pakistan and India had to be "resolved through peaceful means." Nawaz Sharif's office also said that he considered Kashmir as his prime responsibility and hoped that it would be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people and the UN resolutions.⁽¹⁹⁾

On 5 December, Foreign Office spokesman Aizaz Chaudhry said the Kashmir issue should be resolved peacefully and through "meaningful and substantive" consultation with India. He said, "We believe that Kashmir issue should be resolved peacefully through talks for which we have always urged the Indian government to engage with us in meaningful and substantive talks.... We have always believed that the Kashmiri leadership should be associated with the dialogue process to find a solution to the Kashmir issue. We have also expressed our concern on the human rights violations inside the IHK."⁽²⁰⁾

Water issues

On 21 December, in the final award, handed down nine months after the case was filed against Indian violation of the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960, the International Court of Arbitration (ICA) accepted Pakistan's demand for uninterrupted flow of water and gave India the right to divert water from the Kishenganga River for power generation in Jammu and Kashmir.⁽²¹⁾ The seven-member court, headed by Stephen M Schwebel, unanimously decided that, "at any time at which the daily average flow in the Kishenganga river immediately upstream of the KHEP is less than 9 cumecs, India shall release 100 per cent of the daily average flow immediately upstream of the KHEP into the Kishenganga river below the KHEP." Welcoming the decision, Pakistan's Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Muhammad Asif said: "The ICA has accepted Pakistan's right to the water as a riparian state...the decision will safeguard our water rights." The court also ruled that India or Pakistan could review its decision after a period of seven years from the first diversion of water.⁽²²⁾

Ceasefire violations across LoC

Ceasefire violations across the LoC in 2013 more than doubled in number compared to the total figure for 2012.

On 23 November, Indian media reported that India was planning to erect "a 10-metre high embankment along the 198-km stretch of international border that separates Jammu from Pakistan" to keep 'infiltrators' out.

The wall would be "135 feet wide and pass through 118 villages in the districts of Jammu (72), Kathua (17) and Samba (29)."

Although there is no official estimate yet on the total cost, the Indian home ministry will fund the project, which would be handled by the Indian Border Security Force.⁽²³⁾

On 22 November, the Indian media claimed that Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire by opening fire on Indian positions at forward Balakot sub-sector in Mendhar sector of the LoC in Poonch district. One army soldier was injured in an exchange of firing.⁽²⁴⁾

On 19 December, Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged fire for about ten minutes in Jourian sub-sector of Akhnoor in Jammu district.⁽²⁵⁾

Meeting of DMOGs

On 24 December for the first time in 14 years, Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMO) of India and Pakistan met near Indo-Pak international border in Punjab to discuss the mechanism for reducing tension along the Line of Control (LoC). The joint statement noted that the meeting was held in a “cordial, positive and constructive atmosphere,” and offered a few guarantees that the LoC and the thus far ineffective hotline between New Delhi and Islamabad would be rendered more “effective and result oriented.” The concrete outcome of the joint statement was that “two flag meetings between Brigade Commanders will be held on the Line of Control in the near future, to ensure maintenance of peace and tranquility along the Line of Control.”⁽²⁶⁾

Siachen issue

On 4 December, in an interview with the state-run radio, Pakistan’s National Security Adviser Sartaj Aziz said Indian forces in Siachen posed a serious threat to Pakistan’s environment and urged India to pull out its troops. He said, “Pakistan is a country facing water shortage and Indian forces were damaging the virgin snow of Siachen” on a daily basis, which is one of the largest sources of Pakistani waters. He said that the waste from items of daily use disposed of by thousands of Indian soldiers was threatening the existence of the glacier.⁽²⁷⁾

On 5 December, speaking on the Siachen issue, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman said that Sartaj Aziz's statement for withdrawal of Indian troops from the glacier was about the environmental aspects of the issue. He stated: “This issue can be resolved. We came very close to resolving it in 1989-1992. We hope that India and Pakistan will be able to engage in meaningful talks as part of composite dialogue to resolve this issue based on broad understanding that there should be disengagement of forces and demilitarisation of the area.”⁽²⁸⁾

Conclusion

Pakistan continued to express its desire for resuming the dialogue process through two separate visits to India by Sartaj Aziz and Shahbaz Sharif. However, the Indian government has alternated between setting conditions for reviving formal talks and narrowing the bandwidth for dialogue by cherry-picking issues.

The impasse over renewing composite dialogue is likely to persist until at least India’s general elections, due by May 2014.

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Afghanistan

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Introduction

An American intelligence report warned that the gains the US and its allies made in Afghanistan would be lost by 2017. Some NATO countries expressed commitment to continue with security and training assistance to Afghan security forces beyond 2014, though presently their post-2014 mission remains vague in the absence of any official arrangements with Kabul. Likewise, after Loya Jirga's approval for signing the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement on Karzai's demand, the pact still remains unsigned due to additional conditions put by Karzai on US to agree first. Although the US agreed to wait for signing on Afghanistan's time, the rift between the two countries was apparent, as were the ups and down bedevilling Pak-Afghan ties. Despite Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Kabul to express continued support for the peace process, Afghan skepticism remained. The insurgent leader, Hakimullah Mehsud, was killed in a US drone strike which led to the appointment of Fazlullah as the new head of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Where Pakistan-US relations saw improvement with the decision on resuming the strategic dialogue, both sides remained adamant over the protests Pakistan lodged in reaction to US derailing of peace talks by killing of Hakimullah Mehsud. With US-Afghan ties in friction President Karzai looked to regional countries for future support.

US policy discourse

Afghanistan gains will be lost quickly after drawdown

A new American national intelligence assessment on the Afghan war predicted that the gains US and its allies made during the past three years would likely be eroded by 2017, even if Washington leaves a few thousand troops behind and continues financial support. The report that took input from the country's 16 intelligence agencies, predicted that the Taliban and other powerbrokers will become influential with Afghanistan descending into chaos if Kabul didn't sign a security pact with the US.⁽¹⁾

Allied nations & efforts

NATO's post-2014 Afghan mission uncertain

Some NATO members, Germany, Britain and even Georgia, indicated a willingness to keep troops in the country after their UN-authorized mandate expires on 31 December 2014 under a redefined NATO mission. However, arrangements have yet to be decided between Kabul and NATO. Aimal Faizi, Afghan Presidential spokesman, said NATO has to come up with proposals to discuss with Kabul and Afghanistan prefers an agreement with NATO instead of individual states.⁽²⁾

Cameron visits UK soldiers on unannounced Afghanistan trip

British Prime Minister David Cameron paid a pre-Christmas unannounced visit to his country's troops at Camp Bastion in southern Afghanistan and reiterated that no British forces would be in a combat role there by the end of 2014.⁽³⁾

UN passes resolution on drone strikes after pressure from Pakistan

The United Nations unanimously passed a resolution against US drone campaign in foreign territories. Pakistan, a vocal opponent of the unmanned aircraft strikes had raised the issue at the UN General Assembly. The assembly adopted the resolution calling on US to comply with international law as the 193-member body acted on a range of issues relating mainly to human rights.⁽⁴⁾

Afghanistan: Electoral developments

Abdullah leads in pre-election poll

A pre-election poll conducted by the Democracy International Organization across all 34 provinces and in at least 115 districts revealed that Dr. Abdullah Abdullah is the popular presidential candidate in Afghanistan. Dr. Zalmay Rasoul was the fifth-most popular candidate. Hedayat Amin Arsala, Daoud Sultanzoi and Qutbuddin Helal came at the end. The survey result showed 83 per cent men and 63 per cent women intend to participate in the upcoming presidential elections.⁽⁵⁾

ISAF spokesman discusses election security

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is prepared to help the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in security relating to the spring elections, but would only do it on the explicit request of Afghan officials, said ISAF spokesman Heinz Josef Feldmann. Feldmann reaffirmed ISAF's stance that security for the upcoming elections fell on the shoulders of the Afghan forces as the number of NATO security personnel had gone down now.⁽⁶⁾

UN-facilitated discussions on next Afghan elections

A series of United Nations-facilitated public debates and discussions on the importance of public participation in Afghanistan's Presidential and Provincial Council elections, scheduled for April 2014, was concluded with 13 such discussions, which saw active participation of officials and civil society members. The discussion series that lasted from 3 November-23 December, covered several provinces including Bamyán, Paktya, Kandahar north-eastern Kunduz etc.⁽⁷⁾

Japan partnership strengthens Afghan democracy

The government of Japan extended a grant to the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) to help ensure free, fair, credible elections and a more responsive democracy, following the signing of a US\$ 16.7 million agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at the IEC headquarters in Kabul. This grant will include polling items such as ballot papers, indelible ink and polling station kits, and ground transportation of polling materials across the country.⁽⁸⁾

Afghans apprehensive but cautiously optimistic

Annual Survey conducted by the Asia Foundation across all 34 provinces reflects about 9,260 Afghans' perceptions about the upcoming elections. Despite fears for their lives and crimes there is an optimistic wave among the people where 56 per cent view their lives getting better after the elections. The respondents revealed three key problematic areas, insecurity; corruption and unemployment other than Taliban threats.⁽⁹⁾

US-Afghanistan relations

Pact may extend US troops' stay in Afghanistan

An agreement reached between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Afghan President Hamid Karzai on the wording of bilateral security pact that would allow US troop presence through 2024 and keep the flow of financial assistance to the Afghan government. The document was presented to Loya Jirga for their approval. Kerry denied any sort of "apology" reports as part of the deal that President Obama would send a letter to the Afghan people acknowledging "mistakes" during the 12-year war. Kerry said that the deal was finalized with no US apology forthcoming.⁽¹⁰⁾

Loya jirga approves US-Afghan security deal

The 2,500 Afghan elders attending the four-day-long Loya Jirga, a traditional gathering supported and urged President Karzai to sign the joint security agreement with US before the end of the year. However, Karzai said he would follow jirga's decision under one condition that US forces give assurance of not conducting military operations on Afghan homes else the agreement won't be signed.⁽¹¹⁾

Kerry is confident Karzai or successor will sign Afghanistan security deal

US Secretary of State John Kerry said Afghan officials would approve a security agreement that would allow US forces beyond 2014 in Afghanistan. In an interview to ABC, Kerry said either President Karzai or his successor would sign the pact. Kerry said in case of no security agreement the US was prepared to withdraw all its forces from Afghanistan.⁽¹²⁾

Rockets fired by Taliban hit US Embassy in Kabul

The Taliban struck US Embassy in Kabul by firing rockets that sent hundreds of American diplomats and aid workers based at the mission into fortified bunkers. Afghan officials said that another two rockets hit other parts of the city and that three police officers were wounded when one of the rockets exploded as they were trying to defuse it.⁽¹³⁾

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations

Sharif in Kabul pledges support for peace talks

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Kabul and met President Karzai. During the meeting he supported Afghan efforts to seek peace with the Taliban. Sharif said the recent release of a senior Taliban leader, Mullah Baradar, showed Pakistan's commitment to help bring peace to Afghanistan and Pakistan would continue all possible facilitation needed for the peace process. He assured Karzai of arranging further

meetings of Baradar with the Afghan High Peace Council. An Afghan delegation also travelled to Pakistan to meet with Baradar.⁽¹⁴⁾

Afghans' voluntary return in doubt

Scheduled withdrawal of Nato forces from Afghanistan and the country's uncertain situation has raised doubts about the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Only 31,800 of the total 1.6 million registered Afghans have returned to Afghanistan since January last, said officials of United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR). Pakistan hosts 900,000 registered refugees, but only 16,250 Afghans left for their country in 2013, which is the lowest figure compared with the last few years.⁽¹⁵⁾

Taliban, peace & insurgency

Hakimullah Mehsud killed by drone

The leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Hakimullah Mehsud, was killed in a drone strike. The strike targeted a vehicle, in the Dande Darpakhel town of Miramshah, with four missiles in the north-western region of North Waziristan. Four other people were killed in the strike, including two of Mehsud's bodyguards.⁽¹⁶⁾

Senior leader of insurgent Haqqani network killed in Islamabad

A senior leader of the Haqqani network, Nasiruddin Haqqani, was gunned down by unknown assailants on the outskirts of Pakistan's capital city Islamabad. His body was buried in North Waziristan, apparently without the knowledge of authorities.⁽¹⁷⁾

Fazlullah's appointment backed by Mullah Omar

The appointment of Mullah Fazlullah, the first non-Mehsud chief of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), was possibly done with the backing of Mullah Omar, chief of Afghan Taliban. The reason given is to save the militant organization from splitting. Fazlullah has been remembered from his rule in Swat. He is known for being a strong opponent of peace talks with the Pakistan government. He was selected by a 17-member central shura after three-day long sessions held in North Waziristan region.⁽¹⁸⁾

Pakistani Taliban pick hardliner as leader

The Pakistani Taliban (TTP) governing council appointed the hardline commander Mullah Fazlullah as their new leader. Fazlullah is best known for ordering public beatings, executions and beheadings, and delivering thunderous radio broadcasts.⁽¹⁹⁾

Karzai calls US obstacle to peace in Afghanistan

In an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Afghan President Hamid Karzai escalated his standoff with Washington by calling US "an evil" and both US and Pakistan an obstacle to peace in the war-torn nation. Karzai warned if peace was not restored, the security agreement would be an evil for Afghanistan. And for the US to have the security pact peace cooperation is a must, he added.⁽²⁰⁾

TTP dismisses talks, vows retaliation against 'planned operation'

A spokesman of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Shahidullah Shahid, dismissed the peace talks after Pakistan government's announcement of using force as a last resort. They said they were ready for

battling back the military operation. The spokesman criticized the government saying that like the previous governments this one was a puppet of the United States. “It’s powerless and dollar-hungry,” he added.⁽²¹⁾

US-Pakistan relations

Strategic dialogue with US to resume

The suspended strategic dialogue between Pakistan and US will resume by February 2014 after the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan begins. The Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, said that four of the six working groups which were scheduled to meet before start of the strategic dialogue had already met.⁽²²⁾

Pak-US ties must for stability

While the signing of the proposed US-Afghan security pact remains uncertain, stronger Pakistan-US security cooperation is being sorted out among the defence authorities of the two countries. General Dunford, the US commander of the ISAF in Afghanistan, met the new Pakistani Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Rashad Mahmood and Chief of the Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif, and emphasized broad-based defence ties between the two countries.⁽²³⁾

Pakistan summons US ambassador over drone strike

The US ambassador was summoned to register a strong protest against the killing of Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud in a US drone strike. Pakistan’s Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar said that the drone strike had undercut government efforts to negotiate a peaceful end to the decade-long Taliban insurgency. Earlier, Imran Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) leader, vowed to block NATO supplies from passing through Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province along the Afghan border.⁽²⁴⁾

US shuts cargo routes from Afghanistan over drone protests

The US military halted ground shipments of cargo leaving Afghanistan via a key supply route through Pakistan to ensure the safety of drivers after protests in Pakistan over American drone strikes, a Pentagon spokesman said. The route from Torkham at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to the Pakistani port city of Karachi has been targeted by protesters in Pakistan. The US has other ways to move cargo out of Afghanistan, but they are significantly more expensive.⁽²⁵⁾

US proposed law threatens to squeeze aid if NATO blockade continues

A proposed new US National Defence Authorisation Bill of 2014 threatens to squeeze aid to Pakistan if Nato supply routes are blocked or interrupted. The bill also requires a certification from US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel saying that Pakistan is taking appropriate actions against terrorists along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The key supply line at the Torkham border stays blocked by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), since 24 November 2013 in protest against the CIA-led drone campaign in the tribal areas.⁽²⁶⁾

Pakistan & its struggle against insurgency

CID police arrest key Taliban commander in Karachi

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) of police arrested a key Pakistani Taliban commander, Abu Hamza, during a raid in Karachi's West Wharf area. Chief of CID's investigation unit, Mazhar Mashwani claimed that Muhammad Adnan alias Abu Hamza had been operating for the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and was placed at number 36 in the Red Book, the list of wanted suspects.⁽²⁷⁾

Pakistan deploys first domestic drones

The Pakistan military deployed its first fleet of domestically developed drones. The new Burraq and Shahpar drones will be used by the Pakistani army and air force, said military officials though it is unclear whether the aircraft are armed or unarmed.⁽²⁸⁾

Pakistani Army kills 23 suspected militants

At least 23 suspected militants were killed and 12 wounded when Pakistan Army carried out shelling and ground raids in Mir Ali, a tribal district of North Waziristan. The raid was in retaliation to the suicide attack which was carried out to avenge the death of Hakimullah Mehsud in a US drone attack. Ansar-ul-Mujahedeen, a Taliban faction affiliated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, attacked a military checkpost, that killing at least five-people and wounding 22.⁽²⁹⁾

More levies deployed in Bajaur border areas

The local administration in Pakistan deployed additional personnel of Bajaur Levies in addition to local peace committee volunteers at several posts in the border areas of Nawagai tehsil after a cross-border attack killed a tribesman. The officials said that militants fired several mortar shells from Afghanistan's Kunar province. The attack was strongly condemned by tribal elders.⁽³⁰⁾

Army involving Dir youth in healthy activities

Pakistan army plans to facilitate local youth to take part in healthy and positive activities in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of militants. The Commanding Officer, Colonel Mohammad Nawaz, lauded the role of the people in maintaining peace and discouraging militancy in the district. Jamiat Talaba-i-Islam leaders vowed to eliminate Kalashnikov culture and use of force in educational institutions.⁽³¹⁾

Regional developments

Afghanistan's Karzai presses for Indian support

Afghan President Hamid Karzai during a four-day visit to India encouraged New Delhi to boost investment and military support in his country. While meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Karzai discussed bilateral cooperation on security and defence between the two countries.⁽³²⁾

Afghanistan plans cooperation pact with Iran

President Karzai discussed a deal with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani during a visit to Tehran. Aimal Faizi, Afghan presidential spokesman, said that Afghanistan had agreed to a long-term friendship and

cooperation pact with Iran which would cover long-term political, security, economic and cultural cooperation, regional peace and security.⁽³³⁾

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