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**October 27, 2009**

## Pressure From U.S. Strains Ties With Pakistan

**By [JANE PERLEZ](#)**

ISLAMABAD, [Pakistan](#) — The Obama administration is putting pressure on Pakistan to eliminate [Taliban](#) and Qaeda militants from the country's tribal areas, but the push is straining the delicate relations between the allies, Pakistani and Western officials say.

The Pakistani military's [recent heavy offensive](#) in South Waziristan has pleased the Americans, but it left large parts of Pakistan under siege, as militants once sequestered in the country's tribal areas take their war to Pakistan's cities. Many Pakistanis blame the United States for the country's rising instability.

When Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) arrives in Pakistan this week, as she is scheduled to do, she will find a nuclear-armed state consumed by doubts about the value of the alliance with the United States and resentful of ever-rising American demands to do more, the officials said.

The United States is also struggling to address Pakistan's concerns over the conditions imposed on a new American aid package of \$7.5 billion over five years that the Pakistani military denounced as designed to interfere in the country's internal affairs.

The Obama administration has endorsed the Pakistani Army's recent offensive in South Waziristan, suggesting it showed overdue resolve. But it has also raised concerns about the Pakistani Army's long-term objectives. How South Waziristan plays out may prove to be a bellwether for an alliance of increasingly divergent interests.

The special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, [Richard C. Holbrooke](#), said Friday that the Obama administration would be trying to find out whether the army was simply "dispersing" the militants or "destroying" them, as the United States would like.

From the number of troops in South Waziristan, it was not clear that the army wanted to "finish the task," said a Western military attaché, who spoke on the condition of anonymity according to diplomatic protocol.

The army would not take over South Waziristan as it had the Swat Valley, where the military is now an occupying force after conducting a campaign in the spring and summer that pushed the Taliban out, the officials said.

It remains to be seen how the campaign will play out in a region where the army has failed in the past, analysts said. The army has sent about 28,000 soldiers to South Waziristan to take on about 10,000 guerrillas, a relatively low ratio, according to military specialists.

In all, of the roughly 28,000 soldiers, there are probably about 11,000 army infantrymen, said Javed Hussain, a retired Pakistani Army brigadier. Instead of a ratio of one to one, he said, the ratio should be at least five to one.

The army appeared to have no plans to occupy South Waziristan, but rather to cut the militants "to size," said Tariq Fatemi, who served briefly as Pakistan's ambassador to the United States in 1999.

With the uncertainty of American plans in Afghanistan, and the strong sentiment in Pakistan that India was "up to no good" in the restive province of Baluchistan and the tribal areas, Mr. Fatemi said, the army would not abandon the militant groups that it has relied on to fight as proxies in Afghanistan and in Kashmir against India.

The goal in South Waziristan, Mr. Fatemi said, was to eliminate the leadership that had become "too big of their boots" with the attacks on Pakistan's cities. The army would like to find more pliant replacements as leaders, he said.

The militants' war against the cities in the past three weeks had produced a wave of fear that shored up support for the army to fight back in South Waziristan, many Pakistanis said.

But the terror has also amplified complaints that the unpopular civilian government of President [Asif Ali Zardari](#), who is seen as slavishly pro-American, is unable to cope with the onslaught.

Mr. Zardari, whose relations with the Pakistani military appear increasingly strained, has not addressed the nation since the militants unfurled their attacks or since the army launched the offensive in South Waziristan.

Interior Minister Rehman Malik was pelted with stones last week when he visited the International Islamic University after [two suicide bomb attacks](#) on the campus killed six students, including women.

After the attack at the university, the [government ordered all schools and universities closed](#) in Punjab, the most populous province, a move that affected Pakistani families like never before.

"The impact is being felt in every home, before it was just the North-West Frontier Province," said Jahangir Tareen, a member of Parliament and a member of the cabinet under President [Pervez Musharraf](#).

When schools were ordered re-opened Monday, parents were still unhappy.

"The mood is as bleak as I remember," said a well-to-do parent in Lahore who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. "The government says the private schools must open, but security is up to the schools. Where is the government?"

The range and different style of attacks in the urban areas, particularly in Islamabad, the capital, and the nearby garrison city of Rawalpindi, surprised Pakistani security officials, said a Western diplomat who is in frequent contact with them.

The Pakistani security services knew that sleeper cells had been put in place in both cities in the past six months, but their strength was unknown, the diplomat said. "These were not your scared suicide bomber

boys from the villages, these were well trained commandos,” the diplomat said.

The [assassination of an army brigadier](#) as he drove through Islamabad last week further unnerved people, demonstrating that the militants had a cadre of spotters or observers probably marshaled from the increasing number of students attending radical religious schools in the capital, the diplomat said.

Whatever [President Obama](#) decides about troop levels in Afghanistan, Pakistan sees the United States and [NATO](#) headed for the exits, an outcome that encourages Pakistan to hang onto the militants that it has used as proxies, the Western diplomat said.

The fact that the United States had so far failed to persuade India to restart talks with Pakistan and that it was doing little to curb what Pakistan sees as the undue influence of India in Afghanistan was unsettling for Pakistan, Mr. Fatemi, the former ambassador, said.

On top of everything else, that feeling was driving a surge of anti-American sentiment, even among the elite, some Pakistanis said, increasing the challenges ahead.

“There is a general perception in the educated class that Pakistan is paying a very heavy price for fighting alongside the United States,” said Ashfaq Khan, a prominent economist and dean of the business school at the National University of Science and Technology in Islamabad.

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