

Islamist's prayers answered by U.S. proposed intervention

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The North West Frontier of Pakistan's tribal region is steeped in the history of failed attempts by foreign Imperial forces to subdue the region. From Alexander the Great through Imperial Britain to the Russians -- the ferociously independent tribes of this region have successfully resisted all efforts to subdue them. But the U.S. donkey imagines it can do what other more skilled militaries could not accomplish!

It's 'looking good,' isn't it? American support for an illegal Muslim secessionist group in the Balkans, plans to nuke Iran via its proxy Israel and now a covert/overt intervention where angels fear to tread.

The Islamists couldn't be happier, their ranks will swell to overflowing if American operatives and troops intervene in this region - make no mistake. The thinning ranks of extremists everywhere have just been given a booster shot by who else other than the world's biggest idiot nation, Bush led America - 'well done!'

The Americans fear for the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal so they say! However, if a mushroom cloud does form over mainland USA it will not be from any Asiatic attack, Einstein's first wife could tell you that! Islamists lack skill and expertise in the nuclear field but newly created enemies (from former allies) have ample amounts of both. What a stunningly stupid nation America is!

By all means, intervene in this hotbed and then try and contend with every other region where you have so 'intelligently' created so many enemies - you bunch of yankee doodle vacuum-heads!

Go on give it your best shot!

From the New York Times:

U.S. Considers New Covert Push Within Pakistan

by Steven Lee Myers, David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt.

WASHINGTON — President Bush's senior national security advisers are debating whether to expand the authority of the Central Intelligence Agency and the military to conduct far more aggressive covert operations in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

The debate is a response to intelligence reports that Al Qaeda and the Taliban are intensifying efforts there to destabilize the Pakistani government, several senior administration officials said.

Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and a number of President Bush's top national security advisers met Friday at the White House to discuss

the proposal, which is part of a broad reassessment of American strategy after the assassination 10 days ago of the Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto. There was also talk of how to handle the period from now to the Feb. 18 elections, and the aftermath of those elections.

Several of the participants in the meeting argued that the threat to the government of President Pervez Musharraf was now so grave that both Mr. Musharraf and Pakistan's new military leadership were likely to give the United States more latitude, officials said. But no decisions were made, said the officials, who declined to speak for attribution because of the highly delicate nature of the discussions.

Many of the specific options under discussion are unclear and highly classified. Officials said that the options would probably involve the C.I.A. working with the military's Special Operations forces.

The Bush administration has not formally presented any new proposals to Mr. Musharraf, who gave up his military role last month, or to his successor as the army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who the White House thinks will be more sympathetic to the American position than Mr. Musharraf. Early in his career, General Kayani was an aide to Ms. Bhutto while she was prime minister and later led the Pakistani intelligence service.

But at the White House and the Pentagon, officials see an opportunity in the changing power structure for the Americans to advocate for the expanded authority in Pakistan, a nuclear-armed country. "After years of focusing on Afghanistan, we think the extremists now see a chance for the big prize — creating chaos in Pakistan itself," one senior official said.

The new options for expanded covert operations include loosening restrictions on the C.I.A. to strike selected targets in Pakistan, in some cases using intelligence provided by Pakistani sources, officials said. Most counterterrorism operations in Pakistan have been conducted by the C.I.A.; in Afghanistan, where military operations are under way, including some with NATO forces, the military can take the lead.

The legal status would not change if the administration decided to act more aggressively. However, if the C.I.A. were given broader authority, it could call for help from the military or deputize some forces of the Special Operations Command to act under the authority of the agency.

The United States now has about 50 soldiers in Pakistan. Any expanded operations using C.I.A. operatives or Special Operations forces, like the Navy Seals, would be small and tailored to specific missions, military officials said.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who was on vacation last week and did not attend the White House meeting, said in late December that "Al Qaeda right now seems to have turned its face toward Pakistan and attacks on the Pakistani government and Pakistani people."

In the past, the administration has largely stayed out of the tribal areas, in part for fear that exposure of any American-led operations there would so embarrass the Musharraf government that it could further empower his critics, who have declared he was too

close to Washington.

Even now, officials say, some American diplomats and military officials, as well as outside experts, argue that American-led military operations on the Pakistani side of the border with Afghanistan could result in a tremendous backlash and ultimately do more harm than good. That is particularly true, they say, if Americans were captured or killed in the territory.

In part, the White House discussions may be driven by a desire for another effort to capture or kill Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahri. Currently, C.I.A. operatives and Special Operations forces have limited authority to conduct counterterrorism missions in Pakistan based on specific intelligence about the whereabouts of those two men, who have eluded the Bush administration for more than six years, or of other members of their terrorist organization, Al Qaeda, hiding in or near the tribal areas.

The C.I.A. has launched missiles from Predator aircraft in the tribal areas several times, with varying degrees of success. Intelligence officials said they believed that in January 2006 an airstrike narrowly missed killing Mr. Zawahri, who had attended a dinner in Damadola, a Pakistani village. But that apparently was the last real evidence American officials had about the whereabouts of their chief targets.

Critics said more direct American military action would be ineffective, anger the Pakistani Army and increase support for the militants. "I'm not arguing that you leave Al Qaeda and the Taliban unmolested, but I'd be very, very cautious about approaches that could play into hands of enemies and be counterproductive," said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University. Some American diplomats and military officials have also issued strong warnings against expanded direct American action, officials said.

Hasan Askari Rizvi, a leading Pakistani military and political analyst, said raids by American troops would prompt a powerful popular backlash against Mr. Musharraf and the United States.

In the wake of the American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, many Pakistanis suspect that the United States is trying to dominate Pakistan as well, Mr. Rizvi said. Mr. Musharraf — who is already widely unpopular — would lose even more popular support.

"At the moment when Musharraf is extremely unpopular, he will face more crisis," Mr. Rizvi said. "This will weaken Musharraf in a Pakistani context." He said such raids would be seen as an overall vote of no confidence in the Pakistani military, including General Kayani.

The meeting on Friday, which was not publicly announced, included Stephen J. Hadley, Mr. Bush's national security adviser; Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and top intelligence officials.

Spokesmen for the White House, the C.I.A. and the Pentagon declined to discuss the meeting, citing a policy against doing so. But the session reflected an urgent concern that a new Qaeda haven was solidifying in parts of Pakistan and needed to be countered, one official said.

Although some officials and experts have criticized Mr. Musharraf and questioned his ability to take on extremists, Mr. Bush has remained steadfast in his support, and it is unlikely any new measures, including direct American military action inside Pakistan, will be approved without Mr. Musharraf's consent.

"He understands clearly the risks of dealing with extremists and terrorists," Mr. Bush said in an interview with Reuters on Thursday. "After all, they've tried to kill him."

The Pakistan government has identified a militant leader with links to Al Qaeda, Baitullah Mehsud, who holds sway in tribal areas near the Afghanistan border, as the chief suspect behind the attack on Ms. Bhutto. American officials are not certain about Mr. Mehsud's complicity but say the threat he and other militants pose is a new focus. He is considered, they said, an "Al Qaeda associate."

In an interview with foreign journalists on Thursday, Mr. Musharraf warned of the risk any counterterrorism forces — American or Pakistani — faced in confronting Mr. Mehsud in his native tribal areas.

"He is in South Waziristan agency, and let me tell you, getting him in that place means battling against thousands of people, hundreds of people who are his followers, the Mehsud tribe, if you get to him, and it will mean collateral damage," Mr. Musharraf said.

The weeks before parliamentary elections — which were originally scheduled for Tuesday — are seen as critical because of threats by extremists to disrupt the vote. But it seemed unlikely that any additional American effort would be approved and put in place in that time frame.

Administration aides said that Pakistani and American officials shared the concern about a resurgent Qaeda, and that American diplomats and senior military officers had been working closely with their Pakistani counterparts to help bolster Pakistan's counterterrorism operations.

Shortly after Ms. Bhutto's assassination, Adm. William J. Fallon, who oversees American military operations in Southwest Asia, telephoned his Pakistani counterparts to ensure that counterterrorism and logistics operations remained on track.

In early December, Adm. Eric T. Olson, the new leader of the Special Operations Command, paid his second visit to Pakistan in three months to meet with senior Pakistani officers, including Lt. Gen. Muhammad Masood Aslam, commander of the military and paramilitary troops in northwest Pakistan. Admiral Olson also visited the headquarters of the Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force of about 85,000 members recruited from border tribes that the United States is planning to help train and equip.

But the Pakistanis are still years away from fielding an effective counterinsurgency force. And some American officials, including Defense Secretary Gates, have said the United States may have to take direct action against militants in the tribal areas.

American officials said the crisis surrounding Ms. Bhutto's assassination had not diminished the Pakistani counterterrorism operations, and there were no signs that Mr. Musharraf had pulled out any of his 100,000 forces in the tribal areas and brought them to the cities to help control the urban unrest.

Carlotta Gall contributed reporting from Islamabad, and David Rohde from New York.

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