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U.S. Announces \$2 Billion Military Aid Package to Pakistan

Voice of America reported on October 22 that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has announced an Obama administration pledge to seek \$2 billion annually in military aid to Pakistan over five years "to help that country defeat violent extremism." The report stated that the pledge came at a bilateral dialogue held at the State Department attended by Clinton and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi (shown at a March meeting at left).



VOA cited Clinton's statement that the Obama administration will ask Congress for \$2 billion in military aid for Pakistan for each year from 2012 to 2016. "I want to say publicly what many of us have said privately: the United States has no stronger partner when it comes to counter-terrorism efforts against the extremists who threaten us both than Pakistan," VOA quoted Secretary Clinton. "We recognize and appreciate the sacrifice and service that the men and women, particularly the soldiers of the military in Pakistan, have made in order to restore order and go after those who threaten the very institutions of the state of Pakistan."

The report also cited comments from Qureshi expressing irritation over what he described as U.S. insinuations that Pakistan's effort against terrorism is insufficient. Qureshi said that Pakistan has suffered 30,000 civilian deaths in recent years in a "daily fare of suicide bombings" and other attacks and that 7,000 Pakistani soldiers and police have been killed fighting the terrorists, which he said are more than the combined losses of all NATO participants in Afghanistan. "Nonetheless, it unfortunately seems easy to dismiss Pakistan's contributions and sacrifices. There are still tongue-in-cheek comments, even in this capital, about Pakistan's heart not really being in this fight," he continued. "We do not know what greater evidence to offer than the blood of our people. Madame Secretary, we are determined to win this fight."

[Reuters news](#) also quoted a statement made by Qureshi: "Prophets of doom are back in business, painting doomsday scenarios about our alliance. They are dead wrong."

The report also noted that the discussion takes place amid increased tensions between the United



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States and Pakistan. Operations against al Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border have spilled into Pakistan's North Waziristan region, where terrorists have established relatively safe havens.

The United States has employed missile-firing drone aircraft against the terrorists, and sometimes collateral damages from these attacks has resulted in civilian casualties, raising the ire of Pakistanis. Relations between the two nations also deteriorated after a U.S. helicopter attack across the border killed two Pakistani border guards, prompting Pakistan to close a border crossing near the Khyber Pass to NATO supply convoys for 10 days until apologies were made by U.S. and NATO officials.

[BBC News related](#) that a White House report sent to Congress earlier in October expressed dissatisfaction that Pakistan's army has failed to hold territory it had seized, noting:

"The Pakistan military continued to avoid military engagements that would put it in direct conflict with Afghan Taliban or al-Qaeda's forces in North Waziristan. This is as much a political choice as it is a reflection of an under-resourced military prioritizing its targets."

US officials said Pakistan needed further, specific assistance for the fight against militants.

BBC quoted Vali Nasr, a senior adviser on Pakistan and Afghanistan at the State Department, who told the news network that the battle against Pakistani militants had expanded over the last year, but the summer's monsoon floods had undone a lot of the Pakistani army's efforts. However, said Nasr, the solution was not to withdraw US aid to Pakistan, but rather to assist the Pakistani government and military to strengthen the country's institutions.

"We want to expand the security relationship that Pakistan and the U.S. had in the past under the Bush period to be much broader, to involve things that also matter to Pakistanis and impact their daily lives," Nasr said.

"A relationship means that we don't focus only on things that are important to us, but also things that are important to Pakistanis," Nasr continued. "Average Pakistanis have to see value in their engagement with the U.S. before they subscribe to that relationship."

Apparently, the logic behind the U.S. decision to increase aid to Pakistan is based on the theory that if Pakistanis do not see the value of destroying al Qaeda and other terrorists camped out within their borders, they will at least see the value of receiving an extra half billion dollars in aid over the next five years.

From a purely pragmatic point of view, the idea of paying the Pakistanis to be our allies in the fight against terrorism might have some merit, unless one considers the historic unreliability of paid mercenary armies. In the third century, when the Roman Empire became soft and unable to fill its army's ranks with Romans, they turned to Germanic mercenaries to defend them against the invading barbarian legions. The Visigoths had originally been allowed to take up residence in Rome if they would help defend the empire against its enemies. But the alliance eventually came apart and in 410 A.D. they invaded Italy and sacked Rome.

The British use of German Hessians against the colonists also had ramifications that might provide a lesson for us today. As a [Wikipedia](#) article notes:

The British use of Hessian troops rankled American sentiment, and pushed more loyalists to be in favor of the revolution. The British use of foreign troops to put down the rebellion was seen as insulting, as it treated British subjects no differently than non-British subjects. Pro-British Tories



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believed that the British nature of Americans should have entitled them to something other than mercenary foes.

If we consider the Islamic world as having the same sensibilities as the American colonists in the 18th century, it is easy to see that the employment of Pakistani Muslims against fellow Muslims might "rankle" Muslim sentiment and actually help al Qaeda's recruiting operations. Recall that Osama bin Laden, who was a U.S. ally in the war against the Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan, first turned against the United States because he resented the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia (as part of the operation to free Kuwait from Iraqi troops in 1990), and considered their presence there a profanation of sacred soil.

Even if the cultural and religious challenges inherent in any Western operations in the Middle East could be overcome, there is the matter of our Constitution. For among the many powers granted to Congress by our Constitution, Congress has failed to utilize one that is there (to declare war) but has, instead, utilized one that is not there (to provide foreign aid).

Photo: In this March 24, 2010 file photo Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi shares a laugh with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the State Department in Washington: AP Images



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