

Baluchistan and the Coming Iran War

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Akhbar Khan, a nationalist/independence leader in Baluchistan has been killed by the Pakistani military, in a massive operation that is seriously destabilizing military dictator Pervez Musharraf's regime.

This is natural gas country. This is where China is helping to build a pipeline, which Bush opposes. This is from where commandos are penetrating Iran (according to Hersh). This is where the "west" has been stoking up separatist fires, probably to get Musharraf's army to intervene. Need boots on the ground to encircle Iran. Quetta is capital and in 'Taleban' control. Nevertheless, the killing of Akhbar Khan is really upsetting the country—the whole of Pakistan. Meanwhile, Waziristan is off limits to Paki army, though the locals keep being aerially bombed—mostly by US.

Why should the news from Baluchistan interest us? I'll let you connect the dots by presenting a bit of context and concluding with an article from the Carnegie Endowment, which, I think, will underline the significance of the event for the prospected US attack on Iran.

Pakistani military dictator's regime is very unpopular in Pakistan.

Musharraf, as Bush's ally on the "war on terror," has had to do unpopular things, like deploying 70,000 troops to the North-West autonomous tribal regions (among them Waziristan) to hunt down "terrorists" and such.

He hasn't been successful, but American aerial attacks from nearby Afghanistan have killed alleged "leaders" and sundry civilians, causing a flood of refugees and displacements. Serious Pakistani military casualties have not increased his popularity and neither has the charge that he's allowing American forces to violate Pakistani sovereignty. Musharraf's campaign in Waziristan has failed so thoroughly that the region is now virtually off limits to governmental forces.

Baluchistan is continuous with the Waziristan region. Baluchistan is a western province of Pakistan, constituting about 40% of Pakistan's national surface. Its capital is Quetta, accused by Afghanistan's Karzai (which really means Washington) of being a Taliban stronghold supplying and fueling the Taliban armed resurgence in southern Afghanistan. Musharraf's regime denies it. Nevertheless, Musharraf has re-opened hostility in Baluchistan against the decades-long independists forces, which he's accused of provoking into taking up arms again. Musharraf, throughout the spring of 2006, has come under intense criticism by British, American, and Afghan officials for not doing enough for the "war on terror." The trouble is that if he complies with his allies in the "war on terror," he comes under attack from domestic critics, of which he has legions, including the majority of the people.

The latest developments in the murder of the Baluch leader, Bugti, is a case in point: Pakistan is in an uproar and calling for his resignation.

Why would the axis-of-evil crusaders want to destabilize a crucial ally? They don't "want" to, but they have bigger plans.

The US has three military bases in Baluchistan. They say they are fighting Al Qaeda and Taliban forces in the region. Perhaps. But, Baluchistan borders with Iran to the west. Baluchistan, too, is rich in natural gas and minerals. China is helping the Pakistani government to build a natural gas pipeline from Baluchistan's port of Gwadar to China, a project the Bush administration opposes. The port of Gwadar just happens to be geographically located to overlook the Straits of Hormuz, which the Iranians intend to block if they are attacked. Hormuz is the crucial sea route for international oil distribution.

Coincidence that the US should be interested in "terrorism" in Baluchistan and urging Musharraf to be more zealous at the same time that it is planning an attack on Iran?

An article by the Carnegie Endowment entertains the same thought, albeit to deny it: "The Baluch and the Pakistani think that Washington would like to use Baluchistan as a rear-guard base for an attack on Iran, and Iran is suspected of supporting Baluch [independence] activists in order to counter such a Pakistani-US plot. . . . Some Pakistanis perceive the US using its Greater Middle East initiative to dismantle the major Muslim states and redefine the borders of the region. Some Baluch nationalists charge the US with conspiring with the Pakistani government to put an end to Baluch claims. So far nobody has been able to prove any of these accusations."

No? No matter, the Iranians have been mining their side of the Baluch borders, just in case, and Bugti, Baluch independence leader, has been killed by the diplomatically besieged Musharraf, catapulting the country into a political crisis.

Coincidence? Or are plans for an Iranian attack well on the way?

I remind you that Seymour Hersh, in The New Yorker, has confirmed that US commandos have launched penetration initiatives across Pakistani Baluchistan into Iran.

You can read more here:

http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/08/27/asia/AS_GEN_Pakistan_Tribal

<http://www.newkerala.com/news4.php?actionfiltered=fullnews&id=13371>

<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/001200608291840.htm>

<http://www.dawn.com/2006/08/29/ed.htm>

Here's the Carnegie Endowment's complete article:

<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=848&&prog=zgp&proj=zdrl,zsa>

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