

Pakistan Air Force: no Violations of Air Space. “If ordered, the PAF can shoot down the US drones”

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force has assured the government that no foreign helicopters or fighter planes will be allowed to violate the Pakistani air space in future and if ordered, the PAF can shoot down the US drones.

Air Chief Marshal Rao Qamar Suleman has accepted the responsibility of air surveillance failure but informed the government that the entry of American helicopters into the Pakistani air space was not detected because the radars deployed on the western borders were not active on May 2. He dispelled the impression that the Pakistani radars were jammed.

The success of American operation against Osama bin Laden has raised many questions about the capability of Pakistan Army and Air Force. Tension between Pakistan and the US further increased on Friday after another drone attack in the tribal area. The PAF clearly told the government that they never perceived any threat for urban areas of Pakistan from Afghanistan and that was why the radars deployed close to the western borders were “on rest”. It was learnt that radars deployed on the borders with India and the LoC with the Indian occupied Kashmir are active 24 hours and that was why Pakistan came to know about a possible Indian attack in December 2008 immediately after the Mumbai attacks. It was the evening of December 21, 2008 when Pakistan came to know about the unusual movement of Indian Army and Air Force. When the threat was confirmed, then within minutes Pakistan Air Force night fighters were ordered to fly.

Pakistan has two kinds of radars, high-level radars and low-level radars. High-level radars are meant to protect the air space. Low-level radars are used for training flights. The maximum life of high-level radars is 25,000 hours. These radars need overhauling after three years and they cannot work after nine years. Due to the expensive nature of high-level radars, Pakistan Air Force does not use these machines 24 hours on western borders and that was the reason the American helicopters entered Pakistan without challenge.

It was also learnt that Pakistan Air Force informed the government long ago for the need of a modern surveillance system, which could cover all the areas of Pakistan. On the request of the PAF, the former government made a deal with Sweden and China for the purchase of modern aircraft with radar systems.

The PAF has received three Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes from

Sweden and one more will come in June 2011. China has provided one ZDK-03 Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEWC) plane and three more will come at the end of this year. These modern machines will be activated soon and it will cover the whole of Pakistan. In the meanwhile, PAF activated all radars deployed on the western borders after the May 2 incident, which means that foreign forces present in Afghanistan will now be considered as a threat to the security of Pakistan.

Defence sources are of the view that the CIA chief's statement about Pakistan had forced them to think objectively and honestly about our real friends and real enemies. These sources clearly said: "Osama bin Laden declared war not only against America but also against Pakistan Army, we lost 3,500 soldiers, we arrested most of his close comrades but Americans never took us into confidence about the May 2 operation and even after the success of their unilateral operation, they tried to humiliate us in their traditional arrogant style but we will not tolerate their arrogance in future."

When asked why there was another drone attack in North Waziristan on Friday, the defence sources said, "We can stop the drones like we destroyed one Indian drone a few years back at the night time, let the political government allow us and we will not disappoint our countrymen." They insist: "We were not sure about the identity of intruders on May 2 but when the PAF chief came to know about the presence of some helicopters in Abbottabad through the Army, he immediately ordered his night fighters to shoot down the unknown helicopters. Night fighters were in the air within 15 minutes but when they reached Abbottabad, by that time the unknown helicopters had disappeared".

These sources say: "Let them come again from the west or even from the east and the world will see our real action."

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