

# U.S. Military Agenda: Destabilizing Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal?

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Washington has been negotiating secret and “highly sensitive understandings” to “provide added security for the Pakistani arsenal in case of a crisis,” investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reports.

“The secrecy surrounding the understandings was important because there is growing antipathy toward America in Pakistan, as well as a history of distrust,” Hersh writes in the November 16th issue of *The New Yorker* magazine.

“Many Pakistanis believe that America’s true goal is not to keep their weapons safe but to diminish or destroy the Pakistani nuclear complex,” he writes. The arsenal is a source of great pride among Pakistanis, “who view the weapons as symbols of their nation’s status and as an essential deterrent against an attack by India.”

Pakistan keeps its nuclear warheads separate from their triggers to prevent anyone from launching a warhead without at least pausing to put it together. A U.S. rapid-response team of terrorism and nonproliferation experts is stationed at the ready at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, is at the ready to fly to Pakistan if the security of any of its 80-plus nukes is threatened.

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari “spoke with derision” in an interview about U.S. concern over the vulnerability of his country’s nuclear arsenal, Hersh said. “In your country, you feel that you have to hold the fort for us. The American people want a lot of answers for the errors of the past, and it’s very easy to spread fear. Our Army officers are not crazy, like the Taliban. They’re British-trained. Why would they slip up on nuclear security? A mutiny would never happen in Pakistan.”

Moreover, an unnamed senior Pakistani official said to have close ties to Zardari added, “you’d like control of our day-to-day deployment. But why should we give it to you? Even if there was a military coup d’etat in Pakistan, no one is going to give up total control of our nuclear weapons. Never. Why are you not afraid of India’s nuclear weapons?”

The official answered his own question with, “Because India is your friend, and the longtime policies of America and India converge. Between you and the Indians, you will fuck us in every way. The truth is that our weapons are less of a problem for the Obama Administration than finding a respectable way out of Afghanistan.”

A former senior U.S. intelligence official told Hersh the Pakistanis gave the U.S. intelligence about their warheads, some of the warheads’ locations, and their command-and-control

system. However, a U.S. military spokesman for Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "I am not aware of our receipt of any such information."

In the July/August issue of *Arms Control Today*, Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, former director of the Department of Energy's intelligence operation, warned of the "lethal proximity between terrorists, extremists, and nuclear weapons insiders" in Pakistan. "Purely in actuarial terms, there is a strong possibility that bad apples in the nuclear establishment are willing to cooperate with outsiders for personal gain or out of sympathy for their cause. Nowhere in the world is this threat greater than in Pakistan..." He added, "Anything that helps upgrade Pakistan's nuclear security is an investment" (in America's security).

The question of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is made more perplexing by U.S. efforts to pursue its Afghan enemies on Pakistani soil and involve that country's military in its operations. Sultan Amir Tarar, a retired Pakistani intelligence official, told Hersh that the U.S. campaign will backfire. "The Americans are trying to rent out their war to us." If Obama persists, he added, "there will be an uprising here, and this corrupt government will collapse." Tarar is further quoted as saying, "The longer the war goes on, the longer it will spill over in the tribal territories, and it will lead to a revolutionary stage."

Tarar believes the U.S. has to negotiate with the Afghan Taliban, even if that means direct talks with Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, Hersh reported. He noted that stepped-up fighting in the tribal areas of Pakistan could further "radicalize" that nation.

How respect for the U.S. is declining in Pakistan was reflected by a source described as "a retired senior Pakistani intelligence officer" who told Hersh, "My belief today is that it's better to have the Americans as an enemy rather than as a friend, because you cannot be trusted. The only good thing the United States did for us was to look the other way about an atomic bomb when it suited the United States to do so."

And in India, which has been at loggerheads with Pakistan since the 1947 partition, an official told Hersh, "They like us better in Pakistan than you Americans. I can tell you that in a public-opinion poll we, India, will beat you."

Former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, currently living in exile in London, told Hersh that he is troubled by U.S.-controlled Predator drone attacks on targets inside Pakistan, which began in 2005. "I said to the Americans, 'Give us the Predators.' It was refused. I told the Americans, 'Then just say publicly that you're giving them to us. You keep on firing them but put Pakistan Air Force markings on them.' That, too, was denied."

Speaking of Predator attacks, Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai told Hersh, "What the (Pakistani) Army did not understand, and what the Americans don't understand, is that by demolishing the house of a suspected Taliban or their supporters you are making an enemy of the whole family."

The issue of nuclear weapon instability in Pakistan reflects on the series of historic American decisions to

(a) manufacture and use atomic weapons in World War Two in the first place,

(b) to spend literally trillions of taxpayer dollars over the years to increase their numbers and lethality and

(c) to help nations such as Israel, India and Pakistan to build their nuclear arsenals over the objections of the international authority.

(d) The U.S has also sold warplanes capable of carrying nuclear bombs both to hostile neighbors India and Pakistan, further increasing the possibility of their use.

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