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## PAKISTAN

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# U.S. arms package for Zia unsettles India

by Daniel Sneider and Paul Zykofsky

After a spate of signals from the Haig State Department, it was no surprise when reports were leaked last week in the press that a \$1 billion arms and economic aid package was being prepared for Pakistan. In testimony before the Senate and House on the administration's foreign assistance proposals, Haig and lesser State Department officials emphasized the importance of Pakistan in the geostrategic policies for that region.

On March 24 the *New York Times*, in an obviously calculated "leak," reported that the administration was prepared to offer a two-year package, \$500 million yearly of which \$400 million would be in the form of military credits. This compares to a \$400 million two-year package offered Pakistan by the Carter administration—and rejected as "peanuts"—half of which was earmarked for military assistance.

The news of this massive arms inflow to the shaky military dictatorship of Gen. Zia Ul-Haq in Pakistan has created tremors in neighboring India.

Indian Foreign Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao told the Indian parliament that the Indian government had warned the United States of the destabilizing effect this would have on the region and their view that the weapons would end up being used against India. Rao also took note of the reports that arms flows to the Afghan rebels would be carried out through Pakistan, and pointed out that such a move by Pakistan would violate its non-aligned nation status.

This Indian view is widespread in the press as well. Writing in the Indian newsweekly *New Wave* on March 15 in response to rumors of such a Reagan move, Satchit Anand said, "Memories are notoriously short but not so short as to have obliterated the lessons of what happened when, in earlier years, the United States supplied massive arms to Pakistan for the same purpose of containing the Soviet Union. Pakistan waged three wars against India with these arms. In the process Pakistan was weakened after each war. Far from strengthening Pakistan, American arms supplies created chaos and confusion in the country, and the rulers, when not fighting against India, used the arms to suppress the democratic aspirations of

their own people."

Despite claims from both the previous and current U.S. administration, and the Zia regime itself, that Pakistan seeks assistance because of its "frontline" status against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, there is evidence to the contrary. During this entire period, not one single unit of Pakistani troops has been redeployed to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area. Approximately 80 percent of Pakistani forces remain stationed in positions aimed at India, not the Soviet Union. The administration faces considerable resistance in the Congress to providing arms aid on this scale to Pakistan. During the Carter administration, the Symington Amendment was invoked to bar such aid to Pakistan on the grounds of the evidence that the regime was carrying out an extensive program to construct a nuclear weapons device.

### Geopolitical arguments

The argument put forward by Haig and others is simply that by moves to reassure Pakistan of a U.S. commitment to their defense, the need for such things as a bomb will disappear. The geopolitical argument was typically put forward by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs Jane Coon before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The official told congressmen that "Pakistan is now a frontline state facing 85,000 Soviet troops across its border. . . . Pakistan's strategic location, at the eastern flank of the Persian Gulf, makes it very important that we and our allies undertake a major effort to help Pakistan resist Soviet pressures and to become stronger and more self-confident."

Needless to say these arguments do not admit the anti-Indian content of this policy. The *Washington Post* reported last week that the administration had explicitly decided not to take into account Indian objections in formulating the aid package. The *New York Times* reported that some administration officials feel the best way to deter Pakistan from constructing a nuclear bomb clearly meant for India was to offer to "rewrite its 1959 security pledge to Pakistan, promising to come to Pakistan's defense in case of an *attack by India* [emphasis added]."

The Zia regime will probably never exist long enough to collect its payoff. Its instability, despite numerous press claims that it has weathered the latest heavy storm of internal protest, is undeniable.

This was reflected by the regime itself when, a day before the report of the arms package appeared, Pakistani Foreign Minister Aga Shahi went to great pains in a *Washington Post* interview to make it clear that they wanted the aid to be constructed in such a way that they would not look like "a tool of Washington." Even so, the regime already bears that mark in the eyes of its population and neighbors.