

Emulate Operation Abbottabad? No India can't

ABHIJIT IYER-MITRA

A mere three days after the elimination of Osama bin Laden, two of India's service chiefs made statements to the effect that India's armed forces were both 'competent' and 'had the capability' to carry out a similar operation. This seems to be at variance with the facts and also ignores much deeper operational and doctrinal issues, added to the military's seeming inability to grasp geopolitical reality.

Beginning with capability - photos of the crashed chopper from the Abbottabad compound indicate a heavily stealthy version of the Blackhawk, a version never seen before - and probably one that would have never been seen had it not crashed. That India could manufacture a covert-ops stealth helicopter, given that it is still struggling to indigenize the ostentatiously 'indigenous' Dhruv, stretches credibility to the limit. The live link to the White House which enabled the joint special operations command (JSOC) to give critical directions at critical turns is heavily dependent on advanced satellite communications facilities of which India has no demonstrated capability and is excluded from, due to the refusal to sign the communications

interoperability agreement (CISMOA) with the US.

One also needs to remember that unlike the West, India has no significant heliborne combat rescue capability or experience - a prerequisite for covert insertions of this kind. Since after 1991, the West has successfully rescued every one of its downed pilots, even in the face of overwhelming odds. Contrast this with Kargil in 1999, where Indian aviators were downed owing to lack of counter-measures on their aircraft. In addition, those that did eject on the wrong side of the border did not have the training to evade capture nor the Air Force a credible extraction capability. Moreover the Mi-8/17's (the backbone of India's helicopter fleet) crudeness should be contrasted with the sophistication of Pakistan's latest F-16 fighters mated to advanced air-to-air missiles and the Aspide surface to air missiles. The Mi-8 incidentally is the same machine that was shot down by 80s era Stinger missiles in Kargil, indicating that the Air Force had not factored it in as threat even a full decade later.

The creation of a joint chief of the armed forces was torpedoed by both the Navy and the Air Force fearing Army domination of any such institution - effectively ruling out any synergistic effort on the

Sharif was criticized, proved by the release of recorded conversations that blew the cover off one of India's highest value intelligence assets the surveillance system that had enabled these recordings of the

Defence programme that drove Pakistan's recent expansion of its nuclear arsenal. This is a heavy price to pay given that most DRDO programmes are proven failures. As for RAW evidently the Indian media

is able to locate wanted fugitives with greater accuracy than a 'professional' organization as India Today's exposé on Dawood Ibrahim's hiding place in Karachi proved.

Geopolitically an operation like this would be a disaster since Pakistan could then justify shooting down Western planes claiming ignorance of their origin - crippling the latter's targeted elimination operations in the FATA - a significant own goal the Americans would not take kindly to. Also one must remember that Pakistan's eastern border is guarded by twenty strong divisions, all on high alert, while the western border merits a mere five weak divisions, trained to

treat air incursions as both routine and authorized. While India may be able to launch some haphazard strike - whether it can militarily or diplomatically contain the fallout remains doubtful. The option of

targeted assassinations has long existed - but raises questions as to why the military never presented it as an option before - settling instead for the dangerous delusion of 'Cold Start'. In fact the drones that India could use for such an operation have high radar visibility optimized for Israeli operations where the opposition has no credible air defence as opposed to the Indian scenario where the opposition has mauled the Indian Air Force repeatedly.

Given that the then Army Chief's lack of knowledge of ammunition stocks led to stalemate instead of victory in 1965, given that the Army initially tried to hush up Kargil, given that the official war histories of 1965 and 1971 are off-limits - even to those studying in the defence academy, given that 'Cold Start' is proving itself an unusable liability, given that the military takes decades to gauge and respond to new threats (if at all), the question begs asking - Is not the political leadership's distrust of the military legitimate? One can only hope that the advice given to the Prime Minister in private is of better quality than the wild hyperbole fed to the public.

The writer is Research Intern, IPCS. By arrangement with IPCS, New Delhi.



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A tale of engagement and estrangement

MOHAMMAD ALI SATTAR

THE United States established diplomatic relations with Pakistan on October 20, 1947. The relationship since then was based primarily on U.S. economic and military assistance to Pakistan. The history of US-Pakistan relations is more than 60 years now and mostly, US had relations with the military dictators who were Presidents at different periods. Ayub Khan in the 50's and 60's, Zia-ul-Haq in the 80's and Musharraf in the 2000's.

The political leaders failed to impress upon the people with their socio-economic manifesto. At no time in the last 60 years did the prospect of democracy look bright in the turbulent Pakistan. There has been a gross power imbalance between Pakistan's generals and politicians. Pakistan turned into a grazing land for the military rulers.

Ever since the division of the sub-continent in 1947, the region had been a key strategic point for greater powers, especially America. Those were days of bitter cold war with intense feeling of distrust between the two super powers. The political and administrative departure of the British in 1947 left the Indo-Pak politics susceptible. Leaders on both sides of the fence were busy fixing their newly built homes. India could afford to concentrate on the foreign affairs at the early stages, but that was not the case for Pakistan.

India warmed up with Soviet Union. Pakistan was left in the lurch. It was natural that Pakistan would become an easy destination for the US. Amid concerns about Soviet expansion the US and Pakistan signed a mutual defence agreement. US military aid to Pakistan between 1953 and 1961 was 508 million dollars.

The US-Pakistan relations have been extraordinarily volatile. It's been a topsy-turvy marriage and largely a function of

twists and turns of the Cold War. An intimate partnership prevailed in the Eisenhower, Nixon, and Reagan years, and friction occurred during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter presidencies. Since the Cold War ended, the partnership has shriveled. Interestingly the US has suspended aid to the country numerous times from 1965 through 1999 over issues of regional conflict with India over Kashmir, democracy concerns, nuclear weapons and security issues. In 1958, US and Pakistan signed a cooperation agreement. Later in 1965, US cut off aids to

of 3.2 billion dollar comes from the Washington in 1981.

The death of General Zia along with US ambassador in a mysterious plane crash, Benazir's election victory in 1988, her dismissal in 1990 on charges of corruption and incompetence made the political conditions restive. The same year US suspends military aid under the provision of the Pressler amendment. Two years on, US relaxes sanctions against Pakistan to allow food and economic assistance to non-government organizations.

In 1998, Pakistan conducts its

2002-2003 financial year. President Bush in 2003 also announced a five-year 3 billion dollar package for Pakistan.

All these went on amidst tension and suspicion between the two. Numbers of issues that still trouble US relations with Pakistan are human rights, narcotics, missile and nuclear proliferation. Most troubling to some analysts are continuing questions about Pakistan's relationship with terror networks.

Tragedy for Pakistan is its gradual submission to US wills. On one hand, democracy took continuous beating and on the other Pakistan had to compromise a great deal of her freedom and sovereignty to the US. Fighting the Taliban for the US had been a grueling experience.

The tragedy has been compounded by frequent bombings by militants in different cities of Pakistan, civilian deaths by US drone attacks and serious economic hardship. All these make things look portentous for otherwise a prospective country.

The Osama issue is the latest snag. US mission to kill Osama inside Pakistan without informing the Pakistan authority is a huge embarrassment to Islamabad government and certainly a breach to its sovereignty. And discovering Osama's hideout on its territory is an added discomfiture, something Pakistan will have to work hard on to explain. It will also have to do away with the impression of being sponsors of terror on its land. Inter-Services Intelligence, ISI is looked upon as possible sponsors of terror groups.

With Osama's death a big US mission has been achieved. Now remains the Taliban in Afghanistan. US-Pak relations will be revised in a newer context. US-India relations will play a vital role in the matter.

Can Pakistan turn around to protect its sovereignty or continue playing the US poodle?



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both India and Pakistan for their conflict over Kashmir. US never treated Pakistan as a trusted ally. It's been a rapport imposed by the US. Pakistan had always been a second fiddle, while India enjoyed the privilege of being a prospective economic and political power of the region. In 1975, during the time of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, US resumed its financial aid to Pakistan. Again in 1979, military aid to Pakistan was suspended after Pakistan constructed a uranium enrichment plant. Very next year, things turned sour for the US with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Soon the US pledged military assistance to Pakistan. A lucrative five-year economic and military package

nuke tests after India explodes several devices and earns US wrath. Clinton administration sets up five non-proliferation benchmarks for Pakistan and halted nuclear testing. The administration also imposes restrictions on use of its 140 million dollar economic and agricultural aid to Pakistan.

The 1999 take over by General Pervez Musharraf saw another sanction by the US. Pakistan, viewed as a crucial ally during the past fifty years, received nearly 12 billion dollars in aid between 1947 and 2000. However, aid started flowing into Pakistan after 2001 September attacks through 2005.

For instance, Islamabad received 1.5 billion dollars for

House Armed Services Committee votes against new START

THE House Armed Services Committee voted on a number of amendments to the 2012 defense authorization bill that if they became law would limit the Obama administration's ability to implement a nuclear-arms reduction treaty with Moscow.

On all four amendments related to the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), the committee voted straight down party lines 35 to 26, with Republicans voting for amendments that would restrict implementation of the treaty.

The White House signed the New START treaty with Russia in April 2010.

During the lame duck session following November congressional elections, the Senate ratified the treaty in December and it went into effect in February.

The treaty restricts the number of nuclear weapons each country may have and puts into place a new inspection regime. It would reduce the number of deployed nuclear warheads for the United States and Russia to 1,550 each.

Each now has about 2,200 deployed warheads and thousands more in storage or awaiting disposal.

Opponents expressed concern that the treaty would weaken the United States' nuclear weapons capabilities while not necessarily reducing Russia's inventory.



WASHINGTONPOST

Loss of carrier strike capability top concern of Royal Navy Chief

THE head of the Royal Navy says retaining Britain's carrier strike capability would have been top of his "wish list" if the recent strategic defense and security review were to be rewritten.

First Sea Lord Adm. Sir Mark Stanhope told the parliamentary defense committee that if Britain still had a carrier available, it would be deployed off the coast of Libya helping to enforce U.N. Resolution 1973.

Giving evidence alongside the heads of the Army and Air Force on the impact of last year's defense review, Stanhope said that retaining HMS Ark Royal and its fleet of Harrier strike aircraft



would have been his top priority if the government's strategic defense review and associated four-year defense spending plan could be revisited. Britain's Navy was hard hit by the latest round of defense cuts with frigates, destroyers, an aircraft carrier and support ships all being pensioned off. The other two services also suffered heavy cuts, particularly the Royal Air Force.