

THE NEXT MUJAHADEEN?

Walter Pincus reads the 1513 page Defense Appropriations Bill, so you don't have to. And he finds reason to worry about something that I was already worried about. For over a year, the US has been supporting Pakistan's Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force in the tribal areas of Pakistan that does in those areas what Pakistan's regular military cannot do.

The Frontier Corps is a federal paramilitary force stationed in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan Province, known as FC NWFP and FC Balochistan, respectively. Both forces are separate entities that operate under the Federal Interior Ministry and are each headed by an Inspector General (IG). Both of these offices are invariably held by army officers (major generals) on deputation from the Pakistani Army.

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The task of these forces is to help local law enforcement in the maintenance of law and order when called upon to do so. Border patrol and anti-smuggling operations are also delegated to the FC. Lately, these forces have been increasingly used in military operations against insurgents in Balochistan and militants in FATA.

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The United States has been supporting the Frontier Corps for the last few months with provisions of the latest communication equipment and bullet-proof helmets (Dawn, December 6, 2006; <http://www.state.gov>). Lately, it has made increased financial commitments toward the Corps capacity building, but without a mechanism to closely monitor implementation of the reforms, progress

is not guaranteed.

Pincus confirms that there is a \$75 million appropriation for goodies for the Frontier Corps in the Appropriation Bill. And he reports that one purpose of it is to get our Special Forces into the tribal areas.

One purpose for the new money may be to increase the presence of U.S. Special Forces on Pakistani soil in support of the Frontier Corps. Adm. Eric T. Olson, head of Special Operations Command, visited Pakistan last fall and included a stop at the Frontier Corps headquarters.

Pincus notes the precedent for the kind of language used with the appropriation: Vietnam and Central America.

Congress added two unusual clauses in the authorization. It said the assistance will be provided "in a manner that promotes observance of and respect for human rights" and "respect for legitimate civilian authority within Pakistan." In the past, that type of language has been associated with training by U.S. personnel that also could involve them taking part in counterterrorist or counterinsurgency missions. That is what happened to Special Forces in Vietnam in the 1960s and in Central America in the 1980s.

It appears that Congress has learned its lesson from those two precedents—it is trying to tie the appropriation to better reporting on Pakistan, and increased efforts on the part of the Pakistani government to crack down on Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Congress wants to keep track of the new money as well as what is happening along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The

Pentagon must send a budget to six House and Senate committees before spending the Pakistan Frontier Corps funds.

Congress also required a Pentagon report by March 31 that details Pakistani government efforts to eliminate terrorist havens and block cross-border movement of al-Qaeda and Taliban forces along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. It must include an assessment of whether the Islamabad government is "making a substantial and sustained effort" to achieve these objectives.

The language contains a provision that says if the March 31 deadline is not met, the United States cannot make payments to Pakistan for its military expenditures until the report is delivered to Capitol Hill.

I can't shake the feeling that these oversight requirements may end up being another Boland Amendment—a piece of paper that an aggressive President ignores to wage war on his own terms. And given what happened the last time we trained and equipped people in Pakistan's tribal areas, and given Pakistan's apparent inability to ensure the loyalty of all its military, I really wonder whether this is such a good idea.