

US NEGOTIATORS LEAVE PAKISTAN, SUPREME COURT COMMISSION BLAMES HUSAIN HAQQANI FOR MEMO

There are two separate major developments coming out of Pakistan in the last 24 hours. First, US negotiators have left Pakistan without reaching an agreement on reopening NATO supply routes. Both sides appear to be trying to gloss over the obvious conclusion that this represents a major breakdown in the process, but since it appears that Pakistan is insistent on a real apology over the killing of 24 Pakistani troops last November and a stop to US drone strikes in Pakistan, there is no reason to continue the lower level talks on details of route reopening until the larger political issues are settled.

On a separate front, the commission appointed by Pakistan's supreme court has finally delivered its report and it places blame squarely on former ambassador Husain Haqqani for authoring the memo that sought US help in avoiding a military coup days after the US raid that killed Osama bin Laden. Haqqani has been ordered to return to the country, but he is rightly pointing out that the commission's findings are not the result of a judicial process and that he has not yet presented his defense.

Dawn provides a summary of the breakdown in negotiations:

The Pentagon said on Monday the United States was pulling its negotiators from Pakistan but the State Department said the team could go back at an appropriate time.

Pakistan's Ambassador in Washington, Sherry Rehman, also indicated that the talks would continue.

But diplomatic observers in the US capital noted that “no spin can hide the fact that relations between the two countries are at their worst now”, as one of them said on an American news channel.

“I believe that some of the team left over the weekend and the remainder of the team will leave shortly,” Pentagon Press Secretary George Little told a briefing in Washington. “This was a US decision.”

The Express Tribune offers more details:

Officials familiar with the development said the two sides have almost worked out technical details on the resumption of Nato supply lines but the deal could not be finalised due to political issues, including the US refusal to offer an explicit apology for the Salala raid and halt drone strikes.

“Unless the US offers something that resembles an apology, it is very difficult for Pakistan to reopen Nato supplies,” said an official familiar with the development.

“We want to have a package deal and the issue of apology is still included ... there will be no compromise on it,” the official added.

The US appears to be taking a very hard line at this point. Reuters quotes a “senior US government official”:

“If the civilian government in Islamabad would bite the bullet and make the political decision to open the ground lines of communication, that would deflect some of the negativity right now,” the official told Reuters.

“It wouldn’t automatically turn things

around, but that would be an important step.”

The US negotiating teams that had been in Pakistan had been there about six weeks. There appears to be no date set for their return. The Express Tribune article notes that “Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar is expected to meet a senior US official this week on the sidelines of a regional conference on Afghanistan in Kabul” in what appears to be the only ongoing attempt to continue dialogue.

Meanwhile, the pressure has been turned up significantly on Husain Haqqani. From the Washington Post:

A three-member judicial commission has concluded that then-Pakistani ambassador to the United States Husain Haqqani was behind a memo sent to U.S. officials seeking Washington’s help in averting a military coup in Pakistan, television channels reported Tuesday.

The panel said Haqqani was “not loyal” to the Pakistani state while serving as its ambassador and sought to undermine the country’s nuclear assets, armed forces and the intelligence agency.

The probe report also says that Haqqani had not accounted for \$2 million spent from a secret fund of the Pakistani Embassy in Washington.

The New York Times carries Haqqani’s response:

Mr. Haqqani, who resigned his post in November, did not testify before the commission. Speaking by phone from the United States, he rejected the commission’s findings as “political and one-sided.”

“I am being hounded for the perception that I was pro-American,” he said. “The inquiry commission is not a court, and

those claiming it has determined guilt or innocence are wrong.”

/snip/

Mr. Haqqani also offered a veiled attack on the judiciary, which historically has sided with Pakistan’s generals rather than its civilian leaders, saying that he “refuses to let his patriotism be judged by those who had endorsed martial law regimes and had even given the right to military dictators to amend the Constitution.”

I’ve always been of the opinion that Mansoor Ijaz and his neocon backers from the US are much more to blame for this fiasco than Haqqani, who seems to me to have been manipulated into his actions that embarrassed the civilian government at the expense of the military. This latest development does nothing to change my opinion on that front and I expect Ijaz to continue behaving in a way that undermines the civilian government while deflecting blame from himself and onto Haqqani.