

PAKISTAN'S PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR END TO DRONES, COVERT AGENTS IN NEW GUIDELINES FOR US RELATIONSHIP

In a key step toward the re-opening of NATO supply lines, the Parliamentary Committee on National Security presented a new set of guidelines for the relationship between the United States and Pakistan that was passed unanimously by Pakistan's Parliament as a four page resolution. The New York Times brings us the highlights of the resolution:

In a rare show of unity, the government and opposition joined on Thursday to present the United States with a list of stringent demands, including an immediate end to C.I.A. drone strikes, that were cast in uncompromising words but could pave the way for a reopening of NATO supply lines through the country.

After two and a half weeks of contentious negotiations, the main parties agreed on a four-page parliamentary resolution that, in addition to the drone demand, called on the Obama administration to apologize for American airstrikes in November that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. It declared that "no overt or covert operations inside Pakistan shall be permitted" – a broad reference that could be interpreted to include all C.I.A. operations.

Of course, despite the strong need to re-open supply lines that have been closed since

November, the US already is saying that ending drone strikes entirely is out of the question:

Even though the US is willing to address Pakistan's concerns on certain issues, it is highly unlikely that the Obama administration would revisit its CIA-piloted drone campaign in the tribal regions, an American diplomat, requesting anonymity, told *The Express Tribune*.

"The US can accommodate Pakistan's concerns by reviewing the mechanism under which the drones operate but it is not possible at this stage that the entire campaign is brought to a halt," he maintained.

Now that Parliament has had its say, the process moves to the government establishing the final policy. It will be very interesting to see how the government proceeds on this issue, since it has on one hand an extremely rare unanimous move by Parliament and on the other a complete refusal of the primary demand by the US. Clearly the US is hoping that a change to how drones operate in Pakistan will be acceptable, but the government will risk a strong backlash in Parliament if it is seen to not uphold the spirit of the PCNS guidelines.

More details on the guidelines come from Dawn:

The 14-point recommendations presented by PCNS chairman Senator Raza Rabbani, say that US footprint in Pakistan must be reviewed. This would mean an immediate cessation of drone attacks inside Pakistan cessation of infiltration into Pakistani territory on any pretext including hot pursuit.

Pakistani territory including its air space shall not be used for transportation of arms and ammunition to the Nato forces in Afghanistan.

The recommendations also say that Pakistan's nuclear program and assets including its safety and security cannot be compromised.

The US-India civil nuclear agreement has significantly altered strategic balance in the region and therefore Pakistan should seek from the US and others a similar treatment.

The strategic position of Pakistan as well as India on the subject of FMCT (Fissile Material Cut off Treaty) must not be compromised and this principle be kept in view in negotiations on this matter.

Pakistan should seek an unconditional apology from the US for November 26, 2011 unprovoked Salala check post incident.

Those held responsible for Mohmand Agency attack should be brought to justice. Pakistan should be given assurances that such attacks or any other acts impinging on the country's sovereignty will not recur.

Ministry of Defense and Pakistan Air Force PAF should formulate new flying rules for areas contiguous to the border.

As per revised recommendations no verbal agreement regarding national security shall be entered into by the Government or any department or organization with any foreign Government or authority.

Pakistan also is clearly still upset about the Raymond Davis affair. From the Times article:

It states that "no private security contractors or intelligence operatives shall be allowed" – a clear reference to longstanding popular fears that private security contractors are infiltrating

the country on behalf of the C.I.A.

For those in the US who will be offended by Pakistan's demands and who claim that Pakistan does nothing to earn the massive funding we provide, it should be noted that the UN has documented that over 180,000 people have fled fighting between government troops and militants that Dawn describes as linked to the Taliban or al Qaeda in the Khyber region since a government offensive began in January. The Khyber Pass is one of the main routes employed in the NATO supply lines.

Although the PCNS resolution passed Parliament unanimously, there still is resistance among some religious conservatives:

"You want to feed them so they grow stronger and attack us?" asked Maulana Samiul Haq, Chairman of the Difa-e-Pakistan Council (DPC), in reference to reopening Nato supply routes.

The comments came during a press conference with Jamaat-e-Islami's provincial chief Professor Ibrahim at the Markaz-e-Islami. Haq said that the DPC is standing firm against reopening the Nato supply routes and added that parliament's decision to reopen the routes will not be an easy decision to make.

Dawn has more of Haq's remarks:

"We will stop Nato supply and in case any mishap happens, the entire responsibility will be with the government as Americans on the pretext of provision of protection to its supply will try to push its forces into Pakistan," he said.

Mr Haq said supply of foodstuff to Americans in Afghanistan was un-Islamic as they would consume liquor and pork

and kill Muslims for no fault of theirs
and that was why DPC was opposed to such
food's passage through Pakistan.

The next few weeks for the Gilani government
will be very trying, as it is tasked with
finding a path between two mutually exclusive
and uncompromising positions.