BORDER POST ATTACK FALLOUT CONTINUES: NO OBAMA APOLOGY; PAKISTAN THREATENS WOT ROLE

[youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BSoEeLgnm0[/youtube]

Pakistan and the US continue to provide widely differing accounts of the NATO attack on two border posts just inside the Pakistan border that killed 24 Pakistani troops early Saturday morning. Although both sides have adjusted their stories somewhat in the intervening time, the US still claims that NATO forces were under fire from across the border and Pakistan insists the attack was unprovoked.

Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relations released a video of the aftermath of the attack. More description of the video is provided by Dawn, but the presence of the large, established buildings at the peak of the mountain ridge fits with this description quoted in my post from Wednesday:

> "This was a visible, well-made post, on top of ridges, made of concrete. Militants don't operate from mountaintops, from concrete structures."

Meanwhile, as MadDog pointed out, the New York Times reports that the Obama administration has decided not to have the President issue a formal apology:

> On Monday, Cameron Munter, the United States ambassador to Pakistan, told a group of White House officials that a formal video statement from Mr. Obama was needed to help prevent the rapidly deteriorating relations between

> Islamabad and Washington from cratering, administration officials said. The ambassador, speaking by videoconference from Islamabad, said that anger in Pakistan had reached a fever pitch, and that the United States needed to move to defuse it as quickly as possible, the officials recounted.
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> Defense Department officials balked. While they did not deny some American culpability in the episode, they said expressions of remorse offered by senior department officials and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton were enough, at least until the completion of a United States military investigation establishing what went wrong.
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> Some administration aides also worried that if Mr. Obama were to overrule the military and apologize to Pakistan, such a step could become fodder for his Republican opponents in the presidential campaign, according to several officials who declined to be named because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Gosh, yes. Foreign policy should always be conducted with an eye toward not giving the pack of frothing curs (no offense, MadDog!) chasing the Republican Presidential nomination any red meat! In the meantime, in this same article, a "former senior American official" told the Times that the attack on the posts lasted only 15-20 minutes and was at the end of a running battle with the Taliban. Pakistan continues to maintain that the attacks lasted nearly two hours and were unprovoked.

In addition to Pakistan boycotting the upcoming conference on the future of Afghanistan, Pakistan now is threatening to discontinue its role in the War on Terror:

> "Enough is enough. The government will not tolerate any incident of spilling

> even a single drop of any civilian or soldier's blood," The News newspaper on Thursday quoted Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar as telling a Senate committee on foreign affairs.
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> "Pakistan's role in the war on terror must not be overlooked," Khar said, suggesting Pakistan could end its support for the U.S. war on militancy. Despite opposition at home, Islamabad backed Washington after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

However, in a bit of extremely bad timing, it appears that a government office in Peshawar was bombed early this morning, illustrating that Pakistan has its own internal terrorism threat. Choosing just which terror sources not to fight could become difficult.

Adding further to the cross-border confusion, we learn that two Pakistanis were killed by NATO troops about 15 miles inside Afghanistan. Relatives claim the two were in Helmand Province to visit family. Also, seven Pakistanis have been kidnapped near Kabul.

In a more promising development, though, we see that a border incident involving heavy artillery fire was defused prior to any loss of life:

> A cross-border incident involving NATO and Pakistani forces was quickly defused early on Wednesday with no loss of life, according to Brig. Gen. Carsten Jacobson, the spokesman for the American-led international coalition here.
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> Few details of the incident were immediately available but it apparently involved heavy artillery fire across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in Afghanistan's Paktika province.
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> /snip/
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> In the latest border incident, General

> Jacobson said it was reassuring that normal channels of cooperation and communication had been opened to resolve the issue.
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> “We haven’t got the details yet but the most important thing is the normal methods of cooperation worked and there were no casualties, no damage despite heavy firing,” he said.

If the “normal channels of cooperation and communications” “opened” and “worked” in this case, why didn’t they work on Saturday morning? It’s especially troubling that the AP account of this story, carried in Dawn, has as its headline “Pakistan resumes some cooperation: Nato”. If it turns out that the NATO attack on the border posts did indeed continue for nearly two hours despite communication from Pakistan, it would appear that it has been NATO’s lack of cooperation on communication that created the current crisis, not Pakistan’s.