



# Why is the US military clashing with its Pakistani ally?

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A strange thing is happening in Pakistan. It was reported that US and Afghan army had 'exchanged fire' with Pakistani forces. A Pakistani military unit had opened fire on a US helicopter as it crossed the border from Afghanistan into Pakistan. But aren't those two countries meant to be allies in the so-called war on terror?

The Pakistani government is worried that the USA is going to attempt to send a large military force into its country, as part of its war against the rebels in Afghanistan.

Of course the fear of the Pakistani government must be seen in context of how the US attempts to bully its supposed friends. Ex-president and military dictator Pervez Musharraf wrote in his biography of how the US threatened to bomb Pakistan into the stone age if it did not support the war on terror. In 2007 Barack Obama threatened to carry out missile strikes in Pakistan if it did not pursue the war on terror effectively enough. No wonder Pakistanis are concerned!

Obama's comments represent a wing of the US ruling class which thinks that Pakistan is an unruly child, not doing what its told. They are deeply suspicious of the ISI, the hated Pakistani secret police, which maintains close connections with various radical Islamic groups, and no doubt some elements of what the press call the 'Taliban' resistance. The US believes that Osama Bin Laden, apparently last heard from in May 2008, is hiding out in the North of Pakistan in an area bordering Afghanistan called the North West Frontier Province. That is of course if he is still alive, which many now doubt. Back in July 2008 Bush signed a presidential order which authorised US Special forces units to cross the border into Pakistan without the permission of the Pakistani government. So Pakistan is concerned for its sovereignty. They don't want the USA effectively invading the north of their country in pursuit of Afghan fighters, but the USA wants to be able to 'smoke out' the resistance wherever they are. Despite repeated promises by the USA to respect Pakistan's borders, these are not worth the paper they are written on. Already several missile attacks by unmanned drones have killed scores of people, and helicopters are constantly crossing the border. In early September the Pakistani government agreed a motion that authorised Pakistani military forces to shoot at anyone crossing their border. Although some Pakistani military claimed to have fired at US helicopters in the last few weeks, this was denied by the US military until the end of September.

The US's policy is driving one of its key allies in the region away. Both governments are now furious with each other and the Pakistani military is as willing to defend its country as the US military is willing to go to any lengths to hunt and destroy Afghan resistance forces. This is just another sign of how the USA's aggressive policy of imperialist occupation and bullying is raising instability and conflict around the world. The Pakistani workers and peasants, who are in an ever more bitter struggle against rising inflation and poverty at home, and for their democratic rights, need to come to the head of the struggle against imperialist interference in the region, by taking power into their own hands and spreading revolution across south and central Asia.

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