

Where Are All The KLB Bashers?

November 2009 by Ibrahim Sajid Malick



Do you wonder why have the Pakistani pundits stopped complaining about imperialist tyranny and exposing the onerous conditions of Kerry-Lugar Bill? Why all of a sudden KLB is a non-issue? I was curious and I spend last several days in Washington DC trying to understand how Obama administration managed the PR fiasco. Conversations with several insiders and subject matter experts point to a set of meetings on October 19th in Islamabad. General David Petraeus and US Senator John Kerry reached Islamabad on Sunday (October 18th). It was reported in local media that the meetings were about Waziristan operations but in reality talks with top Pakistani General were limited to the \$7.5 billion dollar aid package. "They wanted to understand how this aid package violates Pakistan's sovereignty. And, they wanted to hear it from the horses mouth," said a diplomatic source.

Gen. Patreaus and Sen. Kerry were sent to Pakistan after US President Barack Obama signed a record 7.5 billion dollar package tripling non-military aid to the nuclear-armed Muslim nation to boost its campaign against a virulent Islamist insurgency. Although the Zaradari government defended the package, Pakistan's powerful military sparked a domestic showdown, expressing grave reservations about conditions that hinge some of the funds on efforts to battle Islamist extremism. The bill prevents the funding from being used for nuclear proliferation, to support militants or to attack neighboring countries — namely India — and calls for a cut-off in aid if Pakistan fails to crack down on extremists.

United States Central Command chief Gen David Petraeus and Chairman Senate Foreign Affairs committee Senator John Kerry on Monday October 19th held separate meetings with the Pakistan Chief of Army Staff Gen Ashraf Kayani and the outcome of those meetings were an immediate yanking of the anti-KLB campaign from Pakistani private TV channels. When Central Command chief Gen David Petraeus went to the GHQ he categorically told Gen Kayani to

halt anti-KLB campaign. "Gen. Kayani was told in absolutely clear terms that the Obama administration will not tolerate another Honduras," said a source very close to this conversation.

It is interesting that three of my sources mentioned Honduras while talking about the possible outcome of anti-KLB campaign in Pakistan.

On June 28th Honduran soldiers roused democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya from his bed at gunpoint and flew him to Costa Rica. The coup d'état was the first in Central America in over a quarter century. The coup, led by the Honduran Gen. Romeo Vasquez, was condemned by the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, the Organization of American States and all of Honduras' immediate national neighbors.

The Obama administration initially did not legally classify Zelaya's ouster as a coup, which would automatically trigger a suspension of aid. However the administration subsequently suspended military cooperation with the country.

Honduran controversy has been extremely embarrassing for the Obama administration which had come to power on the rhetoric that America should seize supporting tyrants and military dictators.

In Pakistan, Zardari administration was portrayed by the media as too deferential to the United States. Pakistani journalists who unconditionally support their Army started the campaign against KLB and coalesced anti-Western politicians, and Muslim fundamentalists — implausibly claiming that Pakistan's sovereignty was undermined and the country could end up as a U.S. neo-colony. Some of it is untrue!

To begin with, Pakistan has been an American neo-colony for last six decades and most of that time it was under a military dictatorship. And, most importantly Pakistan has been an American satellite state because of its army.

Pakistan's military operates on the U.S. financial and technological assistance and it will receive even more support in the near future as it targets Taliban strongholds. Therefore conditions placed by the U.S. Congress on \$7.5 billion in economic aid to Pakistan over the next five years should not have been of major consequence to Pakistani generals.

Sen. Kerry brought the carrot while Gen. Patreus had the stick. Gen. Kayani was assured that his military will get monies and equipment that he has asked for but if he pulled a fast one, the Obama administration would at once sever its ties with Pakistan army.

Sen. Kerry's meeting was held earlier in the day and Gen. Patreus arrived at the GHQ in the afternoon. General Kayani counseled his peers and advisors and by the end of October 19th and it was decided that Kerry-Lugar Bill will not be publicly condemned. Five Pakistani journalists were contacted the very same night and told not beat the dead horse.

It is undoubtedly true that Pakistani government is too deferential to the Americans. Not that I condone it but this is not new. Bone of contention here was the 'non-military' aid. This aid package was historic because it earmarked monies for health, education, infrastructure and civil society. Pakistan army felt left-out. Although Pakistan army has backed out of KLB but democratic government is still hanging on the balance. NRO, food security, energy crisis all loom over Zardari's head.

Pakistani media is packed with stories of corruption – same TV anchors who had become Hugo Chavez of Pakistan on army's behest opposing Kerry-Lugar bill have now launched vociferous campaign against Zardari government exposing corruption of ruling politicians. Not a single anchor has ever asked what happened to corrupt Generals. Why are corrupt army officials beyond criticism?

From trafficking heroin to grabbing precious land; from taking kick-back on purchase of equipment (sub-marines included) Pakistan army has looted everything we have ever had. Why then, I wonder, Pakistanis only discuss civilian corruption? Managing PR fiasco was easy for the Obama administration. They had to remind the source of opposition of an old proverb: you can't bite the hand that feeds you. Pakistani Generals understood and complied.

Source: <http://ibrahimsajidmalick.com>