



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 11, 2010

## Pakistan Reopens Torkham Crossing to NATO

Pakistani authorities on October 10 reopened the Torkham border crossing into Afghanistan for NATO forces, ending an 11-day blockade. The Pakistani government imposed the blockade in response to a September 30 NATO airstrike at the border post, which resulted in the killing of three Pakistani troops. On October 5, the United States took responsibility for the helicopter attack and issued an apology, explaining that the pilots mistook the soldiers for insurgents. "We deeply regret this tragic loss of life and will continue to work with the Pakistan military and government to ensure this doesn't happen again," said General David H. Petraeus.



The Torkham crossing provides a vital supply route for necessities such as fuel, clothing, and military vehicles to troops in Afghanistan.

According to Fox News, the blockade endangered NATO convoys: "The closing of the Torkham crossing to NATO vehicles stranded many fuel tankers at parking lots and on highways where they were vulnerable to militant attacks. More than 150 trucks were destroyed and some drivers and police were wounded in the near-daily attacks."

But the blockade did not have as dramatic an impact on the flow of supplies to troops as it may have in the past, since NATO has decreased its reliance on Pakistan in lieu of Central Asian routes to northern Afghanistan. Approximately 40 percent of NATO's non-lethal supplies are now shipped through Pakistan, as opposed to the 80 percent that once was. The Central Asian routes allowed NATO troops to remain supplied throughout the Torkham blockade.

With the Torkham crossing now reopened, NATO forces will have further access into Afghanistan to provide the much-needed supplies, and the dangers plaguing NATO vehicles will be minimized as they will no longer be stranded at the border, though they will continue to face [threats](#) from the Pakistani Taliban.

"I am very happy that our difficult days have finally ended and we are through now. I am thankful to the government of Pakistan for ending our hardship," remarked driver Khan Rehman immediately before he drove the first truck over the crossing into Afghanistan at approximately noon.

For News reports, "By early afternoon [October 10], around 10 vehicles had crossed into Afghanistan through Torkham and authorities were working to clear hundreds that had been stranded for days, said customs official Ataur Rehman."

"We have cleared a bunch of oil tankers and containers after customs formalities, and the first few vehicles have already crossed the border," added Rehman.

But even though NATO may once again use the Torkham crossing to transport supplies into



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Afghanistan, there is no doubt that the September 30 NATO airstrike further strained already aggravated relations between the Pakistani government and NATO forces. Pakistan is disgruntled with NATO and the United States over the increased number of drone attacks against militants on the Pakistani side of the border. In the month of September alone, the United States is believed to have launched over 20 missile strikes on militant insurgents, double the amount of the previous month. Pakistan has officially opposed the drone program.

NATO, on the other hand, views the difficult Pakistan-NATO relationship as resulting from Pakistan's failure to assist NATO. "For the Western world, Pakistan seems to have become a rapidly growing staging point for militants who attack our troops in Afghanistan. We say Pakistan could do more to restrain the militants, but hasn't taken adequate steps," explained an Islamabad NATO official. However, the release of Wikileaks documents revealed that there is more to it than that. As Dennis Behreandt [summarized](#) for *The New American* in July: "According to the leaked documents ... the entire ISI [Pakistan's secret intelligence agency] is supporting Taliban and insurgent operations in Afghanistan."

In discussing Pakistan's relationship with NATO, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik claimed, "We will have to see whether we are enemies or allies." But the leaked documents show that the role of Pakistan's ISI in Afghanistan is that of an enemy, not a friend.

*Photo: AP Images*



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