



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 27, 2011

Pakistan Retaliates Against NATO After Soldier Killings

"Pakistan's sovereignty was attacked early this morning," said Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani the day of the incident. "This is our Pakistan and we have to defend it." Other Pakistani officials also vented their fury over the attack and demanded swift retaliation.

Citizens were outraged, too. Headlines in national newspapers spoke of "murders" and an act of war. According to news reports, thousands of Pakistanis [protested](#) the attack as well, shouting "down with America" at U.S. diplomatic posts across the country.



"America is attacking our borders. The government should immediately break ties with it," a Pakistani housewife at an anti-American demonstration in Karachi was [quoted as saying](#) by the Reuters news agency. "America wants to occupy our country but we will not let it do that."

Pakistani officials will now have an even tougher time defending their controversial relationship with the U.S. government. American taxpayers provide billions of aid to the regime each year. In exchange, however, the government of Pakistan is expected to support the war against terror and offer tacit authorization to drop bombs from drones. Both policies were already deeply unpopular among the citizenry even before the most recent killings.

Details of the November 26 attack on the Pakistani military base still remain sketchy. But according to early [news accounts](#), NATO forces on the ground in Pakistani territory came under fire from the installation — or at least from the general vicinity. Following the gunfire, which Pakistani officials said did not come from their base, air strikes were called in. Fighter jets and helicopter gun ships responded, killing more than two dozen Pakistani soldiers and wounding at least 13 others. A NATO investigation and an inquiry by the government of Pakistan are both ongoing.

"It is a very tragic incident and it couldn't come at a worse time," said Brigadier General Carsten Jacobson, a NATO spokesman in Afghanistan. "We are all aware of the grave consequences that an incident like this can have."

In phone calls with Pakistani officials, Obama administration figures apologized profusely. According to White House spokesman Tommy Vietor, U.S. officials expressed "our condolences, our desire to work together to determine what took place, and our commitment to the U.S.-Pakistan partnership which advances our shared interests, including fighting terrorism in the region."

NATO boss Anders Fogh Rasmussen also expressed his "deepest condolences," noting that the military alliance would work with Pakistan to prevent similar tragedies going forward. "We have a joint interest in the fight against cross-border terrorism and in ensuring that Afghanistan does not once again become a safe haven for terrorists," Rasmussen was quoted as saying.

But it was not enough. Hundreds of trucks carrying supplies for the NATO occupation force in neighboring Afghanistan are stranded after Pakistan shut down the border crossing. "NATO forces



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should respect the feelings of the Pakistani nation,” [said](#) Interior Minister Rehman Malik, noting that the NATO supply routes — which account for about half of the U.S.-led coalition’s supplies — were being shut down permanently.

Following the killings and the ensuing retaliation, U.S. lawmakers on both sides of the aisle insisted that the Pakistani government must continue to cooperate in the terror war and the occupation of Afghanistan. At least two Senators appeared on Fox News over the weekend, once again [threatening](#) to cut off American taxpayer aid to the regime in Islamabad if it refused to offer appropriate assistance in battling U.S. government enemies.

NATO leaders have repeatedly expressed outrage over the Pakistani government’s failure to pursue the terror war with sufficient devotion despite the billions in U.S. taxpayer-funded aid each year. In fact, according to senior American defense officials, Pakistan’s intelligence services have even been aiding and abetting groups accused of attacking U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

“The [anti-American] Haqqani [terror] network ... acts as a veritable arm of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency,” U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen [told lawmakers](#) in September during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. “In choosing to use violent extremism as an instrument of policy, the government of Pakistan — and most especially the Pakistani army and ISI — jeopardizes not only the prospect of our strategic partnership, but Pakistan’s opportunity to be a respected nation with legitimate regional influence.”

Last month, NATO-backed Afghan “President” Hamid Karzai [vowed](#) to side with Pakistan if a war were to break out between the U.S. government and the Pakistani regime. Most Western and Afghan officials downplayed the remarks, but some analysts said it was a serious statement that needed to be taken into account, especially because more than a few experts have been predicting such a war for years.

In the meantime, the current war to prop up Karzai will continue until at least 2014. But the Obama administration has been scrambling for years to get the Taliban to negotiate, so far without success.

The hard-line Islamic group, once a close U.S. ally, has steadfastly refused to talk, even with the prospect of massive concessions including a potential leadership role in the Afghan government. “We are winning, why should we negotiate?” a high-ranking Taliban official stated last year.

With supply lines for the occupation through Pakistan closed indefinitely, NATO will have to route its material through various central Asian countries. It remains unclear, however, exactly how the Pakistani government’s retaliation will affect the ongoing war in Afghanistan or the [U.S. assassinations of militants](#) on Pakistan’s side of the border.

Photo of Pakistani protesters: AP Images

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