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Pakistan: Chronology of Recent Events

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Summary

This report provides a reverse chronology of recent events involving Pakistan and Pakistan-U.S. relations. Sources include, but are not limited to, the U.S. Department of State, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Dawn* (Karachi), *Daily Times* (Lahore), *News International* (Karachi), and major newswires. For a substantive review, see CRS Issue Brief IB94041, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations*. This report will be updated regularly.

- 05/24/05** — New York-based Human Rights Watch accused the U.S. government of “turning a blind eye” to the alleged torture and illegal detention of two U.S. citizens in Pakistan. On the same day, Pakistan reported arresting seven foreigners near the Afghan border who were suspected of having links with militant groups.
- 05/22/05** — **Rockets fired by a U.S. helicopter reportedly killed five Pakistanis** in a North Waziristan town one kilometer from the Afghan border. Artillery shells fired by U.S.-led forces pursuing a small group of insurgents also reportedly fell in Pakistani territory.
- 05/20/05** — Police in Multan reportedly arrested three alleged Al Qaeda collaborators.
- 05/19/05** — Two U.S. citizens of Pakistani origin claimed that they had been detained in Pakistan for nine months, and were beaten by Pakistani agents and interrogated by F.B.I. agents before being released without charges. On the same day, Pakistan’s navy chief said that the new port at Gwadar would not be used for military purposes.
- 05/18/05** — **The House passed H.Res. 272**, recognizing the historic steps India and Pakistan have taken toward achieving bilateral peace. On the same day, security agents in Lahore reportedly arrested two members of the outlawed Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorist group.
- 05/17/05** — **Information Minister Rashid said that President Musharraf “will continue as president after 2007.”** Opposition parties condemned the announcement as evidence of “dictatorial designs.” Musharraf himself later called the announcement a “personal opinion, not my own.”

Acronyms:

LOC: Line of Control (Kashmir)
MMA: Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
PPP: Pakistan People’s Party

- 05/16/05** — A U.S. Army colonel said that **insurgents continue to cross into Afghanistan to attack U.S.-led forces** there before returning to Pakistan.
- 05/15/05** — President Musharraf claimed that Pakistan had “broken their [Al Qaeda’s] back” with recent arrests. On the same day, *Newsweek* magazine apologized for a recent story which alleged desecration of a Koran at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay. The Islamabad government later reiterated its demand for an investigation into the allegations.
- 05/14/05** — Press reports claimed that a U.S. Predator drone had fired a missile on Pakistani territory, killing suspected Al Qaeda explosives expert Haithem al-Yemeni. Pakistan denied the reports. On the same day, police in Lahore used force to disperse a group of human rights activists who had staged a “mixed marathon” including men and women. A former chairwoman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan was among those “brutally dragged” into police vans and detained for several hours. Also, a journalist working for Reuters was shot and injured by unidentified gunmen in a tribal area near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.
- 05/13/05** — Pakistan’s National Assembly passed a resolution condemning the alleged desecration of a Koran at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay.
- 05/12/05** — Foreign Minister Kasuri said that captured militant Abu Faraj al-Libbi would not be remanded to U.S. custody until after standing trial.
- 05/11/05** — An emergency supplemental appropriations bill became **P.L. 109-13**. The bill allows that up to \$1.22 billion in Pentagon funds be used to reimburse Pakistan and other key cooperating nations for their support of U.S. military operations. On the same day, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom released an annual report which claimed that, “The response of the government of Pakistan to persistent and religiously motivated violence in Pakistan continues to be inadequate” and again recommended that Pakistan be designated a Country of Particular Concern. Also, President Musharraf announced that former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif would not be allowed to return to Pakistan from exile to participate in planned 2007 elections. Finally, Interior Minister Sherpao said that captured militant Abu Faraj al-Libbi was behind a July 2004 attempt to assassinate PM Aziz.
- 05/10/05** — After consulting with the Indian and Pakistani governments, **the World Bank named a Swiss engineer to serve as Neutral Expert** to address the dispute over a dam India is constructing on the Chenab River in Baghliar, Kashmir. On the same day, the Islamabad government expressed “serious concern” to U.S. officials about allegations that a copy of the Koran had been desecrated at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay. A State Department spokesman later called any such desecration “abhorrent” and said the allegations would be “thoroughly investigated.” Also, tribal leaders in the southwestern Baluchistan province said that “peace has collapsed” there due to alleged central government malfeasance. Finally, U.S. and Pakistani officials met in Islamabad for three days of negotiation on a Bilateral Investment Treaty.
- 05/09/05** — A *Newsweek* magazine report alleging that a copy of the Koran had been desecrated at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay allegedly spurred four days of violent anti-U.S. protests in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, although senior U.S. and Afghan officials later disputed the connection. On the same day, Pakistan’s National Assembly passed a resolution

condemning the publication of a “derogatory” cartoon about Pakistan in the *Washington Times*. Also, police in the southern Sindh province reportedly arrested five members of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorist group wanted in connection with sectarian attacks that left 15 Shiites dead in 2003. Finally, a senior Pakistani air force officer said that Pakistan and China had agreed to begin co-production of at least 400 new JF-17 “Thunder” fighter aircraft.

- 05/08/05 — Information provided by captured militant Abu Faraj al-Libbi reportedly led to the arrest of six suspected Al Qaeda members.
- 05/06/05 — **The Pentagon notified Congress of two possible Foreign Military Sales to Pakistan** worth up to \$226 million. The deals involve 300 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and 60 Harpoon anti-ship missiles. On the same day, Prime Minister Aziz said that Pakistan would not be open to investment from Indian companies until more progress is made “on many issues, including the core issue of Kashmir.”
- 05/04/05 — **The Islamabad government announced having captured Abu Faraj al-Libbi**, a Libyan native wanted in connection with lethal attempts to assassinate President Musharraf in December 2003. Libbi, captured in the northwestern city of Mardan, was described by some terrorism analysts as being the third-most senior Al Qaeda operative, although others disputed this claim. President Bush said Libbi was “a direct threat to America” and called his capture “a critical victory in the war on terror.” On the same day, police in the northern Gilgit region reportedly arrested 148 people allegedly involved in 127 cases of sectarian violence there.
- 05/03/05 — **Police in Islamabad and Lahore used batons to break up gatherings of journalists** marking World Press Freedom Day, injuring nine and detaining 30 more. The arrests came hours after Pakistan’s information minister told a seminar that the media was free in Pakistan.
- 05/02/05 — The Commander of the U.S. Central Command, Gen. Abizaid, visited Islamabad for consultations on regional security. On the same day, a Parliamentary Committee on Baluchistan reportedly decided to provide the southwestern province with some \$100 million in gas royalty arrears.
- 04/30/05 — Japan’s prime minister visited Islamabad, where he and President Musharraf agreed to reinvigorate bilateral economic ties in the interest of regional stability.
- 04/29/05 — Education Minister Qazi proposed that the Islamabad government allocate 4% of the country’s GDP to education. This would nearly double current allocations.
- 04/28/05 — A powerful bomb exploded in a remote area of northwestern Pakistan, killing two suspected Islamic militants.
- 04/27/05 — **The U.S. State Department released its *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004***, which called Pakistan one of the most important U.S. partners in the war on terrorism and said Pakistan in 2004 achieved notable gains in efforts to combat terrorism.
- 04/26/05 — The top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Barno, said that the United States was training Pakistani special forces soldiers in night flying and airborne assault tactics.
- 04/21/05 — Hundreds of Pakistani troops reportedly launched search operations for foreign militants in North Waziristan near the Afghan border.

- 04/19/05 — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on “Combating Terrorism With Education,” concentrating on the Middle East and South Asia. On the same day, a senior Pakistan military official warned of military operations in North Waziristan if tribal leaders there did not take action to expel foreign militants from the region.
- 04/18/05 — Following meetings between President Musharraf and Indian PM Singh, **Pakistan and India released a joint statement calling their bilateral peace process “irreversible”** and agreeing to move forward on a broad range of fronts, including increased trade and confidence-building measures related to Kashmir. On the same day, the top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Barno, said that Pakistan was preparing to launch military operations in North Waziristan near the Afghan border. A Pakistani general later denied the claim and called Gen. Barno’s comments “highly irresponsible.” Also, New York-based Human Rights Watch requested that the Pakistani government immediately release thousands of opposition PPP supporters who had been arrested in nationwide sweeps preceding the return to Lahore of Asif Zardari, husband of former PM Benazir Bhutto and leading PPP figure.
- 04/17/05 — India released 156 Pakistani fishermen who had been held for illegal fishing in India’s territorial waters.
- 04/16/05 — **President Musharraf arrived in India** bearing a “message of peace” and declaring his visit “very historic.” On the same day, Asif Zardari, the husband of former PM Benazir Bhutto, returned to Lahore from overseas and was placed in “protective custody” by authorities.
- 04/15/05 — In an effort to block a rally planned to welcome the return to Lahore of Asif Zardari, the husband of former PM Benazir Bhutto, **police arrested thousands of activists of the opposition PPP** and some senior party leaders, and blocked travel routes around the city.
- 04/14/05 — President Musharraf called the new trans-LOC bus service in Kashmir “the first step to converting [the LOC] into a soft border” and reiterated that Pakistan “cannot accept the Line of Control to be a final solution.” On the same day, police in Quetta announced having arrested four suspected members of the sectarian Sipah-e-Sahaba terrorist group for their alleged role in a lethal 3/19 attack on Shia shrine.
- 04/13/05 — **Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld met with President Musharraf in Islamabad** for talks on counterterrorism and other issues.
- 04/12/05 — **H.R. 1553**, to prohibit the provision of military equipment to Pakistan, was introduced in the House.
- 04/08/05 — **A U.S. federal indictment against Pakistani businessman Humayan Khan** alleged that he violated U.S. laws by clandestinely purchasing U.S.-made high technology components then shipping them through South Africa for use in Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program. Khan alleged partner, Asher Karni, an Israeli living in South Africa, has already pleaded guilty for his role. A Pakistani official called the charges baseless.
- 04/07/05 — **A new bus service was launched linking Muzaffarabad in Pakistani Kashmir and Srinagar in Indian Kashmir.** The service is a major confidence-building measure that allows separated Kashmiri families to reunite for the first time since 1947. A State Department spokesman applauded “the courage of the Kashmiri passengers who made this historic

journey” and congratulated “the leaders of India and Pakistan for their vision in launching this initiative on behalf of the people of Kashmir.” On the same day, Japan announced that it would resume yen loans to Pakistan that had been suspended after May 1998 nuclear tests.

- 04/06/05 — The U.S. Agency for International Development announced plans to spend up to \$90 million on a Fulbright Program that will enable up to 600 Pakistanis the opportunity to pursue graduate studies in the United States.
- 04/05/05 — **Chinese PM Wen Jiabao visited Islamabad**, where Pakistan and China signed 22 pacts meant to bolster bilateral cooperation in numerous areas.
- 04/04/05 — The Defense Ministry announced that **Pakistan had signed an agreement to purchase new four naval frigates from China**.
- 04/03/05 — Police in the eastern city of Gujranwala clashed with Islamist protestors who opposed women’s participation in a 10km road race there. Some 900 MMA supporters, reportedly bused into the area from the North West Frontier Province, had attacked race participants.
- 04/02/05 — Police in Karachi arrested five suspected Shia militants who appeared to be planning a major sectarian attack. On the same day, President Musharraf told an audience in Quetta that “the Army is in the barracks and have [sic] no role in politics.” An opposition party parliamentarian later disputed the claim, saying that 831 military officers are employed by federal and provincial government departments.
- 04/01/05 — A nationwide strike organized by the Islamist MMA coalition resulted in **police arresting up to 2,000 protestors in both Lahore and Karachi**. On the same day, a prominent Shia scholar was shot and killed in Lahore in a suspected sectarian attack.
- 03/29/05 — Foreign Minister Kasuri said that **Pakistan was sending “old and useless parts of outdated centrifuges” to international investigators** looking into Iran’s nuclear program.
- 03/28/05 — A State Department report on *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy* noted that, “[Pakistan’s] political parties are generally weak, undemocratic institutions centered on personalities instead of politics.”
- 03/25/05 — **The United States announced that it would resume sales of F-16 fighters to Pakistan**.
- 03/24/05 — Prime Minister Aziz’s cabinet called for **a restoration of a religious column on Pakistani passports**, thus reversing an earlier decision to remove the column. Critics called the decision incompatible with a policy of “enlightened moderation.”
- 03/23/05 — **Twenty Members of the House wrote a letter to President Bush** urging him to block the sale of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan as such a sale would “undermine our long-term strategic interests in South Asia” and “squander an opportunity” to continue building positive relations with India. On the same day, in a Lahore rally organized by the Islamist MMA, **thousands of Pakistanis took to the streets in protest against the government of President Musharraf**.
- 03/20/05 — In a Karachi rally organized by the Islamist MMA, **tens of thousands of Pakistanis took to the streets in protest against the government of President Musharraf**. On the same day, Pakistan freed 529 Indian fishermen who had been held for illegal fishing in Pakistan’s territorial

- waters. Also, rebellious tribesmen surrounded some 300 Pakistani soldiers in the southwestern Baluchistan province.
- 03/19/05** — **At least 40 people were killed and scores injured when a bomb exploded at a religious shrine** in remote part of the southwestern Baluchistan province. On the same day, Pakistan test-fired a nuclear-capable Shaheen II medium-range ballistic missile.
- 03/18/05** — Bombs exploded on passenger trains in the southwestern Baluchistan province, killing two people and injuring another ten.
- 03/17/05** — The U.S. Defense Intelligence Director told a Senate Armed Services Committee panel that “international and indigenous terrorists pose a high threat to senior Pakistani government officials, military officers, and U.S. interests,” and, “If Musharraf were assassinated or otherwise replaced, Pakistan’s leader would be less pro-U.S.” On the same day, Pakistani soldiers used helicopter gunships and other heavy weapons to battle rebellious tribesmen in the southwestern Baluchistan province.
- 03/16/05** — **Secretary of State Rice arrived in Islamabad** where she met with Prime Minister Aziz and President Musharraf and told the Pakistani people that “the United States will be a friend for life.”
- 03/14/05** — U.S. Navy personnel reportedly arrested nine Pakistani nationals and seized nearly three tons of hashish from a ship intercepted off the Pakistani coast. On the same day, two Pakistani doctors were each sentenced to seven years in prison for providing financial and medical aid to Al Qaeda-linked Islamic militants.
- 03/13/05** — Abdullah Mehsud, a former prisoner at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay wanted in connection with the October 2004 kidnaping of two Chinese engineers in Waziristan, was reported to have died of a bullet wound sustained in a 3/5 gunbattle. On the same day, Pakistani security forces reportedly arrested ten Al Qaeda suspects in North Waziristan near the Afghan border.
- 03/10/05** — In the first such admission by a top government official, **Pakistan’s information minister said that A.Q. Khan “has given centrifuges to Iran, but the government was in no way involved in this.”** On the same day, **H.R. 1230**, to extend trade benefits to certain tents imported into the United States from certain Middle Eastern countries including Pakistan, was introduced in the House.
- 03/08/05** — President Bush said the United States is more secure “because Pakistani forces captured more than 100 extremists across the country last year, including operatives who were plotting attacks against the United States.”
- 03/06/05** — While on a visit to Tashkent, President Musharraf signed an agreement to bolster Pakistan-Uzbekistan counterterrorism cooperation.
- 03/05/05** — Pakistani soldiers reportedly killed two Al Qaeda suspects and arrested 11 others in North Waziristan near the Afghan border.
- 03/01/05** — Ruling party parliamentarians allied with Islamists to reject legislation which sought to strengthen national laws against “honor killings.” Secular opposition figures said the development contradicted President Musharraf’s calls for “enlightened moderation.”
- 02/28/05** — The U.S. State Department annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for 2004 found that the Pakistan government’s human rights record in 2004 “remained poor.”