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Pakistan: Chronology of Recent Events

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Summary

This report provides a chronology of recent events involving Pakistan and Pakistan-U.S. relations. Sources include, but are not limited to, major newswires, the U.S. Department of State, and Pakistani news outlets. For a substantive review, see CRS Issue Brief IB94041, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations*. This report will be updated regularly.

- 03/02/06** — **A car bomb exploded outside the U.S. Consulate in Karachi**, killing at least five people, including an American diplomat. The attack, which may be linked to Al Qaeda-allied terrorists, came just two days before President Bush was slated to visit Pakistan. President Bush said the terrorist attack would not alter his travel plans.
- 03/01/06** — **Pakistani soldiers and helicopter gunships attacked a suspected Al Qaeda camp in North Waziristan** near the Afghan border, killing up to 30 militants and spurring anti-U.S. outrage among some local residents.
- 02/28/06** — **President Bush began a four-day visit to South Asia**. On the same day, testifying on worldwide threats, Defense Intelligence Agency Director Maples told a Senate panel that Pakistan and India “continue modernizing their nuclear weapons stockpiles” and “maintain aggressive ballistic missile programs.”
- 02/27/06** — President Musharraf told an interviewer that Pakistan was doing everything possible to combat terrorism, and he expressed certainty that ousted Taliban leader Mullah Omar was not in Pakistan. On the same day, secular and Islamist opposition parties resolved to launch a “final and decisive” campaign to oust Musharraf.
- 02/26/06** — Some 25,000 people in Karachi protested the publication of blasphemous cartoons in European newspapers. A smaller protest was thwarted in Lahore, where police detained several hundred Islamic activists.
- 02/25/06** — New York-based Human Rights Watch urged President Bush to press for restoration of civilian rule in Islamabad during his upcoming trip.

Acronyms:

MMA: Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
PML: Pakistan Muslim League

- 02/24/06** — In an interview on Indian television, President Bush said that while in Islamabad he would “talk about the terrorist activities” and “the need to dismantle terrorist training camps,” among other issues.
- 02/23/06** — Meeting with Pakistani journalists, **President Bush praised President Musharraf** for his courage and commitment to fighting Islamic radicalism, while also insisting that the U.S. commitment to the people of Pakistan is “genuine, real, [and] tangible.”
- 02/22/06** — **In a major speech, President Bush lauded close U.S. relations with Pakistan**, identifying it as a “key ally in the war on terror” and saying the United States wants to “build a broad and lasting strategic partnership with the people of Pakistan.” The President called Pakistan’s scheduled 2007 elections “an important test of Pakistan’s commitment to democratic reform, and the Islamabad government must ensure that these elections are open and free and fair.” He later vowed to encourage Pakistani and Indian leaders to address the “important issue” of Kashmir, where the United States supports a resolution that is acceptable to “all sides,” including the Pakistanis, the Indians, and the “citizens of Kashmir.” On the same day, two Pakistani soldiers were killed and four injured when their convoy was ambushed by suspected separatist militants in Baluchistan.
- 02/21/06** — A Karachi antiterrorist court sentenced 11 men to death for their roles in a failed June 2004 attack on a senior Pakistani general that left 10 people dead. On the same day, several thousand tribesmen gathered in South Waziristan to protest the publication of blasphemous cartoons.
- 02/20/06** — Prime Minister Aziz said that the publication in European newspapers of cartoons deemed offensive to Muslims was an attempt to promote a clash of civilizations. On the same day, two Uzbeks and a Pashtun tribesman were reported killed in fighting in North Waziristan.
- 02/19/06** — President Musharraf began a five-day visit to China to discuss counterterrorism, trade, and technical assistance with top Chinese leaders. On the same day, Pakistan test-fired a nuclear-capable Hatf II short-range ballistic missile. Also, MMA leader Qazi Hussein was placed under house arrest, and police in Islamabad used teargas to disperse hundreds of demonstrators who defied a government ban on public protests.
- 02/18/06** — **The “Thar Express” railroad linking Sindh with India’s Rajasthan state was resumed** after more than four decades in suspension.
- 02/17/06** — The Danish Embassy in Islamabad was closed over security concerns as thousands of protestors continued marching in Pakistani cities and police detained more than 100 Islamic activists, including the founder of the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist group.
- 02/16/06** — Secretary of State Rice told a House panel that the Bush Administration has “pressed the Pakistanis” to hold free and fair elections in 2007. On the same day, Afghanistan presented Pakistan with a list of 150 Taliban militants said to be living in Pakistan. Also, Pakistan’s ruling party condemned the publication of blasphemous cartoons as part of a “vilification campaign” against Islam. Finally, up to 50,000 protestors angered by the cartoons marched in Karachi.
- 02/15/06** — **Afghan President Karzai arrived in Islamabad** for a three-day visit focused on bolstering security along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and Afghan officials reported that recent suicide bombings in Afghanistan appear to have been orchestrated by Taliban fugitives operating out of

Pakistan. On the same day, apparent Baloch separatist **militants shot and killed three Chinese engineers and their Pakistani driver in Baluchistan**. Also, violent protests over blasphemous cartoons continued in Pakistani cities, leaving at least three people dead.

- 02/14/06** — Anger over the publication in European newspapers of cartoons deemed offensive to Muslims led to **violent protests in Islamabad and Lahore**, where two people were killed.
- 02/13/06** — U.S. Navy engineers in Pakistan turned over \$2.5 million worth of construction equipment to their Pakistani counterparts. On the same day, more than 10,000 protestors gathered in Islamabad to condemn the publication in European newspapers of cartoons deemed offensive to Muslims. Also, unidentified gunmen in Lahore shot and killed an elderly Pakistani doctor suspected of ties with Al Qaeda. The shooting spurred a protest by some 500 people chanting anti-American slogans.
- 02/12/06** — Afghan police reportedly seized 700 homemade bombs as they were being smuggled across the border from Pakistan.
- 02/11/06** — Two Pakistani women were reported killed and four children injured by rockets fired by U.S. forces just across the border in Afghanistan. On the same day, President Musharraf said he was “95% sure” that “some foreign terrorists” were killed in a 1/13 missile attack near the Afghan border.
- 02/10/06** — **The State Department’s Bureau of South Asian Affairs was reorganized** to include official responsibility for U.S. diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and the five Central Asian states, and will now be called the Bureau for South and Central Asian Affairs. On the same day, landmine explosions killed two women and an infant in Baluchistan. Also, London-based Amnesty International urged investigations into allegations of serious human rights violations in Baluchistan.
- 02/09/06** — **A suicide bomber killed at least 23 Shia Muslims** taking part in a religious procession, and at least 8 more people were killed and hundreds injured in ensuing sectarian riots 125 miles southwest of Islamabad.
- 02/08/06** — **President Bush exercised his authority to waive coup-related sanctions on Pakistan for FY2006**, finding that such a waiver would facilitate the transition to democratic rule in Pakistan and is important to U.S. efforts to combat terrorism.
- 02/07/06** — Some 5,000 people marched in Peshawar in protest over the publication in European newspapers of cartoons deemed offensive to Muslims.
- 02/05/06** — **A bomb exploded on a bus in Quetta, killing at least 13 people** and injuring 20 others. Police later arrested 11 Baloch tribesmen in connection with the attack. On the same day, six people were killed and at least a dozen others, including women and children, were wounded in a missile attack in Sui, Baluchistan.
- 02/04/06** — Fierce fighting between Afghan security forces and Islamic militants in eastern Afghanistan spread across the border, leaving at least three Pakistani soldiers dead in South Waziristan.
- 02/03/06** — President Musharraf condemned “in the strongest terms” **the publication in European newspapers of cartoons deemed offensive to Muslims**. The Pakistani Senate passed unanimously a resolution denouncing the publication, calling it part of a “vicious, outrageous, and provocative campaign” against Islam. Hundreds of Islamic activists marched in

protest in Pakistani cities. A State Department spokesman said the U.S. government found the images “offensive” while characterizing the issue as a matter of press freedom.

- 02/02/06 — **Director of Intelligence Negroponte told a Senate panel** that Pakistan’s commitment to counterterrorism efforts has enabled some key Al Qaeda captures, but that Pakistan “remains a major source of extremism that poses a threat to [President] Musharraf, to the United States, and to neighboring India and Afghanistan.” He also said Musharraf has made “only limited progress” in democratization efforts. On the same day, Saudi King Abdullah visited Islamabad, where **Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed five agreements** meant to enhance diplomatic, educational, and trade interactions.
- 01/31/06 — **Pakistan and India signed an agreement to relaunch a cross-border train service** that was halted in 1965.
- 01/30/06 — **Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Patterson visited Islamabad** for meetings with top Pakistani leaders. On the same day, **a new video of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri surfaced**, demonstrating that he had not been killed in the 1/13 Bajaur attack. Also, two Pakistani paramilitary soldiers were killed by an improvised explosive device in North Waziristan.
- 01/29/06 — President Musharraf told an interviewer that the 1/13 Bajaur attack “was definitely not coordinated with us [Pakistan]” and called the strike “a violation of our sovereignty.” Musharraf also claimed that Pakistan-India relations “have never been as good as they are today,” but he expressed disappointment that dispute resolution was not moving forward, especially with regard to Kashmir. On the same day, exiled former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accused Musharraf of failing democracy and “degrading Pakistan’s name across the world.”
- 01/27/06 — The Senate passed **S.Res. 356**, commending earthquake relief and recovery efforts, and urging the U.S. government to take the lead in encouraging continued efforts. On the same day, police in Lahore arrested several hundred Islamic activists who were protesting against a planned mixed-gender marathon there. The marathon later took place peacefully, although 2,000 women reportedly withdrew due to fears of violence.
- 01/26/06 — **Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto held a press conference in Washington**, where she claimed that Pakistan’s military-dominated government was sidelining the country’s secular democratic forces and creating a vacuum that is being filled by Islamist extremists. She called for countering terrorism with “stable, pluralistic structures through democratic reform.”
- 01/25/06 — The Pakistani Senate passed unanimously a resolution condemning the 1/13 Bajaur attack as a violation of the country’s sovereignty. Also, six people, most of them women and children, were reported killed in a landmine explosion in the Baluchistan province.
- 01/24/06 — **President Bush hosted Prime Minister Aziz at the White House**, where he lauded the “strategic” and “vital” U.S.-Pakistan relationship. On the same day, the U.S. Trade Representative determined that **Pakistan had made “significant progress” in protecting and enforcing intellectual property rights**, especially with regard to the pirating of optical media.

- 01/22/06** — Prime Minister Aziz told an American television interviewer that the apparent 1/13 U.S. attack in the Bajaur Agency was not coordinated with the Pakistani government and that “not one shred of evidence” had been found indicating that Islamic militants had been at the site of the attack. He condemned the incident and called for greater U.S.-Pakistan communication and coordination in the future. On the same day, a spokesman for Baloch tribal militias claimed that 16 people, including women and children, had been killed in two days of heavy fighting between militants and security forces in Baluchistan.
- 01/20/06** — The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom urged President Bush to raise in upcoming meetings with Prime Minister Aziz the issue of “severe violations” of religious freedom in Pakistan. On the same day, anti-U.S. protests continued in Pakistani cities, with thousands of marchers reportedly chanting “Death to America” in Peshawar.
- 01/19/06** — Career Foreign Service officer **Richard Boucher was nominated to be Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs.**
- 01/18/06** — **Two days of high-level Pakistan-India talks ended** with Foreign Secretary Khan expressing satisfaction with the achievements of the bilateral “composite dialogue” while also calling for movement on “more difficult questions.” On the same day, New York-based Human Rights Watch released an annual report claiming that President “Musharraf’s military-backed government did little in 2005 to address ongoing human rights concerns” and that Musharraf himself “continued to tighten his personal grip on power.”
- 01/17/06** — Pakistani officials claimed that **at least four Al Qaeda militants, including Ayman al-Zawahri’s son-in-law and a top bomb expert, had been killed in the 1/13 Bajaur attack.** On the same day, a U.S. delegation arrived in Islamabad for **a fourth round of U.S.-Pakistan bilateral investment treaty negotiations.** Also, President Musharraf gave a major address to the nation in which he sought to justify his government’s water and dam policy, commended earthquake relief efforts, decried the activities of “subversive” tribal leaders in Baluchistan, and made no mention of the 1/13 Bajaur attack.
- 01/16/06** — Pakistan’s ruling PML party issued a statement demanding a U.S. apology for the 1/13 Bajaur attack. On the same day, anti-U.S. protests continued in Pakistani cities, with up to 10,000 marching in Karachi.
- 01/15/06** — The Leader of the Opposition in the Pakistani Senate strongly condemned the 1/13 “violation of Pakistani airspace and missile attack on civilians” in Bajaur. On the same day, eight people were reported killed in clashes between security forces and militants in Baluchistan.
- 01/13/06** — **A missile attack on a residential compound in northwest Pakistan near the Afghan border killed up to 18 people,** reportedly including numerous women and children. Pakistani officials and local **witnesses blamed the attack on U.S. air forces,** possibly Predator drones that were targeting top Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri, who was not at the scene. U.S. officials would not confirm U.S. involvement. The incident led to **major public anti-U.S. demonstrations.** On the same day, at least 18 people, one-third of them Pakistani soldiers, were reported killed and many more injured in gunbattles and landmine blasts in Baluchistan.

- 01/10/06 — **A fierce battle between Pakistani soldiers and suspected Islamic militants in North Waziristan** left 14 militants and 7 soldiers dead.
- 01/09/06 — The Pakistani government lodged a strong protest with U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan after cross-border firing killed eight people in North Waziristan. U.S. authorities denied the involvement of U.S. troops.
- 01/08/06 — **President Musharraf accused India of arming and financing militants Baluchistan.** New Delhi rejected the allegations as “utterly baseless and false.” On the same day, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad reported that U.S. helicopters were delivering more than 100 tons of earthquake relief supplies in the region daily.
- 01/07/06 — **A missile attack on a residence in North Waziristan killed eight people** and injured nine others. Local residents said an American aircraft had launched the missile, but U.S. officials did not confirm or deny the report. Separate incidents left 16 people, including 8 Pakistani soldiers and 5 members of a tribal elder’s family, dead in the region.
- 01/06/06 — The Defense Department FY2006 Authorization Act became **P.L. 109-163**, which authorizes \$40 million for Pentagon-funded humanitarian assistance to victims of the 10/8 earthquake.
- 01/04/06 — A State Department official said the United States is “absolutely opposed” to any gas pipeline projects involving Iran. On the same day, Baloch political figures claimed that 10 people, including 2 women and 4 children, had been killed in government shelling in Baluchistan.
- 01/03/06 — U.N. Secretary General Annan appointed former U.S. President George H.W. Bush as special envoy for South Asian earthquake relief efforts.
- 01/02/06 — Fighting between Pakistani security forces and suspected tribal militants in Baluchistan left two people dead and eight women and children injured.
- 12/30/05 — The Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2006 became **P.L. 109-148**, which allows that up to \$195 million in Pentagon funds be used to reimburse Pakistan and other key cooperating nations for their support of U.S. military operations.
- 12/24/05 — **Tribal leaders claimed that at least 100 people had been killed** in a “military operation” being conducted against “unarmed” people in Kohlu, Baluchistan.
- 12/21/05 — A public opinion poll found **Pakistanis holding a more favorable view of the United States** than at any time since September 2001, with U.S. humanitarian assistance efforts dramatically improving America’s image.
- 12/18/05 — **Pakistani troops backed by helicopter gunships launched an operation** against what the government called “miscreant hideouts” in Baluchistan after the head of Pakistan’s Frontier Corps and his deputy were injured in an attack on their helicopter over in the region.
- 12/16/05 — **The Pentagon notified Congress of a possible Foreign Military Sale to Pakistan of 115 self-propelled howitzers** worth up to \$56 million.
- 12/06/05 — Four paramilitary soldiers were reported kidnaped in South Waziristan. The beheaded bodies of two were found two days later.
- 12/03/05 — **“Senior” Al Qaeda figure Hamza Rabia reportedly was among those killed in an apparent 12/1 missile attack in North Waziristan.** The missile likely was fired from a U.S. aerial drone.