

January 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 29TH TO FEBRUARY 4TH 2017

INDIAN SHELLING LEAVES EIGHT INJURED IN AJK

Dawn, February 02, 2018

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Heavy shelling from across the Line of Control (LoC) left eight civilians, including four women, injured in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Thursday.

The shelling started early in the morning and hit different villages in the Khuiratta and Charhoi sectors of Kotli district. “The injuries, however, only occurred in one village in the Khuiratta sector,” SSP Raja Irfan Saleem told Dawn.

Residents of Khuiratta described the shelling as the heaviest in several weeks.

A video clip made by a villager from Khuiratta showed shells landing in a field and emitting smoke. Some houses were partially damaged.

SSP Saleem said that eight people had been wounded in Sehri Chattar — a village that lies in close proximity to the LoC.

The injured were identified as Shahnawaz, 24; his 18-year-old brother Ahtisham, Muhammad Farooq, 25; Fareeha, 35; her 16-year-old daughter Amina Ilyas, Shaheena, 40; Tussaraf Begum, 35; and Muhammad Fiaz, 50.

“Amina was sent to Rawalpindi due to her critical condition while others are being treated at the District Headquarters Hospital in Kotli,” said medical superintendent Dr Tariq Mehmood.

While there has been no official statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on the LoC situation, residents claimed that the Pakistani troops responded to India’s unprovoked shelling.

The heavily militarised LoC is frequently witnessing ceasefire violations, in a serious breach of a truce agreement signed by the rival troops in November 2003, and as a result civilian casualties are taking place frequently.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1386825/indian-shelling-leaves-eight-injured-in-ajk>

US GENERAL RULES OUT MILITARY OPERATIONS INSIDE PAKISTAN

Dawn, February 3rd, 2018

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: A senior US general has assured Islamabad that the United States is not planning to conduct military operations inside Pakistan.

Another general said that despite differences Pakistan remains “absolutely critical” to America’s success in Afghanistan, while the Pentagon’s chief spokesperson urged Islamabad to join US efforts to defeat terrorists in the South Asian region.

“We actually don’t contemplate military operations inside Pakistan,” US Joint Staff Director Lt Gen Kenneth McKenzie said at a Pentagon news briefing on Thursday afternoon.

“On the other hand, we recognise — because the strategy is inherently regional and Pakistan is geographically located at a critical nexus of a lot of different things — Pakistan is a fundamental part of the strategy,” he added.

The assurances followed a White House statement on Tuesday, saying that the US military had been given authority to eliminate militant safe havens in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The statement alarmed Islamabad and Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan told the Urdu service of Voice of America (VOA), that he took the statement “very seriously”.

“We want to make it clear to the US that Pakistan is a sovereign country and its sovereignty must be respected,” he said. “Instead of using these words, which can be interpreted in any way, Pakistan should be consulted.”

The defence minister also said that statements like this were “taking us away from peace in Afghanistan”.

At the Pentagon news briefing, a journalist asked Lt Gen Kenneth McKenzie to explain the White House statement, which he said was interpreted in the Pakistani media as saying that the US could possibly strike inside of Pakistan.

“Through a variety of measures, we look to gain Pakistani cooperation and assistance as we pursue operations in Afghanistan,” said the general while explaining how the US strategy for South Asia plans to deal with Pakistan. “But no, we’re not planning to conduct military operations inside Pakistan.”

Pentagon chief spokesperson Dana W. White said the strategy had created an opportunity for Pakistan to cooperate with the US in defeating the terrorists operating in the region.

“We’ve said many times that — that Pakistan has an opportunity. It has been a victim of terrorism, and it has supported terrorism. And we are looking for Pakistan to actively join — it can do the things we need them to do to confront terrorism,” she said. “So, it’s an inflection point, it’s an opportunity, and we hope Pakistan will take it.”

Ms White, however, said that she did not agree with the assessment of some Pakistani officials that the US had failed in Afghanistan and that’s why it was blaming Pakistan. “We haven’t failed,” she said.

Asked if she saw a link between the rise of terrorist attacks in Kabul and the US decision to suspend military aid to Pakistan, Ms White said: “The Taliban is desperate. They’re murderous and they attack innocent civilians.”

At a separate briefing arranged by the US State Department’s Dubai Regional Media Hub, US Central Command chief Gen Joseph Votel said on Wednesday that Pakistan remained “absolutely critical” to the success of America’s South Asia security strategy. The Arab News reported that Gen Votel said the new South Asia strategy required the partnership of not just Afghanistan, but of all countries in the region, and Pakistan was a key part of that region.

“We have had our differences with Pakistan over the years on this, but Pakistan remains absolutely critical to the solution of the problem in Afghanistan,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1387031/us-general-rules-out-military-operations-inside-pakistan>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 22ND TO JANUARY 28 TH 2018
PAKISTAN COMMITTED TO 2003 CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT, SAYS COAS
Dawn, January 23rd, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Bajwa on Monday re-emphasised Pakistan’s strong commitment to the 2003 ceasefire understanding, but vowed strong response to violations by India on the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary (WB).

“Our commitment to abide by the ceasefire agreement of 2003 should never be misconstrued as response limitation. Indian aggression or any misadventure shall always get the most befitting response,” Gen Bajwa was quoted by the Inter-Services Public Relations as having told troops during his visits to the LoC and WB that have continued to witness frequent truce breaches by Indian troops.

The army chief visited Khuiratta and Ratta Arayan sectors.

Violations by India have continued last year’s pattern when the highest number of violations — 1,881 — was recorded during a year since the understanding on ceasefire went into effect in 2003, resulting in martyrdom of 87 people. Over 200 violations by India have taken place so far this year in which 12 lives have been lost, including four troops.

The army chief appreciated effective and responsible response of the troops to Indian unethical targeting and high morale of the troops and civilians, the ISPR said.

Gen Bajwa was informed that Indian troops were specifically targeting civilian populations.

Besides the increased intensity of ceasefire violations, which has been progressively growing over the past 10 years, new disturbing trends were witnessed last year that point towards changing Indian tactics.

The Indian troops have particularly been targeting women and children living in villages along the LoC, whenever they notice their movement or activity. Moreover, there has been calibre escalation.

Military officials say that Indians use artillery, heavy mortars, missiles, rockets and heavy automatics, besides employing deadly air bursts.

It is further said that the Indian troops use sniping with heavy calibre weapons and are targeting women and children for terrorising civilian populations.

The ISPR said: “The army chief directed enhanced protective measures including construction of more community shell protection shelters for civil population. COAS especially hailed heroic determination of local population against Indian blatant aggression.”

Four civilians, including three women, were injured on Monday as intense mortar shelling by Indian troops continued unabated for the fifth consecutive day on border villages of the Sialkot’s Sucheetgarh sector.

Sialkot Deputy Commissioner Dr Farrukh Naveed said that Safoora Bibi, 50, Zeeshan, 18, Asia Bibi, 35, and Tanzeela Bibi, 25, were at their homes when several heavy mortar shells landed on their houses. They were taken to the Combined Military Hospital in Sialkot’s Cantonment in critical condition.

Indian troops continued pummeling border villages along Phookaliyaan-Bajwat, Chaprar, Sucheetgarh, Harpal, Bajra Garhi, Charwah and Zafarwal-Shakargarh sectors of the Sialkot Working Boundary, with mortar shells all night between Sunday and Monday.

Dr Naveed told reporters that dozens of homes had been badly damaged and dozens of cattle heads were killed and injured. All educational institutions in the area have been shut down.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1384662>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 15TH TO JANUARY 21ST 2018

FOUR SOLDIERS MARTYRED IN CROSS-LOC FIRE

The Express Tribune, 18 January 2018

In an escalation that prompted Islamabad to seek Washington’s intervention, at least four Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom on Monday after Indian army resorted to unprovoked firing along the Line of Control (LoC), targeting troops who were busy in line communication maintenance in the disputed Kashmir region.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the troops were fired upon and hit by a heavy mortar round in Jandrot and Kotli Sectors of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

“[The] exchange of fire killed three Indian soldiers while injuring a few,” the military’s media wing added.

The deadly incident promoted strong reaction from Pakistan, which summoned a senior Indian diplomat to the Foreign Office to record a formal protest over Indian troops’ latest ceasefire violation.

The Director General (SA & SAARC), Dr Mohammad Faisal, summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner JP Singh and condemned the unprovoked ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation

forces, using heavy mortars, on 15 January in Jandrot sub sector of Kotli Sector, resulting in the shahadat of four Pakistani soldiers, while injuring five others.

“Despite calls for restraint, India continues to indulge in ceasefire violations,” a statement issued by the Foreign Office said.

The statement added that in 2018, the Indian forces carried out more than 100 ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary in just 15 days.

This unprecedented escalation in ceasefire violations by India was continuing from the year 2017 when the Indian forces committed more than 1,900 ceasefire violations, the Foreign Office maintained.

Foreign Office spokesperson Muhammad Faisal said the deliberate targeting of civilian populated areas and troops carrying out maintenance activities was indeed deplorable and contrary to human dignity, international human rights and humanitarian laws.

“The ceasefire violations by India are a threat to regional peace and security and may lead to a strategic miscalculation,” he cautioned.

The Director General (SA & SAARC) urged the Indian side to respect the 2003 ceasefire arrangement; investigate this and other incidents of ceasefire violations; instruct the Indian forces to respect the ceasefire, in letter and spirit and maintain peace on the LoC and the Working Boundary.

He said that the Indian side should permit UNMOGIP to play its mandated role as per the UN Security Council resolutions.

The latest border clashes came just days after the Indian army chief claimed that his country’s armed forces were ready to call Pakistan’s ‘nuclear bluff’.

His statement, however, drew strong condemnation from Pakistan, which called it as irresponsible and reckless.

The latest border clashes came at a time when President Trump’s special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan was on a visit to Islamabad. Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua raised the issue of India’s belligerence during her meeting with Ambassador Wells.

The Foreign Secretary urged the US to persuade India to show restraint and avoid escalation.

Meanwhile, India claimed to have killed five member of a militant group trying to slip into Occupied Kashmir.

“They crossed the Jhelum river which is de facto border in the area. We allowed them to cross the river and challenged them. All of the five who crossed the river were killed,” said an Indian officer, Major General Gulab Singh Rawat.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1609039/1-four-soldiers-martyred-unprovoked-indian-firing-along-loc/>

US TO CONTINUE MILITARY TRAINING, SENATE PANEL TOLD

Dawn, January 18th, 2018

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: The United States has conveyed to Pakistan that the military training component of the aid would continue despite suspension of the security assistance package.

Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua informed the Senate's foreign affairs committee on Wednesday that the US would continue funding the aid components that support their national interest, including the International Military Education and Training (IMET) part.

The IMET programme, which focuses on military education, is meant to establish a rapport between the US military and the recipient country's military for building alliances for the future. Under this programme, Pakistan Army officers have been trained in the US at a cost of \$52 million over the past 15 years and an allocation of another \$4m has been made for the current year.

The IMET programme exemption is meant to continue contacts with future military leaders. One of the main lessons learnt by the US from the period when nuclear proliferation-related sanctions under the Pressler Amendment went into force in 1990 and, among others, training programmes were ended, was that such actions, besides depriving Pakistan of wanted military equipment, reduced the US interaction with Pakistani military officers in the 1990s. That break impeded their efforts for rebuilding rapport after 9/11.

While the IMET would continue, the US has frozen the aid provided under the programmes that are more important to Pakistan, particularly the Foreign Military Financing (FMF). The recipients of FMF can use the funds under this programme for procurement of defence hardware produced by the US.

Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, while briefing the lawmakers on the current state of Pak-US relations, said the relationship was not going "very smooth" and problems were persisting.

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells concluded on Tuesday her two-day trip to Pakistan renewing the demand for clearing Pakistani territory of alleged terror sanctuaries. Earlier, US Centcom chief Gen Joseph Votel had reached out to Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa for calming the frayed nerves at the General Headquarters.

The foreign minister said the situation remained the same and there was no real shift in the US position so far.

He said Pakistan was trying to maintain a balance in its relationship with the US and had made it clear that it could live without aid but would not compromise on national integrity.

Mr Asif said the US was trying to shift the blame to Pakistan for its failures in Afghanistan. "We have to stand up to those who accuse us of harbouring terrorists," he remarked.

The accusations, he maintained, became meaningless without facilitating the repatriation of Afghan refugees and helping with fencing for checking unauthorised border crossings. Without doing these two things, he warned, the security situation would not improve much.

Senator Farhatullah Babar asked if the antiterrorism fatwa declaring private jihad as well as suicide bombings un-Islamic also covered the so-called jihad across the national boundaries.

The absence of the words “across the national borders” in the fatwa unequivocally rejecting private jihad created space for some jihadists, he maintained, and asked the minister whether the Foreign Office was on board in the exercise leading to the formulation of fatwa.

Responding to Mr Babar, the foreign minister said that it was a matter of interpretation.

Senator Babar then said that some undeclared moves seemed afoot to mainstream militant organisations without taking parliament on board and asked whether the FO was aware of any such move. He said that the soft treatment meted out to former Taliban spokesperson Ehsanullah Ehsan, bail of Maulana Soofi Mohammad, shielding Maulana Masood Azhar from UN sanctions and lately the militant organisations entering into electoral politics pointed towards these undeclared moves.

Mr Asif said that the FO was not aware of any move to mainstream militant organisations in the country.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383631/us-to-continue-military-training-senate-panel-told>

TWO VILLAGE WOMEN KILLED IN INDIAN SHELLING

Dawn, January 19, 2018

Abid Mehdi

SIALKOT: Two women were killed and six people injured in mortar shelling by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on border villages in Sucheetgarh, Chaprar, Harpal, Bajra Garhi, Charwah and Zafarwal-Shakargarh sectors of the Sialkot Working Boundary on Thursday.

According to an official of the Punjab Rangers, the shelling left Parveen, of Rurki Awanaa village (Harpal sector), and Ayesha, of Gandiyaal-Kingra village (Charwah sector), dead.

The injured were identified as Mohammad Asghar, Rasheed Ahmed, Naseem, Natasha, Saima and Sameena.

Rescue 1122 ambulances took the injured to the Combined Military Hospital in Sialkot.

There were reports of people moving to safe places along with their cattle.

According to the Inter- Services Public Relations, the BSF targeted civilians in border villages. The district administration set up three emergency relief centres to help and shelter the victims.

Assistant Commissioner Shahid Abbas told Dawn by telephone that the centres had been set up in Pindi Bhago-Charwah village, Govt Girls High School, Daallowali-Sucheetgarh, and BHU of Raja Harpal, Sialkot.

He said the terrified people were moving to safe places, adding that the Punjab Rangers had asked the people living in border villages to stay away from the firing range along the Sialkot Working Boundary.

Indian Deputy High Commissioner J. P. Singh was summoned to the Foreign Office for receiving protest over latest ceasefire violations by Indian troops along the Working Boundary in Sialkot in which two women lost their lives.

“Despite calls for restraint, India continues to indulge in ceasefire violations,” the FO spokesman said.

He said India had in the first 18 days of 2018 committed more than 100 ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary, resulting in the martyrdom of three civilians and four troops.

Mr Singh was summoned to the FO also a few days ago over martyrdom of four troops, who were hit by Indian mortars while repairing lines of communication.

India seems to be following last year’s pattern of ceasefire violations when it committed 1,900 breaches, leaving 87 people dead.

The spokesman said Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua had at a meeting with Alice Wells asked the US to advise restraint to India and urge it to stop its escalation tactics.

Baqir Sajjad Syed also contributed to this report from Islamabad

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383849>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1ST TO JANUARY 7TH 2018
THREE INJURED IN INDIAN SHELLING ALONG WORKING BOUNDARY
Dawn, January 5th, 2018

SIALKOT: Three people were seriously injured by mortar shells fired by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Pakistan’s border villages in Zafarwal-Shakargarh sector along the Sialkot Working Boundary.

The injured were identified as Aqeel, Rashid and Shahid — all from Chak Naahra village.

Shakargarh Assistant Commissioner Amir Shehzad told Dawn that the injured were taken to General Hospital Lahore because of their critical condition.

The BSF personnel began shelling on Wednesday evening and continued the ceasefire violation the entire night.

According senior officers of Punjab Rangers, the mortar shells hit villages of Lehari, Sakho Chak, Sukmaal, Timbar Chak, Poorey Chak, Bhopalpur, Agor, Tughalpur, Chak Naahra, Seelaayi, etc.

The shelling created panic among the masses and damaged several houses.

Punjab Rangers responded to the mortar shelling, forcing the Indian guns to fall silent.

According to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) press statement, the Indian Border Security Force violated ceasefire along the Sialkot Working Boundary in Zafarwal-Shakargarh sector, injuring three people in the “unprovoked” attack.

The Pakistan Army targeted an Indian post, killing one Indian soldier and injuring two, besides neutralising the post.

The ceasefire violations are frequent along the Line of Control (LoC) and Sialkot Working Boundary, although senior officials of Pakistan Rangers and Indian Border Security Force had in November last year agreed to revive the spirit of the 2003 ceasefire accord to protect the lives of innocent people.

Until June last year, unprovoked firing by Indian security forces from across the Line of Control and at the Sialkot Working Boundary had left 832 people dead, 3,000 injured and 3,300 houses damaged, according to Director General of the Disaster Management Authority Zaheeruddin Qureshi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380885/three-injured-in-indian-shelling-along-working-boundary>

February 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 26TH TO MARCH 4TH 2018

STUDENT KILLED IN INDIAN SHELLING

Dawn, February 28th, 2018

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: A grade five student lost his life while another man was injured in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Tuesday due to shelling by Indian troops from across the Line of Control (LoC).

Casualties occurred in the Nakyal sector of Kotli district, said Waleed Anwar, assistant commissioner of Nakyal.

He said that Zain Imtiaz, 11, was hit by splinters of a mortar shell in front of his house in Dharoti Naari village and died on the spot.

Elsewhere in the same sector, 26-year old Muhammad Farid was injured in Kunda Tarkundi village, Mr Anwar said.

The funeral prayers for the boy were offered in Nakyal after which his body was taken to his native village for burial.

Earlier, an unpleasant scene was created at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, Nakyal, after its administration initially refused to provide an ambulance to ferry the body of the boy to Dharoti Naari village, located barely seven kilometres away from there. Later, the administration provided the ambulance to the people.

Meanwhile, a large number of people also staged a protest in the town's Parawa Chowk against unrelenting shelling by Indian security forces across the dividing line.

In Islamabad, the Foreign Office summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner J.P. Singh and condemned the unprovoked ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation forces along the LoC in which Zain lost his life, adds PPI.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392170/student-killed-in-indian-shelling>

TWO SOLDIERS MARTYRED IN INDIAN FIRING

Dawn, March 1st, 2018

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Two Pakistani soldiers were martyred after Indian troops resorted to unprovoked firing from across the Line of Control (LoC) on Wednesday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The casualties occurred in Bhimber sector, located in the southernmost Bhimber district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, according to the army's media affairs wing.

"Indian troops initiated unprovoked firing in Bhimber sector. Two Pakistan Army soldiers embraced shahadat," the ISPR said in a late-night press release.

The deceased soldiers belonged to two different districts of Azad Kashmir.

The ISPR identified them as 32-year-old Sepoy Mohammad Munir Chohan, a resident of Rakri Chohan village in tehsil Forward Kahuta of Haveli district, and 28-year-old Sepoy Aamir Hussain, a resident of Danna village in tehsil Samahni of Bhimber district.

The ISPR said that Pakistani troops responded to Indian firing and there were reports of substantial damage to posts on the other side of the LoC.

The heavily militarised LoC that splits the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir into two has been constantly witnessing exchange of fire in a serious breach of a ceasefire agreement signed by the two armies in November 2003.

Resultantly, a number of civilian casualties have occurred in Azad Kashmir.

According to the AJK State Disaster Management Authority, 14 civilians have lost their lives while another 62 have been wounded in the ongoing Indian shelling.

The Foreign Office summoned on Tuesday Indian Deputy High Commissioner J.P. Singh and condemned the unprovoked ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation forces along the LoC after a boy lost his life due to the shelling.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392471>

NUCLEAR WORRIES

Dawn, March 1st, 2018

Sadia Tasleem

ON Jan 13, 2018, people in Hawaii were shocked to receive text messages warning of an imminent missile attack. After what many said were the most horrifying 38 minutes of their lives, they received a second message that it was a false alert, the result of human error at the emergency operations centre. But in the context of a simmering crisis between the US and North Korea, the possibility of a missile attack seemed real, and with it the potential for nuclear war.

Too often, debates about nuclear weapons revolve around concepts of operationalising nuclear deterrence, escalation ladders and flexible responses. But these debates tend to obscure the fact that nuclear weapons are real and their use is not impossible. A crisis sparked by a false alert, fake news, an inflammatory tweet, a social media gimmick, a computer glitch, a hacked network — any of these could spark conflict that results in nuclear weapons being used.

Ironically, attention drawn to a US-North Korea crisis or other potential flashpoints makes the nuclear establishment in Pakistan fairly comfortable. After all, we are not the focal point of what we often think is the Western media's negative attention. But does that mean there is no cause for worry about a nuclear war in South Asia?

We must revisit our beliefs regarding a nuclear war.

All is not well between India and Pakistan. In recent times, the Indian air chief has threatened to target Pakistani nuclear assets, while the Indian army chief talked about calling Pakistan's "nuclear bluff". The DG ISPR warned of a befitting response. All this on top of the ever-increasing levels of violence along the Line of Control.

These reminders of the fault lines and sabre-rattling between India and Pakistan call for introspection, for thinking through our preparedness to deal with crises, and to gauge our ability to protect citizens from our own follies. We must revisit our fundamental beliefs and unstated assumptions about the possibility of crisis and a war that may turn nuclear.

Advocates of nuclear deterrence believe that nuclear weapons prevent war and therefore their inhumanity in some strange ways serves the cause of human survival. Nuclear proliferation optimists flaunt the deterrence role of nuclear weapons by referring to what John Lewis Gaddis called an era of 'Long Peace' — itself a debatable notion for those familiar with the intense arguments between Gaddis and our very own Eqbal Ahmad. Eqbal brought home the brutality of the supposed Cold War and 'Long Peace' by looking at it from the perspective of its victims.

However, the nuclear industry and deterrence discourse of the Cold War has made nuclear weapons fetish objects and nuclear deterrence sacrosanct for many here as elsewhere. We are fond of quoting Bernard Brodie's 1946 observation that, "from now on the chief purpose of military strategy is not to win wars; it is instead to prevent one". Quite often we treat this as a departure point to teach nuclear deterrence during the Cold War without realising that Brodie's voice was not reflective of a consensus; it was just one among many voices. In fact, the US and the USSR never thought a nuclear war was impossible and spent considerable effort and money planning to fight one.

And yet, nuclear war didn't break out. Was it because it looked too real? Was it because it was too deadly and the human mind too sane to blunder into a nuclear inferno? Or was it mere luck, as former US defence secretary Robert McNamara suggested? It is as difficult to answer these questions as it is to determine the precise role of nuclear weapons in preventing war during the Cold War. But it is important to keep thinking about these questions and how they apply to South Asia today. There are no assurances that nuclear weapons won't be used.

Indeed, the fact that we in Pakistan assume that nuclear deterrence prevents large-scale wars itself may create enough reasons for both India and Pakistan to opt for escalation in a crisis.

Yes, a nuclear war is too dreadful an idea to think about; too inhuman to contemplate. But that doesn't change the fact that there are wars, and savagery and brutal weapons that have the ability to annihilate human species from the face of this earth. Our inhibition does not change the fact that organisations and states continue to develop the instruments of death and destruction without guilt or remorse and many people in many places endorse those weapons with pride.

In sum it is important to understand that the possibility of escalation in a future crisis in South Asia cannot be precluded only because we know nuclear weapons are too deadly or because others have not fought nuclear wars. It is equally important to resolve conflicts and find ways to reduce and eventually eliminate all weapons of mass destruction in South Asia and elsewhere..

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392485/nuclear-worries>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 12TH TO FEBRUARY 18TH 2018

SIX INJURED IN INDIAN SHELLING FROM ACROSS LOC

Dawn, February 12th, 2018

MUZAFFARABAD: Six people, including two children, were injured in different villages of Azad Jammu and Kashmir due to unprovoked Indian shelling from across the Line of Control (LoC) on Sunday, officials said.

Mohammad Shah Nawaz, 25, and Hassan, 9, were injured, respectively, in Simti Majhan and Tarkundi villages of Nakyal sector in Kotli district after being hit by splinters from mortar shells, Nakyal Assistant Commissioner Waleed Anwar said. They were taken to a local health facility.

Saima, 10, was injured in Junoobi Grid village of Tatta Pani sector and Nagina Aqsad, 36, in Chattar village of Khuiratta sector in Kotli district, said a police official. They were shifted to the Kotli District Headquarters Hospital.

In Poonch district, 18-year-old Mohammad Nazeer fell victim to the Indian shelling when he was riding his motorbike through Dhar Bazaar of Battal sector, said Poonch Deputy Commissioner Raja Tahir Mumtaz. In the same sector, Saba Azad, 24, was injured while doing household chores.

Mr Mumtaz said the injured had been shifted to the DHQ Hospital of neighbouring Kotli district because it was dangerous to transport them to Rawalakot — the district headquarters of Poonch — amid unrelenting shelling.

In a brief statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations said the Indian army had initiated unprovoked firing along the LoC in different sectors, targeting civilian populations.

“Pakistan Army troops responded effectively to Indian ceasefire violations and targeted those posts which [had] initiated unprovoked firing,” the military’s media affairs wing said. It claimed that there had been reports of “substantial damage” to the Indian army.

The heavily militarised LoC has been witnessing ceasefire violations in a serious breach of an agreement signed by the two countries in November 2003, resulting in frequent civilian casualties.

On Feb 5, two people were killed and four wounded in Poonch and Kotli districts in Indian shelling.

According to the disaster management authority, seven civilians have been killed and 41 injured so far this year in Indian shelling from across the LoC.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1388905>

US BUDGET REQUESTS INCLUDE MILITARY FUNDS FOR PAKISTAN

Dawn, February 13th, 2018

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: The US State Department on Monday announced that its budget proposals for the fiscal year 2019, which begins in October this, include both economic and military funds for Pakistan.

The military funds for Pakistan, however, include a condition which requires Islamabad to a decisive action against the Haqqani network and other terrorist groups to receive the assistance.

The largest unconditional budget requests are from the Economic Support Fund and Economic Support and Development Fund of \$200 million each for 2018 and 2019 and also \$200m set aside for 2017 are also mentioned. These funds are not affected by a recent US ban on aid to Pakistan.

On Jan 4, the Trump administration suspended its military assistance to Pakistan over the alleged existence of terrorist safe havens on its soil and over its alleged links to the militants fighting in Afghanistan.

But Mondays’ budget requests endorse a State Department announced last week that US security assistance to Islamabad could be resumed if Islamabad took the required action against militants.

The request includes \$200m for Pakistan from the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund and the request includes a justification for Congress, saying: the “resources will help reduce opportunities for violent extremism in the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region: and will “strengthen societal resilience to violent extremism.”

The requested funds will “expand private sector-led inclusive economic growth, including pursuing private-public partnerships with both US and Pakistani firms.”

The assistance will support the government of Pakistan's efforts to provide improved access to and quality services for its citizens, implement political and economic reforms, and foster a more inclusive and tolerant environment, says the State Department.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389065/us-budget-requests-include-military-funds-for-pakistan>

ARMY SAYS TROOPS BEING SENT TO SAUDI ARABIA

Dawn, February 16th, 2018

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Taking a major decision, the army on Thursday announced that it is deploying troops in Saudi Arabia under an existing bilateral security pact.

“In continuation of ongoing Pak-KSA bilateral security cooperation, a Pakistan Army contingent is being sent to KSA on training and advice mission,” the Inter-Services Public Relations announced after a meeting between Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki at the General Headquarters, which was said to be about “regional security situation”.

Gen Bajwa had earlier this month quietly visited Saudi Arabia, where he stayed for nearly three days and his only known meetings were with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Commander of Ground Forces Lt Gen Prince Fahd bin Turki bin Abdulaziz. This was his second visit to the kingdom in two months.

Saudi Arabia has been demanding deployment of Pakistani troops since the start of the Yemen conflict in 2015, but Pakistan has been struggling to evade the demand despite a unanimously adopted parliamentary resolution affirming the country's “neutrality” in the conflict.

ISPR insists soldiers will not be employed outside kingdom

Last year Pakistan sent its retired army chief Gen Raheel Sharif to lead a Saudi coalition. Therefore, it was always speculated that the deployment would take place even though it could not happen as quickly as the Saudis wanted.

The ISPR insists that the new deployment and nearly 1,000 Pakistani troops already stationed there would not be “employed outside KSA”.

There was no word on the size of the deployment.

However, multiple sources hinted that it might be the size of a composite brigade. Another version is that the numbers are still being worked out.

When contacted, ISPR Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor said the deployment would be much lesser than a division, and he would give the details at a press conference.

The deployment is being made at a time when Saudi Arabia's Yemen woes are aggravating. The kingdom's air campaign against Houthi militias has failed to achieve victory, whereas on the ground local Yemeni allies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE have turned the guns on each other, further complicating the conflict. The Houthis have, meanwhile, intensified missile attacks on Saudi targets, though most have been intercepted by the Saudi air defence systems before they could hit the targets.

The phrasing of the last Foreign Office statement condemning the Houthi missile attacks had clearly shown that a shift in Pakistani policy was in the offing.

The FO had said that the Houthi attacks posed a threat to the security of the kingdom and holy places there. Threat to holy mosques was always mentioned as a red line.

The decision to deploy troops is expected to ruffle feathers in Pakistan's neighbourhood.

The ISPR statement, therefore, made it a point to reassure that the Pakistan "Army maintains bilateral security cooperation with many other GCC/regional countries".

It should be recalled that the ambassadors of Iran and Turkey had earlier this week met Gen Bajwa, and it is believed that they were briefed about the army's decision. A day before the meetings with the Turkish and Iranian envoys, Gen Bajwa reportedly made a secret trip to Doha to meet Qatar's emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Since the eruption of a diplomatic row between Riyadh and Doha and subsequent blockade of Qatar, Turkey and Iran are considered on one side of the alignment in the Middle East, while most of the Arab countries on the Saudi side. Kuwait and Oman, meanwhile, appear to be playing neutral.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389722/army-says-troops-being-sent-to-saudi-arabia>

FIVE INDIAN SOLDIERS KILLED AFTER ATTACK ON STUDENTS VAN IN AJK
Dawn, February 16th, 2018

Tariq Naqash

ISLAMABAD: In a tit-for-tat action, Pakistan Army on Thursday destroyed an army post across the Line of Control and killed five soldiers hours after a Pakistani civilian lost his life in Indian firing on a students' van.

The Inter-Services Public Relations, the media affairs wing of Pakistan Army, said the Indian post was hit in Tatta Pani (Hot Spring) sector from where innocent citizens were being targeted.

Five Indian soldiers were killed and many injured, ISPR chief Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor tweeted.

Indian terrorism against innocent citizens shall be responded befittingly, he said.

Earlier, two students of a private school and as many of Government Degree College, Mandhol, were returning home in the Dharamsal area when their van was hit by Indian troops at about 1:30pm, Hajira Assistant Commissioner Sikandar Hayat told Dawn.

"Indian troops opened a burst of fire on the vehicle, killing the driver on the spot," he said.

The deceased was identified as Sarfraz, 28.

"The students sitting in the vehicle escaped unhurt," Mr Hayat added.

Haleema Shaheen, one of the students, said they all got frightened when the firing started. “Suddenly we noticed blood oozing from the wounds of Saaji Bhai (referring to driver). We screamed but there was no one around,” she said in a video clip, shared by the ISPR on social media.

“People gathered at the scene...but the driver had died by then,” added the second year student.

Part of Battal sector of district Poonch and Dharamsal are located on the right and left banks of the River Poonch, respectively, and the Indian army’s post is just a stone’s throw from Dharamsal village.

Though a majority of families have moved out of Dharamsal due to unrelenting Indian shelling, some still live there.

Condemning the ceasefire violation, the ISPR chief said India’s “unethical and unprofessional approach” across the LoC continued to terrorise civilians.

“[Indian troops] targeted a van carrying schoolchildren in Battal sector, in violation of the Geneva Convention and ceasefire understanding and the van driver embraced shahadat,” he tweeted.

AJK President Sardar Masood Khan also condemned the incident as yet another “cowardly act of terror” on the part of Indian troops.

“India is shamelessly violating the ceasefire agreement and terrorising civilians in...AJK. She must be ready for a befitting retaliation,” he tweeted.

The heavily-militarised dividing line is constantly witnessing shelling by India in a breach of the truce agreement signed in November 2003 by the two armies.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389721>

NA, SENATE CHIDE GOVT OVER TROOPS FOR SAUDI ARABIA Iftikhar A. Khan | Syed Irfan Raza

February 17, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Questions over the ‘unilateral decision’ of sending troops to Saudi Arabia in violation of a unanimously adopted parliamentary resolution were raised on Friday in both houses of parliament which sought a policy statement on the issue from the defence minister and admonished the foreign ministry for keeping parliament in the dark on the issue.

The Senate directed the defence minister to appear before the house on Monday, while the National Assembly asked the foreign ministry to provide a detailed reply why Pakistani troops were being deployed in the kingdom and under which bilateral agreement.

Just a day ago the army had announced the decision of sending troops to Saudi Arabia for deployment under a bilateral security pact. The announcement came after Saudi ambassador Commodore Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki reportedly discussed “regional security situation” with Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa who recently met Crown Prince Salman and military commanders during his three-day visit to the kingdom.

Explanation sought from defence, foreign ministries

Taking up the matter of public importance raised by Senator Farhatullah Babar in the upper house on Friday, Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani asked who took unilateral decisions bypassing parliament and to the detriment of the country.

“Has anyone given a serious thought to its grave consequences?” he asked.

Mr Rabbani said that on the one hand the Yemeni allies of Saudi Arabia were losing the internal political battle because of internal fighting and on the other air campaign and blockade by Saudi Arabia suffered a backlash, adding ‘this provides a disturbing context’.

He said that the deliberately nuanced FO statements recently condemning the Houthi attacks as threat to the kingdom and holy mosques also seemed aimed at justifying sending Pakistani troops to actively engage the Yeminites in the conflict on the side of the Saudis.

While the number of troops being sent had not been announced, the disclosure that it would be less than a division indicated that the contingent could be almost the size of a division, said the Senate chairman. Who was making unilateral decisions bypassing parliament and to the detriment of the country, he asked, recalling parliament’s unanimous resolution seeking strict neutrality.

The defence minister was then asked to appear before the upper house on Monday and gave a policy statement on this issue of public importance.

The announcement related to the deployment of troops also drew the ire of the National Assembly which asked the foreign ministry to explain why Pakistani troops were being sent for deployment in Saudi Arabia and under which bilateral agreement.

“The ministry of foreign affairs should give details about fresh deployment of troops in Saudi Arabia and a letter will also be sent in this regard to the ministry,” said Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq when the houses were discussing the matter.

Expressing concern over the decision, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) lawmaker Dr Shireen Mazari said why parliament had not been apprised of the decision that people came to know through the media.

She said: “The decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia was a complete violation of a unanimous resolution passed by a joint sitting of parliament on April 10, 2015 that Pakistan will not become part of any war in the Middle East or any Arab state.”

Before this unilateral decision, former army chief Gen Raheel Sharif had been given a no-objection certificate for heading the Saudi Arabia-led alliance without taking parliament into confidence, said Ms Mazari.

She said parliament was once again kept in the dark why Pakistani troops were being sent to Saudi Arabia while everyone knew that the kingdom was fighting a war with its neighbour Muslim country, Yemen.

It had been decided and communicated in clear terms by parliament two years ago that Pakistan would not become a part of this war, she said, adding that Pakistan would suffer a big loss if it engaged its troops in the war against Yemen.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Dr Nafisa Shah also expressed concern over the decision to send Pakistani troops to Saudi Arabia and said the Foreign Office (FO) must give an official reply why the troops were being deployed in Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan had already decided it would not become a part of any war against Yemen, then why the batch of army troops was being sent to Saudi Arabia, she said. “We know that some of our troops have already been deployed in Saudi Arabia for the protection of the two holy places, Mecca and Madina, but it does not mean that we will fight others’ war there,” she added.

Meanwhile, in the Senate session, Senator Farhatullah Babar asked why the interior ministry despite being the focal ministry under the National Action Plan (NAP) had no clue about Ehsanullah Ehsan, former spokesperson of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the self-proclaimed murderer of 150 children of Army Public School, Peshawar.

It took more than nine months for the interior minister to finally admit that the civilians had no role in policy making in fighting militants, as it was dealt with by unnamed agencies, Senator Babar said, while asking ‘what does this prove’.

Responding to the question, Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry informed the upper house that former TTP spokesperson had surrendered himself before an intelligence agency. However, in what many saw as a disconnection between the civilian and military institutions, he said only they were in a position to give details.

The interior minister said the details could be sought from the relevant quarters if the Senate so desired, admitting that it had not been done so far. He insisted that the relevant institutions had decided not to pardon Ehsanullah Ehsan and he would be acted against under the law of the land. The question Senator Babar had asked in June last year was “Is it correct that Ehsanullah Ehsan has publicly claimed responsibility for several gruesome attacks on security forces, civilians and state institutions? If yes, details of terror incidents and the number of those martyred and injured in each terror incident owned/claimed by him? Whether cases have been registered against Ehsanullah Ehsan subsequent to his admission together with details thereof? And whether cases registered against him will be tried in military courts, if yes, when and if not, why not?”

Senator Sirajul Haq of the Jamaat-i-Islami asked whether there were more TTP captives in the custody of agencies besides the former spokesperson and what was being done about them.

Senator Babar said his term as Senator would soon expire and asked the presiding officer Tahir Hussain Mashhadi to give a ruling so that the important issue could be pursued even when he was no longer in the Senate. Senator Mashhadi said he would bring the matter to the attention of the Senate chairman for a ruling.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389964>

PM SANCTIONED TROOP DEPLOYMENT TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR ‘ADVISORY PURPOSE’
Vaqas Asghar

The Express Tribune, February 17, 2018

The recent decision to send Pakistani troops to Saudi Arabia has raised eyebrows, even though the deployment was sanctioned by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as part of longstanding defence cooperation between Islamabad and Riyadh.

Currently, there are 1,379 Pakistani troops deployed in Saudi Arabia, most of whom are from Pakistan Army, along with a few Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Pakistan Navy (PN) officials, according to security sources. The exact number of troops being sent is not known, but the fresh deployment is said to be slightly over 1,000 soldiers.

Security sources also clarified that there is nothing new about the deployment of Pakistani troop in the oil-rich kingdom, as defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia is based on a 1982 bilateral protocol for training and advisory roles.

After the announcement of troop deployment, rumours swirled in the media that the troops could be sent to Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is actively involved in a war against Houthi rebels. Security sources, however, vehemently quashed the speculation, saying that no Pakistani boots will be on the ground in Yemen. They reiterated that troop deployments in the kingdom have been a regular feature for decades.

Defence cooperation in the Persian Gulf is not limited to Riyadh, as there is currently a deployment of 627 Pakistani military men in Qatar, including 165 from the army and 462 from the navy and air force. In fact, an addition of 292 army officials has been approved and they are awaiting deployment. This deployment is also for training and advisory purposes.

In Bahrain, Pakistan had stationed one infantry unit, comprising 653 soldiers and officers from 2008 to 2013. Currently, however, there are no Pakistani troops deployed in Manama.

Islamabad also maintains a similar working relationship with Iran, which currently has 10 pilots in training with the Pakistan military. The Iranians will be sending five more pilots “sometime in April”, and even “more in subsequent years”, according to security sources.

Pakistan has stayed away from the conflict in Yemen where Iran strongly opposes the involvement of the Saudi-led military coalition. In November last year, army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Tehran where he met top Iranian civil and military leaders, including President Hassan Rouhani.

The army chief recalled the defence cooperation between Islamabad and Tehran in the past and said that similar collaboration in future had “great mutually benefiting potential”.

Meanwhile, Gen Bajwa has also visited Saudi Arabia five times in his first year in charge.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been involved in a number of joint training exercises in recent months, the most recent being a joint naval exercise in Karachi codenamed Affa Al-Sahil, which concluded on Friday.

The exercise has been performed annually since 2011 and aims to enhance interoperability and sharpen tactical proficiency in countering maritime human trafficking, piracy and terrorism. Meanwhile, Exercise ‘Dera Al Sahil’ is currently under way between Pak Marines and RSNF Marines. It is taking place in Saudi waters.

This exercise is aimed at enhancing skills in relation to coastal defence.

Earlier, in November and December, Pakistani and Saudi Special Forces participated in the joint counterterrorism exercise Al-Shehab-2 at Prince Naif Security City in Riyadh.

The two-week exercise was a follow-up to Al-Shehab 1, which was held in Pakistan a year earlier. A Pakistani contingent comprising 68 special services group (SSG) officers and soldiers participated in Al-Shehab-2. The venue for the annual exercise alternates, meaning that the next one will be held in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, in March, around 21 countries including Pakistan, the US, and the UK will be participating in a military exercise in KSA named Gulf Shield.

It is also of note that Saudi special services participated in the last Pakistan Day parade, while there are currently 200 Saudi cadets in the Pakistan Military Academy, PAF Academy, and Naval Academy.

On the same note, a source said that last year, close to 1,500 Saudi officers and soldiers were trained in Pakistan, mostly by the interior ministry.

The other Military exercises held with the kingdom in 2017 include Al Samsaam, which was an army exercise in Pakistan, Aces Meet, which was an air force exercise in Pakistan, a strategic planning exercise involving National Defence University and Saudi authorities in the kingdom, and an engineers' exercise involving Pakistan Army and Royal Saudi Land Forces
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1637202/1-pm-approved-troops-ksa-advisory-purpose/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 5TH TO FEBRUARY 11TH 2017

INDIAN SHELLING KILLS TWO IN AJK

Tariq Naqash

Dawn, February 05, 2018

MUZAFFARABAD: A woman and a teenage boy were killed and six other people suffered injuries when Indian forces resorted to unprovoked shelling on the eve of Kashmir Day in two districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Sunday.

“Indian troops resorted to unprovoked firing in Nezapir sector targeting civilian population. A citizen embraced shahadat while 2 children [were] injured,” said the Inter-Services Public Relations, the public affairs wing of the Pakistan army, in a statement.

Pakistan Army responded effectively targeting the Indian posts from where shells came, it added.

Kashif Hussain, the deputy commissioner of Haveli district, told Dawn that the shelling began at about 11am and continued till 4pm.

“Indians used both small and heavy weapons but got a befitting response from our side,” he said.

Mr Hussain said a 16-year-old boy — Razaqat, son of Zakir — was herding cattle in Akhori Bala village when he fell victim to shelling and lost his life.

In Kairni village of the same sector, 8-year-old Usama and his 7-year-old sister Mavia were injured and shifted to a military-run health facility in Forward Kahuta, he added.

In Kotli district, Indian troops fired mortar shells at Tarkundi, Plani and Kalar Galla villages of Nakyal sector at about 4pm “without any provocation, targeting unarmed and innocent civilian populations,” said Nakyal Assistant Commissioner Waleed Anwar.

A 25-year-old woman, identified as Tasleem Begum, daughter of Mohammad Sadiq, was killed in Plani village, he said.

Her 27-year-old namesake, Tasleem Bibi, wife of Mohammad Khalil, and a 50-year-old man, Mohammad Javed, son of Fateh Muhammad, were injured in the same village, he added.

Mr Anwar said the injured were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital in Kotli, where doctors described the condition of the woman.

At about 6pm, mortar shells fired by Indian troops started landing in another area of Nakyal sector, targeting Pir Klinjar, Dharoti, Mohra Gim and Balakot villages, he said.

According to initial reports, Muhammad Atta, 18, and Raees, 20, were injured in Pir Klinjar and Mohra Gim village, he said.

According to AP, two Indian soldiers were injured in retaliatory firing by Pakistan.

An Indian official alleged that Pakistan started firing artillery and small arms onto Indian positions.

Both Pakistan and India said their forces returned fire only in retaliation.

India and Pakistan have a long history of bitter relations over Kashmir, a Himalayan territory divided between them and claimed by both in its entirety. They have fought two wars over Kashmir’s control since they won independence from Britain in 1947.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1387419/indian-shelling-kills-two-in-ajk>

March 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 19TH TO MARCH 25TH 2018

RULES FRAMED FOR TOP NUCLEAR BODY BEING KEPT SECRET

Dawn, March 19th, 2018

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: The National Command Authority (NCA) Act about the command and control of strategic assets was passed after open public discussion in parliament in 2010, but the rules framed under it are still being kept a closely guarded secret and the authorities concerned seem reluctant in

placing them even before the house despite repeated requests by the members of two committees of the Senate over the past two years.

The NCA is the apex civilian-led command headed by the prime minister to oversee the policy formulation, exercises, deployment, research and development, and operational command and control of the country's nuclear arsenals.

The last periodic report of the Senate Committee on Delegated Legislation recently laid before the house raised some questions about the operationalisation of the NCA Act, but it escaped notice in the maze of over two dozen reports by various committees during the last days of the outgoing Senate.

The 8th quarterly report of the committee for the period January to March presented by its chairman Taj Haider showed as to how the committee members found themselves helpless and powerless when the defence secretary despite being present in the Parliament House building sent a request for postponement of the agenda item despite knowing that it was the last meeting of the committee.

Authorities seem reluctant to place documents even before parliament

The officials of the ministry of defence were to give a briefing to the committee on "rules / regulations framed under NCA Act, 2010" and it was upon their request, that the committee had made arrangements for holding the session in camera.

Neither the secretary nor any other official of the ministry bothered to attend the meeting, according to the report.

The committee chairman, the report says, informed the members that defence secretary had requested through the Senate secretariat that the agenda items related to his ministry may be postponed as he would be busy in a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence.

According to the report, the committee chairman informed the members that on the request for the postponement, he had allowed the defence secretary to send additional secretary or the joint secretary to attend the meeting.

Mr Haider said the secretary insisted that the matter was very important and he personally wanted to brief the committee.

However, Taj Haider said, neither the defence secretary nor any of his representatives came to the meeting even for discussion on another agenda item pertaining to a briefing on the rules of defence housing authorities.

The rules under NCA Act were previously also denied to the Senate Committee on Defence.

PPP's Farhatullah Babar, who retired from the Senate after completion of his six-year term on March 11, had first raised the issue in the meetings of the Senate committee on defence in 2016, but to no avail. Again, he demanded presentation of the NCA rules when he became a member of the committee on delegated legislation.

In the last committee meeting, according to the report, Mr Babar said that since the NCA Act was passed through an open parliamentary debate, the subordinate legislation should also be discussed openly.

He said “if the secretary was too busy, he could have nominated some senior officer, but it too was not done”, says the report.

Mr Babar was of the view that if the defence secretary so wished, he could attend both the meetings in the same building under the same roof by taking leave briefly from the NA committee and walking into the Senate committee. “But again this eminently doable and sensible course was not adopted,” the report quoted Mr Babar to have said during the meeting.

“He wondered whether the avoidance was deliberate as the Senate term was about to expire and the ministry hoped that the matter would soon be dead and buried,” says the report.

Mr Babar said that previously as a member of the defence committee also he had asked for these rules. However, it was denied for as long as 16 months till finally he resigned from the committee for some other reasons. “The defence ministry seems to resist this committee as well, he said,” according to the report.

There is a lingering suspicion that the rules may have been framed in violation of the Act itself, the report quotes Mr Babar as saying.

If the rules indeed are in conflict with the Act it would have “dangerous implications for the command and control of strategic assets”, the report quoted him as saying.

Mr Babar apprehended that the rules might be in conflict with the basic law and wished to “place on record his apprehensions” about its destabilising potential, according to the report.

When contacted to seek his comments on Sunday, Mr Babar said the committee’s report was a public document and there was no need for further elaboration by him as he had already made his views known.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1396182>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 12TH TO MARCH 18TH 2018

RUSSIA TEST-FIRES ‘IDEAL’ HYPERSONIC MISSILE

The Express Tribune, March 12th, 2018

Russia said Sunday it successfully launched a hypersonic missile which President Vladimir Putin called “an ideal weapon” as he unveiled a new array of next-generation arms earlier this month.

The high-precision Kinzhal (Dagger) missile was launched from a MiG-31 supersonic interceptor jet that took off from an airfield in the South Military District in Russia’s southwest, the defence ministry said.

“The launch went according to plan, the hypersonic missile hit its target,” the ministry added.

The ministry released video footage showing two pilots gearing up for a flight and then running towards a jet with a large missile slung beneath its underbelly.

Set to rousing, patriotic music, the video then shows a missile detaching from the airborne plane and gliding across the dark sky, leaving a fiery trail behind.

The Kinzhal missile was one of an array of new weapons Putin unveiled in his state-of-the-nation address earlier this month, ahead of a presidential election on March 18 that he is all but guaranteed to win.

Putin said the missile flies at 10 times the speed of the sound and can overcome air-defence systems.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said on Facebook that work had also been done to modernise the “unique” MiG-31 supersonic jet that will carry the missile.

Since the start of the year, more than 250 sorties have been carried out by the aircraft to perfect the work of the missile systems, the defence ministry said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1657179/1-russia-test-fires-ideal-hypersonic-missile/>

April 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 23 RD TO APRIL 29TH 2018

NUCLEAR RIVALRY

Dawn, April 24th, 2018

Moeed Yusuf

The writer is the author of *Brokering Peace in Nuclear Environments: U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia*.

THIS week, the nuclear nonproliferation world is gathered in Geneva for the second preparatory meeting (prepcomm) of the 2020 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Conference. The NPT is the cornerstone of the global nonproliferation regime that aims to eliminate nuclear weapons and regulate the use of nuclear technologies and materials.

For NPT member states, the prepcomm is business as usual. There will be grandstanding, hollow promises and commitments made to the disarmament agenda. But things aren't as mundane for the independent non-proliferation lobbies and experts in Geneva to push these states to recognise the serious problems coming their way.

First, the revival of great power competition is bad news for this crowd. The salience of nuclear weapons decreased after the Cold War, given that the centrality of the atomic bomb in the bipolar era had been a function of superpower nuclear competition. The US and Russia began cutting back on their arsenals and talk of nuclear war-fighting all but disappeared from great power lingo.

Will this hold? President Trump clearly prefers to elevate the role of nuclear arms in US defence strategising. The new US nuclear posture review has codified his intent. This goes against the conventional wisdom that the world's strongest conventional military power would benefit most by marginalising the global role of nuclear weapons and, instead, focus on conventional superiority.

Even before this, Russia had begun to revive conversations on its own nuclear capability. Its military continues to think of and integrate nuclear weapons planning and posturing in its military exercises. China is modernising its capability at an unprecedented pace.

Great power capabilities are tied in with those of regional nuclear states. The US nuclear postures impact Russian and Chinese decisions; the latter influence India; and India drives Pakistan's behaviour. Intensified US-China competition can generate a race to the top that would suck India and Pakistan into an active nuclear arms race. Given its limited resources, Pakistan is the most vulnerable actor in this chain.

Second, a demand-side problem in terms of nuclear proliferation has been brewing. Several critical post-9/11 developments in global politics are to blame.

Take Iraq and Libya. Saddam Hussein didn't have WMD, but his demise was triggered by this allegation; Muammar Qadhafi gave up his nuclear ambitions hoping to bring Libya back into the international mainstream. He was gone shortly thereafter. Compare this to North Korea, the only country to develop nuclear weapons while being an NPT member. It has repeatedly defied the UN and threatened its neighbours and the US. Yet, it has escaped Iraq and Libya's fate.

The suggestion is not that the absence of nuclear weapons was the reason for the conflicts in Iraq and Libya. It wasn't. Still, this interpretation won't be all that unnatural for a recalcitrant state that perceives a threat from any of the strong powers. Indeed, North Korean leaders have often been reported to claim that their biggest lesson from Iraq and Libya is that nuclear capability is the only way for their regime to ensure survival.

The problem is that global non-proliferation efforts continue to persist with their historical bias towards supply-side issues. Conversations focus on controlling countries' access to nuclear materials and technology and boosting global vigilance mechanisms to catch culprits. These measures are going to come under increasing pressure, perhaps even reach their maximum limits, unless action is taken to address demand-side problems.

Third, the world's inability to figure out how to deal with the three non-NPT nuclear weapons states, India, Pakistan and Israel, adds to the conundrum. A large segment of the non-proliferation lobby has remained opposed to offering any concessions to these states. Yet, the limbo hasn't helped.

For instance, attempts to mainstream India through country-specific concessions have imposed only modest accountability but conferred great legitimacy on the Indian nuclear programme. For many champions of disarmament, this represents the worst of both worlds: the troubling signal they wished to avoid has been transmitted but without any permanent solution to the grey legal status of these countries.

Finally, the present aura of unpredictability around US foreign policy risks strengthening conservative lobbies in countries under US security umbrellas. The impression that the unipolar moment is waning is forcing some US allies to seek reassurances that Washington will be there to protect them in crises. Every time the reassurance isn't categorical and public, those arguing for self-help in these countries grab attention.

The non-proliferation regime is under far greater stress than the business as usual attitude of states at the prepcomm suggests. The stakes are too high to ignore this reality.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1403553>

PAKISTAN, RUSSIA 'KEEN TO EXPAND MILITARY TIES'

The Express Tribune, 25 April 2018

Russia on Tuesday said Pakistan is a 'geo-strategically important' country and "it is keen to expand its existing military-to-military cooperation" in a significant development at a time when Islamabad's relationship with Washington continues to deteriorate.

The Russian offer to expand defence and security ties with Pakistan came during Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's visit to Moscow.

Gen Bajwa held talks with Colonel General Oleg Salyukov, Commander Russian Federation Ground Forces, at Kremlin Palace.

"Upon arrival the COAS was presented guard of honour who laid wreath at the Tomb of unknown soldier. National anthems of both countries were played," said a handout issued by the military's media wing here.

The notable outcome of the meeting was the acknowledgement by the top Russian military commander for Pakistan's achievement in the fight against terrorism and contribution for regional peace and stability.

This was in contrast to the US' position which since Trump came to the White House has repeatedly accused Pakistan for not doing enough.

While Washington appears to have down played Pakistan's critical role, Russia thinks otherwise.

"Pakistan is a geo-strategically important country and Russia is keen to expand its existing bilateral military to military cooperation," the Russian Ground Forces Commander said.

Gen Bajwa thanked General Oleg and said that Pakistan reciprocates desire of enhanced bilateral military engagements.

He said that Russia had recently played a positive role to help resolve complex situations in the region.

He said Pakistan will continue to play its part in keeping conflicts away from the region and "seek approaches which bring regional convergences into play rather than the divergences".

The visit of the army chief was the latest in a series of high-level exchanges between the former Cold War rivals

In February, Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif visited Moscow to garner Russia's support after Trump pressurised Pakistan to do more.

Then the defence minister also visited Moscow. And more recently National Security Adviser Lt-Gen (ret'd) Nasser Khan Janjua travelled to Russia.

The flurry of visits suggested a new push by Pakistan to diversify its foreign policy options after the US expanded its cooperation and strategic ties with India.

Relations between Pakistan and Russia have seen an unprecedented improvement during last few years. The two countries, which remained bitter cold-war rivals, have been recalibrating their ties against the backdrop of realignments.

While India, Russia's long-standing strategic partner, has joined the US camp, Moscow is also opening up its options that include reaching out to countries such as Islamabad.

Russia was one of the first countries, which publically expressed its solidarity with Pakistan after President Donald Trump unveiled a new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia.

Trump accused Pakistan of supporting and harbouring the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network. He threatened Pakistan to change that approach or face consequences.

Russia along with China, however, came to Pakistan's help by suggesting that shifting the blame on Pakistan would destabilise the region and would have negative impact on Afghan security.

Pakistan has been pushing for a regional consensus on Afghanistan. Russia, China and Iran have endorsed Pakistan's stance that the use of force will not resolve the lingering conflict in Afghanistan.

All the regional players believe that the only way out to achieve elusive peace in the war-ravaged country can come through Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1694209/1-pakistan-russia-agree-expand-defence-cooperation/>

BUDGET 2018-19: RS1.1 TRILLION PROPOSED FOR DEFENCE

Dawn, April 28th, 2018

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: The government proposes to spike allocation for defence by a whopping 18 per cent to Rs1.1 trillion (approximately \$9.6bn) for the next fiscal year from the original estimate of Rs920bn for the outgoing financial year.

The increase represents the highest growth in defence budget in over a decade, as the allocation is 10.22pc greater than the revised estimate of Rs998m for the present financial year.

The defence expenditure is 21pc of the total budget outlay for the next year and 3.2pc of gross domestic product. The increase is consistent with the rate of 20pc at which the current expense is estimated to grow next financial year. However, the allocation does not give the complete picture of the defence budget, as it does not include Rs260bn for pension of retired soldiers and the allocation for major weapon procurement.

In his budget speech, the newly appointed Finance Minister, Miftah Ismail, noted the sacrifices rendered by the military and paramilitary forces, and their success in eliminating terrorist hideouts.

The government allowed 11pc annual increase in the defence budget on an average except for its first budget 2013-14 when the PML-N government had increased the defence spending by 15pc.

The budget does not include several other allocations for the military, including Rs260bn for pension, which is 76pc of the federal government's total pension bill, as well as Rs45bn for security enhancement.

While there is no mention of expenditure incurred on the country's nuclear and missile programme, major planned military hardware acquisitions are also not part of the Rs1.1tr defence allocation. The defence budget details show that maximum growth (31pc) has been recorded in the employees-related expenses over the original allocation for the outgoing year and 16.25pc when compared with the revised numbers. This head covers the salaries and allowances paid to troops in uniform and civilian employees.

The operating expense, which covers transport, POL, ration, medical treatment, training etc, has grown by 12.4pc from the one allocated in the current financial year.

A 16pc increase has been proposed for physical assets that provides for local purchase and import of arms and ammunition and related procurements. The increase is 12.8pc over the revised figures for 2017-18.

Civil works that include funds marked for maintenance of existing infrastructure and construction of new buildings get a 10.1pc increase over the original allocation, or six per cent when compared with the revised figure.

The ratio at which the budgets of the three forces and the inter-services institutions are proposed to grow also gives an interesting read. The army traditionally gets the lion's share of the increase, but this time around the navy has been given 21.4pc increase over the original allocation, followed by the army (19.7pc), Pakistan Air Force (19.5pc) and inter-services institutions (18.6pc).

It gets even more interesting when the hike is compared with the revised budget for the outgoing year according to which the army got the lowest rise of four per cent whereas the air force 16pc, the navy 15.5pc and the inter-services institutions 17.3pc.

Jane's Defence Budgets Report had in December forecast that global defence expenditure was set to touch the highest level in 2018 since the end of the Cold War. Over the last decade, the global defence expenditure had fallen from an average level of 2.7pc to 2.2pc of GDP. However, they are growing for the fifth consecutive year.

India and China are among the top five defence spenders globally, with India setting aside \$45bn (12.10pc of the total central government expenditure) and China spending \$175bn this year.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1404337>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 16TH TO APRIL 22ND 2018
PAKISTAN REDUCING DEPENDENCE ON US ARMS: FT REPORT
Dawn, April 19th, 2018

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is gradually reducing its dependence on American military technology and China is filling the gap, says a Financial Times report, which also warns that this shift will have geopolitical repercussions as well.

The long, almost 2,000-word report notes that the shift started in the last few months of the Obama administration, when Congress blocked the sale of eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan.

In Islamabad, this move was seen as a confirmation of Pakistan's fear that the United States "could no longer be relied on as their armed forces' primary source of advanced weapons", the report adds.

The shift started in the last few months of Obama administration, when Congress blocked sale of eight F-16s to Islamabad

So, Pakistan shifted its focus from F-16s to the JF-17 fighter jets it is developing with China, and which is catching up with the F-16 in terms of capabilities.

The ban accelerated Pakistan's efforts to shift its "military procurement away from American-made weapons towards Chinese ones, or those made domestically with Chinese support.

The report also quotes data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, showing that since 2010, US weapons exports to Pakistan have plummeted from \$1 billion to just \$21 million last year. During the same period, those from China have also fallen, but much more slowly, from \$747m to \$514m, making China the biggest weapons exporter to Pakistan.

"The shift coincided with Islamabad's growing suspicion about the closeness between the US and India, but was accelerated by the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil in 2011, which badly damaged relations with the US," the report added.

US President Donald Trump's decision to suspend \$2bn of military aid to Pakistan — announced in January — further exacerbated the situation.

Identifying one immediate impact of the move, the FT noted that US officials were "now finding that Islamabad is less responsive than usual" to their requests for support in Afghanistan.

Harrison Akins, a research fellow at the Howard H Baker Jr Centre for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee, told FT: "The Trump administration's decision ... can only push Pakistan further into the arms of Beijing — especially with Pakistan's shift from US military supplies to Chinese military supplies."

The report also identified longer-term consequences of this development, noting that sales of weapons systems, often backed by preferential financial terms, were central to the way the US managed its

network of military alliances and partnerships. But many of those countries were now buying some of that hardware from other governments, particularly China.

The Financial Times noted that Pakistan has been buying from Beijing for decades, starting after the US placed an arms embargo on it in the wake of the 1965 war with India. “After that, every time Islamabad has suffered diplomatic problems with Washington supplies of Chinese weapons have risen,” it added.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Beijing provided supplies and technical knowledge to help Pakistan develop its nuclear weapons, and in the early 1990s shocked Washington by selling its neighbour more than 30 M-11 missiles, capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

The report also noted that in the past decade, the nature of the military relationship between China and Pakistan had changed. China was now selling the “high-end systems in which the US once specialised to Pakistan’s military, and is co-developing many others”.

Jon Grevatt, an analyst at the defence research company Jane’s IHS Markit, told FT that in the last decade, China collaborated much more expansively with Pakistan. Since 2010, China has provided A-100 rocket launchers and HQ-16 air defence missile systems to Pakistan while VT-4 tanks were now being tested in Pakistan.

The report, however, focused on three weapons systems that encapsulate the new Chinese capabilities, and threaten US influence in South Asia.

The first is the JF-17 fighter aircraft.

In 2007, Pakistan flew its first two JF-17s, which cost about a third of the price paid for an F-16. Later, China also shared the designs so the Pakistan’s armed forces can build their own, and even export them.

In 2015, Pakistan used a drone to attack militants near the Afghan border, which strongly resembled a Chinese design.

In October 2016, just a month after the US refused to subsidise new F-16s, Beijing agreed to sell eight attack submarines to Pakistan for about \$5bn — the biggest single arms export deal in the country’s history.

The report noted that submarines deal came at a time when Washington was relying on India to provide a bulwark against perceived Chinese maritime expansionism.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1402479>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 9TH TO APRIL 15TH 2018

CHINESE AIR CHIEF COMMENDS TIES WITH PAKISTAN

Dawn, April 14th, 2018

NOWSHERA: Chinese air force chief Lt Gen Ding Laihang has expressed his resolve to promote cooperation between the armed forces of China and Pakistan.

He was speaking at the passing-out parade of GD pilots held on Friday at the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Academy Risalpur, where he was invited as a chief guest.

He inspected the parade and gave away badges to the cadets. The chief guest also presented the Quaid-i-Azam banner to the champion squadron. National anthems of both countries were played during the ceremony.

Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar, army officers, ambassadors of Islamic countries and government functionaries were present on the occasion.

Addressing the ceremony, the Chinese air chief congratulated the passing-out cadets. He said Pakistan and China established all-weather friendship. The Chinese air chief said: "Tomorrow you will be on sacred duty of safeguarding national sovereignty."

The cadets took the oath to guard the country and remain faithful to it under all circumstances. As many as 109 cadets, including two Saudi nationals, participated in the parade.

Cadet Muhammad Kamran received the 'Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Trophy Aviation' and Hamza Hussain collected the 'Chief of Air Staff Trophy Engineering Aviation'.

The 'Sword of Honour' was awarded to Hamza Dogar on overall best performance, while cadet Sajid Farosh was given trophy for quality performance in best air defence.

The ceremony ended with a spectacular fly-past by PAF fighter jets.

Meanwhile, the Chinese dignitary called on President Mamnoon Hussain at the President House, adds APP.

During the meeting, Mr Hussain said Pakistan and China shared everlasting friendly relations, which were also the basis of the country's foreign policy.

He said that defence relations between the two countries were the guarantee of peace and stability in the region. The president lauded the efforts of Chinese authorities for successfully holding the joint exercises of the air forces of Pakistan and China and expressed the hope that such exercises would also be held in the future.

He thanked the Chinese government and the air chief for providing quality support to the Pakistan Air Force and also expressed his satisfaction over the progress of different projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Frequent exchange of high-level delegations between the two countries should continue to further enhance the bilateral relations, he added.

Lt Gen Ding Laihang thanked the president and said he would continue to play his role in promoting relations between the two countries.

Earlier, the president conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz upon the Chinese air chief during a special investiture ceremony at the President House.

Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, Chinese Ambassador Yao Jiang and senior officials were present on the occasion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401553>

May 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 14TH TO MAY 20TH 2018

PESHAWAR HIGH COURT STAYS EXECUTION OF MAN CONVICTED BY MILITARY COURT

PESHAWAR: A Peshawar High Court bench has stayed the execution of a terror convict by suspending the sentence of death awarded to him by a military court.

Justice Roohul Amin Khan Chamkani and Justice Syed Afsar Shah issued notice to the defence ministry asking it to produce the records of the case of the convict, Izzat Khan, a resident of Shamoza area in Swat, whose wife Nargis Bano has filed a petition challenging his conviction.

The petitioner has claimed that her husband surrendered to the security forces on Apr 11, 2010, and since then he had been in their custody.

She claimed that her husband was innocent and that his trial by the military court wasn't fair.

The bench fixed May 22 for next hearing of the case.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of Pakistan Army, had on May 5, 2018, announced the sentences of death awarded to 11 terrorists including Izzat Khan and the confirmation of their sentences by the Chief of Army Staff.

The ISPR has claimed that the convict was a member of proscribed organisation.

It was added that he was involved in the killing of innocent civilians and attacking Armed Forces of Pakistan as well as Malakand University, which had resulted in the death of a civilian, four police officials and injuries to seven others.

It was stated that the convict was also involved in destruction of three different educational institutions. It was added that the convict had also confessed his offences before the judicial magistrate and the trial court.

Mohammad Arif Jan, lawyer for the petitioner, said the convict was handed over to the security forces in 2010 on the demand of the forces and that the family was also given a certificate about his surrender to the forces.

He said the family was told that he would be set free in few days.

The lawyer however said the convict was first kept at an internment centre in Lakki Marwat and was later shifted to another such centre in Swat. He said the convict's family was first given visitation rights at the Swat centre but around eight months ago, it was not allowed to meet him.

The lawyer said the family members including the petitioner came to know about his conviction through media.

Arif Jan claimed that despite their requests, the authorities concerned had not been providing them with the case records so that they could know under what charges he had been tried.

He said the convict was not provided a fair trial and even not permitted to hire a counsel of his choice.

The lawyer said the convict had no affiliation with any terrorist outfit and was falsely implicated in the instant case.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1407776>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 30TH TO MAY 6TH 2018

ARMY HANDS OVER INDIAN MAN TO BSF AT WAGAH

Dawn, April 30th, 2018

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army on Sunday sent back to India an Indian citizen who had crossed the border by mistake, said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Dalwandar Singh, 23, was handed over to the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Wagah border crossing after Punjab Rangers had completed due legal process.

Singh had inadvertently crossed the border and entered Ballanwala village near Kasur on March 6, 2017, said the military's media affairs wing.

According to ISPR, he expressed gratitude to the Pakistani security personnel for taking good care of him during his stay in the country.

In the absence of a mechanism aimed at ensuring their early return, people who cross the India-Pakistan border by mistake often have to endure long ordeals. A Pakistani, who crossed the border when he was only 11 years old, returned home earlier this year after spending 25 years in India.

Siraj-ud-din was released from an Indian prison and handed over by BSF officials to Pakistani security forces at the Wagah crossing last month.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1404731>

ARMY, PAF CONDUCT JOINT EXERCISE IN JHELUM

The Express Tribune, May 5, 2018

Pakistan Army and Air Force tested their joint conventional firepower capability in central command exercise at Jhelum firing ranges on Saturday.

Commander Central Command Lt Gen Azhar Saleh Abbasi apprised the audience on the various aspects of the exercise.

The exercise marked the culmination of a process aimed at integrating all available fire power assets and sensors held with both armed forces via an optimised near real time sensor – shooter grid in a network assisted environment.

Various concepts related to integration of firepower assets like PAF, artillery, air defence, SSG, army aviation, infantry and armour in support of offensive and defensive manoeuvres in a conventional war were practiced, perfected and validated during the exercise.

CGS Pakistan Army Lt Gen Bilal Akbar witnessed the concluding event as the chief guest.

CGS lauded efforts of all ranks in making the exercise professionally rewarding and doubled down on the need for continuous efforts to hone professional skills in the defence of Pakistan.

CGS commended their services while also felicitating them on carrying out the exercise.

A large number of senior army and air force officers witnessed the fire power display.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1703208/1-army-paf-conduct-joint-exercise-jhelum/>

August 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 20TH TO AUGUST 26TH 2018

MOHMAND TRIBE: 484 DISPLACED PERSONS RETURN HOME AFTER 10 YEARS

RECORDER REPORT | AUG 20TH, 2018 | PESHAWAR

As many as 484 Pakistanis belonging to Mohmand tribal district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that have taken refuge in Afghanistan due to military operation, returned to Pakistan after 10-year through Torkham crossing of Pak-Afghan border on Sunday. Hundreds of families of Mohmand tribe have migrated to Afghanistan in wake of military operation by Pak-Army in tribal region against militants in 2009.

Some of such displaced families have already come back homes. However, those hailing from Khuizai and Baizai areas faced hurdles in their return to Pakistan. Reasons behind hurdle in their return were the lack of their registration as displaced persons before going to Afghanistan.

To make honourable return of these remaining families, a prominent tribal leader and former Senator Haji Abdur Rehman Faqeer held meetings with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Corps Commander Peshawar, wherein, return of such families was formally approved.

To go ahead, tribal elders with the help of locals prepared verified lists of such families meticulously. However, due to the holy month of Ramazan and July 25 general elections in the country, the process of the return of displaced families of Khuizai and Baizai, from Afghanistan was delayed.

However, with the help of security agencies and local administration, the return of the first phase of these displaced families was made possible on August 16, 2018, and since then, a total of 87 families consisting of 484 individuals have so far come back to Pakistan from Afghanistan through Pak-Afghan Torkham border.

Welcoming the returning families, a tribal leader Haji Mohammad Nauman Faqeer while talking to media persons lauded the role of Governor KP and Corps Commander Peshawar, who upon the request of Haji Abdur Rehman Faqeer, made a respectable return of these displaced families possible.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180820400865/>

October 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 22TH TO OCTOBER 28TH 2018

ECC OKAYS SALE OF JF-17 TO NIGERIA FOR \$184.3 MILLION

Express Tribune; published Oct 24, 2018)

By Zafar Bhutta

ISLAMABAD — The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved the issuance of a certificate of sovereign guarantee for the sale of three JF-17 aircraft to Nigerian Air Force against a sum of \$184.3 million, to support the declining foreign exchange reserves.

The Ministry of Defence Production had tabled a summary before the ECC which approved the issuance of a certificate of sovereign guarantee to show commitment for the provision of the aforementioned aircraft to Nigerian Air Force, in line with a contract signed between the two sides recently.

Officials familiar with the development told The Express Tribune that the Ministry of Defence Production informed the ECC that the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) was continuing its role as Repair Overhaul Organisation (ROO) for technical operation support of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

The ministry further informed the economic decision-making committee that the PAC Kamra had signed a contract for the sale of three JF-17 aircraft and associated package to Nigerian Air Force.

According to Article 6.1 of the contract, PAC Kamra shall present the sovereign bank guarantee from the Government of Pakistan prior to the release of payment by Nigeria. No bank loan or credit financing is involved in this case, the ECC was told.

The ministry told the ECC that the Nigerian authorities had been informed that the Government of Pakistan would issue a certificate of sovereign guarantee rather than a certificate of sovereign bank guarantee, and the Nigerians had agreed to it.

The guarantee referred here is the surety from the Government of Pakistan that contracted products and related equipment would be provided to the purchaser by the PAC Kamra. A draft of the requisite guarantee acceptable to the purchaser is also required concurrently.

The Finance Division has no objection to the issuance of a certificate of sovereign guarantee subject to the approval by the ECC and completion of all codal formalities.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201810240004&EN_ID=1120181024001&EMID=11201810240003

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 15TH TO OCTOBER 21TH 2018

PAKISTAN BIGGEST IMPORTER OF CHINESE ARMS: REPORT

By Rahima Sohail

Published: October 18, 2018

Pakistan accounts for 42 per cent of China's total arms sales over 2000-14, a report by RAND revealed recently. At the Dawn of Belt and Road: China in the Developing World examines the country's economic, political and military activities across the Global South.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has been a key supplier of major conventional weapons to South Asian countries especially Pakistan and Bangladesh. Sales to both amount for over half of total Chinese total arms sales over 2000-14. Bangladesh amounts for 11 per cent of the sales, making China the world's third-largest arms exporter.

Probably the most notable Chinese sale to South Asia was the sale of JF-17 fighters to Pakistan followed by an agreement to build the jets in Pakistan under a joint venture: the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex/Chengdu Aerospace Corporation.

China has continued to provide considerable military assistance to Pakistan including helping develop the country's nuclear program. During the mid-1970s Beijing covertly assisted Islamabad's nuclear ambitions to counter New Delhi, according to the document. This reportedly included the design of a nuclear weapon and fissile material.

"In 1988, China agreed to supply and train Pakistanis in the operation of the M-11 solid-fuel rocket, with a 185-mile range and carrying a 1,100-pound warhead. The missiles arrived in 1995. In subsequent decades, China has sold Pakistan hundreds of jet fighters and signed agreements to sell frigates and submarines to Pakistan," the report read.

Military exercises

Besides arms sales, China has also held military exercises with South Asian countries – more than a quarter of their exercises between 2002 and 2014 were held with South Asian countries. Many of these exercises focused on counter-terrorism operations with Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka as major partners.

Of the 24 conducted over 2002-14, two-thirds (16) were held with Pakistan. While the relationship with Pakistan is "quasi-alliance" in nature, China also held five exercises with India. This is indicative of Beijing not wanting "close ties with Islamabad to come at the expense of a confrontational relationship with New Delhi."

China-Pakistan 'pivotal' relationship

China continues its Pivotal Regional Partnership (PRP) with Pakistan in South Asia. The relationship has acquired greater importance than a simple check on India of late. According to the document,

close ties with Pakistan, “the linchpin of China’s South Asia policy”, are based on three factors: ensuring China’s internal stability, balance against India and defending China’s burgeoning economic interests.

Islamabad will continue to be an important partner for Beijing because of the conflictual future of the region. “Pakistan’s political stability and national unity is crucial to China, not only to ensure that Islamabad remains a counterweight to India but also because, as an Islamic state and nuclear power its instability or disintegration would send shockwaves cascading far and wide.”

Pakistan’s relationship with China was capped in April 2015 with the inking of agreements between the two countries promising investments of up to \$46 billion and the construction of a China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) of roads, rail lines, and pipelines. The corridor is to run from Gwadar in Pakistan through Lahore and Islamabad to Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in China.

Beijing is also concerned about energy security and CPEC is an effort to diversify its petroleum import routes. China, has been a net importer of oil since 1993, and the overwhelming majority of petroleum arrives in the PRC via Southeast Asia. “To improve security in the Indian Ocean, China has adopted what one US consulting firm dubbed a ‘String of Pearls’ strategy working to establish a network of port facilities in countries around the Indian Ocean region.” Developing Gwadar, reportedly leased by a Chinese company, constitutes a key element.

Strong China-India economic ties relations, however, continue to hold steady. India is China’s largest trading partner in the region and is both, its largest source of imports and export destination.

“China’s two-way trade with India now dwarfs that with Pakistan. Between 2000 and 2013, Sino-Indian two-way trade jumped 22-fold to \$65 billion. In contrast, Sino-Pakistani two-way trade has increased very slowly over the same period, to reach a modest \$14 billion in 2013.”

Soft power

Beyond economic and military hard power, China has also expanded its soft power reach. It has established eight Confucius Institutes across six countries in South Asia. India and Pakistan have two each. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka each boast a single.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1828531/1-pakistan-biggest-importer-chinese-arms-report/>

US WANTS INDIA TO BUY F16S TO OFFSET RUSSIA ARMS SANCTIONS: PAPER

The Newspaper’s Correspondent Updated October 21, 2018

NEW DELHI: The United States is pressing India to buy its F-16 fighter planes for a waiver on sanctions that would apply to New Delhi’s purchase of S-400 missile system from Moscow, local reports said on Saturday.

“With India signing a pact with Russia to purchase the S-400 missile defence system, Washington has informally conveyed to Delhi that it could avoid sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) if India were to give an assurance that it would buy the F-16 fighter aircraft from the United States,” The Indian Express said.

Other newspapers reported a similar discussion, which took place between Indian Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her US counterpart James Mattis in Singapore on Friday.

The reports said India is not keen on buying an aircraft already in service with Pakistan, and has refused to give any such assurance till date.

Ms Sitharaman is scheduled to make her first bilateral visit to the US as Defence Minister in mid-December “but it is not clear if Mattis would still be a part of the Trump administration then,” The Express said.

He has been a vocal supporter of a CAATSA waiver for India, forcefully arguing for a waiver before the US Congress. But the three-step waiver process is to be decided by President Trump, who said last week that India “is going to find out” the answer “sooner than you think”.

According to local reports quoting US State Department officials there were “no blanket waivers that will be issued for any one country.”

And any waiver under CAATSA would require, among other things, countries to significantly reduce their reliance on Russian arms”.

Sanctions under CAATSA would be triggered once Delhi makes a payment for the Russian equipment. India likely to make a part payment of the \$4.5-billion deal with Russia this financial year, reports said.

Published in Dawn, October 21st , 2018.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1440331/us-wants-india-to-buy-f16s-to-offset-russia-arms-sanctions-paper>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 8TH TO OCTOBER 14TH 2018

PAKISTAN OPPOSED TO ARMS RACE IN SOUTH ASIA: FO

By Our Correspondent

Published: October 11, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Taking note of the recent Indo-Russia defence deal, Pakistan on Thursday said it was opposed to any arms race in South Asia and had been proposing measures for promoting restraint in both the nuclear and conventional domains.

This came during the weekly press briefing from Foreign Office spokesperson Dr Muhammad Faisal, he said “However, we cannot remain oblivious to these developments and are firmly committed to maintaining credible minimum deterrence through taking any measures, as necessary. Let me assure you that Pakistan is fully confident of its ability to do so.”

He was responding to the conclusion of multibillion-dollar air defence deal signed between Russia and India during the recent visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi.

The defence pact also drew reaction from the United States, which warned India of the possible implications of striking such a deal with Russia.

The spokesperson said countries which were providing weapons to India should make sure that their assistance does not disturb the balance of power in the region.

Answering a question, Faisal said that Pakistan has not shied away from talks with India and was open to discuss all issues including Jammu and Kashmir, Sir Creek, Siachen and terrorism.

On China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the spokesperson made it clear that Pakistan was not reviewing the multibillion-dollar project.

“There is no plan to review the CPEC projects. The alleged statement of the prime minister was out of context and a press release has been issued clarifying the position,” he added.

He also said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia held discussions about the possibility of Riyadh investing in projects in Pakistan under CPEC.

However, the details had not been worked out as yet, he added.

“It is worth mentioning that both Pakistan and China are open to third party or country investments in some projects of CPEC including SEZs. Besides Saudi Arabia, other countries are also welcome to invest in SEZs under CPEC.”

On the Pak-US relations, Faisal said that engagements with Washington had increased ever the since the assumption of present government.

About recently held talks with US special representative Zalmay Khalilzad, the spokesperson said Pakistan conveyed to the US side that it would take all possible steps in good faith to facilitate the political settlement in Afghanistan.

“However, it remains a shared responsibility. The role of the US, Afghan government and other regional players is also important,” he said.

Answering another question, the spokesperson denied there was any ban on the international non - governmental organisations in Pakistan.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1823535/1-cpec-not-reviewed-says-foreign-office-spokesperson/>

November 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 19TH TO NOVEMBER 25TH 2018

WORLD POWERS CLASH OVER CHEMICAL ARMS WATCHDOG'S NEW ROLE

RECORDER REPORT | NOV 20TH, 2018 | THE HAGUE

World powers traded accusations of hypocrisy in bitter clashes on Monday over the global toxic weapons watchdog's new ability to attribute blame for attacks like those in Syria and Salisbury.

The United States and Britain went head-to-head with Russia, China and Syria over the boosted powers that members agreed to give the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in June.

At a tense meeting in The Hague, Moscow and Beijing were accused of trying to stall the watchdog's new role indefinitely by proposing that the changes be subjected to “open ended” scrutiny before going live.

US Ambassador Kenneth Ward said Russia's claims that the OPCW's new powers were illegitimate were "pungent hypocrisy", and warned against allowing a "new era of chemical weapons use to take hold".

"What have they done for the last few years but to connive with their Syrian ally to bury the truth of what has happened in Syria, along with the dead killed by the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime," Ward said.

"And as if that wasn't bad enough, Salisbury comes along."

The West pushed through the new powers after a string of chemical attacks in Syria, as well as a nerve agent attack on Russian former double agent Sergei Skripal in the British city of Salisbury in March. Britain accused Russia of carrying out the attack using a Soviet-era chemical called Novichok and the West has since imposed a series of sanctions on Moscow.

British envoy to the OPCW Peter Wilson called any attempt to limit the watchdog's power to attribute blame for chemical attacks "unacceptable".

But Russia's envoy Alexander Shulgin hit back, saying that Western claims of chemical weapons use by Damascus and Moscow were a "scam" and "out and out lies".

He added that Russia had a "principled position regarding the illegitimacy" of the new investigative powers, adding that they "infringe on the properties of the UN Security Council", where Russia has a veto.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad meanwhile launched a fierce broadside at the US and Britain.

"You have taught people to use chemical weapons, you have used chemical weapons in the first two world wars. The Syrian government has never used chemical weapons," he said.

"Where is your morality? This is sheer hypocrisy and sheer lies, I wish to use such undiplomatic language."

The meeting is also the first since the expulsion of four Russians accused by Dutch authorities in October of trying to hack into the OPCW's computer system, using electronic equipment hidden in a car parked outside a nearby hotel.

At the time the organisation was investigating the attack on Skripal as well as a major chemical attack in Syria.

The OPCW says the two-week meeting of the 193 member countries is meant to "discuss the future of the organisation".

New OPCW director-general Fernando Arias warned in his opening address on Monday that the "international norm against the use of chemical weapons has come under strain".

"Their repeated use poses a challenge that must be met with strong and unified resolve," he added.

Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, the OPCW is responsible for upholding the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention to end the use of all toxic arms.

So far it says it has overseen the destruction of 96.5 percent of the world's chemical arms stocks.

But in recent years it has seen its role expand to cover the investigation of a wave of chemicals attacks in the Syrian civil war, as well as the Salisbury attack and the 2017 killing in Malaysia of a half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

A “very small but very strong” investigative team will start work early next year with a mandate to go back and try to attribute blame for all chemical attacks in Syria since 2013, Arias said.

The watchdog will also be able to point the finger for future attacks anywhere in the world, so long as it is asked to by the country on whose territory where the incident happened.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181120425258/>

50 COUNTRIES TAKING PART IN IDEAS 2018

Shazia Hasan November 25, 2018

KARACHI: There will be 522 exhibitors from 50 countries, including Pakistan, at the 10th edition of the International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS) 2018, scheduled for Nov 27 to 30 at the Karachi Expo Centre.

Speaking at the curtain-raiser event of IDEAS 2018 at the Expo Centre on Saturday, director coordination of Defence Export Promotion Organisation (DEPO) Brigadier Waheed Mumtaz said that with the defence exports of Pakistan currently standing at \$300 million with aircraft such as JF-17 fighters and Mushshak central in the sales, the upcoming edition of IDEAS would surpass all previous milestones in terms of space, booking, exhibitors and delegates, both domestic and foreign.

Besides trade visitors, more than 262 high-level delegations from 51 countries are also visiting the exhibition.

Countries such as China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, UAE, Ukraine, USA and host Pakistan are all establishing their exclusive country pavilions at the Expo Centre. For the purpose, the organisers have also added three extra exhibition halls in the form of marquees.

Though a presentation, Commodore Tariq Javed, the media director of DEPO, also said that the event as per its traditions would offer a number of activities encompassing the world's advance defence technology demonstrations, an international seminar, three conferences by the Pakistan armed forces, the IDEAS Karachi Show, a counterterrorism demonstration, networking and business expansions through business to business (B2B) and business to government (B2G) engagements and the signing of MoUs.

“IDEAS 2018 will bring together defence industries from across the globe to showcase their latest technological innovations. A large number of senior civil and military delegations and trade visitors will also be witnessing the exhibition,” he said.

IDEAS will kick off with a grand inauguration ceremony.

The first two days have been earmarked for delegations, trade visitors and for networking activities. The other highlights include an international seminar on emerging global and regional environment and the role of grey hybrid warfare therein from Pakistan's perspective. Renowned national and international subject matter experts will also present their scholarly papers on the topic.

It was shared that Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Zubair Mahmood Hayat will be the keynote speaker at the seminar. Another significance of IDEAS 2018 is the holding of exclusive land, maritime and aviation conferences by Pakistan Army, Navy and the Air Force, respectively, which will be hosted by respective service chiefs.

To specially mark the 10th edition of IDEAS, the Ministry of Pakistan Postal Services is also issuing a commemorative postal stamp of Rs10 denomination. The ticket will be available for sale at the Expo Centre as well as all major post offices from the inaugural day.

In addition, two Russian naval ships will also be visiting Pakistan for port call during IDEAS. New inventions of Pakistan defence industry including those from Global Industrial Solutions, Pakistan Ordnance Factories, Military Vehicles Research and Development Establishment, Shibli Electronics, Universal Smart Military Systems and Daudson Armoury will also be inaugurated and showcased during the exhibition.

General public

The Karachi Show has been planned specially for the people of the city at Nishan-i-Pakistan, Seaview, on Nov 29.

In addition, Nov 30, the fourth day of the exhibition will be exclusively reserved for the general public.

Brigadier Waheed Mumtaz said it was pertinent to point out that by saying "open to the public" they don't mean "open" in the classic sense.

"The Karachi Show as well as the IDEAS exhibition will be open to those who have taken the trouble to register online. They should also carry their CNICs with them," he stressed. "This is an international event and security of the participants, visitors and guests along with the public, too, cannot be taken lightly," he added.

Traffic plan

On the occasion, DIG Traffic East Javed Ali Mahar, also briefed the media about the traffic plan that will include the deployment of 2,300 police personnel and alternative routes to facilitate travelling of the people of Karachi during rush hours. He said that Sir Shah Sulaiman Road from the National Stadium Karachi flyover to Hasan Square will be closed for public. Residents of this area though will be allowed to pass through after showing their CNICs.

A map shared by the police on the occasion showed yellow barriers with brown stripes indicating the areas closed for the general public while the blue barriers with purple stripes show the area from where the heavy traffic will be filtered and diverted to alternative routes. The open roads have been

indicated with green and blue arrows, the stars show where diversions have been created and the blank rectangular boxes show the parking areas from where one can take a shuttle to the Expo Centre.

Air Commodore Tahir Anwar, Brig Ali Ammar Haider from DEPO, Brig Abid Ali Askari, and Zohair Naseer chief operating officer of Badar Expo Solutions were also present during the briefing.

Published in Dawn, November 25th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1447427/50-countries-taking-part-in-ideas-2018>

December 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 3RD TO DECEMBER 9TH 2018

CHINA'S SPECIAL FORCES TEAM ARRIVES FOR JOINT EXERCISES

Our Correspondent

December 9, 2018

RAWALPINDII: A special forces contingent of People Liberation Army China arrived here on Saturday to participate in Pak-China joint military exercise 'Warrior-VI 2018'.

Troops of Special Service Group from both armies will participate in three weeks long exercise, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Focus of the joint exercise is to share respective experiences in the field of counter-terrorism operations and learn from each other.

This is sixth joint exercise of the series as part of bilateral military cooperation between both friendly countries. Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa is also likely to visit the exercise area. The joint exercises between special services forces of Pakistan and friendly countries are a continuous process.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/403769-china-s-special-forces-team-arrives-for-joint-exercises>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 26TH TO DECEMBER 2ND 2018

INDIGENOUS MULTI-ROLE DRONE UNVEILED IN IDEAS

Shazia Hasan Updated November 29, 2018

KARACHI: Day two of the 10th International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS) 2018 here on Wednesday was witness to the unveiling of a new indigenous multi-role drone built by Global Industrial and Defence Solution (GIDS). The drone was introduced by Vice Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Kaleem Shaukat, one of the chief guests of the exhibition being organised under the aegis of the Defence Export Promotion Organisation at the Karachi Expo Centre.

Named Shahpar, the drone is capable of flying at an altitude of 17,000 feet for up to seven hours. GIDS describes Shahpar as a medium-range tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) with autonomous take-off and landing. It is said to be able to carry various types of payloads integrated for

reconnaissance and day and night surveillance. Shahpar's other features include accurate lateral, longitudinal trajectory control, mission planning, management and control, geo-referencing and geo-pointing for terrestrial targets. The drone's cameras can focus up to a radius of 250 kilometres and can operate in any weather.

Visitors

The first two days of the exhibition have been earmarked for delegations, trade visitors and networking activities. The visitors with proper accreditation parked their cars in the designated parking areas to take a shuttle from there to reach the Expo Centre.

A couple had brought with them their six-month-old baby Fahad Ghaziani. When someone asked them if they had accreditation for the baby, they shook their heads and said they didn't think that anyone would stop them from taking inside an infant. Later, the mother was seen roaming about the stalls all alone.

First two days of exhibition earmarked for delegations, trade visitors and networking activities

Most Pakistan stalls were located around the entrance. There were armed vehicles and tanks that people wanted to climb on mostly for the sake of pictures. Right in the centre was JF-17 Thunder, the pride and joy of the Aircraft Manufacturing Factory at Pakistan Aeronautical Complex, Kamra.

The aircraft has been developed to meet tactical and strategic needs of the Pakistan Air Force. It is designed to accommodate future upgrades and additional requirements. Equipped with advanced electronics, it is capable of carrying multitude air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons having compatibility with western weapon systems. It was surrounded by its ammunition, which the visitors skipped and hopped through to climb up to its cockpit, for pictures.

"Is that the plane's steering wheel?" a woman's voice could be heard from inside the cockpit of Super Mushshak aircraft also on display near JF-17. Maqsood Ahmed, the man in uniform representing the aircraft's manufacturers, Aircraft Manufacturing Factory, smiled in reply before explaining that it was not a steering wheel but the plane's control stick. Another woman wanted to know why Super Mushshak didn't have its ammunition laying around like JF-17 and was politely informed by another representative in uniform, with the name tag 'Nawaz' on his chest, that it was because it was primarily a trainer aircraft and not for combat really. Then someone else had an issue with its small size.

"Well, we just let them come sit with us inside the cockpit. Most just want someone to photograph them there while others take selfies as we make small talk with them about the weather or how they are today. They all seem very happy," said Mr Ahmed in the cockpit.

Passing the Kashmir Hall set up as a marquee for seminars and conferences, one could get to the main building. Hall-1 mostly had Turkish and Russian stalls. Hall-2 also Hall-3 had Turkish and Chinese stalls, while Hall-4 and Hall-5 had many international stalls representing Italy, Poland, etc, as well as Pakistani stalls.

Conferences

The first conference of the day was organised by the Pakistan Army early in the day. It was titled “In pursuit of peace, Pak Armed Forces contributions in bringing peace and stability in the country and region” in which National Defence University President Lt Gen Majid Ehsan, Ambassador Najmuddin Sheikh, Azad Jammu & Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan, Ambassador Riaz Khokhar, Lt Gen Khalid Rabbani and Ambassador Abdul Basit highlighted the importance of the Pakistan armed forces’ role in stability of peace in the country and particularly in the region. The conference was attended by a large number of local and foreign delegates.

The National Centre for Maritime Policy Research Karachi chapter of the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) under the auspices of Pakistan Navy also organised a maritime conference titled “Maritime security dynamics and requirement of innovative solutions for Indian Ocean Region”.

The conference was also attended by Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi and other high-level civil and military officials, eminent maritime stakeholders and world renowned defence industry entrepreneurs.

Published in Dawn, November 29th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1448318/indigenous-multi-role-drone-unveiled-in-ideas>

ISLAMABAD, MOSCOW AGREE TO UPGRADE BILATERAL TIES

By Our Correspondent

Published: November 29, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad and Moscow agreed on Thursday to upgrade bilateral ties to the level of strategic partnership during a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Russian Ambassador Alexey Dedov.

The two sides agreed to improve cooperation in the field of defence production. Relations between Pakistan and Russia have increased significantly during the last few years with a focus on bilateral defence ties.

Discussions were also held to improvement in bilateral trade, energy and investment, said the Foreign Office (FO).

Qureshi also praised Russian efforts to bring peace to war-torn Afghanistan. Russian has recently launched a peace initiative to bring the warring sides of Pakistan’s western neighbour to the negotiating table as instability in the country is a cause for concern for Russia as the country lies north of the Amu river in Afghanistan.

The Russian envoy assured the foreign minister of Russia’s cooperation in various sectors.

Earlier in October, the Pakistan Army and the Russian military held joint military drills in the mountains of Pakistan from October 21 to November 4.

Russia and Pakistan have been holding the 'Friendship' drills since 2016. In 2017, over 200 servicemen took part in the drills, which were held in the North Caucasus at an altitude of 2,300 meters above sea level.

In August, Pakistan and Russia reached a historic agreement allowing officers from the country's armed forces to train in Russia.

The deal was concluded at the end of the inaugural meeting of Russia-Pakistan Joint Military Consultative Committee in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan and Russia have stepped up cooperation in the defence sector since 2014 when the two nations signed an agreement for boosting bilateral ties.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1856603/1-islamabad-moscow-agree-upgrade-bilateral-ties/>