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Pakistan's Losing Leverage over the U.S.

Supplies through Pakistan: Lifeline of US Operations in Afghanistan: Bagram Air Base's lifeline enters Pakistan at the Port of Karachi and passes through the historical Khyber Pass into Afghanistan. Bagram, the huge military airport plus housing compound, is Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan's (OEF-A) headquarter. Bagram is maintained by the 5th and the 6th Aviation Battalions of the United States Army and the United States Air Force's 455th Air Expeditionary Wing is also housed at Bagram.

The United States Army, the United States Air Force (USAF), the United States Navy (USN) and the United States Marine Corps (USMC) all have their lifelines passing through two Pakistani corridors—the Khyber Pass and the Quetta-Chaman-Spin Boldak/Kandahar corridor. The U.S. has 30,000 troops in Afghanistan and the lifeline for these troops passes through Pakistan. Some 84 percent of all containerized cargo destined for U.S. troops in Afghanistan passes through these two corridors. Fuel for U.S. Army's Humvees (the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle), its infantry fighting vehicles, cavalry fighting vehicles and its armored personnel carriers is refined at refineries in Pakistan. Aviation fuel that powers USAF's A-10 Thunderbolts, B-1 strategic bombers and military transport aircraft is also refined at refineries in Pakistan (U.S. forces in Afghanistan also get some oil supplies from the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan).

The lifeline to Bagram is Pakistan's leverage over the U.S. Obama is sending in an additional 30,000 troops and Pakistan is the shortest land route to Kabul as well as Kandahar. But, General David Petraeus, the 10th Commander of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), is now bent upon diluting Pakistan's leverage over the U.S.

NATO Evaluating Options: On February 2, the Associated Press, quoting NATO Commander General John Craddock, reported that "individual NATO member nations can make deals with Iran to arrange for the transportation of supplies to their forces in Afghanistan as an alternative to using the increasingly dangerous supply routes in Pakistan." On February 3, Reuters reported that "traffic through Pakistan's Khyber Pass has been halted indefinitely after a 100-ft bridge was blown up in an apparent militant attack. The explosion disrupted the main supply route for supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan. Thus far, there have been no estimates on how long repairs might take."

Safer Alternatives: General Petraeus has reportedly finalized agreements with the Shymkent Refinery, owned by PetroKazakhstan, and the Atyrau Refinery, owned by

KazMumayGas, for the supply of up to 20,000 barrels-per-day of refined oil to Bagram as well as NATO's main military base in Kandahar (where massive construction is underway). The Republic of Kazakhstan, as a consequence, stands to reap a rich bonanza all at the cost of Pakistani refineries. According to the BBC, General Petraeus (along with the United States Transportation Command) is also working on an alternative route that would "see containers being shipped across the Black Sea, then going by rail through Georgia to Azerbaijan's Caspian sea ports and then by road through Turkmenistan."

US-Iran: Common Objectives: On January 9, General Petraeus, while addressing the U.S. Institute of Peace, said that the United States and Iran have "common objectives" in Afghanistan. Petraeus must also be looking at the Port of Chabhar, the Iranian seaport on the Oman Sea. From Chabhar to Zaranj, in south-western Afghanistan, on to Delaram and then onwards to both the Kandahar and the Bagram Air Base (the 215-km Zaranj-Delaram Highway has been built by the Corps of Engineers of the Indian Army).

America is thinning out Pakistan's leverage, diluting it to put America in a position to force Pakistan to "do more."