

CRS Report for Congress

Pakistan: Significant Recent Events

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Susan Chesser
Information Research Specialist
Knowledge Services Group



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Summary

In recent months, militant attacks on government and civilian targets in Pakistan have escalated. This report documents major events that occur daily in the country of Pakistan and reflect on Pakistan's evolving relationships with the United States as well as with neighboring countries.¹ Sources include Pakistani news outlets, reports by the U.S. government, and international resources. For a substantive review, see CRS Report RL33498, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

This report will be updated as warranted.

¹ For a chronology of events before Jan. 27, 2007, see CRS Report RS21584, *Pakistan: Chronology of Recent Events*, by K. Alan Kronstadt.

Contents

Introduction	1
Chronology	1
March	1
February	6
January	10

Pakistan: Significant Recent Events

Introduction

Militant attacks on government and civilian targets in Pakistan have escalated in recent months. This report documents major events that occur daily in the country of Pakistan. It also reflects on Pakistan's evolving relationships with the United States and with neighboring countries. Sources include Pakistani news outlets, U.S. government reports, and international resources.

Listed below, in reverse-chronological order, are significant events that took place in or affected Pakistan or involved Pakistan's relations with the United States or neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan, India, Iran, or China. The events covered in this report are from January 27 through March 31, 2007.

Chronology

March

03/31/07 Fresh fighting in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) killed an estimated 56 to 200 pro-government elders and foreign militants over the past week. Reportedly, Mulla Dadullah arrived in SWA to negotiate a peace deal. Also, Commander of U.S. Central Command, Admiral William J. Fallon, met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to discuss the situation in Afghanistan.

03/30/07 The State Bank of Pakistan projected a GDP growth rate of 6.6% to 7.2% for FY2007, with an average inflation rate of 6.7% to 7.5%. This inflation rate is higher than the annual target but "substantially lower relative to the preceding year."²

03/29/07 In an interview with *The New York Times*, Afghan President Hamid Karzai stated that he receives "almost daily" reports of suicide bombers coming into Afghanistan from Pakistan. Karzai believes the Pakistani government does not want his government to succeed.³ On the same day, a suicide bomber blew himself up at an army base near Kharian in Punjab province, killing one soldier and injuring six or seven others.

² Sarfaraz Ahmad, "SBP Asks Govt to Address Inflation," *Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 31, 2007.

³ Nicholas Kristof, "An Interview with Hamid Karzai," *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 2007.

03/28/07 Authorities placed an indefinite curfew on the Tank district in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) after at least five people were killed and two were abducted within three days during clashes between Pakistani troops and alleged Taliban militants. Shops and businesses were closed.

03/27/07 Unidentified gunmen attacked and killed four officials of the Inter-Services Intelligence. Later, 11 people were arrested for involvement in the attack. On the same day, it was reported that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has repatriated 28,000 Afghans from Pakistan thus far in 2007. Also, thousands of political opposition members protested peacefully in Lahore and Karachi to denounce the suspension of the Chief Justice (see 3/8 entry).

03/26/07 Pakistani security forces in Balochistan discovered and freed three of four Iranian policemen abducted on February 27. The fourth policeman had been killed. On the same day, local government officials, tribal elders, and pro-Taliban militants in Bajaur signed a peace deal. Government officials promised not to make arrests without conferring with tribal elders, while tribesmen and militants pledged not to shelter foreign militants or allow “subversive” activities.⁴ Also, the Supreme Court of Pakistan directed the attorney general to submit information by April 10 on the whereabouts of “hundreds of people” taken into official custody.⁵

03/25/07 Landslides caused by heavy rains in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Azad Kashmir over several days killed up to 80 people and forced the evacuations of hundreds of families.

03/23/07 It was reported that up to 70 dead crows had been found in Islamabad, some testing positive for the H5N1 strain of bird flu. On the same day, intelligence agencies claimed that Waziristan’s Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, fled to Afghanistan.

03/22/07 The *Washington Post* reported that Pakistani government officials claim the fight of local tribespeople against Uzbek, Chechen, and Arab militants validates the government’s counterterrorism strategy to allow tribal leaders to evict Al Qaeda on their own.⁶ Reportedly up to 160 people died in four days of fighting, including 130 foreign militants.

03/21/07 Five members of the Pakistani Frontier Corps were killed and four others were wounded when their convoy was attacked near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

⁴ “New Peace Deal Inked in Bajaur,” *The Post* (Pakistan), Mar. 27, 2007.

⁵ “SC Sets Deadline on Missing Persons,” *The Post* (Pakistan), Mar. 27, 2007.

⁶ Griff Witte and Kamran Khan, “Pakistan Officials Applaud Fighting in Tribal Region,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 23, 2007, p. A13.

03/20/07 At least 42 Uzbek militants and 16 tribespeople were killed in two days of fighting in the South Waziristan tribal region. It was reported that 27 Uzbek militants were captured. On the same day, the *New York Times* reported that the Bush administration warned the governments of several countries, including Pakistan, that the United States may levy penalties against them if they pursue energy deals with Iran.⁷ Also, State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack said in a briefing that President General Musharraf “has made certain commitments [about leaving the post of army chief] and we think it’s important that he follow through on those commitments.”⁸ Finally, new deep-water port facilities opened at Gwadar. China provided 80% of the \$248 million initial development costs.

03/19/07 Two students were killed and six others were injured when their bus was hit by crossfire between local Taliban fighters and Uzbek militants in South Waziristan. On the same day, it was reported that at least seven judges resigned in protest over the suspension of the chief justice (see 3/8 entry).

03/18/07 Train service between Quetta and the rest of Pakistan was suspended after tracks were blown up. On the same day, a watchman was killed and two people were injured in attacks on video shops in Peshawar and Mardan. Also, five workers of the Muslim Students Federation were injured in Azad Kashmir when a gun battle broke out with activists of the pro-independence National Students Federation.

03/17/07 A *jirga* of Mamoond elders reportedly warned tribesmen that anyone sheltering foreign terrorists in Bajaur Agency would be punished severely. On the same day, suspected militants reportedly pardoned 10 journalists, tribal security personnel, and civilians for allegedly spying on the activities of muhahideen in Kohat and are no longer “liable to be killed.”⁹ Also, five members of the militant Lashkar-e-Islami group and a member of the rival Insarul Islam group were killed in a battle between the two groups.

03/16/07 Three explosions rocked Quetta, including one when a hand grenade was thrown into a police constable’s house and injured a child. On the same day, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced an agreement with the Pakistani government to corroborate and improve the Primary Health Care Programme to “eradicate polio and decrease infant and maternal mortality.”¹⁰

⁷ Steven R. Weisman, “U.S. Cautions Foreign Companies on Iran Deals,” *New York Times*, Mar. 21, 2007.

⁸ State Department Regular News Briefing by Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Sean McCormack, Mar. 20, 2007.

⁹ “10 Men in Kohat No Longer ‘Liable to be Killed,’” *Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 18, 2007.

¹⁰ “Ministry, WHO join to improve healthcare,” *Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 17, 2007.

03/15/07 U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher announced a \$750 million, five-year aid package to enhance security along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and to develop the FATA. The package still needs to be approved by Congress. An additional \$75 million has been requested by the Administration “to support the military development and transformation of the Frontier Corps,” which patrols Pakistan’s northwest frontier.¹¹ On the same day, thousands of people protesting the removal of the chief justice crowded around the Supreme Court building, shouting “Go, Musharraf, Go!” and demanding the president’s resignation.¹² At least 700 protesters were arrested in Islamabad and Rawalpindi (see 3/8 entry).

03/14/07 Concluding a three-day meeting, the *jirga* commissions of Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed that the countries will not trade allegations so that bilateral relations will improve. Also, security forces reportedly arrested a leader of the Balochistan Liberation Army and 13 of his men.

03/13/07 The Afghan Defence Ministry reported that Pakistan had started fencing parts of its border. Afghanistan disputes the border, called the Durand Line, although President Musharraf claims it is “very, very clear.” Pakistani officials said the work was not yet underway but would begin soon in “areas of concern to divert the people towards authorized routes and restrict the movement of miscreants.”¹³ On the same day, Chief Justice Chaudhry, his wife, and daughters were reportedly “manhandled” by Islamabad police when they tried to march to the Supreme Court (see 3/8 entry).¹⁴

03/12/07 In an op-ed article published in the *Washington Post*, Benazir Bhutto, leader of the opposition Pakistan People’s Party and former prime minister, accused the West of fear mongering when it claims that President Musharraf’s regime is “the only non-Islamist option” to lead Pakistan. She further questioned if it “wouldn’t ... be prudent to tie aid money to genuine political reform?”¹⁵ On the same day, the arrival of two JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft was commemorated. The aircraft were jointly manufactured by Pakistani and Chinese engineers and will be inducted into Pakistan’s Air Force. Also, at least 14 people died in rain-related incidents around the country. Finally, baton-wielding police beat lawyers protesting outside the Lahore High Court building against the removal of the Chief Justice. Approximately 50 attorneys and 35 policemen were injured.

¹¹ Remarks by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher at the press conference at the U.S. Embassy, Islamabad, Pakistan, Mar. 15, 2007.

¹² Griff Witte, “Top Judge’s Ouster Shakes Pakistan; Political Opponents are Arrested as Protest Swells Against Move by Musharraf,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 17, 2007.

¹³ “Pakistan has started fencing border: Afghanistan,” *Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 14, 2007.

¹⁴ Nasir Iqbal, “Acting CJ Takes *Suo Motu* Notice: Manhandling of Justice Iftikhar,” *Dawn* (Karachi), Mar. 15, 2007.

¹⁵ Benazir Bhutto, “A False Choice for Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 12, 2007.

03/10/07 Three rebels and a junior army officer died in an exchange of gunfire when security forces prevented militants from crossing the border from Afghanistan to Pakistan. Relying on reports of the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the Earth Policy Institute, the Pakistan Planning Commission has reportedly concluded that Pakistan will face a “major water crisis” in the next 20 to 50 years.¹⁶

03/09/07 The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence reportedly passed a resolution referring to proposed U.S. legislation (H.R. 1, S.Res. 99) that calls for restrictions on aid to Pakistan, claiming such measures indicate an undervaluing of Pakistan’s contributions in the war on terror. It is reported the resolution recommends that if the bills become law, Pakistan’s Parliament should limit or end cooperation with the United States.¹⁷

03/08/07 President Musharraf charged Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry with “misconduct and misuse of power,”¹⁸ prompting the Supreme Judicial Council to suspend him pending a hearing. Several provincial judicial leaders filed complaints against Chaudhry, while newspapers reported that he had ruled against the government in several matters.

03/07/07 In the United States Congress, S.Res.99 was introduced to express “the sense of the Senate that United States military assistance to Pakistan should be guided by demonstrable progress by the Government of Pakistan in achieving certain objectives related to counterterrorism and democratic reforms.” On the same day, a Peshawar-based Internet service provider blocked a Taliban website after receiving complaints about the hate material and photos of dead U.S. marines posted there.

03/06/07 The U.S. State Department’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006* stated that the Pakistani “government’s human rights record remained poor,” citing extrajudicial killings, disappearances of activists and political opponents, corruption in the government and police forces, widespread trafficking in persons, and abuse of women and children.¹⁹ On the same day, Pakistan began hosting the navies of the United States and 25 other countries for a week of AMAN-07 exercises in the Arabian Sea. Also, 13 foreign militants died in a gun battle with a Wazir tribe after two brothers of the tribal chief were murdered.

¹⁶ Khaleeq Kiani, “Glacier Depletion to Hit River Flows After 50 Years,” *Dawn* (Karachi), Mar. 12, 2007.

¹⁷ Zulfiqar Ghuman, “NA Body Decries Conditional US Aid,” *Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 10, 2007; Amir Wasim, “NA Body Warns US on Sanctions Law: Threat of Non-Cooperation in War on Terror,” *Dawn* (Karachi), Mar. 10, 2007.

¹⁸ Mohammad Kamran, “Musharraf Wants CJP Iftikhar Out,” *Daily Times* (Lahore), Mar. 10, 2007.

¹⁹ See [<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78874.htm>].

03/05/07 The Supreme Court of Pakistan dismissed a petition requesting an inquiry into an attack on a North Waziristan village by U.S.-led forces based in Afghanistan. One resident of the village died in the attack.

03/04/07 Police in Karachi arrested Ammar Raza Naqvi, a member of an outlawed Shiite group, on suspicion of “planning and execution” of attacks on five Sunni clerics who were killed in separate incidents in 2004 and 2005.²⁰

03/03/07 Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States, Mahmud Durrani, was reportedly called to Islamabad for consultations following a March 1 interview with Reuters in which he said a threat to cut U.S. aid could destabilize Pakistan and end President Musharraf’s administration.

03/02/07 Three policemen were killed and nine other people, including an anti-terrorist judge, were injured when a remote-controlled bomb exploded in the Punjab city of Multan. Also, Pakistan successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable Haft-II Abdali missile, which has a range of 120 miles.

03/01/07 The State Department’s *2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* noted that Pakistan is a “major transit country for opiates and hashish from neighboring Afghanistan” and that “Pakistan traffickers are an important source of financing to the poor farmers of Afghanistan, who otherwise could not afford to produce opium.”²¹

February

02/27/07 Mike McConnell, the new Director of National Intelligence, told a Senate committee that Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri are trying to establish an operational base in a tribal area of northwestern Pakistan. McConnell also said the United States needs the Musharraf government to win elections later this year to give the region stability.

02/26/07 Vice President Richard Cheney made an unannounced visit to Pakistan reportedly to give President Musharraf “an unusually tough message” and warning “that the newly Democratic Congress could cut aid ... unless his forces become far more aggressive in hunting down operatives with Al Qaeda.”²² On the same day, Pakistani security forces reportedly arrested the Taliban’s former defense minister, Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, in Quetta. Later, it was reported that he had not been arrested.

02/25/07 Foreign ministers from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, plus the secretary general of the Organisation of

²⁰ “Pakistani Police Arrest Shiite Militant Suspected in Killing of Sunni Muslim Clerics,” *International Herald Tribune*, Mar. 4, 2007.

²¹ See [<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/82201.pdf>].

²² David E. Sanger and Mark Mazzetti, “Cheney Warns Pakistan to Act on Terror,” *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 2007.

Islamic Conference, met in Pakistan to develop solutions to the Palestinian issue and to denounce the “campaign to malign Islam.”²³ On the same day, three people were killed in a rocket attack on their house in Balochistan.

02/23/07 Pakistan successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable Shaheen II ballistic missile, which has a range of 1,245 miles. On the same day, the *New York Times* published a letter from Shafquat Jalil, the Press Counselor of the Pakistan Mission to the United Nations, which stated that the reports that Al Qaeda is operating out of Pakistan are “based on faulty intelligence ... If Al Qaeda is indeed ‘regaining’ power it could do so much more easily in the vast ungoverned areas in southern Afghanistan,” Jalil said.²⁴

02/22/07 Prosecutors in the trial of two men accused of organizing the March 2006 bombing of the U.S. consulate in Karachi claimed the attack was carried out by Pakistani militants and planned by Al Qaeda operatives. U.S. diplomat David Foy and four other people died in the attack.

02/21/07 The foreign ministers of Pakistan and India signed a pact to reduce the risk of an atomic weapons accident.

02/20/07 Marghazar Zoo in Islamabad closed for a week after lab tests confirmed that 24 birds had died from the H5N1 strain of avian flu. About 40 chickens at a small farm in Rawalpindi also died of the virus. Employees at the zoo and farm were tested, but no humans in Pakistan have tested positive. On the same day, a “fanatic” who believes “women cannot rule over men” murdered Punjab Minister for Social Welfare Zille Huma Usman because “she was leading an un-Islamic life and spreading an evil influence on other women.”²⁵

02/18/07 Bombs exploded on the Samjhota Express while in northern India, en route to Lahore, killing 68 people and injuring at least 50 others. Most of the dead were from Pakistan. At least two bombs exploded while two others failed to detonate. On the same day, the government of Tehran reportedly claimed “Sunni insurgents from Iran used Pakistan as a base to plan” the February 14 bombing in Zahedan, which killed 11 Revolutionary Guards.²⁶ Iran closed its border and alleged American explosives had been used. Later it was reported that several villages in Pakistan suffered food shortages without the supplies usually imported from Iran.

²³ “Muslim FMs in Pakistan Agree to Continue Talks to Resolve Middle East Crisis,” BBC Monitoring South Asia, Feb. 25, 2007.

²⁴ Shafquat Jalil, “Pakistan and Al Qaeda,” *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 2007.

²⁵ “Minister’s Murderer Believes Women Can’t Rule Over Men,” *Daily Times* (Lahore), Feb. 22, 2007; “Punjab Minister Assassinated,” *The Post* (Pakistan), Feb. 21, 2007.

²⁶ Nazila Fathi, “Iran Says Sunnis, Using Pakistan as Base, Planned Fatal Bombing,” *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 2007.

02/17/07 A suicide bomber killed 17 people, including a civil court judge and seven lawyers, and wounded 30 at the Quetta District Courts compound.

02/16/07 Thousands of parents in the NWFP prevented WHO personnel from vaccinating children against polio after clerics reported the immunizations were a U.S. plot to sterilize Muslim children. A WHO doctor overseeing the program died in a roadside bombing.

02/15/07 A White House fact sheet on plans to defeat terrorism in Afghanistan included material on increasing cooperation with Pakistan, adding 100 border outposts, providing high-tech equipment to locate terrorists crossing the border, funding helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft for better security and surveillance capabilities, and establishing Reconstruction Opportunity Zones for exporting locally-made products to the U.S. duty-free.²⁷ On the same day, U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker told a Senate committee that Pakistan has been in the fight against the Taliban since 9/11 and has lost hundreds of soldiers, civilian officials, and pro-government tribal leaders, demonstrating that Pakistan's "commitment is not in question on this."²⁸

02/13/07 The World Bank approved \$138 million in credit to complete housing reconstruction in areas struck by the October 2005 earthquake.

02/12/07 Visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates met with President Musharraf to discuss plans for a spring offensive against the Taliban. Gates reportedly stated the United States had neglected Afghanistan after the Soviet Union left in 1989 and allowed extremism to take control.²⁹

02/11/07 Claiming the right to self-defense, American troops in Afghanistan launched artillery rounds against Taliban fighters into Pakistan. On the same day, a grenade thrown into the NWFP compound for American aid group Save the Children wounded two Pakistanis.

02/10/07 A bomb exploding in the parking lot of the Red Cross headquarters in Peshawar damaged several vehicles. Also, Qadros Engineering, a private sector manufacturer in Lahore, reportedly exported one of the world's largest sugarcane crushing mills to Louisiana.

02/09/07 Gunmen ambushed a van in Attock, in the province of Punjab, killing six activists from the opposition Pakistan People's Party and injuring two others. On the same day, police in the NWFP seized ten bombs found on a road frequented by army convoys. Also, eleven men returned to the

²⁷ See [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/02/20070215.html>].

²⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nominations of Ryan C. Crocker to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq and William B. Wood to be Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*, hearing, 110th Cong., 1st sess, Feb. 15, 2007.

²⁹ "In Pakistan, U.S. Defense Secretary Seeks Support to Counter Taliban," *New York Times*, Feb. 13, 2007.

Balochistan border village Qamar Din after having allegedly been taken by NATO forces that reportedly crossed the border from Afghanistan and raided the village.

02/08/07 Two commanders and 400 Marri tribesmen surrendered to security forces in Balochistan and pledged support for the government. On the same day, it was reported the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance announced a 10% reduction in the poverty level in Pakistan. Also, the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) criticized the government for pro-Taliban policies. The HRCP report, *State of Human Rights in 2006*, stated that “at least 110 people had lost their lives in terrorist attacks” and at least 565 women and girls had died in “honor killings.”³⁰

02/07/07 Two suspected Taliban militants killed an Intelligence Bureau officer and wounded his driver in an ambush near Peshawar. On the same day, the Water and Power Development Authority signed an agreement to purchase electricity for Gwadar port from an Iranian company, to start January 2009.

02/06/07 Intelligence agencies reported they uncovered 10 suspected terrorist plots targeting high ranking officials in revenge for military operations in South Waziristan. On the same day, the bodies of two Afghan men were found on a road in North Waziristan along with notes claiming they had been shot as U.S. spies. Also, a delegation from the U.S. Consulate in Karachi reported that Pakistani scholars will receive the highest number of Fulbright Scholarships allocated worldwide for 2007.

02/05/07 Two pro-government tribal elders were killed and another injured when a roadside bomb exploded in the FATA. On the same day, the government of Mauritania denied landing rights to a boat carrying 200 Pakistani migrants to Europe.

02/04/07 In an interview at a “secret base” in southern Afghanistan, Taliban senior commander Mullah Hayatullah Khan reportedly said the Taliban “received no outside support and operated entirely from within Afghanistan.” He claimed the Taliban pulled out of Pakistan after government officials surrendered several colleagues to U.S. forces.³¹ Also, police in Lahore arrested Rizwan Ahmad, head of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a Sunni militant group, and four other men “on suspicion of preparing suicide attacks.”³²

02/03/07 A suicide car bomber rammed into a military convoy, killing two soldiers and wounding seven in the NWFP.

³⁰ See [http://www.hrcp-web.org/ar_anualreport-06/index.htm].

³¹ Saeed, Ali Achakzai, “Interview - Taliban vows bloody summer,” Reuters News, Feb. 4, 2007.

³² “Pakistan arrests sectarian militant chief,” Agence France Presse, Feb. 5, 2007.

02/02/07 U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker delivered eight Cobra attack helicopters to Pakistan, saying the helicopters were “important weapons in our common fight against terrorism.”³³ On the same day, security forces seized more than 30 surface-to-surface missiles from a hideout in Balochistan. Also, a beheaded body was found in North Waziristan with a note saying the Afghan had been killed as a U.S. spy.

02/01/07 Two government officials and a tribal police officer were killed in North Waziristan when their van was ambushed. On the same day, the Economic Coordination Committee approved a five-year plan to increase production of automobiles from 200,000 in 2007 to 500,000 by 2012.

January

01/31/07 Following interrogations of 11 suspects, Pakistani investigators reportedly determined the bombings of the previous week in Islamabad, Peshawar, and Dera Ismail Khan to be linked to Taliban militants. On the same day, eight Pakistani drivers were killed by insurgents in Iraq, and another ten kidnapped drivers were released when their employer, a Lebanese company, paid ransom.

01/27/07 U.S. House Speaker Representative Nancy Pelosi and six other Members of Congress met with President Musharraf in Islamabad. On the same day, a bomb blast in Peshawar killed 15 people, most of them policemen including the city’s police chief, and injured some 60 other people in a possible sectarian attack.

³³ “U.S. Gives Eight Cobra Helicopters to Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 2, 2007.