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## Clinton Aims to Bolster Ties With Pakistan

*Secretary of State Seeks to Show Solidarity With Islamabad's Anti-Taliban Offensive and Ease Concerns About U.S. Aid*

By JAY SOLOMON

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she will use her first official trip to Pakistan to smooth relations strained by terms of an American aid package for the key South Asian ally.

Mrs. Clinton was scheduled to arrive Wednesday morning in Islamabad for a three-day visit in which she will also seek to show solidarity with Pakistan's military operations against Taliban and al Qaeda forces based in the tribal region of South Waziristan, which borders Afghanistan.



Associated Press

A police officer stands guard Tuesday in Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan, as refugees from the fighting in South Waziristan wait for aid to be distributed.

The Pentagon views Islamabad's increased willingness to conduct offensive operations against the Taliban, particularly in South Waziristan, as crucial to underpinning American efforts to stabilize eastern and southern Afghanistan.

"I think it's important for Americans and others to recognize the high price Pakistanis are paying" in the fight against militancy, Mrs. Clinton said en route to Islamabad on Tuesday. "I think too often people outside Pakistan don't acknowledge how hard this effort is."

The Taliban, in response to the South Waziristan offensive, have intensified attacks in Pakistan's cities, on military installations and government offices. Due to security concerns, the State

Department sought to conceal many aspects of Mrs. Clinton's trip.

U.S. intelligence officials say South Waziristan is a haven for Taliban and al Qaeda fighters conducting strikes in Pakistan as well as cross-border attacks against Afghan and American troops.

U.S. officials worry, however, that simmering tensions within Pakistan's powerful military over the terms of billions of dollars in new U.S. aid could potentially weaken Islamabad's resolve to confront the Taliban and al Qaeda in the longer term.

Mrs. Clinton said she will seek to clarify issues related to the aid during her meetings with Pakistani officials this week, while also working to forge closer economic, diplomatic and cultural ties.

"There have been a lot of misconceptions of what the United States intends from its relationship with Pakistan," Mrs. Clinton said. "It is unfortunate that there are those who question our motives ... and I want to clear the air on that."



European Pressphoto Agency

Pakistani troops carry a coffin containing the remains of a soldier killed during fighting in South Waziristan in a funeral ceremony on Tuesday in Karachi.

President Barack Obama this month signed new legislation authorizing \$7.5 billion in financial aid over the next five years to bolster Pakistan's new civilian government. Congress is also drafting a new defense authorization bill that will earmark billions of dollars for Pakistan's military, including funds for its military operations against the Taliban.

In drafting the new bills, however, Congress has established benchmarks for Pakistan to meet in order to receive the funds. The financial-aid bill, sponsored by Sens. John Kerry (D., Mass.) and Richard Lugar (R., Ind.), requires the White House to certify that Pakistan isn't supporting militant Islamic groups or engaging in nuclear proliferation.

The defense-authorization bill, meanwhile, seeks assurances that Islamabad is using weapons purchased with U.S. assistance only against the Taliban, rather than against rival India.

The terms of the Kerry-Lugar legislation stoked a political outcry in Pakistan. Opposition political parties and religious leaders claimed the bill encroached on Pakistan's sovereignty.

Military officials, meanwhile, scolded the U.S. for trying to condition Pakistan's use of military aid while at the same time pressuring Islamabad to conduct military operations that could kill many Pakistani soldiers.

The former first lady said that despite sensitivities, she would continue to raise contentious issues with Pakistan's leaders, particularly the threat of nuclear proliferation. "We will certainly raise it with Pakistan," Mrs. Clinton said. "We worry about proliferation, and we have good reason to worry."

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