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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: KMDR, KPAO, OIIP, OPRC, PGOV, PREL, PK
 SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 04, 2009

Summary: Reports that the "U.S. and NATO supply line disrupted as an important bridge on the Peshawar-Torkham road was blown up" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Wednesday. Also front-paged were reports from Washington that a "classified Pentagon report urges President Obama to shift U.S. strategy in Afghanistan - to focus on ensuring regional stability and eliminating Taliban and Al-Qaeda from Pakistan." Prime Minister's Gilani's decision to "lift ban on recruitment in government services, and dissolve the task force on employment" received prominent coverage. Several major newspapers reported that "violence claimed 14 lives in Baluchistan." The English daily, "Dawn," reported that "over 70 militants were killed by security forces during fierce clashes in

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Swat on Monday and Tuesday."

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Most major dailies ran critical editorials on the abduction of an American citizen who is the senior UNHCR official in Quetta. The independent English daily, "Dawn," observed that "it is an ominous development that sends all the wrong signals to foreign and local agencies providing aid to those who desperately need assistance." The Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," noted that "Mr. Solecki was an extremely 'valuable' victim because of his status as an UN official and his American nationality." The leading mass circulation Urdu daily, "Jang," opined that "this incident occurred at a time when the UN Secretary General is coming to Pakistan in a few days. The timing of this event also lays bare some scheme to defame the country in the world." End Summary.

News Stories

"NATO Supply Line Disrupted By Bridge Blast" "Dawn" (02/04)

"The crucial supply line for U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan was disrupted after an important bridge on the Peshawar-Torkham road was blown up on Tuesday."

"Pentagon For Targeting Terror Camps In Pakistan" "The News" (02/04)

"A classified Pentagon report urges President Barack Obama to shift the U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan by de-emphasizing democracy-building and concentrating more on targeting Taliban and al-Qaeda sanctuaries inside Pakistan with the aid of the Pakistani military forces. U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates has seen the report prepared by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, but it has not yet been presented to the White House, officials said on Tuesday."

"Gilani Lifts Ban On Recruitment" "Dawn" (02/04)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani dissolved the 'task force on employment' on Tuesday and lifted a ban on recruitment in government services. The task force, set up by the PPP-led government soon after coming into power, has been severely criticized by the opposition and civil society and numerous cases of gross violation of recruitment policies and prescribed procedures have been reported by the media."

"Holbrooke, Haqqani Discuss Situation In Tribal Areas" "The News" (02/04)

"Special envoy appointed by President Obama for Pakistan and

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Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke met with Pakistani Ambassador in the United States Hussain Haqqani in Washington and discussed situation in tribal areas and joint patrolling by Pakistan, Afghanistan and NATO forces on bordering areas."

"Aid Cut Will Curtail Pakistan Army's Independence: Boucher" "Daily Times" (02/04)

"In an interview with rediff.com's Aziz Haniffa, United States Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher was quoted as saying on Tuesday that he did not believe that security assistance to Pakistan had to be conditioned to the extent that the independence of its army had to be curtailed. 'You have to be careful not to cut off your nose to spite your face,' Boucher was quoted as saying."

"U.S., U.K. Working To Improve Pak-Afghan Border Situation: Hillary" "The News" (02/04)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Tuesday said the United States and the United Kingdom are working together to address the situation along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and forge a positive relationship. We are working together also in Pakistan, she said after meeting with British Foreign Secretary David Miliband in Washington."

"Afghans Need Governance More Than U.S. Troops: Mullen" "The News" (02/04)

"Afghanistan needs better governance even more than it needs extra U.S. troops to fight insurgents, the top U.S. military officer said on Monday. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, made his remarks as the Pentagon released a report which described Afghanistan's government as one of the world's weakest, hampered by pervasive corruption, he said in remarks at a lunch organized by the Reserve Officers Association in Washington."

"Anti-Terrorism Policy Review, Dialogue Key To West-Muslims Ties" "Daily Times" (02/04)

"Most of the foreign envoys based in Islamabad on Tuesday urged a review of the war on terror policies, dialogue with extremists and better relations between the Muslim and the West. Speaking at a conference - Islam and the West: Future Agenda of Change (Role of the Muslim World) - organized by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), the envoys also called on the world to change its perception towards Islam and replace 'might is right' principle with 'right is might.' The conference was convened to consider recommendations for U.S. President Barack Obama to improve the West-Muslim relations."

"Obama Says Pakistan Must Not Be Destabilized" "Dawn" (02/04)

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"Pakistan's nuclear weapons are the main cause of concern for US President Barack Obama and his military chiefs who have vowed not to allow the destabilization of Pakistan because that will allow the militants access to weapons of mass destruction, said Mr. Obama in an interview to NBC television."

"Violence Claims 14 Lives In Balochistan" The Nation" (02/04)

"At least 14 people including a bride and bridegroom were killed and 20 other sustained critical injuries, some of them seriously, in separate incidents of firing and target killings in Dera Bugti, Nushki, Mastung and Khuzdar district of Balochistan on Tuesday."

"70 Militants Killed In Swat" "Dawn" (02/04)

"Over 70 militants were killed by security forces during fierce clashes in Swat on Monday night and Tuesday. Official sources claimed that the Taliban had suffered a major setback in the area."

"Military Action In Swat Has Public Backing: Sherry" "The News" (02/04)

"Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sherry Rehman on Tuesday said the public consensus against violence in Swat serves as a huge boost to the government's efforts for restoration of law and order in the region."

"Swat Taliban Turn Their Guns On Lawyers" "The News" (02/04)

"Militants in Swat on Tuesday warned that all lawyers and judges, being part of an 'infidel judicial system,' would be killed if they did not quit their profession. Announced on their illegal FM radio, the threat from insurgents - intent upon forcing their ideology on residents of the restive valley - has obviously scared the legal fraternity."

"Presidency Sitting On Sufi's Peace Offer In Swat" "The News" (02/04)

"The Presidency is sitting on what could have been a remarkable peace initiative to overcome the present state of lawlessness in Swat. Maulana Sufi Muhammad, Chief of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), had assured the authorities two months ago that he would ensure peace in the troubled Swat only if his demand of setting up of an Islamic appellate court named Darul Qaza is met to ensure quick justice.

The president, however, is scared of the expected international

pressure in case he approves the Shariatayat in Swat, which interestingly was originally approved during Benazir Bhutto's second regime but never implemented thus leading to the present lawlessness in Swat."

"Security Forces Keep Up Advance In Mohmand" "The News" (02/04)

"The security forces on Tuesday continued to advance into areas of the Pandyalai tehsil of Mohmand Agency and demolished five houses owned by the militants besides recovering arms and ammunition."

"Two More Schools Blown Up In Bajaur" "Dawn" (02/04)

"Militants blew up two government schools in the Pashat area of Bajaur Agency on Tuesday."

"One Killed, 25 Hurt In D.I. Khan Mosque Blast" "The News" (02/04)

"One worshipper was killed and 25 others were injured when unidentified miscreants hurled a hand-grenade at a mosque in Kumharanwala, Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday."

"Over Dozen Suspects Being Quizzed In Quetta" "Dawn" (02/04)

"Police were questioning more than a dozen suspects on Tuesday over the kidnapping of a top UN official in Balochistan. Officials admitted on Tuesday they had no idea who had snatched John Solecki and where he had been taken, given the myriad criminal gangs, insurgent rebels and militants known to operate in Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan."

"Ban Likely To Announce UN Probe Panel Today" "Dawn" (02/04)

"United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who is arriving in Islamabad on Wednesday, is expected to announce formation of a UN commission to look into the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Abduction Of UN Official," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/04)

"Monday's ambush in Quetta that left an employee of the UNHCR dead and led to the abduction of the refugee agency's Quetta office chief is more than a personal tragedy for the families of those who were attacked. It could have wider repercussions as well. It is an

ominous development that sends all the wrong signals to foreign and local agencies providing aid to those who desperately need assistance."

"Terrorism's Strategy Of Kidnapping," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/04)

"Mr. Solecki was an extremely 'valuable' victim because of his status as a UN official and his American nationality. Therefore the reaction from the UN will be most inconvenient for Pakistan in so far as the UNHCR is crucial to Pakistan's efforts to take care of war-displaced refugees. The UN has the option of terminating its missions if its personnel are not seen to be even minimally secure."

"Abduction Of UN Official - What Is Role Of Secret Agencies?," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (02/04)

"The kidnap of a senior UN official isn't the first incident of its kind, as several other diplomats, and foreigners have been abducted or assassinated in different parts of Pakistan in the past. Furthermore we must bear in mind that this incident occurred at a time when the UN Secretary General is coming to Pakistan in a few days. The timing of this event also lays bare some scheme to defame the country in the world."

"Worsening Situation In Balochistan And NWFP And RAW," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/04)

"The kidnapping of UN Regional Chief from Balochistan is a grave incident that has been perpetrated to show Pakistan as an unsafe country.... Since Mumbai attacks it has been India's endeavor to prove Pakistan as unsafe for foreigners and foreign investment in order to get donors and investors attention once again focused on New Delhi and Mumbai.... Pervez Musharraf once said that he was 200 percent sure of Indian involvement in lawlessness in Balochistan province. However, the present rulers' apathy in this respect has encouraged Indian machination."

"Solecki's Kidnapping," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/04)

"Such incidents are not new in Pakistan's troubled areas and reflect badly on the country's reputation the world over.... These incidents show the failure of government's efforts in controlling militancy in the country.... UNHCR officials' kidnapping could be a

reaction of the US missile and drone attacks in the tribal areas." UNCLASSIFIED

"They Are Destabilizing Balochistan," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/04)

"The grip of law and order enforcement agencies has loosened and with each passing day abhorable acts of target killing, firing at police personnel and blasting of gas pipelines are steadily on the increase. The authorities had gathered enough proofs that those behind subversive activities were being financed and trained by foreign powers inimical to Pakistan.... The kidnapping of the UNHCR representative would have serious implication for Pakistan at the international level and every effort must be made to ensure his early and safe recovery."

"Target: Quetta," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/04)

"After Peshawar, the city of Quetta seems to be falling into the hands of militants. The kidnapping of the Chief of the UNHCR in the city is the latest evidence of this.... The situation is disastrous for more reasons than one. The kidnapping will add to the international image of Pakistan as one of the world's most dangerous places. This in turn will have an impact on spheres such as investment, which are crucial to the economic stability of Pakistan.... "

"Unrest In Balochistan," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/04)

"The incident of kidnapping of John Solecki, head of the UN refugee agency in Quetta, by unknown miscreants on Sunday, reflects poorly on the law and order situation in the provincial capital.... It shows that even lives of such high profile persons are not safe, and for another it points to the strength these non-state forces have been gaining over time."

"Making Pakistan Safe," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/04)

"President Obama has said, a strong, united and stable Pakistan is important. The question is how such stability can be built. A bill which the U.S. Vice President Joe Biden had helped draft had proposed large scale development aid for Pakistan rather than only military assistance.... The idea of investing in the people of Pakistan rather than its military alone remains one that makes sense. The stability Barack Obama believes Pakistan needs can come only when the abject poverty and social injustice in which extremist thought is rooted is addressed. Pakistan today needs massive

investment in education, health and welfare UNCLASSIFIED

"Pak-U.S. Relations And The Changing Scenario," an editorial in the Lahore-based Urdu daily "Waqt" (cir. 5,000) (02/04)

"[The U.S.] is giving an impression that aid to Pakistan would be stopped if the Pakistani measures against terrorism do not meet U.S. expectations. Pakistan was previously thrown at the mercy of the Pressler Amendment. The need is for the Pakistani leadership to ponder over the reason for this humiliating attitude. How long will

Pakistanis live in uncertainty in exchange for some U.S. dollars?"

"Pakistan's Eight Points For Holbrooke," an op-ed by Nasim Zehra in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/04)

"Pakistan must present its position clearly and cogently. Unless Washington recasts its Afghan policy in a politico-military cast there will be no end to war in Afghanistan. Endless war in Afghanistan also means continued warring and destabilization in the bordering regions within Pakistan..... Ambassador Holbrooke should be told that unless a holistic politico-military and development approach to resolving the Afghan problem is adopted, his efforts to initiate a regional peace process in Afghanistan will not succeed. More importantly for Pakistan, it cannot afford a scenario of continued war in Afghanistan."

"Messieurs President, PM & COAS: Put Nation Before The U.S.," an op-ed by Shireen M. Mazari in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/04)

"Messieurs Zardari, Gilani and Kayani should realize that it is not U.S. money or U.S. drones that will solve our problem of terrorism and extremism, national consensus, dialogue with all stakeholders backed by state force, and effective governance based on rule of law and an independent judiciary where people feel they can get redress for their grievances peacefully. A tall order, but at the very least, surely, before meeting with Holbrooke, our leadership should commence the dialogue (instead of seeking surreptitious compromises with individuals like Sufi Mohammad only) and also get a policy consensus from Parliament - after all, if nothing else, it may provide the much needed backbone to the present set of decision makers."

"Drone Attacks And U.S. Responsibilities," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (02/04)

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"It is a hard reality that the killings of innocent people in drone attacks has intensified public reaction against the governments of the U.S. and Pakistan and put the ongoing war on terror in jeopardy. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced owing to the security forces' operation in the border areas, and now they are looking forward to the humanitarian assistance. The U.S. administration must understand Pakistan's stance on this issue."

"Drone Attacks - Do Something Other Than Verbal Protest," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/04)

"When the British Foreign Secretary Miliband made statements against the Indian stand on Mumbai attacks during his visit to New Delhi, the Indian PM Singh sent a protest letter to his British counterpart. On the contrary there is no need to tell that how the U.S. treats the Pakistani officials. Whether Pakistani Foreign Minister can meet President Obama, as does the U.S. Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher visit Pakistan almost every month and meets Pakistani president, prime minister and army chief with no trouble? Can Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S. Haqqani visit the White House so frequently, as the U.S. Ambassador Patterson visits the President House in Islamabad? It is true that the U.S. is a super power, but we should not compromise over our self-respect, sovereignty and national honor anyway."

"Keep Registering Reservation To Americans: A Right Approach," an editorial in the Karachi based left-wing Sindhi Daily "Awami Awaz" (Cir. 70,000) (02/04)

"Pakistani government's senior officials during their meeting with the U.S. Congressional delegation have put forward country's reservations on the U.S. drone attacks, urging the Congressmen to raise funding for Pakistan. We anticipate that the U.S. would understand Pakistan's point of view, only then this alliance on war against terror would survive. There is a need of compromise and understanding to maintain bilateral cooperation."

"Part Ways With The U.S.," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000)

(02/04)

"Pakistan's demands to the U.S. are going unheard. President Zardari rightly asked Congressional delegation to share intelligence with Pakistan instead of resorting to drone attacks. Pak Army chief General Kiyani, in a meeting with NATO chief, also urged NATO to play its role in stopping U.S. attacks in Pakistan. But as a matter of fact U.S. is more interested in pressing a weakening Pakistan

than sincerely waging war against terrorism. It is the right time that we must ask the U.S. to vacate our airbases, and should discontinue logistic support to NATO and the U.S."

"Taking Flight," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/04)

"People who have either been forced to flee for their lives because of the ferocity of the fighting or have chosen to leave of their own volition. It is estimated that over 20,000 have fled their homes and are now at makeshift camps in and around Peshawar.... Those people that have stayed behind say that government control is now virtually non-existent."

Patterson

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