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E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: KMDR, KPAO, OIIP, OPRC, PGOV, PREL, PK
 SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: NOVEMBER 18, 2008

SUMMARY: Reports on the Friends of Pakistan conference held in Abu Dhabi promising "cooperation in the fields of development, security, energy, and institutional building" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. Also highlighted were reports that the Government informed the National Assembly that "it hoped for a policy review by the new U.S. administration of President-elect Barrack Obama." In a front page story, the English daily, "Dawn," reported that "Pakistan aided ISAF in attack on its soil." Reports on the resumption of supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan also receive prominent display. All newspapers also highlighted the U.S. District Judge Berman's remarks regarding the results of the psychiatric evaluation of Aafia Siddiqui declaring her "unfit to stand trial."

All major dailies ran critical editions of Sunday's report in the American daily, "The Washington Post" that "there is a secret deal between Pakistan and the United States allowing U.S. drone attacks into FATA." The national English daily, "Dawn," noted that "considering the events of the last several months, the Washington Post's story appears to confirm an existing situation." An editorial in the popular Urdu daily, "Ausaf," observed that "the compulsions of our rulers are beyond our understanding that they are doing mere protests over U.S. drone attacks rather than taking any practical steps to prevent them." The pro-Taliban Urdu daily, "Islam," wrote: "If the government does not move on this issue it will support the idea that there is some truth in the Washington Post report." The second largest Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" noted that "if we look at the American attacks and the hollow statements of our President, prime minister and the Army chief, then we tend to believe the Washington Post story on the existence of a secret agreement between America and Pakistan." End Summary.

 News Stories

1. "Friends Agree To Cooperate In Four Sectors" "Dawn" (11/18)

"Acknowledging that Pakistan is facing "formidable challenges and needs a well-coordinated international cooperation", the Friends of Pakistan forum agreed on Monday on a broad framework for cooperation with Pakistan in four major sectors. "A work plan for the group has been adopted, envisaging cooperation in the fields of development, security, energy and institution-building," Foreign Office spokesman Mohammad Sadiq said in Islamabad after the conclusion of a meeting in Abu Dhabi of top officials of the countries constituting 'Friends of Democratic Pakistan'."

2. "Investments, Not Aid, Likely From 'Friends'" "Dawn" (11/18)

"Pakistan is not expecting pledges of financial support from a group of friendly nations that met in Abu Dhabi on Monday to consider various proposals to help revive its ailing economy. Diplomatic sources in Washington told Dawn that Monday's meeting only included mid-level officials and focused on exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan."

3. "Pakistan Hopeful of Policy Review By Obama Administration"

"Dawn" (11/18)

"The government told the National Assembly on Monday it hoped for a policy review by the new U.S. administration of President-elect Barack Obama taking office next month, while repeating its rejection of a U.S. newspaper report that alleged a tacit deal between the two sides allowing drone attacks on Pakistani tribal areas. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi cited unexplained "indications of a

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policy review" by the new U.S. administration and said: "We hope we will be able to bring about this change."

4. "Tacit Understanding over Drone Attacks Denied In NA" "The News" (11/18)

"The Washington Post report about the secret understanding about the Government of Pakistan and the U.S to allow drone attacks inside Pakistan territory echoed in the National assembly on Monday and the opposition asked the Government to come clean on the issue."

5. "U.S. Envoy Denies Pak-U.S. Tacit Deal" "Statesman" (11/18)

"U.S. Ambassador in Islamabad Anne Patterson has denied any deal between Pakistan and her country about air strikes in the tribal areas. The U.S. envoy refuted a report published in Washington

Post."

6. "Pakistan Aided ISAF in Attack on Its Soil" "Dawn" (11/18)

"The Pakistan military helped the western forces based in Afghanistan attack a position in Pakistan used by militants after an ISAF post was hit by two rockets fired allegedly by militants from inside Pakistan. According to a spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force, militants pounded an ISAF base in Paktika on Sunday, leading to the coordinated artillery strike into Pakistan."

7. "NATO Supplies Resume under Tight Security" "The News" (11/18)

"Supply to NATO forces in Afghanistan resumed on Monday under a heavy security escort after a week's pause. "Fifty-two containers crossed the Pak-Afghan border at Torkham in two separate convoys that were escorted by the personnel of the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) and the Khasadar Force," Political Tehsildar Bakhtiar Khan told The News."

8. "Aafia Unfit To Stand Trial, Says U.S. Judge" "Dawn" (11/18)

"Aafia Siddiqui, the Pakistani woman suspected of links to Al Qaeda and charged with trying to kill American interrogators in Afghanistan, is mentally unfit to stand trial, according to her psychiatric evaluation. Aafia Siddiqui, 36, is "not currently competent to proceed as a result of her mental disease, which renders her unable to understand the nature and consequences of the proceedings against her," U.S. District Judge Richard Berman said on Monday while reporting the results of the evaluation."

9. "Obama In Touch With His Pakistani Friends" "The News" (11/18)

"Even after his election as president of the United States, Barack Obama continues to maintain directly and indirectly his old bond with his few Pakistani friends, most of them having been settled in America. 'Obama and Senate Chairman Muhammadmian Soomro have exchanged, through their common friends living in the United States, good wishes after his election as president of America,' a source close to the upper house chief told The News."

10. "Obama and McCain Vow to Work Together" "Dawn" (11/18)

"U.S. President-elect Barack Obama and Senator John McCain met on Monday and pledged to work together, prompting media speculations that the Republican senator may get a senior position in the Obama administration. The former rivals met in Mr Obama's transition office in Chicago. Rahm Emanuel, the incoming White House chief of staff, attended the meeting, as did Sen. McCain's close friend, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham."

11. "Suicide Bomber Kills Four Soldiers in Swat" "The News" (11/18)

"Four security personnel were killed and three others sustained injuries when a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into Gashkor checkpost in Khwazakhela tehsil of Swat Valley on Monday."

12. "Three Militants Killed In Bajaur" "The News" (11/18)

"Three militants, including an important commander, were killed when security forces targeted their suspected hideouts in Saporay and Kaga areas, while clashes between the militants and the tribal Lashkar continued in different parts of Mamond Tehsil of the troubled Bajaur Agency on Monday."

13. "Taliban Spurn Karzai's Talks Offer" "The News" (11/18)

"Taliban militants rejected an offer of peace talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, saying on Monday there would be no negotiations until foreign troops leave Afghanistan. Karzai offered on Sunday to provide security for reclusive Taliban leader Mulla Omar if he enters negotiations and said the U.S. and other Western nations could leave Afghanistan or oust him if they disagree..."

14. "Taliban Threaten Daewoo Bus Service" "Daily Times" (11/18)

"The Taliban have issued threats of dire consequences to Daewoo Pakistan Bus Service, Daily Times learnt here on Monday. A letter posted by the Taliban through the mail to the company states, "I am going to warn you for the last time that we will be at your bus stand in the near future and kill your driver or blow up one of your

buses." The letter added, "We have a complete map of your bus stand ... We can hit your female employees with rockets."

15. "Pakistani youth in danger of radicalization: study" "Daily Times" (11/18)

"A Brookings report says the U.S. should make socio-economic aid conditional upon Pakistan's ability to spread benefits to masses instead of tying it solely to terrorism." Pakistan's potential for youth radicalization is high, given a poor education system stratified along socio-economic lines and disparate economic opportunities across society, according to a study published by the Brookings Institution."

Editorials/Op-eds

16. "The Smart Middle Way," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (11/18)

"Considering the events of the last several months, the Washington Post's story appears to confirm an existing situation.... The use of drones that carry out sneak attacks on targets after actionable intelligence is available points to a trust deficit between the U.S. and Pakistan. It also indicates the absence of coordination between the intelligence agencies of the two countries. Hence more often than not the drone attacks have killed innocent people rather than terrorists or their leaders."

17. "U.S. Attacks, Hush-Hush Agreements, And Our Protest," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (11/18)

"The compulsions of our rulers are beyond our understanding. They are lodging mere protests over U.S. drone attacks rather taking any practical steps to prevent them. It is essential to make all facts public, assume a courageous stance, and talk to the U.S. administration without any expediency."

18. "Explanation Should Be Given about Clandestine Agreement," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (11/18)

"If the Washington Post is trying to defame the Government of Pakistan, then the government must not only lodge its protest, but also ask for concrete evidences about that agreement. If the government does not move on this issue it will support the idea that there is some truth in the Washington Post report."

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19. "Self-Respect Is Paramount" an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (11/18)

"Speaking in Karachi Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said American attacks on tribal areas would stop as a result of Barack Obama's inauguration as the President and dialogue with the new administration.... Should we allow continuation of the attacks till January even if the nation believes in what the Prime Minister says? The Pak Army does not need the U.S. or anyone else's permission to stop action against tribals.... If we look at the American attacks and the hollow statements of the President, the prime minister and the Army chief, then we tend to believe the Washington Post story on the existence of a secret agreement between America and Pakistan."

20. "President Zardari's Stance on U.S. Attacks," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (11/18)

"President Zardari expressed his disapproval of the U.S. drone attacks and urged Washington to instead provide the Predator technology to Pakistan to enhance its ability to fight terrorism.... The new U.S. administration must realize that it cannot overlook Pakistan's pivotal role against terrorism. The operatives of the Indian intelligence outfit RAW and Israeli MOSSAD, who were previously working in the NWFP and Baluchistan, have extended their activities to the entire Pakistan taking advantage of the

unjustified American and Afghan infiltration into Pakistan. Pakistan rightly looks forward to the newly elected U.S. President Obama to stop holding Pakistan responsible for every evil, and instead Pakistan should be helped to deal with terrorists."

21. "A Deal on Drones?," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/18)

"... No government can succeed by fooling its people or attempting to keep them in the dark. The dilemmas we face regarding the war on terror needs to be addressed head on. This is not a battle Pakistan can win unsupported, but the nature of that support is a matter for debate. What is also needed is for people to be taken on board to fight the war, rather than left isolated and confused on the outskirts...."

22. "Drone Attacks," an editorial in the Peshawar-based, independent regional daily "The Frontier Post" (cir. 7,000) (11/18)

"... Drone attacks, in fact, have strengthened the terrorists instead of helping the cause of the war on terror. The attacks have

resulted in increasing the number of ~~UNCLASSIFIED~~ against security personnel and inside the settled areas of the country, a most recent example of which was the suicide bombing on the main gate of a sport's stadium in Peshawar, killing at least four people.... Such attacks leave the government of Pakistan in a difficult position, with some suspecting the Pakistan government of having compromised its sovereignty in the name of fighting the war on terror. This is because such incidents have occurred with regularity over the years...."

23. "Ground Realities Are Different and Apologies Are Something Else," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (11/18)

"Instead of imploring or threatening the U.S., our government must insist on the UN mandate on Afghanistan. And if the U.S. fails to respect the UN mandate, we can take decisions on our own in consultation with our friends and allied countries."

24. "U.S. Missile Strikes: Mere Expectations Will Not Solve Anything" an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (11/18)

"Mr. Richard Boucher, an official of the Bush administration has said in Islamabad that it does not matter how strikes affect U.S. image. However, Mr. Obama needs to understand that stopping U.S. strikes could help reduce the growing hatred against the U.S.... Merely keeping expectations will not get the U.S. strikes stopped. The government needs to improve its relations not only with Mr. Obama and his administration but also needs the influence of Europe and other countries. This is the best way to stop U.S. strikes."

25. "Persuading Obama," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (11/18)

"... It is an open secret that while buttressing Musharraf's dictatorial regime, the Bush Administration did not trust the security agencies working under him. The present government, on the other hand, has taken the issue of terrorism to Parliament where it was unanimously decided to root out extremism and terrorism in all forms. What is more, the Pakistan Army has not only expressed a commitment to carry out the orders of the elected government, but is also conducting full-scale operations in Swat and Bajaur under the government's direction. The Americans should therefore have no reasons to harbor suspicions about the new government's commitment to fight terrorism. Islamabad must, however, tell them plainly that terrorism can only be eradicated through a holistic policy, of which military action is to be the last and not the first option...."

26. "Will Obama Choose War Or Peace?," an op-ed by Hamid Alvi in the

center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000)
(11/18)

"...Bush has done Pakistan unlimited damage. Three times did he pronounce from the White House lawns last summer that "Pakistan is the most dangerous U.S. state in the world." In the same breadth he described Pakistan as the U.S.'s "closest ally" in the war against terror. Mr. Obama's team should know that such statements and bombing of Pakistani territory by U.S. drones have largely destroyed

the goodwill between the two countries. Deterioration in relations has occurred to such an extent that people of Pakistan are beginning to consider Bush and his country as enemies rather than friends...."

27. "Obama and the Future of U.S.-Pakistan Ties" an op-ed by Iqbal Ahmad Khan in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (11/18)

"... It was essentially the combination of President Bush's baggage which Sen. McCain was unable to shake off and Sen. Obama's charisma, energy and innovative strategies that ultimately carried the day for the president-elect. In debates, speeches and writings Obama displayed a remarkable understanding of a whole gamut of complex issues ranging from the economy to foreign affairs and including health, education, immigration, environment and crime. He eloquently and convincingly articulated his party's vision and policies for overcoming the deep political and economic crises in which the country was mired. There was no sign of the Bush-era dogmatism, arrogance and arbitrariness, features which had estranged the majority of Americans and proved an anathema to the outside world...."

28. "Karzai's Olive Branch To Mullah Omar!," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (11/18)

"Afghan President Hamid Karzai has apparently expressed his strong desire to have peace talks with Taliban leader Mullah Omar even if it meant displeasing the occupation forces. Taliban are part and parcel of the Afghan nation and instead of targeting them for killing efforts should be made to bring them back to the national mainstream. Karzai and his other colleagues should, therefore, convince their foreign masters that Afghanistan has had enough of war and destruction and it is time that the outside world should provide substantial assistance for rebuilding of the country...."

29. "Karzai's Desperation," an editorial in the Peshawar-based, independent regional daily "The Frontier Post" (cir. 7,000) (11/18)

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"... Karzai has indeed lost the life-time opportunity to be remembered by the annals as a nation-builder. He couldn't be unaware of history that tells tellingly that the Afghans have never been tolerant of foreign invaders. Nor could he be blind to the inexorable reality that the Pashtuns have traditionally been Afghanistan's kings or kingmakers. Yet he insanely consigned them to a subservient state. The U.S. in his power dispensation, knowing full well for being the Taliban's progenitor the Pashtun community necessarily needed to be worked upon incisively and won over for peace in the country...."

Patterson

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