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## Arms transfers to Pakistan undermine U.S. foreign policy goals

By STEPHEN ZUNES

The Bush administration's decision to sell sophisticated F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan raises questions regarding the administration's stated commitment to promote democracy, support nonproliferation and fight terrorism and Islamic extremism.

Pakistani Gen. Pervaz Musharraf, who overthrew the democratically elected government in 1999, continues to suppress the established secular political parties while allowing for the development of Islamic political groups. Despite this, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who visited Pakistan in March as part of her world tour supposedly promoting democracy, had little but kind words for the Musharraf dictatorship. While acknowledging that he has yet to restore constitutional governance, she praised his willingness to perhaps hold elections in 2007.

Under Musharraf's rule, Pakistan has one of the lowest education budgets relative to gross domestic product of any country on the globe, resulting in the collapse of what was once one of the developing world's better educational systems. This lack of adequate public education has led to the rise of Saudi-funded Islamic schools, known as madrassahs, many of which have served as recruiting grounds for terrorists. The Congressional Research Service, in a report this past December, noted that despite promises to the contrary, Musharraf has not cracked down on the more extremist madrassahs. Meanwhile, in contrast to the \$3 billion worth of armaments the U.S. government is eager to send their way, the Bush administration is only offering \$67 million in foreign aid for Pakistani education.

An administration official has claimed that the fighter jets "are vital to Pakistan's security as President Musharraf prosecutes the war on terror." However, these jets were originally ordered 15 years ago but the sale was suspended out of concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program. Such sophisticated aircraft are not particularly effective in attacking a decentralized network of underground terrorist cells located in remote tribal areas of that country, where small-unit counterinsurgency operations would be more effective.

The Bush administration has tried to assuage the concerns of India, Pakistan's military rival, by promising that India too would be able to receive sophisticated warplanes. Such "balance" will simply result in a regional arms race between these two countries, which have engaged in frequent border clashes in the disputed Kashmir region in recent years and came close to an all-out war as recently in 2002. Most disturbing is that these jets the United States is so eager to sell are nuclear-capable.

Pakistan and India are among only a handful of nations that have refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and both countries have built, tested and amassed a stockpile of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable missiles. U.S. law prohibited the United States from sending arms to Pakistan and India as a result of their nuclear program, but President Bush -- with bipartisan Congressional support -- successfully had such restrictions overturned in 2001.

Pakistan and India remain in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1172 -- passed in 1998 with U.S. support -- which calls on both countries to eliminate their nuclear weapons and their ballistic missiles. Yet rarely does anyone in the administration or in Congress ever mention this important resolution. This contrasts with the U.S. determination to go to war with Iraq in 2003 over Baghdad's alleged violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Investigations have since shown that Iraq was in compliance with those resolutions.

The administration and Congressional leaders appear to believe that nuclear proliferation and violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions should only be of concern if the government in question is one that the U.S. government does not like.

What may be most worrisome is that Pakistan has been sharing its nuclear materials and know-how with North Korea and other rogue states. The Bush administration is ignoring this irresponsible nuclear arms bazaar and chooses to blame others for it.

Even though it was Pakistanis who passed on nuclear materials to Libya, the Bush administration told U.S. allies that North Korea was responsible, thereby sabotaging negotiations that many had hoped would end the North Korean nuclear program. Though it was Pakistan that provided Iran with nuclear centrifuges, the Bush administration is now citing Iran's possession of such materials as justification for a possible attack against that country.

Despite evidence to the contrary, the Bush administration claims that serious breaches of security were solely the responsibility of a rogue nuclear scientist named Abdul Qadeer Khan. Unfortunately, the Pakistani military regime has not allowed U.S. intelligence access to Dr. Khan, who lives under government protection in Islamabad.

A bill known as the Pakistan Proliferation Accountability Act (HR 1553) has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives that would block the sale of fighter jets until Pakistan fully accounts for the activities of Dr. Khan. The resolution makes no demands, however, regarding Pakistani compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1172 or the restoration of democracy. In any case, as of this writing, the bill has only nine cosponsors.

During the presidential debates last fall, both President Bush and Sen. John Kerry agreed that nuclear proliferation was the single most important national security issue facing the United States. As the proposed weapons sale to Pakistan indicates, neither Republicans nor Democrats seem serious about stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

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