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## Cables reveal role of US troops in Pakistan

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**KARACHI: Confidential American diplomatic cables obtained by Dawn reveal new details about the activities of US forces on the ground in Pakistan, an issue that has gained heightened sensitivity in the aftermath of the Raymond Davis incident in Lahore and the American raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad.**

The reports reveal that US special operations forces were embedded with Pakistani troops for intelligence gathering by the summer of 2009 and deployed with them on joint operations in Pakistani territory by September that year.

“We have created Intelligence Fusion cells with embedded US Special Forces with both SSG and Frontier Corps (Bala Hisar, Peshawar) with the Rover equipment ready to deploy,” [reported](#) then US Ambassador Anne Patterson to the State Department in May 2009. “Through these embeds, we are assisting the Pakistanis collect and coordinate existing intelligence assets.”

At the time she noted that the US had “not been given Pakistani military permission to accompany the Pakistani forces on deployments as yet.”

By September, plans for the joint intelligence activities had been expanded to include army headquarters. “Pakistan has begun to accept intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support from the US military for COIN operations,” Ms Patterson [wrote](#). “In addition ... intelligence fusion centers” had been established “at the headquarters of Frontier Corps and the 11th Corps and we expect at additional sites, including GHQ and the 12th Corps in Balochistan.”

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In April 2009, the cell at Bala Hisar assisted with the Pakistan military operation then taking place in Lower Dir. “US Special Operations Command Force are assisting the FC at the Intelligence Fusion Cell at FC Headquarters with imagery, target packages, and operational planning,” a cable written that month [reveals](#).

Meanwhile, joint operations on the ground were also in the pipeline. One previously unpublished cable describes how a deployment with US forces in Pakistani territory was planned for April 2009 before being called off at the last minute.

“The 3rd Commando Group of the Pakistan Special Services Group (SSG) exploited the weakened state of the Taliban surrounding Daggar, the main city within Buner, to secure the city early on April 29,” the Islamabad embassy [wrote](#).

“Although reported [earlier] that US officials would accompany the FC deployment to Daggar, a late-night decision on April 28 by the Pakistan Military General Headquarters (GHQ) denied the joint deployment, saying the FC had all the assets needed. Embassy will work with GHQ to determine the reason for the late change and to promote integrated operation support.”

Although the presence of US trainers has been publicly acknowledged, joint operations have not. Questions about American boots on the ground inflamed public sentiment after CIA operative Raymond Davis shot dead two Pakistanis in Lahore, and Senator John Kerry admitted on Monday that US troops levels had been reduced in response to a Pakistan military request in the aftermath of the bin Laden operation.

A number of the leaked reports reveal, however, that the US had been eager to embed American troops with Pakistanis soldiers.

“On a brighter note,” Ms Patterson [wrote](#) in a November 2009 cable, “there is the possibility that operations in the northern FATA may provide additional opportunities to embed US Special Operations Forces with FC units to provide ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] support and general operational guidance.

“If we can expand on what we have recently been doing in Bajaur Agency ... with our embeds, it would be a significant opportunity to contribute to the pursuit of the TTP.”

The Bajaur operation with the FC that Ms Patterson refers to is likely one that took place in September 2009 and was described in an October 2009 cable previously published in the media, which also mentioned that US troops had been deployed in Wana in South Waziristan and Miram Shah in North Waziristan with the Pakistan Army’s 11th Corps and that the FC had requested a further deployment in Bajaur.

“Previously, the Pakistani military leadership adamantly opposed letting us embed our special operations personnel with their military forces,” the cable noted. “The recent approval by GHQ ... appears to represent a sea change in Pakistani thinking.

“These deployments are highly politically sensitive ... Should [they] receive any coverage in the Pakistani or US media, the Pakistani military will likely stop making requests for such assistance.”

Another previously published cable had described how, in a January 2009 meeting with Chief of Army Staff Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, then CENTCOM commander Gen David Petraeus explained he “had given instructions that Special Operations Forces would be deployed regularly and constantly, and the US ‘needed to move their soldiers in here, so they could engage productively with the Frontier Corps.’

“Petraeus noted that the 11th Corps Chief of Staff Brigadier Amir was less cooperative with US forces, and Kayani took note of that.”

The cable does not clarify whether Gen Petraeus was referring to training or other activities.

Cables referenced: WikiLeaks # 207373, 226157, 204260, 204652, 236332. All cables can be viewed at Dawn.com.