

Pentagon cuts \$300 million in military aid to Pakistan



Washington, September 2 (RHC)-- The U.S. military has declared it is canceling \$300 million in aid to Pakistan over what it calls Islamabad's failure to take decisive measures against militant forces, marking a further deterioration in ties.

"Due to a lack of Pakistani decisive actions in support of the South Asia Strategy the remaining \$300 (million) was reprogrammed," Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Kone Faulkner said over the weekend, according to Reuters.

The suspension was part of a broader cut in the so-called Coalition Support Funds announced by U.S. President Donald Trump early this year, when he accused Islamabad of rewarding past American aid with "nothing but lies & deceit."

According to Faulkner, the U.S. Defense Department aimed to spend the \$300 million on "other urgent priorities" if approved by Congress. He further noted that another \$500 million in CSF was stripped by Congress from Pakistan earlier this year, to bring the total withheld to \$800 million.

US officials, however, have held out the possibility that Pakistan could win back that support if it "changed its behavior."

Defense Secretary James Mattis, in particular, had an opportunity to authorize \$300 million in CSF funds through this summer -- if he observed concrete Pakistani measures to go after the militants, but he chose not to, Reuters said in its report.

The disclosure came ahead of an anticipated visit by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the top American military officer, General Joseph Dunford, to Islamabad. Mattis stated last week that combating militants would be a "primary part of the discussion."

Washington has for years accused Islamabad of allowing militants and terrorist groups to operate relatively freely in Pakistan's porous border regions to carry out operations in neighboring Afghanistan, an

allegation Pakistan denies.

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has previously suggested that he might order the shooting down of U.S. drones entering Pakistani airspace, has opposed the American open-ended presence in Afghanistan. In his victory speech, he said he wanted "mutually beneficial" relations with Washington.

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