

MEMO TO:

FROM:

SUBJECT: Talking Points: Pakistan-India: Military Balance + Related Issues

I. Conventional Force Balance

1. India maintains a sizeable military superiority in conventional forces. During the last five years India has significantly improved its military capability with the acquisition of new weapon systems that include British Jaguar tactical bombers, Soviet MIG-23 fighters and fighter-bombers, Soviet T-72 tanks and BMP infantry fighting vehicles, and Soviet missile destroyers.

2. Pakistan's armed forces in comparison are weak and obsolescent. The Army lacks mobility and modern antitank and antiaircraft weapons and could not contain a major Indian attack for longer than two weeks. The Navy could not prevent an Indian blockade of Pakistan's only major port--Karachi--and would be quickly trapped in port or defeated at sea in wartime. The Air Force could neither seriously threaten most strategic targets in India nor provide effective close air support for ground forces and would be overwhelmed by the Indian Air Force in wartime.

3. Pakistan's military strength is further constrained by serious deficiencies in combat preparedness. Pakistan does not have an advanced command-and-control system needed to operate modern weapons and to coordinate complex military operations. The Pakistan Armed Forces get little training in complex tactical situations or in coordinating ground, air, and sea operations. The Air Force and Navy, in particular, have difficulty maintaining ~~its~~ present equipment in good condition, and the acquisition of modern weapons will further strain maintenance capabilities and reduce operational readiness. Pakistan's logistics infrastructure for supporting wartime operations is also in poor condition.

II. Impact of US Arms Sales

4. Integration of 40 US F-16 fighters and 100 M-48A5 tanks will improve Pakistan's military capabilities. The F-16s will significantly increase the range and striking power of the Pakistan Air Force and--coincidentally--provide a credible nuclear weapons delivery system. The M-48A5 tanks will help strengthen Pakistan's underequipped armored units. Nonetheless, important requirements for close air support aircraft and improved ground-based air defenses are being largely neglected.

5. Pakistan's plans for arms modernization will not reduce the great military advantages already enjoyed by India. India is undertaking an ambitious military modernization program of its own and the disparity between Indian and Pakistani forces is likely to grow in the next eight years as India assimilates new arms and concludes new arms agreements. Pakistan cannot match India's forces in size because the costs are too great and its trained manpower base is too small.

III. Nuclear Weapons Issue

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7. Pakistani progress towards acquiring nuclear weapons will intensify pressures within the Indian Government to take more decisive action. A test explosion by Pakistan almost certainly will force India to conduct its own nuclear test. India would probably establish its own weapons program once it became convinced that Pakistan had accumulated enough fissile material to manufacture several bombs--a situation that we believe could develop by early 1985. Once Indian military planners are convinced that Pakistan is on the verge of deploying nuclear weapons, the odds that India will conduct a military strike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities will increase greatly.

*Para 6 language ^{mainly} cleared
with Gates*