

## Pakistan Awards US CentCom Chief for Counterterror Efforts

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General Michael Kurilla, commander of the United States Central Command (CentCom), has been bestowed with one of the highest military honors in Pakistan in what many deemed a strong gesture of defense diplomacy.

General Kurilla received the **Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military)**, Pakistan's prestigious military decoration, during a formal ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Islamabad. He was

recognized for his contributions to regional security and counterterrorism cooperation. President Asif Ali Zardari personally presented the award, underscoring the significance of U.S.-Pakistan defense ties. A ceremonial Tri-Services Guard of Honour was also held, reflecting the respect Pakistan's military leadership holds for the CENTCOM chief.

The honor also reflects ongoing cooperation between the U.S. and Pakistan on regional security, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East, where both nations continue to confront terrorism and instability. Kurilla, who has led CENTCOM since April 2022, oversees U.S. military operations and partnerships in a region that spans more than 20 countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan.

U.S. defense officials noted that under Kurilla's command, ties with Pakistani military leadership have remained steady through intelligence sharing, security coordination, and joint strategic planning, especially in light of growing concerns over regional threats such as militant extremism and instability in neighboring Afghanistan.

Though Washington and Islamabad have had a complicated relationship in recent years, the ceremony signals a renewed focus on shared security interests. U.S. defense analysts say that maintaining strong communication channels with Pakistan is critical for long-term stability in the region and for counterterrorism missions that rely on regional partnerships.

In a statement, the Pakistani presidency credited General Kurilla for playing a "constructive role in strengthening defense ties" and "contributing significantly to regional peace and stability." The award, the statement added, acknowledges Kurilla's efforts in "enhancing military-to-military cooperation."

The award not only affirms Pakistan's strategic alignment with key defense partners but also underscores the importance of personal diplomacy and high-level military engagement in securing common goals across borders.