

Pakistan-US Counterterrorism Alliance Gains Momentum

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The defense and counterterrorism partnership between Pakistan and the United States has entered a new phase, marked by Washington's decision to intensify cooperation against groups threatening Pakistan's internal security. The shift highlights a renewed commitment at the highest levels of both governments to address shared threats.

On August 11, the United States formally designated the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as a foreign terrorist organization, expanding upon its 2019 classification as a specially designated global terrorist entity. The decision places stricter financial sanctions, tighter travel restrictions, and greater scrutiny on the group's operations worldwide. For Pakistan, which has long accused the BLA of violent attacks in Balochistan, the designation represents a diplomatic and security gain.

The U.S. move is expected to disrupt the BLA's ability to raise funds, recruit operatives, and operate across borders. It also reinforces Pakistan's longstanding concerns, giving international recognition to the security challenges Islamabad has faced from the group.

This development comes amid a series of high-level exchanges between Pakistani and American officials. Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, has recently engaged U.S. military leadership, including participation in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) change-of-command ceremony. These interactions signal a warming of military-to-military ties that had cooled in recent years.

On August 12, the progress carried into the Pakistan-U.S. Counterterrorism Dialogue, co-chaired by Pakistan's Special Secretary to the United Nations, Nabeel Munir, and U.S. Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism Gregory D. LoGerfo. The talks focused on joint strategies to counter the BLA, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

For Pakistan, Washington's acknowledgment of the TTP as a priority threat is particularly significant. The TTP has carried out numerous attacks on Pakistani soil, and U.S. recognition of its destabilizing role adds weight to Islamabad's case that these groups are part of a broader international threat. Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi underscored this during discussions with a visiting U.S. delegation, stating that Pakistan "stands as a wall between terrorism and the rest of the world."

The renewed dialogue could open doors to expanded U.S. assistance in intelligence-sharing, training, and technology. However, Pakistan will need to balance this growing security cooperation with its other strategic partnerships, particularly with China and regional neighbors.

The evolving partnership reflects Washington's view of Pakistan as a critical partner in regional stability. While challenges remain in translating commitments into long-term

strategy, the designation of the BLA and the inclusion of the TTP in the U.S. counterterrorism agenda represent important steps forward.

For Islamabad, the momentum in Pakistan–U.S. relations strengthens its counterterrorism campaign and enhances its global standing as a frontline state against terrorism.