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Subject: Pakistan's Chief of Army Fights to Keep His Job (NYT)

ISLAMABAD (New York Times) — Pakistan's army chief, the most powerful man in the country, is fighting to save his position in the face of seething anger from top generals and junior officers since the American raid that killed Osama bin Laden, according to Pakistani officials and people who have met the chief in recent weeks.

Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who has led the army since 2007, faces such intense discontent over what is seen as his cozy relationship with the United States that a colonels' coup, while unlikely, was not out of the question, said a well-informed Pakistani who has seen the general in recent weeks, as well as an American military official involved with Pakistan for many years.

The Pakistani Army is essentially run by consensus among 11 top commanders, known as the Corps Commanders, and almost all of them, if not all, were demanding that General Kayani get much tougher with the Americans, even edging toward a break, Pakistanis who follow the army closely said.

Washington, with its own hard line against Pakistan, had pushed General Kayani into a defensive crouch, along with his troops, and if the general was pushed out, the United States would face a more uncompromising anti-American army chief, the Pakistani said.

To repair the reputation of the army, and to ensure his own survival, General Kayani made an extraordinary tour of more than a dozen garrisons, mess halls and other institutions in the six weeks since the May 2 raid that killed Bin Laden. His goal was to rally support among his rank-and-file troops, who are almost uniformly anti-American, according to participants and people briefed on the sessions.

During a long session in late May at the National Defense University, the premier academy in Islamabad, the capital, one officer got up after General Kayani's address and challenged his policy of cooperation with the United States. The officer asked, "If they don't trust us, how can we trust them?" according to Shaukaut Qadri, a retired army brigadier who was briefed on the session. General Kayani essentially responded, "We can't," Mr. Qadri said.

In response to pressure from his troops, Pakistani and American officials said, General Kayani had already become a more obstinate partner, standing ever more firm with each high-level American delegation that has visited since the raid to try and rescue the shattered American-Pakistani relationship.

In a prominent example of the new Pakistani intransigence, The New York Times reported Tuesday that, according to American officials, Pakistan's spy agency had arrested five Pakistani informants who helped the Central Intelligence Agency before the Bin Laden raid. The officials said one of them is a doctor who has served as a major in the Pakistani Army. In a statement on Wednesday, a Pakistani military spokesman called the story "false" and said no army officer had been detained. Over all, Pakistani and American officials said, the relationship was now more competitive and combative than cooperative.

General Kayani told the director of the C.I.A., Leon E. Panetta, during a visit here last weekend that Pakistan would not accede to his request for independent operations by the agency, Pakistani and American officials said.

A long statement after the regular monthly meeting of the 11 corps commanders last week illuminated the mounting hostility toward the United States, even as it remains the army's biggest patron, supplying at least \$2 billion a year in aid.

The statement, aimed at rebuilding support within the army and among the public, said that American training in Pakistan had only ever been minimal, and had now ended. "It needs to be clarified that the army had never accepted any training assistance from the United States except for training on the newly inducted weapons and some training assistance for the Frontier Corps only," a reference to paramilitary troops in the northwest tribal areas, the statement said.

The statement said that the C.I.A.-run drone attacks against militants in the tribal areas "were not acceptable under any circumstances."

Allowing the drones to continue to operate from Pakistan was "politically unsustainable," said the well-informed Pakistani who met with General Kayani recently. As part of his survival mechanism, General Kayani could well order the Americans to stop the drone program completely, the Pakistani said.

The Pakistanis have already blocked the supply of food and water to the base used for the drones, a senior American official said, adding that they were gradually "strangling the alliance" by making things difficult for the Americans in Pakistan.

The turmoil within the Pakistani Army has engendered the lowest morale since it lost the war in 1971 against East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, army observers say. The anger and disillusionment stems from the fact that the Obama administration decided not to tell Pakistan in advance about the Bin Laden raid — and that Pakistan was then unable to detect or stop it.

That Bin Laden was living comfortably in Pakistan for years has evinced little outrage here among a population that has consistently told pollsters it is more sympathetic to Al Qaeda than to the United States.

Even a well-known pro-American commander, Lt. Gen. Tariq Khan, who spent more than a year at Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Fla., after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks had fallen in line with the new ultranationalist sentiment against the Americans, a former army officer said.

The anger at the Americans was now making it more difficult for General Kayani to motivate the army to fight against the Pakistani Taliban in what is increasingly seen as a fight on behalf of the United States, former Pakistani soldiers said.

"The feeling that they are fighting America's war against their own people has a negative impact on the fighting efficiency," said Javed Hussain, a former special forces officer in the Pakistani military.

Discipline has become a worry, as has an open rebellion in the middle ranks of officers, particularly as rumors circulate that some enlisted men have questioned whether General Kayani and his partner, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha, the head of the chief spy agency, the Directorate for the Inter-Services Intelligence, should remain in their jobs.

A special three-year extension General Kayani won in his position last year did not sit well among the rank and file who perceived it as having been pushed by the United States to keep its man in the top job.

“Keeping discipline in the lower ranks is a challenge,” said Mr. Qadri, the retired army brigadier.

General Kayani’s problems have been magnified by a groundswell of unprecedented criticism from the public, questioning both the army’s competence and the lavish rewards for its top brass, something that also increasingly rankles modestly paid enlisted men.

“Adding to this frustration and public pique is the lifestyle that the top brass of all the services has maintained,” Talat Hussain, a prominent journalist who generally writes favorably about the military, wrote in Monday’s edition of the English-language newspaper Dawn. “This is not a guns versus butter argument, but a contrast between the reality of the life led by the military elite at state expense and the general situation for ordinary citizens.”

Despite the resources the army soaks up — about 23 percent of Pakistan’s annual expenditures — it has appeared impotent since the May 2 raid. The infiltration three weeks later of the nation’s largest naval base by Qaeda commandos that left at least 10 security officers dead added to the sense of disarray.

According to the notes of a participant in the session at the National Defense University, General Kayani acknowledged that Pakistan had mortgaged itself to the United States. The participant declined to be identified because people at the session agreed that they would not divulge what was said.

In making the analogy to Pakistan as a mortgaged house, General Kayani said that if a person gave his house against a loan and was unable to pay back the loan, the mortgage holder would intervene, the participant said. “We are helpless,” General Kayani said, according to the person’s notes. “Can we fight America?”

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