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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Pakistan army boss Kayani says militants' back broken (Reuters)

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Subject: Pakistan army boss Kayani says militants' back broken (Reuters)

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - Pakistan's military has broken the back of militants linked to al Qaeda and Taliban, the country's powerful head of the army said in a speech on Saturday that followed criticism from the United States that it wasn't doing enough to fight militancy.

Washington, struggling to put down a 10-year insurgency in Afghanistan, said this month that Pakistan lacked a robust plan to defeat militants, and its intelligence agents were maintaining links with Afghan Taliban militants.

Without making any reference to Washington's concerns, army General Ashfaq chief Kayani said Pakistan army was fully aware of the internal and external threats faced by the country.

"In the war against terrorism, our officers and soldiers have made great sacrifices and have achieved tremendous success," he said in a speech to army cadets at Kakul military academy, north of Islamabad, broadcast by state television.

"The terrorists' backbone has been broken and Inshallah (God willing) we will soon prevail."

Pakistan is crucial for U.S. efforts to stabilise Afghanistan but relations between the two allies have been strained since the fatal shooting of two Pakistanis by Raymond Davis, a CIA contractor, in the city of Lahore in January.

Pakistani and U.S. officials have traded barbs publicly, reflecting deepening mistrust between the two countries.

Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. military's Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Pakistani media during a visit this week that continuing ties between agents of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and the Haqqani faction, one of the most brutal Afghan Taliban groups, was "at the core" of problems between the two countries.

Hours after Mullen's criticism, Pakistan army rejected suggestion that it was not doing enough to combat militants as "negative propaganda".

However, despite the rising level of rhetoric, both sides have sought to mend their ties because both need each other for their own reasons.

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