

U.S. Will Withhold Security Aid From Pakistan



A protest against President Trump's tweets about Pakistan took place in Karachi on Tuesday. Credit: Asif Hassan/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

WASHINGTON — The United States will suspend nearly all security aid to Pakistan, the Trump administration announced on Thursday, in a sign of its frustration with the country's refusal to confront terrorist networks operating there.

"The suspension is a freeze, and does not reflect intent to reprogram funds at this time," according to internal government talking points that were obtained by The New York Times.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert did not provide an estimate of the total aid funds affected, but said it would be a very significant figure.

The Trump administration had delayed \$255 million in State Department aid until

Islamabad did more to crack down on terrorism. Relations between the United States and Pakistan have deteriorated since the summer, when President Trump accused the country of giving “safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror.”

American officials had also demanded access to a militant who was captured by Pakistani forces during the rescue of a Canadian-American family in October. The militant was a member of the Taliban-linked Haqqani network, but Pakistan rejected the Americans’ request.

The suspension includes Coalition Support Funds for Pakistan, which is provided by the Pentagon to help pay the costs of Pakistan’s counterterror operations.

However, Ms. Nauert added, “There may be some exceptions that are made on a case-by-case basis if determined to be critical to national security interests.”

The United States has provided Pakistan more than \$33 billion in aid since 2002.

Additionally, the State Department announced earlier on Thursday that it had placed Pakistan on a special watch list for what it described as the country’s severe violations of religious freedoms. The announcement was part of the administration’s annual accounting of violations by countries as required by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

As Pakistan has become more religiously intolerant in recent years, in part driven by a growing proliferation of religious schools funded by Saudi Arabia, attacks on religious minorities have increased.

Gardiner Harris contributed reporting.

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