

## US And Pakistan At Odds After GI Is Shot On Border

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By Ahmed Rashid in Lahore

Relations between Pakistan and America deteriorated sharply yesterday as tension rose over the shooting at the weekend of a US soldier by a Pakistani serviceman on the Afghan border and a retaliatory bombing by a US plane.

The American was shot in the head on Sunday during a clash with Pakistani troops on the border. The US air force promptly reacted by dropping a 500lb bomb as it pursued the Pakistani patrol.

The incident caused uproar in the North West Frontier Province, which is governed by a hardline Islamist alliance. The provincial assembly yesterday called the air raid "a severe blow to our sovereignty and independence" and asked the Pakistani government to lodge a protest with the US government "against this flagrant violation of the country's air space".

Qazi Hussain, the head of the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami party, accused Pakistani leaders of being too submissive. "Our country is like an orphan," he said. "There was no protest. This is tragic."

Residents of the Pakistani border district of South Waziristan alleged that US planes dropped two bombs on a madrassa, or religious school, in the small town of Angoor Adda, though there were no casualties.

A US military spokesman at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan said close air support was called in to pursue the border patrol troops as they fled to a nearby building, but only one bomb was dropped and it fell inside Afghanistan.

The spokesman said US and Pakistani patrols were working together at the time to blow up a cache of weapons. When the Pakistani soldier was asked to leave the area, he opened fire. On Dec 21, a US soldier from the 82nd Airborne Division was killed in the same area in an encounter with the Taliban.

US officers in Kabul are becoming increasingly frustrated at Pakistan's inability to stop small groups of al-Qa'eda and Taliban guerrillas crossing from Pakistan into Afghanistan, firing rockets on US bases and then retreating.

"Ninety per cent of the attacks we face are coming from groups based in Pakistan and there is very little we can do about it," said a senior US military officer in Kabul.

Although US politicians insist that Pakistan is still "on side" in the war on terrorism, the country's military leaders are less sanguine.

"I think the security situation in eastern Afghanistan is going to be a problem for some time to come," said Gen Richard Myers, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, on a visit to Bagram late last year. Gen Myers called for Pakistan to place more troops on the border.

Western intelligence sources in Kabul say Jalaluddin Haqqani, a high-ranking Taliban leader, is hiding in South Waziristan under the protection of Pakistan's Interservices Intelligence and organising attacks against US bases in Afghanistan. Pakistan denies the allegations and says it has 60,000 troops guarding the border.

Meanwhile, an unmanned US surveillance drone crashed near an air base in Jacobabad in the north of the Pakistani province of Sind. There were no casualties.