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PAKISTAN STILL NOT CRACKING DOWN ON MILITANTS, US INTEL CHIEF SAYS

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By Nicole Gaouette,

Pakistan is holding back on cooperation with the US while failing to take tougher action against militant groups, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats told lawmakers Tuesday.

Instead, he said, it's only trying to appear tougher.

"Ongoing Pakistani military operations against the Taliban and associated groups probably reflect the desire to appear more proactive and responsive to our requests for more actions against these groups," Coats told the Senate Intelligence Committee during a hearing about worldwide threats.

But, Coats added crucially, the actions Pakistan has taken to date "do not reflect a significant escalation of pressure against these groups and are unlikely to have a lasting effect."

Coats also told the committee that intelligence agencies believe Islamabad isn't likely to change its behavior soon -- continuing to slow walk cooperation with the US, while maintaining ties with the Taliban and the Haqqani network.

Pakistan "will maintain ties to these militants while restricting counter terrorism cooperation with the United States," Coats said.

President Donald Trump has very publicly emphasized US concern about Pakistan's reliability and integrity. His first tweet of 2018 put Islamabad in the crosshairs for its "lies and deceit."

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools," Trump tweeted on January 1. "They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"

US intel chief says risk of global conflict highest since Cold War

The online blast previewed a January 8 announcement that the US would freeze security assistance to Pakistan -- close to $1 billion -- over its failure to clamp down on terror groups within its borders.

The Treasury Department on January 26 announced terror designations on members of the

Taliban, the Haqqani Group and other groups, in an effort to boost pressure on the militants' abilities to operate. The designations "highlight, once again, the importance of Pakistan as a safe haven for the Taliban's senior leadership," according to Thomas Joscelyn, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He noted that five of the six men listed have been based in Pakistan.

Kaynak/Source: