

Former envoy says U.S. alienating Pakistan

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- U.S. demands that Pakistan divert troops from its border with India to battle Islamic insurgents have alienated Islamabad, a former U.S. ambassador says.

Former U.S. ambassador to Islamabad Robert Oakley, in an interview with the Washington think tank The Atlantic Council last week, said such demands are counterproductive, Pakistan's English-language newspaper Dawn reported Monday.

"We've alienated them tremendously," said Oakley, who served as ambassador from 1988 to 1992. "Whether we agree or not, the Pakistanis consider India to be the biggest threat to their security."

In the interview, Oakley also criticized restrictions proposed by members of the U.S. Congress on a bill to provide foreign aid to Pakistan, saying, "What we're calling 'benchmarks' remind them very much of the 'sanctions' they had hanging over their heads for so many years."

Pakistani critics say the proposed restrictions are onerous because they require Islamabad to improve its relations with India, whether or not New Delhi reciprocates those efforts, Dawn reported.

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