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Pakistan Courts China as US Announces Military Aid Cuts

By Jason Ditz

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[Yesterday's announcement that the US](#) is withdrawing some \$800 million in military aid from Pakistan looks to do more serious harm to US-Pakistani relations, but if administration officials expected the “rebuke” to be met with an act of contrition from the Pakistani military, they were mistaken.

Rather, Pakistan's military [today insists that they don't need the US military aid at all](#), and that the civilian government is the one more in need of help from abroad. Major General Athar Abbas, the military's spokesman, also accused the US of trying to undermine the military leadership.

But the US isn't the only horse in the race to court the Pakistanis, and Pakistan's military is being very plain about this fact. [The military is now reporting that they are seeking even closer ties with the Chinese government](#), in the hopes of “filling the gap” in weapons sales that may be lost by the US.

Pakistan and China have long had a solid relationship bolstered by their mutual tensions with India. It is only natural then, with China's own ambitions for increased regional influence that they should be in the bidding to court Pakistan, particularly when the US is making it increasingly clear that their relations are at risk.

Perhaps even more interesting is the blaise attitude of the US surrouding this potential loss of what has often been called a “key ally.” Both Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are visiting the region in the next few days, and neither is planning to stop off in Pakistan. Spurning such a visit is likely deliberate, particularly with regional tensions on the rise.