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US long-term interests in S Asia - A matter of concern

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According to the Washington Times, CENTCOM Chief General David Petraeus would open the intelligence organisation called the Centre for Afghanistan-Pakistan Excellence. The organisation would be headed by Derek Harvey, a retired colonel in the Defence Intelligence Agency, and would focus on training military officers and covert agents and analysts. In other words, the intelligence leak from the CIA officials few months back happens to be correct and US is actually planning to set-up a training centre at the Central Command to train Pakistani and Afghan military officials and secret agents to focus on their countries. In another development, Pakistani Army is to get US \$18 billion (approximately Rs 1.48 trillion) from US to cover operational expenses, travel and transportation expenses, assets, defence stocks and civil works expenses separately in respect of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. The Air Force will get over Rs 80 billion and the Navy Rs 38.1 billion while Army's share of Rs 82 billion would be spent on the salaries and other expenses. Rs 25 billion has been earmarked for operational expenses which includes over Rs 4 billion for travel and transportation and a little over Rs 20 billion for general expenses. The army, whose physical assets stand at over Rs 26 billion, will also be able to spend Rs.14 billion on civil works during 2009-10. The latest developments indicate that US appears to be serious in implementing its long-term strategy in the South Asian region. However, it is too early to spell out whether the agency is going to achieve its set goals or as usual fail and would be covered up by making false claims of success. Anyway, it is being claimed that keeping in view previous intelligence failures, the organisation would be set-up on the experience and lessons learnt during the many years of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The information gained in from intelligence analysis from communication channels and interceptions of targets would also be taken into account to train the officials and agents at the training centre. A new experiment is being carried out in which instead of

relying on orthodox intelligence cycle, focus on integration of all sources of information to update both combat fighters and the decision makers. In other words there would be less reliance on intelligence sources and more emphasis would be on input coming from provincial reconstruction teams, civil-affairs officers, commanders and operators on the ground who are interacting with the local population and understand their psyche. The Centre for Afghanistan-Pakistan Excellence would train future analysts, officers and covert operators in the local dialect such as Pushto, Dari, Persian, Balochi and other languages. The centre would also run culture and religious courses. In other words the American presence in South Asia is going to prolong for couple of more years until the long-term US objectives are met. The centre would prove to be training centre to develop a hub of intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination. Thus the centre would also be coordinating and sharing information between various agencies including Defence Intelligence Agency, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the (NATO) International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. It is interesting to note that CIA would be having separate set-up and would work independently, covering special missions, including all the areas and fields covered by Centre for Afghanistan-Pakistan Excellence. US would not be over-ambitious if it feels that it would be successful in recruiting some of the retiring military and civilian officers to act as fighting officers, covert agents and analysts but the loyalty of these officers would always remain a question of concern. Afghan and Pakistani personnel who have no regard to their own ideology on the basis of which their country came into being can only be loyal to payments in dollars and nothing else. Such officers and men had been fooling their superiors and deceiving their motherland throughout their service and once they have retired they want to cheat someone else. Anything can be expected from them and it would be a good luck for US if they don't mislead them in attaining the objectives of Centre for Afghanistan-Pakistan Excellence. Many among these officers who got an employment opportunity feel that they would be acting as dual agents ie clandestinely helping anyone who pays them more. As far as my personal opinion is concerned Centre for Afghanistan-Pakistan Excellence would be another failure. If organisations like CIA failed to deliver anything, one cannot expect much from a baby organisation whose very foundation has been laid on cheating, mistrust and greed. If US rely on these officers who are ready to sell their loyalties, in the coming years Afghanistan and Pakistan are going to prove graveyard for pork-eating American troops.