

Headlines:

- **US Withholds \$290 Million in Aid to Egypt citing Human Rights Concerns**
- **Pakistan tells US to Eliminate Terror Safe Havens in Afghanistan**
- **China Warns US Sanctions will not help Trump Secure Cooperation over North Korea**

Details:

US Withholds \$290 Million in Aid to Egypt citing Human Rights Concerns

The United States (US) has decided to delay \$US 195 million in military aid and about \$US 95.7 million in other aid, citing a failure to achieve relevant progress in its human rights record and democratic norms, Reuters reported on Tuesday. The US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson signed papers related to the funding and informed Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry of the decision in a phone call, according to government officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to the Washington Post. A State of Department official said that the decision was a message that the US is not happy with the lack of progress in human rights in Egypt and a recent law on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), stating "we want to see improvements". In response, Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement expressing its regret over the US decision. The statement said that the decision reflects misjudgment about the strategic relations between the two countries. The Ministry added that the decision reflects an incomplete vision towards the economic and security hardships Egypt is dealing with. The statement concluded by saying that this decision could negatively affect the common goals of the two countries. Additionally, Shoukry canceled his meeting with top US Presidential Adviser Jared Kushner, who arrived in Egypt on Wednesday with a delegation. It's not clear whether the US decision was behind the cancellation or not. However, the office of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said that he would meet with the delegation led by Kushner on Wednesday. In statements to Egyptian Streets, an Egyptian Foreign Ministry official who wished to remain anonymous stated that the US decision was "unexpected" and would lead to tension between Egypt and the United States. After US President Donald Trump assumed office in January, bilateral relations between Egypt and the US significantly improved. During meetings between Al-Sisi and Trump, the latter hardly touched on the human rights issues in Egypt, even though he was urged to do so by several rights organizations. The two presidents, in essence, focused on combating terrorism in the region and the US aid to Egypt in their meetings. The relationship between Egypt and the US was strained under the administration of former US President Barack Obama. In 2013, when the former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi was ousted by the armed forces, Obama decided to cut the military aid to Egypt. The Obama administration further described the Rabaa sit-in dispersal as a "massacre". However, Obama restored military aid to Egypt in 2015 amid the growing threat of the Islamic State (IS) in the region. [Source: Egyptian Street]

The US has a long history of mistreating Egypt, but Egyptian rulers never learn. Instead, they brood over their chastisement from their master. Sisi is no different, as he complains over peanuts in US aid.

Pakistan Tells US to Eliminate Terror Safe Havens in Afghanistan

Pakistan, in its formal comprehensive response to US President Donald Trump's South Asia strategy, rejected allegations it is harboring Taliban insurgents who are staging deadly attacks against American forces in Afghanistan. The rebuttal was issued Thursday after a meeting the National Security Committee of top civilian and military leaders chaired by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in Islamabad. "The Afghan war cannot be fought in Pakistan... To scapegoat Pakistan will not help in stabilizing Afghanistan," Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif said while

reading the statement to the Senate, the upper house of parliament. President Trump in his policy speech Monday said that Pakistan is taking billions of dollars from the United States but housing the very terrorists attacking US forces in Afghanistan. Pakistani security forces have taken “indiscriminate actions” against all terrorist networks and sacrificed tens of thousands of troops and civilians in this fight, Minister Asif said. In turn, he asked the United States to move against fugitive anti-state militants hiding in Afghanistan. “We would like to see effective and immediate US military efforts to eliminate sanctuaries harboring terrorists and miscreants on the Afghan soil including those responsible for fomenting terror in Pakistan,” said the foreign minister. Instead of any financial or material assistance, there should be understanding and recognition of Pakistan’s efforts, contributions and sacrifice of thousands of its citizens and over 120 billion US dollars of economic losses, Asif said. “The claims of billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan are also misleading to the extent that the reimbursements to Pakistan since 2001 only account for part of the cost of ground facilities and air corridors used by the United States for its operations in Afghanistan, rather than any financial aid or assistance,” the minister explained. He said that Islamabad has consistently worked with both Washington and Kabul to promote a negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict to bring an end to years of bloodshed in the neighboring country. Foreign Minister Asif also took aim at the Trump administration’s attempt to give India, archrival of Pakistan, a role in regional security efforts. “India cannot be a net security provider in the South Asia region when it has conflictual relationships with all its neighbors and is pursuing a policy of destabilizing Pakistan from the east and the west,” he said. Pakistani leaders have consistently maintained that the Indian intelligence agency is using its growing influence with Afghan counterparts to sponsor terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Kabul and New Delhi deny the charges. Meanwhile, the top US commander in Afghanistan said Thursday the new war strategy Trump announced earlier this week will result in an increase in train, advise and assist efforts as well as stepped up air power to Afghan security forces battling the Taliban. [Source: Voice of America].

Once again the Pakistani leadership have demonstrated nativity in their dealing with the US. They should have stopped all forms of cooperation with the US in 2001, but Musharraf’s betrayal has set the framework for the present disaster unfolding in both countries.

China Warns US Sanctions will not help Trump Secure Cooperation over North Korea

China warned on Wednesday that new US sanctions targeting Chinese firms linked to North Korea “will not help” cooperation with Beijing in the nuclear crisis. The US Treasury Department slapped punitive measures on a clutch of Chinese and Russian individuals and companies on Tuesday, accusing them of supporting Kim Jong-un’s nuclear programme and attempting to evade US sanctions. President Donald Trump has pressed Beijing to do more to convince its ally North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions. “The US action will not help the solution of the problem as well as the mutual trust and cooperation with China,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing. “We urge the US side to stop this wrongdoing and correct it,” she said. At the same time, Hua said the “extremely tense” situation on the Korean Peninsula “has shown some signs of abating” thanks to the concerted efforts of various parties, though it “remains highly complex and sensitive”. She made the remark hours after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson signalled that talks with the North might be possible “in the near future”. [South China Morning Post]

The US clearly believes that China has the greatest influence over North Korea, but is not using their influence to rein in Pyongyang. With Russia also criticizing the US and sending its strategic bombers to the Korean Peninsula the chances of accidental war are increasing. As for Beijing, she views America’s intransigence with North Korea, as a pretext to contain Chinese military and economic expansion.