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# SANDNet Weekly Update, November 16, 2001

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## Nuclear Issues

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## **1. Al-Qaeda and Nuclear Weapons**

Documents and notes explaining how to detonate explosives to compress plutonium and trigger a thermonuclear reaction were found in an abandoned house in Kabul. The discovery was made by a reporter for The Times, a British newspaper.

Writing for the Far Eastern Economic Review, David Lague explores the reasons for the United States' concern that Osama Bin Laden may already have, or may be able to acquire, nuclear weapons.

## **2. India Nuclear Safety**

Dr. R. Chidambaram, the newly appointed Principal Scientific Adviser to the Indian Government, has ruled out any need to review the country's nuclear policy.

## **3. Related News and Analysis**

Writing for the Indian daily The Hindu, N. Gopal Raj criticized the United States for blocking the acceptance of a protocol designed to improve the effectiveness of Biological and Toxin Weapons Conventions.

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## **Afghanistan War and Implications**

### **1. Afghanistan: Current Situation**

Following the capture of Kabul, the Northern Alliance's foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah has invited Afghan groups for negotiations on the future of the country. There have been unconfirmed reports of violence and killing in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul. Meanwhile, the fate of the southern city of Kandahar, the birthplace of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, remains uncertain.

["Fate of Kandahar unclear"](#)

In the wake of the Taliban's retreat, a former mujahideen group led by Maulvi Yunus Khalis took control of the eastern city of Jalalabad. There have also been reports of tensions among various Northern Alliance groups in Mazar-e-Sharif.

["Factional fights break out in Mazar-i-Sharif"](#)

In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation's Pashto Service, the supreme commander of the Taliban Mullah Mohammad Omar claimed that his real goal is "the extinction of America." Meanwhile, a former Pastun Mujahideen, and the leader of Hizb-i-Islami Afghanistan, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar has announced his support of the Taliban.

["Mujahideen take up the Taliban fight"](#)

Pakistani government has denied a report broadcasted on Mashed based Iranian radio claiming that Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden have crossed into Pakistan.

### **2. Afghanistan: Future Prospects**

Afghanistan's victorious Northern Alliance forces have come under strong international pressure to seek a broad-based interim government. Pakistan, Iran and the United States have also reiterated their support for a broad based and multi-ethnic setup in Kabul.

["US envoy, CE discuss broad-based government"](#)

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["Musharraf emphasizes liaison with Iran"](#)

["Pakistan, Iran won't be part of world force, says UN"](#)

An editorial in the Indian national daily, The Hindu, believes that Afghanistan is a "critical test for the U.N and its voiceless majority to prove themselves."

### **3. Humanitarian Crisis**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has expressed "extreme fears" that 9000 displaced Afghans in Makaki camp, where there are reportedly armed Taliban fighters among the civilian population, could become human shields or hostages.

### **4. Pakistan**

The fate of Pakistani volunteers who had crossed into Afghanistan to join the Taliban militia remains uncertain. The Pakistani government has approached the United Nations relief agencies to verify the number of Pakistanis killed in Afghanistan.

["Move to ascertain number of Pakistani casualties"](#)

There have been unconfirmed reports that four bombs fired by the United States fighter planes hit northwest part of Pakistan.

A report published in The News, Pakistan, has suggested that the Northern Alliance may be open to establishing friendly relations with Pakistan.

There have been reports that Pakistan has deployed its troops along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to prevent the Taliban fighters from entering into the country. The Pakistani government, however, has denied these reports.

["Troops arrive at Chaman border"](#)

Roedad Khan, a retired senior member of Pakistani bureaucracy, takes a critical look at Pakistan's foreign policy.

### **5. India**

Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee has applauded the victories of the Northern Alliance over the Taliban. He advocated a "generous assistance to our brethren in Afghanistan."

### **6. General Assessments**

In his column for the Pakistan daily, The News, Imtiaz Alam examines the strategic and tactical "blunders" committed by the Taliban.

M.A. Niazi, a Pakistani journalist and political commentator, has argued that the "Taliban have not just shifted gear from the conventional to the guerrilla mode of warfare, but have also shifted to guerrilla rather than state politics..."

Writing for the Far Eastern Economic Review, journalist and author, Ahmad Rashid argues that the Taliban's retreat from northern Afghanistan has set the stage for new military battles while accelerating the "challenge of finding a legitimate leadership in a country where war is a way of life."

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad has stated the war against terrorism is "beginning

to look more and more like a war against Muslims."

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## **Pakistan**

### **1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation**

Pakistani law enforcements agencies have been put on high alert to track down "as many as 96 most wanted sectarian terrorists" who have been hiding in Afghanistan, and may try to "enter Pakistan in the disguise of Afghan refugees."

Chairman Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP) Mehmood Khan Achakzai has called for greater autonomy for the four Pakistani provinces.

Pakistani businessmen have expressed fear that the country will continue to face uncertain economic conditions until the situation in Afghanistan is stabilized.

In his column for the Pakistani daily, Dawn, Ayaz Amir has suggested that Pakistan citizens may now have "a chance to cure the Pakistani state of its delusions of persecution and grandeur. The world is not out to get us (persecution). Nor are we a fortress of Islam destined to fulfill messianic dreams (grandeur).

In his article for The News, Pakistan, Kamran Khan discusses Pakistan's security concerns after the fall of the Taliban government.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan dismissed the chief of Jamaat-i-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad's petition challenging a local court order that restricted his movement within the country.

["Apex court dismisses JI chief's petition"](#)

In an article for the Egyptian weekly, Al Ahram, Iffat Malek examines how the war against Afghanistan is affecting the lives of Pakistani Christians.

### **2. U.S. - Pakistan Relations**

Pakistan and the United States have signed an agreement under which the U.S. will provide \$600 million in direct budget and balance of payment support to Pakistan.

According to the United States Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca, the events of the last two months have opened "new possibilities for recasting Indo-Pak relations and reducing tensions."

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## **India**

### **1. India: Domestic Situation**

Indian opposition politicians have criticized the Indian government's performance at the Doha trade talks. The representatives of Indian industries, however, expressed satisfaction with the results of the trade talks.

A prominent leader of the Indian National Congress, Maninderjit Singh Bitta has criticized his

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party's opposition to the proposed Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance.

## **2. U.S. India Relations**

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The United States authorities have imposed \$ 7.5 million fine on the State Bank of India for violating banking laws and for failing to maintain accurate records.

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. Internal Situation**

Nine people, including four Indian army soldiers were killed in continuing clashes in the valley.

["Four troops killed in Kashmir"](#)

Unnamed Indian army officers stationed in Kashmir have expressed fears that the Taliban fighters fleeing Afghanistan might find their way to Jammu and Kashmir.

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