

# Indian, Pakistani leaders won't meet at regional summit

By Michael Dorgan and Ken Moritsugu  
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NEW DELHI, India — With India and Pakistan teetering at the brink of a war that could go nuclear, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee left Sunday for a 16-nation regional summit in Kazakhstan and ruled out any meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, who was also en route to the summit.

Vajpayee, before boarding a plane for his four-day visit to the Kazakhstan capital Almaty, called on Pakistan to stop the influx of Islamic militants into India-controlled parts of the disputed territory of Kashmir, which both Pakistan and India claim.

"I have no such plans (to talk to Musharraf)," he told local reporters, disappointing hopes for any early end to the crisis.

Musharraf and Vajpayee were expected to meet separately with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has offered to try to mediate tensions that already have resulted in daily exchanges of artillery and machine gun fire across the Line of Control that separates Pakistan and Indian forces in Kashmir.

In Washington, Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that the U.S. would have to reassess the U.S. military mission in nearby Afghanistan. "Can we keep thousands of troops in the theater when there is a threat of nuclear war?" he asked.

Vajpayee said that India would respond positively if Musharraf followed through on his pledge to not allow militants to use Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled regions of Kashmir as staging areas for attacks on India.

Musharraf, since announcing a crackdown on militants in January, has repeatedly denied any government involvement in a series of recent terrorist attacks against India that has provoked a mobilization of 700,000 Indian troops along the 1,750-mile India-Pakistan border.

India is not convinced, and even leaders of some countries friendly with Pakistan, including President Bush, have expressed doubts that Musharraf has acted forcefully to end the incursions.

Eager to dispel those doubts, Musharraf plans to send emissaries to the United States and other countries to explain Islamabad's efforts and intentions.

"Pakistan will not start a war," Musharraf told reporters Sunday on a stopover in Tajikistan. "We

support solving the conflict through peaceful means."

Musharraf said he would like to discuss the crisis with Vajpayee, at the Kazakhstan conference or anywhere else.

"I'm ready to meet anywhere and at any level," he said. "I would like the talks to be one-on-one, but if (Vajpayee) he doesn't want to, I will not insist."

Leaders of both nations are under intense domestic pressure to adopt an inflexible stance.

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**B.A. Malik**  
former Pakistani diplomat

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes on Sunday told a conference in Singapore that Musharraf's pledge to crack down on terrorism following a suicide-squad attack on the Indian parliament in December was "merely cosmetic," and that the Indian government was under "intense" pressure to launch an attack against militants in Kashmir.

But Fernandes said India "will not be impulsive" in dealing with Pakistan, suggesting that there is still hope that a flurry of 11th hour diplomacy by the United States and other countries may avert war.

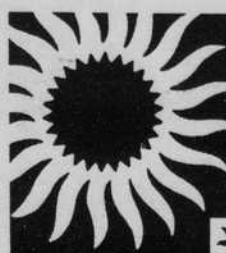
U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage is scheduled to visit both New Delhi and Islamabad later this week, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld will follow a few days later.

B.A. Malik, a former Pakistani diplomat, predicted that Armitage and Rumsfeld would lean on Musharraf to pledge to stop the militants in Kashmir, but would not succeed.

"My view is that Gen. Musharraf may not be able to deliver now," Malik said in an interview. "He's under great pressure from India and from Islamic militants. He's getting besieged."

Also on Sunday, the leaders of political and religious parties in the Pakistan-controlled part of Kashmir issued a declaration demanding that Pakistan "resist all external or internal pressure aimed to change its present Kashmir policy."

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