

## **'US must press Pakistan to crack down on LeT'**

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**Washington:** A US expert has suggested that Washington can bring about a thaw in India-Pakistan relations without any direct intervention by pressing Pakistan to crack down on Lashkar e-Taiba, responsible for the Mumbai attacks.

"A relaxation of tensions-and even a resolution to decades-long disputes-would be welcomed by Washington," wrote Richard Fontaine, president of the Centre for a New American Security in Washington in the Wall Street Journal.

"Yet the Obama administration should resist any urge to intervene directly in the talks," he wrote noting, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif "will seek general international support,

but they do not require an American mediator."

"Washington can be helpful in two ways," Fontaine wrote suggesting that it press Islamabad for a crack down on LeT that "continues to plot anti-India violence" and urge Pakistan to allow trans-shipment of Indian goods from Afghanistan across its territory.

"Another Mumbai-style attack courts catastrophe; at a minimum it would spoil

any efforts at a broader peace," he wrote.

"Already, Lashkar founder Hafiz Saeed has criticized Prime Minister Sharif and warned that he should not sacrifice Kashmir for better ties with Modi."

On the trans-shipment proposal, Fontaine noted that "currently, trucks laden

with goods from Afghanistan deliver their wares to India and must return empty."

"By blocking India's route into Afghanistan, Pakistan has encouraged India to develop the Chabahar port in Iran in order to access Central Asian markets."

"Permitting trans-shipment would increase economic connectivity between India and Pakistan, and could even one day result in construction of the oft-discussed Trans-Afghanistan natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to India," he wrote.

"In the meantime, the right American response is one of quiet support. The path ahead is difficult, and if past is prologue, it may end in deadlock," wrote Fontaine.

"Yet by taking this bold step, the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers may have delivered much-needed good news to their countries and the world."

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