

Pakistan must consider security ops against Haqqani network: Top US commander

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Washington: Pakistan, which has a way of communicating to the Haqqani network, should consider security operations against the insurgent group if it can't leverage its influence to stop them from crossing over to Afghanistan and hit US targets, a top American commander has said.

"I think Pakistan has a way of communicating to the Haqqani, and a way of highlighting to them the disruptive role they are playing in Afghanistan," General Joseph L Votel, nominee of the Commander of US Central Command, told members of Senate Armed Services Committee at a confirmation hearing.

"So I think the first thing we need to do is leverage their influence with that particular organisation to prevent them from having those particular facts," Votel said.

"If that does not work...They need to look at conducting security operations to contain them and keep them from coming across the border and having an impact in Afghanistan," he said.

Votel was responding to a series of questions from Senator Kelly Ayotte after he in his statement expressed concerns about the continuing threat the Haqqani network poses to the US forces and to the stability of Afghanistan.

Senator Ayotte posed several questions to Votel about the role Pakistan can play in containing the insurgent group.

"I would like to ask you, you said in your statement that we need Pakistan to take more decisive actions against the Haqqani Network. Could you describe for us what actions you would like to see Pakistan take to the extent you can in this setting" Ayotte asked.

"Also do you believe that Pakistan has to be much more aggressive that it has been in going after the Haqqani Network? Can you tell us where you think they are vis-a-vis, getting at this very dangerous network that is undermining stability and harming us in Afghanistan" the Senator asked.

Votel began with saying that Pakistan needs to "do more."

"I think we seen some instances lately were Pakistan has been aggressive in some of the things they've been doing along the border. They have been pretty aggressive, they have pushed a lot of fighters into Afghanistan. That's traded additional turbulence, but it's also created opportunities for us that we've been able to capitalise on," he said.

In his prepared statement, General Votel said despite positive momentum against some militants, particularly al-Qaeda and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the US remain concerned about the continuing threat to US forces in Afghanistan posed by the Haqqani network.

"We continue to urge Pakistan at the highest levels to take deliberate action against this group," he said.

Votel, however, defended Obama administration's decision to continue US assistance to Pakistan.

"The risks of ineffective and unclear signals and conditioning may risk us losing our access and frank dialogue to Pakistan" and may reduce Pakistan's willingness to continue its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations," he said.

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