

## **Upset Pakistan hunts new US lobbyist after two back-to-back diplomatic disasters**

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**Islamabad:** Looking for some damage control after two consecutive diplomatic setbacks, Pakistan is now in search of a new lobbyist in the United States after being refused subsidised rates in the F-16 deal and with the US openly campaigning in favour of inducting India into the NSG, a media report said today.

### **Nawaz Sharif, Barack Obama**

The ties between the two countries started to lose its grip over differences in opinion about dealing with the Taliban in Afghanistan and allegation by the US that Pakistan failed to root out militants groups.

Nadeem Hotiana, Pakistan Embassy spokesman in Washington, confirmed the country was now looking for a paid lobbyist "but has not yet taken any decision", the Dawn reported.

Earlier, Locke Lord Strategies was hired in 2008 to lobby for Pakistan but Islamabad failed to renew its contract with the firm in July 2013.

The group was hired by government of Pakistan People's Party mainly because one of its partners, Mark Siegel, was a personal friend of the late prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

The embassy was paying USD 75,000 per month to this group, which is the lobbying arm of the law firm Locke Lord, but it failed to improve Pakistan's image.

Pakistan's main expectation from the firm was to promote its interests on Capitol Hill, where it often has to face angry lawmakers every time an issue related to the country is discussed.

But the firm had little influence on the Hill.

It proved equally ineffective in lobbying the US media for Pakistan. There were occasions when the embassy's press section managed to gather more senior journalists than did the firm for official briefings and for group or individual meetings with visiting Pakistani leaders.

To be fair to Locke Lord, some of the issues it had to deal with during this period (2008-13) were beyond its control.

Even the most influential lobbyists would have found it impossible to plead Pakistan's case on the Hill, in media or in Washington.

- (With PTI inputs)