

End selective targeting, go after terror groups targeting neighbours: US tells Pakistan

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The US has asked Pakistan to act against terrorists targeting its neighbours and not just those that pose a threat to itself. The statement by State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner, asking Pakistan to act against terror groups targeting its neighbours and not just the ones that pose a threat to it virtually endorses the stand taken by India at the SAARC ministerial meet.

State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner

“We have been very clear with the highest levels of the Government of Pakistan that they must target all militant groups and that includes those that target Pakistan’s neighbours. They must also close all safe havens,” the State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner said on Thursday at his daily briefing.

He said Pakistan was going after terror groups “selectively”.

“...They’re going after groups, but selectively. We need to see them go after all groups and as I just said, even those groups that might not threaten Pakistan itself but threaten its neighbours,” he said.

“We obviously believe that Pakistan needs to do all it can to confront all terrorists operating on its soil. We have seen it make progress; we want to see more progress on its part,” Toner said when asked about Home Minister Rajnath Singh’s visit to Islamabad for the SAARC meeting.

Addressing the SAARC Home Ministers’ meeting in Islamabad, Singh had said mere condemnation of terrorism and terrorists is not enough and that there are “no good terrorists or bad terrorists”, while asking Pakistan to stop encouraging terror groups and “glorification” of terrorists.

Asked about the SAARC meet, Toner said it was important to have a forum where countries can “talk about in a candid way” on the areas of disagreement and concerns and advocated closer cooperation between India and Pakistan to deal with terror threat in both the countries.

“We encourage that kind of regional dialogue regarding counter-terrorism efforts. We advocate for closer cooperation, certainly, between India and Pakistan to deal with terrorist threats in both countries.”

Calling the two countries to fight together against terrorism, he said, “Terrorism is obviously a reality in both countries, and in order to effectively confront it, they need to work together. That’s something we have long encouraged.”

“So it is important that these have these forum, rather, to talk about in a candid way some of the areas of disagreement and some of the areas of concern between the two of them,” he insisted.

Asked about Pentagon’s decision to withhold USD 300 million military aid to Pakistan after Defence Secretary Ashton Carter declined to give a certification to the Congress that Islamabad is taking sufficient action against Haqqani network, Toner said, “We’ve urged Pakistan to address this and to pursue closer counterterrorism cooperation with Afghanistan against all groups that pose a long-term security threat to the region, not just to Pakistan.”

“We believe that Pakistan has taken and is taking steps to counter terrorist violence and certainly focusing on those groups that threaten Pakistani or Pakistan’s stability,” he said.

- (With inputs from PTI)