

Kashmir resolution crucial for South Asia stability: Mullen

Describing the resolution of the Kashmir issue as crucial for the stability of the South Asian region, the US' military chief has welcomed India's reduction of troops in Jammu and Kashmir.

'In the long-run, resolution of the border in the east in Kashmir is a very important outcome. Obviously, that is a principal concern to India and Pakistan,' Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, told foreign correspondents here Tuesday.

'But there is a concern to many others in terms of stability of the region. I think that is a key part of what needs to happen in the future,' Mullen said when asked how the US was addressing Pakistan's concerns about its border with India and the Pakistani militants receiving military weapons from Afghanistan.

Welcoming India's decision to reduce troops from Jammu and Kashmir, Mullen said 'de-tensioning' of the state's border with Pakistan was absolutely critical to the long-term stability of the region.

'I really do believe that de-tensioning that (Kashmir) Indo-Pak border is absolutely critical to the long term stability in that region and it is going to take outreach on the part of both countries.'

'I am very positively moved by the steps that the Prime Minister (Manmohan) Singh's government has taken with respect to this,' Mullen said when asked about the implications of New Delhi's decision to reduce troops in Jammu and Kashmir.

He added: 'I think that the adjustments that the Indians have proposed, and to the degree that has been executed - I am just not current on the level of execution right now - but certainly executing those changes is a very positive step.

'I think, the leadership - the political leadership, the diplomatic leadership and military leadership in both countries and in the region need to continue to encourage and also to respond.'

The top US military official, who has made several trips to Pakistan in the last one year and has been in constant contact with the top Pakistani military leadership, said the US will coordinate its counterinsurgency efforts on the Afghan side for addressing Islamabad's concerns over possible influx of militants into tribal areas.

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