

China could convince Pakistan for dismantling terror safe havens: US

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Washington: With the Trump administration determined to eliminate terror safe havens in Pakistan, the US is hoping that China will play a helpful role in convincing its close ally that it is in its national interest to crackdown on these sanctuaries, a senior White House official has said.

The official said that dismantling terrorist safe havens in Pakistan is key to bring stability in Afghanistan and in the region.

“Pakistan already has deep historical ties with China going back to many years and they have close military ties. The economic relationship is also growing with China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC),” the senior administration official said on condition of anonymity.

“But, China shares some of the concerns of the US about the terrorism problem. The US is seeking to work with other regional players and China would be one of the main ones to deal with this issue. It won’t serve China’s interests to have terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan,” the official said.

The official was quick to point out that China has been playing a more helpful role in terms of encouraging better relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. “It is taking a more active role in this regard.”

“So, I would disagree with the assertion that China will not play a helpful role in convincing Pakistan it is in its own interest to crack down on the terror sanctuaries,” the official told a group of reporters on Friday.

“Ultimately, China is also working towards a stable Afghanistan. That’s going to take them back to the same issue which are the sanctuaries in Pakistan,” the official said.

China-Pakistan relationship is already very strong and appeared unconcerned over reports that the US’s decision to freeze approximately USD 2 billion in security assistance to Pakistan would push Islamabad towards Beijing, the official added.

“That relationship is already very very strong.

But what we have seen is an interest by Pakistan in having a strong relationship with both the US and China. So that’s one issue. And the second issue is that China is also concerned about terrorism and extremism in South Asia,” the official said.

Noting that China has taken a more active role in trying to help stabilise Afghanistan, trying to improve relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the official said the US believes that China is also interested in stability in Pakistan and also for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

“Ultimately if they want to see stability in the region, and I think they do, they also will have an interest in seeing

Pakistan crack down on the Haqqani and Taliban network,â€• the senior administration official said.

The Trump administration has suspended about USD 2 billion in security aid to Pakistan for failing to clamp down on the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network terror groups and dismantle their safe havens.

The freezing of all security assistance to Pakistan comes after President Trump in a New Yearâ€™s Day tweet accused the country of giving nothing to the US but â€œlies and deceitâ€• and providing â€œsafe havenâ€• to terrorists in return for USD 33 billion aid over the last 15 years.

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