**WAR ON TERROR**

On September 11, 2001, with the collapse of the World Trade Center started what the U.S. called “the war against terrorism”. U.S. President George Bush termed it an act of terrorism and threatened strong action against the people who had carried out the attack. It was the Taliban and the Saudi millionaire-turned-militant Osama bin Laden who were eventually held responsible for it. President Bush said that the U.S. would do “whatever it takes” to hunt down “terrorists” and that if Osama bin Laden thought he could hide, “he was mistaken”.

Pakistan became the center of world attention after the September 11 attacks. It was placed in a difficult situation as the U.S. threatened to carry out military strikes on the Taliban. Faced not only with international pressure to take part in curbing the war on terrorism, but also a strong domestic pressure not to side with the United States against an Islamic country, Pakistan sought to assume a delicate balance between the U. S. demands and an expected backlash from internal militant and religious organizations.

General Musharraf made efforts to persuade the country’s political and religious leadership to support an alliance with the United States but was partially successful in his efforts. Liberal-minded politicians agreed to fully back the government while leaders of some hard-line Islamic parties were not happy. Several groups threatened to start a countrywide uprising in protest against any U.S. attack on the Taliban. All the religious parties and various political parties like the Jamiyat-i-Ulema-i-Islam, Jamaat-i-Islami, Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf, shared the same opinion on the possible US military action against the Taliban regime and use of Pakistani soil. They were not only against attacking Afghanistan from Pakistan soil, but were also against offending Pakistan’s closest brotherly neighbor, whom Pakistan had supported against the Soviet Union at the cost of burdening itself with a large number of refugees.

Pakistan was faced with a tough choice and irresistible pressure from the United States, an old ally and sole super power, to support a military strike against Osama bin Laden. That pressure, however, was combined with extreme reluctance to abandon Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban, an old friend and neighbor. Pakistan in this difficult situation was left with actually little choice except to comply with U.S. demands. The Government, despite the protest of the religious parties, decided to cooperate with the U.S. However, it made it very clear that Pakistan would extend full cooperation to the international community in its fight against terrorism without involving its forces in any action beyond its geographical boundaries. The U.S. was given permission to make use of Pakistani airspace for U.S. missile or aerial strikes against targets in Afghanistan. Pakistan also agreed to the exchange of intelligence and logistic facilities and to the closing of Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan.

US attack against the ruling Taliban started almost a month after the September 11 attacks as the Afghan Government refused to meet American demands of closing alleged terrorist training camps, handing over the leaders of the Al-Qaeda network, and return of all foreign nationals, including American citizens detained in Afghanistan.