

Pakistan Air Force reopens bases near LoC, barely 100 kms from Srinagar

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has reopened two air-bases, barely 100 km from Srinagar. The air-bases in Kotli and Rawalkot, both close to the Line of Control (LoC) are in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and were closed for some years.

The reopening of PAF facilities so close to the LOC is a threat, while the strengthening of the base in Shamsi in Balochistan and the construction of a new army cantonment near the PAF base in Jacobabad, Sind, is a sign of growing unrest in those provinces.

- 1) The Kotli air-base will be in the area of the Pakistan Army's 3 POK brigade, which is part of 23 Division. Over a hundred air-defence troops have been moved to Kotli.
- 2) The Rawalkot air-base comes under 2 POK Brigade of 12 division. This air-base has been closed for four years.

The reopening of the two airfields may relate to the Indian Air Force's strike in Balakot on February 26, 2019. At that time, IAF warplanes flew all the way to Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (it is just after POK) and back without being even challenged by the PAF was a huge embarrassment. The reopening of both Kotli and Rawalkot is a precautionary measure as is the deployment of small numbers of F-16 fighters in different airfields all over the country.

- 1.1) The PAF's 403 Squadron-- of helicopters-- has moved to Shamsi where communication and radar networks are being readied.
- 1.2) The Pakistan Army's cantonment is coming up near Shahbaz, the PAF base in Jacobabad, Sind. It has acquired over 7,000 acres of land.
- 1.3) This is in addition to a new PAF base in Nasirabad, in Balochistan. The Pakistan government has already acquired 26,000 acres for the base.