



## South Asia Security Monitor: No. 200

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Afghanistan; India; South Asia; Southeast Asia

### September 14:

The BBC reports that a program to provide weapons training to youths in the border villages of India has been revived after a seven-year break. Officials from India's Special Services Bureau (SSB) say that while the young men will not be supplied with weapons during peace time, the goal of the effort is to create a trained pool of people who would be motivated to "co-operate with security forces and fight alongside them, if necessary" in the event of a conflict. "We want the border populations to be part of our effort to defend the national frontiers effectively," one SSB commander has explained. As part of the effort, SSB instructors have begun 10-day weapons training and basic combat skills for 15 young men, with plans to ultimately train 400 youths.

### September 18:

In a move sure to strain the already unstable peace process in the South Asian state, former Maoist rebels have resigned from their posts in Nepal's interim government. According to the BBC, the reason for the rift stems from the government's failure to accede to rebel demands and abolish the nation's monarchy ahead of constituent assembly elections this November. However, officials in Kathmandu say that the issue of the monarchy can only be decided by the constituent assembly. Some analysts see the walkout as an attempt to pressure the government to bow to Maoists demands before the upcoming polls, in which the latter are expected to perform poorly.

### September 24:

In a sign of easing tensions, Afghan President Hamid Karzai recently announced that his government is "working very hard" on peace talks to bring Taliban insurgents and supporters "back to the fold," ABC News reports. "We are already in contact... with those Taliban who are not part of al-Qaida and terrorist networks, who are really in the majority... and we would like to add to this process as the opportunity presents itself," said Karzai. The promising statements came during a high-level meeting that included representatives from twenty-four of the country's supporters and neighbors.

### September 25:

Despite the tight Internet controls imposed by Burma's junta, savvy young bloggers have been able to post photos and videos of the nation's growing anti-government protests. According to the *Herald Sun*, the military government in Rangoon has blocked almost all websites containing news or information about the South Asian state, but an "army" of university students have dedicated themselves to circumventing the censors. To the government's dismay, they have provided a window of information into the unfolding turmoil – and major news agencies are picking up on the information streaming from the country. Reporters Without Borders has dubbed a "paradise for censors."

New Zealand's *One News* reports that Thailand's post-coup government has just approved a massive 6.7 billion baht (\$212 million) allotment for foreign weapons procurement. According to a cabinet spokesman, the army will spend over 1 billion baht on Israeli guns, 3.9 billion baht on Ukrainian armored vehicles, and 1.6 billion baht on ground-to-ground missiles from China. The purchase comes despite the fact that the country's economic growth is slowing to a crawl.

The *Tehran Times* reports that negotiations have begun between Iran and Pakistan over the proposed trilateral Iran-India-Pakistan pipeline. The talks are intended to finalize the text of a contract for the pipeline, which could eventually provide Pakistan with as much as 30 million cubic meters of natural gas daily. Pakistani officials have expressed high hopes for the negotiations. "We are confident that this project will be launched in the near future," Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has told reporters.

The trilateral pipeline is only one of the energy routes being explored by Islamabad, however. "[Pakistan is] exploring the possibilities of a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan, which could be extended onward to India," Aziz has disclosed.