

..AS PAKISTAN CLAIMS AFGHANISTAN'S USE OF FAULTY MAP CAUSED CONFUSION OVER BORDER.

An unidentified senior Pakistani official said on 31 July that Afghanistan has mistakenly claimed that "Pakistani forces have intruded 12 kilometers inside Afghanistan" because Kabul is using old, Soviet-produced maps, the Pakistani daily "Dawn" reported on 1 August. The official added that this claim "cannot be true." "Russian maps are known to be flawed and inaccurate," he said. "Even if there was an intrusion, it could not possibly be more than a few meters." The official claimed that the maps used by the Afghan side "vary from the maps used by Pakistan and the United States." He said that Islamabad is using British maps, on the basis of which the "Durand Line" -- after Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, the British signatory of the 1893 agreement that demarcated the border between Afghanistan and British India -- was signed. The comments came after a meeting of the tripartite commission of Afghan, Pakistani, and U.S. representatives established to investigate claims by Afghanistan that Pakistani forces have violated its territory (see "RFE/RL Afghanistan Report," 17 and 24 July 2003). (Amin Tarzi)

INDIA ACCUSED OF INCITING AFGHAN-PAKISTANI TENSIONS...

Citing unidentified sources, Pakistan's official Associated Press of Pakistan claimed in a 29 July report that since the reopening of the Indian Consulate in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, in December 2002, tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have escalated. According to the report, Indian officials in Jalalabad have "established links with local [Afghan] warlords and are using them to vitiate Pakistani-Afghan ties." Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Islamabad has regarded ties between Kabul and New Delhi as a danger to its security. When the Pakistan-backed Taliban regime took control of Kabul in 1996, it closed the Indian consulate. (Amin Tarzi)

..WHICH IS AFFIRMED BY ISLAMABAD.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry on 1 August alleged that India's Research and Analysis Wing is running espionage and terrorist operations aimed at Pakistan from India's consulates in Jalalabad and Kandahar, AP reported on 2 August. A statement by the ministry reportedly provided no evidence to support the accusation. The Press Trust of India news agency reported on 2 August that India has denied such activities and that on 29 July Pakistan's high commissioner in New Delhi, Munawar Saeed Bhatti, was told by Indian External Affairs Ministry officials that "even Afghan officials and ministers, including their interior minister," have publicly rejected "these preposterous allegations leveled by Pakistan." (Isabelle Laughlin)

AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN DISCUSS BILATERAL TRADE.

Afghan Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai traveled to Islamabad on 4 August at the head of a 17-member delegation participating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission, dpa reported. In the first day of the two-day talks, the commission agreed on 4 August to forge closer bilateral relations in trade, banking, and other finance-related areas. Pakistani Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz said his country last year exported \$400 million worth of goods to Afghanistan, imported \$35 million worth from Afghanistan, and allowed a further \$15 million of Afghan goods to pass through Pakistan en route to India. Ahmadzai sought Pakistan's assistance in establishing Afghanistan's own postal services, customs administration, and accounting practices, and said imminent reforms will allow Pakistani banks to open in Afghanistan. The two sides also discussed fostering business travel by increasing the frequency of flights between their countries, which currently number two per week. (Isabelle Laughlin)