

Act or we will, U.S. tells Pakistan

The Trump administration has firmly told Pakistan that if it fails to take “decisive” action against terror groups, it will “adjust” its tactics and strategies to achieve the objective in a “different way.”

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has told Pakistan that it must take action against terrorist groups and dismantle their safe havens on its soil, a State Department spokesperson told PTI, a day after Mr. Tillerson concluded his maiden trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

“We have communicated our expectations to Pakistan numerous times that they must take decisive action against terrorist groups based within their own borders,” the spokesperson said.

At a news conference in Geneva, his last stop on his overseas tour, Mr. Tillerson said the U.S. had “a very healthy exchange of information on terrorists, which is what we really hope to achieve with Pakistan.”

Blunt message

He said the message to Pakistan was: “Here’s what we need for Pakistan to do. We’re asking you to do this; we’re not demanding anything. You’re a sovereign country. You’ll decide what you want to do, but understand this is what we think is necessary. And if you don’t want to do that, don’t feel you can do it, we’ll adjust our tactics and our strategies to achieve the same objective [in] a different way.”

Mr. Tillerson said that he would not characterise his direct discussions with the Pakistani leadership as lecturing at all.

‘Open exchange’

“It was a very good and open exchange. In fact, we probably listened 80 per cent of the time and we talked 20 per cent. And it was important to me, because I have not engaged with Pakistani leadership previously. And, so my objective was to listen a lot, to hear their perspective,” he said.

“We put our points forward. We put our expectations forward in no uncertain terms. There has been significant engagement prior to my visit, and there will be further engagement in the future, as we work through how we want to exchange information and achieve the objective of eliminating these terrorist organisations, wherever they may be located,” Mr. Tillerson said.

He described his communication with the Pakistani leadership as very frank and very candid.

“There’s nothing to be achieved by lecturing, but we should be very clear about expectations and what we’re asking. And either people will step up and meet those expectations or they won’t. We are going to chart our course consistent with what Pakistan not just says they do but what they actually do,” he said.

Based on conditions

Noting that the future course of action would be based on conditions on the ground, he said the entire South Asia strategy is a conditions-based strategy.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif in a meeting on Thursday with the National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs said that Pakistan will neither surrender to the U.S. nor

compromise on its sovereignty.

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