

## FALCON TALON 2022

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



For the first time in three years, Pakistan and United States Air Forces held a joint exercise, under the title of ‘Falcon Talon 2022,’ an Agile Combat Employment operation at Pakistan Operational Air Force Base from February 26 till March 4, 2022. The joint exercise event was the fourth in line, with previous exercises held in 2019, 2011, and 2009. The exercise was also marked the Ninth Air Force (Air Forces Central)’s first major training event in Pakistan since 2019. The main aim of the exercise was to promote and advance Pakistan and US cooperation on issues of mutual security in the region. US Chargé d’affaires Angela P. Aggeler and visiting Director of Exercises and Engagements at US Central Command (CENTCOM) Major General Steven deMilliano were also part of the closing ceremony of the joint exercise.

During the closing ceremony US Chargé de Aggeler highlighted the importance of the exercise and its timeliness and congratulated and thanked members of the US Air Force to Pakistan and highlighted that through exercises like Falcon Talon 2022, both Islamabad and D.C are able to sustain a partnership that helps build regional peace, security, and stability with a shared understanding of threats and means to mitigate them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. and Pakistan Air Force Carry Out Joint Training Exercise in Pakistan, US Embassy and consulates in Pakistan, March 7, 2022, <https://pk.usembassy.gov/u-s-and-pakistan-air-force-carry-out-joint-training-exercise-in-pakistan/>

The bilateral exercise was designed to promote interoperability in realistic scenarios at an operational base. Personnel at the exercise included Pakistani and American airmen and women as well as technical staff and undertook multiple including flying operations, large-force exercise, and training, partner nation integration training across multiple capabilities including maintenance, security forces, and other training and operational support.

Members of the US Air Force's Airmen showcased their partners at the Pakistan Air Force by how each Airman serves their primary role and additional tasks outside of their career field. The ability to perform duties outside of an Airman's Air Force Specialty Code is essential in the execution of the ACE warfighting concept.<sup>2</sup>

"Celebrating the 75th anniversary of U.S. and Pakistan relations, our militaries were happy to increase our interoperability and partner capacity during Falcon Talon," said US Army Brig. Gen. James Sindle, Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché-Pakistan. "Engagements such as live flying with PAF and US Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons, as well as exchanges with our maintenance and security forces professionals, ensured our militaries are ready to fight to win today and postured for tomorrow."<sup>3</sup>

Air forces of two sides have a long history of enviable cordial relations; during the first period of intense engagement between 1956 and 1962, in response to India's increasing tilt toward the Soviet Union, the US provided Pakistan with 132 jet fighters including 100 F-86F Sabres under the US aid program.<sup>4</sup> And addition of 12 F-104A Star fighters and 26 bombers - B-57B Canberras, however, during the Indo-Pakistan war US withheld its military engagement with Pakistan for almost a decade which was later revamped in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks at the World Trade Centre in the US following which the US in 2004 provided 32 F-16s to Pakistan in the next three years<sup>5</sup>

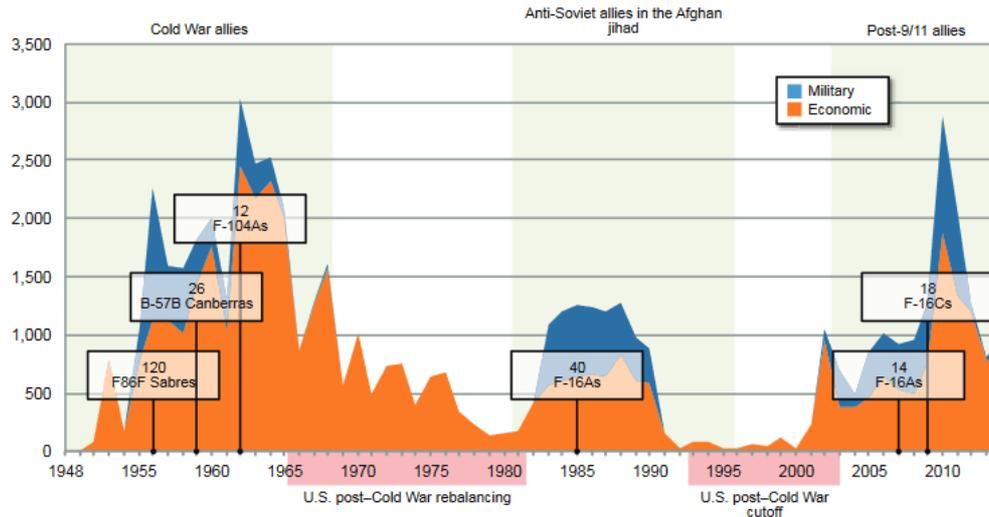
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2 Capt. Monique Roux, "US, Pakistan Air Forces Strengthen Partnerships During Bilateral Training Exercise," US Air Force Central, March 9, 2022, <https://www.afcent.af.mil/News/Article/2960364/us-pakistan-air-forces-strengthen-partnerships-during-bilateral-training-exerci/>

3 Capt. Monique Roux, "US, Pakistan Air Forces Strengthen Partnerships During Bilateral Training Exercise," US Air Force Central, March 9, 2022, <https://www.afcent.af.mil/News/Article/2960364/us-pakistan-air-forces-strengthen-partnerships-during-bilateral-training-exerci/>

4 Air Power Asia, <https://airpowerasia.com/2020/05/11/Pakistan-air-force-a-comprehensive-story/>

5 Jonah Blank, Richard S. Girven, Arzan Tarapore, Julia A. Thompson, Arthur Chan, "Vector Check - Prospects for U.S. and Pakistan Air Power Engagement," [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2100/RR2107/RAND\\_RR2107.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2100/RR2107/RAND_RR2107.pdf)



**Source:** U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan, Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2015, Washington, D.C., 2015. (Amount in constant 2014 \$millions).<sup>6</sup>

Before the imposition of sanctions under the Pressler Amendment which led to the denial of vital economic and military assistance promised to Pakistan as recently as 1990,<sup>7</sup> Pakistan had ordered 111 F-16A/B Block 15 aircraft. The entire F-16 deals and purchases between Pakistan and the US both through Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) are accredited as Peace Gate I, II, III, and IV. Of these, 40 were delivered between 1982 and 1987 under the Peace Gate I and II programs,<sup>8</sup> costing Pakistan \$1.1 billion in cash.<sup>9</sup> However, the US later suspended arms deliveries to Pakistan under the Pressler restrictions.

Of the 71 F-16 aircraft remaining to be transferred at this time, 28 either had already been built or were near completion. The nuclear tests of 1998 by Pakistan further raised the stakes for the continuing stalemate, however, the United States agreed to pay Pakistan \$326.9 million in cash and up to \$140 million in other compensation (including \$60 million in wheat) while it claimed that \$157 million had already been paid through US sales of Pakistan bought aircraft components to other nations.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jonah Blank, Richard S. Girven, Arzan Tarapore, Julia A. Thompson, Arthur Chan, “Vector Check - Prospects for U.S. and Pakistan Air Power Engagement,” [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2100/RR2107/RAND\\_RR2107.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2100/RR2107/RAND_RR2107.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> “Discard The Pressler Amendment,” Washington Post, December 21, 1993, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1993/12/21/discard-the-pressler-amendment/c9532c96-bd8c-4d1e-ae31-8e3a504e33ed/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.f-16.net/f-16\\_users\\_article14.html](https://www.f-16.net/f-16_users_article14.html)

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, “Pakistan Agrees To A U.S. Aid Plan And F-16 Delivery,” September 16, 1981 <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/09/16/world/pakistan-agrees-to-a-us-aid-plan-and-f-16-delivery.html>

<sup>10</sup> Pakistan Air Force Inventory, [https://www.f-16.net/f-16\\_users\\_article14.html](https://www.f-16.net/f-16_users_article14.html)

Program	Model	Block	Qty.	Serials	Delivered
Peace Gate I	F-16A	Block 15	2	82701/82702	1983
	F-16B	Block 15	4	82601/82604	1983
Peace Gate II	F-16A	Block 15	26	83703, 84704/84719, 85720/85728	1983-1987
	F-16B	Block 15	8	82605, 84606/84608, 85609/85612	1983-1987
Peace Gate III	F-16A	<a href="#">block 15OCU</a>	6	91729, 92730/92734	embargoed
	F-16B	Block 15OCU	5	91613, 92614/92617	embargoed
Peace Gate IV	F-16A	Block 15OCU	7	92735/92739, 93740/93741	embargoed
	F-16B	Block 15OCU	10	92618, 93619/93621, 94622/94624, 95625/95627	embargoed
	F-16A	Block 15OCU	41	9_742/9_782	stop-work
	F-16B	Block 15OCU	2	9_628/9_629	stop-work
Peace Drive	F-16C	Block 52	12	10901/10912	2010
	F-16D	Block 52	6	10801/10806	2010
Second hand	F-16A	Block 15ADF	9	14732/14740	2014
	F-16B	Block 15ADF	4	14624/14627	2014

Source: PAF Inventory <sup>11</sup>

The Falcon Talon 2022 exercise comes at a time as Pakistan and the United States mark seven decades of their bilateral relationship and through the exercise re-establish and aspire to strengthen real world operational efforts against security threats in the region. The training allowed Pakistan and the US air forces to continue building and strengthening their relationship. It provided them the chance to improve integration, and additional opportunities of training to enhance the readiness of air operations. The engagement also emphasizes the fact that regardless of the political environment and mood in both the capitals, engagement between different sectors and organizations between the two remain stable and objective. Moreover, it is imperative that Pakistan and the US maintain a sturdy level of commitment at different levels through multiple mechanisms including active engagement between forces personnel and technical knowledge sharing rather than to look for rapid engagements.

<sup>11</sup> Pakistan Air Force Inventory, [https://www.f-16.net/f-16\\_users\\_article14.html](https://www.f-16.net/f-16_users_article14.html)