

INTERVIEW-Onus on Pakistan in Kashmir-Indian aide.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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NEW DELHI, May 30 (Reuters) - A top Indian official said on Sunday it was up to Pakistan to "undo what it has done" in Kashmir if the nuclear-armed neighbours were to step back from a growing confrontation over the Himalayan territory.

"When other countries ask us to exercise restraint, we tell them: 'Please go and tell Pakistan to undo what it has done'," said Brijesh Mishra, principal secretary and National Security Adviser to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Mishra told Reuters in a telephone interview that India would press on with its air-and-ground offensive to evict hundreds of well-armed infiltrators from Indian Kashmir's high ridges.

"Let there be no mistake - this was an armed incursion by Pakistan into Indian territory," said Mishra. "The so-called mercenaries have been thoroughly controlled and directed by the Pakistani army. We have enough evidence of that."

"We are determined to restore the status quo ante. That is the bottom line."

Mishra admitted India had been taken by surprise by the extent and size of the infiltration, which differed from previous years when small bands of guerrillas crossed into Indian Kashmir to stage hit-and-run attacks.

"Obviously we did not assess the situation properly," he said. "But for nearly three decades there was no activity on those high ridges on our side of the LOC (line of control). The terrain is so horrendous you don't expect this sort of incursion."

But he brushed aside a question about a failure of India's intelligence machinery. "This is not the time for a post-mortem," he said.

Asked how India would respond to a proposal by Pakistan to send its foreign minister, Sartaj Aziz, to New Delhi for talks to defuse the Kashmir crisis, Mishra said:

"We are always willing to welcome dialogue, but what is the purpose of dialogue? If the purpose is to agree that Pakistan is entirely responsible for this situation and if Pakistan says 'Let us take back our men' then that is good."

Mishra, a former diplomat, said there was a serious lack of consensus in Pakistan on policy towards India, and recalled the warmth between Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif when the two met in Lahore for a pathbreaking summit only three months ago.

"It is very clear to us now that when we were being received in Lahore, preparations were already going on for this armed incursion into our territory," Mishra said.

Asked if the stand-off in Indian Kashmir's Drass-Kargil-Batalik sectors might develop into a long, bruising undeclared war of attrition between the arch-foes, similar to their skirmishes on the high and hostile Siachen Glacier further north, Mishra said:

"I don't think it will. But if it does, we have the resources to handle that sort of situation. Pakistan doesn't."

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