**SECTION (A)**

**Blow to Pakistan: US cuts military training programmes**

US military institutions are struggling to fill the 66 slots they had kept aside for officers from Pakistan for the next academic year, as the Trump administration refused to provide funds for their training, official sources said.

The fund for training Pakistani officers came from the US government’s International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET) but no funds were made available for Pakistan for the next academic year.

The Pentagon and the Pakistani military did not comment directly on the decision or the internal deliberations, but officials from both countries privately criticized the move.

U.S. officials, speaking to Reuters on the condition of anonymity, said they were worried the decision could undermine a key trust-building measure. Pakistani officials warned it could push their military to further look to China or Russia for leadership training.

Dan Feldman, a former U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, called the move “very short-sighted and myopic”.

The State Department spokesperson, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the IMET cancellations were valued at $2.41 million so far. At least two other programs have also been affected, the spokesperson said.

Pakistani Senator Mushahid Hussain, chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, told Reuters that a U.S. decision to cut off such exchanges would be counter-productive and push Pakistan’s military towards other countries.

Russia and Pakistan signed an agreement earlier this week that would allow for Pakistani military officers to train at Russian institutes.

**SECTION (B)**

**US Cuts Pakistan’s Access to Military Training Programs**

The United States has started cutting Pakistani officers from training and educational programs which were a key aspect of US-Pakistan bilateral relations that have lasted for more than a decade, US officials told Reuters.

The move is one of the first major impacts of Donald Trump’s announcement that the US would cut security aid to Pakistan to compel the country to crack down on Islamic terrorists living on Pakistani soil.

Reuters cited anonymous US officials as stating that they were worried the decision could undermine US-Pakistan relations further, compelling the country to turn to Russia or, more likely, China for assistance. China has already extended several loans to Pakistan for the $60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

A US State Department official told Reuters that the US government's move to cut Pakistan from the United States’ International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET) would close off 66 spots that had been allocated for Pakistani officers in 2018. The official added that the spots would either be left vacant, or be allocated to officers from other nations.

In fact, US President Donald Trump’s first tweet of 2018, targeting Pakistan, had caused ripples in international diplomatic circles, especially on the Twitter timelines of Pakistan government officials.

In his tweet, the US called Pakistan a ‘safe haven’ for terrorists and said that the “United States had foolishly given more than 33 billion dollars in aid to Pakistan over the last 15 years.”

Pakistan had been the largest recipient of IMET between 2003 and 2017, according to the Security Assistance Monitor which tracks U.S. assistance.