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## Team Obama scuttles the term "AfPak"

Posted by Josh Rogin    Wednesday, January 20, 2010 - 3:26 PM    [Share](#)



Haven't heard the term "AfPak" coming from senior administration officials lately? There's a good reason for that. The Obama team has jettisoned the term due to Pakistani ire, according to special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan **Richard Holbrooke**.

"We can't use it anymore because it does not please people in Pakistan, for understandable reasons," **Holbrooke told the Women's Foreign Policy Group** Jan. 8.

Those reasons apparently weren't all that understandable when Holbrooke coined the term and pushed its usage to government types and reporters alike. Also at the WFPO event, the *New York Times*' **Helene Cooper** explained how Holbrooke had advocated for the phrase that the government is now abandoning.

"Ambassador Holbrooke takes great pride in having invented the word 'AfPak,' Cooper said. "A few years ago, I was interviewing him for a piece I was working on in Afghanistan, and he kept going on, 'AfPak, AfPak, AfPak.' And it was just sort of like white noise, and I kept ignoring it, and I was like, 'Yeah, whatever.' I got off the phone and the next day he called me before my story had run, and he said, 'Your story really needs to use the word AfPak.' And I said, 'What are you going on about?' And he said, 'No, seriously: AfPak is going to be big.'"

And it was big. The joining of Afghanistan and Pakistan into "AfPak" was a main take-away of the Obama administration's first major policy review in March, which was run by Holbrooke, along with Under Secretary of Defense **Michèle Flournoy**, and former NSC staffer **Bruce Riedel**.

But Pakistanis hated the term from day one and griped about it in public and private.

"The Af-Pak terminology is disliked and has received strong criticism across Pakistan," the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs **wrote in a recent report** on Pakistan. "The Pakistani intelligentsia is not pleased with a de-hyphenation of the Indo-Pak equation and the hyphenation of the Pak-Afghan calculus. The issue is not only one of national pride; there is a genuine concern among the strategic enclave that the permanence of the threat from India has not eroded.... There is objectively no interest for Pakistan to be fully involved in what is happening outside its borders, namely in Afghanistan."

So I guess we can add "AfPak" to the growing list of terms the Obama administration won't likely be using in the near future, including the "Global War on Terror," "strategic reassurance," "honest budgeting," and maybe "comprehensive health-care reform." (Too soon?)

Holbrooke was in India Tuesday as part of his **whirlwind tour** of South Asia, where he said that Indian participation is crucial to the success of the region. The Indians **have made clear** that they don't want Holbrooke to have India in his portfolio, so don't expect the term "Af-Ind" to surface anytime soon.

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