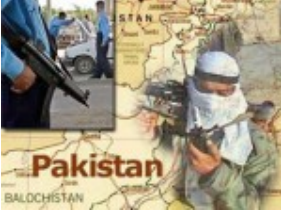


West Warned on Nuclear Terrorist Threat From Pakistan



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The next few months will be crucial in defusing a global terrorist threat that would be even deadlier than the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, a leading Washington counter-terrorism expert warns.

David Kilcullen — a former Australian army lieutenant colonel who helped devise the US troop surge that revitalised the American campaign in Iraq — fears Pakistan is at risk of falling under al-Qaeda control.

If that were to happen, the terrorist group could end up controlling what Dr Kilcullen calls “Talibanistan”. “Pakistan is what keeps me awake at night,” said Dr Kilcullen, who was a specialist adviser for the Bush administration and is now a consultant to the Obama White House.

“Pakistan has 173 million people and 100 nuclear weapons, an army which is bigger than the American army, and the headquarters of al-Qaeda sitting in two-thirds of the country which the Government does not control.”

Compounding that threat, the Pakistani security establishment ignored direction from the elected Government in Islamabad as waves of extremist violence spread across the whole country — not just in the tribal wilds of the Afghan border region.

“We have to face the fact that if Pakistan collapses it will dwarf anything we have seen so far in whatever we’re calling the war on terror now,” Dr Kilcullen told The Age during an interview at his Washington office. Late last month, when US President Barack Obama unveiled his new policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan, he warned that al-Qaeda would fill the vacuum if Afghanistan collapsed, and that the terror group was already rooted in Pakistan, plotting more attacks on the US.

As the US implements its new strategy in Central Asia, Dr Kilcullen warned that time was running out for international efforts to pull both countries back from the brink.

<http://www.nationalterroralert.com/updates/2009/04/12/west-warned-on-nuclear-terrorist-threat-from-pakistan/>