

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Pakistan Asks For More Money to Battle Taliban, 05/12/09

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june09/pakistan_05-12.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. What is the Taliban? Why are they important?

2. Where is Pakistan?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. Who was in Washington, D.C., last week to talk with President Obama?

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari was in Washington last week to ask for help fighting the Taliban, the same group that supported the Sept. 11 al-Qaida terrorists and now threatens the stability of Pakistan, one of the world's few nuclear powers.

2. What does the White House want Congress to do about Pakistan?

The White House is pushing Congress to boost U.S. military aid for Pakistan, and it's also asking Congress to launch a hefty civilian aid program, \$1.5 billion a year for five years, to build up infrastructure, education, and health for ordinary Pakistanis.

3. What part of Afghanistan is most at risk?

The northwest region of Pakistan, along the border with Afghanistan is most at risk. Earlier this month, militants from the Islamic extremist group the Taliban advanced towards the nation's capital, Islamabad.

4. How many refugees have left the Swat Valley?

The United Nations says that as many as 360,000 civilians have left their homes in Swat Valley, a former tourist destination, making their way to rapidly growing refugee camps.

5. What is one major problem for Pakistan?

In recent weeks Taliban forces began advancing towards the capital, violating the terms of the ceasefire and prompting international alarm.

6. What did the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan promise during their trip?

Pakistan's leader promised to move troops from its eastern border with historic rival, India, to the western Afghanistan border.

In a May 8 NewsHour interview, President Zardari expressed confidence that the United States and other western nations were committed to helping Pakistan fight the Taliban.

"They're a challenge to every government, and no government can afford to disengage," he said.

7. Why are the Taliban dangerous to Pakistan?

In an interview with the NewsHour, Pakistan resident and writer Daniyal Mueenuddin noted that the Taliban have a powerful ability to recruit the children of poor and displaced families who have limited options.

"They speak to the needs of the people and what they demand of them in return is this kind of allegiance," Mueenuddin said. "That's very attractive to people who are very poor and desperate."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

- 1. Why are the Taliban so dangerous? What can be done to stop them?**
- 2. Are you worried that the Taliban could take control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal? Why or why not?**
- 3. Why makes it hard for the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan control what goes on within their borders?**
- 4. How do you think the United States presence in the area affects the situation in those countries?**
- 5. Should the U.S. invade Pakistan if the Taliban takes over? Why or why not?**

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.