

Afghans supportive of Taliban, claims Musharraf

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The Pakistan president, admitting Taliban militants are receiving support from across the border, has said the main reason for their resurgence is that the people of Afghanistan back them.

In an interview with the CNN's Late Edition on Sunday, Pervez Musharraf did concede Pakistan-based elements provided support to the insurgents. However, he strongly refuted the charges of his Afghan counterpart that Taliban had safe haven in Pakistan.

"It is not an export from Pakistan into Afghanistan, it is an import from Afghanistan into Pakistan," the retired general observed while insisting the rebels were Afghans. "Whatever is happening in Afghanistan cannot be done or achieved by a few couple of hundreds of people or even thousands of people.

"It has to be hundreds of thousands of people who give support to those who are fighting, and they are the locals in Afghanistan. Let that not be mistaken," Musharraf argued, saying he knew about the guerrilla warfare and had been trained in that.

Reminded of a recent statement from President George Bush that he would authorise US forces to enter Pakistan in search of Osama bin Laden, Musharraf replied: "Frankly, I don't agree with that. We will -- whatever intelligence we get on terrorists, jointly think of what kind of action is possible and whatever assistance we can get."

Musharraf added: "It is Pakistan forces who act and I would continue with this arrangement. If we need any kind of assistance, it is -- the prerogative must remain with Pakistan."

All the terrorists were arrested in his country on the basis of Pakistani intelligence, the president pointed out. "There hasn't been even one arrest in Afghanistan," said Musharraf, who believed the elusive al-Qaeda leader might be hiding somewhere in areas along the Pak-Afghan border.

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