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Istanbul Trilateral Defence Meeting Pushes Pakistan–Türkiye Cooperation Toward Joint Production

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EXECUTIVE BRIEF & KEY FINDINGS

The 31 August 2026 inaugural meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee in Istanbul marks a qualitative change in Pakistan–Türkiye defence cooperation. What had previously consisted of bilateral procurement, military training, platform-specific technology transfer and individual co-production projects is now being embedded within a permanent trilateral security and defence-industrial architecture involving Türkiye, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.The three states agreed to establish a permanent secretariat in Saudi Arabia, initially headed by a Pakistani secretary-general for three years. More importantly from a military-industrial perspective, their official joint statement commits the three countries to strengthening defence capabilities and the cohesion of their armed forces through joint activities, robust defence-industry cooperation, joint technology development and joint production.The Istanbul meeting therefore provides the strongest official evidence yet that the new defence arrangement is intended to go significantly beyond a conventional mutual-defence treaty. Türkiye's Ministry of National Defence had already stated on 13 August that the framework was designed to provide not merely finished equipment and systems, but joint development, production, technology cooperation and sustainable maintenance and logistics support. Ankara specifically identified unmanned and autonomous systems, electronic warfare and artificial intelligence as priority areas.This institutionalisation coincides with unusual Turkish military airlift activity into Pakistan between approximately 18 and 21 August. Turkish C-130 and A400M transport aircraft were tracked making repeated movements to Pakistani military installations including Nur Khan, Masroor and reportedly Murid. The flight activity is credible, although there is currently no official cargo manifest. Claims that these aircraft carried hundreds of ASISGUARD SONGAR armed drones, additional UAVs, loitering munitions or air-

> *defence equipment remain unverified.Similarly, reports that Pakistan has acquired Türkiye's GAZAP 2,000-lb aerial bomb for integration with PAF F-16s have circulated since June and have been repeated by several defence publications. However, neither Ankara nor Islamabad has publicly announced a GAZAP contract, delivery quantity or operational induction. Reporting concerning Roketsan KARAOK anti-tank missiles and local manufacture in Pakistan has an even weaker current evidentiary base. Pakistan was reported as early as 2023 to be negotiating for Roketsan anti-tank guided weapons and considering co-production, but no authoritative source has yet confirmed that KARAOK specifically has been delivered or that its production line is operational in Pakistan.The principal development is therefore not any one weapon. It is the emergence of an institutional mechanism capable of accelerating the movement of Turkish defence technology, Saudi capital and Pakistani manufacturing capacity into joint programmes.*

1. What Happened in Istanbul

On 31 August, the foreign ministers, defence ministers and senior military chiefs of Pakistan, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia assembled in Istanbul for the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee established under the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement signed on 7 August 2026. Pakistan was represented by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir. Türkiye's delegation included Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Defence Minister Ya?ar Güler and Chief of General Staff Gen Selçuk Bayraktaro?lu.

The original Makkah agreement stipulates that an armed attack against one of the three states will be regarded as an attack against all three and provides for expansion across the spectrum of defence cooperation.

The Istanbul meeting converted this broad political undertaking into an emerging institutional structure. A permanent secretariat is to be created in Saudi Arabia, while its first secretary-general will come from Pakistan and hold office for three years. The official statement also commits the parties to improving the cohesion of their armed forces and developing joint defence technologies and production programmes.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan subsequently said that preliminary decisions had been reached concerning the steps and timetable required to institutionalise the arrangement. He described the process as the beginning of a new regional security and cooperation architecture.

This is important because institutionalisation addresses one of the persistent limitations of Pakistan–Türkiye defence cooperation. Earlier projects were often negotiated individually through military dialogue groups, defence companies or service-specific mechanisms. The new architecture potentially places procurement, interoperability, joint exercises, industrial cooperation and technology development within the same strategic framework.

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2. This Did Not Begin in August 2026

The current development should not be interpreted as a sudden Turkish entry into Pakistan's defence industry. A trilateral Pakistan–Türkiye–Saudi defence-industrial mechanism existed as early as August 2023, when representatives of the three states met in Riyadh and discussed defence-industry development, technology transfer, localisation and scientific research.

Pakistan and Türkiye separately developed an increasingly sophisticated bilateral architecture. The 18th High Level Military Dialogue Group in February 2024 discussed training, exercises and co-production of defence equipment.

The February 2025 Pakistan–Türkiye High Level Strategic Cooperation Council went further. Its joint declaration committed both countries to prioritising defence sourcing from each other where possible, promoting joint R&D, developing joint ventures and pursuing projects aimed at the indigenisation of their respective defence industries.

During the 20th High Level Military Dialogue Group held in Pakistan in April 2026, a dedicated Defence Industry Working Group reviewed existing programmes and explored new areas of collaboration.

The air domain was receiving particular attention immediately before the Makkah pact. PAF Chief Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu visited Türkiye in May and met Turkish Defence Minister Ya?ar Güler, the Turkish Air Force commander and Baykar CTO Selçuk Bayraktar. Pakistani state reporting specifically identified aerospace innovation, unmanned aerial systems, emerging technologies, capacity building and interoperability as areas under discussion.

The August developments therefore appear to be an acceleration and consolidation of an existing trajectory, rather than its starting point.

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3. The August Turkish Military Airlift

The most visible operational indicator appeared days after the Makkah agreement. Open-source flight tracking and Indian reporting identified an unusually concentrated series of Turkish military transport movements into Pakistan between approximately 18 and 21 August. C-130 Hercules and A400M Atlas transports were reported at PAF Base Nur Khan, PAF Base Masroor and PAF Base Murid. One repeatedly cited A400M movement involved callsign TUAF526.

The number and pattern of flights are significant irrespective of what was carried. Using military transport aircraft rather than normal commercial freight channels would be consistent with movement of sensitive military equipment, spares, personnel or time-sensitive logistical support.

The critical intelligence gap is the cargo. Neither Türkiye's Ministry of National Defence, Pakistan's ISPR, the PAF nor the Turkish manufacturers implicated in media reporting have disclosed what the aircraft transported. A subsequent claim alleges that A400M flights to Murid delivered 850 ASISGUARD SONGAR systems, reportedly divided among several configurations. The claim appears to originate primarily from Indian OSINT and defence reporting and has subsequently been repeated by Turkish media. Importantly, Turkish outlets repeating the report themselves acknowledge that neither Ankara nor Islamabad has confirmed the quantity or cargo.

ASISGUARD's publicly visible communications also provide no confirmation of an 850-system Pakistan delivery. The company did, however, publish a Pakistan Independence Day message on 14 August, which is an interesting but insufficient indicator of a commercial relationship by itself.

> *Assessment: The Turkish military airlift should be considered confirmed or highly credible. Attribution of its cargo to SONGAR, Bayraktar systems, loitering munitions or air-defence equipment should remain unconfirmed pending photographic, contractual, manufacturer or official evidence.*

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4. GAZAP and the Pakistan Air Force

Reports concerning Pakistan's acquisition of Türkiye's GAZAP heavy aircraft bomb first emerged publicly in June. Turkish defence publication MilDef reported on 9 June that Pakistan had procured GAZAP and planned to integrate the

weapon with its F-16 fleet. The Defense Post subsequently repeated the acquisition claim. Neither report was supported by an official Pakistani contract announcement or imagery showing GAZAP with the PAF.

There is also considerable inaccurate technical description of GAZAP circulating online. GAZAP is not publicly identified as a Roketsan-developed weapon. Turkish official and state-media reporting identifies the Turkish Ministry of National Defence's R&D Centre as the developer. Türkiye introduced the weapon publicly at IDEF 2025. The weapon uses the standard Mk-84 class form factor. Turkish officials have stated that the bomb contains approximately 10,000 fragmentation elements and creates significantly greater fragment density than a standard conventional bomb. The officials also stated that its fragmentation can spread across a radius reaching approximately one kilometre under test conditions. Its Mk-84 configuration is particularly relevant to Pakistan because the weapon is compatible in physical form with aircraft already designed to carry Mk-84-class stores. Turkish officials specifically identify the F-16 as a compatible aircraft.

However, the increasingly common description of GAZAP as a specialised bunker-destroying thermobaric weapon requires caution. Turkish authoritative descriptions emphasise enhanced blast and very high fragmentation density. Reporting has frequently conflated GAZAP with Türkiye's separate penetrator weapon, HAYALET.

Consequently, the strongest assessment currently possible is that Pakistan is credibly reported to be pursuing GAZAP integration, but actual operational induction remains unverified in the public domain.

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5. KARAOK and the Pakistan Army

The KARAOK story has a longer but less conclusive trail. In November 2023, reporting indicated that Pakistan was negotiating to acquire anti-tank guided weapons from Roketsan and was considering their co-production in Pakistan. Roketsan's portfolio included KARAOK, OMTAS and UMTAS, but the specific system selected by Pakistan was not publicly identified.

KARAOK would be operationally attractive to the Pakistan Army. Roketsan lists it as a man-portable 125 mm fire-and-forget anti-tank missile using an imaging-infrared seeker, with approximately 2.5 km range, a tandem armour-piercing warhead and direct and top-attack modes. The weapon has also reached a considerably more mature stage. Roketsan publicly showcased its operational use during the EFES-2026 exercise in May.

Nevertheless, the evidence chain currently does not establish that KARAOK missiles have been delivered to Pakistan in August 2026, nor does it establish that POF or GIDS has begun their licensed production. It is therefore analytically sound to distinguish three claims.

Development	Assessment	Confidence
Pakistan negotiated acquisition of Roketsan ATGWs	Supported by reporting since 2023	Moderate to high
KARAOK is the selected Pakistan Army system	Plausible but not independently confirmed	Low to moderate
KARAOK production or ToT has begun at POF/GIDS	No authoritative public confirmation located	Low

The technology-transfer claim deserves particularly close monitoring because the imaging-infrared seeker and associated guidance technology would be much more strategically valuable than simple assembly of imported missile kits.

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6. POF and GIDS Claims Require Further Corroboration

The specific assertion that Roketsan and the Turkish Ministry of National Defence have partnered with Pakistan Ordnance Factories and GIDS in August 2026 to establish production lines for GAZAP, KARAOK and associated guidance systems could not be verified from authoritative open sources.

Neither the publicly accessible GIDS newsroom nor recent corporate communications currently identifies such an arrangement. GIDS does publicly describe itself as pursuing indigenous technology and operating across air, land, naval and missile-related sectors, but that cannot be treated as evidence for this particular ToT package.

Nor has a corresponding Roketsan announcement been located. This does not mean the intelligence is necessarily incorrect. Defence technology transfers can remain undisclosed for considerable periods. It does mean that a publication should not present the POF/GIDS production arrangement as established fact at this stage. What is now officially confirmed is the broader mechanism under which precisely this form of arrangement could occur.

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7. Why the New Framework Matters

The most important feature of the Makkah framework may ultimately be the division of comparative advantages among its three principal participants. Türkiye contributes technology and mature defence products. Its industrial ecosystem now encompasses UAVs, precision-guided munitions, missiles, electronic warfare, sensors, naval systems and aerospace technologies. Pakistan contributes a large military establishment, operational experience and an established state-owned defence-industrial base. Organisations including PAC, POF, Heavy Industries Taxila, Karachi Shipyard and entities represented through GIDS provide existing manufacturing and integration infrastructure. Saudi Arabia contributes capital, procurement scale and an ambitious defence localisation programme.

This creates the potential for a defence-industrial model in which Turkish systems are financed at greater scale, components or complete systems are manufactured or assembled in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and products are subsequently supplied to the three armed forces or offered to third-country customers.

The official language emerging from Ankara strongly supports this interpretation. Türkiye's defence ministry has explicitly stated that the objective is not simply product and system supply, but joint development, manufacturing, technology cooperation, maintenance and logistics. The 31 August communiqué takes the next step by formally committing all three states to joint technology development and production.

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8. Implications for India

For India, the development needs to be assessed as an industrial-capacity problem rather than merely an inventory problem.

The immediate acquisition of several hundred drones or a limited stock of new bombs changes Pakistan's available wartime inventory. A successful technology-transfer arrangement changes Pakistan's ability to replace losses, sustain a conflict and scale production during mobilisation. This distinction became particularly important after Operation Sindoor. A military that expects repeated high-intensity conventional exchanges has strong incentives to move away from dependence on finite imported inventories towards domestic production of comparatively expendable systems such as drones, loitering munitions, precision-guidance kits, rockets and tactical missiles.

Türkiye is particularly well positioned to assist Pakistan in this transition because many Turkish systems have been deliberately designed around modularity, indigenous substitutes and scalable manufacturing. A Pakistan–Türkiye–Saudi

production ecosystem could therefore affect India in four areas.

> *First, Pakistan's wartime replenishment capacity could increase. Domestic assembly or production shortens supply chains and reduces dependence on emergency wartime imports.*
>
> *Second, Pakistan could gain faster access to successive generations of Turkish UAV, EW and precision-strike technology. The August 13 Turkish MoD statement explicitly prioritises unmanned systems, autonomous technology, electronic warfare and AI.*
>
> *Third, Saudi financing could allow procurement and industrial projects to proceed despite Pakistan's persistent fiscal constraints.*
>
> *Fourth, joint exercises and military interoperability could progressively connect Pakistani operational doctrine to Turkish experience across UAV-intensive warfare, electronic warfare, air defence and precision fires.*

None of these outcomes is automatic. Technology-transfer negotiations are complex, and Türkiye may retain sensitive seeker, propulsion, electronic warfare or software technologies. Saudi, Turkish and Pakistani threat perceptions are also not identical. Nevertheless, the institutional framework required to overcome many of those obstacles is now being built.

Bottom Line

The most consequential Pakistan–Türkiye defence development of August 2026 is not yet the confirmed transfer of GAZAP, KARAOK or 850 SONGAR drones. It is the creation of an institutional structure that explicitly combines collective defence, military interoperability, defence-industrial cooperation, technology development and joint production.

The 7 August Makkah Joint Defence Agreement provided the political framework. Türkiye's 13 August explanation supplied the industrial and technological intent. The unusual Turkish military airlift between 18 and 21 August provided a possible early operational indicator. The 31 August Istanbul meeting then established a permanent secretariat and formally endorsed joint technology development and production. Taken together, these developments indicate that Pakistan–Türkiye military ties are entering a more structured and potentially more consequential phase.

Claims concerning GAZAP integration with PAF F-16s are credible enough to monitor closely but remain without official confirmation. Reports of KARAOK delivery and Pakistani production are less firmly established, while claims of a specific POF/GIDS ToT package should presently be treated as unverified intelligence rather than fact.

> *For Indian planners, the key question is therefore shifting from what Türkiye has sold Pakistan to what Türkiye may enable Pakistan to manufacture, integrate and replenish domestically. If the Makkah framework succeeds in combining Turkish*

> *technology, Pakistani manufacturing infrastructure and Saudi financing, its long-term effect could be substantially greater than the impact of any individual weapons shipment.*

Source confidence

High confidence

Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, collective-defence provision, Istanbul committee meeting, Riyadh secretariat, Pakistani secretary-general, commitment to joint production and technology development.

Moderate confidence

Concentrated Turkish military transport activity into Pakistan and Pakistani pursuit of GAZAP integration.

Low to moderate confidence

Specific SONGAR quantities and cargo composition, KARAOK delivery, KARAOK technology transfer, and reports of dedicated POF/GIDS production lines.

Not established in current open sources

A single August 2026 Roketsan and Turkish MoD ToT contract covering GAZAP and KARAOK with POF and GIDS.