

## US denies discussing Pakistani national's indictment with Islamabad

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The United States has not engaged in any discussions with Pakistan concerning the indictment of Asif Merchant, a Pakistani national charged in connection with an alleged Iranian plot to assassinate US politicians and officials, a State Department spokesperson said on Thursday.

Matthew Miller, the spokesperson, clarified during a press briefing that there had been no conversations between Washington and Islamabad regarding Merchant's case. "I don't have any discussions to speak to today," Miller stated. Merchant, 46, is accused of attempting to recruit individuals in the United States to carry out the assassination in retaliation for the 2020 killing of Iran's top military commander, Qassem Soleimani, by US forces. Prosecutors allege that Merchant, who spent time in Iran before travelling to the US, has been charged with murder for hire. A federal judge in Brooklyn ordered his detention on July 16, according to court records. In

response to queries about the indictment, Miller emphasised that protecting US citizens and officials from threats, particularly those emanating from Iran, remains a priority. “The United States will continue to do what is necessary to protect its people, including foreign officials, from threats emanating from Iran,” he added. Miller refrained from further comments, noting that it was an ongoing legal matter and referring questions on the charges to the Department of Justice. “I would defer to the Justice Department to speak to an indictment returned by a grand jury,” he said.