



U.S. Relations With China and Discussions About Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan

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REMARKS TO THE PRESS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: (Inaudible in Chinese). That's about enough Chinese for the moment. I'll do the rest in English.

Thank you. It's a real pleasure for me to be back in China. I've spent a good part of my life here and it's always fun for me to come back and see how much things have changed and are still changing, and have a chance to sit down with my Chinese colleagues and talk about world events.

The part of the world that I work in, the South and Central Asia part, has been particularly eventful recently and I think we've positioned ourselves at a very good moment to compare notes on what's going on.

I was able to spend a lot of time today with Assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue -- who covers South Asia, among other things -- Vice Foreign Minister Li Hui, to talk about Central Asia, and then Vice Foreign minister Wu Dawei, to talk about everything.

Our focus today, I think, really was on Pakistan, India, Afghanistan. As you know, the Secretary of State last week was in India and Pakistan, talked to them, after the Mumbai attacks that were horrible and really gut-wrenching for all of us. We wanted to make sure that in addition to talking to the countries of the region we were talking to a lot of friends and other players who have interests and influence in this region.

So I'm glad I was able to come to China right now and talk to my Chinese colleagues about it, as well as some of the bigger issues of Pakistan and Afghanistan: how do we help those two governments spread out and gain full control over their territory. I think that's where the United States and China are in fundamental agreement: that we want to build the capabilities of those governments to serve their people, to control their territory and to stop the terrorism and the drugs that we all worry about.

I think the U.S. and China are in fundamental agreement almost with these things and I found these very productive meetings and interesting consultations. We always have slightly different histories and points of view and I think it was interesting for me to hear some of the different views. But in the end, we come together on the fundamental fact of wanting to build stability, wanting to control the dangers and support the governments of the region in terms of how they can work with their own people, a strong desire from the United States and China to work together.

These are consultations that we do on a regular basis. These consultations are part of a bigger picture of the United States and China working together. We have a strategic dialogue that our Deputy Secretary, Deputy Secretary Negroponte, and now State Councilor Dai Bingguo conduct and will be conducting early next week.

You've seen my colleagues who work on Africa and the Western Hemisphere come out here in the last few months. So we're always trying to work together with China and make sure that we're lining ourselves up as much as we can strategically and practically when it comes to countries of the region. I think we did that effectively today, so I'm very pleased with the day's worth of consultations and I look forward to continuing our dialogue into the future.

I will be glad to stop there and be glad to take your questions. Thank you.

QUESTION: I have a question about terrorism in Xinjiang. It looks like the terrorism in Xinjiang becomes more and more terrible, more and more serious. Can you talk some conditions nowadays about Xinjiang terrorism and can you give some suggestions to ordinary Chinese people, tell them how to anti-terrorism in their ordinary days? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Thank you. I don't think I can talk enough about Xinjiang in particular because I don't follow that part of China and the specific terrorism conditions out there.

I look at it sort of from Afghanistan-Pakistan, how we control it there, and how we keep it from spreading out into Central Asia and ultimately into China. We do know there are terrorists who operate throughout this area, and a lot of them get some kind of support or training or contacts in the area of the Pakistan-Afghan border. So our primary effort is to stabilize Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is, really, to work with the governments there, to try to build their capabilities so that they can go into those areas, get rid of the terrorists and establish good governance for people. We think that in the long run that's the only way to stabilize these areas.

We also work with other governments in the region to try to prevent it from spreading. We work with individual governments in Central Asia to build their counter-terrorism capabilities, their counter-drug capabilities and their border control capabilities. And that's something I think that China does, as well. So, one of the things we did today was compare notes about how China supports the governments in the area and how we support the governments in the area so that they can keep this from spreading.

But I think we're both concerned about building capabilities at the source so that Pakistan and Afghanistan can control their territory; and then helping governments who might be, sort of, affected by this build their capabilities to interdict it as well. That obviously includes China; it includes groups that might be targeting China. But I don't know the detail on Xinjiang groups.

QUESTION: I'm sure even from this distance you've been following developments in Pakistan, so I did want to ask you what your assessment of the news made by the Pakistani Cabinet of the past day in dealing with militants there. Second, what's your sense after these conversations of China's leverage over Pakistan and how it's been exercising that leverage in the wake of the Mumbai attacks?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I think the steps that we've seen Pakistan take are good steps. They're promising steps. I think they understand, as we do, that extremists, violent extremist groups, are a threat to Pakistan, a threat to the neighborhood, and as we saw in Mumbai, a threat to Americans and Indians and people of many other nationalities. These are good steps. We hope they get followed up.

Part of this issue...the first thing you have to do is you have to deal with the immediate situation. Who did this? Who backed them? How did they get organized? Cut all that off. But you also have to find out who else was trained and what else they might have planned. So I think we want to keep working with Pakistan and make sure that other threats, other dangers, other terrorists can be stopped, as well as the people who are immediately involved in this event. That's why I think it's important to see that they have picked up some of the leaders of the organization. I think it's going to be important to see that they push through that to the end in terms of eliminating the

capability of the organization to launch attacks from Pakistani soil.

In terms of the Chinese and how they use their influence, it's really something I have to leave to China to explain, discuss. What I found in my consultations today is we have very similar goals. We don't want to see Pakistani territory used to conduct terrorist attacks. We don't want to see groups be able to go in and out of Pakistan and go elsewhere to perpetuate terrorism in the region. We want to support Pakistan's own capability to deal with those situations. So I think China and the United States in that regard have very similar goals. But how they carry that out and achieve it, I think I have to leave to them to explain.

QUESTION: [You met with Vice Minister Wu Dawei, who was with the] Chinese delegation to the 6-Party Talks. Was there talk about that? What message did you convey to Minister Wu Dawei and what message [did he convey to you]?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Minister Wu Dawei is more important than I am and he has a much broader range of responsibilities. So when it comes to the 6-Party Talks, my friend and colleague Chris Hill is responsible on the American side, so I'll leave it to Chris Hill to explain. I really didn't try to convey. He told me a little bit about the last couple of sessions, but I'll leave it to Chris Hill to explain to you and the rest of the public.

QUESTION: A recent report* reveals that now in Afghanistan Taliban have over 60 percent of the territory, has permanent Taliban presence. What's your comment on this figure? Can this country (inaudible) fall into the hands of Taliban again?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: My comment on that report is that was a pretty lousy report. It was a very lousy report. It was not in any way accurate. It was not in any way systematic. It was done by groups that have put out bad information on Afghanistan in the past, and I'm not surprised. But one shouldn't give it any credibility.

The fact is the government in Afghanistan is, I think, proving itself more and more capable. They've been able to provide people in the country with more services. If you look at health care, over 80 percent of the people in Afghanistan now get health care from their government. Six million kids in school. There are a lot of statistics that show that the government is actually out there doing things for people throughout the country.

The Taliban have been able to set off bombs. They've changed their tactics this year. Really, they've set off more bombs, done more kidnappings, more suicide attacks, a few lightning attacks. But in the end all they've been able to create is insecurity and instability, so they have perhaps made people feel unsafe in more of the country but they've by no means expanded any of their ability to control any territory or really administer any territory. All they can do is make people feel unsafe.

We have to deal with that. The way to deal with it is to continue to build the capabilities of government so that government can provide safety to people, and government can provide justice, and government can provide services like health and education. We're seeing more of that. We're not seeing enough of that. That's where, as I said, we're going to have to do more and we're going to have to do it better in extending government. But frankly, that report is just plain wrong and it doesn't reflect the real situation.

QUESTION: I have two questions. I wanted to ask a follow-up, first of all, to my colleague who was asking about terrorism and Xinjiang terrorism. I know you don't know about Xinjiang groups specifically, but I just wondered, in general, does China face, in the U.S.'s estimation, a credible terrorist threat or no? And I was just curious to know if the Xinjiang...how the Xinjiang groups compare to, let's say, the Taliban in terms of being a threat. That was one question.

The second question I had was about Afghanistan. I know a few months ago there was a discussion, I guess you could say, about China possibly sending peacekeeping troops or so to Afghanistan to join the NATO forces. I know it's not UN forces. But I just wondered if that had been brought up again, whether that's something that you're talking about with the Chinese. Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No, that didn't come up. I don't remember any discussion of that, frankly.

QUESTION: I think it was Gordon Brown who said that China was going to send troops to Afghanistan, and of course China came out saying no because it's NATO, not UN. I just wondered if that...

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I really hadn't heard the proposal. As far as the Xinjiang groups, I think the United States does understand that there are certain terrorist groups directed against China. If you look at our terrorism reports you'll find groups listed and threats mentioned in there. So we do understand there's a threat against China from terrorist groups.

I don't think you compare one to the other. Groups that kill people need to be dealt with, wherever they are. Our efforts in this region, the region I deal with, in South Asia or Central Asia are all devoted at helping governments and people in those regions live safely from the threat of terrorism.

QUESTION: I'm curious to know whether the issue of the U.S.-India nuclear agreement came up today. China gave the sense in the past it had misgivings about that agreement, so I'm wondering if there was any discussion about that. Secondly, especially in the wake of the Mumbai attacks, does that give the U.S. any pause about how civilian nuclear power in India should be expanded over the next decade or so, given the security issues that obviously this attack has brought to the fore?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No. A nuclear power plant is not a hotel. You protect it differently. I think one can expect that in helping India build nuclear power plants that they will also be built with adequate security and protection for the environment that they might face. So I wouldn't really worry about that too much. I don't think Mumbai says anything about the vulnerability of nuclear power plants.

We didn't really talk about the U.S.-India nuclear deal very much. It sort of came up in passing as one of the things where we had found a way to cooperate recently. China, as you know, in the end supported the deal at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in Vienna. We worked through a lot of issues with a lot of countries including China, but in the end the whole group, everybody supported it, including China, so we welcome that and we're glad to be together on that. That was about the extent of the discussion.

QUESTION: You talk about [working together on Pakistan]. Can you be a little more specific on that? And how (inaudible) discussion (inaudible)?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Well, there are a lot of different ways of talking about it. First and foremost, I think there have been significant financial donors to Pakistan. The United States budget for Pakistan has been, the last couple of years, \$800 or \$900 million a year. China has taken a number of fairly major steps with Pakistan to provide support, including financial support in the present economic difficulties that Pakistan has faced.

We talked a bit about the understandings that Pakistan has with the International Monetary Fund. Pakistan has a program to reestablish fiscal financial stability that's been endorsed now by the International Monetary Fund and they've been able to benefit from some of the money that the fund can provide to support that.

We also know that Pakistan will need other support from other donors so we've been talking to other donors including China, including my discussions today, about two groups. One is the Friends of Pakistan, which is designed to help coordinate with Pakistan the areas that are priorities for Pakistan and how we can help them develop in those areas. The second is the idea of holding, sometime early next year, publicly a donor's conference for Pakistan where people who are willing to support Pakistan can make clear the extent of that support for the next year or two.

So we compared notes with China. Nothing's quite set yet. We have a lot of other donors to talk to. But I think what I heard from China was a very positive attitude towards continued support of Pakistan.

The second aspect was to really help the Pakistan government as it deals with a number of very difficult situations. They're trying to achieve political stability, economic stability and basic security stability all at the same time, against powerful odds. And I think we all understand the importance of supporting the Pakistan government and the endeavors that they're engaged in.

The third thing is we both have strong relationships, I think, with the Pakistan military. We want to be able to help the Pakistan military support the government and control their territory. So we talked about that a bit, as well.

QUESTION: I think that in next generation, next President you will promote the dialogue between the U.S. and China about Tibet. A second question,...

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Let me just answer that quickly. Tibet is part of China. I don't do China, so I didn't talk about Tibet today.

QUESTION: Thanks. Second question is about the Central Asia policy of the Obama Administration. What's your comments? Is there any change?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I can't speak yet for the Obama Administration. The saying is: "we have one President at a time." But I have to say just reading and looking at what I've seen said by people on the Democratic side of the aisle in the Congress, by the President-elect, I haven't seen any differences. I don't think it's going to be a big question. I think, fundamentally, U.S. interests in Central Asia are: to help these countries with their independence and sovereignty; to help these countries take advantage of economic opportunities in all directions -- north, south, east and west; and to help these countries deal with the dangers of terrorism or drugs or other things that might come their way.

So I think our fundamental interests are the same and I think the commitment of the United States will remain in this region, but I haven't had a chance yet to discuss with representatives of the new Administration what exactly they want to do.

QUESTION: If you are going to maintain the stability of Pakistan in terms of politics and the economy, which their government obviously cannot do recently, are you having plans to send more troops into their area?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: We don't have any plans to send troops into Pakistan.

QUESTION: No, I mean...

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: In Afghanistan?

QUESTION: Yeah.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: We've, I think, already made clear we are sending more troops into Afghanistan. We've sent some Marines recently. We've got plans for another deployment in January. There may be more after that.

I want to say, though, we take the view that we need to deal militarily with the problems, but we also need to deal with more civilians. We're planning on sending more civilians into Afghanistan to do aid projects, to help with governance, to help with agriculture. And we want to help really the Afghan government with its capabilities, whether it's military, police or governance administration. To help build the Afghan government so, in the end, the Afghan government is the one that works throughout the territory.

To that extent the policy is the same as in Pakistan. We want to help the Pakistani government control its territory, not only militarily but also in terms of being able to provide development projects, provide schools, provide health care to its people. For example, in Pakistan's Tribal Areas we have a program that's about \$150 million a year that goes into the Tribal Areas for economic development purposes, for training and roads and electricity and schools. So we see that equally as part of the task.

QUESTION: Do you see the situation in Afghanistan and the government is more capable of governing the country, but how do you explain that, the increasing number of attacks of insurgents in this country? And a small question, do you think international troops in Afghanistan should be doubled to 80,000 in the future?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I don't have a precise number on where the troops ought to go. I think we know we need more troops. But a lot of what we need more troops for is to be able to do the training of the Afghan army and police, and that will be a major priority.

I think the explanation for more government and at the same time there's more attacks is that the enemy has changed their tactics in some way and we have to cope with that. Last year they set out to strangle territory, to take cities. They were unable to do that. They failed. So this year they set out to set off bombs to kill themselves and others. We've had, I think, a greater feeling of insecurity. So even while the government's been able to get out and provide more services to people, people have also felt more nervous about bombs and attacks and kidnapping.

You have to really get out there now with more troops, with more government, with more Afghans so that the Afghans can provide the feeling of stability and safety to their people. That's where we're really trying to push hard.

QUESTION: It is reported that seven Pakistan were killed by the U.S. (inaudible) yesterday. And in the past three months the U.S. has conducted more than 20 military actions in Pakistan. So why for that, that intensive actions? And how do you balance the U.S. law in keeping the safety of South Asia and (inaudible) the terrorism? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I'm not in the position to discuss any particular military action or military tactics. The only thing I can tell you is there are people who operate in these areas on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border: al-Qaida, Taliban and others who are actively plotting against us and others throughout the world. And we need to deal with them.

But we understand that in the long run the only way to deal with them is to help the Pakistani government control those areas. That's where the major effort is, to build Pakistani capabilities to get up there and be able to provide security and stability and development to the people of those areas. But there are some very dangerous people up there that one has to deal with.

QUESTION: I want to ask a pretty elementary question about these talks. I know there are regular talks. When did they start? How often do you have them? Were there contentious issues in the beginning that have now been resolved? Are there still contentious issues right now that still need to be resolved? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I've done this four or five times during my two and a half years. I've been to Beijing twice now. They've been in Washington probably twice. We try to do it every six months. We probably don't succeed. I'd say it's more on the order of nine months, we get together one group or another, talk to the Chinese about Central and South Asia. Sometimes it's together, sometimes it's separate. So that's about the rate. It's a periodic consultation interspersed with some consultations at international events or with embassies if there's some particularly acute issue.

They're not in the nature of a contention or a negotiation, frankly. It's a comparing of notes, a comparing of views, comparing of goals. I think gentle inquiries to one another about how do you do this and what do you do about that. But I think it's more a coordination and consultation exercise than it is a confrontation or a negotiation.

QUESTION: [You were planning a trip to Nepal that was cancelled after Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi went there. Was the cancellation related to China?]

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No, it has nothing to do with China, and I know...I've seen some of the press reports in Nepal, as well. It has nothing to do with our view of the government or the Maoist party that's leading the government right now. Because of the events in Mumbai we thought it was fairly important for the Secretary of State to go to India and Pakistan, and that's a trip on which I accompanied her. Since I was in India and Pakistan I wasn't able to go to Nepal last week, but I'll try to reschedule for sometime soon.

I think it's been important, the evolution in Nepal's been generally very positive and we've been very supportive of the efforts to establish better governance and to move on to writing the constitution.

I was able to meet with the new Prime Minister, Prime Minister Dahal, as well as the Foreign Minister when they came to New York in September, so I've seen them fairly recently. I wanted to go back and visit them in Katmandu, but just wasn't able to do it last week, but I'll try to do it sometime soon.

QUESTION: A question about this proposed Donor's Conference on Pakistan. Could you share any more details about when it would be held, what goals you hope to achieve from that conference, and who would attend and who's said they will attend?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No, I can't because most of that stuff's not really decided yet. We've been talking to other donors who might be interested in supporting Pakistan and showing their support for Pakistan. People have to get ready for it. We have to make sure that the consensus is there. But I think there are a lot of countries that want to come forward and be able to show that they're going to have support for Pakistan next year and they're going to help Pakistan through the immediate crisis and back into the building of a healthy, long-term economy. That's about as far as I can go for the moment, because that's all that's decided.

QUESTION: My question is some (inaudible) said that Afghanistan government want to talk with the Taliban, and I want to know the attitude of the U.S. government.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Our attitude has been supportive. The Afghan government has made clear that they're willing to talk to people who will abandon violence and support the new system, the new constitution. We've always felt that in addition to fighting the violent elements there has to be a path for people who want to stop fighting and come in to support the government. That's what the Afghan government is trying to establish.

I think we all know there are some very violent elements that will probably never lay down their arms. But for others, particularly ordinary villagers, local people, there has to be a path to join the new system and that's what the government has tried to establish at different levels. If people want to reconcile with the government, then good. But for those who keep fighting, I'm afraid we're going to have to be able to fight them. That's kind of where we are right now.

QUESTION: You will stay in the next administration?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I'm a career diplomat, so I'll continue until I finish my career, but I won't continue in this particular job. Normally when a new Administration comes in they replace the Assistant Secretaries. I would expect that to happen, but I don't know when. But I've been doing this for a couple of years now, almost three years. It's been a good run and I'm going to continue working as hard as I can until somebody says I've been replaced.

Thank you.

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**The referenced report is entitled "Struggle for Kabul: the Taliban Advance," authored by the International Council on Security and Development, formerly known as the Senlis Council, and released in December 2008.*

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