



Press Availability at New Delhi, India

Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State
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DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I can't tell you what a delight it is for me to be back in Delhi. This is my fourth visit in two years and I hope I have at least four more in the next two. I was sent to South Asia -- and particularly here to India -- by President Bush to make the point that although the United States has been very heavily engaged in Iraq; we are able to do two things at once. And one of the things we are able to do is to promote our relations with India.

I had a very good set of discussions today. Let me tell you that I was able to convey to Prime Minister Vajpayee, the President's and Mrs. Bush's condolences in the form of a letter for the loss of his sister. On a happier note, I was able to invite Deputy Prime Minister Advani to Washington as the guest of our Vice President in June. I had an excellent opportunity to review the excellent state of US-India relations following up on my conversation with Ambassador Mishra in London and his conversations in Washington to include a meeting with President George W. Bush.

I was able to convey to Prime Minister Vajpayee the President's, the Administration's and the American public's appreciation for the far-reaching act of statesmanship embodied in the statement which the Prime Minister made in Srinagar extending the hand of friendship to Pakistan. I was able to engage in a discussion of regional and global interests with our friends here in Delhi; and finally I was able to expose my colleagues here to that portion of my discussions in Pakistan, which are of interest to India.

So with that statement, I'd be glad to take a few questions.

QUESTION: What assurance can you give that Pakistan will stop cross-border terrorism (inaudible)

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I have spoken in Delhi to this matter. President Musharraf told me that "there was nothing happening across the Line of Control, and if there were training camps on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control, that they would be gone by tomorrow," he said. It's not my job to give assurances; it's not my job to tell our Indian friends what I think. It is for India to make up her own mind on what she thinks about that particular statement from President Musharraf.

QUESTION: What did the Indian leadership (inaudible) tell you about that statement, whether they believed it or not?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I think the fact of the matter is that people are dying. And whenever people die, whenever women and children and innocent non-combatants die for political purposes, one has to call that terrorism. And I would let Indian officials speak for themselves. From our point of view, the fact of the matter is all violence has got to end.

QUESTION: Islamabad has told you that cross-border terrorism has gone down, but even the State Department and other reports say that it hasn't (inaudible)

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: As I said in Islamabad, I had a very careful review of our understanding of incidents and deaths surrounding cross-border violence. My position, my point of view is that it is a terrible thing when we reduce the death of a person, a loved one for some family, to a statistic. So, I concentrate on the fact that all violence must end.

QUESTION: During the course of your talks today and with Mr. Mishra, was there any reference to Iraq and does the US want Indian troops deployed in Iraq in one way or the other in the next few weeks or months?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: In my discussions, both in London and here in Delhi, I talked about the situation, present situation as we saw it in Iraq, our own activities there and talked in general about reconstruction in Iraq in which there will certainly be a role for (India). I made no specific request about troops or anything of that nature.

QUESTION: What can move the dialogue between Indian and Pakistan forward at this time?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, I said in Islamabad and I'll say again here that I am cautiously optimistic that the process begun by the act of statesmanship by the Prime Minister of India could possibly lead to a step by step process that would eventually resolve all issues. We would like to see the two great nations - India and Pakistan - living side by side in peace, stability and harmony. We'd like to see the ability for the United States to develop a relationship with Pakistan, in and about Pakistan; and a relationship with India, in and about India; and not having to take into consideration other interests. But that's a hope we have. It's a long trip to when one would get there and I just hope we've begun a process.

QUESTION: The United States calls Pakistan its ally in the fight against terrorism. According to the India Government, India is a victim of Pakistan's terrorism coming from across the border. How do you reconcile these two apparently contradictory stands?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: As I've said before in Islamabad the fact that more than 500 terrorists have been arrested in Pakistan, most recently six who were intent on doing great harm to US personages in Karachi, is a great aid to us in the global war on terrorism. I might add that India is a partner with us in this global war on terrorism. And our position doesn't need to be reconciled. A terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist. That's a quote from George W. Bush.

Thank you all very much. Good night.

