



Remarks With Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Hyderabad House
New Delhi, India
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(10:54 a.m. local)

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for turning up in such large numbers. We are pleased to welcome Dr. Rice to India. It is her first visit, and the first visit by a cabinet member in the second term of the Bush administration. We view her as a friend of India who led the fashioning of the new policy in the first term. I look forward to working with her, and talking Indo-U.S. relations to even higher levels and more frequently, and we'll continue our discussion during lunch.



The issues that I'll just briefly mention: The Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership, or NSSP, Phase II should be concluded fairly soon. High Technology trade will continue to grow. We will cooperate more closely in the field of energy. Our defense cooperation will be expanded. Civil aviation is another major area of growth through an Open Skies agreement. This will impact positively on our economic and trade links. Both governments will encourage their business communities to be more aggressive in exploiting opportunities and challenges.

Madam, we acknowledge your great political vision, and I felt that we were on the same wavelength as you looked at this relationship not only for what it offers today, but at its enormous potential to shape our global future to our mutual advantage. Naturally, we discussed important regional and global questions. We approached these issues from a common commitment to democracy, pluralism and prosperity. On Nepal, we agreed that recent events have been a setback to these goals. Democratic freedoms must be restored and reconciliation with political parties must lead to a return to multi-party democracy in Nepal. I apprised the Secretary of State of recent developments in our composite dialogue with Pakistan, which is progressing satisfactorily. We look forward to welcoming General Musharraf here soon.

If I may be allowed to say something, I will also respectfully request him that he ensures that the Pakistan cricket team does not beat our team.

(Laughter)

There should be no doubt about our commitment to achieving peace in Pakistan. It is critical that Pakistan implements fully a solemn commitment to cease all cross-border terrorism against India.

On Afghanistan, we assessed our ongoing cooperation and support of President Karzai's government. We will continue to work together closely. We also exchanged views on West Asia, what you, Madam, call the Middle East. I informed the Secretary of State that India will be prepared to contribute to economic reconstruction in Iraq. We will await any requests from the newly elected government, and judge them on their merit.

Naturally, we spoke about the reform of the United Nations. It was agreed that as strategic partners, we should have a sustained dialogue on this very important issue. Dr. Rice met the Chairperson of the UPH Imadi Sonia Gandhi earlier this morning. Their meeting lasted half an hour. Apart from being extremely cordial and warm, almost all issues of mutual interest were discussed. Dr. Rice will be calling on the Prime Minister later in the day. I am hosting a lunch in her honor where we will, as I said earlier, continue our discussions. Even from this brief stay, I am certain that she will get a sense of warmth of the welcome that awaits President Bush. I told Condoleezza Rice that she comes here as a friend, and when a friend comes to India, they don't have to knock at any door. They will find the door open. Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. I have indeed had a very warm welcome here in India. I want to thank you very much, Foreign Minister Singh, for this very warm welcome and for our productive discussions. I did have a very cordial and wonderful meeting this morning with Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the Congress Party. We had met before at one time in Washington. It was really very good to have a chance to renew my discussions and my dialogue with her.

The President wanted me to have a chance to come to India early in my tenure as Secretary of State and early in his second term because this is a relationship that has transpired...transformed in recent years from one that had great potential into one that is really now realizing that potential. It is based first and foremost on the fact that we share common values, and there are no stronger relationships than those that are based on common values. This is a vibrant and wonderful democracy. It's remarkable that this large country with all of its ethnic and religious and heritage differences could be such a vibrant and functioning democracy. In fact, the United States is, of course, not nearly so large, but we also are a democracy that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious and pluralistic and that's an experience that binds us together and gives us a firm foundation for our partnership in regional and global affairs.

We and India have taken our relationship to a new level through the NSSP, Phase I of which has been completed, and Phase II of which we look forward to having completed very shortly. And I said to the Foreign Minister and will say later to the Prime Minister, that there is much more that we can do. Our defense cooperation is strong in military-to-military contacts and joint exercises. The United States looks forward to enhancing that defense cooperation over the next several years. We also look forward to an energy dialogue, because, of course, the demands for energy of growing economies like India and the United States are demands that will have to be met in order to keep prosperous and growing and expanding economies that can then serve the needs of their people, and we look forward to a large-scale energy dialogue that looks at ways to meet our energy needs and at the same time to be responsive to environmental concerns.

We, as well, have had a chance to talk about American support for the composite dialogue with Pakistan. We very much admire what the Prime Minister and President Musharraf have been able to continue. Given the change in government here in India, it is heartening that that dialogue has continued and, indeed, accelerated and we want to be supportive in any way that we can. As the Foreign Minister said, we had the chance to talk about Afghanistan, about Iraq, and especially about the challenge to democracy in Nepal, where we have had outstanding cooperation between our Ambassadors to try and help that country to get back on a democratic path. That simply must happen, and we are in complete agreement that it needs to happen very, very soon.

I think it shows that India and the United States have regional responsibilities, but also increasingly global responsibilities. We respect this great democracy. We respect what it has been able to achieve for its people. We respect the challenges that it has to achieve even more for its people, and we respect the possibilities that the United States and India enjoy for global partnership.

And, I am going to make a promise to the Foreign Minister right now and that is that I'll even try to understand cricket. (Laughter.) That will help.

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: I will try to understand baseball. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

MODERATOR: There will be time for two questions from the Delhi-based media and two questions from the traveling press. Please introduce yourself and indicate to whom the question is directed. Yes, I see NDTV.

QUESTION: This question is on...

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: Please stand up. Could you stand up?

QUESTION: Yes, sorry. This question is for Ms. Rice. What do you feel about the cooperation between India and Iran on the gas pipeline, since you've just made a statement about expanding the dialogue on energy, since... Are there any reservations between cooperation between India and Iran on the gas pipeline? (repeats the question in Hindi) Thanks.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you very much. I think that our views concerning Iran are very well known by this time, and we have communicated to the Indian government our concerns about gas pipeline cooperation between Iran and India. I think our Ambassador has made statements in that regard. And so, those concerns are well known to the Indian government. We do need to look at the broader question of how India meets its energy needs over the next decades in what is a rapidly growing economy, and economy that must continue to grow in order for the benefits to be felt by India's people, and since that is something, that is a goal that we very much support, we believe that a broad energy dialogue should be launched with India because the needs are there, we have our own energy needs, and indeed, given the technological sophistication of our economy, of India's economy, I would hope that we could also explore new ways that new technologies can help us over the next decades to meet what are undoubtedly going to be burgeoning energy needs. So, yes, we do have our concerns. We've communicated those, but we intend also to look at this as a broader problem.

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: Yes, as you know the discussions are going on between the Petroleum Minister of the Government of India, Shri Mansagar Rai, and his counterparts in Iran and in Pakistan. As the Secretary of State said, the energy requirements of India are growing exponentially in the years to come, becoming more and more industrialized. We have traditional good relations with Iran. We expect Iran will fulfill all of its obligations with regard to the NPT. We have no problems of any kind with Iran, and as Dr. Rice said, the requirement for energy and a new technology... India, Pakistan, Iran are indeed in touch with each other.

QUESTION: In your discussions today. . .

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: I can't hear you.

QUESTION: This question is for both of you. In your discussions today, did you discuss the sale of F-16s to both India and Pakistan, reach any agreement on that, and does this kind of potential arms pact represent a tacit acknowledgement by the United States that both powers possess nuclear weapons that could be used against the other?

SECRETARY RICE: It will not be surprising to you that in our context of our discussions about the security environment here in the region and our discussions about defense cooperation that the question of arms sales, including F-16s has come up. As I've said, we are going to continue to have broad discussions about the security needs, about the defense needs, of India. I'm quite certain that when I go to Pakistan that I will have discussions about the defense concerns and the defense needs of Pakistan, but there has been no such agreement, as you called it, Anne. And as I've said to you I don't expect that there are going to be any announcements out of this, but we, of course, have discussed this as well as a number of other issues about the defense needs of India.

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: It is known, India and the United States have an ongoing dialogue on defense, on various aspects of it, on defense supplies, on defense equipment, and every issue was brought up, including F-16, and as the Secretary has said, no announcement is going to be made. We discussed every aspect of our defense relationship with the Secretary of State, and if anything else happens between now and lunch, I'll let you know. (Laughter).

QUESTION: I got the sense that you. . . Both talked about the UN reforms, and I'm sure a discussion must have happened on the expansion of the UN Security Council. There's a sense here that there's some ambiguity on the U.S.'s own position on the expansion of the UN Security Council. One, will the United States support the expansion at all, and second, will you support India's candidature as a permanent member in the UN Security Council? And, a quick question, too, for Mr. Natwar Singh: Sir, would you like the U.S. to make its position clear with regard to the expansion of the UN Security Council and India's candidature into the council as a permanent member?

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. We are at the beginning of discussions about UN reform, including of course, UN Security Council reform. Our view is that the reform of the United Nations has to be seen understood as a broad process, that there are many aspects of the UN that need reform, including, as we've said, Secretariat issues, General Assembly issues, Security Council issues, and agency issues, as well as management reforms. And so it's not surprising that we continue to have these discussions with countries around the world. I believe Secretary General Annan has talked about the need to have intensive consultations. I myself have just appointed a special advisor, Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, who will full-time for me be engaged in discussions around the world about UN reforms. So, we're just at the beginning of this. And, in that context, we have agreed to stay in touch with India and with others about how those discussions are going.

Let me make a broader point, separate from this, which is that the world is changing, obviously. There are countries like India that have emerged in recent years as major factors in the international economy, in international politics, taking on more and more global responsibilities. I was really quite interested in the fact that when we had the tsunami cooperation, which was a kind of ad-hoc arrangement for a while, to respond to the immediate needs of the tsunami, India was able, I'm told, to mobilize its ships and go to sea in about 48 hours or so. That's extraordinary, and that shows that India's potential is very great to help resolve humanitarian and other needs for the world, and so, we will continue to talk with people about Security Council reform, reform of the UN, but clearly we also note that there have been great changes in the world, and that international institutions are going to have to start to accommodate them in some way.

FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH: I just, I might add that to the previous question about the defense issue that we did express certain concerns about certain matters on the defense issue as to how it might pave some complications I think there are no serious differences of opinion. There are one or two items on which we don't agree. Our relations will now reach a maturity but we can discuss these things freely and frankly and place our views firmly on record, and our views with regard to F-16 (inaudible).

Now with regarding security council: Yes, we did discuss and the Secretary of State is fully familiar with India's stand that India is an aspiring candidate for an expanded and reformed security council. We a democracy of one billion people. Our UN record is impeccable. We have been in involved many, many peacekeeping operations. We have led discussions on de-colonization. We have led discussion on the end of apartheid. In South Africa--I myself was for many years a top leader of the UN committee on de-colonization, where I worked with your colleagues Ambassador Plimpton, Ambassador (Inaudible), both of them last no more and with the father of your deputy here Bob Blake whose with us still, I mean the father.

Naturally we think that the world of 2005 has nothing to do with the world of 1945 and therefore it is imperative that the United Nations, if it is to be relevant and an effective instrument for maintaining peace and ensuring development and harmony, then it has to be drastically reformed. I also realize that the amendment to the UN charter is not an easy exercise. The charter has only been reviewed once, in 1963, when the non-permanent members were increased by four. So, the Security Council from eleven became fifteen.

Now there are many aspirants for the Security Council expansion and corporate membership. India, Japan, Germany and Brazil are working together and we are in touch with all our friends, including United States. We have got a chance of a very large number of countries, but let me add, quite categorically, that the amendment of the UN charter is a very, very complicated process. We are studying the report of the high-level panel appointed by the US Secretary General.

The Secretary General should be sending the report, I think today or tomorrow, to member of states and then we'll have our comments, intensive discussions will take place. If I may, Madam, in your presence say, that obviously the United States should play a very, very important role in this particular exercise.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi is indicating that he is willing to pull Italian forces out of Iraq if the security situation in that country has not improved, perhaps as early as September. What is the official U.S. response to Mr. Berlusconi's announcement?

SECRETARY RICE: First is to note that the Italians have been steadfast in their support of the Iraqi people's desire to have their aspirations for freedom met. They were early supporters of the Iraqi people through the coalition. The Italians suffered casualties as a result of their commitment there, including among the carabinieri, and I remember that when that happened that they had more volunteers that they could take to take the place of those people. So, the Italians have served and served bravely in support of democracy in Iraq.

As we move forward, we know that coalition partners are beginning to look at what the future of their commitment can be, and we understand that Prime Minister Berlusconi has said that they will look at conditions. They, of course, are also engaged in the training of Iraqi security personnel, and for all of us, the real issue is how quickly can we get Iraqi police, army, border guards trained so that Iraqis can do the security tasks necessary to sustain the Iraqi democratic process. And indeed, we were all heartened by the way the Iraqi security forces stepped up to the plate during the Iraqi elections, really being the core. I remember General Casey saying that during that period of time he couldn't think of one case in which the coalition forces had to step in for Iraqi security forces. So, they are making a lot of progress. And, the real answer to Iraqi security will be when Iraqis can do those security tasks. So, I am quite certain, given the experience of working with the Italian government, given the experience of working with the Italian Ministry of Defense, that any decisions that the Italians make about their forces are going to be fully coordinated in a way that does not put at risk the mission. And whatever the Italians then decide, I want to be very clear that the United States and, I think especially the Iraqis appreciate what Italy has done, and what Italy will continue to do in the future in helping the Iraqis to sustain their democratic progress.

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. Thank you, Excellencies.

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