



Remarks With Indian Minister of External Affairs Natwar Singh Following Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Benjamin Franklin Room
Washington, DC
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(1:50 p.m. EDT)

SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. I am very pleased to welcome to the United States and to the State Department Foreign Minister Natwar Singh. We met not too long ago when I was in India. We have been able to continue our strategic dialogue on a number of issues.

India and the United States share much in common. We share, of course, common values as democracies, as multiethnic democracies that are committed to not just tolerance but to fully appreciating the great value of the diversity of our societies. We share a goal for peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, as well as in the rest of the world. As I said when I was in India and have reiterated here, it is very important that the U.S.-India relationship continues to grow as we recognize the growing importance of India as a global factor. This is a development that we very much welcome.

We had an opportunity to talk about how to push our relationship to a new level, to improve our cooperation in a number of areas, to accelerate our work in our next steps in Strategic Partnership Initiative, to launch an energy dialogue that will be led on our side by our Energy Secretary and on India's side by the head of its Planning Commission.

We had an opportunity to talk about Iraq and Afghanistan and the Middle East, befitting the fact that our relationship is a broad one, and we also recognized the importance of continuing our economic dialogue.

The United States and India have demonstrated great cooperation in a number of areas. We talked about the way that we demonstrated that cooperation in the tsunami relief effort. It is a relationship that is growing, getting more important. We look forward to the visit of the Prime Minister to the United States in July for an official visit and we look forward to our continued discussion and cooperation as we move forward.

Welcome, Natwar, and now your comments.

MINISTER SINGH: Thank you, Condi.

The Secretary of State and I have had very wide-ranging and very fruitful talks this morning and this is a continuation of our talks in Delhi, at what time we had agreed to meet again, and so I am delighted to be here at this time.

And our discussions, as the Secretary said, have been very wide-ranging, looking at long-term relationship across the board. This morning I had the privilege to be received by President Bush at the White House and we deeply appreciate his personal commitment to developing Indo-U.S. relations and are confident that in the second term this relationship will reach newer heights.

The President was strongly supportive of the initiative of the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to which she has made a reference in her remarks. We welcome the interest the President expressed in together working with India on the range of global issues.

We spoke about the global energy situation and the importance of our cooperation in this regard, including on civil nuclear energy. And my colleague, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, is staying back to have discussions on economic matters and matters related to the peaceful uses, civil uses of nuclear energy, and also other scientific matters.

You have, if I may say so, eloquently summarized what we discussed today and the discussions and the decisions we have arrived at. The strategic dialogue that we will co-chair will provide the political direction to our rapidly expanding bilateral ties (inaudible) the realization of the rich and diverse agenda that we have before us. The dialogue is key to our global partnership.

As I said earlier, the energy dialogue that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, and Secretary Bodman will lead together recognizes the importance of addressing growing energy demands while taking into account their environmental implications. The three main components are: civil nuclear energy, hydrocarbons and cleaner technologies.

I am particularly happy to compliment our American friends for the fresh approach they have brought to bear on a subject that is of such vital importance for us.

Our cooperation in space highlights the technology bond that is a special characteristic of our ties. As Secretary Rice indicated, we have established a joint working group and have agreed on its terms of reference. Our goal is to promote synergies in all aspects of space collaboration, including satellite fabrication and launch. The NSSP process, as the Secretary said, will be accelerated. It has been a useful and productive engagement but we are now looking at even wider horizons.

My colleague, the Defense Minister of India, is expected to visit Washington very soon and he will remark on the deeper defense relationship. This again reflects the enhanced level of our trust and understanding between us. Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia's presence also underlines the importance we attach to the economic dialogue that he chairs with Allan Hubbard. I fully share, Madame, your expectations of what this dialogue can and, I take it, will assume.

I am happy to say that our deliberations also focused on how we can effectively address global challenges. India's ability and willingness to shoulder global responsibilities has been demonstrated.

I was encouraged to hear Dr. Rice declare that the United States understands India's aspirations. This will be underlined by the dialogue that we expect to sustain on the reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council. We also agreed that India should have a more active association with the G-8.

And in conclusion, may I thank you very much for your hospitality and for your friendship and for your understanding of our problems and for your

goodwill and friendship.

Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, is it getting to be time to take your concerns about Iran to the United Nations? And is it accurately being reported the Middle East has suddenly vaulted to the top of the list of U.S. concerns over North Korea, Iran and whatever?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't think that one has to choose between policy issues, Barry. On the Iranian issue, we are engaged in an international effort to try and deal with the Iranian nuclear program, or the Iranian nuclear aspirations. For instance, the Russians have been telling us a good deal about what they are doing with Bushehr. We are obviously trying to support the EU-3 in their negotiations with the Iranians and, of course, we also have the IAEA Board of Governors approach.

At some point in time, yes, if this does not work then, of course, the Security Council remains an option. And we have made clear with our European friends that that is, in fact, the case. We believe that the diplomatic path that we are on is the appropriate path and we are determined to have a united front with the international community to convince the Iranians that they have to live up to their international obligations not to seek nuclear weapons under the cover of civilian nuclear power development.

As to the Middle East, I think it was perfectly obvious from the President's address -- State of the Union address -- that we attach enormous historic importance to the changes in the Middle East that are now beginning to unfold, to securing and helping the Iraqi people to secure a free and democratic and prosperous Iraq, helping the Palestinians and the Israelis to find a way forward from the historic disengagement that is about to take place there, and then to hopefully accelerated progress on the roadmap, that reform in the greater Middle East is of great concern to us because the generational challenge that we face is to replace the ideologies of hatred that literally lead people to fly airplanes into buildings with a belief in the hope that can be provided by freedom and democracy.

QUESTION: Dr. Rice, I have a question. Does the United States support India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council? And a related question: One of the senior administration officials said on March 25th that the goal of the U.S. policy is to make India a global power. There's a school of thought in India that says that it's a lot of words. How do you explain that and what is your reaction to that?

SECRETARY RICE: The first point that I would make is that India is becoming a global power not because the United States is making it one but because India is a democracy that is emerging to take on global responsibilities. It has the population, the reach, the increasing economic clout to do that. But the United States wants to be supportive of what we see as a positive trend in India's global role because India is a democracy and that matters to us in the global role that it is beginning to play.

We are demonstrating that we support that aspiration by the breadth of the relationship that we have with India. I think U.S.-Indian relations are at a high point. They have certainly come a very long way over a reasonably short period of time. President Bush came to office devoted to an expanded and deepened U.S.-Indian relationship and we have tried to make good on that. But we have an energy dialogue, an economic dialogue, a defense cooperation relationship. We are doing things together around the world. This is clearly a relationship that has breadth and global dimensions. And so that is how this is being demonstrated.

Now, in terms of the UN Security Council, the United States has said that we believe UN Security Council reform needs to take place in the context of broader UN reform, that it is important, of course, to reform the Secretariat, the institutions of the UN, the organizations of the UN, it needs management reform and, of course, we should also look at Security Council reform. I said when I was in India that international organizations in general will have to take into account India's growing role in the world in order to be updated and to be effective.

We are in broad discussions with a number of partners about how to move forward on UN reform and Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, who is my assistant or my advisor for UN reform, will be going to a number of places, including to India, to continue those discussions.

QUESTION: Secretary Rice, the German Foreign Minister said today that the European Union will not proceed with plans to lift its arms embargo against China unless it sees concrete steps from Beijing on Taiwan and human rights. What is your reaction to that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I can't help but think that it is a positive statement because, as you know, we have been very concerned about the lifting of an embargo that would send the wrong message on human rights, given that it was imposed in response to the Tiananmen Square situation, but also that would send the wrong message and possibly create a reality in which technologies are available to a military -- increased military modernization in China that could, indeed, threaten U.S. security interest in Asia, not to mention the security interest of other allies in the region.

We have had broad discussions with the Europeans on this. We have been pleased at the openness of the Europeans in discussing this. But when it comes right down to it, as I said when I was in Asia, the Pacific is a region that particularly the United States has borne the greatest responsibility for the defense of that region. Yes, the concerns over Taiwan are there and the anti-secession law did nothing to reduce tensions in the Taiwan Strait; in fact, it enhanced -- it increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

So this is perhaps recognition of that, those facts, and it will be the European Union's decision but we are quite clear that we think the lifting of the embargo would be a mistake.

QUESTION: You had no difficulty in Japan to say that Japan should be a member of the Security Council. Can you equally strongly say that India ought to be a member of Security Council?

Secondly, when you were in India you mentioned the problems we have -- it so happens that oil and gas in countries that are either not democratic or because the United States has got problems. What do you think is going to happen to the vast investment India has made in Iran? Does it create problems for you and what can be done about it?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, on the second issue, one reason that we have an energy dialogue is that we recognize that there are a number of countries -- by the way, the United States among them -- that have growing needs for energy and for reliable sources and supplies of energy to meet the demands of growing economies. And we have to look at the broad range of possibilities for meeting those energy demands.

We have made clear our concerns about the Iranian development. We have made clear that at a time when Iran has clearly not yet made a strategic choice to demonstrate to the world that it is prepared to live up to its international obligations, that we would hope that this would be taken into account. But these are the kinds of discussions that we continue to have.

And we -- on the Security Council reform, we have to do this in the broader context of UN reform. Yes, we have supported Japan for some very particular reasons having, for instance, to do with the fact that Japan really is the second largest contributor to the United Nations in terms of support for

the United Nations. It is really not very far behind the United States in providing that support and that needs to be recognized.

But we are going to have now -- we have said even to the Japanese that that, too, has to be on the context of broader UN reform. So we are going to continue our discussions with our friends. We will send Ambassador Tahir-Kheli to India to have these discussions and to other places. It is my hope that we can do this in a way that builds consensus in the international community about UN reforms ought to proceed because what we do not need is acrimony as we try to move forward to reform this extremely important organization so that it can be relevant for the 21st century.

QUESTION: What is your response our request to Dr. Rice's statement on the Security Council?

MINISTER SINGH: Well, we have made our views on India's candidature and credentials for being a permanent member of the Security Council. We are working together with Brazil, Germany and Japan and with also very many other countries. We have sent some special envoys to various parts of the world to promote our cause. Our credentials are impeccable. We are a founding member of the United Nations by the virtue of having been a member of the League of Nations, even though we were a British colony.

Our peacekeeping record in the UN, our role in decolonization, our role in the dismantling of Apartheid in South Africa, our efforts at disarmament, nuclear and conventional. Take any aspect of UN life, India has played a leading role, and by any criteria that you apply India qualifies for a seat in the expanded Council as permanent member. And it is quite obvious that the structure created in 1945 doesn't represent what's happening in 2005. It's as simple as that.

SECRETARY RICE: And let me just add that --

QUESTION: (Off mike.)

SECRETARY RICE: One second. Let me just add that I would agree completely that we are going to need to take a look at the structures because they are from 1945, and not just the Security Council but all of the structures of the United Nations need revitalizing and reform. But India is a growing influence in international politics and in international organizations more broadly. That's going to have to be accommodated.

Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: One last question. Why aren't you going to the ball game tonight? I thought you were a fan.

SECRETARY RICE: I am. I plan fully to watch it on television, along with the rest of you. But I have very few evenings at home. I decided to take one of them.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: (Off mike) on Kashmir. But, and we said that the peace process is (inaudible) irreversible but he's still looking for out-of-box solutions. What would you say to that?

MINISTER SINGH: Well, I am rushing back to receive President Musharraf in Delhi and we'll continue with the very friendly discussions we had with him in Islamabad some days ago. And, Madame, you may miss this afternoon's game; I'm not going to miss a cricket match on the 17th.

(Laughter.)

MINISTER SINGH: Okay.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

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