



Remarks With Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran

R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs

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UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's a pleasure for me to be back in Delhi and I want to thank Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran for his terrific hospitality to my delegation and to me today.

We've had a very good day. And it's been a full day -- especially for those of us who arrived late last night after a long flight. But we had a good discussion this morning about this new strategic partnership that we are building -- India and the United States together. And it's a very strong partnership. Before I go into the few words that I wanted to say about today, I wanted to, again, on behalf of President Bush and the American people, extend the condolences of the United States to the victims in Jammu and Kashmir -- the Indian victims as well as the Pakistani victims of the terrible earthquake. From the beginning our country has tried to reach out and extend whatever assistance we could to the Indian victims, and our Ambassador and Embassy put forward 100,000 dollars to Indian and American non-governmental organizations. I would like to announce today that we will now contribute an additional 500,000 dollars to Indian nongovernmental organizations, as well some of the international organizations that are supplying relief aid to the victims, and the families of the victims of the earthquake.

I would also like to say that my government has been pleased by the progress in building this relationship that Prime Minister Singh and President Bush began on July 18th in Washington D.C. This, for us, is a historic turning point in our nearly 60-year relationship with India. There has never been a period of time when our relations have been better, when our consultations have been more expansive, and when the future has held a greater promise about cooperation between our countries. We see India as a great power in the world. We seek a partnership with India whereby we can work together for peace and stability in the world and work together to confront many of the challenges that we surely are going to face in the next 40 to 50 years.

On that basis today, the Foreign Secretary and I had a very good discussion about the July 18th agreement. You know, it's more than just a civil nuclear agreement. We now have joint ventures that the Prime Minister and President have asked us to undertake and to plan in the field of education, in agriculture, in science and technology, in space launch. We very much would like to welcome an Indian citizen to fly on our space shuttle so that our space program can have the advantage of Indian expertise and Indian commitment. We have a very broad economic dialogue underway. Our Secretary of the Treasury will be arriving here shortly. United States Trade Representative Ambassador Portman will be here shortly. We have a new energy dialogue between our governments. We have a CEO Forum. We have a trade dialogue between our two governments. And, in addition to that, we have a new and very promising security relationship, as Secretary Mukherjee and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld enunciated last June.

So what we have, in essence, is the development of a true, comprehensive, across the board engagement between the governments of India and the United States, but also the societies. There are more Indian students in the United States today than from any other country in the world -- 85,000. There are two million Indian Americans in our country, at least, who are building businesses in our country; they are running for political office; they are influential and they are building bridges back to India from my country. And this private sector engagement, as well as the public sector engagement, are creating the kind of relationship that will make India, we believe, in the period of years to come, among the most important partners of the United States anywhere in the world.

And so, this morning we covered, in exhaustive detail, I think about three hours, all of these joint venture initiatives that we have between our governments. This afternoon we spoke about the very important civil nuclear energy cooperation that my government has committed to begin with the Indian government. This is a very promising agreement. We are working hard on it. As you know, in our country we are consulting with our Congress and briefing our Congress on the outlines of the arrangement.

Just this week, the United States led the discussion at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in Vienna and we advocated that the Nuclear Suppliers Group now modify its practices so that all the members would engage in civil nuclear cooperation, those that are willing, with the Indian government. And we look forward in the early part of 2006 to our Congress passing legislation in the United States that would allow our government and our private sector to begin, on a national basis, this cooperation with India as well.

We had a very good discussion of this issue. We went through all of the details, as you can imagine. And we look forward to the further discussions that we are going to have in the next couple of months.

Finally might I say, that beyond the bilateral economic and scientific and educational cooperation, beyond the civil nuclear energy arrangement, which is at the heart of our effort, we find an increasingly positive dialogue with India on the issues that concern this region. We, of course, are both democratic countries. We hope for peace and stability in this region and both of us are working for democracy in Nepal. And both of us are working for stability in the other countries of this region. And, of course, my country hopes, as we look at India and look at Pakistan for progress in that relationship. But more importantly than just this region, we see India as a global partner. And so tomorrow, we will be discussing not only these regional issues, but some of the global issues -- promotion of democracy, combating HIV/AIDS, seeking reform of the United Nations. These global issues are so important to our partnership.

So, we are very pleased to be here. We thank the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues for the hospitality, and we look forward to a very productive relationship in the future. Thank you.

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: Well, first of all let me once again say how happy I am to be able to welcome my old friend Nick Burns again here in Delhi. I think this is his second visit in about six months.

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: ...four months, five months.

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: How much?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Who is counting?

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: I am sure there will be many more encounters to come. So really I don't find that I have very much to add to the very comprehensive assessment that has been given by Nick to you. This has been a very intensive dialogue between us. As he said this morning we went through the entire series of... (mobile phone rings.)

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: Well this is the first time that I have had to address the press with musical accompaniment.

As I was saying that we have had a very intensive dialogue this morning as well as this afternoon. In the morning we went through all the different items of cooperation which were spelled out in the joint statement when our Prime Minister had visited Washington. And, as Nick said, that perhaps the focus was so much on the civilian nuclear energy cooperation aspect that many of the other very important things that we had agreed to do perhaps did not find the same salience in terms of the public projection of our partnership. But each one of those items on our agenda are important. For example, we reviewed the progress that we have made on energy cooperation -- a very key area for our interaction. And there, we have, you know, set up already the various working groups. We have identified what are the priority areas where we want to move ahead. The United States of America is a leader in terms of clean coal technologies. It is a leader in terms of gasification technology. There are a number of areas where, really, there is a great deal for us to be really working together on.

Similarly, we have reviewed the progress that we have made on our global initiative on HIV/AIDS. I did convey to Nick our appreciation of the much faster approvals that are being given to Indian drugs, ARV drugs by the Federal Drug Administration. This is very welcome in terms of the global initiative that we are talking about. We spoke about the democracy initiative. And I brought to Nick's attention that our website, the Virtual Center for Democracy, is very much in progress -- a lot of information about the kind of institution building which is possible through training institutions in India. We spoke about how we can cooperate together in terms of such institution-building in a country like, say, Afghanistan. We may have a U.S.-India interaction on the issue of federalism, for example. This is something that we can talk about. We touched upon the very important area of our economic and trade interaction. As you know we have a very high-powered CEO forum and that has been very active. They are working out, you know, certain recommendations to make to the governments, but also quite apart from recommendations they make to the government, what they will be doing themselves in terms of promoting investments, promoting trade between the two countries.

We also reviewed the agriculture initiative. And there, you know, we recalled how the United States of America had made a very major contribution to the Green Revolution in India in the 60's. There was very close relationship between the land grant universities in the United States and our agricultural universities. And we are trying to recreate, not only recreate, but greatly, expand that kind of cooperation between the two countries. Something which will have a direct impact on agricultural development in India -- a very key sector for India -- and U.S. is a very important partner in that respect.

So, as you can see there is a whole expanse that has been covered. I think we could have talked on and on about all these areas of cooperation. But I'd like to give you a sense that really what we were trying to do was to see where we are at this point of time. Looking forward to welcoming President Bush on his landmark visit to India sometime early next year, we would want that in each of these areas we have something in terms of deliverables which we will be able to present to the two leaders. And I think we are making good progress -- that is what our assessment was.

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Yes.

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: I would also like to mention that we had a very good discussion on the civilian nuclear cooperation agreement between our two countries during the afternoon. As you know, this is a complicated issue, but what is very important is that both countries are fully committed to the implementation of this understanding -- extremely important understanding -- which was reached between President Bush and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh while in Washington. I mentioned to Nick that in terms of some of the responsibilities which India has to carry out, we have delivered on some of them, such as the WMD legislation, the harmonization of our export control list with the NSG and MTCR, the fact that we are committed to working together with the United States of America in terms of new global standards for controls on reprocessing and enrichment technologies being exported to third countries. As you know India has unilaterally declared that it will not transfer such technologies to other countries. So we are already conforming to and becoming a partner in a global non-proliferation regime and we see ourselves both United States and India as partners in that effort. So we believe that it will be possible for us, as Nick said, by the time the President comes on his visit to India, we hope that we will have, in fact, a very good agreement between our two sides, an implementable agreement between our two sides on this very important question.

This has been a very productive visit by Nick. We enjoyed having him here and exchanging views with him. And we look forward to having another very exhaustive session tomorrow on a number of regional and international issues. And I will conclude by expressing our thanks to the United States Administration for the fresh assistance that has been announced by Nick this evening. This is a very friendly gesture on their part and we deeply appreciate the sympathy and concern which has been conveyed to us at the level of the President and the Secretary of State, and I also of course welcome the words of sympathy that we have heard today from Nick himself. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: My question is to Mr. Burns. Mr. Burns, there is a sense here that the civilian nuclear cooperation that the U.S. is extending or is going to extend to India is also linked somehow to India's slowing down the Iran pipeline to India. What is your reading on that? Can you elaborate? Is it true at all or is it just a myth?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Thank you very much. You know the Prime Minister and the President are the ones who made the agreement back on July 18th. It's very specific. In fact, I brought it out today and just re-read it myself. It is a very simple statement. It expresses the intention of both governments to work towards full civil nuclear cooperation. It lists the responsibilities of the United States and the obligations of the United States to India to make this happen, and it lists the obligations of the Government of India -- that's the agreement. I know that both sides will fulfill the obligations we have to each other and when those obligations are fully in place then the agreement will be in place and a new future of civil nuclear energy cooperation between our countries. No other issue is associated with it. It's very important, as we go along here, that we meet the commitments that we have made to each other and that we not move the goal posts -- or as we say in American English, "raise the bar."

Now, having said all that, and I hope that's very clear to you, we also obviously have a discussion under way with the government of India on a wide variety of issues. And we agree on some of the issues we discuss and sometimes we disagree, which is not uncommon between two large democratic states. I think Secretary Rice has spoken before -- you've asked her, when she was here in Delhi, a question about Iran and the pipeline. I know I've spoken about it before. We know that this is something that has not yet been completed. We know it's, in essence, hypothetical and so we leave it my friend Shyam Saran to speak to that part of the question, not to me.

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: I think you directed the question to him -- you didn't ask me (laughter).

QUESTION: Mr. Burns, do you have any problem if India goes ahead with the Iran pipeline deal?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Well, as I said before, actually we haven't even had a discussion today about this because we are discussing regional issues tomorrow. Since we don't have a press conference tomorrow, I'm very sorry we won't be able to answer your questions on those issues. I think we have been clear in the past that we understand that this is something that has been talked about but there has been no agreement between the governments. So it wouldn't be appropriate for me to react to something that hasn't happened.

QUESTION: What are your views on Iran and the November 24 IAEA meeting? Have you asked India? Are you going to watch India's voting behavior if it comes to voting on November 24? And what happens if India abstains or does not vote for the resolution at that time?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Well, the first thing I learned when I was State Department Spokesman 10 years ago was: never answer hypothetical questions. And you're asking hypothetical questions here today.

But let me give you a serious answer. What do we think about Iran? We're concerned about the attitudes and the behavior of the Government of Iran. Iran is a state trying to build nuclear weapons capability and I don't think there is a single country in the world that wants to see Iran acquire nuclear weapons. You'll notice at the IAEA vote in September, that Russia and China and Brazil and South Africa abstained. They didn't support Iran in that vote and that probably came as somewhat of a surprise to the Iranian government. The only country that it had voted with it was Venezuela, and if you've only got Venezuela on your side, and you have the rest of the world not agreeing with where this country is heading -- Iran -- in terms of its nuclear future, then the Iranians must feel fairly isolated and fairly alone in the world these days.

Our belief is that Iran should come back to negotiations. They unilaterally abrogated the negotiations with the EU-3 in August. The EU-3 was negotiating in good faith. There is still a possibility for Iran to sit-down with the European countries and seek a diplomatic solution to this very important problem. And our advice to the Government of Iran is to do that -- come back to negotiations and resolve this issue by peaceful and diplomatic means. But Iran is a country that most of the world believes is trying to

create a nuclear weapons future. It's also a country that is the leading supporter and funder of the major terrorist groups in the Middle East -- the groups that are in action in Israel, in the Palestinian territories, and in Lebanon. And as a country devoted to counterterrorism worldwide, we are extremely concerned about Iranian behavior. Our Secretary of State has spoken about, also, the very unhelpful Iranian behavior in Iraq, specifically concerning support to terrorist groups there.

So there's a lot we are concerned about and we believe that the best route forward is negotiations. Now, if Iran does not come back to negotiations, then there is every reason to believe that there will be a vote in the IAEA Board of Governors on November 24th, that there is a majority of countries that already exist, there are countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America that have voted to find Iran not to be in compliance. That is a fairly sizable and widely spread sense of the international opinion of Iraq ...on Iran...excuse me.

QUESTION: My question is to Mr. Shyam Saran. In Parliament, (inaudible) our Prime Minister said that before voluntarily placing our civilian facilities under IAEA safeguards, we will ensure that all restrictions on India will be lifted. So, in your discussions today did this point come across and what is our position? When will we circulate or go to the United States with our civilian and military facilities? Will it be before implementation in Congress or will it be after?

FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN: Well, I think that I have even earlier answered this question that you have raised at an earlier press conference and I said that there is a joint working group which has been set up to precisely work out the practical modalities through which the understanding which has been arrived at between the President of the United States and Prime Minister of India are going to be implemented. Now, what we had this afternoon was the first initial exchange of views on precisely looking at those modalities and what I can tell you is that modalities are within the parameters, very clear parameters, which have been set out in the joint statement out on July 18th. I think it is very clear what the commitments on the U.S. side are and what the commitments on the Indian side are.

Today, we confirmed that we will work out the modalities within those parameters. And we will be looking at precisely what are the kind of modalities that we need to put into place. What we had today was an initial exchange of views on those modalities. We sought certain clarifications from the American side and the American side also asked for clarifications on our side. Now, what we will be doing is, we will be taking these back and reflect upon them and very soon, we will be coming back in another meeting of the joint working group to take this discussion further.

QUESTION: We have seen reports of senior Senators and Congressmen opposing the civil nuclear agreement and asking for more information. How convinced are you in the administration that you will be able to carry through the legislation promised through Congress?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Thank you very much. Let me tell you that our administration is fully committed to the agreement that our President signed with Prime Minister Singh. We believe it's an agreement that is beneficial to the United States, as well as to India, and we intend to carry it out in full. We have been talking to members of Congress since the afternoon the agreement was signed on July 18. We have had extensive conversations in our House of Representatives, as well as our Senate, and I believe that there is significant support for the agreement on Capitol Hill.

Now, it is also true there are more than 500 members of our Congress and there are some members and some staff members who have doubts about it, there are some who are opposed. We are a democratic country, as is India. So you will recognize this in a national debate on an important issue. But as more and more information is produced about the actions of my Government and the Indian Government as we carry out the agreement, I am convinced that our Congress will support this. And our hope is when President Bush visits Delhi, visits India -- and he is looking forward to it very much in the early part of 2006 -- we will have made sufficient progress so that this agreement can be put into place. That's our hope and it is our expectation.

And I agree with Shyam. We had an extensive and a very detailed conversation today about a very complex issue, and I think it was a good conversation. And we'll go on from here and will make this work.

QUESTION: Since the Nuclear Suppliers Group has postponed its meeting till next May, do you think it will come in the way of implementation of the civil nuclear agreement?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Well, you are right to point to the importance of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. One of the obligations we have is to put in place a change in American law that would allow this civil nuclear energy cooperation. A second obligation, a commitment we made to the Indian Government, would be to advocate within the Nuclear Suppliers Group a similar action by that body. And we had a very good first meeting two days ago. As I said, the United States sent two Assistant Secretaries of State -- Christina Rocca and Steve Rademaker -- to present the American position. We feel that it was favorably received by many members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Others, of course, had questions. The next regularly scheduled meeting is in May, but we can call a meeting, as a member, at any time. And as soon as that becomes logical, we will be happy to do that. So, I don't expect this to be an impediment to the bilateral cooperation that the United States and India have undertaken.

QUESTION: Mr. Burns, ... (inaudible) The Press Secretary of the White House said that the agreement with India on nuclear cooperation is based on a realistic assessment of a commitment by India to abide by certain agreements. Does it include anything other than what has been stated in the Joint Statement between the Prime Minister of India and the President of America?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: No, it does not. No. We are very clear in our administration, and I am here speaking on behalf of President Bush and Secretary Rice. Ambassador Mulford is here every day as our American Ambassador to do the same thing. And both of us understand that this agreement has not changed, that -- take it out and read it tonight. What the United States said we would do in that agreement, we will do. And we are not adding any conditions that we expect the Indian Government to meet. And we had this conversation today and I assured Shyam -- my friend Shyam -- that we will stick to our agreement, and we Americans will meet the obligations we have undertaken.

Thank you.

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