



## Interview With Barkha Dutt, Managing Editor, NDTV 24x7

**Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs**

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**QUESTION:** There are those who believe that the Indo-U.S. nuke deal may well be the X-factor of the year. A political development in Washington that could have severe political repercussions right here in New Delhi, with the Left, the UPA's old allies, very, very critical of the shape and form the deal is taking at this moment. Well, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher is in India presently to negotiate further on the deal. He joins us now. Ambassador Boucher, welcome to NDTV.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Thank you, it is a great pleasure to be with you and with your audience.

**QUESTION:** This is a critical stage, some would say, in the negotiations. The Prime Minister is expected to make a statement in the Indian Parliament very soon. The status of negotiations... government sources here have been telling the media that any serious deviation from the July 18 agreement would be "deal breakers." Would you concede that at this moment, there have been some serious deviations that Delhi has every right to be concerned about?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think there are things that Delhi has every right to be concerned about, because in our case, we are concerned about some other things in some of the legislation, as well. But it is not going to be finished until the Senate votes, the conference is held, and the final legislation emerges. So, we got a good bill in the House. We spent a lot of time working with members of the House of Representatives to get that bill, and they understood it was important that the bill not require any renegotiation, that we not end up with any "deal breakers." We ended up with a bill that will allow the President to go forward the way that he promised. And I am confident that there is the same feeling in the Senate. How exactly it works out in terms of this provision, that provision, I can't tell you yet. But I am confident that the final legislation will let us go forward as the President promised the Prime Minister.

**QUESTION:** And will that final legislation be virtually the same as the agreement signed on July 18th last year?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Legislation is never the same as negotiation between governments. Even the House bill is not the same. What it will do is permit us to go forward in the same manner, in exactly the same manner as the President promised the Prime Minister.

**QUESTION:** You are probably aware, especially since you have just got back from Kolkata, that the Left in India has actually identified what it calls "9 points of departure" from the original agreement of July 18. I won't go into all 9, but I want to look at some of the areas of concern for the Indian Government here. One of the big areas of concern is what India should be able to do with re-processing spent fuel. Many officials that we speak to off-camera here tell us that India should have autonomy over how we use or re-process our spent fuel. Let me quote to you a resolution -- Senate resolution section 106 -- which actually prohibits the export of equipment, materials, or technology related to the enrichment of uranium, the re-processing of spent nuclear fuel or production of heavy water. This is a major area of concern for Indian officials here, something that they see as vital interests.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, those are two different things. But I think you know -- our policy for every single country in the world is not to export re-processing and enrichment technology. Every single country in the world -- it does not matter if they are nuclear weapons states or non nuclear weapons states. When we look at this situation, we have differences with the Senate bill -- and we have differences specifically with that provision in the Senate bill. You saw John Rood, our new Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation. He spoke directly to Chairman Lugar about this in Public Session, and said we do not like to see legislated a provision like this, even though it corresponds to our policy. Why? Because in the future, we might want to have discussions with the Congress about something different. We do not like to see policy changed into legislation as a matter of principle.

**QUESTION:** But could there be a change in the final legislation?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Certainly, everything in the Senate bill that does not correspond to the House bill will have to be negotiated with the House, and will have to end up with final legislation that will be different. So, I think we see many opportunities to deal with these things. We have made clear ourselves we don't like that legislature provision and we are hopeful that the senators will take it up.

**QUESTION:** Another big area of concern is what's been called "annual certificate from the American President to the Congress"... every year including information on India's nuclear weapons program. Now officials here have said that India is under no obligation to supply that information, that it is up to America to get it from wherever it finds fit. But for ordinary people here, they kind of feel that we are looking to America to get the thumbs up every year, and that is somewhere inhibiting our independence.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I don't think one should read too much into that provision. The United States Executive Branch reports to our Congress on any number of things all the time. One of our jobs in the administration is to keep the Congress well informed. We do that through briefings, we do that through testimony, we do that through reporting requirements. They like to ask us to issue reports and then give them reports, and we will do that if they ask for it. So I don't think you should read too much into this.

**QUESTION:** But in terms of where that information would be procured from -- I mean India is reasonably clear that it is not India's job to provide that information.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** We don't think it is India's job to provide that information. No, it's not. The Congress is not levying any requirements on India. They are making requirements for the Executive Branch -- for us, in the Administration. They are not imposing any new requirements on India.

**QUESTION:** Alright, let's look at the issue of safeguards. Now, the July 18th agreement spoke of an additional protocol, of India-specific safeguards. There is deep concern here that the shape and form the two bills have taken so far are actually talking about a model which applies to non-nuclear weapon states, states that are signatories to the NPT. Many officials here are concerned about this in specific, that somewhere in India-specific safeguards are not as promised, are not taking shape and form, or certainly have not until this point.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Let us not jump to the end until we get there. The fact is the legislation is still taking shape, the negotiations are still taking shape. The India-specific safeguards get negotiated between the International Atomic Energy Agency and India. We are interested in how that turns out, the Congress wants to know how that turns out, but we are not the negotiators on that. We are negotiating a bilateral agreement with India. That again will be a bilateral agreement specific to India. So, the legislation doesn't do those negotiations, we do those negotiations, you do those negotiations. So, again, you can not read too much into the proposals in the legislation, particularly since the legislation is not final.

**QUESTION:** But there is a disagreement, some would say, over sequencing. I mean, India would like to see the legislation through first and then work out the safeguards, but it seems to be going the other way around.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** You know, if we keep -- I don't think we can approach this by saying you have to do this, then we'll do that, then we'll do that. There are a number of pieces here, four big ones, that all need to move forward. We are trying to move them all forward. We and India are both talking to Nuclear Suppliers' Group members. We and India are negotiating, India is talking to the International Atomic Energy Agency, we are working with the Congress. All these things are essential and all these things need to move forward. We will never get anywhere if we start saying you go first, you go first.

**QUESTION:** Let me ask you then, what does Washington see as an obstacle at this stage, I mean we have put on the table India's concerns, what are Washington's concerns?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** There are a couple of things we've raised, and again, you see these in testimony of Mr. Rood that we don't like the provision that legislates the restriction on enrichment reprocessing technologies, we don't like some of the other impositions on end-use certification, things like that. So, you know, we're talking to the Congress about these things, we've raised these issues; we'll keep working on them. How they will turn out in the end, I can't predict at this moment.

**QUESTION:** Could you predict when this legislation will go through, do you think it will meet ...?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** No, that's the last thing I could predict. The Congress sets its own schedule. They have moved very swiftly so far. Two months ago, people were saying, you know, next year. Well, the House has acted already in July; the Senate will take it up in September. So, I think frankly things are moving already more swiftly than anybody expected.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe it would go through this September?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** We'll continue working to see it go through. How long it will take in the Senate depends on business on the Senate floor and they set their own schedule on that. But I'm confident we have seen very swift action and strong support in the House, and I'm confident we will see action and support in the Senate.

**QUESTION:** There is a perception that if it does not go through this year, it is back to the drawing board.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I would not agree with any perceptions, but I hope we won't face that problem.

**QUESTION:** Let me shift tracks a bit, because there are two things that really work up ordinary Indians when it comes to America -- one is of course the nuke deal, the other is Pakistani terrorism. There was a statement that was attributed to you pretty soon after the Mumbai blasts which said that Richard Boucher had actually asked for more evidence before India pointed a finger at Pakistan, of Pakistan having had a hand in the Mumbai blasts. Has that sort of evidence been brought to Washington's table now from the Indian side, are you more convinced that Islamabad or Islamabad-backed groups may have had a hand in the Mumbai blasts?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I have to say it is not a question I can answer because the premise is wrong. It is not what I said, it is not properly interpreted. We and India need to cooperate against terrorism. The Mumbai blasts were horrible, these were very carefully timed to hit the maximum number of people ....people, ordinary people trying to go to work and this is a horrible terrorist attack on the scale of things we have seen in other places and we can not allow this to be forgotten. India has suffered many such attacks and we all need to see what we can do to stop it. The people of India have suffered too much from this, and the only way we are going to get to the bottom of these things is to stop all the manifestations of terrorism, the pieces, the groups that are operating in one country or another country, they all have to be stopped. So, we work against terrorism with every country in this region. We work very closely with India, we work with Bangladesh, we work with Pakistan, we work in Afghanistan -- in every single country this is a major issue. And what we are trying to do is stop this whole network, all the groups, wherever they come from, wherever they have pieces, however they fit together, we are trying to stop the whole network and that is the only way to make our people safe.

**QUESTION:** India's official position though, from the Prime Minister downwards is that Pakistan-backed groups had a hand in the Mumbai blasts. Is that a theory Washington agrees with? I mean, you have your own intelligence.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, I am not the one doing the investigation, I leave it to Indian investigators to decide what the specific causes of this blast were. We know that there are groups who still have elements in Pakistan who do this kind of thing. We know there are groups throughout the region who do this kind of thing. We all need to act against those groups, whether this group was specifically involved in Mumbai or that group was specifically involved in Mumbai, we all need to act against the terrorist groups that operate in this region. That is part of our policy in India, that is part of our policy in Bangladesh, that is part of our policy in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well.

**QUESTION:** You do not believe though -- when I say you, I mean Washington -- does not believe, though, that at this stage India has enough evidence to point a finger at Pakistan?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I am not the investigator. I saw some remarks, I think, by the Foreign Secretary the other day that seemed quite clear, and I agree with him.

**QUESTION:** Does that mean that Washington believes India or it doesn't believe India?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** That means I'll stick with the Foreign Secretary for the moment.

**QUESTION:** Okay. In a larger sense, moving beyond the Mumbai blasts, does Washington believe that Pakistan has, and when I say Pakistan, I mean Pakistan's government, has done enough to curb terrorism?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** None of us have done enough to curb terrorism. There is still terrorism in this region. There are groups that have operated in Pakistan for many years, Talibans, Al Qaeda's, Kashmiri groups. Some of them have been banned and outlawed by the Pakistani government, they have taken steps against them, they have arrested them. Some of these groups are banned in the United States. The United States has banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, we've prosecuted cases in Virginia and California, we've put them on UN lists, we have acted against them financially. We need to get at these groups wherever they are. And all of us need to do our part and that is what we do with the countries in the region. You come back to the basic phenomenon -- the people in this region have been blown up, they've suffered, we feel terribly for them, and I think we need to see, to make sure that we remain committed until we stop it.

**QUESTION:** A lot of ordinary Indians sometimes feel angry that Washington does not do enough to stop or to put to use its leverage with Pakistan to come down harder on terror groups that still operate from Pakistani territory.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Washington has made working with Pakistan on terrorism one of our major points of emphasis. You saw this during the President's trip, during the Secretary's trip. We have also made building an enlightened moderate society in Pakistan, helping Pakistan move back to democracy, creating a society that does not have extremists of any kind, that is a major priority as well because in the long run it is not only the police action and the anti-terrorism action that each country needs to take but it is building that kind of healthy, stable, democratic society that can help us beat terrorism. So, we are in this for the long term, we have not finished the job yet. We intend to keep working at it until we do.

**QUESTION:** Take Dawood Ibrahim, he is now on America's own list of terrorists, recognized as a terrorist by Washington. India continues to believe that one of his bases of operation is Pakistan. India would like to see international pressure brought on the government of Pakistan on this front, on Dawood Ibrahim. We have repeatedly asked for the extradition of Dawood Ibrahim from Pakistan.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, as far as India and Pakistan relations, I will leave that to you guys. In terms of our work with Pakistan, we work against all the terrorists, all the terrorist groups, all the terrorist individuals who might be in Pakistan, and we try to support the Pakistani government as they try to move against these groups, because they have outlawed some of these groups, they have taken steps against some of these groups. But again, none of us have finished the job, and we all have to keep at it.

**QUESTION:** Like Dawood Ibrahim in particular...

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I don't know personally where he is and how identifiable he is. But again, it doesn't matter, wherever there is a terrorist, we need to go after him.

**QUESTION:** Okay. One final question. Is Washington concerned that the India-Pakistan equation seems to have taken a dip again, we've had a tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsion on both sides, the third round of composite dialogue has not taken off again, is there concern that this could be an area of tension blowing up again?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think we all want to see Pakistan...India-Pakistan relations advance, we all want to see you be able to achieve the kind of results you have achieved over the past several years, and I have to say it has been real acts of statesmanship on the Indian side and the Pakistani side that have led to the dialogue, that have led to the progress, and I hope those kinds of acts of statesmanship will continue. I see a basic commitment, I see a basic direction, but we understand that it was not possible to have the Foreign Secretaries talks. There are obviously going to be difficulties from time to time, there are obviously going to be continuing needs. I mean, the need to move against terrorism is obviously a big one, but at the same time, I think we need to keep moving in the general direction. We need to keep the idea in mind that only by solving some of these issues, only by making real progress, are we going to be able to beat the problems that challenge us all.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador Richard Boucher, thanks very much for speaking with NDTV.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Thank you very much. It is good to be here.

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