



Interview With CNN IBN of India

R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs

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QUESTION: Let's talk about this now with the U.S. Under Secretary of State and the nuclear envoy in this bilateral agreement between India and the U.S., Mr. Nicholas Burns, who's in Washington, D.C. Mr. Burns, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to India tonight. [inaudible] and I have a couple of quick questions for you.

The first one --

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: It's a pleasure.

QUESTION: -- Politically there have been expected noises being made by the opposition party, just like you have expected noises being made by the full non-proliferation lobby in America. However, our concern here is when the matter comes up at the Nuclear Suppliers Group may we need that crucial support of the 45 member group, how far would America be willing to take on China and convince them? Would you, for instance, be willing to walk that extra mile if China says get Pakistan on board as well or give us the access to some dual-use technology that China so far hasn't gotten from the United States of America?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: First of all let me say that we're quite confident that this is a good arrangement both for India and the United States, and we think it's good for the world because it will bring India into the non-proliferation system at long last. It will relieve India of its isolation that it's had to live in for 30-odd years, and it's going to strengthen our international efforts because India has been a country that has respected its nuclear technology, it has not traded it as some other countries have on the world market.

There are two steps necessary. First, India has to go to the IAEA^[1] to achieve a Safeguards Agreement. Second, India would then have to go to the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The United States will be a very strong supporter of India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group. We believe this is good for the rest of the world and we're already working with governments around the world, including China, to convince them that this is the proper step forward.

I don't think it will be necessary at all and we would not consider making the kind of deals that you suggest. That's not necessary. India will be judged on its own merits and I think it will be successful.

Once that happens, then we go back to the United States Congress in this marathon of diplomatic depth. The Congress will vote one final time to approve the India agreement, and I think we'll have strong support in the Congress.

Now there are some Members, as you indicated, who are opposed to the arrangement. There are some members of our non-proliferation community writing articles in our press. But remember that we had strong bipartisan support among Democrats and Republicans the last time, in December 2006, and I would expect that would be the result this time as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Burns, could you please just quickly [inaudible] some of the concerns here in India, one of the concerns being that part of the deal would be a quid pro quo on Iran, or India's support to the U.S. on Iran. Is that something that you are expecting to see happening in the next few months? You've already seen the U.S. Ambassador to India say that India is supporting Iran in anyway. [inaudible] the deal to go through in Congress?

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: There's nothing in the 123 Agreement, the bilateral agreement that we just negotiated with Foreign Secretary Shania Menon, that pertains directly and specifically to Iran. There are no conditions like that.

The agreement speaks to the technical aspect of our civil nuclear cooperation.

But I would say this, Iran is a country that right now is a nuclear outlaw. It's a country trying to achieve a nuclear weapon future. All the countries of the world have now lined up to say to the Iranians if you won't negotiate with us the future of your nuclear program, then we're going to press sanctions on you. The Security Council of the United Nations has already passed two sanctions resolutions and we're now considering a third sanctions resolution. So we would hope that India, as well as all other states -- China and Russia, France and Britain, and Japan -- would diminish their economic relations with Iran and send Iran a stiff message that it can't be time for business as usual.

This is not a message just for India. It's really something that all of us in the world need to do. In that respect India can be part of the international mainstream in trying to negotiate and trying to deal with one of the most difficult security problems that we face internationally, and that is of a recalcitrant and difficult Iran that is seeking its own way forward toward nuclear weapons. That is not in the interest of the world community in our judgment.

QUESTION: All right, [inaudible]. The completed hour is [inaudible] and we have to leave it there, but thank you very much.

UNDER SECRETARY BURNS: Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to speak to you today. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[1] International Atomic Energy Agency

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