

- ▶ [Latest Embassy News](#)
- ▼ [Ambassador Speeches & Remarks](#)
- ▶ [About the Embassy](#)
- ▶ [Photo Gallery](#)
- ▶ [Contact Us](#)

## Speeches and Remarks

### Remarks by Ambassador David Mulford at the signing ceremony of the Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA)

15 December 2004

#### As prepared for delivery

New Delhi -- I am very pleased to be here today to sign, on behalf of the United States, the Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with India. I want to thank Chairman A.K. Singh of Indian Customs for being here on behalf of the Government of India. I also want to thank Scott Davis, Deputy Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, for making the trip from Washington to attend this important event. And of course, I am grateful to James Dozier, his colleagues at the American Embassy, and our Indian counterparts for working together to realize this significant bilateral agreement.

In August of 2002, the former United States Customs Service, now Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, in the Department of Homeland Security, recognized the growing importance of the U.S.-India relationship and opened an office here in New Delhi. Previously, our governments had to coordinate on Customs matters through our Customs Attaché in Bangkok. The combined effort of our Customs authorities to set up a permanent site here was a testament to the significance of U.S.-Indian cooperation against terrorism, drug trafficking, fraud and a host of other critical issues.

U.S. and Indian Customs began discussing a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement, or CMAA, in February of 2001 here in

New Delhi. In fact, a member of the American delegation that traveled to India to start these proceedings was none other than our current ICE Attaché James Dozier. And today the CMAA will become a reality. I have no doubt that this is a very special day for James.

With the rapid expansion of the global economy over recent years, international criminal activity has spread along with it aided by opening borders and greater sophistication in technology. Accordingly, it is essential for the United States to establish a network of bilateral agreements with customs agencies around the world to promote the rule of law and thwart criminal, and certainly terrorist, activity. The United States has already signed 52 bilateral agreements of this kind and today, we are pleased to connect with India in this global partnership of law enforcement and criminal interdiction.

The CMAA establishes a formal mechanism of sharing intelligence and investigative data between our customs offices on issues of critical and mutual interest. Together, we will more effectively coordinate responses and develop defenses against terrorism, trade fraud, money laundering, narcotics interdiction, smuggling of weapons of mass destruction, cyber-smuggling, child pornography, intellectual property violations, and human trafficking. I'm sure you will agree that these are issues of paramount importance to both of our countries.

Since the opening of this office, ICE personnel have worked with their counterparts at Indian Customs on training and joint investigations. In fact, last May Indian Customs Officials traveled to the United States to evaluate seaport, airport, marine, training and investigative operations of both ICE and Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection.

The CMAA shows what progress is possible when two countries recognize their mutual interests and develop frameworks for even closer cooperation. We look forward to building on this success in years to come.

[back to top](#) ^

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