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Speeches & Remarks

The United States has a freestanding bilateral relationship with India

US believes that India can play an important role in increasing stability in Asia and beyond

January 7, 2005

(This interview appeared in the January 7, 2005 edition of Force magazine)

Introduction: As George W. Bush starts his second term as President of the United States, his ambassador in India David C. Mulford talks about the prospects of India-US bilateral relations.

Force: How do you see the bilateral relationship during President Bush ' s second term in office?

David C. Mulford: The United States has a very important relationship with India, an emerging regional and world power. We want this relationship to grow and to fulfill its potential. Our relationship with India is based on the expectation that India will move ahead and achieve its own vision for a bigger role in the world, and a more integrated

position in the global economy. The fact that President Bush sent defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, a very senior member of his Cabinet, to New Delhi so soon after his re-election emphasises the importance that he attaches to our growing relationship with India. Secretary Rumsfeld's visit also conveyed to the Indian government that the United States remains committed to pushing our relationship forward wherever possible. Our strategic and defence/military relationship has developed very significantly during the Bush administration in the form of a multiplicity of exchanges and visits and joint military exercises. We expect these trends to continue. The President has indicated that he would very much like to visit India, but he has not yet made a commitment as to the timing of a visit.

What is meant by NSSP second stage and how much is likely to be accomplished in the next four years?

DCM: The Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) represents an important step forward in the US-India bilateral relationship and in our efforts to improve scientific and commercial collaboration between our two countries. The completion of Phase One of the NSSP in September marked an important step in a process in which both our nations have much at stake. We are pleased that it has moved so quickly and smoothly to date and look forward to working on further implementation in the future. A large number of US companies are interested in cooperating with India in high technology, space, computers and other technologies, and exploring possibilities they now feel they can exploit. We have now begun Phase Two of the NSSP, which we hope will lead to further opportunities for cooperation, and we are pleased that the Indian government is equally committed to moving this process forward.

What was the significance of Secretary

***Rumsfeld visit
to India ?
Rumsfeld said
that
' bilateral
military to
military and
defence to
defence
relationship
will
strengthen
What does this
mean?***

DCM: The visit of Secretary Rumsfeld was very significant because he was the first Cabinet level official to travel to India since our Presidential elections in November. As you know, Secretary Rumsfeld will remain in his position during President Bush's second term. The President was enthusiastic that he should make this visit even though at the time our Congress was in full session and debating the passage of the Intelligence Bill, a major piece of legislation. Secretary Rumsfeld conveyed to the senior-most members of the Indian government the importance that President Bush and the United States attach to our growing relationship with India. Secretary Rumsfeld rightly termed the military-to-military and defence-to-defence relationship as a strong one and 'something that we intend to see is further knitted together as we go forward in the months and years ahead.'

Secretary Rumsfeld's discussions were chiefly about the bilateral relationship, including the defence/military relationship, which has developed significantly over the past four years, in terms of the number of exchanges, visits and joint military exercises. He also stressed the importance of making further progress in the area of interoperability between our military forces, which is a natural result of our close working relations. We have been exchanging Standard Operating Procedures and are working on a number of areas to increase the complexity of our exercises and are conducting more and more joint exercises together.

India has

***expressed
unhappiness at
the proposed
US arms sales
to Pakistan.
Will this
affect Indo-US
relations,
especially when
India has said
that it might?***

DCM: The United States has a freestanding bilateral relationship with India . This is a very important relationship with its own vision of India as an emerging regional and world power. We also have a freestanding bilateral relationship with Pakistan , which is also very important but has a different vision. We think it is imperative to view these relationships as distinct since each has its own context. Obviously, there are points of sensitivity which we will need to bear in mind. However, the United States will continue to build strong bilateral relationships with both India and Pakistan.

***It is
understood
that the US
has offered an
earlier version
of Patriot
anti-missile
system to
India and not
Patriot 3. Why
is this so?
Does this offer
imply that
bilateral
talks on
ballistic
missile defence
have moved
beyond the
talking stage?***

DCM: The US has offered a briefing on the Patriot system, which I believe India is interested in receiving. India is in the early stages of formulating its own approach to missile defence. We have offered to share some of our own experience and insight in this area.

***Prime Minister
Manmohan Singh
has said that
relations with
Pakistan
depend upon
President
Musharraf
keeping his
January 6
commitment to
stop cross
border
terrorism.
What role will
the US play in
ensuring that
the peace
process remains
on tracks?***

DCM: The United States supports talks between India and Pakistan as a way to reduce tensions in South Asia. We applaud India and Pakistan's important progress in this area in the last 18 months. India and Pakistan have come a long way since June 2002. The United States sees the Composite Dialogue as an opportunity for both countries to further reduce tensions and engage with each other in a more positive manner. Secretary Powell has said many times that we are not mediators, but will continue to support our two friends to find common ground and resolve their differences. It is up to the leaders of both India and Pakistan to decide how to proceed, but we will support steps they take to further their engagement.

We strongly condemn the continuing violence in Kashmir, especially against non-combatants like civilians and politicians.

The United States firmly believes that violence will not resolve the Kashmir issue. Violence only destroys lives and hope. Resolution of differences must come through a process of engagement between India and Pakistan that takes into account the wishes of the people of Kashmir. The United States has made it clear to Pakistan that it wants to see infiltration stop completely and the infrastructure of terrorism dismantled. We welcome President Musharraf's pledges not to allow Pakistani territory to be used for a base of activities against India. This issue is a regular part of our dialogue with Pakistan.

***How can India
be US partner
in Afghanistan,
Iraq and in
fighting
terrorism?***

DCM: India is a diplomatic ally of the United States in the global war on terrorism and we are working increasingly closely in this area. India is also a victim of terrorism. The tragic attack on its Parliament on 13 December 2001 and the bombing in Mumbai in September 2003 that killed more than 50 people are only two of the most egregious examples. Incidents of terrorism and militant violence take place almost daily in India. This is terrible and must stop.

The Presidential election in Afghanistan was a tremendous achievement, and we applaud the government in Kabul and the Afghan people. These first free and democratic elections in Afghanistan's history would have been unimaginable four years ago. Most observers predicted that the US and our allies would fail. They have been proven decisively wrong. This was a huge step forward and a huge success for the people of Afghanistan. We are working closely there with a broad coalition of countries in the international community. However, given the devastation wrought by the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, the civil war in the early 1990s, and Taliban rule, this will be a long process of building strong democratic institutions and a civil society in Afghanistan. The United States has a long-term commitment to Afghanistan and shares India's desire to see it play its proper role in the community of nations. Secretary Rumsfeld praised India's extensive

assistance programme to Afghanistan, and was pleased that New Delhi shares our interest in ensuring Afghanistan's success as a democracy. India has expressed willingness to do more to assist that process, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with India to advance our mutual interests.

With respect to Iraq, the President has made it very clear that the United States is committed to assisting the Iraqi people to emerge from decades of dictatorship. He has also indicated that we would welcome support and assistance of any kind that contributes to the stabilisation and reconstruction of Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld expressed appreciation for India's interest in training election officials and providing other material assistance, playing a role in the electoral advisory and support area, and providing practical training and education opportunities in India.

Secretary Rumsfeld also encouraged India to think about what more it could do to play a positive role in Iraq, given India's important historic relationship with Iraq and our shared interest in a positive outcome there. He did not make formal proposals, but simply invited India to come forward with ideas and to play a positive role.

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