



Remarks With Pakistani Foreign Minister Mian Khursid Mahmud Kasuri Following Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Washington, DC
January 29, 2003



SECRETARY POWELL: We reviewed the situation in Afghanistan. We reviewed our bilateral relationship, which we believe is strong and will continue to grow in the months and years ahead. We discussed the situation on the entire subcontinent. We talked about relations between India and Pakistan, and I once again reaffirmed to the Foreign Minister that the United States wishes to play a helpful role in the area and will be doing everything we can to continue to reduce tensions in the region, and hopefully reach a point where dialogue can begin between India and Pakistan and all of the various issues that exist between the two nations, to include, of course, Kashmir.

We also had a discussion on topical issues such as Iraq, Iran and similar matters. And I might point out that the Minister gave me a very full description of Pakistanis concerns on a new NSEERS program, the registration program. We know that this program has caused some concern among Pakistani Americans as well as Pakistanis back home who are watching how it is being implemented.

I assured the Minister that we are very sensitive to those concerns. He gave me a number of ideas as to how some of these concerns can be dealt with. He will be meeting with the Attorney General later this afternoon to also discuss this matter. But I also reinforced that this is not something directed at Pakistan or directed at Muslims or directed at Pakistanis in America; it is an effort on the part of the United States to do a better job of knowing who is in our country.

We appreciate all the contributions that Pakistanis have made to American life, and so many Pakistanis have become American citizens. So we will continue to learn from our experience with the program, and I wanted to linger on this point so that the Minister has my full assurance that we will be doing everything to implement this program in a dignified manner.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: Mr. Minister.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Yes, I'd like to first read a very brief statement and then I am quite -- I am available for answers.

I have had extremely cordial and productive discussions with your Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell. Our talks today encompassed the entire range of our bilateral relationship. We also exchanged views on developments in our region, including relations with India and Pakistan, particularly the Kashmir issue, the latest developments in Afghanistan, the situation obtaining in Iraq.

Both of us reaffirmed our mutual commitment to strengthen and broaden the Pakistan-U.S. relationship in diverse fields and to lend it a permanent character. The U.S. Secretary of State has assured me of the firm U.S. commitment to the well-being and prosperity of Pakistan.

Both sides expressed profound satisfaction on our strong cooperation in the global fight against terrorism. I reaffirmed Pakistan's abiding commitment to the Secretary of State in this regard and assured him that our commitment is long-lasting.

I apprised the Secretary of State of the state of our relations with India and the need for initiation of a bilateral dialogue process between Pakistan and India to resolve all outstanding issues, including the core issue of Jemo and Kashmir. The Secretary of State assured me that the United States will remain engaged in South Asia and would work towards the beginning of a Pak-India bilateral dialogue process.

In the context of Afghanistan, we expressed our commitment to the Bonn process which is aimed at bringing about peace and stability in Afghanistan. We also reaffirmed the need for an all around commitment in order that the process of Afghanistan's reconstruction gets underway.

On Iraq, we had an exchange of views, particularly in the context of our membership with the United Nations Security Council. We hope for a peaceful outcome, including Iraq's full compliance with the Security Council resolutions.

I also raised with the Secretary of State an issue of very immediate, shall I say primary concern for Pakistan, and that is -- and that has agitated our public opinion immensely. This relates to the registration of foreign nations in the United States under the NCS program. I have urged the Secretary of State that Pakistan should be excluded from this list and that Pakistani nationals in the United States should be provided the necessary relief and flexibility under the law.

On this last issue, I just want, Mr. Secretary, your permission to say one or two things because I know a lot of Pakistani journalists are also here and they are very educated and they want to hear something from me. I have brought out to the Secretary of State all the ramifications of this particular law. Now, we have discussed various things, but what I have suggested to him is that even under the law, because the Secretary said it will ultimately apply to the whole world, it's not aimed at Pakistanis, but what we are afraid of is mass deportation of Pakistanis under any provision or pretext whatsoever. That will be devastating and it will place undue pressures on our relationship. The Secretary, I am grateful, appreciates that and he has promised to play, let's say a supportive role, and I am grateful to him for that.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, if we could please revert back to Iraq. There's talk on the Hill now again about maybe exile for Saddam Hussein as possibly the only way left to avoid a confrontation. I wonder if you could again address that.

And so far as the evidence you're going to present, not all of it I understand has been seen by the inspectors. Is it a different category of material or something?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, with respect to exile, if he were to leave the country and take some of his family members with him and others in the leading elite who have been responsible for so much trouble during the course of his regime, we would, I am sure, try to help find a place for them to go. And so that certainly would be one way to avoid war, and we have indicated this before.

With respect to my presentation next week, I expect to put forward information and evidence which will fill in some of the gaps with respect to what Dr. Blix and Dr. El Baradei discussed earlier this week about the problems they have had getting Saddam Hussein to participate in the disarmament, to lead the disarmament effort, which he is required to do under [UN Security Council Resolution] 1441.

The information I present, some of it will be an expansion of information that has already been seen, some of it is information that has been given to inspectors, and some of it will be new information that were really not relevant to the inspectors' work but relevant to making the case with respect to the Hussein regime's possession of weapons of mass destruction.

Elaine Monaghan.

QUESTION: Well, actually -- (laughter).

SECRETARY POWELL: Very well.

QUESTION: I actually wanted to ask you about the evidence, in fact, I'm afraid. I'm a little confused because one of the suggestions seems to be that it's satellite photographs that -- satellite photographs, which don't seem to be a particular problem in terms of intelligence because they were taken by satellites. So is there going to be more evidence that may involve you having to consider revealing sources, that kind of thing?

SECRETARY POWELL: You can be sure that we will be as forthcoming as we can next week, but also mindful of sources and methods. And it will be, I think, a rather comprehensive presentation, but we'll all see it together next Wednesday.

QUESTION: A Pakistani journalist wants to ask a question.

SECRETARY POWELL: Of course.

QUESTION: You have been in touch with Pakistani and Indian leaders on a resumption of dialogue between the two countries. What are the prospects now?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I think we have to find a way to get the dialogue begun. Some suggestions have been made that perhaps some economic moves from one side to the other might be a way to jumpstart it. I think many people are watching activity that is occurring across the line of control to see whether the rate of that activity, if it went down, might be an encouraging step.

So we're looking for different ways to use our good offices to get a dialogue moving, but at the moment I don't know that I can be more forthcoming in that. We'll continue to work hard at it. And what I said to both Pakistani and Indian leaders is that the United States is committed to doing everything we can to get the dialogue going.

There were some people who were concerned that, you know, once the demobilization took place and things calmed down a bit, the United States would not be interested any longer. We are interested. We remain committed. We remain committed to a strong U.S.-Pakistan relationship and a strong U.S.-Indian relationship. It's not a zero sum game. We can have good friendships with both nations. And by having good friendships with both nations, we can lend our good offices to solving difficulties between --

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: In this connection, I explained to the Secretary of State the efforts made by the Government of Pakistan, by myself, by Prime Minister Jamali, to invite Prime Minister Vajpayee to Pakistan for the South* conference. Unfortunately, for reasons best known to the leaders and Government of India, that invitation was not accepted, and that would have appreciably actually led to a lowering of tensions in the region.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you. Terri.

QUESTION: I know you don't put much stock in what the Iraqis say, but the Iraqi UN Ambassador was just at the stakeout up at the UN, and he said that in 1998 the Clinton Administration confirmed that all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been destroyed by the attacks in 1998, and he asked whether now -- this is putting one President in the position of contradicting another. What is your understanding of what the situation was in 1998 and --

SECRETARY POWELL: That's a verbal trick on his part. I think what he's referring to is after Operation Desert Fox, a great deal of damage was inflicted, I am quite sure, on the targets that the Clinton Administration and the military at that time went after. But I don't think anybody would claim that those strikes, in and of themselves, pulled up the entire infrastructure. And, in fact, I think the questions that existed at that time, put forward by UNSCOM -- what happened to these stocks -- those questions remain relevant today and that's what we'll be looking at.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you said that if Saddam Hussein and his retinue decided to leave or were willing to leave, the United States might try to find somewhere where he could go. Would the United States also, under those circumstances, consider offering any kind of immunity for Saddam Hussein and those people?

SECRETARY POWELL: I am not prepared to talk to that. I think it's not for the United States alone to offer that kind of protection. I mean, it would have to be a broader forum that might look at such a question. But I think that's so hypothetical right now that it would be interesting to chat about, but not terribly relevant at the moment.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Mr. Minister, any comments on the diplomatic dogfight between India and Pakistan? And it has been going for many, many years and some people are -- both nations are blaming each other. And also on terrorism from Pakistan into India, both nations are blaming each other. And also, sir, as far as this diplomatic fights are going on, or dogfights, some people in India are saying that now why should India and Pakistan have diplomatic relations at all.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Well, thank you for the question because it does provide me an opportunity to put another light on that. You're talking of terrorism sponsored by Pakistan across LOC, but I would rather that you also spoke of state terrorism committed by Indian military occupation forces in Kashmir.

Having said that, and since I do not believe in heightening rhetoric, I have not responded in kind to some very inflammatory statements from Ministers in the Government of India because I'm interested in lowering tensions. I have already stated the Government of Pakistan, the Foreign Minister -- myself, the Prime Minister Jamali, we are very keen to resume a process that ultimately leads to a solution of all outstanding issues, including the core issue of Jemo and Kashmir.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.

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