



Remarks Following Meeting with President Pervez Musharraf in Rawalpindi

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Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamabad, Pakistan
May 8, 2003

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Bismillah Rehman ir-Raheem

I'd like to welcome Mr. Armitage, Miss Christina Rocca and other members of the American delegation to Pakistan. Mr. Armitage is a friend of Pakistan. He's visited here before many times, and I hope he'll do so again. Today, Ms. Rocca informed us that she's been to Pakistan 10 times in 12 months. I wish she'd made it 12 times in 12 months! And I hope Deputy Secretary Armitage will following her footsteps, but he will have to make very quick visits in very quick succession. But anyway that's just on the side

But we had very useful discussions today. We covered the whole range of international issues, including Afghanistan, Iraq and, of course, Pakistan and India. The American delegation had meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and myself. We had talks in a very good and cordial atmosphere. We covered the whole range of bilateral relations. Both of us agreed there was need for United States and Pakistan to think in terms of a long-term relationship. And, quite understandably, there was lot of discussion on recent initiatives by India and Pakistan. And as far as the Pakistan side is concerned, we expressed our readiness to initiate a process of dialogue so that all issues of concern to India and Pakistan could be addressed in a meaningful way, including, of course, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for the warm welcome, and as you already said, we have enjoyed a very full series of discussions with your good self, the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and, most recently, 90 minutes with the President. And we did cover the full range of international issues from Iraq to Afghanistan to the U.N. Security Council and the possibility of a resolution being introduced soon to cover the Post-Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. Most importantly of all, we were making preparation discussions for the President's upcoming visit to Washington - President Musharraf, and, of course, this was all under the rubric of the U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relationship, which I think we both agree is going extraordinarily well. So I think that probably a good place for me to stop and for you to start, if you like to ask questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Deputy Secretary, Secretary of State Mr. Colin Powell, when he was here in Islamabad last time, termed Kashmir as a dispute on international agenda. I wish to whether, during this trip, are you going to help in disposing of this agenda, since you are going to New Delhi? Should we expect that you will ask Indian government to reduce its aggression in the part of Kashmir controlled by India so that a cooling-off process should be helped out? Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you. Clearly today, much of the discussion, as the Foreign Minister has already suggested, revolved around both the India - Pakistan initiative which was recently undertaken and of course the situation in Kashmir. It is not the position of the U.S. government to pressure Pakistan or the pressure India. If we can be helpful in bringing about a dialogue, then that's a good thing. But my discussions here today will be faithfully carried over to our Indian friends, and they can study the comments and I have to say. Of course, they'll respond in their own way. I want to dispel you the notion that there is pressure from the United States. That is not the case.

QUESTION: Can you tell us has Pakistan done enough to stop cross-border incursions into Indian Kashmir, and do you think the cross-boarder incursion into Indian Kashmir is down?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I will give you a direct answer to your question, but -- I tell you, I'm not keeping score with people's lives. I think any violence is too much violence. The infiltration across -- the cross-border violence and the lethality are down from this time last year. That does not fill me with the great enthusiasm, because as I said, anybody suffering, I think, is a cause for concern of us all. President Musharraf gave an absolute assurance that there was nothing happening across the Line of Control, and there were no camps in Azad Kashmir -- and if there were camps, they would be gone tomorrow.

QUESTION: Mr. Armitage, would you agree with the view of many in Pakistan, including President Musharraf (indistinct) on the ground at the LOC that -- the argument for a strong level of (inaudible) should allow India to stop infiltration because they have, by Pakistani estimates, 20 times more troops in the region, and Pakistan has done all that it can. So should India be doing more to stop them coming in?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I don't think it's useful for me to point a finger at India or, for that matter, to blame Pakistan for what's going on. We're in a situation that has been brought about by 50-odd years of history. Our whole endeavor here, the United States, is just to faithfully discuss these issues with both sides of the equation and try to act as just an interlocutor. I'm not going to be in a position of describing whether I think either side has done enough. I am just going to put the facts as I hear them on the table.

QUESTION: Mr. Richard Armitage. I am Javed Siddiq, representing Daily Nawa-I-Waqt. You know that the core issue between the India and Pakistan is Kashmir. Unless this issue is resolved, the relations between the two countries can not become normal. So have you brought some concrete proposals which you intend to put before two sides for the solution of this problem?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: First of all, depending on what side of the question you are on, one side would say it is a core issue. I have no doubt this is exactly how our friends here in Pakistan feel. I think, from India's point of view, they would say, if they were here -- as they've said to me -- that their view is it's unrelenting hostility that is the core issue. So I'm not accepting the premise of what is or isn't a core issue. That's for the parties themselves to decide.

And the second part of your question was what -- was I bringing a concrete proposal? The United States is not making a proposal in this regard. As I said, the discussions that I have been honored to have with our friends in Pakistan will be faithfully conveyed to our friends in India, and they can decide how they feel about them.

QUESTION: Mr. Armitage, Omar Farooq from GEO Television. The words you have been using to describe the Pak-India diplomacy is "facilitation." Can you describe this word a little further?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: No, I don't think I can describe it any further. I guess it's kind of in the eye of the beholder. Let's say I've come here

to discuss a full range of issues. The very serious issue of Kashmir is not the only one I had at my agenda. As I said, bilateral relations between the U.S. and Pakistan was highest on the agenda, and second of all was the question of the President's upcoming visit to Washington.

QUESTION: Last question could be from Aroosa Alam.

QUESTION: Sir, nonproliferation has been a matter of grave concern to USA. And you know India and Pakistan are engaging in nuclear race and arms race. What can do -- if you are not ready to make any facilitation on your obligation on Kashmir, what can you do on the nuclear non-proliferation front?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Look, I think, when Prime Minister Jamali made his telephone call to the Prime Minister of India, and then the Prime Minister of India made his very far-reaching statement in Srinagar, that something was begun. At least, a nascent, beginning of a dialogue. And a dialogue over time can handle all aspects of a relationship. And what you're suggesting, in terms of arms races, etc..., is sometime that I think is somewhat down the path, in terms of discussions to be held between India and Pakistan. There have to be, I think, a series of confidence-building measures, political and economic, in other words, before, I think, two states who have been in such a general confrontational stance can be expected to make far-reaching decisions on matters of arms control. But I think what you're seeing, I hope, is beginning of a process, and I'm cautiously optimistic that is exactly what we're seeing.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: There is one thing I just want to say, because a question was asked about Kashmir. And now we won't go into modalities, and that's not the right approach. What we are interested in is a process. We are interested in initiating a process of dialogue. Well, it stands to reason that any solution that does not take into consideration the aspirations of the people of Kashmir is not likely to last. So, keeping that in view, as far as the Government of Pakistan is concerned, we would like to go -- we have expressed our readiness to go -- into a tiered dialogue, a dialogue which, hopefully, will be meaningful; which will address all issues of concern to India and Pakistan.

Thank you.

QUESTION: (cross talk)...Saddam, Iraq. What has been Pakistan's response on that issue? And also, having effective control of Iraq now and after the killing of several thousand people in Iraq, do you think American regime is under pressure that they have not found weapons of mass destruction there?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: There are two questions for your last question! (Laughter) I'll answer the first question on the U.N. Security Council resolution. Pakistan, very importantly, occupies the Chair in the U.N. Security Council. So I wanted to make sure that we exposed our friends here to our thinking and the British thinking on the way forward for a U.N. Security Council resolution which will govern the situation after the Oil-for-Food Program ends. And it has several aspects: political, economic, etc... The second part of your question has to do with WMD. We are absolutely confident of our information. Never have I seen the intelligence agencies of my government and, by the way, allied governments so united on any one issue as I did on the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. And you have seen, I think, just in recent days announcements about a mobile van -- one of the things that Secretary Powell spoke about during his 5 February discussions in the U.N. Security Council. This has turned out to be true. A mobile biological van has been found. So I have absolutely no doubt we'll get to the bottom of it all.

QUESTION: What was the reason for the change in India's stance and view of the belligerent statements coming from Indian Ministers. And also, sir, do you think that this time there are more chances of the talks being successful than they have been in the past? And if so, why would you be feeling that way?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Madam, all I can say -- I can't answer for our Indian friends. I just note that the Prime Minister of India made a rather far-reaching, and I think to many people surprising, statement in Srinagar. His motives are his own. I have no doubt that he, himself, is a man of peace and he wants to have peace for India and peace between India and Pakistan. Beyond that I can't speculate on his motives. It's something, I think, that our friends, once they get into a discussion, will find out for themselves.

And the second part of your question, Madam, was...?

QUESTION: Do you think the talks are going to be more successful this time? Because we have had talks before, and they have come to naught in a sense.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, time will tell. I would pronounce myself as cautiously optimistic that we're at the beginning of what might be a very good process. There seems to be a certain confidence in Pakistan, a certain confidence in India about the ability to address all aspects of a relationship, and I think that's a very good basis on to which move forward.

Thank you all very much.

QUESTION: Thank you

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