



## Remarks with Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri of Pakistan

**Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State**

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**FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI:** Thank you all for being here. I'll just make a short opening statement and so will Mr. Armitage, and then you can ask a few questions.

We have a robust, long-term relationship with the United States of America. This explains frequent high-level contacts between Pakistan and the United States. In this context, the US Deputy Secretary of State Mr. Richard Armitage and Assistant Secretary Christina Rocca have paid a very successful visit to Pakistan. I just had an in-depth interaction with him on Pak-US relations, the regional situation, Afghanistan, and the war on terrorism. Earlier he had met with the President (Musharraf). Both sides expressed the hope for the continuation of the engagement between Pakistan and USA.

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE:** Thank you very much Mr. Minister, and thank you for the wonderful hospitality as well as for the very stimulating conversation. I am honored to be back here in Pakistan. This is a special relationship to the United States, one that President Bush treasures particularly. I had the opportunity to engage in discussions with our colleagues here (at the Embassy) following up on my trip the other day to Kandahar and to Kabul, (that) they will share with the president and with the foreign minister, my impressions of Afghanistan.

I was able to have a rather in depth discussion with President Musharraf on the question of our whole strategic relationship. We are very interested in having a full-up relationship with Pakistan, not simply one based on the global war on terror, but one that covers the entire gamut: economic, social, political, as well as, of course, security. And I was quite thrilled with the discussions this morning with President Musharraf.

**QUESTION:** (Regarding compensation from the US to families of Pakistani soldiers killed accidentally on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border).

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE:** Yes, I did take note of the tragic loss of some of the valued soldiers of Pakistan. This was an accident, one that was certainly something that we didn't wish. Regarding the question of compensation which you raise, I'm sure these are matters that are being undertaken now between our military authorities and the appropriate families. I myself am not informed as of amounts, et cetera, but I know that this compensation discussion is ongoing.

**QUESTION:** Could you explain what you meant when you said in Washington last week that you weren't sure if the whole rank and file of Pakistan security services were with you in the war on terror. (another reporter) Does this statement not amount to your saying that President Musharraf as a commander in chief of the country does not have full control of his troops?

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE:** You have started your question, I think, by acknowledging that what I said was that there was no question in my mind about both the sincerity and the effort put forth by General Musharraf. I said that there was some question of some individuals in the security services who might not have the same affection, that is the same energy and the same regard, for these efforts as President Musharraf.

In no way do I have any sign that the military and the security forces as institutions are anything but 200 percent behind the nation, and behind the president.

**QUESTION:** Just a follow-up QUESTION: 200 percent is in very sharp contrast to the doubts that you expressed that were reported publicly. What has made you change your position from where you were last week to where you stand today? And if I could also ask a question to Mr. Kasuri which is, sir, that in your discussions with Mr. Armitage, have you raised this issue that has received very wide publicity here and the concern that this suggests that General Musharraf is not completely in charge.

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE:** On the question I'll try to reiterate, perhaps, a little more articulately. What I said was there was no question in my mind, and I don't think in anyone's mind in Washington, that the institutions are firmly behind the president and the nation. And as I said, 200 percent. I said in Washington last week that there seemed to be some individuals who didn't share the same affection, let me reiterate, that means the same amount of energy and the same dedication. But in terms of institutions, we're absolutely convinced that all the institutions relevant to security are behind the president.

**FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI:** Well, as far as I am concerned, I never had any doubt that the president is in total control of the armed forces. The Pakistan Army is a highly disciplined institution and is acknowledged as such. And, in fact, even Deputy Secretary Armitage paid a compliment, as well as many others did when I was in the United States, on their professionalism and the wonderful role they are playing in peacekeeping operations all over the world.

**QUESTION:** When you were here last time, you said that you were trying to bring about reconciliation between India and Pakistan, and that Kashmir was high on the agenda of your talks. Have you forgotten it, or is it sidelined, or what is the situation now on this issue?

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE:** I don't know why you would suggest that I have forgotten it. I certainly had a very good discussion with President Musharraf about it, as well as with the distinguished Foreign Minister. We have no question that the issue, from Washington's perspective, the issue of Kashmir, is one that has to be resolved through dialogue. We continue to seek the resolution (of the issue). The discussion of Kashmir was high on the agenda during the UNGA, as it continues high on our agenda here. The reason perhaps you are not concentrating on it is because on this trip I am not going to India because of the holiday season.

**QUESTION:** (inaudible)... the same contacts between the India, US and Pakistan. Secondly, Colin Powell has confirmed with the Washington Post that they are developing a mutual security program with India that is the glide path. Under that program there is a nuclear cooperation, space technology cooperation and missile defense cooperation. When especially the Pakistani authorities already say that there is a commensurate imbalance between the two countries, why this situation is going to affect the regional security?

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE:** Thank you. Just to be clear, that's a civilian nuclear cooperation that is discussed in that so-called glide path. As I've assured our friends here in Pakistan, and last week in New York other colleagues did, anything we do that affects Pakistan, we are extraordinarily sensitive to. And we take into full concern the sensitivities of the feelings here in Pakistan. And we don't feel that anything that we are engaging in is something that would disrupt the status quo in a way that is detrimental to Pakistan.

**FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI:** Thank you very much. I just want to thank the Secretary here, and I want to say that I raised the same issue with him, and he said that

the United States Government - as did, by the way, President Bush, when we were in New York recently-is very sensitive to Pakistan's concerns regarding the matters that you raised. Thank you very much.

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