



Remarks with Pakistan Foreign Minister Mian Kursheed Mehmood Kasuri

Secretary Colin L. Powell
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamabad, Pakistan
March 18, 2004

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: I want to welcome Secretary Powell here. He's always been known to be a friend of Pakistan. So it gives me particular pleasure to welcome him here. These talks are very useful. They are very friendly, and we were able to raise quite a large number of issues of concern to both our countries. You will be happy to know, and I am not reading out of a text, you will be happy to know that one issue you always ask me about is one of prisoners, Pakistani prisoners in Afghan jails and some of them in Guantanamo Bay. I raised this with the Secretary today and I am glad to announce that we had an agreement: there will be a screening process. I can't go beyond that. The rest will now depend on the Ministry of Interior. They have to work out a mechanism, whereby people who are regarded as threat can be taken care of. I can't be more specific than that. But since that's the question you always ask me, I thought I should answer your concerns on that issue and I then go on to my prepared text.

Secretary of State Colin Powell and I just concluded a wide ranging discussion on bilateral relations, regional security situation, particularly along the Pakistan border with Afghanistan, nuclear non-proliferation and recent developments in Pakistan-India relations. We discussed ways and means of realizing our mutual commitment for a long term, broad-based and enduring partnership between the two countries. I expressed hope that some of the irritants caused by the travel advisory and restrictive visa for U. S. A. would be overcome in the coming months. During the meeting we also took stock of the progress in the war against terrorism. We talked about the progress in composite dialogue between Pakistan and India to address all our outstanding issues, including of course, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. There was satisfaction of the success achieved in curbing nuclear black market. Secretary of State Colin Powell commended Pakistan readiness to address the issues related to nuclear proliferation in a forthright manner. I would now throw the floor open for questions, either to the Secretary or to myself. And you're going to be conducting.

(laughter)

SECRETARY POWELL: Do you want to take it all?

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Of course not, go ahead.

(laughter)

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. It is a great pleasure to be with you again and a great pleasure to be back in Islamabad. On behalf of President Bush and the American people, I came to say that the United States is committed to a long-term partnership with Pakistan. We have been involved in a long-term partnership with Pakistan for many years and I believe that in the current environment we have every opportunity to strengthen that relationship in strategic ways as we move forward. Pakistan has an important role to play in this region as a peaceful, moderate modern Muslim nation, a nation that is becoming increasingly democratic.

During our meetings today we are going to be discussing, not only as the Minister and I already have, but with the Prime Minister and the President later, a number of the critical challenges that Pakistan is taking on fighting terrorism, countering extremism, stopping proliferation, reforming education, and building stronger democratic institutions. The United States applauds Pakistan's determination and courage and stands ready to support the progress that has been made. Our assistance package to Pakistan constitutes one of our largest programs in the world: \$3 billion over a five-year period. That money will help with education reform, basic health care improvements and extending rural access to reliable sources of water. These programs directly benefit the citizens of Pakistan. The United States is also providing Pakistan with close to \$1.5 billion in debt relief: U.S. debt. I'm also happy to let you know this morning that the United States Ex-Im Bank is expanding its financing options in Pakistan. Ex-Im Bank will now support short, medium and long-term financing for the sale of American products when the Government of Pakistan guarantees repayment. This is a sign of the increasing importance of business in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.

I might also note that I advised the Foreign Minister this morning that we will also be making notification to our Congress that will designate Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally for purposes of our future military-military relations. The United States welcomes the steps that Pakistanis are taking to advance democracy at every level: local, provincial and national. On the security front, President Bush and the American people appreciate the sacrifices that Pakistan already has made to keep us all safer from terrorism. We share your sadness over the loss in battle in the past few days of some of your brave frontier soldiers. And we share your pride in the way that they pursued their mission to defend their nation. Both our countries recognize our alliance is crucial to winning the worldwide war on terror. We must do together more if your region, and if indeed the whole world, is to live in peace. In addition to fighting terrorism, Pakistan has a very important role to play in promoting Afghan recovery and reconstruction, and the Minister and I had a chance to discuss that issue, as well. And I was able to brief him on my conversations in Afghanistan yesterday.

The United States also welcomes the historic decision to launch a comprehensive dialogue between India and Pakistan: an act of great statesmanship on the part of President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee. An exciting series of cricket matches is one of the most immediate benefits from this process and I congratulate your magnificent team for its recent success. Over time I believe Mr. Minister that your dialogue will also offer opportunities for India and Pakistan to build stronger economic ties and tap into the natural dynamism of the Pakistani and Indian peoples. In sum, the United States stands with Pakistan as you move forward in this new dialogue relationship with India and as we move forward together to meet the challenges of this century.

Thank you, Mr. Minister.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, at this time there will be one question.

QUESTION: This is for you Mr. Secretary. When in New Delhi you did mention that you would speak with President Musharraf on proliferation of pieces that have come out in Pakistan. In that you mentioned you would raise the issue of Pakistani officials, whether past or present, if they were involved. Do you have any fresh intelligence that you're talking about as officials, because we didn't hear that from Washington before?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I have no particular intelligence I'm going to bring to President Musharraf, but I think as you look at this matter, questions have arisen as to not only what Dr. Khan and his associates might have been doing, was there any other knowledge within the government at the time it was happening. I think this is a logical and proper question to ask and I'm sure that Pakistani authorities would want it known, as well. What we are interested in is going after this network, this network that was providing technology to develop nuclear weapons to some very dangerous countries around the world. And it is in our mutual interest, of Pakistan, the interest of the rest of the world, to make sure the network has been completely pulled up and make sure that all those who were participating in the network in one way or the other have been identified. That's the only way we will know that the network has been completely destroyed. That is, that is our mutual goal (inaudible).

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Before we go to the next question, I assured the Secretary that it was in Pakistan's own interest as a nuclear power that no proliferation take place and that we are going to spare no effort to try and make efforts, to...you know...pull this out root and branch, wherever this network is. And there will complete sharing with the United States and with other friendly countries on that issue of non-proliferation. And I explained the particular circumstances in which Dr. Khalid Khan, who enjoyed a total autonomy was able to do that, I went to explain in some detail.

MR. BOUCHER: Mr. Gedda of the Associated Press.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, on the same subject, have U.S. officials had contact or questioned Dr. Khan or if not, has access to him (inaudible) been sought or do you consider this more a Pakistani internal matter?

SECRETARY POWELL: This is a Pakistani internal matter, but we are receiving information from them and our services work very well together and I'm confident that they're will be full disclosure so that we can work together to make sure, as the Minister has said, that this is all pulled up root and branch. So we're cooperating very well with each other, but it's actually an internal Pakistani matter.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, it is believed and I also believe in this fact, that you are voice of reason in your country's administration and you are statesmen of international stature. I wish to know that how do you see, in the longer perspective, the future relationship between the United States of America and Pakistan? And another quick query is that since you were in India and Pakistan, in India they have (inaudible) the process of peace and you will appreciate certainly this fact that without participation of the Kashmiri people this process cannot go with success. The human rights situation in the part of Kashmir controlled by India is a source of concern everyone of us. Did you take up this question with your host in New Delhi? Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POWELL: On the first question with respect to our relationship and where I see it going in the future, it has come so far just in the past several years, since the aftermath, immediate aftermath of 9-11 when the very bold and historic decision was made by President Musharraf to join us in the war on terror and assist us in our efforts in Afghanistan. Since then, we have moved in so many directions: military to military, tried to help you with your economic difficulties through debt relief, through access to our markets, through the kinds of things that I announced today with the Em-Im Bank. And as we move forward I hope there will be opportunity for greater participation--political level, economic level, military to military activities. There's no limit to what we can do together. There's enormous respect in America for Pakistan, and Pakistani people, and I think we have tried to demonstrate our commitment to that long-term relationship.

With respect to the dialogue between India and Pakistan, the point you touched on: yes, it was raised. We know of human rights concerns but this really is an issue that is going to be dealt with by India and Pakistan in this dialogue. The United States has a good strong relationship with India, a good strong relationship with Pakistan, we no longer see this relationship as was the case in years past, through this prism. We have two great friends in this part of the world and any point in this dialogue when we can be helpful will be helpful, but essentially a matter that has to be resolved between the two sides or it will not be resolved in a satisfactory way. I'm sure both sides will take into account the needs, desires, aspirations, and concerns of the people of the region.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Nicholas Kravlev from the Washington Times. Obviously you and the Administration have invested quite a lot in President Musharraf in the past three years and he is has been enormously helpful after 9/11. But what kinds of contingency plans do you have for the day that Mr. Musharraf...President Musharraf... will not be the leader of this country? Having in mind the two attempts on his life and the fact that he came under a military coup. Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: He is the President and we will work with him, we are also working with the Government of Pakistan to put in place the appropriate (inaudible) of democracy that will be vibrant, that rests on sound legislative process, that does not rest on any one single personality. Although we have no contingency plans as you describe them because we are working with the government that is here now and President Musharraf has been an excellent partner in working with us on so many issues, the war on terror, economic improvements in Pakistan, we have worked on education reform in Pakistan, we will continue to do so with him. My interaction is with President Musharraf, and President Bush with President Musharraf, but I also interact widely with my colleague, the Foreign Minister, and the Prime Minister. And so we are reaching out to all levels of Pakistani society. I am meeting with young people in a little while. We understand the importance of understanding the views of all the different groups in Pakistan.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: The (inaudible) is important. I wish to respond to this also. First of all, an attempt should be made to make a difference between Pakistan and some other countries in the area. Pakistan is a pluralistic society. We've had, you know, it's not a brush with democracy, it's not recent, we've had democratic institutions for more than a hundred years, at least since Minto-Morley Reforms, before Pakistan became independent. It has a free press. It has very powerful NGOs in the civil society, and since its basically pluralistic society with a multi-party system and a parliament in which the opposition is very strong, I don't think that there is any such fear as the type you describe. And I thought it was appropriate to make that point.

QUESTION: Secretary Powell, do you endorse the view that Kashmir is a central issue in Indo-Pakistan relations, and that unless there is any progress towards settlement of this dispute, there can be no durable peace between the two countries?

SECRETARY POWELL: I endorse the view that the two sides on the 6th of January agreed to enter into a dialogue on a variety of issues of importance to both sides. A very well structured dialogue that has already begun and has already started to show it's success and Kashmir is part of that dialogue. And the Minister and I discussed the fact that he will be meeting with Minister Sinha in the summer and all these issues will be discussed and debated. I think everyone understands the importance of Kashmir to this dialogue and the importance of many other issues to the dialogue. What I think is significant is that the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan came together in Islamabad and said we have to move forward, and we have to move forward by talking to one another. And I think that was an historic step on their part. And I think they are also doing it because the people of Pakistan and the people of India want this dialogue to take place. They want to see these outstanding issues resolved, these conflicts resolved, and the United States will be watching with great interest and trying to help both of our friends.

Thank you.

Released on March 18, 2004

