



Remarks With Pakistan Minister of Foreign Affairs Mian Kurshid Mahmood Kasuri After Their Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell
C Street Entrance
Washington, DC
May 19, 2004

(4:45 p.m. EDT)

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I just had a very successful meeting with my colleague, Foreign Minister Kasuri of Pakistan, and we discussed bilateral issues, of course.

I expressed, once again, our appreciation for Pakistan's collaborative efforts with us in the war against terrorism, and especially our need to continue our cooperation in dealing with al-Qaida and Taliban remnants that drift back and forth between both sides of the border, between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

We also discussed the situation concerning nuclear proliferation, the actions of A.Q. Khan. We're very pleased at what the Pakistani Government has been doing and we look forward to continuing our exchange of information.

I briefed the Minister on our efforts with respect to Iraq and the effort we're putting forward now to work with Ambassador Brahimi on selecting an interim government and the leadership for that interim government. We are determined, the President is determined, to transfer sovereignty to an Iraqi interim government by the end of June.

I also briefed the Minister on our other efforts on reform, as part of the Middle East Initiative, and we discussed also Pakistan's concern concerning detainees and how we are continuing to work closely with each other to resolve outstanding issues concerning Pakistani detainees.

It's always a pleasure to receive the Minister. Our conversation, as always, was candid and forthright.

Minister, I offer you the microphone.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Thank you very much.

Yes, as the Secretary said, I raised the issue of Guantanamo Bay prisoners, as well as some other matters. Guantanamo Bay I mentioned because it's a bilateral matter because some Pakistanis are also involved there.

Of course, as the Secretary said, we discussed regional and international situation. We discussed the situation emerging out of the new elections in India, and the Secretary felt, and I agree with him, that, in view of the good work that's already been done, and the good vibes that are coming from the new government even before it's been formed by leaders of the would-be government, we both agreed that these were positive signals and that we need to continue with that.

Well, I'm certain, and on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, I can say that the Government of Pakistan is committed to continuing with the peace process and look forward to the Government of India doing the same.

I thank you very much. If there is a question, I am ready for that.

Yes.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary --

SECRETARY POWELL: Barry.

QUESTION: I'm sorry. Before we go to the subject at hand, we have to ask you about Gaza. What have you heard about Israel's explanation? And do you buy it?



SECRETARY POWELL: Israel expressed, has expressed, its regret for the incident; nevertheless, it is a tragic incident. I believe the activities of the Israeli Defense Forces in Gaza in recent days have caused a problem and it worsened the situation, and I think made it more difficult for us to move forward and get back into the peace process.

So we are in touch with the Israeli Government. I spoke with the Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister today, along with Dr. Rice, in a conference call, and I also spoke to the Israeli Foreign Minister, and expect to speak to Palestinian officials before the day is out, to urge all sides to exercise maximum restraint.

All of these actions have to be weighed against the consequences that flow from such actions. And that was a clear message we gave to the Israelis earlier today and we are also reminding both parties of their obligations under the roadmap.

This once again shows, however, the possibilities that exist in Prime Minister Sharon's plan to evacuate all of the settlements in Gaza and beginning the evacuation of some in the West Bank. And I hope that the Prime Minister, in the near future, will be able to come forward with that plan again and with any modifications that he intends for that plan so that we can use it as a way to move forward.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary --

SECRETARY POWELL: Shall we wait a minute for the siren?

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, in the face of the results of the Indian elections and the meeting with Mr. Kasuri, what is the new message from the U.S. Administration to India and Pakistan, who are both nuclear, and has the U.S. finally reconciled with the reality that both countries are nuclear and they need to be accepted in the

international community?

SECRETARY POWELL: They both are nuclear and there is no question about that. They both have nuclear capability.

Our message to the new Indian leadership is that we look forward to working with them. We have a solid agenda with the Indian people covering all aspects of our bilateral relationship, and we see no reason that that agenda should not continue to be pursued with the new government.

I think, as the Minister said a minute ago, the activities between India and Pakistan, the roadmap that they have been following, seems to still be very much intact, and we expect that both sides will continue to walk down that path. But I would yield to the Minister, if you want to add another word to that.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: No, I entirely agree what the Secretary has said, and I told him that the Government of Pakistan is committed to this peace process. We've invested a lot of time and effort. And, of course, it would be a pity if that were not the case and I have no reason to believe that it was otherwise.

SECRETARY POWELL: Frankly, the initial statements coming from the new government certainly suggests that, both in terms of U.S.-Indian relations, and if I may say so, Indian-Pakistan relations, remain on track.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, just this weekend, you urged the Israelis to show restraint and you criticized their destruction of homes in Gaza. This comes after that. What does the fact that they've apparently escalated their activities in Gaza following your warning say about our ability to influence events in Israel?

And also just another point. The 40 people that were apparently killed in western Iraq today being reported as a wedding party. These two events combined, what does this do to further hurt our image, the U.S. image, in the Arab world?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, with respect to what happened today, it was not a -- as the Israelis have explained it, it was not anything that was a deliberate, planned act. They believe that it was a tragic incident and they're looking into it.

But nevertheless, it does not assist us in the process of moving forward to get back into the roadmap. Now is the time for everybody to exercise maximum restraint. We disapprove and oppose the destruction of the houses of innocent people, and we've said that and that remains our position.

With respect to the reports that we are receiving concerning Iraq, I do not yet have confirmation from our military authorities that the reports have been verified, so I can't comment on them.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, is the United States prepared, as German diplomats, for example, are requesting -- is the United States prepared to have a formal mechanism whereby, after June 30th, there will be some kind of review body that the Iraqis can have a say in any military action that their forces are involved in?

SECRETARY POWELL: Iraq, at that time, will be a sovereign government and, of course, it will have a say in what is happening in its sovereign territory. And I think as I said at the G-8 ministerial meeting press conference the other day, we would expect to put in place consultative mechanisms between the Iraqi interim government and our embassy, the Iraqi interim government and its military authorities with our command that will be there under the leadership of General Sanchez.

This should not be startling or seen as revolutionary. These are the kinds of arrangements that we have had in countries throughout the world where we have had our forces stationed in countries that were sovereign. But we intend for Iraq to be a sovereign nation and we fully expect that the interim government will be inviting us to remain. We know they will because we are the basis for their security while they are getting up and running, while they are preparing for elections and while they are getting ready for the national assembly elections that they will have in either December or January of this year.

So we are quite confident that we will be able to make the necessary arrangements with the new Iraqi interim government that will assure them that we will take into account their desires and their points of view. However, United States forces ultimately remain under the command of our military commanders and under the command of the President of the United States as Commander-in-Chief, and they will act in accordance with the instructions they receive through Secretary Rumsfeld to them from the Commander-in-Chief, President Bush, and we never lose our ability to act in what is our best interest to secure our troops and to accomplish the mission that we have been given.

But we are quite confident we will be able to make the necessary arrangements with the Iraqi interim government so that all of their points of view will be taken into consideration, and that's why we're putting in place a very strong embassy staff understand the leadership of a gifted ambassador, John Negroponte, who has worked in similarly complex diplomatic political-military arrangements.

One more, a Pakistani.

QUESTION: Yes, sir. When you last visited, when you visited Islamabad, you spoke of making Pakistan a major non-NATO ally.

SECRETARY POWELL: Yes.

QUESTION: Where does the proposal stand now?

SECRETARY POWELL: The proposal is moving its way through our process. And I don't have the timelines in mind, but it's working its way through our legislative -- executive and legislative process. Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

Released on May 19, 2004

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.