



Press Availability in Islamabad, Pakistan

Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary
Office of the Foreign Ministry in Islamabad, Pakistan
July 15, 2004

(Introduction of Mr. Armitage was made by Mr. Riaz Khokhar, Foreign Secretary of the Pakistan Foreign Office)

Mr. Armitage: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for the warmth of your greeting and for your kind remarks.

In addition to the subjects you noted, I would like to - which we discussed, and I think with a very clear understanding of the way forward - just to note that, on a bilateral basis, to be called a friend and partner of Pakistan is a great honor for the United States. And we're going to do our best to be worthy of it. I liked the term you used, Mr. Secretary, about an enduring relationship, and not one that is temporal.

In the past, we had one that was temporal, that was based on a third party, as it were. And we've gotten away from that.

So, for the United States, let me say that we are completely satisfied with where we are in our relationship. We will look to move forward in a way that is mutually acceptable. But, as of today, couldn't be more pleased. So I'll be glad to try to answer maybe only two of the questions and give four to the distinguished Foreign Secretary.

Question: It was refreshing to see the American spirit which existed before, pre- 9-11, when you apologized in India yesterday. In Pakistan, too, senior officials have been abused by your immigration, especially one gentleman who was with the President's entourage on an official visit. How do you comment on that?

And very quickly, Pakistani prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. Do you need assistance from the coalition partners to finish the task so that Pakistanis can come home quickly? It has been a long time.

Mr. Armitage: Can I ask you to repeat the second part of your question, please, I'm not sure I...?

Question: It's a question about the Pakistani prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. It's been forever now, nearly two years or more, that you have them there. Do you need help from your coalition partners to finish the task of asking them questions or whatever, so that they can return home quickly?

Mr. Armitage: Thank you. I did apologize to my friend George Fernandes. A high ranking official who travels and is treated in such a fashion deserves an apology. And the distinguished guest from the great nation of Pakistan would likewise receive one.

The question of homeland security is one that my colleagues are wrestling with every day back in Washington, and throughout our country: how to have open but secure borders. It's a very difficult thing. And as we move forward, we'll try in various ways to adjust.

So I'm very sorry for the inconveniences caused, and once we've finally prevailed in this Global War on Terrorism, it would be my fondest hope that these kinds of inconveniences will disappear.

And the second question of prisoners in Guantanamo: We are in the business of bringing them back home. You've seen in recent months - I don't have the figures on the top of my head - a great upsurge in the number of people who have been sent back to their own homes. We had a Swedish prisoner who was recently released to Swedish authorities. We had some French citizens who are going back, if they haven't already, then in the not too distant future.

So, we're doing the best we can to relieve these people, those who have been to not found to have great deals of information or things of that nature, to bring them back and repatriate them to their countries.

Question: Mr. Deputy Secretary, you have been quoted by the Indian press that Pakistan has to dismantle the apparatus of terrorism. But what about the human rights violations that have taken place in Indian-held Kashmir, where the Indian forces are killing dozens of people every day? What are your comments on that?

Mr. Armitage: Thank you. There is absolutely no question that there is violence and violations of human rights, and we have discussed this with our Indian friends. I was correctly quoted yesterday when I just noted that all of the terrorist camps have not been dismantled.

But it has to be noted that there are lots of different kinds of violence. There is some across the LoC violence; there is other indigenous violence. It all should stop so the people of Jammu-Kashmir can have a prosperous life, a prosperous future. And that's what U.S. policy is directed towards.

Question: Mr. Armitage, something that America had requested Pakistan for troops contribution in Iraq, is there any fresh request from the United States or are you going to put a request in during this visit presently, because, since the U.N. mission is in the process of being established in Iraq.

Mr. Armitage: Yes, I briefed my distinguished colleague the Foreign Secretary on our views of Iraq. I made no requests of the Government of Pakistan. Pakistan will make her own mind up on these matters. I simply pointed out where we thought the government, the interim government of Iraq was going, and how we were doing.

Question: On the question of the kind of U.S. assistance to Pakistan in the war on terror, a Pakistani official was quoted yesterday in an interview saying that there are still gaps in Pakistan's ability to gather intelligence and that the U.S. could do more in this area by providing Pakistan with technology and new types of help. Do you have anything to say on that?

Mr. Armitage: The Foreign Secretary also raised these matters with me, and I told him that I would certainly look into it. I was, however, pleased to note that we've had some recent deliveries particularly of helicopters and some more that we are going to do in the not too distant future which helped alleviate the gaps that exist. So, our business is to do as much as we can to help our partner be able to take care of her own interests and her own security here in Pakistan, and I'll do that in any way possible.

Question: Can you elaborate just a bit more about what more is in the pipeline, or what more is under consideration?

Mr. Armitage: We were provided a list of equipment some time ago by the Government of Pakistan. I don't have it on the top of my head, but my colleagues are certainly reviewing it. The Foreign Secretary asked for a little speed-up in the process, and that is something that we ought to be able to do.

Question: Mr. Armitage, after being designated as a Major Non-NATO Ally, can Pakistan hope for any advanced weapons systems from the United States?

Mr. Armitage: Can they look forward to any?

Question: Yeah. And would the United States be willing to send some advanced weapons systems to Pakistan?

Mr. Armitage: Well, it depends on which advanced weapons systems you are talking about. It also depends on what the needs of the Pakistani military are as judged by the Pakistani military. We will certainly consider any request that the Government of Pakistan and the Army of Pakistan together deem as appropriate. But I came here with no decisions on major weapons systems at all.

Question: Mr. Deputy Secretary, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi of Pakistan diplomat has been appointed as an envoy of the U.N. Secretary General for Iraq. My question would be, in the garb of disappointment, will the United States of America use pressure tactics or arm-twisting matters to compel Pakistan to deploy troops to Iraq in the shape of a protection force or otherwise?

Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar: Can I answer that question? There is no garb and there is no arm-twisting and there is no request. So I think, you take it easy.

Mr. Armitage: I would have just said "no" (laughter in the hall). I might add, I would have answered to your question, I would have just said "no," but I would have said that the appointment of Ashraf Qazi as the Secretary General's Special Representative, I thought, was a great tribute to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to Pakistan in general.

Question: My question is, Mr. Excellency, the President of the United States of America and Secretary of State and yourself have appreciated the Pakistani role against the war on terrorism, but unfortunately, your ambassador in Kabul used to allege (of) Pakistan in this regard, and he always says that Osama is in Pakistan, Mullah Omar is (in) Pakistan, Pakistan is doing this thing, Afghanistan is doing that thing. Have you given open license to him?

Mr. Armitage: Well, I think his responsibilities in Kabul are such that he sometimes looks at things in sort of a very narrow way. Those of us who have a larger responsibility, and see the total aspect of what Pakistan is doing in the Global War on Terror, have a view that is quite more pronounced in the positive. And that's why the Secretary of State, myself and other officials are able to be so categorical about the assistance that Pakistan is providing overall in the Global War on Terrorism.

Question: Will you continue to say what he is saying? I mean, nothing that you say stops him. Nothing that State Department says stops your ambassador in Kabul. Have you given him a license that he can go continue?

Mr. Armitage: We haven't given anyone a license, you can be assured of that...

Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar: Thank you very much. You're most welcome anytime in Pakistan.

END TRANSCRIPT

