



Remarks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamabad, Pakistan
March 17, 2005

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: It's been a great pleasure to welcome Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice on her first official visit to Pakistan. Secretary Rice's visit to Pakistan, early in the second term of President Bush, underlines the importance attached by the United States to developing a robust partnership with Pakistan. I respect Secretary Rice's intellectual vigor, grasp of history and vision for a better future. I am confident that during her stewardship of U.S. foreign policy our bilateral relationship, which has assumed a strategic dimension, will contribute to global and regional peace, stability and prosperity.

I am strengthened in my belief because of what Secretary Rice told me during my visit to Washington that our relationship has both grown immeasurably in the last few years much beyond Afghanistan, Iraq and terrorism. We remain engaged in broadening and deepening our multifaceted relationship on a long-term basis for the mutual benefit of our two countries.

There is something missing so I am going to dictate that, but the rest is -- copies will be given to you.

I made specific proposals especially for discussion in security and strategic matters during our meeting today, which is probably not being given to you, and you can, if you have any doubt, you can ask us later.



Secretary Rice called on President Pervez Musharraf last evening. She praised President Musharraf for his courage and vision in promoting peace and stability in the region and for his concept of enlightened moderation. Dr. Rice had earlier met with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on her arrival yesterday. During these meetings and again this evening with her meeting with me, Secretary Rice reiterated the commitment of the United States to an expanded and sustainable long-term partnership with Pakistan. I had wide-ranging discussions with her covering bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues. We discussed steps to take our partnership to a new and higher level of engagement. We reviewed our bilateral cooperation and agreed to promote greater collaboration in the areas of security and defense as well as in economic and technological fields. We also focused on the importance of increasing market access of Pakistani products. I expressed satisfaction with the progress made with India on a number of CBMs. I did however emphasize to Dr. Rice that Pakistan desires durable peace with India and pointed out that this could only be achieved by resolving all outstanding issues, especially the Kashmir dispute. This is, of course, as you know, been a cause of perpetual tension during the last 57 years.

I also raised the issue of water security for Pakistan. In this context, I discussed the Baglihar dam and the Kishan Ganga project. We also touched on the situation in Afghanistan. Secretary Rice expressed her appreciation for the support extended by Pakistan for stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. We exchanged views on UN Security Council reform, nonproliferation and the global war on terrorism. I am looking forward to working closely with her in building a strong and enduring relationship between Pakistan and the United States.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank you, Minister Kasuri, for very productive meetings here and also for arranging a very (inaudible) for me here in Pakistan. We've known each other an extended period of time and we've remarked many times about how far the U.S.-Pakistani relationship has come in the last three and a half years. It is a relationship that is broader than the war on terrorism although we obviously admire the courage of the Pakistani leadership and the courage of the Pakistani people and armed forces in the fight against terrorism. We have also extended our relationship to America's interest and support for educational reform in Pakistan, for economic reform in Pakistan, our trade relationship. President Bush has pledged \$3 billion over five years in economic and security assistance to Pakistan. So this was a broad and deep relationship.

We had an opportunity to talk about the warming relations between India and Pakistan I want to give my encouragement to the parties for continued progress along that front. It's extremely important for a region like this that Pakistan and India continue their efforts to improve relations, to remove barriers to interaction between their people. And as I did when I was in India, I noted that it is quite great to see cricket diplomacy, even if I don't myself understand cricket very well. (Laughter.) So it was a very good discussion about India and Pakistan. Obviously, it is important that all issues be on the table for eventual resolution and all of the parties, both India and Pakistan as well as the Kashmiris, believe that they have a future that can be secure and peaceful and free of terrorism and violence, but also a democratic future. And so we did have a very good discussion of that.

We talked about Pakistan's internal development and the need for a democratic path ahead for Pakistan, and I had a chance to talk with President Musharraf and the Prime Minister last night and with the Foreign Minister today. And we continue to work with Pakistan and we look forward to the evolution of a democratic path toward elections in 2007 for Pakistan.

The United States and Pakistan are working closely together also in this region with Afghanistan in the fight on terrorism, and of course I was just in Afghanistan for the first time and I want to take note of the increasingly productive relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, one that was really unthinkable some years ago has really begun to blossom. It is a relationship that could anchor an entire region in trade and in development, in economic commerce. It was once a region that had a great deal of economic vibrancy and we look forward to trying to help the regional actors, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan, reestablish that economic vibrancy.

So all in all, I think it has been a very good discussion and I look forward to continuing it with you over dinner, Foreign Minister, and I think we will now take questions.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Thank you.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Pakistan and India (inaudible). What is your comment on this?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I do believe that bilateral discussions between the parties can not only serve to resolve tensions but are serving to resolve tensions. And it is the case that the United States has always said that it is prepared to help in any way that it can, but it can never do so in a way that tries to supplant the goodwill and the intention and the commitment of the parties to dialogue. And so we've been actually very impressed by the composite dialogue and want to see it continued.

As to specific issues between India and Pakistan, I'm really not prepared to comment. These are issues that the parties will have to resolve and I'm certain they'll find the appropriate mechanisms in which to do so.

MODERATOR: (inaudible) Associated Press (inaudible).

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, did you ask for and did you receive any specific assurances about when President Musharraf intends to give up his military post?

SECRETARY RICE: We did talk about the importance of democratic reform in Pakistan -- about getting on a road to democratic reforms that would, in fact, lead to free and fair elections in 2007. And that was the character of our discussion. I want to just note that Pakistan is a country that has come an enormously long way in the last several years. This is not the Pakistan of September 11th. It is not even the Pakistan of September 11th, 2002. And it is a credit to President Musharraf and his advisors and indeed to the Pakistani people that progress is being made in educational and other reforms, press reforms among them, that we would hope do lead to a future for Pakistan that is both democratic and tolerant of many different views, in other words pluralistic, and that is (inaudible) of the kind of extremism that of course does not believe in or intend to be involved in a democratic process.

And so we will always talk about the need for democracy. And it is central to our dialogue with every country in the world and it is also central for our dialogue here. And I found our Pakistani hosts to be more than willing and open to have those discussions.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: I'd like to say something here because very important. (Inaudible) and democracy, there are quite a few ingredients to that. One of them, of course, is an independent and free media. I'm quite proud to say that Pakistan has one of the freest media in Asia. And that includes every single country in Asia.

Secondly, as far as women participation is concerned, gender equality issues, we have 40,000 women working at the local bodies level. We have 73 members in the National Assembly. We have quite a large number of women in the Senate.

On the minorities, probably Pakistan is the only country in the world, if I might say, that has granted two voting rights to minorities. I can't think of any country, in fact some countries will say is going overboard because it's a violation of one man, one vote. To minorities we give two votes; they elect the general members and they also get their own co-religionists in the National Assembly.

And furthermore, in the history of Pakistan, 57-year history of Pakistan, we've never had such a strong opposition. We are 190 in government and there are 150 in the opposition in the National Assembly. So looked at from every point of view, I think we have a working democracy. We can never be perfect. It's a move towards perfection and we are continuing in that direction. And I agree with Secretary Rice that when we discussed this issue, we look forward to totally free and fair elections in 2007.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, (inaudible) between India and Pakistan. But do you think that a durable peace can be achieved without the resolution of the core issue of Kashmir, which has been the source of three -- four wars between the two countries?

SECRETARY RICE: Certainly, I would expect that in the course of time, there will need to be resolution of all issues of concern to both sides. But let me be very clear that an improved atmosphere and efforts to bring the two sides together that really, if you look at three years ago or so, these efforts seem quite remarkable in and of themselves. That trend certainly helped to improve the atmosphere in which the difficult issues can be addressed and ultimately resolved.

I don't have any doubt that as much as we applaud the (inaudible) dialogue and all that has been achieved there, that there are still deep divisions and difficulties and that they need to be overcome. But if they can be overcome in an atmosphere of goodwill, an atmosphere of commitment to better relations between India and Pakistan, and a recognition that the future of these two great countries rest in peace between them, then I'm quite certain that all issues can eventually be resolved.

MODERATOR: (Inaudible), New York Times, yes sir?

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you and the Pakistanis have discussed the possible sale of F16s, but it seems fairly clear that Congress is not going to approve any such deal as long as the lingering questions about A.Q. Khan's sales, particularly to Iran. Did you receive any new information or any new assurance during this visit that Pakistan will finally answer these questions?

SECRETARY RICE: Let me start by saying of course we have had broad discussions about the defense requirements of Pakistan. I think that's not surprising. We are very much in a strategic relationship with Pakistan and we've been discussing the defense requirements and we've been discussing military balance issues here in the region.

As to A.Q. Khan, I don't think there is any doubt that A.Q. Khan represented a threat not just to the United States but a threat also to Pakistan, to the region, to the international community as a whole. And we have had cooperation with Pakistan to try and make sure that the A.Q. Khan network is broken up, to get as much information as is possible. It's a network that we want to make certain that its tentacles are broken up as well and so we have cooperation with a number of countries on that front. But I do not doubt that we all have an interest in knowing what happened, that we all have an interest in making sure that this network cannot -- it does not continue to operate in any way. And perhaps most importantly, we all have an interest in knowing how it happened so that we can safeguard against this kind of black market entrepreneurship in the future.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: On this issue I'd like to say something. The international community got wise to it much later. President Musharraf, off his own back, as it were, in 2001 removed Dr. A.Q. Khan from the position in (inaudible) laboratories. In view of his status in Pakistan as the father of the bomb as he was called, he was removed and given (inaudible) high-sounding title of advisor to the prime minister and his entry into (inaudible) laboratory was banned. That was not an easy decision for President Musharraf or for any leader to take. It required a lot of courage. So he didn't act when our friends pointed out and friendly agencies -- from some friendly countries, agencies from friendly countries, pointed out certain facts to the President. He took the action on their doubt when there was no proof available. I don't want to go into details, but he was removed much earlier than the information that was supplied to him.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Oh. Do we have another question? (Inaudible)

QUESTION: (Inaudible) in your opening remarks you talked of the importance of the resolution of (inaudible) problem. But there -- it is -- (inaudible) that United States of America believes in (inaudible) and freedom. The United States Department (inaudible) Human Rights Report speak of growing human rights violation in the part of Kashmir occupied by India. Since you were in India, did you discuss this specific question with your interlocutors there so that you get a reassurance that human rights violation (inaudible) and the long sufferings of the Kashmiri people should come to an end and this problem will be resolved on the political (inaudible)? Can you comment?

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Well, it is obviously the view of the United States that there should be no long-suffering people anywhere in the world who are denied the liberty that we all enjoy here, that we as Americans enjoy. The fact is that we do a human rights report; it speaks for itself. We've also talked about the need to end violence and terrorism in this area. And so there are a number of issues that need to be dealt with by all the parties and I think we've been very clear to Pakistan, to India, as to what we consider their responsibilities to be.

Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER KASURI: Thank you.

2005/T4-11

Released on March 17, 2005



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