



Press Briefing in Pakistan

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
 United States Embassy Islamabad
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[Secretary Rice Travel to Afghanistan, India and Pakistan With the President Bush](#)

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SECRETARY RICE: Okay, well let me just say a couple words about the trip, and then I'll take any questions that you might have. This is a region that, obviously, September 11th changed dramatically American strategic interests and perspective in the region. It's hard to look back and think about Afghanistan from five years ago, when the Taliban was in power, when in fact the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan was one in good -- Pakistan was one of the only countries that actually recognized the Taliban. If you look back to December of 2001 or June of 2002, you had a situation in which everybody worried about war between India and Pakistan.

And you come here now, and there's been a dramatic change in the relationships among the countries, but also in the relationships with the United States. And even though, obviously, September 11th and the war on terror have very much shaped these relationships and the strategic nature of them, I think that it's clear from all three that they are much more than that.

Now there are broad relationships in Afghanistan -- a relationship of helping to have given rise to a young democracy there, and now trying to help stabilize that young democracy, trying to build a country that, after 25 years of civil war, obviously has a very tough road ahead, to India, which I might note that the President, also back in 2000 when he was running for office, noted the importance of the rise of India, and has followed through on his determination to build a strategic, broad relationship with India.

I know that there's a lot of focus on the civil nuclear deal, which is an important step forward, and I think really does bring India into the mainstream on non-proliferation policy. And for a country that has really an excellent relationship on proliferation, now will give access to the IAEA, to its civilian nuclear industry. And I know that a lot of the focus was on that, but if you just looked at the agricultural agreement, harkening back to the grain revolution of the '60s, the business roundtable, the CEOs, the relationship with the business school, if you look to the extraordinary defense relationship that we now have with India, where there were exercises here just before the President arrived, air exercises, that's obviously a deep and broad relationship, based on our common democratic and multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious -- we share those elements.

So I think this really was a breakthrough relationship -- trip for India, but the relationship has been building and moving in that direction now for some time.

And then finally here in Pakistan, again, we tend to think of it as a relationship principally in the war on terror. But the President just had a really wonderful meeting with some members of civil society -- a woman who's the head of a bank that is -- principally gives micro loans for women-owned businesses; the head of the American-Pakistani Business Council, which has raised extraordinary amounts of money for the earthquake relief; a person here who is head of a Christian center here, who has been a part of the fight that President Musharraf mentioned to mainstream minorities and minority religions into the political process; a woman member of parliament who talked about her work on women's issues and women's legislation, in particular domestic violence laws against the adultery and rape as being equal.

So the breadth of the work that we were doing here was very evident when many of the people around that table said, I have a USAID grant to do this, or the U.S. Agriculture Department is working with us on this. So it was very clear that this, too, is a very broad relationship.

Obviously, Pakistan has a road ahead of it, in terms of democratic development. I think President Musharraf spoke to that this afternoon. But I would just -- today, I think you have to look back at where Pakistan was in September of 2001. This was a country that, I think, was very, very close to losing completely the grip on extremism, very close to Talibanization of its own, and probably just a step away from losing the chance to ever return to a state of moderation in this region. And I think that you've seen now, over the last several years, when you think about women's rights, when you think about minority rights for religious groups, you've seen some changes in a positive direction.

So all in all, I think it's been a great trip for the President. I know he's enjoyed it very much. He just went out and batted cricket, which I'm not sure if it was a good hit or not, since I know nothing about cricket, but it looked good to me.

So I'll take your questions.

Q There was a story a while back about how Karzai had hand delivered some information to Pakistan about some of the extremists down in the western and southern part. The thought was that he wanted Pakistan to do more to crack down. Was that discussed today, the border issues, and can you give us a sense on how each one of them were handling that issue?

SECRETARY RICE: Sure. We discussed it in Afghanistan, and we discussed it here. There are efforts underway -- the United States has tried to help the two cooperate more, through trilateral type of efforts. And I think it's fair to say that this is not easy. This is a very hard place. This region hasn't been controlled for years, ever. The British didn't control it; the Pakistanis have never controlled it. And I think that the Afghans understand that, but they, like everybody, are suffering from the fact that this is a region that is producing a lot of violence and has been an area in which terrorists have operated. I don't think there's anyone who wants more to get them than President Musharraf. After all, these are folks who tried to kill him a few times, who are very much a block to his -- a hindrance to his efforts to root out extremism in Pakistan. But it's a very hard area.

I think the more cooperation that you have, and that's one thing that we've been encouraging, in intelligence, the more that specialized forces start to be developed that can deal like regions like this -- and I think both in Pakistan and Afghanistan you're seeing the development of more specialized forces, the better that they're going to do. But this is a very tough region.

Q Did the President ask him to do anything?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, the President discussed it in full with him, and --

Q What was the message to him?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the message was to him, we all have to really work hard and continue our efforts in this very difficult region -- is there anything more that we can do, is there anything more that Afghanistan and Pakistan can do together? I mean, it was more of a kind of problem solving approach.

Q What did you say?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'm not going to go into details here, but we're working it. Everybody is working it. There are long histories of suspicion between Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's no secret to anyone. What's remarkable is that they now have a relationship in which President Karzai could come here, could present information to President Musharraf, could talk to him about it, and they can agree to work together. But this has been a difficult relationship for a long time. It's getting -- the good news is that they're getting better. That picture that we had last year, of President Bush, President Karzai and President Musharraf in the same room, you could not have taken just a few years ago.

Q That having been said, it is a difficult region, and I'm sure everyone at the table today acknowledged it. President Musharraf has a delicate balancing act as he tries to move forward. But does President Bush feel like U.S. forces, U.S. intelligence has the ability to act in that border region, and pursue every tangible lead in a real-time way, or are there obstacles that need to be dealt with?

SECRETARY RICE: We have a very good, cooperative relationship with the Pakistanis. It is a politically delicate area, and we coordinate and we work closely together. I don't think you'll find a closer working relationship than Ambassador Crocker and the military here and General Abizaid and with the Pakistanis. Everybody wants to defeat these terrorists in this region.

One point that I would make about the region is, yes, it's delicate, but President Musharraf talked about not just getting the terrorists, which is obviously extremely important, but also creating conditions in this region where terrorism won't continue to breed.

So one thing that we talked about today is a zone, kind of an opportunity zone, in the area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which could give some economic development to this region by tariff-free export to the United States. So you also have to do some -- this has been an area that's been economically and politically isolated for its entire history. The Pakistanis, also, after the tragedy of the earthquake, have been trying to do redevelopment projects that bring that region closer to the Pakistani mainstream.

So there's a short-term effort -- the Pakistani military is fighting up there, as I said, nobody has, ever. They're changing the kinds of forces that they use up there in order to be more effective. They're working very closely with us, and they also are -- we always talk about winning the hearts and minds, well, this is an effort to reintegrate that region into Pakistan proper.

Q Did you all discuss the air strikes and whether that can happen again? I mean, will the United States be allowed to do that again?

SECRETARY RICE: We've been through this issue, and I think the Pakistanis spoke to it at the time.

Q It was not a topic today?

SECRETARY RICE: We've been looking forward since then.

Q Do you have any take on the latest in Iran, with the --

SECRETARY RICE: I keep reading in the newspapers a breakthrough here, or a breakthrough there. I don't think that -- when you talk to the diplomats, I think what you're getting is that the Iranians have still not said the words that everybody needs them to say, which is that, first of all, they'll suspend the activities that they restarted in violation of the Paris Agreement, and secondly, that they understand that a civil nuclear program for Iran is going to have to be one that does not include enrichment and reprocessing on Iranian territory. Those are the bottom lines, and I haven't heard anything to this point that suggests the Iranians have accepted those bottom lines.

Q March 6th is two days from now. So is there anything we should watch for there?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, one thing is I think March 6th is why you're seeing all this Iranian activity. You know, people have offered them these things before, and they haven't been as interested as now.

Q So they're hoping for maybe a delay in the referral?

SECRETARY RICE: I think they're trying to find some way to fade the heat, to get people to -- they'd love to get us back into a situation where they're talking, but doing all the things that they've been doing since they broke the Paris Agreement. And I don't think anybody is prepared to have them do that.

We've said all along that going to the Security -- being in the Security Council, which is where we are at this point -- remember that the London Agreement was that we are in the Security Council, but we would not take action until after the board report. But after the board report, I think the Security Council will have to have a serious discussion about what the next steps will be. Nobody has said that we have to rush immediately to sanctions of some kind. We've love to solve this within the IAEA framework, by having Iran react to the requirements of the February 4th resolution. But thus far they haven't shown any inclination to do that.

Q I have just one more question on the nuclear. Did he -- did Musharraf today actually say, gee, I'd like to have the same kind of deal as India, or was that just kind an unspoken --

SECRETARY RICE: You heard it at the press conference, that the Pakistanis have energy needs, and of course they've expressed an interest in civil nuclear. It's not the right time for that with Pakistan. It's, as the President said, a different history with India. And I think we can address energy needs on each country's terms, on different terms for each country.

Energy Secretary Bodman is coming out shortly. He'll be able to talk about Pakistan's energy needs. We had some interesting discussion today at a lunch about biomass, and about the possibilities of using ethanol. There are a lot of technological ways to pursue the energy needs, but civil nuclear just isn't possible.

Q But was that a pretty prickly term, thing to go into here, giving their history of rivalry on this and so many things, that here we're agreeing with the Indians to do this, and they argue the same thing, we have the energy problem?

SECRETARY RICE: One of the things we've worked very hard to do, and I think we've mostly succeeded, is to de-hyphenate these relationships. These are very different places, with different histories, different sets of problems, different prospects. And so when you have a particular deal with India that moves in a particular direction because of India's long history of protecting nuclear technology, you have that deal. But with the Pakistanis, you can have a quite different approach to the energy problem.

And I think we've been effective in taking these relationships on their own terms, and not assuming that everything we do in Pakistan is going to be appropriate in India, or that everything we do in India is going to be appropriate in Pakistan. And that's the approach that we're taking.

Nobody has been prickly during this visit about anything. It has been problem solving, warm, cooperative. I think the Pakistanis appreciate very much that the President has taken time and been here for an extended period of time. He's been able not only to meet with President Musharraf and with the government, but also with members of Pakistani, you know, got to see the cricket kids, have a state dinner tonight. It's been a great visit.

MR. McCLELLAN: Last question.

Q Last question, I was going to follow on something else.

SECRETARY RICE: All right.

Q Well, just to follow on Deb's question. Did President Musharraf express an interest in that sort of deal? I know you said that it wasn't discussed, it was talk more broadly, but did he express at least an interest in that, or want to have discussions to do that direction?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it's just not -- the time isn't right for those discussions with Pakistan.

Q So it didn't happen?

SECRETARY RICE: No, it came up, and I think the President made clear what he made clear in the press conference, that the history and the situation are just not there on the Pakistani side. But we want to try and pursue energy development with Pakistan; we talked about clean coal technology as another direction to go. But nuclear energy has a particular character, given both the energy possibilities and the proliferation concerns. And I think we believe that the agreement with India can meet those simultaneously. But it's generous.

Q When the President was in India, he met with opposition leaders. But here, he didn't do so. There's been a lot of stuff in the press about the opposition leaders -- the round up over the evening and this morning. Does that send a sort of message to President Musharraf that the United States agrees with the way he's handling democracy, and also does it send that same message to the opponents, that the United States believes Musharraf is moving toward democracy?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I can tell you that in this meeting that we had, people expressed what they needed their government to do. This was a meeting with civil society; they expressed what they needed their government to do. And they seemed, by the way, quite unafraid to express that.

Pakistan is in a different stage of development than India, in terms of its democratic development. Again, the relationships -- or the countries are not identical. But Pakistan is pointing toward elections in 2007, and I think our best -- the thing that we can do is to speak faithfully in favor of the need for free and fair elections, to continue to support Pakistan in the development of that.

I'll give you one example. One of the participants there talked about the weakness of the party structure in Pakistan, that there really needs to be the development of centrist, more moderate parties. And the NDI, which is National Endowment for Democracy, is doing work here in party development. And so I think that's the way that we support Pakistan as it gets ready for those elections. We've also done work here in women's empowerment, we've done work here with the press. We've done lots of elements of trying to support the democratic enterprise. But, clearly, the elections in 2007 are going to be very important.

Q Just one thing, your comment on Iran. You are basically expecting the referral then to happen?

SECRETARY RICE: The referral has happened. The report has happened. It is in the Security Council now. The question is, what action will the Security Council take. And we still have a few days to see what Iranian behavior would be. But I would expect that you'd need at least something that tries to give the IAEA the weight of the Security Council, in order to get Iran to do something. But I don't think people are talking about going directly to sanctions.

Thank you.

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