



The U.S.- Pakistan Relationship Remains Strong

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Good afternoon. I still don't know what Time Zone I'm in. But wherever I am, I'm happy to be here with you.

It's a great pleasure for me to be back in Pakistan. As you know I'm a regular visitor and I always enjoy my trips – for the hospitality first of all. But I think it's very important to us as we try to work in Washington on things involving this region, especially Pakistan, that we understand from people here what the situation is on the ground. So it's a great pleasure for me to be back.

It's also a great pleasure for me to be here with our Ambassador today who's done an excellent job representing the United States. It was an honor for me to be included last night with President Musharraf in a dinner to honor our Ambassador. This may be the last time that we appear together at a press conference, so I want you to know that and let me pay my own little tribute in public to him.

QUESTION: Who will be his successor?

(Laughter)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I think I ought to start off by just giving you the news.

I am pleased to announce that during my visit I was able to confirm today, to the government of Pakistan, that we will be providing \$750 million over the next five years to support the tribal area development strategy. This is a good plan. It is a comprehensive plan to provide economic development, education, and other opportunities to the people who live in the border regions of Pakistan, the tribal areas in particular.

We are very pleased to be able to support it. The President has said we would. And I was able to confirm that we are going to ask our Congress for the funding. And indeed we have asked our Congress to make an adjustment to the budget this year and put another \$110 million into the State Department account so that we can use that with money we already have so that we reach this figure of \$150 million a year.

In addition, the Defense Department has asked for authority to spend \$75 million this year to support the military development and transformation of the Frontier Corps. This is another important project that the Pakistani government has underway that we are going to be supporting over time.

So I think it was good that I was able to do this today. We've made a general promise and I think today I was able to say specifically that we've worked out how to do it.

I think this commitment to the development of Pakistan, this commitment to a long term relationship, is another example of the very broad and deep relationship we have and that we are developing with Pakistan.

I've said before and I will say it again. We have a fundamental interest in the success of Pakistan as a moderate, stable, democratic Muslim nation. This is a path that the President and the people of Pakistan have set out upon. We have tried to support it - I think not only in our words but in our deeds. And today's announcement is another example of that.

Our support and our work goes across the boards in many fields: education, energy, democracy and elections, economic reform and economic ties, obviously our counter-terrorism cooperation, our diplomatic cooperation around the world, the relationships we have with developing the military as well as developing the economy and the social system. That, in a sense, is what I was able to talk about today – these various aspects of the relationship - with the variety of people that I met with.

Let me say one more thing that I think is perhaps a little misunderstood here. That is the action in the U.S. Congress. The House passed a bill that would require certification from the Administration before certain aid money was disbursed. This bill then gets taken up in our Senate. And our Senate has dropped that provision, has not put that provision in the legislation.

There is an amendment that has been proposed by Senator Kerry and some others that would express the sense of the Senate that we should provide appropriate amounts of aid based on progress against terrorism, progress in democracy. But that is a sense of the Senate. In neither of these things is there any Pressler kind of language. Especially in the Senate version, there is nothing binding in the Senate side.

The House and the Senate will have to get together and figure out the final legislation. But I'm not very fearful. I am fairly confident that we will not see something from the U.S. Congress that will undermine our relationship. People in Congress are very supportive of progress that we are making and I expect them to continue to be that way.

The administration has made very clear that we oppose the House provision. We've done that at all levels; and that will continue to be the case. We do not want to see that in final legislation. We will keep working to make sure that provision does not appear.

But right now the House has it. The Senate has nothing. They will both have to work out what emerges. Normally in those cases things get worked out positively. So we'll look forward to seeing how that works.

Once again, let me just say that we have a very strong, enduring relationship with Pakistan, very strong cooperation and support in many areas in the overall development of Pakistan – economically, politically, socially. Making the border area safe for everyone; fighting against common enemies, the militant extremists who have attacked Pakistani citizens and Pakistani soldiers and who have attacked people around the world.

So, we all need to continue on this course. We are here for the long-term as a partner for Pakistan in these many, many areas. And it was my pleasure to make my small contribution with another visit at this time.

Thank you.

QUESTION: You had two sessions with the President. You said that you were there at the dinner and then you had a formal meeting with the President. Did he share his views about the internal situation in Pakistan, the judicial crisis that has gripped this country? Because that relates to the restoration of democracy and independence of judiciary, etc.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I only had one session with the President. We had a dinner last night and a brief meeting after that. We discussed some general topics.

I guess I would say that this topic of the judicial situation has come up in a variety of meetings. I have been trying to understand it better. We do think this is a matter that needs to work itself through the Pakistani system. We understand the sensitivity of accusations involving judicial figures. It is a sensitive matter. Obviously things like this need to be handled carefully. But it is something the Pakistani system is going to have to deal with in its own way.

So I asked a lot of questions. But we will watch carefully as it works its way through.

QUESTION: Mr. Richard, you have, eulogized Pakistan's role in countering terrorism. But we in Pakistan hear different voices from Washington, sometimes very sweet and sometimes very sour. Is it confusion on the part of Washington, the State Department, other departments? Or is it a deliberate effort? And keeping in the view, how do you see the essential and necessary role of President Musharraf in the war against global terrorism. Thank you, sir.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: Gosh! Different voices.

I'm going to choose (c). I don't like either of your choices: I don't like either (a) confusion or (b) deliberate.

I think the administration, frankly, has been remarkably consistent. You've heard me speak. You saw me testify in front of Congress. You've heard me give a press conference. You know my views.

You've seen the Secretary of State express similar views. You've heard the Vice President, on many occasions, express similar views. You've heard the President express similar views, because he is the one who makes policy. He has said two weeks ago in his big speech on terrorism, repeatedly, that Pakistan is a key ally in the war on terror. He has said repeatedly that Pakistan is making a lot of efforts and indeed achieving a lot of successes.

I think if there is any confusion, it is because people confuse official voices with press writings, opinions. We are democracy. We have a legislature. We have 435 members of the house and 100 members of the Senate. And they are elected to provide their views.

So you are going to hear different views from the United States, from different parts of the government, different parts of society. That's the way democracy works. You are not unfamiliar with different views being expressed in Pakistan. So the only thing I would say is, let's not confuse what an editorial has said with what the President of the United States says. The policy of the United States is the policy of the President of the United States, and that policy is that Pakistan is a very strong ally in the war on terror; that we support Pakistan; we work with Pakistan. We all want to do more. We all want to be more effective in the war on terror. We recognize what Pakistan is doing, and we'll continue to work with Pakistan.

QUESTION: (inaudible) ...the role of President Musharraf in the anti-terrorism campaign.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: President Musharraf has been a very strong ally. Pakistan has been a very strong ally with President Musharraf as the leader in the war on terror. We work closely with President Musharraf and the Pakistani government because we have common interests with the country, with Pakistan as a whole. Where I started out, Pakistan's success in fighting violent extremism, in building a stable, modern, democratic society, in developing its economy and economic opportunity in building a strong education system. This success is important to us. That's the direction that President Musharraf is leading the nation and we are proud to work with him.

QUESTION: A little clarification on what you have said. After the House, the Senate has adopted certain bills. Are you trying to say that it will not be binding on the administration? Secondly, about the aid, when are you going to establish or allow the establishment of Zones in tribal areas? Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No, I can't. I can't promise the final outcome from the House and Senate. I know it's hard to understand some of the procedures in our Congress. I was talking to Minister Sherao today and he was explaining how "jirgas" worked. I felt sort of the same way.

But the House has passed a piece of legislation. The Senate, at present, has nothing like that, and if it has anything, it would adopt an amendment that's non-binding. Whatever the Senate does, the Senate and House pieces will have to be reconciled. They will get together in a conference and decide what the final legislation would work out. So that ultimately determines what the legislation is.

What I've said is, there is a piece here, there is a piece there. We have expressed our very strong opposition to this piece. There is nothing coming out of the Senate like that. It is either nothing or non-binding. So chances are things will work out. But one shouldn't get out up in arms because there is nothing final. And second, if you look at all the various possibilities, the most likely ones are the ones that are non-binding or nothing at all.

So we just will see how it works. I do accept that Pakistanis share our opposition to the provision of the House bill. You saw me in testimony last week stating quite clearly that the administration opposes those provisions on the house side.

So we understand how important this is. We will keep working it. We will keep working at all the various levels of our government so that the House understands clearly our opposition. I think when they go to conference we will have to see what comes out, but I think we stand a good chance of being successful.

QUESTION: There are also speculations of emergency in position here in Pakistan and also the elections may be delayed. What is your position on it? Will America support a delay in the elections?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: You asked me to speculate on speculation. I'm not just going to go there. We support the progress being made towards democracy. We look forward to the elections occurring. They have been promised for this year and we look forward to that occurring.

QUESTION: Sir, you talked about the U.S. interest in promoting democracy and elections. I just wondered if you could explain how that can be the case, if the U.S. is bank rolling what in fact is a military ruler?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: No. I can explain what the United States is doing, but I reject your characterization.

First of all, we provide assistance and support for Pakistan. We help them with their education system, we help them with the health care, we help them with their national defense, we help them in fighting an enemy -- a violent enemy that is trying to kill women and children, and stop schools, and threaten neighbors. So that's what we are doing here, first of all.

Second of all, I think we all know the history of Pakistan. We all know that there is a military ruler. We also know that the commitment, the program to get back to

democratic elections this year is strong one. We know that Pakistan has a strong independent press, a lot of political discussion, a strong civil society and that's a good basis for having a democratic election later this year.

We support the package, including democracy. We support the movement towards elections. We've spent some of our aid money on supporting the Election Commission, so that they can do their job better and make sure these are elections are free and fair, as free and fair as possible. So that's what we are doing here.

QUESTION: What is the United States of America's position over Pakistan's trend to fence over two thousand five kilometer Pak- Afghan border, one. And secondly, where could the new disputes with Iran end?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: On the questions of the fence, these came up when I was in Afghanistan. They came up in my discussions here. I think for both sides it's an effort. The question is, how do they best control the border and the border areas? How do they best prevent violent militants from crossing this border, hacking the other side? Militarily, fences may have a role. That's something that is best works out in a common discussion. So we hope that kind of discussion will take place. We can help with that. But I think it's not the fence per se, it's where it fits in the whole program. We need to discuss how, all together, those of us who face this problem of violent extremists moving back and forth, how we, control this border. Indeed, Pakistan's ideas about a fence are something we look forward to hearing. I think they can be discussed, should be discussed. Pakistan has its decisions to make. But it can be done in a way that everybody agrees is a contribution to making the border more secure.

The other part was Iran, where do we stand with Iran. We stand with a strong diplomatic effort that the United States has been working with other countries and allies. Under Secretary Burns has been working very closely with the members of the Security Council to craft another resolution that makes very clear the international community's view about Iran's nuclear weapons efforts.

And that is important. I think that is important for us to pursue this in a diplomatic way and that's what we have been doing. But I think it's also important for everybody in the world to note that our problems are not with Iranian people. Our problems are not with Iran. Our problems are with the behavior of the Iranian government. We have had very difficult problems created by their behavior and support for violence in Iraq. And we, last Saturday, sat down in meetings to raise those.

We've had very important problems with the way they have handled the nuclear program, developments that have been reported by the International Atomic Energy Agency. And we've sat down with the Security Council, supported originally European efforts and now have to go down the Security Council route. But we have worked a diplomatic path to address those questions as well.

So, I think there are, unfortunately, other things that Iran does that have created problems in the world. We will have to deal with those. But our first course is always to deal with those diplomatically, and that's what we are doing.

QUESTION: Earlier on when you were asked about the ongoing judicial crisis, you replied, at the tail end of your answer, you said something like this will have to be dealt carefully. Could you just elaborate a bit more, given what we all hear in the last six days, the violence, the harsh criticism and the increasing criticism of the government. Could you just elaborate a bit more how differently, or more carefully, the situation could have been handled?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: I said it was a sensitive matter, as all such matters are, and it should be handled carefully. I think that does not require any further explanation. I'll just stick with that.

QUESTION: Have you discussed the idea how to strengthen the democratic forces in Pakistan with President Pervez Musharraf, and the possibility of a possible political rapprochement with moderate political forces?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: There is a lot of politics in the air in Pakistan this year. And there is probably going to be more politics in the air. We are interested observers. We like to ask questions and listen. We want to understand Pakistan and the evolution of society. But we are not involved. And we are not going to get involved in your politics.

So I think I will just leave it at that. These kinds of questions about what somebody is doing on this to strengthen the democratic forces – whether somebody thinks there can be a meeting of minds between different parties and coalitions and things like that – is very interesting. But it's really for the people involved in such matters to work out.

QUESTION: I just want to know as you have announced aid money for the tribal areas, will Pakistan be able to utilize some portion of money to fence the border or to mine the border?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: First of all, that's not what Pakistan has asked for. President Musharraf asked President Bush for money to support the economic development of the tribal areas and for money to help with the upgrading and transformation of the Frontier Corps. President Bush said we will try to help you with that. And the news I brought today was that we have figured out, within our own budgetary process, how to do that. What we are financing will be the economic development strategy that has been worked out, the whole plan has been worked out for economic development in this region. And second of all, to start working with the Frontier Corps to help them upgrade their capabilities. All the other things in this area are really things that Pakistan will do.

This reminds me that I have skipped one of the questions before, which was about Reconstruction Opportunity Zones. Let me just say that we are still working to prepare legislation for that. I don't yet know the final form of legislation, but we've been working very intensely based on the economic studies that have been done last fall. We are working very intensely to work out a plan that will benefit the people of the area, give them opportunities to develop new industries, to export products of a whole variety of kinds, and to get the economic benefits of trade, not just the development assistance we might give to that area, but really to open up new opportunities and bring them opportunities in the national and especially the world economy.

So we are still moving forward on it. We should have legislation fairly soon in the coming months. And we will go to our Congress for authority to do that. So I think that is another sign of our interest in seeing this area develop economically and see this area be brought into the global economy.

QUESTION: I would like to ask, does America support more peace deals in the tribal regions like Pakistan has done in Waziristan ?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER: That's a political aspect of how to work in the tribal areas. We all know the arrangements, for historical reasons, are somewhat unusual. It's really a matter for the Pakistani government to work, figure out how to make those political arrangements work.

The only observation I would make is that I think everybody recognizes that at this point, and perhaps that will change, but at this point the political deal in Waziristan has not stopped the militancy. Unfortunately it hasn't stopped the bombings against Pakistani civilians. It hasn't stopped the cross border activities.

So, the point is, Pakistan will have to figure out how to make the political parts of this work. So one has to figure: if this deal – or something like it, does that effectively, then good. If not, then other arrangements will have to be made. But that's for the Pakistani government to figure out.

Thank you very much.

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[Ambassador Ryan Crocker](#)

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