



## Panel Discussion With Pakistani Television Media

**Richard A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs**  
 Islamabad, Pakistan  
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**QUESTION:** Thank you very much for inviting us here and having the time for us. President Musharraf has been saying that he will decide about his uniform issue as per the Constitution of Pakistan. Two days back, the State Department Spokesman expressed his belief that General, President Musharraf will remove his uniform and he will get re-elected from the next assemblies. What formed the basis of that belief in the State Department? Is there some assurance from President Musharraf or is this your own democratic aspirations?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think, first of all, that there is the assurance that you cited in your question, that the President has said he would deal with this matter of two jobs in accordance to the Constitution as part of the election process. We take him at his word that he will do that. So, we're repeating what we've already heard and said. That is: that the President has said he will deal with this matter in accordance with the Constitution as part of the elections.

As far as how the scenario unfolds this fall, I think our Spokesman also noted that there were different scenarios and I guess we'll see what happens. But to a great extent, how the election happens, how a new election happens, is up to the Pakistani people. Our interest is in seeing an election that is free and fair and that gives a choice to the Pakistani people, where the Pakistani people can really choose who their leadership is going to be.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador Boucher, this is a question about the bigger picture. A section of Pakistani public opinion -- one that a visitor to the country may not often get to meet directly because this section of the public opinion is not affiliated with any of the political parties, opposition, or government -- this section believes that Pakistan -- our country -- needs an incremental democratic process, the kind that the Musharraf administration unleashed over the past eight years. I am just wondering, what is the prevalent viewpoint within, among, the Pakistan watchers inside the State Department about this?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think that the prevalent viewpoint in the U.S. Government -- that is really mirrored by a lot of opinion I meet here, not just some specific section but a lot of different people -- is that it's time for Pakistan to move back to democratic elections and civilian rule. But that's part of moving in a more moderate direction. And in fact that's the direction that President Musharraf has set. We're happy to work with him in that regard. He's announced a program moving the country in a moderate direction, moving the country to free and fair elections. Just the other day he reversed some regulations against the press and reaffirmed the need for a free press.

Those are all things that we support and we're frankly happy to work with the government. We're happy to work with the Pakistani people as a whole, to help the country move in that direction. That's our goal, too: to help Pakistan succeed as a stable, moderate, democratic, prosperous society. So, I don't see any contradiction between supporting democracy, working with President Musharraf on all the big things before him and before us, and helping us all move in that direction that's good for everybody.

**QUESTION:** My question is the role of Pakistan in the war on terror. After 9/11, Pakistan has done a lot in the war on terror. Hundreds of suspects of al Qaeda and the Taliban were captured and handed over to the U.S. Department and U.S. authorities and hundreds of Pakistani soldiers have sacrificed their lives. But we often see statements from U.S. officials that Pakistan should do more. What [specifically does the U.S. want Pakistan to do?]

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, I think first of all there are a lot of different statements in the United States because we are a democracy, and you'll hear a variety of views in the press and in the Congress. Hopefully you hear a very consistent view from the Administration -- we're the ones who have to enunciate a consistent policy working with Pakistan in the war on terror. And that's what our goal is.

We certainly recognize the enormous effort, the enormous achievements and the enormous sacrifices that Pakistan has made so far. I've often said in the Congress and elsewhere that no country has done more against the terrorists or lost more people doing so than Pakistan. And I think that's an important [thing] to remember.

At the same time, we're not done with this. We have a job to do in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, where we all need to work together to eliminate this threat. This threat comes to the nations of the region, to Pakistan or Afghanistan, comes to the greater world, from having spaces where terrorists can plot and plan. We have already seen many times what happens if governments don't have control of those spaces. We see what happens to the people of those areas, whether it's southern Afghanistan or the Pakistan border areas, where people have been left behind, where people haven't had economic opportunity, where they haven't had education for their kids. So for both those reasons -- controlling the terrorists and developing those regions -- we're working with Pakistan and we're working on the security side but also on the economic side.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, there are media reports that you are here for mediating a deal between President Musharraf and the Pakistan People's Party. Is it a true story?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** You know, I think I've come here about nine times since I took this job fourteen months ago, so I'm here on a very regular basis. And I know every time I come there's some speculation that I'm going to get involved in the most recent crisis or issue. I see my visits much more as a regular process of discussions between the two countries, strategic discussions between the two countries, discussions on the region, on what's going on in Pakistan, relations with Afghanistan, economic development, developing the border regions, all these different programs we have on education and economics and health. So that's really the context for this visit, for my visits, whenever I come.

Obviously, we're interested in the political situation. I've had a chance to talk to a whole variety of people during my meetings and also at the reception the other night when all the political parties were there. So, yeah, we talk about politics, and I hear about politics. I'm interested in political developments. I think as far as our role in that, ultimately the politics is going to work itself out in Pakistan. The people in an election are going to decide which party and which party goes down and where they sit in various assemblies.

But to the extent that we can encourage the parties to sort of move together, create a stronger moderate center, we do that and we think that's part of the overall direction of the country. We think that the parties need to look for their common interest, need to look for how to stabilize the center of Pakistani politics. And when we meet with leaders of the parties we make that view known. But that's encouragement to sort of move forward in a moderate and stable direction and we do that with everything.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Assistant Secretary of State, you rightly said that you were interested in politics, but coming back to the question which I was asking from you, that well, there could be some assurance as you have just spoken from President Musharraf but here in the domestic scenario, he has never made a categorical statement that he will remove the uniform.

Do you feel that his assurances include that he will remove the uniform? Or do you believe that retaining the uniform will provide some chance of free, fair and

transparent elections in this country?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** The answer is no. I don't believe either one of those things. I don't believe that the whole issue of the election rises or falls on whether or not, or when President Musharraf carries out whatever is appropriate under the Constitution with regard to his two jobs. The issue of a free and fair election is much more fundamental than that. We've been here supporting the right of the Pakistani people to choose. We've been supporting the work of the Election Commission. We've been talking to the parties.

You know, the other night, all the party leaders were talking about an all-party conference to get all the parties together and agree on how to get to a free and fair election and what are the elements of that. Whether this comes into it or not, you know, could be a subject for their discussion, but I think that the issue of the election is much broader. We support an election process that is free and fair and gives the Pakistani people the right to choose, and it's not going to hang on one particular question. That particular question needs to be answered but I think we have a bit of patience in seeing it answered at whatever is the appropriate time.

**QUESTION:** You visited the Chaman border point between Afghanistan and Pakistan and I understand, according to the press reports, that you also saw the biometric system for identification of people crossing that border point. Now there's a frustration among the...with the Pakistani government about that particular point. They introduced that system in order to identify people crossing that area but the position of the Afghan government is not very positive, to say the least, non-cooperative really on that point. What's your impression?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** First of all, let me say I had a very interesting day yesterday. I want to thank everybody who was a host to me then, in Quetta: the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary, some of the members of the Provincial Assembly that I met with, the Police Chief. The Frontier Corps colonel who's in charge of that area took me around to one of the border points, one of the points where they stop the flow of illegal goods or people and then I was able to see the Chaman border crossing point, including this really quite remarkable fingerprint identification, biometric identification system.

I think, you know, we're talking about my visits and I remember being here in January when that was introduced. And you're right, the reaction on the Afghan side was not positive, should we say. There were demonstrations and other things. Our hope is that some of these things can be worked out. One of the things I've done in all my meetings here and in my meetings with Afghans recently is to say: where, how many different matters can Pakistan and Afghans start really cooperating on? They are cooperating on refugees. There's more they can do on cooperating on economic exchanges and cross-border trade. Obviously, the political discussions between the presidents in...meeting between President Musharraf and President Karzai in Turkey was important. The meeting between Foreign Minister Kasuri and Foreign Minister Spanta in Germany was important.

Those kind of political discussions need to keep going. Issues like border crossings are naturals. And somehow Pakistan and Afghanistan have to look at their common interest in having regular and well-regulated flows of people and goods across their borders. And that's one of the issues we've encouraged them to take up. There have been some discussions, but as you point out with this biometric system, we're not there yet and so we continue to encourage both sides.

**QUESTION:** But do you think it's a good system?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think it's a great system. Whether it works for both sides or not, that's something that both sides are going to have to sit down and talk about. But, in terms of Pakistan and that particular point, where they have so many people going across to the market in the morning and coming back in the afternoon, having a quick way of identifying the known people is very important. Because then you can concentrate your efforts on the unknown people. And that's where your problems are going to be.

So, I think it's a great system for that location and given that kind of transit trade. If it works for both sides, maybe we can get both sides to use it. If not, at least if the sides start to sit down and work on cross-border movement, maybe they can figure out some other things that work.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, after 9/11, the United States has started military operations against terrorism. Do you think that the military is the only way to combat extremism and terrorism?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Absolutely not. And I think if you look at what we're doing, look at what we're doing in Afghanistan, look what we're supporting here -- you know, we've just got from our Congress a major, major, increase in funding for Afghanistan -- a billion dollars more. And that money is going into our military operations which are necessary, building up the police so that the people of Afghanistan can have safety, building up the army so Afghanistan can take over its own security. And a lot of money also is going into roads, electricity, and the provincial government, provincial justice system.

Basically, people need a lot of things from their government and we have to be sure government can give them that. Government has to extend itself and it has to deliver what the people need. They want safety, they want justice, they want opportunity. And opportunity comes about when you have a road and you have electricity and you have an irrigation system. And they want a chance to decide their futures -- and that is elections, democracy and a role in government. So if you look at what people need, that's what you have to give them to stabilize these regions. And I think that, frankly, that's the approach the Pakistani government is taking as well with regard to the tribal areas, the border areas.

You all know the history of these areas better than I do, but they haven't been governed under normal arrangements since history [began]. And so as we move forward, we also need to develop these areas, give these people a stake in the national economy, give them opportunities. So, we're supporting a sustainable development plan for the tribal areas that's going to be a significant investment for the Pakistani government, but also we're going to make sure that there's 750 million dollars available from the United States over the next five years to support that. And we've already taken the steps with our Congress to make the money ready this -- the portion, 150 million -- available for this year.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, the U.S. declares itself as one of the largest democracies. Then why does your government support a military regime in Pakistan?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, we've been one of the largest democracies for 200 and some years. Our goal is to support democracy and movement towards democracy wherever it appears, to give the people that are struggling, that are fighting, that are moving forward to democracy all the support that we can. In Pakistan, it's not really an "us against them" scenario. You have political parties pledged to democracy. You have a President who is pledged to democracy. And yes, he's a military ruler. But he's pledged free and fair elections. So we could say our task here is to support everybody. Everybody says to us: we want a free and fair election. And we're working with all of them. We're working with parties, with the government, the Election Commissions, across the board with Pakistani society to try to help the whole society achieve this goal. Everybody, as I said, everybody says they want free and fair elections. We're going to try to help people get there.

**QUESTION:** Let me come to follow up to initiatives of President Bush's visit to Pakistan last year. It has been one year, three months, and around twelve days. Some of the initiatives have not been implemented -- like the Strategic Dialogue was once held in Washington, follow-up was due in Pakistan after December and this is June now. And then Reconstruction Opportunity Zones -- they have not got materialized into physical planning and action and then so on. You know, energy cooperation, there were two meetings and then there is no follow-up. Why are things not moving at the pace which was expected?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, I think we're doing better than you give us credit for. But you're right, we have an agenda coming from President Bush's visit, from the meetings at that time with President Musharraf and we do follow up very carefully on that agenda. That's one of the things I did this time and I've done on previous visits with the Foreign Ministry. We have had a series of discussions; we had a Strategic Dialogue last year; we've had an economic meeting; we've had the Education Dialogue; we've had science and technology meetings; we've had a number of energy meetings. More than the high-level meetings, we've had some very specific ones on new technologies and cooperation in those areas. And so we're going through a whole strategic agenda, the whole complete agenda.

We have many programs here. You know, this is the largest Fulbright Program, exchange program, that we have anywhere in the world, and that is going great guns.

And there are more scholars this year than last year. So these things are going forward that have been announced.

We haven't had the formal Strategic Dialogue. But again, I have to say, every time we have a visitor -- me, Secretary Gates, our Deputy Secretary of State who is going to come in and have discussions here for the next two days as part of the regular consultations -- those are strategic level discussions between the United States and Pakistan. There's no question that our relationship is a strategic one. It's based on Pakistan's position in the world. It's based on Pakistan's position in the region, on Pakistan's success as a moderate nation. And those are the kind of talks that we have. And yes, we will schedule a formal Strategic Dialogue soon. But I think all this is going forward. Some of it has produced its fruits faster than others, just like some trees produce fruit faster than others.

Reconstruction Zones are going forward. We said at the time it was going to take a little while to get it going. We've done the economic studies to identify real economic potential for the zones. We've now been working to craft the legislation. And I think we're very close to the point where we'll have something to submit to our Congress. So, it's a lot of in-house work to get that ready; it's a very complicated economic matter. But it's pretty much on schedule, maybe a little bit slower than we would have hoped, but it's pretty much on schedule and moving forward even though most of the work so far has been in-house work and hasn't had much of the public impression.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador Boucher, this is more like more of a personal question. Often when you come here, I'm fascinated by the way often opposition politicians or local politicians in the provinces come up to you and draw your attention to very local provincial politics. For example, yesterday you were in Quetta and one of the politicians there, who happened to be from the opposition, drew your attention to problems in his province -- 'the government is not consulting us on major project' and other things, you know, very local political issues -- and I think he forwarded to you a complaint against the federal government of Pakistan regarding that, and you accepted that letter. So I'm just fascinated, I mean, when you do this, when you accept this, what do you feel, I mean? Do you, for example, give them a sign that you would help in this or get involved in that kind of local politics? What's your feeling on a personal level?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, I think first of all, I try not to be a Pakistani. I'm not part of the political process here. It's not my job to carry messages inside the country or to advocate a point of view inside the country. You know, I'm an outsider, and so my interest is in sort of, what's going on around here. How does this affect the development of the country, how does this affect the stability of the country, how does it affect our ability to work together on things that are important?

So, I suppose politicians talk to us for a variety of reasons. One is that's what politicians do and that's what we do. So we fit together pretty well -- they talk, we listen. It's always interesting. Second of all, we're always looking for people to support their cause. And third, if you want to have an understanding of what's going on in Baluchistan -- that is very important to us because there's sort of two problems of violence: there's the problem with the nationalist groups, and there's the problem with the border area with Afghanistan -- you've got to listen to people, you've got to hear points of view about what's going on and why these problems exist, whether they can be settled in one way or the other.

And second of all, this whole...you know, you say national development projects are a local issue, but when we look at the strategic approach from Pakistan and the strategic goal of Pakistan in regard to the corridors to Central Asia, the opportunities that we see, and that Pakistan sees, that Afghanistan sees, for more trade and transit through Afghanistan down to the ports of Pakistan and beyond, the port of Gwadar, the road links, the transportation links, how they're handled, how they're supported by the local population, that's a key element of the strategic picture.

And so, these things sometimes look local, but when I look at them I tend to see them as part of a big strategic position of Pakistan and strategic cooperation with Pakistan, and how they're going to affect really the long-term future for this part of the world.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, my question is about Pak-India relations and the Kashmir issue. And you know this Kashmir issue has created tension between these two countries and is also part of [inaudible] and heavy defense budgets, other people and nations. The people of this region believe that United States can play a very important role to settle this issue, but it is not doing so. How would you respond to that?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think we've played a role as best we can. We are very interested in seeing progress between Pakistan and India. We think that the progress that has been achieved in the last year or two, several years really, is quite remarkable, and certainly the prospects are better, the tensions are lower than at any time for decades. You know, I was working with Secretary Powell in 2001-2002 when a lot of people were saying there's a risk of nuclear confrontation. Now, a few years later we have people saying there's a prospect of solving a decades old conflict over Kashmir. I think it's...I'd rather be in this position than that position.

Our job, I think, is to encourage progress. And every time we talk to either India or Pakistan, we talk about, we find out about where they stand in their relationships and their composite dialogue and their terrorism mechanism. We encourage them to keep using those mechanisms, keep moving forward. We encourage them to really finalize some of these things, not just to discuss the option or discuss the Kashmir deal or discuss cooperation but to really do it. And I think that's the appropriate role for us.

We recognize that movement in Pakistan and Indian relations has been based on statesmen from both sides. President Musharraf has put out ideas, Prime Minister Singh has put out ideas, and they've had conversations at various levels. They're doing quite well without us. They're doing quite well on their own with our encouragement and so our desire is to keep that ball rolling and see if they can bring some of these things together as soon as possible and make some of this more concrete. But, so far, so good.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, during your stay here you met political parties, leadership from political parties and other people around. Do you...are you satisfied with the political condition in Pakistan and do you expect that elections will be free and fair?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I think...I hear a lot from the political party leaders, and have over time here and elsewhere, about the prospects for the elections. I emphasize again and again our desires to see free and fair elections, to give the people of Pakistan a real choice, and a credible choice, and a fair choice, and have their choices respected by everybody. And everyone tells me that's what we need to do and then they start telling me: no, in order to get there, you have to do this, have to do that, have to do that.

Some of it's political. Some of it's fundamental, though -- things like having voter lists, things like having the voter lists available for people to check, political parties to check, trying to see if they can't be made available in electronic form -- I think that would be a good idea -- having a stronger, more independent Election Commission -- that was one of the reasons why I went to see the Election Commission -- making sure that the parties and anybody else just stays out of the process once the voters go to vote.

There are a lot of fundamental issues. Our interest is in the process of democracy. We support it with money, we support it with expertise, we support it with observers. We've seen a lot of examples from around the world, so we try to be very active. But our interest is in seeing the process develop freely and fairly. And we'll work with the parties, we'll work the Election Commission, we'll work with everybody to try to see that that happens.

**QUESTION:** Excellency, as my friend pointed out, the regional peace. There is a very important project called Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. We know that the European countries, they are having good relations with Iran as far as Iranian petroleum products are there. There is no UN Security Council resolution even by [inaudible] Iranian petroleum products. But when this comes to the question of IPI, the United States is all-out against this project. It's a belief that it's going to enhance further the regional peace and security environment. Why this particular position is from the United States?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, I think there are a couple of factors at work here and we've expressed -- you're right, we've expressed our skepticism about the project. We've expressed our reservations about the project. That's the way I'd put it. And let me tell you why.

First of all, I don't think you can separate Iran's behavior in one particular area, [inaudible], from what Iran is doing more generally in the region and in the world. And, yes, Europeans have oil and gas, and petroleum relationships with Iran. But they're also, like us, pretty much fed up with the way Iran has pursued nuclear weapons, and I

don't believe Pakistan wants another neighbor with a nuclear weapon.

So, you have to look at you bigger interests in all these things. You have to look at the issues of terrorism, you have to look at the issues of Middle East peace. You know, every time we talk to President Musharraf, he's always interested in promoting or pursuing peace in the Middle East, while Iran is directly opposed to that. Iran is trying to sabotage Middle East peace through their support for terrorist groups. So, I don't think you can say this is okay even though Iraq is a problem. I think you have to look at some of these things in a bigger context.

Second of all, I don't know that you want to tie your gas supply to Iran. That's a question, that's a question people have to answer. There are also commercial questions about the deal and we'll see where that goes. And third, we have to point out, in fairness and honesty, that there are U.S. regulations that determine how we can cooperate with countries that invest in Iran. And so, we wouldn't want someone to go into a deal and find out there are consequences for the United States that they hadn't anticipated. So, we do make that clear.

But, you know, the energy supply for Pakistan -- we recognize it is a very important question. And we've been working with Pakistan in a variety of ways. We've been working now to promote the electricity supply from Central Asia and really there's going to be electricity coming down here from Central Asia in a few years and we've been part of that. We've been going to all the meetings, we've been promoting feasibility studies. Companies are now expressing interest in building the power lines. So, we've tried to help Pakistan deal with its energy problems and develop new energy sources without saying you should start relying on a country like Iran, which is not necessarily the most reliable for a significant portion of their supply.

**QUESTION:** About Central Asia, Ambassador, which is your area. Last week's spat between Washington and Moscow over the missile defense system for Europe. Now there's a sense among observers that this might negatively impact the U.S. cooperation with the Russians as far as the security in the Central Asian region is concerned, which is our region really. What's your sense of that?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, I think two things. One, on missile defense, the developments were sort of interesting last week because Russia had gone on record before that as saying there's no point to having this system, it's a bad thing, it's threatening. And then they moved last week to say, well, it's okay, it has a point, it has a use, but it shouldn't be here, it should be there. So, we're no longer at whether it's good or bad -- we're talking about where it should be. That's progress. On the other hand, we're going to have to talk about these things and with the Europeans and the Russians. We'll get together and talk about missile defense because that's what it is -- defense. And it helps all of us. So, I think we've, they say in diplomacy if you can move your argument forward, you've actually made progress. I think last week was a good week and we've made progress on missile defense.

As far as U.S.-Russian cooperation in Central Asia, it really revolves around the countries themselves. These countries, they want to stop the drug flow, they want to prevent terrorism, they want to have strategic options that go beyond Russia and China and come to the south, just like Pakistan wants to develop her role as a gateway. So, there's a lot of common interest there and frankly, interests that we believe fundamentally serve...are good for the Russians, good for the Chinese, good for everybody in the region. It has to be based on the countries themselves and we have regional cooperation with the countries themselves. One of the things I did in Almaty was to visit a regional drug control center that's being put in place where we'll be there, the Russians will be there, the countries will be there. We think we can enhance the already very active counter-narcotics cooperation in the region.

We're supporting regional trade developments because it's one thing to build roads and electric lines, and we're doing all that, but at the same time, you need to make sure the border posts operate smoothly. We need an end to bribery, change the trucking regulations, whatever else it takes for the vegetables to flow, or the goods to flow, or ideas to flow. So, we are working in a regional context and we do hope to work with Russia in that context.

**QUESTION:** But the fact, Mr. Ambassador, would you be open to the idea of the Russians, that the one that the Russians are proposing, the using of the radar in Azerbaijan instead of the radar you want to put in Europe?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** In many ways, that question goes beyond my personal competence and I haven't seen any studies. Part of it's technical -- would it work -- and part of it's what's the most economic and efficient way to organize this system. But I think we, NATO, European countries have said we ought to sit down with the Russians and talk about this.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, after this latest legislation by the U.S. Congress about Pakistan, what is the status of F-16 deal?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Which latest legislation?

**QUESTION:** Legislations that U.S. President Bush, will, the President will provide a certificate about what Pakistan is doing...

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** You have to remember that it hasn't passed. That's not legislation; that's not a bill; that's not an act of law. That was a bill passed by one side of our legislature, the House. The Senate didn't have that provision and they have to get together to work it out. So, we'll see what ultimately emerges from the Congress. We have been opposed to that provision. We've made that very clear on the record. I have taken it up with people on the Hill. Others in the administration, the White House, senior levels of the State Department, have objected to that provision. So it may never become law. It may change or be dropped by the time final legislation is prepared.

As far as you more basic question, what's the status of the F-16 bill -- right on track. It's going forward fine, won't be affected, and we intend to proceed with it. It's an important commitment, it's an important area of cooperation.

**QUESTION:** The government of Pakistan claims that disturbance on Baluchistan border was mainly due to refugee camps there and that people move here and there and have sympathy for terrorists. [inaudible] Do you agree with this, and do you support Pakistan for repatriation of refugees to their homeland?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** Well, first of all, I think we do support the refugees going back home. When it comes down to it, people want to be home and they want to be able to live safely and securely at home. And so, part of it is the conditions in Afghanistan and part of it is the encouragement and incentives we can give them to move back across. One of the reasons I wanted to go down to Baluchistan and Quetta is to talk to people and to see a little bit myself of the conditions at the, in the area, and talk to people about the repatriation process. And, I think the only thing I'd say is there is a good process underway of Pakistan and Afghanistan working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and that they have the full support of the international community both for the Pakistan movement and also for resettlement in Afghanistan or wherever. And that's the way this process should unfold and I was fairly pleased to hear that's the way the process is unfolding. There's a lot of cooperation, there's a lot of effort being put in now. It will help make all of us more secure but also that's how if we can help, give people a chance to move back to their homes and live safely, and grow with their families in their homeland.

**QUESTION:** Last question, Ambassador. In a lighter vein now, what would your advice be to someone like me who shortly will begin his courses in the Chinese language?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** You know, when I started Chinese I asked someone who spoke very well, "how did you learn Chinese?" And he said, "Don't worry. After seven or eight years it falls into place." It's one of those things -- you have to work hard and you have to keep at it. After seven or eight years it does fall into place. But it's a wonderful language to know because there are over a billion people in China and you can only talk to a small portion of them in English. And the more Chinese you know, the more friends you have. You open your mouth in Chinese anywhere in China and you immediately have one hundred new friends.

**QUESTION:** Russia and the United States have welcomed Pakistan in the global initiative on combating nuclear terrorism. Does that mean these two superpowers now

recognize Pakistan as a responsible nuclear state? And does this mean that the United States or Russian or other NSG groups, those are open for Pakistan to have cooperation like that?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER:** I can't read that much into it. I think our basic view of Pakistan in nuclear matters has not changed. There's a whole history there, there's a whole series of issues. And we've answered, I think, all those questions before.

We recognize Pakistan as an important partner in the global fight against terrorism. We recognize Pakistan as one of the countries that can play a very important role in stopping nuclear proliferation. And, in fact, we have ourselves a lot of bilateral programs with Pakistan in areas that prevent proliferation and control cargo better and things like that. So, I think that's what we see with Pakistan. Again, it goes back to the strategic relationship. We see Pakistan as having a strategic role in the world and in helping counter proliferation, proliferation of all kinds. And that's why we want to work with them on this initiative.

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