

June 4, 1998

Cable, US Embassy New Delhi to the US Mission Geneva, 'My Meeting with Jaswant Singh'

Citation:

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Summary:

The US Ambassador to India met with Jasawant Singh to discuss US-India relations following the Pokhran-II nuclear tests.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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SECRET PTQ2672

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**RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D)**

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 004571

NODIS

DECAPIONED

GENEVA PLEASE PASS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY INDERFURTH;
DEPARTMENT FOR US PICKERING AND DAS LANPHER FROM THE
AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/4/08
TAGS: PREL, PARM, MNUC, IN
SUBJECT: MY MEETING WITH JASWANT SINGH

1. CLASSIFIED SECRET BY AMBASSADOR RICHARD F. CELESTE;
REASON: 1.5 (B).

2. (S) SUMMARY: I MET FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS WITH JASWANT
SINGH ON JUNE 4. HE GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE GOI'S DECISION
TO TEST NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND OFFERED TO MEET WITH SENIOR USG
SECRET

**Classified by Director A/GIS/IPS, DoS on 04/11/2017 ~ Class: SECRET ~ Reason: 1.4(B), 1.4(D), B1 ~
Declassify on: 06/03/2023**

SECRET

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OFFICIALS NEXT WEEK IN THE U.S. WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE HARD
FEELINGS ON THE U.S. SIDE OVER BEING MISLED BY THE GOI ON
NUCLEAR TESTING AND HAD A BRIEF EXCHANGE ON CROSS-BORDER
TERRORISM. END SUMMARY.

3. (C) I MET JASWANT SINGH, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S DESIGNATED

**REVIEW AUTHORITY: Sharon Ahmad,
Senior Reviewer**

HITTER ON NUCLEAR POLICY, ON JUNE 4 FOR A WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION WHICH LASTED CLOSE TO TWO HOURS. THE MEETING WAS AT MY REQUEST AND WAS HELD IN HIS OFFICE AT HIS RESIDENCE. WE MET ALONE.

4. (C) I BEGAN BY STATING TO HIM MY CONVICTION THAT IT WAS VITAL FOR US TO BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN A MANNER THAT WAS COMPLETELY CANDID. I STRESSED THAT THERE WOULD BE TIMES IN SUCH A RELATIONSHIP WHEN ONE OR ANOTHER OF US MIGHT BE OBLIGED TO SAY I CANNOT DISCUSS A PARTICULAR SUBJECT, BUT WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW MISAPPREHENSIONS TO GO UNCHALLENGED. WHILE I DID NOT WANT TO SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TRYING TO DIVINE BLAME FOR THE PROFOUND MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OUR GOVERNMENTS ON THE MATTER OF INDIA'S DECISION TO TEST

NUCLEAR WEAPONS, I SAID THERE COULD BE NO MISTAKING THE CONSEQUENCES. SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS FELT MISLED AND WOULD TRY TO ASK DIRECT QUESTIONS, AND WOULD HOPE TO GET DIRECT ANSWERS.

5. (C) AT SEVERAL POINTS DURING OUR EXTENDED CONVERSATION WE RETURNED TO THIS THEME OF MISTRUST AND DISAPPOINTMENT.



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6. (C) I THEN DESCRIBED TO SINGH THREE CONSEQUENCES OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR TESTS WHICH ARE OF PROFOUND CONCERN TO THE USG. FIRST IS DESTABLIZING THE REGION. THE SECOND IS REVERSING THE POSITIVE MOMENTUM OF THE NON-PROLIFERATION REGIMES, AND THIRD, I REITERATED, MISTRUST OF THE TESTED DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS. AS WE HAD ALREADY DISCUSSED THE THIRD MATTER, JASWANT SINGH TURNED TO THE FIRST TWO SUBJECTS. HE OFFERED AN EXTENDED RATIONALE FOR INDIA'S DECISION TO TEST DATING BACK TO 1987 WHEN, ACCORDING TO SINGH, THE CHINESE CONVEYED 40 ADVANCED MISSILES TO SAUDI ARABIA. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, ACCORDING TO HIM, THE INDIANS RECEIVED STRONG EVIDENCE THAT PAKISTAN HAD THE CAPABILITY OF "NUCLEAR WEAPONIZATION." BY 1989, SINGH ASSERTED, PAKISTAN'S THEN PRIME MINIZTER ZIA USED THE ASSURANCE PROVIDED BY THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPONIZATION TO COMMENCE STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN KASHMIR. SINGH SAID

THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY PART OF THE GLOBE WAS PROTECTED BY THE U.S. NUCLEAR UMBRELLA--THE AMERICAS, EUROPE, EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC. INDIA WAS LEFT IN AN INCREASINGLY THREATENED SOUTH ASIA CONFRONTED BY NUCLEAR POWERS TO ITS NORTH AND WEST. SUCCESSIVE INDIAN GOVERNMENTS HAD CONSIDERED AND INDEED PREPARED FOR NUCLEAR TESTING BUT STOPPED SHORT. THIS GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER DETERMINED TO EXERCISE THE NUCLEAR OPTION. HE STRESSED MORE THAN ONCE THAT "OUR NUCLEAR CAPABILITY IS NOT COUNTRY SPECIFIC."

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7. (C) SINGH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT INDIA'S DECISION TO TEST RAN COUNTER TO THE MOMENTUM OF RECENT NON-PROLIFERATION AGREEMENTS.



HE SAID THAT HE PLANS TO SHARE INDIA'S CASE FOR WHY THE NEED TO TEST AND WEAPONIZE WHEN HE IS IN NEW YORK FOR THE SPECIAL UN SESSION ON NARCOTICS (JUNE 7 - 12). HE SAID FURTHER THAT INDIA HAD IN A NUMBER OF PLACES SET FORTH THE STEPS IT WAS WILLING TO TAKE TO ALIGN ITSELF POSITIVELY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION ISSUE. THIS INCLUDED AN ANNOUNCED MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR TESTS WHICH THE GOI IS WILLING TO TURN INTO A DE JURE COMMITMENT. (IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THE MORATORIUM DOES NOT EXTEND TO MISSILE TESTS ALTHOUGH SINGH SAID INDIA HAS NO ICBM ASPIRATIONS.) ON MISSILES, SINGH SAID, INDIA WOULD SUPPORT AN AGREEMENT NOT TO CAP MISSILES WITH NUCLEAR WARHEADS AND NOT TO DEPLOY MISSILES EITHER.

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THIRDLY, INDIA WAS PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN FMCT
NEGOTIATIONS. FOURTH, INDIA HAD OFFERED A COMMITMENT ON NO
FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. FIFTH, INDIA UNDERSTOOD THAT
IT "CANNOT REWRITE THE NPT AND CANNOT REWRITE THE CTBT."
SIX, INDIA WAS READY AND EAGER TO MEET PAKISTAN "AT ANY
LEVEL, AT ANY TIME, IN ANY PLACE, AND ON ANY SUBJECT,
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INCLUDING KASHMIR." SINGH ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD
ONLY BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS KASHMIR DIRECTLY WITH PAKISTAN
AND NOT IN ANY INTERNATIONAL FORUM. FINALLY, SINGH NOTED
THAT THE INDIAN CABINET HAS INITIALLED THE CHEMICAL WARFARE

CONVENTION AS AN EXPRESSION OF ITS DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN GOOD FAITH IN WMD CONVENTIONS.

8. (C) SINGH THEN ASKED RHETORICALLY THE QUESTION "WHAT IS HOLDING UP A DISCUSSION BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS?" HE ANSWERED THE QUESTION HIMSELF, SAYING IT WAS MISTRUST AND DISAPPOINTMENT. I SAID THAT CERTAINLY WAS THE CASE. ON OUR SIDE, WE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO DETERMINE WHO COULD SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY ON BEHALF OF THE GOI. SINGH THEN DESCRIBED SEVERAL CONTACTS, ONE THROUGH THE INDIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, ANOTHER THROUGH HARRY BARNES, AND PROPOSED THAT HE MEET DIRECTLY WITH USG OFFICIALS. HE CLEARLY HAD RECEIVED THE MESSAGE THAT HE NEEDED TO TALK TO ME. HE SAID THAT AMBASSADOR BARNES HAD INFORMALLY SUGGESTED THE GOI PREPARE A PAPER FOR THE USG. SINGH SAID THAT WAS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF A CONCERN ABOUT LEAKS AND ALLUDED TO THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF READING PRIME MINISTER VAJPAYEE'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON IN THE NEW YORK TIMES. SINGH THEN SAID THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO MEET WITH APPROPRIATE USG OFFICIALS DURING THE FORTHCOMING VISIT TO NEW YORK. HE SAID THE GOI RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR A CLEAR AND CANDID EXCHANGE AND IS EAGER FOR A FORMAL DISCUSSION. THE GOAL OF THIS DISCUSSION IS TO RESTORE A SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN EACH OTHER AND TO BEGIN TO RECONCILE OUR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A REBUFF, WHICH HE SAID WOULD BE TAKEN AS A REBUFF TO "AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION," AND THEREFORE HOPED THAT WE COULD COMMUNICATE WHETHER NOW IS THE
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TIME FROM OUR STANDPOINT TO BEGIN THIS DISCUSSION.

9. (C) I ASKED HIM WHO HE FELT HE WOULD NEED TO MEET. HE SAID AS A CABINET MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE HE FELT HE SHOULD MEET WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY TALBOTT, SECRETARY ALBRIGHT, OR NSC ADVISOR BERGER. I ASKED HIM WHAT VENUE HE HAD IN MIND. HE SAID HE WAS ONLY AUTHORIZED TO MEET IN NEW YORK. WHEN I PRESSED HIM ON THIS, HE SAID IT WAS HIS HOPE AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S THAT THESE MEETINGS COULD BE "DISCREET." I SAID I WAS SURE HE WOULD BE ASKED UPON ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK "WHO ARE YOU MEETING IN THE USG?" AND THAT ANY MEETING WOULD VERY QUICKLY FIND ITS WAY INTO THE PRESS. WHEN I ASKED HIM HOW HE WOULD RESPOND TO THE QUESTION, "DID YOU REQUEST THESE MEETINGS," HE SAID HE WOULD ANSWER "WE HAVE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO TALK SINCE MAY 11." I SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS LIKELY THAT SUCH MEETINGS COULD ONLY TAKE PLACE, IF IN FACT THEY DID TAKE PLACE, IN WASHINGTON.

10. (C) I LEFT IT THAT I WOULD COMMUNICATE HIS INTEREST IN THESE MEETINGS TO WASHINGTON AND THAT I WOULD GIVE HIM A RESPONSE ASAP.

11. (S) WE COVERED A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS. SINGH MENTIONED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT PAKISTAN SUPPORTED STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN KASHMIR. [REDACTED]

1.4(D)
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12. (C) AS WE CONCLUDED, I STRESSED TO SINGH THAT THE SANCTIONS WHICH ARE UNDERTAKEN WITH RESPECT TO INDIA WILL BE SERIOUS. THEY WILL HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON HIS COUNTRY. THESE ARE INTENDED NOT TO PUNISH BUT AS A CONSEQUENCE OF OUR LAW TO INFLUENCE AND ENCOURAGE INDIA TO MOVE IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION WITH RESPECT TO ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. I STRESSED THAT GETTING THESE SANCTIONS WILL BE PARTICULARLY TOUGH IN THAT THEY CAN ONLY BE LIFTED BY AN ACT OF CONGRESS.

13. (C) COMMENT: OUR CONVERSATION WAS FRANK BUT WITHOUT RANCOR ON EITHER SIDE. AN EXTRAORDINARILY THOUGHTFUL MAN,

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SINGH UNDERSTANDS THE PROFOUND CRISIS IN SOUTH ASIA AND IN
INDO-U.S. RELATIONS. HE SAYS THE PM WANTS TO DO SOMETHING
ABOUT IT. WHILE HE DEFENDED THE GOI'S POINT OF VIEW, HE DID
NOT DO SO TENDENTIOUSLY OR ARROGANTLY.

14. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: SINGH WOULD MAKE A CREDIBLE
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INTERLOCUTOR FOR A SENIOR-LEVEL DIALOGUE BETWEEN US AND THE

GOI. THE QUESTION FOR WASHINGTON IS WHETHER NEXT WEEK IS PROPITIOUS. THE P-5 MEETING WILL HAVE OCCURRED, AND THE G-8 WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE 12TH AS I UNDERSTAND IT. SINGH LEAVES FOR NEW YORK IN THE EARLY MORNING OF JUNE 7. WITH SUFFICIENT NOTICE, HE PERHAPS COULD EXTEND HIS STAY IN THE U.S. AND VISIT WASHINGTON ON THE 13TH. OR PERHAPS HE COULD BE CONVINCED TO TRAVEL TO D.C. EARLIER IN THE WEEK, PRIOR TO THE G-8. PLEASE ADVISE URGENTLY SO THAT I CAN REACH HIM ASAP WITH OUR VIEWS.

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