

October 17, 1982
**US Embassy Pakistan Cable 15696 to State
Department, 'Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with
General Zia'**

Citation:

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Summary:

The U.S. Embassy in Pakistan reports to the State Department on a meeting between Ambassador General Vernon Walters and President Zia. Walters returned to Islamabad to warn Pakistani officials that U.S. aid was in "grave jeopardy" after a link between the Pakistani program and Chinese technology was discovered. A U.S. military aid package, which included F-16 fighter-bombers, was also discussed.

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E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PNUC US PK

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN NUCLEAR ISUUE: MEETING WITH
 PRESIDENT ZIA

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 15676; B) ISLAMABAD 15677

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. IN A PRIVATE MEETING, HELD AT HIS REQAEST AND RESTRICTED TO FONMIN YAQUB AND AMBASSADORS WALTERS AND SPIERS, AT HIS RESIDENCE DVENING OF OCTOBER 15, PRESIDENT ZIA CATEGORICALLY DENIED ANY PAKISTANIK ACTIVITIES IN NUCLEARUWEAPONS AREA. HE HAD BEEN FULLY BRIEFED BY PARTICIPANTS IN PREVIOUS TWO SESSIONS, (REFTELS) AND ASKED THAT HIS ASSURANCES THAT PAKISTAN "IS NOT, REPEAT NOT, ENGAGED EVEN IN A RESEARCH PROGRAM IN THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS FIELD" BE CONVEYED DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT REAGAN. AMBASSADOR WALTERS PROMISED TO DO SO WHEN HE MET WITH THE PRESIDENT OCTOBER 22.

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3. ZIA RECAPITULATED PREVIOUS US-GOP DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT, BEGINNING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. HE HAD MADE CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET THAT PAKISTAN WOULD IN NO

CIRCUMSTANCES ABANDON ITS RIGHT TO CONDUCT NON-MILITARY NUCLEAR RESEARCH PROGRAM, TO INCLUDE ENRICHMENT AND REPROCESSING, AND THAT THIS HAD BEEN EXPLICITLY RESTATED DURING NEGOTIATIONS ON THE NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH UNDER SECRETARY BUCKLEY AND ACCEPTED BY US SIDE. THE INFORMATION CONVEYED BY AMBASSADOR WALTERS IN HIS JULY VISIT HAD BEEN TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND INVESTIGATED THOROUGHLY. ZIA SAID "I KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD; NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM ME." HIS INVESTIGATION TURNED UP NO CORROBORATION OF THE US INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION.

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4. ZIA SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT "NOTHING COULD BE HIDDEN FROM US INTELLIGENCE. THE CIA IS CAPABLE OF PENETRATING ANYWHERE, AND IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO ACT ON ANY OTHER ASSUMPTION. AMBASSADOR SPIERS CAN SIT IN HIS RESIDENCE AND KNOW EVERYTHING THAT IS GOING ON IN PAKISTAN." ACCORDINGLY IF SOMEONE IS PRESENTING EVIDENCE OF A CLANDESTINE WEAPONS PROGRAM, HE ASKED THAT WE EXAMINE IT CLOSELY, SINCE PAKISTAN HAD ENEMIES. HE FOUND OUR ALLEGATIONS DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH, SINCE WE COULD GIVE HIM NO SPECIFICS TO FOLLOW UP ON. IF THERE WERE GENUINE EVIDENCE OF WRONGDOING BY ANYONE IN PAKISTAN, "I'LL HANG THAT CHAP UPSIDE DOWNMZ

5. ZIA WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE KNEW FULL WELL THAT THE U.S. AID PROGRAM "WOULD GO FOR ADP" IF PAKISTAN WERE IN FACT DOING WHAT WE SUSPECTED, AND THIS PROGRAM WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO HIM AND HIS COUNTRY. HE WOULD DO

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NOTHING TO JEOPARDIZE IT, AND HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF US - PAKISTAN RELATIONS WOULD RESULT "AS NIGHT FOLLOWS DAY" IF THESE ALLEGATIONS WERE TRUE. PAKISTAN WOULD BE AT THE MERCY OF ITS ADVERSARIES: HE WOULD FACE A HOSTILE INDIA, HE WOULD BE OVERWHELMED BY AFGHANISTAN. "WHAT KIND OF RATIONALITY IS THIS?", HE ASKED.

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6. WITH REFERENCE TO THE DRAWINGS WE HAD LET HIS EXPERTS SEE, HE HAD BEEN ASSURED THERE WAS NOTHING IN THEM THAT PAKISTAN COULD NOT PRODUCE ON ITS OWN. WHY TAKE THE RISKS OF ORDERING ITEMS SUCH AS SPHERES FROM ABROAD. IF SUSPICIONS WERE HEIGHTENED BY THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS ISSUES, HE COULD PROVIDE REASSURANCES: HE HAD JUST TOLD MUNIR KHAN ("IN MY

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PRESENCE," INTERJECTED YAQUB) TO SETTLE THIS PROBLEM NOW, TO ACCEPT 105 PERCENT OF WHAT IAEA ASKED FOR AND TO RESOLVE REMAINING DOUBTS WITHOUT DELAY.

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7. ZIA SAID HE IS AN HONORABLE MAN AND ASKED TO BE TREATED AS SUCH. HE HAD CONVEYED HIS FIRM ASSURANCES TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN WRITING AND HE STOOD BY THEM. WHAT ELSE COULD HE DO? WHAT PAKISTAN WAS BEING IMPLIEDLY CHARGED WITH WOULD BE TOTALLY JUINOUS TO ITS INTERESTS AND THEY COULD NOT HOPE TO GET AWAY WITH IT.

8. AMBASSADOR WALTERS HAD MENTIONED RADAR "BLIPS", ZIA SAID. FRANKLY HE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED BY SOME OF THE "BLIPS" SHOWING ON HIS SCREEN. HE DID NOT KNOW HOW TO INTERPRET THEM: THE IMF ABSTENTION, THE HOLD-UP ON THE PROMISED ALR-69, DELAYS IN FUNDING OF THE AID PROGRAM, A PRESS CAMPAIGN (JUDITH MILLER MENTIONED

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AGAIN) QUESTIONING PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR INTENTIONS, RENEWED TALKS OF COLLUSIVE INDIAN/ISRAELI ACTION AGAINST PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR FACILITIES, NONSENSICAL SPECULATIONS ABOUT "ISLAMIC BOMBS". HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT A COMBINATION OF FORCES WORKING AGAINST A STRENGTHENED US-PAKISTAN RELATIONSHIP, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT FOR ITS ISLAMIC PARTNERS ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE. HE HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED SERIOUS INTIMATIONS ON JOINT INDIAN-ISRAEL ACTIONS AGAINST PAKISTAN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE HAD TO SEE THE US INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND.

9. AMBASSADOR WALTERS REPEATED OUR INTEREST IN PRESERVING AND STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN. HE WOULD REPORT ZIA'S RESPONSE FAITHFULLY TO PRESIDENT REAGAN AND SECRETARY SCHULTZ. HE HAD BEEN ASSURED BY INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF FABRICATION OR DISINFORMATION, BUT WOULD REVIEW ALL THE EVIDENCE FULLY AND IN PERSON ON HIS RETURN. GIVEN

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THE IMPORTANCE PRESIDENT ZIA OBVIOUSLY ATTACHED TO IT, HE WOULD ALSO PURSUE THE ALR-69 QUESTION. AMBASSADOR SPIERS REVIEWED THE BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF THIS PROBLEM, NOTING THAT SENSITIVITY IN THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT APPARENTLY DERIVED FROM SUSPICIONS THAT PAKISTAN HAD SHARED SENSITIVE TECHNOLOGY (E.G. MATRA 550) WITH THE PRC IN THE PAST. PRESIDENT ZIA HAD GIVEN FULL ASSURANCES ON THIS MATTE WHICH HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON, BUT THE MATTER WAS STILL UNRESOLVED.

10. DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSIONS, ZIA MENTIONED A RECENT EPISODE WHICH HE ASKED WE HOLD IN "TOTAL CONFIDENCE" IN ORDER NOT TO JEOPARDIZE HIS RELATIONS WITH THE SAUDI KING. ABOUT SIX WEEKS AGO HE HAD RECEIVED AN EMISSARY FROM KING FAHD WHO TOLD HIM THAT TWO AGENTS (WHOSE NATIONALITY WOULD SURPRISE US) HAD OFFERED TO SELL A NUCLEAR WEAPON TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR \$250 M, AND THAT IT WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ANY EXPERT FAHD

ASAED TO HAVE EXAMINE IT FOR A SUM OF \$30 MILLION.
FAHD WANTED ZIA-S ADVISE AND ASKED IF PAKISTAN
WANTED TO HAVE ONE OF ITS "EXPERTS" EXAMINE THE DEVICE
TO TEST THE VENDORS BONA FIDES. ZIA HAD REPLIED THAT
PAKISTAN HAD NO WEAPONS EXPERTS AND ADVISED FAHD NOT
TO TOUCH THE PROPOSITION "WITH A BARGE POLE." HE
OBSERVED THAT FAHD WAS A STRNGE MIXTURE OF
SHREWDNESS AND NAIVITY.
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