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Transforming the US-India Defense and Security Relationship

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith,

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Transforming the US-India Defense and Security Relationship

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for asking me to speak to your seminar today. I want to thank especially the sponsors of this event: the Confederation of Indian Industry, the National Defense Industrial Association, and the U.S.-India Business Council.

My theme today is the ongoing transformation in the US-India defense relationship.

President Bush, Secretary Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld have all spoken of this transformation. What does it mean? How far have we come? What is left to accomplish? These three questions will frame my remarks today. I speak as a proud participant in the process, which made a significant advance when Secretary Rumsfeld sent me to New Delhi in early December last year to reinvigorate our security relationship with India.

The Bush Administration came into office with a conviction that US interests require a strong relationship with India. The Cold War, not a period of US-Indian cooperation, was over. New conditions were increasing the salience and importance of interests that India and the United States have in common. Early in this Administration, it became clear that U.S. and Indian leaders were thinking along similar lines. In the last six months we have



seen these convictions turn to action.

When President Bush hosted Prime Minister Vajpayee for a working visit at the White House last November 9, they agreed that cooperation should deepen across many fields, as the US and India are (in Prime Minister Vajpayee's phrase) "natural allies." The Prime Minister highlighted this phrase, using it in his address to a Joint Session of the Congress. Secretary Powell repeated it during his visit to New Delhi. It does not imply a traditional military alliance. But the phrase "natural allies" does refer squarely to the fundamental principles of the two countries. We are the two largest democracies, committed to political and economic freedom protected by limited and representative government. We have a common interest in the free flow of commerce, including through the vital lanes of the Indian Ocean. India's rise to prominence in the Information Technology sector, and the impressive growth of the Indian-American community create further ties between us. Finally, we share an interest in fighting terrorism and in creating a strategically stable Asia.

Americans were moved by India's dramatic and unconditional support for the United States in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. We in turn have grieved with India when terrorism has struck it, lately in Kashmir and New Delhi. It is important for the United States to demonstrate the principled nature of its global war on terrorism. We are fighting terrorism because the purposeful targeting of civilians is evil, whatever the motivating political cause. Terrorism is a threat to the liberties and the way of life of all open societies. Operation Enduring Freedom has freed Afghanistan from a tyrannical dictatorship, eliminating a secure base of operations for extremists who target both the United States and India. Our efforts continue to disrupt and destroy the breeding grounds for terrorists and to ensure that they do not escape from Afghanistan to operate again against the United States, India or others.

As Secretary Powell said last year in New Delhi, "The United States and India are united against terrorism, and that includes the terrorism that has been directed against India as well. Even before the September 11 attacks, the United States and India were cooperating extensively against terrorism. We established a counter-terrorism joint working group And now our cooperation is even more intense."

With the global war on terrorism underway, President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee in November agreed on a mandate to enhance US

Indian cooperation in the areas of defense and security.

To help fulfill that mandate, I went to New Delhi early last December to join Defence Secretary Yogendra Narain in reviving the Defense Policy Group, which oversees our defense relationship.

I was gratified that during the DPG we connected well on a personal level and promptly got down to practical work, setting an ambitious agenda for the next six months. I am pleased with the quantity and quality of bilateral activities undertaken between then and now.

A dozen sub-groups have met on a range of issues:

- from counter-terrorism to peacekeeping
- from Navy-to-Navy cooperation to the principles and practices of military "Jointness"
- from cooperation in R&D to sales and licensing.

We have achieved results:

- signing a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)
- completing a sale of 8 "Firefinder" Radars, and
- cooperating in Naval operations escorting shipping through the Malacca Strait.

Next week, we hold our second DPG meeting, and we hope to accelerate our work across the board.

I'd like to spend a moment on a question that continually arises as we work on our relationship with India-what about Pakistan? For many years,

many Americans thought of India primarily, if not exclusively, in two contexts - as one side of the India-Pakistan relationship and as a nuclear non-proliferation problem states. The administration of George W. Bush has an altogether different appreciation of India. We reject what is referred to as the "hyphenated view" of India and Pakistan. We think of India in its own right, as a fellow democracy, a strategically significant power and a player of importance in the community of the world's advanced economies. India's relations with Pakistan are important - and they have commanded intense attention of late in this period of tension - but those relations are seen as but a part of a very broad strategic canvas in which India plays a key, multifaceted role, sharing multiple, large interests with the United States.

The US relationships respectively with India and Pakistan are valuable, but not identical. Each stands on its own merits.

We are working closely with Pakistan in the war on terrorism. Pakistan has contributed invaluablely to Operation Enduring Freedom - and the US-Pakistani relationship has warmed greatly as a result.

We view President Musharraf as a man who is trying to accomplish something strategic and historic for Pakistan. He is trying to remake his country - to point it in a new direction that can increase its openness, its prosperity and its opportunities for better relations with the United States and India. On this difficult experiment in statecraft hinge large national interests of Pakistan, India and the United States.

Islamist extremism and terrorism are a threat not only to India and the United States but also to President Musharraf and the success of his grand political project. That is how we see it. We all have a stake in his success.

An important subject of discussion at the December 2001 Defense Planning Group meetings was what I have called the on-again-off-again (or "spigot") quality of our defense relationship. It is often most unwise for the United States to react to a problem with a country by severing our defense connections. We may then go through a period of two, six, or in some cases ten years in which our institutional linkages are lost. This damages US interests most regrettably. As you know, the Executive Branch of the US government tends to disfavor the use of this spigot, but the Congress has often employed it - for many countries.

Defense trade, which is the focus of today's seminar, is an area that is traditionally affected by this spigot. Clearly, if a relationship has little more to it than defense sales, then political or diplomatic differences make defense sales vulnerable. But, in a multi-dimensional relationship, with a deeply rooted appreciation of common strategic interests, I think it will be less likely that such sales will be a tool for dealing with such differences. Consider how such sales with our allies and closest friends are handled: disagreements are seen in context. As the U.S.-India relationship develops and our two countries increasingly harmonize their policies and strategic goals, the inevitable result will be more durable and consistent links in the defense and other fields.

In their Joint Statement of last November, President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee agreed that our countries should discuss ways to stimulate bilateral high-technology commerce. They also agreed to intensify cooperation in areas such as energy, science and technology and export controls. It is our intention to share high technology with our allies and friends, including India.

From the Defense Department's perspective, such technology is instrumental to the effectiveness of our armed forces. And technology in the hands of adversaries can be a major strategic problem. We have important issues in this field to work through with India.

When the United States shares military or dual-use technologies, even with our closest allies, we attach conditions. We need the ability to protect specified items and services. We expect our friends to protect militarily valuable technologies through a robust export control system, with its own legal, regulatory and policy infrastructure. Every country with which we share technology has to be willing to agree to no "third-party" transfers without U. S. Government approval. That is why November's Joint Statement highlighted the importance of the dialogue on export controls.

As our relationship evolves, we also need to account for the fact that India and the U.S. have in common governments with complex bureaucratic organizations and procedures. Many constituencies weigh in on policy and decision making. While such a system does not always allow us to act quickly, it is the price we pay for our democratic principles.

The US Executive Branch and Congress both take seriously their role and in both branches of government there are multiple constituencies that have voices, including those with responsibility for regional affairs, human rights, arms control, and technology security. Some of these actors will support defense sales, while others oppose them.

For the United States, defense sales are a part of our overall national security policy, not simply a matter of business and commerce.

It is clear that in the past year, the United States and India have been moving together in the right direction. The United States recognizes an interest in looking positively on a much wider range of activities with India, including in the area of defense trade and technology cooperation. Among the many motivations for supporting U.S. sales of defense technology are improving interoperability between US and friendly countries' forces and enhancing recipient countries' ability to defend themselves.

Today you will hear from several of my colleagues in the U.S. Government with responsibility for policy oversight and implementation of our defense trade relationship. They will help to clarify issues that I have been able to touch on only briefly.

I'd like to close with a story that highlights the strides that the United States and India have taken together. Only a month ago, on April 13, the Indian offshore patrol vessel Sharda relieved our guided-missile cruiser USS Cowpens, which was protecting commercial shipping passing through the Strait of Malacca. Since early March, Cowpens had been serving as a military escort to high-value shipping as part of the war against global terrorism. Following several days of turnover in which Cowpens and Sharda steamed together in a combined escort operation, Sharda took over from Cowpens as part of a worldwide effort to protect shipping from terrorism and sea banditry.

Cowpens' commanding officer, Capt. Paul S. Holmes, said that working with the Indian Navy rekindled a friendship. Just fourteen months earlier, in February, 2001, Cowpens represented the United States in the International Fleet Review in Mumbai. While there, in addition to hosting numerous dignitaries and participating in various military events, Cowpens delivered \$80,000 in relief supplies in response to the devastating earthquake that hit India in late January 2001.

Captain Holmes recently said: "During an interview at the end of the Fleet Review, I was asked what would come of U.S.-India relations as a result of the Fleet Review. I said we would have to wait and see what would develop from the seeds of friendship that we had planted. Who could have foreseen that 14 months later an Indian Navy ship would relieve a U.S. Navy ship in a real world operation, and that . U.S. Navy ship would be Cowpens."

That's a good story, as strategically significant as it is heart-warming.

Thank You.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

