

## **July 13, 1998**

### **Letter, Strobe Talbott to Jaswant Singh**

#### **Citation:**

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#### **Summary:**

Strobe Talbott writes to Jasawant Singh about Indo-US relations, India's nuclear policy, and the CTBT.

#### **Original Language:**

English

#### **Contents:**

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MKA  
Comb. Celeste  
Pickering  
Berger  
Reidel  
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United States Department of State

*The Deputy Secretary of State*

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

Monday, July 13, 1998

Dear Jaswant:

I began this letter, as I usually do with my writing, in the early morning. As the sun came up, it pleased me to think that, at that hour (making allowances for the difference in time zones), you were on horseback — which is more dangerous but also more fun than being shackled to a computer keyboard.

I am following up on what I regard as our excellent meeting in Frankfurt, in hopes of laying the ground for an equally good encounter in New Delhi next week. In composing my thoughts, I have had the benefit of two conversations with Dick Celeste, including one after he saw you on Monday evening.

I intend this letter to be in the spirit of our most direct and personal exchanges — and in the spirit of our entire enterprise, which seems to me have been captured by a wonderful sentence from Raja Rao's book that you so kindly gave me: "The end, I have been taught, is not a question of success or defeat, but the abolition of contradiction, of duality — and of the peace it should bring to one." Did you have this concept of the win-win (no-defeat) game in mind when you gave me the book? I wouldn't put it past you. After all, you have spoken more than once of how we are dealing with a duality — the ideas of India's and the U.S.'s most fundamental and enduring security interests — and how we might reconcile, if not abolish, the contradictions between them.

Mr. Jaswant Singh

Special Emissary of the Prime Minister,  
New Delhi, India.

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In any event, down to business...

I have reported to the President and to the Secretary that, like our first meeting in Washington, our second in Frankfurt provided ample evidence that you and your Prime Minister are making a good-faith and imaginative effort to establish a new modus vivendi between India and the U.S., one that builds upon the several points where our interests coincide; that enables us to manage the differences between us, especially our profound, and I suspect enduring, disagreement over the wisdom of India's having demonstrated its nuclear capability in the way it did in May; that permits us to resume the enhanced and deepened relationship of which the President spoke so hopefully after Prime Minister Vajpayee assumed office; and, of course, to that end, one that will help us overcome the significant obstacles to a possible Presidential visit in November.

Let me add that I have reported to the President and the Secretary the depth and intensity of the concerns you conveyed about our China policy - concerns that, however sincere, are based on the most elemental misunderstanding of American objectives toward both China and India (to say nothing of other countries in the region).

In that regard, while taking care to assure the highest level of confidentiality, I have given the President and the Secretary a sense of the domestic political difficulties and uncertainties you and your Prime Minister must factor into the substance and the tactics of your approach to our common venture. Against that backdrop, I have told them, in all candor, that it remains to be seen whether the ideas we discussed in Frankfurt can, in the relatively short period of time available to us before the President must make some hard choices of his own, be converted into measures that will answer the needs you and I have identified. I have advised that we Americans must, in our own thinking and in our own efforts to achieve what Rao has taught me to call *rasa*, balance our hopes with realism. High on our list of hopes is that the Prime Minister will be willing and able to affirm and advance the results of our brainstorming to date with what we regard as the necessary degree of specificity.

President Clinton will be writing directly to the Prime Minister in the coming days. But precisely in the interests of specificity, let me

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review in this letter where I think we are and where I hope we can move over the next month:

CTBT: I have explained your proposal to the President and Secretary as follows (and I'm setting it down here so that you can let me know, when I get to New Delhi, whether I've got it right)...

The Indian government would undertake, in the nearest possible future, a formal, unilateral commitment to conduct no further tests; it would then ratify the CTBT sometime next year, no later than October 1999, the date of the CTBT conference that will be held if the treaty's entry-into-force requirements have not been met. You hope to use this unilateral pledge of no further tests as a way of "de-demonizing" the CTBT and thus laying the ground for your adherence before the October '99 deadline.

The mechanism for formalizing the pledge would be an "equivalent document." The PM would present the equivalent document to the Parliament after he has elicited the support of the key opposition leaders. He might even call the Parliament back into special session for this purpose in late August. Because the document will be an executive action by the Indian Government rather than a treaty commitment, it will underscore and be consistent with India's claim of nuclear sovereignty. As such, it will make signing the treaty easier as a follow-up step. However, to give it additional international standing and weight, the PM will deposit it with the Secretary-General of the UN when he comes to the General Assembly in late September or early October.

We also understand that the document would be unconditional; specifically, it would not, for example, be contingent on a comparable Pakistani action. Nor will it require ratification by the Parliament, hence it will not be subject to what we have called in our own ratification debates over SALT and START "killer amendments."

This proposed arrangement leaves my colleagues and me with a concern: I hope you can clarify the mechanism, venue and timing whereby India would publicly commit itself to CTBT adherence in a time frame that will permit us to make our own decisions. In order to assure ourselves on what is, for us, a vital question — the viability of the global no-testing

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theory could be auspicious if, in practice, it allows us to reconcile India's "strategic autonomy" with the global norms and objectives to which we, the U.S., and the international community are committed. But that will be the case only if words like "minimum," "sufficiency," and even "deterrence" itself are defined in a way that entail a high degree of restraint.

Incidentally, on all these subjects, as well as for purposes of directly engaging our military with yours in the wake of May, having my friend and colleague, Gen. Joe Ralston in New Delhi week will be extremely useful, I'm sure.

Let me conclude by noting that in my report to the President and the Secretary, I observed as significant that in Frankfurt, you did not attach conditions to the potentially useful steps India might take in the security, non-proliferation and arms-control fields. I reported that we had discussed what might be called the philosophical justification for this absence of horse-trading linkages: namely, that India will do nothing that cannot be justified in terms of its own concept of its own security — nor will the U.S. ask India to do anything that cannot be so justified.

But I also passed along to the President and Secretary your belief that it would be desirable and appropriate for us, in the course of further discussions, to take judicious note of the several ways in which India will be making a good-faith effort to meet its very serious responsibilities. My colleagues and I are giving some thought to what we might be prepared to do, especially in the area of energy cooperation, while taking into account our constraints in the nuclear field.

Finally, Jaswant, having inflicted this long letter on you, I should stress that I would be most receptive to any points that you might feel I should have in mind as I wing my way in your direction.

I look forward to seeing you on Monday.

Best regards,



Strobe Talbott