MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

From: Cyrus Vance Jr.

Subject: Letter to President Zia of Pakistan

June 20, 1979

SECRET

President Zia of Pakistan in a conversation with our Charge offered to put in writing assurances that Pakistan does not intend to conduct a nuclear explosion and that Pakistan's definition of a peaceful nuclear program excludes a nuclear explosion.

Zia sometimes speaks impetuously and his advisers may persuade him to back off from his offer. I do not think, however, that this should deter us from following up. If he does provide us with written assurances it would be a significant step forward and could set the stage for further steps which would enhance our regional and global non-proliferation objectives, although it would not solve our fundamental non-proliferation problem with Pakistan.

You have not previously written to Zia on Pakistan's nuclear policies and I think we should take this as an opportunity both to emphasize your concern over non-proliferation risks of Pakistan's nuclear activities as well as over the deterioration of our relations and your earnest desire to reverse this trend. You could indicate that you are asking our Charge to discuss certain steps that might be taken to this end. At the moment Congressional sentiment is not in favor of helping Pakistan but I believe we could expect support for selected programs if we were in a position to state that we were making progress in the non-proliferation area based on Zia's assurances.

SECRET

DOCS-1 6/20/79
Recommendation:
That you sign the attached letter to President Zia.
Approve _______ Disapprove _______
SECRET

Dear Mr. President:

I was gratified to read the statement you made on May 31 that Pakistan has been proud of its good and cordial relationship with the United States since the founding of Pakistan in 1947, but that sometimes like old friends we have something to quarrel about. I want you to know that I share those feelings and have been deeply concerned over the state of the relationship between our countries in recent months. In that spirit I wish to exchange with you some thoughts about the relationship between our two countries.

Secretary Vance has told Foreign Adviser Shahi that we share the serious concerns you have over developments in Afghanistan and Iran. We want to see what we can do to enhance your security in the face of this new and disturbing situation. We are keenly aware of the consequences for stability in the region.

I would hope that steps by both of us could lead to a rekindling of our relationships and a forging of bonds of even greater friendship.

SECRET
Secretary Vance also explained to Adviser Shahi our deep concern over the possibility of a nuclear arms race developing in the subcontinent. I know you share this concern, but as Ambassador Hummel has explained to you certain activities of your government, including enrichment and reprocessing and their relationship to explosives research, have raised questions about Pakistan's peaceful intentions in this area. It is to my great regret that our inability so far to resolve these questions has led to an unfortunate deterioration in our normally good relations. I was most encouraged, therefore, to hear of your conversation with Peter Constable, our Charge, in which you offered to write to us your assurance that Pakistan does not intend to conduct a nuclear explosion and that Pakistan's definition of a peaceful nuclear program excludes a nuclear explosion for any purpose. I would be gratified if you wished to convey these assurances to me directly in the course of our correspondence. I believe it could be an important first step in resolving the uncertainties which have arisen between us. More importantly, it may give us a basis for further steps we might both be able to take to restore our relations to a more constructive state.

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DECLASSIFIED
Authority: NWD 78957
I look forward to your response and thoughts on how we might proceed.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Carter
SECRET

TO: The Secretary  
THROUGH: T - Mrs. Benson HB  
P - Mr. Newton J  
FROM: NEA - Harold H. Saunders HHS  
OES - Thomas Pickering HR/HP

Presidential Letter to President Zia of Pakistan

Discussion:

President Zia has offered to put in writing assurances that Pakistan does not intend to conduct a nuclear explosion and that Pakistan's definition of a peaceful nuclear program excludes a peaceful nuclear explosion. We think this is an important departure from our otherwise negative nuclear dialogue with Zia and that we should follow up on his offer. Our purpose would be to get an unconditional statement that Pakistan does not intend to conduct a nuclear explosion of any kind. This would be parallel to assurances India has given publicly. Although this could not solve our fundamental non-proliferation problem with Pakistan, it could help provide the basis for improving our strained relations with Pakistan and could set the stage for further steps which could enhance our regional and global non-proliferation objectives.

At this stage we would propose a Presidential letter to Zia. This would be the first direct communication by the President to the Pakistanis solely on nuclear issues. In such a message we could restate our deep concern over the deterioration in our relations and our desire to reverse this trend. While we would not be specific in the letter, we would indicate that we are willing to discuss means of meeting Pakistan's security needs. We could also
suggest a willingness to consider other steps to re-
store our relationship to a healthier, more mutually
beneficial state. We would expect Congress to be
more receptive to military sales and economic aid
proposals for Pakistan if we have received the above
assurances. Nevertheless, we will have to consider
how far we go and how strongly we approach Congress
since the reliability of Zia's assurances, even if
he is prepared to put them in writing, are open to
serious doubt given our cumulative evidence on
Pakistan's nuclear plans over the last nine months.

Gerard Smith believes that assurances, while
desirable, should not be an end in themselves, but a
start of a renewed effort to get Pakistan to stop
its nuclear explosive programs. Otherwise, he
believes that this move would foreshadow likely
acceptance of an Israel-type situation for Pakistan
where a nuclear weapons potential is legitimized as
long as there are no tests -- a far cry from the
President's policy of trying to stop the spread of
fissile material production -- even for peaceful
purposes.

Recommendation:

That you sign the attached memorandum to the
President which encloses a proposed letter to Zia.

Approve  

Disapprove