

March 19, 1979

**Memorandum for the President from Cyrus Vance,
'Nuclear Problems in the Sub-Continent: Status
Report'**

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Summary:

This document is a three-page brief from U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter regarding Pakistan's nuclear program.

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

March 19, 1979

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: Cyrus Vance
SUBJECT: Nuclear Problems in the Sub-Continent
-- Status Report

INDIA

State Dept. review
completed

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is still considering the license for the next shipment of fuel to the Tarapur nuclear power plant. Desai's recent public statements on the delay have been remarkably restrained, but we cannot expect this to last indefinitely, particularly because the Indian program is beginning to be affected.

I wrote to Chairman Hendrie in January to urge expeditious action. Warren Christopher wrote the Commission on March 15, reporting on his trip to New Delhi and emphasizing the importance of approving the license for our non-proliferation efforts and our overall relationship with India. We think that on the basis of these representations the Commission will act very soon, and I do not believe you should weigh in at this point. Resolving this issue quickly is particularly important in view of the need to involve India in seeking a solution to the Pakistan problem and I will be in touch if we need your help with the NRC.

DOE review
completed.

PAKISTAN

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As you know

Pakistan is engaged in a clandestine program to develop a nuclear explosive device. Our best estimates are that it will be about three years before it will have

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sufficient fissile material to test a bomb, but the fact that it has imported critical components of a uranium enrichment facility has brought into effect the Symington amendment, prohibiting us from making further foreign assistance obligations. We have made no public statement that this has happened, and we are winding down the affected aid programs in as orderly a manner as the law allows. Food assistance under PL-480 and military sales are not affected by the Symington amendment, but politically it will be very difficult to obtain Congressional consent for these programs under present circumstances.

Warren Christopher's conversation with General Zia and other top Pakistan officials in early March made clear that we were aware of Pakistan's program, including its enrichment effort, and the consequences that a weapon program would have on our bilateral relationship and on Pakistan's ties with other states. Zia did not dispute that it was developing sensitive nuclear facilities. He emphasized India's 1974 explosion and ongoing nuclear program and the resulting discrimination against Pakistan in this regard. Pakistani officials reiterated their proposal for a South Asia Nuclear Free Zone, including its willingness to submit to inspection if India also agreed (in conversations that Warren Christopher had a few days before in New Delhi, the Indians again strongly rejected the South Asia Nuclear Free Zone concept, noting that it would exclude China and the USSR).

We are now studying various steps that we, in conjunction with others, might take before the Pakistan program becomes the focus of public attention.

These include inducements such as economic and military assistance, the threat of sanctions, and the possibility of opening a dialogue between India and Pakistan on mutual nuclear restraints. We are also looking at longer range scenarios involving international condemnation after the issue becomes public.

We met with the British on March 16 to discuss the problem. David Owen will be going to New Delhi in mid-April (and perhaps Islamabad if Bhutto is spared). We

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both share the same deep concern about the regional and international consequences of Pakistan developing a nuclear weapon, particularly in view of the "Islamic bomb" aspect to this situation with regard to both Israel and India. We and the British concluded there are no easy answers, that time is short before the issue will become public, particularly since the Indian press is carrying increasingly detailed accounts of the Pakistan program and that, as a consequence, we should also be focussing more on how we make use of the international outcry to serve our objective. We agreed to keep in close touch as our thinking evolves.

Next week we will be consulting with key members on the Hill so that they will be prepared when this issue surfaces. We will tell them about the steps we are taking to phase out aid in accordance with the law and in a non-punitive manner.