

**April 9, 1979**

**Memorandum for the Secretary of State from Gerard Smith with Enclosed Telegram from the American Embassy, Islamabad**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum for the Secretary of State from Gerard Smith with Enclosed Telegram from the American Embassy, Islamabad", April 9, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NARA, RG59, Records of Warren Christopher, Box 56. Contributed by Malcolm Craig. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/280735>

**Summary:**

This document has two parts. The first is a memo addressed to the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, that focuses on the increasing immediacy of the Pakistan nuclear situation. The second part is a telegram that details the growing pushback from U.S. political leaders after the Carter Administration decided to invoke the Symington Amendment towards Pakistan.

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*Pakistan*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 AMBASSADOR AT LARGE  
 WASHINGTON

SECRET

April 9, 1979

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Cy:

The ~~attached~~ <sup>with instruction for</sup> telegram ~~instructing~~ Ambassador Hummel was not cleared with me -- although it deals with the most important nonproliferation issue yet faced by President Carter. I urge reconsideration of the "straddle" policy which it adopts. This policy attempts the impossible -- to keep proliferation separate from Pakistan security -- by dealing with these issues on "two levels."

The Eisenhower doctrine which the 1959 agreement implemented never contemplated security guarantees for a prospectively nuclear armed Pakistan.

We have been willing to put sharp strains on relations with the Federal Republic, Japan and other allies in efforts to get them to alter their clearly peaceful nuclear programs. We even embargoed the European Community for a short period. Here, we have discovered a Pakistani covert weapons program based on stolen designs. Our reaction seems mild by comparison. Even the aid cutoff seems cast as an action which we have to take because of Congress and we are even willing to discuss with the Pakistanis "the question of the strategic value of a nuclear weapons capacity." Our nonproliferation policy thus becomes in the language used in the instruction a matter of "degree," not principle.

I think our best chance to turn the Pakistanis around -- and to sustain Congressional and domestic political support for a U.S. role in Pakistan -- is to make clear that in the last analysis its nuclear policy puts our whole relation at stake. I recommend that Ambassador Hummel's instructions be changed accordingly.

*Smith*  
 Gerard Smith

cc: - D - Mr. Christopher  
 P - Mr. Newsom  
 NSC - Dr. Brzezinski

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I.O. 12005: N/A  
TAGS: FEFR, EAID, MNUC, PINT, PE, US  
SUBJ: GOP REACTS TO US AID DECISION: MORE POLITICAL LEADERS  
ATTACK US MOVE

REF: ISLAMABAD

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1. SUMMARY: GOP ADVISOR ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AGHA SHAHI (AS "MFA SPOKESMAN") HELD EXTENSIVE PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 8 ON GOP REACTIONS TO THE US DECISION TO INVOKE THE SYMINGTON AMENDMENT STOPPING ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO PAKISTAN. SHAHI CHARGED THAT THE US DECISION IS "DISCRIMINATORY, BASED ON "FALSE CHARGES," AND DESIGNED TO KEEP NUCLEAR POWER OUT OF THE HANDS OF MUSLIM COUNTRIES. HE REITERATED THE GOP'S CONTENTION THAT PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM IS FOR "PURELY PEACEFUL PURPOSES." SHAHI REFUSED TO ADMIT OR DENY EXISTENCE OF CENTRIFUGE PROGRAM.

2. MORE NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE ALSO JOINED THE FRAY, CONTINUING, IN THEIR STATEMENTS, TO FOCUS ON THE WEST'S ALLEGED ANTI-ISLAM BIAS AND THE NEED FOR A "REPROCESSING PLANT" TO MEET PAKISTAN'S GROWING ENERGY REQUIREMENTS. END SUMMARY.

3. FOREIGN ADVISER AGHA SHAHI -- DESCRIBED IN APRIL 9 FAX PRESS AS AN MFA "SPOKESMAN" -- HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 8 TO DISCUSS THE GOP'S REACTION TO THE US DECISION TO STOP DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO PAKISTAN IN RESPONSE TO INFORMATION ON PAKISTAN'S ACTIVITIES IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD.

ACCORDING TO ONE WESTERN REPORTER WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE MEETING, IT WAS "VINTAGE SHAHI;" ALL WESTERN NEWSMEN STILL IN CAPITAL AREA ATTENDED, INCLUDING NYT, WASH. POST, NBC, EPC, AND AP.

4. AS REPORTED IN PAKISTAN TIMES APRIL 9, THE "MFA SPOKESMAN"

-- "CATEGORICALLY DENIED" US ASSERTION THAT "PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM HAS BEHIND IT THE INTENT OR PURPOSE

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OF DEVELOPING A NUCLEAR WEAPON;"

-- "REJECTED THE FALSE CHARGE" THAT THE GOP IS DEVELOPING "ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM WITH THE ASSISTANCE OR PARTNERSHIP OF LIBYA OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY;"

-- SAID THAT THE US DECISION TO INVOKE THE SYMINGTON AMENDMENT IS "DISCRIMINATORY" SINCE THE US STILL AIDS AND ARMS "COUNTRIES WHICH MAINTAIN "COMPLETELY UNSAFEGUARDED NUCLEAR PROGRAMS;"

--SAID THAT PAKISTAN IS "READY TO ACCEPT FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS TO COVER ITS PEACEFUL PROGRAM OF NUCLEAR RESEARCH" IF THE US IS "WILLING TO ENSURE" THAT THE SAFEGUARDS ARE APPLIED "WITHOUT PREFERENCES AND EXCLUSIONS" TO OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE EITHER ACQUIRED A NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY, OR ARE ON THE "THRESHOLD OF DOING SO."

--SUGGESTED THAT IF THE NON-PROLIFERATION PROBLEM IS GLOBAL, AS THE US SUGGESTS, IT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED NOT IN A BILATERAL CONTEXT BUT RATHER IN THE UN, WHERE PAKISTAN "HAS ALREADY PROVEN," BY SPONSORING RESOLUTIONS AND OTHER ACTIONS, THAT IT SUPPORTS THE "GOALS OF NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT."

5. IN ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ON PAKISTAN'S DEVELOPMENT OF A GAS CENTRIFUGE, SHAHI SAID THAT PAKISTAN IS NOT THE ONLY COUNTRY ENGAGED IN A RESEARCH PROGRAM ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF ATOMIC ENERGY." SHAHI RESPONDED TO A QUERY BY A BRITISH CORRESPONDENT ON THE POSSIBLE USES IN PAKISTAN OF ENRICHED URANIUM, BY ASKING THE REPORTER IF HE IS "AWARE OF ALL OF THE NUCLEAR PROGRAMS OF HIS COUNTRY," OR OF ITS PROGRAMS TO DEVELOP "CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS."

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5. IN ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ON PAKISTAN'S DEVELOPMENT OF A GAS CENTRIFUGE, SHAHI SAID THAT

"PAKISTAN IS NOT THE ONLY COUNTRY ENGAGED IN A RESEARCH PROGRAM ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF ATOMIC ENERGY." SHAHI RESPONDED TO A QUERY BY A BRITISH CORRESPONDENT ON THE POSSIBLE USES IN PAKISTAN OF ENRICHED URANIUM, BY ASKING THE REPORTER IF HE IS "AWARE OF ALL OF THE NUCLEAR PROGRAMS OF HIS COUNTRY," OR OF ITS PROGRAMS TO DEVELOP CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS."

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6. SHAHI ALSO SAID THAT HE WAS "NOT INFORMED" ON THE QUESTION OF PAKISTAN'S IMPORT OF SOME NUCLEAR RESEARCH EQUIPMENT; HE SUGGESTED THAT "MANY COUNTRIES" IMPORT THIS TYPE OF TECHNOLOGY, HOWEVER, AND DENIED THAT PAKISTAN HAS IMPORTED ANY ENRICHED URANIUM.

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NOTE BY CC/T: REFERENCE AS RECEIVED.

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7. SHAHI SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHY THE US HAD TAKEN THIS ACTION TO WINDDOWN ITS AID PROGRAM. HE SPECULATED THAT "IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT PAKISTAN IS AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY." THE ADVISER SAID THAT THE STOPPAGE OF US AID WILL AFFECT US-PAK RELATIONS, SINCE "IT SEEMS AN IMPEDIMENT IN AREAS OF PRIMARY CONCERN TO US." SHAHI UNCLASSIFIED

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SUGGESTED ALSO THAT "DOMESTIC PRESSURE ON THE US GOVERNMENT" MIGHT HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE US MOVE, SINCE THE "ZIONIST LOBBY AND OTHERS PROPAGATE THAT IF PAKISTAN ACQUIRES SOPHISTICATED NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY, IT WOULD PASS IT ON TO THE PLO AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES TO THE DETRIMENT OF ISRAEL." IN SPITE OF THE US DECISION, SHAHI CONCLUDED, THE COP "CANNOT SURRENDER OUR NATIONAL INTEREST AND SUGGEST TO PRESSURE."

8. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE, SHAHI SPENT A LONG TIME DISCUSSING THE ANTI-MUSLIM NATURE OF THE US MOVE, AND STRONGLY MAINTAINED THAT THE WEST HAS "FALSE APPREHENSIONS IN THIS REGARD." SHAHI RELATLY ASKED THAT ALL OF HIS COMMENTS ON ZIONISM BE PLACED ON BACKGROUND. THE REPORTERS TOLD HIM THAT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE, AND THE WESTERN PRESS MAY HAVE FILED STORIES WITH SHAHI'S COMMENTS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. LOCALLY, HOWEVER, THE SHAHI COMMENTS WERE ATTRIBUTED TO "POLITICAL CIRCLES IN ISLAMABAD." THE RESULT APPEARS IN A SEPARATE ARTICLE IN THE PAK TIMES APRIL 9, WHICH IS BASICALLY A MORE FERVENT RESTATEMENT OF THE ANTI-ISLAM THEME AND THE DISCRIMINATORY NATURE OF THE US POSITION.

9. THE APRIL 9 PRESS ALSO CARRIES TWO STORIES FROM THE US. IN ONE, PFI MAINTAINS THAT THE US DECISION ON AID CAME "OUT OF THE BLUE TO THE PAKISTAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON," AND THAT ICM BAYAT MEHDI WAS NOT INFORMED OF ANY SUCH DECISION WHEN HE WAS CALLED INTO THE DEPARTMENT ON APRIL 6. THE PFI STORY SUGGESTS THAT DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN CARTER DID NOT PROVIDE SATISFACTORY ANSWERS TO A BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS, AND THAT HIS PERFORMANCE LEFT US REPORTERS "UNCONVINCED." IN THE OTHER STORY, THE PAKISTAN STUDENTS FEDERATION IN NEW YORK IS SAID TO HAVE PROTESTED UNCLASSIFIED

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THE US DECISION IN A LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER.

16. MORE POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE ALSO JOINED THE FRAY. COMMENTS REPORTED IN THE PRESS APRIL 9 COME FROM A WIDE SWATH OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. MOST FOCUS ON THE WEST'S ATTEMPT TO KEEP "ISLAM FROM FLOURISHING" AND EMPHASIZE CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO US "PRESSURE TACTICS AIMED AT HAMPERING PAKISTAN'S ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE A REPROCESSING PLANT."

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