

commentary

from other pens...

Powell visit to Asia highlights list of woes

By George Gedda

Associated Press Writer

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — Secretary of State Colin Powell didn't need to read his briefing book to know South Asia is a rough neighborhood. He has felt and seen it all around him this week.

For openers, Muslim leaders in Pakistan who back the Taliban militia in Afghanistan decided a nationwide general strike was an appropriate way of welcoming Powell to Islamabad, the nation's capital. Thousands of merchants heeded the call.

To the west, in Afghanistan, American bombs were being dropped on terrorist encampments and the Taliban regime infrastructure that supports them. For Afghans, this is nothing new. There has been more war than peace in the country for 22 years.

To the east, a relatively short drive from Islamabad, Indian troops attacked Pakistani positions across a line of control that separates Indian Kashmir from Pakistani Kashmir.

The fighting — the heaviest in 10 months — began an hour before Powell touched down in Islamabad and certainly did not make his visit to Pakistan and subsequent stop in India any easier.

Powell had said before leaving Washington he wanted India and Pakistan to keep the lid on their dispute over Kashmir so that they could concentrate on helping the U.S.-led anti-terrorism struggle.

Kashmir is perhaps the most difficult of South Asia's travails. It is a conflict that has bedeviled diplomats for decades.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars — two involving Kashmir. All were fought before they acquired nuclear weapons. When they battled each other in the summer of 1999, it was history's first direct combat between two nuclear powers.

It's not surprising Powell asked Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf for restraint on Kashmir in their meeting on Tuesday and made the same request of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Wednesday.

South Asia expert Jonah Blank offers perspective on the dangers Kashmir poses.

"Every border skirmish between India and Pakistan now carries the potential — however remote — for catastrophic escalation, and in Kashmir, such skirmishes are a daily fact of life," Blank has written. "There will be no safety for either state without stability in Kashmir, and there will be no stability in Kashmir without the cooperation of its people."

In 1998, first India, then Pakistan, engaged in underground nuclear tests.

Then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright joined with foreign ministers of the four other long-standing nuclear powers to urge the two nuclear upstarts to step back from the brink by keeping their bombs and missiles in storage. They also called on the two sides to negotiate an end to the Kashmir dispute.

There have been no nuclear tests since then. But the Kashmir dispute continues to fester — as demonstrated by this week's cross-border clashes.

Albright learned about Kashmir at the knee of her father, Josef Korbel, who served as a member of the United Nations High Commission on India and Pakistan 50 years ago.

Of his experience, he wrote, "The two great nations of the subcontinent, India and Pakistan, continue to dissipate their wealth, their strength and their energy on a near fratricidal struggle in which the hitherto almost unknown state of Kashmir has become the physical battleground."

Powell is now sticking his toe in Kashmir waters, but not too deeply. A lengthy opening statement he read at a news conference Tuesday contained but two sentences on Kashmir.

The Kashmir issue, Powell said, "can be resolved if all parties engage with a willingness to address the concerns in mutually acceptable ways."

"Issues must be resolved through peaceful, diplomatic means, not through violence and reliance on force, but with a determined respect for human rights."

EDITOR'S NOTE — George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.



With God as our guide, we must move on

I don't know about you, but I believe God seeks the lost in situations daily — in America or wherever evil lashes out.

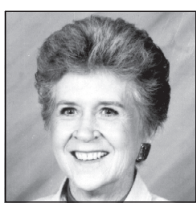
We're called to help. We've got to help. We can't stay in the grieving process - in any stage of it. We've got to move on. How do we do that appropriately?

One way is to examine our lives. How are we living that causes other people to hate us? How can someone be so fanatical as to train and plan for two years to die in a hijacked plane? That kind of hate has to come from something.

A second way is to go deeper into our faith, to really study and understand what Christ calls us to do with our hurt and anger over the September 11 "bombings." How can we make things better for the people around us? How can we give - of ourselves and our resources?

Another way is to familiarize ourselves with the Islam religion, so that we will understand Muslims better.

Part of the reason we can't understand the hijackers' dedication is because we have made little ef-



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fort as a country, or as individuals, to understand them. They are highly intelligent. They are not crazy. They are not ignorant foreigners with a weird belief system.

They believe in God. They believe that what they do on this earth makes a difference. They believe in eternal life.

It sounds almost like Christianity, doesn't it? But how many of us have that kind of dedication?

Christians are called to fight evil. That's what we're about. We all know that there is a great deal of evil in the world. But where does that start?

I believe it starts in the heart of each one of us.

Wars are just big arguments. Wars are just a larger version of two neighbors who refuse to get along. Wars begin with little things that fester and grow

into big things. Hate is the natural forerunner of war.

As Christians, it is important to demonstrate our faith during this national crisis. It is essential to get past mind-numbing helplessness to the final stage of grief which is, for a Christian, forgiveness. That's hard, isn't it?

We really would like to avoid that stage. It's easier to be angry. We'd rather stay outraged. Forgiveness is almost asking too much, isn't it?

Well, are we Christians, or not? We are to be known by our love, not by our hate. God gives us freedom to choose, but believe me, God often cries over our choices.

Just as I believe God cried over the choices made by the hijackers. I rejoice that we have a professed Christian as President. He faces difficult decisions as the world takes on the evil of terrorism. This is the time for Americans and the Congress to be united behind our President, and to demonstrate what freedom is worth and the difference being a Christian makes.

Stamp out evil, yes! But also protect the innocent.

Don't woo Muslims at Israel's expense

While fighting terrorism militarily, the United States needs to do more to win popular support in the Islamic world — but not at the expense of Israel.

Terrorist leader Osama bin Laden is trying to make the Palestinian cause his leading justification for violence. The Bush administration should not accept his priority list as a way of winning Muslim hearts and minds.

It's a losing proposition, anyway. Bin Laden is aiming for the destruction of Israel, not peace, and, even if the Bush administration muscled Israel into concessions, bin Laden and other Islamic extremists would reject them as insufficient.

There are indications that the State Department wants Bush to return to former President Bill Clinton's peace plan — including "sharing Jerusalem" — as the basis of renewed Middle East diplomacy, but that's likely to lead to failure and help the terrorist cause, not undercut it.

Instead, to fight bin Laden on the political and propaganda fronts, various experts have suggested a series of other steps — some of which are already being taken, some of which are not.

Robert Satloff, director of the Washington Institute on Near East Policy, recommends that the United States upgrade its media and public-opinion operations directed toward Arab and Muslim populations, using satellites, magazines and Web sites in local languages to convey American values.

"What most Middle Easterners really want is a U.S. visa," he said. "We can't give everyone a visa, but we should give them the intellectual equivalent — better understanding of what we're all about."

He suggests establishing a U.S. equivalent of the Arabic Al Jazeera satellite television network, beginning American studies programs in Arab universities, and reforming U.S. democracy-building programs, which, he said, are largely ineffective.

Satloff said the U.S. international exchange program should stop sending out speakers to Arab nations with a "blame America" attitude and be more



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selective about the journalists and scholars it invites into the country.

As other experts recommend, America should also encourage economic and political reform in the often-corrupt regimes of the Islamic world and get them to stop spreading anti-U.S. and anti-Jewish propaganda in their controlled media.

"The rage on the Arab street is nominally aimed at the United States and Israel," said the Nixon Center's Geoffrey Kemp, a former Reagan White House aide. "But it actually arises out of the frustration that young people feel toward the corrupt and inefficient regimes they live under."

Islamic extremism, Kemp pointed out, offers disillusioned young men an acceptable way of expressing their rage at their own governments.

As other experts suggest, we should increase economic aid to countries helping in the current struggle, especially Pakistan and Uzbekistan, and stay involved in the region when the terrorist crisis has passed.

The administration is furnishing food to starving Afghans, and, in a shift in policy, Bush has vowed to participate in United Nations-managed "nation building" in Afghanistan once the ruling Taliban is ousted.

Bush is doing everything possible to make clear that we are not fighting Muslims or Arabs and that we foresee no "clash of civilizations," but rather that we are at war with the "evildoers" of world terrorism.

Beyond that, the United States should start insisting that Saudi Arabia cooperate in the anti-terror campaign by sharing intelligence and cutting off bin Laden's funds — and Bush should also stop pres-

suring Israel to appease the Oil Kingdom.

America should try to reduce violence between Palestinians and Israelis and get peace talks restarted, but not by muscling Israel or rewarding Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat before he's decisively cracked down on terrorists in his midst.

Arafat last week arrested one top leader of the terrorist group Hamas and ordered his Palestinian Authority police to fire on pro-bin Laden rioters in Gaza.

Pro-Israel experts interpret such actions as proof that Arafat is capable of more forceful action to stop violence, but so far is taking it only to protect himself, not Israelis.

Martin Indyk, the Clinton administration's former ambassador to Israel, believes that Bush should appoint a special envoy to the region — ideally, former Sen. George Mitchell, D-Maine, author of the Middle East plan that the administration favors — to negotiate a permanent cease-fire.

Indyk said Israelis don't trust Arafat enough to make concessions to him, but the State Department seems intent on pushing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to do so.

The Boston Globe reported that the State Department wants Bush to return to a plan favored by former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Clinton, which includes the transfer of 95 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians and "sharing Jerusalem" in one form or another.

Secretary of State Colin Powell did not deny that such a plan was afoot, but guaranteed that the United States would do nothing to threaten Israel's security.

However, the Clinton-Barak plan was decisively rejected by Arafat as insufficient, and violent protests followed. Going back to that plan and picking fights with Sharon might serve short-term U.S. propaganda goals, but it's long-term trouble.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

berry's world



I am questioning this decision

To the Editor:

I am writing to you in regard to the Flatlander Fall Festival.

I understand that any business wanting to set up a stand has to be approved by the Chamber of Commerce office.

What I don't understand, however, is why the Chamber would not grant permission for a local couple to set up a Kettle Corn stand — especially when the Chamber was allowing another Kettle Corn business from a different state to do just that. The Chamber stated the out-of-state would get first chance in participating.

I thought the idea was to promote local business and to encourage competition, rather than suppress it. Is that the American way?

Donice Monhollon
Goodland



from our
readers

• to the editor

Editor's Note: Chamber representatives say the out-of-town business has been coming to the Flatlander festival for many years and they feel they should return that loyalty. They said when they allowed two corn vendors one year, both felt it hurt business too much. They also say they arranged for your family to be able to sell corn at another event that week.

While it would be possible to argue the Chamber's decision, it seems fair and reasonable to us. — Steve Haynes

The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: gdnadv@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$ 28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

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County Herald

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