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SUBJECT: SRAP HOLBROOKE MEETS INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER KRISHNA

Classified By: Ambassador Timothy J. Roemer. Reasons: 1.4(B, D).

¶1. (C) Summary: EAM Krishna told Ambassador Holbrooke in a January 18 meeting that Pakistan needed to take visible steps against those responsible for the Mumbai attacks before a full fledged dialogue with India could move forward. Holbrooke cited the U.S. and India's shared interest in Pakistani stability and reassured Krishna the U.S. had been pushing Islamabad for action on terrorism, while noting the weakness of Pakistan's civilian leadership. On Afghanistan, Holbrooke encouraged India to work together with the U.S. on reconstruction, particularly in the areas of agriculture and education. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Special Representative Holbrooke met with Indian External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna on January 18 to review developments in U.S. policy towards Pakistan and Afghanistan and solicit Krishna's views. Holbrooke was joined by Ambassador Roemer and SRAP Advisor Vali Nasr. Krishna was joined by Joint Secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran) Sinha and Joint Secretary (Americas) Gaitri Kumar.

Holbrooke: Consulting and Informing

¶3. (C) SRAP Holbrooke said his visit's purpose was to inform Indian officials about U.S. policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan and seek their views, not to negotiate. Underlining shared views between the U.S. and India, he noted that the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and Al Qaeda were a common threat. The U.S. saw Pakistan as a fragile state that was critical to

regional stability. The U.S. had put pressure on the GOP to take steps against those accused in the November 2008 Mumbai attacks as well as against LeT and its leader, Hafiz Saeed. While the U.S. had its own difficult relationship with Pakistan, Holbrooke noted, it was neither in the U.S. nor India's interest that the U.S. abandon its ties to Islamabad. He promised to keep India fully informed through his own visits and those of Advisor Nasr as well as through Ambassador Roemer.

Krishna: Need Visible Steps on Mumbai

¶4. (C) EAM Krishna appreciated Holbrooke's readout and outlined India's policies towards Pakistan and Afghanistan. Noting that New Delhi has certain "fixations" about Islamabad, Krishna said these had been driven by the circumstances of the Mumbai attacks rather than by choice. Referring to his January 14 phone conversation with Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi, Krishna said that India did not want to be a permanent antagonist of Pakistan. Returning to the same theme several times, he stressed that India sought some "visible" steps by Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of Mumbai to justice. This would provide India with the political space with its public to move forward. At the same time, if there were more terrorist incidents, India would be "driven" to take a much harder position towards Pakistan. PM Singh had been judicious and had not acted in haste after Mumbai, Krishna said, but India does not want to be "bullied."

¶5. (C) Krishna reviewed his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart in September at the margins of UNGA. In New York, the two sides had agreed to a road map for the relationship that focused on acting against the Mumbai perpetrators, and the shared expectation was that the investigations and prosecutions "would have reached certain levels" by November or December. In their January 14 telcon, Qureshi had explained that there were delays in the judicial process. Krishna told Holbrooke that while the Indian government was positive about moving forward, an atmosphere of trust needed to be created.

¶6. (C) Despite efforts by SRAP Holbrooke and Ambassador Roemer, Krishna would not be drawn out on what India would be willing to do in the event the GOP took credible steps against the Mumbai perpetrators. He allowed that "nothing

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prevented" India from moving forward under those circumstances, but underlined again that there must be a visible investigation against those accused which was conducted with a sense of urgency. This had not yet happened, and the GOP had not taken steps against a LeT's terrorist infrastructure. He observed that Pakistan had not taken action against the JuD, despite adoption of a Pakistani law in September that would allow the government to proscribe the JuD as a successor to the LeT. The Composite Dialogue with Pakistan would remain suspended until Islamabad acted, although some humanitarian actions such as the exchange of imprisoned fishermen could go forward.

GOP's Ability to Act

¶7. (C) Holbrooke assured Krishna that the U.S. was deeply disturbed by the GOP's ties with the LeT and described U.S. efforts to press Pakistan to take action against the group. He assessed that the civilian government in Pakistan had a limited capacity to take such steps. The Army was the key decision maker while President Zardari was increasingly sidelined and the GOP was struggling with a failing economy. The military was not likely at this time to resume full control, but would assert its views on relations with India and Afghanistan. Holbrooke cited the example of India's exclusion from an Afghan conference in Istanbul -- despite efforts by Holbrooke and Secretary Clinton -- as an example of the military's weight in decision making. In his view, a paralyzed Pakistani government could not move forward on tough decisions. Until the political process in Pakistan settled down, little progress could be made. Krishna said India was also getting a pessimistic picture of what was taking place in Pakistan which was both confusing and disturbing.

Afghanistan

¶8. (C) Holbrooke highlighted practical steps that India and the U.S. could take together to support Afghan reconstruction. He flagged cooperation on agriculture as particularly important, given its significance in the strategy to rebuild the Afghan economy and marginalize the Taliban. Krishna noted Indian willingness to work together on Afghan-driven priorities and described India's contributions to Afghan infrastructure and training. Joint Secretary Sinha stressed India's interest in agricultural capacity building and technical skills development; Holbrooke encouraged a focus on education as well.

¶9. (U) SRAP Holbrooke has cleared this message.

ROEMER