

RELEASE IN PART B5

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, September 11, 2011 3:40 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Checking in re Burma trip

Fyi

From: Mitchell, Derek J
Sent: Sunday, September 11, 2011 06:29 AM
To: Campbell, Kurt M; Yun, Joseph Y; Posner, Michael H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Crosby, Colin T; Jung, Thomas T; Barte, Peter R; Murphy, W Patrick; Barboriak, Eric M
Cc: Murphy, Erin L; Nanavatty, Katharine Bernsohn; Scheibe, Laura K
Subject: Checking in re Burma trip

All: My apologies for not being in direct touch earlier about how the trip to Burma has been going. This is the first opportunity since arrival that I've had access to the Net (at the embassy). Cables will be forthcoming -- they will have more details on each of the individual meetings as well as analysis. I have also asked Erin and Kate to take detailed notes so we have an exact record of the meetings for future reference (given that I had about eight meetings back-to-back through the day, they did have a tendency to run together after a while).

Overall, the consensus here is that the 1.5 days in Naypyitaw went as well as could have expected. I had a full day of meetings with all the key figures (below the president and vice presidents) from the government and parliament (including the speakers of both). We should remember they arranged all this on a few days notice. They were on their best behavior, generally relaxed, and consistently on message about their commitment to reform (democracy) and national reconciliation and that there was no turning back. That said, there were clear differences in style and rhetoric between those known to be unreconstructed hardliners [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and others: I received lectures from the former and had relatively interesting conversations with the latter. I'd have to say [REDACTED] was perhaps the most disappointing: although he looked forward to working with me, he read directly from note cards and offered little more than stale talking points to key issues.

I did not have to sell myself: they expressed no reservations at any point about me or about the Special Representative position. Actually, they seemed to accept the idea that establishment of my post represented a potential opportunity for them to enhance the bilateral relationship. (I heard that they were reassured by my Straits Times interview and cover note to the package we sent to UN Amb Than Swe last week).

For my part, I did not raise the issue of sanctions since I assumed they understood that issue. That allowed for a more constructive tone to my conversations. For their part, they rarely raised the issue either (with perhaps a couple exceptions).

I took repeated opportunities to drive home my/our message. I noted that the US recognizes and appreciates Naypyitaw's recent moves intended to signal change/reform; that we continue to have questions about how far reform will go, where it will lead, and whether it will be stopped or reversed in the future; that in order for substantial progress in the bilateral relationship, we will need to see concrete actions that suggest their commitment to reform is genuine, i.e., release of political prisoners, meaningful dialogue with the opposition, including ASSK, end to fighting/violence in the ethnic areas, and credible accounting for the abuses that have occurred in these areas. On the latter, I noted with appreciation the establishment of their new Human Rights Commission (which tended to get strong appreciative nods from the Burmese side) to promote national reconciliation through accountability and took the opportunity to apply what Samantha P gave me by urging them to consider partnering with the international community on these investigations to ensure their credibility. I did not hand over the docs Samantha gave me but will ask the embassy here to follow up. I also have a meeting with representatives from the Commission on Tuesday so may have an opportunity to do so there as well.

I got no serious pushback on any of the above. No one denied the existence of political prisoners and several acknowledged that they were thinking about (even struggling with) the issue. I received no sense that a release is

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imminent, with some saying it could happen in a matter of months. I also received no pushback on calling for an end to the violence and importance of accountability, or international partnership on accountability: I couched it all in terms of essential first steps/indicators of serious and genuine commitment to national reconciliation that the US will require before bilateral relations can develop. I told them that were such actions taken, and commitment to reform genuine, the US would meet those actions with positive action and partnership. I laid down the markers. The ball was in their court.

Meetings w/opposition parliamentarians Saturday morning were also interesting but will report on that separately. Meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi is tomorrow -- she apparently has asked the first 15 minutes be one-on-one. Again, cables will be forthcoming, and many more meetings to be had over the next few days. I'll try to check in with more updates if I again have access to the Net in the next few days. Please pass this to other interested parties for whom I don't have e-mail address access, e.g., Danny, Colin, Samantha, etc. Thanks much.

Derek