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May 2, 2007

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The Honorable Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India
South Block, Raisina Hill
New Delhi, India 110 011

Dear Prime Minister Singh:

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding several recent developments that, if left unaddressed, have the potential to significantly harm prospects for the establishment of the “global partnership” between the United States and India that you and President Bush announced on July 18th, 2005 and for peaceful nuclear cooperation between our two countries.

As you are aware, on April 2nd, the U.S. Department of Justice indicted several individuals in the United States for allegedly conspiring with the government of India – including an employee of the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. – to illegally procure sensitive technology for India’s ballistic missile program. This activity, which apparently occurred as recently as April 2006, appears to be a significant violation of India’s September 2004 pledge not to “obtain or use U.S. origin licensable items in contravention of U.S. export control laws and regulations” and is inconsistent with efforts to increase the level of trust between our two nations.

Regarding Iran, we are deeply concerned by India’s increasing cooperation with that country, including the exchange of visits between high-level officials, enhanced military ties, and negotiation of agreements to establish closer economic relations.

In March, the commander of the Iranian navy, Rear Admiral Sajjad Koucheiki-Badelani, visited India at the invitation of Admiral Sureesh Mehta, the chief of staff of the Indian navy, to discuss the strengthening of military relations. A “joint defense working group” reportedly has been established and will meet later this year in Tehran to pursue broader cooperation in defense, including training Iranian military personnel.

Such cooperation raises renewed questions about the possible diversion of sensitive technology to Iran, for which Indian entities have been sanctioned in recent years, including U.S.-origin technology provided to India in the context of civilian nuclear and space cooperation.

We are also concerned that broadened economic relations between India and Iran are being pursued. Among the most prominent developments is the agreement reached earlier this year for the construction of a major natural gas pipeline from Iran to Pakistan and India that will provide the government of Iran with billions of dollars of revenue.

Most recently, India's Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Murli Deora met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Minister of Petroleum Kazem Vaziri-Hamaneh to pursue an agreement on liquefied natural gas reached in 2005.

We must point out that these ventures could be subject to U.S. action under the Iran Sanctions Act.

Far more serious is that these and other recent steps by India to enhance its economic cooperation with Iran will undermine the international community's efforts to impose financial and other constraints on the Iranian government to persuade it to stop its program to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

India's increasingly broad cooperation with Iran is especially disturbing in terms of its impact on the United States. As you are aware, Iran's senior officials have openly and repeatedly proclaimed their intention to undermine American interests in the Middle East and elsewhere. American military personnel in Iraq have been targeted and killed by extremists trained and armed by Iran, and Tehran is actively working to defeat U.S. and coalition efforts to stabilize Iraq. More broadly, Iran is seeking military domination of the Persian Gulf and continues to arm and support terrorists in Iraq, Lebanon, and other countries.

It is difficult for us to fathom why India, a democracy engaged in its own struggle against terrorism, would want to enhance security cooperation with a repressive government widely regarded as the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism.

India's pursuit of closer relations with Iran appears to be inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the July 18th, 2005 announcement by you and President Bush of the establishment of a "global partnership" between our two countries. It also is contrary to the pledge that India "would play a leading role in international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons."

And given Iran's role in sponsoring terrorism, this cooperation calls into question your commitment to the statement in the same announcement that "terrorism is a global scourge and the one we will fight everywhere."


The expectation of an enhanced effort by India to restrain Iran's nuclear weapons program was a crucial factor in persuading Congress to approve the Henry J. Hyde United States and India Nuclear Cooperation Promotion Act. As you are aware, a prerequisite for peaceful nuclear cooperation is the approval by Congress of a so-called 123 Agreement. We must stress that the subject of India's strengthening relationship with Iran will inevitably be a factor in the consideration of that Agreement when it is presented to Congress.


The Honorable Manmohan Singh
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As strong proponents of closer ties between the United States and India, we are deeply concerned that the developments outlined in this letter have a significant potential to negatively affect relations between the U.S. and India in general and consideration by Congress of the 123 Agreement in particular.


Mr. Prime Minister, we urge you to provide assurances that India will cease illicit procurement activities in the U.S., sever military cooperation with Iran, and terminate India's participation in the development of Iran's energy sector. By taking these important steps, you can help ensure that the positive evolution of our bilateral relationship continues.


Sincerely,


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Committee on Foreign Affairs



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