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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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March 23, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Pakistan's Request for Arms

I had a good talk yesterday with Aziz Ahmed, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan, who is here to tell us of President Bhutto's recent visit to Moscow and to sound us out on future U.S. policy toward Pakistan. Ahmed's visit follows Bhutto's offer to us of base facilities and his very recent request for substantial grant military aid, including three squadrons of aircraft, 100 tanks, four submarines, and a large amount of other equipment.

Ahmed said the Soviets pressed Bhutto on two fronts: first, that Pakistan should promptly recognize Bangladesh, which Ahmed concludes the Soviets want under their umbrella; second, that Pakistan should make its peace with India. The GOP sees in this a broader Soviet strategic objective of pre-dominance in the entire region, while supporting Indian designs to reduce Pakistan to satellite status. Ahmed told us he believes the Indians in effect are acting as a stalking horse for the Soviets in pressing smaller regional countries like Ceylon and Burma to work out Soviet friendship treaties such as the one signed by the Indians last August.

In the context of this strategic assessment and Pakistan's concern that it cannot go to the negotiating table with India in military weakness, Ahmed is here both to press us for decisions on military supply and to hear our assessment as to how we see our future role in South Asia.

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I made clear to Ahmed the value we attach to our relationship with Pakistan. I told him we regard Pakistan's integrity as important to regional stability. I cited the substantial efforts we have already made in the economic field. He is fully conscious of your own regard for Pakistan.

As for military supply, I emphasized that no decisions have been made by you and that the matter remained under active review. I stressed our desire to see a situation evolve where there is reasonable stability among all states in South Asia and our intention to do what we could to prevent a situation where any one outside power could exercise predominant influence. I said we had made these points clear in our discussions with both the Chinese and Soviets, that we would continue to do so, and that this will continue to guide our South Asian policy.

I pointed out that while we appreciated Pakistan's concern for its security and had not made any decisions, Pakistan would want to weigh the question whether substantial U.S. military aid might not jeopardize the outlook for Indo-Pak talks. We recognized that the Soviets have been heavily involved with arms supply to India; but U.S. involvement in a similar way with Pakistan could well push the Soviets further down that road with India. It could also cause either the Indians or the Soviets, or both, to take an intransigent position on talks of any kind. I put these points in the form of questions to get the Pakistanis reflecting on whether arms aid from us would not more likely complicate the outlook for peace in South Asia than simply strengthen the Pakistan hand at the bargaining table.

I did not want my comments to suggest we had reached any decisions on what obviously was an issue of great importance to Pakistan. I said this matter remained under active review. But I reminded Ahmed of the problems we already face in the Congress and among public opinion in this country on such issues as military assistance abroad and that U.S. supply of

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arms to Pakistan at this juncture could weaken further Congressional support for helping Pakistan in the economic sphere.

In this context, and speaking as a friend of Pakistan, I said that any decision on our part to begin a new and large military aid program to Pakistan would be a very difficult one. Our strong hope at this juncture, I indicated, is that some way can be found to get Indo/Pak talks started. This of course would facilitate our entire relationship. I noted our own efforts with the Chinese, the Russians, in the Middle East and elsewhere, to find a basis for peace. Finally, I stressed that our attitude vis-a-vis the Soviets in the last analysis -- politically speaking -- was the best protection for Pakistan's territorial integrity.

That is where we left the matter, after I had reminded Ahmed again that this and other aspects of our relationships in South Asia will continue under very active review. Ahmed, who knows Washington well from his previous Ambassadorial assignment 1959 to 1963, is seeing a number of people on the Hill, including Senators Aiken, Fulbright, and Kennedy. He is also seeking an appointment with Dr. Kissinger.

William P. Rogers per [signature]
William P. Rogers

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