

Viewing cable 06NEWDELHI7514, INDIA STRONGLY DENIES HOWITZER SALES TO BURMA, BUT

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06NEWDELHI7514	2006-11-02 07:59	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy New Delhi

VZCZCXRO7141
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHNE #7514/01 3060759
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 020759Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0114
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY 0632
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 0432
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4177
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0439
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7596
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 7673
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0229
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0693
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 3560
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8327
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1818
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0338
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 1073
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0616
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3977
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 7009
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7082
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 5802
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 3143
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6306
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 3758
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2715
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5032
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 007514

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2011

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [BM](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: INDIA STRONGLY DENIES HOWITZER SALES TO BURMA, BUT

OTHERS CONFIRM

Classified By: Ambassador David Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Embassy contacts have confirmed press reports that India has supplied Burma 105 mm Howitzers and associated equipment. However, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) denied that any such deals had transpired. India's rationale for supplying weapons to the junta is ostensibly to support joint counter-insurgency operations aimed at Indian separatist groups based within Burmese borders. End Summary.

Press Reports India Arming Burmese Government

¶2. (U) Indian press reported in early October that India had transferred lethal military equipment, including Howitzers and related equipment, to the Burmese government. According to The Hindustan Times (HT), in August 2006 the Indian Navy transferred two BN-2 "Defender" Islander (sic) maritime surveillance aircraft and deck-based air-defense guns along with surveillance equipment to Burma, despite British protests and a British declaration that it would not provide spares and maintenance. In September, India "recommended and started giving (Burma) 105 mm Indian field guns," according to Indian Army Vice-Chief Lt. Gen. S Pattabhiraman, as quoted in Force magazine. Pattabhiraman reportedly declared that India had previously provided 75/24 Howitzers, putting the number as somewhere between "not much" and "not symbolic." IANS also reported that Defense Secretary Dutt had agreed to supply Burma with an unspecified number of soon-to-be-retired T-55 tanks, mortars, armored personnel carriers and advanced light helicopters.

Rationale: Counter-Insurgency Along Border

¶3. (U) The press articles speculated that India is supplying arms to the Burmese junta as part of a deal to cooperate in flushing out insurgents in the India-Burma border region. India believes violent separatist groups such as the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) operate against India from bases in Burma. HT also suggested India seeks a limited military relationship with Burma as a check to China's influence in a country India asserts is of critical strategic importance in its near abroad.

UK High Commission Engagement Noted, Apparently Disregarded

¶4. (C) The UK High Commission in New Delhi confirmed that it was alerted in December 2005 that India intended to give Burma two British-origin Islander (civilian) aircraft for use in maritime surveillance, although at the time the High Commission was concerned that the Islanders may have been upgraded to include arms or may have in fact been the military version of the Islander, i.e., the Defender. The UK

vigorously protested, explaining the EU arms embargo on Burma, as well as human rights concerns. According to a UK diplomat based in New Delhi, India noted the British concerns, but offered assurances that the Burmese would merely use the planes for innocuous coastal surveillance. The UK registered its disapproval several times with the GOI, however, with no end-use agreement in place, the High Commission felt ultimately India had control over the fate of the planes in question. The High Commission told us it had not been notified of the actual transfer of the planes to Burma, nor could it confirm where the planes currently are.

MEA Categorically Denies...

5. (C) During an October 24 meeting with Mohan Kumar, MEA Joint Secretary for Burma/Bangladesh/Sri Lanka/Maldives, Polcouns pressed Kumar on the press reports. Kumar categorically denied that the GOI is training or selling arms to the Burmese junta, calling such reports "absurd." He claimed that the GOI has only provided Burma with dump trucks and bulldozers for border road projects and the relocation of border markers. He maintained, however, that the GOI will continue its policy of "constructive engagement" with Burma, as it needs Burmese cooperation for dealing with northeast Indian insurgents. He asserted that, in his opinion, the USG's policies of sanctions and isolation were ineffective and that the Burmese regime was impervious to outside influence. He noted that, "even China does not control Burma."

...But USDAO Contacts Confirm

6. (S/NF) The Burmese Defense Attache in New Delhi verified to USDAO on October 30 the transfer of 18 used 105 mm Howitzers and associated equipment. USDAO also received confirmation of Howitzer transfers to Burma from a colonel in the Directorate General for Military Intelligence (DGMI). Both military contacts claimed the purpose of the equipment was to support the Indian strategy of using Burmese assistance to conduct cross-border counter-insurgency operations. Also, the Indian Air Force general officer responsible for foreign cooperation told the DATT that Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of the Air Force Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi was visiting Burma (along with Cambodia and Singapore) in November 2006 as part of an Integrated Defense Staff and MEA official trip.

Comment: National Interests Trumps Human Rights Rhetoric

7. (C) Despite MEA's insistent denial, dual confirmation from both Burmese and Indian military sources lead us to believe the news reports are most likely accurate. There are two

possible explanations for MEA's denial: 1) the MEA realizes its policy toward Burma runs counter to what the U.S. and

NEW DELHI 00007514 003 OF 003

nearly everyone outside of Rangoon would like to see; or 2) MEA is out of the loop on actions directed by the Ministry of Defense. In either case, India believes it has legitimate reasons for engaging with the Burmese junta -- in addition to the counter-insurgency campaign -- including desire for a land corridor into SE Asia; a check on China, which India fears is pursuing a "string of pearls" strategy of clinching defense and security agreements in the region; a check on Pakistan, who has long standing commercial relationship with Burma; and a claim that it can wield more influence by remaining engaged. Regardless, we will protest these sales vigorously when we see key contacts at higher levels of the MEA.

MULFORD

<http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2006/11/06NEWDELHI7514.html>