

Viewing cable 08BEIJING605, GAMBARI CONFIRMS MARCH VISIT TO BURMA; ASKS USG

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SUBJECT: GAMBARI CONFIRMS MARCH VISIT TO BURMA; ASKS USG
FOR "SPACE" TO CARRY OUT MISSION

REF: A. EAP/CM-EMBASSY NIGHTNOTE EMAIL (02/14/08)

[1](#)B. 07 BEIJING 6851

[1](#)C. BEIJING 579

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr., Reasons 1.
4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Drawing from Ref A talking points, the Ambassador encouraged UN Special Envoy Gambari February 19 to push for more concrete progress in Burma. Gambari confirmed that he will return to Burma "in the first week of March," though the Burmese Government has not yet confirmed the date nor issued him a visa. Echoing his comments in his October 2007 meeting with the Ambassador (Ref B), Gambari affirmed continuing Chinese support for his mission and asked for the United States to limit its public pressure on him in order to create "space" to carry out his good offices mission. End Summary

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador hosted UN Special Adviser on Burma Ibrahim Gambari, accompanied by UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator Khalid Malik, for dinner on February 19 to press U.S. concerns on the situation in Burma and gain Gambari's perspective on his talks with Chinese officials and upcoming visit to Burma.

China continues to support good offices mission

13. (C) Gambari affirmed China's support for his mission is "still robust," because China believes success in Gambari's good offices mission will forestall the imposition of additional international sanctions and the initiation of U.S.-sponsored measures on Burma in the UN Security Council, which he said, "China would not like to see."

14. (C) Gambari noted that the Burmese Government has characterized its agreement to receive Gambari in the first week of March (instead of April as first suggested) as a concession deserving of praise. This distracts attention from the substantive concessions the regime should consider in addressing democratic progress and national reconciliation. Gambari noted that many countries, including China, India and Russia, are taking credit for the regime's decision to receive Gambari in the first week of March. In fact, the Burmese Government has not yet confirmed the exact date nor issued him a visa. Gambari added that the regime's refusal to date to issue him a multiple-entry visa is "an insult" to his good offices mission and to the United Nations.

15. (C) The Ambassador reiterated USG points conveyed separately to Chinese officials (Ref C) that the Burmese regime seems to only respond constructively when under pressure. Gambari responded that as a UN official, he had no official position on sanctions other than those authorized by the UN Security Council. Personally, however, carefully targeted sanctions "seem to be successful in getting the Burmese leadership's attention." UN Resident Coordinator Malik observed that the Burmese leadership suffers from not being able to send its children to be educated in the West.

China and India, not ASEAN, influence Burma

16. (C) Gambari said he believes that the Burmese leadership responds to Indian and Chinese influence. He noted that India has been slow to take a constructive role in Burma, with Indian PM Singh only recently publicly expressing support for Gambari's good offices mission. China's interest in maintaining stability in Burma has helped the regime maintain its control, he said. Gambari noted that Aung San Suu Kyi's message to China that it should not fear a democratic Burma should help her cause because "unless China is comfortable with her, they won't allow her to share power." He added that China's influence is actually limited. The Burmese military leadership perceives itself as the heirs of the historical Burmese kings and jealously guards a nationalistic independence.

17. (C) Gambari commented that ASEAN countries have "abrogated their responsibilities" in Burma. Listing key ASEAN members, Gambari said only Indonesia might have some influence over Burma because Indonesia's military leadership can talk to the

Burmese "general to general" and provide a concrete example of how a military government can transition to a civilian one. He noted that other ASEAN members, such as the Philippines, with its strong human rights stance, and Thailand, which Gambari described as having "unsavory" ties

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to Burma, have little or no influence in Burma.

¶8. (C) Noting that Tokyo was not originally on his itinerary, Gambari said that he welcomes the Japanese Government invitation to discuss the situation in Burma and that he hopes historical ties between the two countries may prove useful to addressing the current situation.

¶9. (C) Gambari said that the Chinese frequently refer to the current situation as stable, as if this is an acceptable outcome. He said he told the Chinese that a stable period allows Burmese generals to "take bold steps" in terms of the democratic process and national reconciliation. Mutual mistrust between the two sides continues, however, and makes meaningful dialogue difficult, Gambari said. He said the two sides are "still discussing talks about talks" and are "nowhere near" discussing a democratic transition nor such sensitive issues as amnesty and security for military officials.

Gambari's plan for March visit to Burma

¶10. (C) Discussing his upcoming visit, Gambari said that the Burmese regime is hesitant to receive him because "they think they've got to produce." Gambari outlined a number of measures he hopes the Burmese Government will adopt. First, he said the dialogue between the Burmese Government and Aung San Suu Kyi must become more substantial. Because Minister for Relations Aung Kyi has no power to make decisions, Gambari will suggest that the Burmese Government raise the level of the Government interlocutor, perhaps to the Prime Minister or possibly even Senior General Than Shwe.

¶11. (C) Second, on the draft constitution, Gambari will suggest that even at this late stage, the Burmese Government should open the text for input. (Note: his comments came prior to February 20 press reports that the Burmese Government had announced the completion of a draft constitution. End note.)

¶12. (C) Third, Gambari hopes to follow up on his proposal to create a Poverty Alleviation Commission to address the root causes of economic discontent in Burma. The work of such a commission could result in offers of material assistance from the international community, "an important carrot." He said the Burmese Government, to date, has not commented on this proposal.

Gambari asks USG for "space" to carry out mission

¶13. (C) As he requested in his October 2007 meeting (Ref B), Gambari asked for "space" from the USG for his good offices mission. He said to register success dramatically "is impossible." Gambari said he believes his good offices mission has achieved success in Burma already. The regime's February 9 announcement of a timetable for a referendum on the constitution in May and elections in 2010; its appointment of a Government liaison to Aung San Suu Kyi; and its decision to remove soldiers from the street and release those arrested during the September unrest are all at least partly in response to his suggestions to the regime, he said. Gambari admitted that many of these measures address process rather than substance, but he added that Burmese officials believe whatever progress they make is not recognized by the international community.

¶14. (C) The Ambassador responded that the USG believes that Burmese Government has had sufficient opportunity to make progress on democratic reform and national reconciliation but that the regime's actions, including the continuing arrests of activists, are steps in the wrong direction.

Burma still wants dialogue with the United States

¶15. (C) Gambari said that the Burmese are uncomfortable relying so heavily on China and see the United States as "a possible balancer" against China. They hope the dialogue initiated in Beijing in June 2007 can continue. The Ambassador noted that given the crackdown and the continuing intransigence of the regime on democratic progress and national reconciliation, such a dialogue is unlikely. In addition, the Burmese proposal at the end of the first round was to wait five months for another round, which suggests that the Burmese did not consider it an urgent priority.
RANDT

<http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/02/08BEIJING605.html>