Viewing cable 09BEIJING344, UNSYG SPECIAL ADVISER GAMBARI DISCUSSES BURMA

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TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV CH BM IN UN
SUBJECT: UNSYG SPECIAL ADVISER GAMBARI DISCUSSES BURMA
VISIT AND BEIJING MEETINGS

REF: USUN 0056

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4
(b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Burmese military regime's objective is to organize elections in 2010 that will be won by a military-based political party, UN Special Adviser on Burma Ibrahim Gambari told the Charge and four other Beijing-based Western mission representatives February 10. Gambari added that the military will then take control of the three most important ministries (Defense, Internal Affairs, and Territorial Affairs). Gambari reported that PRC Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei had earlier reiterated to him China's position that the situation in Burma does not constitute a threat to international peace or security and therefore should not be discussed in the UN Security Council. Gambari suggested that pointing out to China the possibility that the non-participation in the 2010 elections of the Burmese opposition party National League of Democracy would cause instability in Burma might convince China to bring pressure on the Burmese regime. End Summary.

¶2. (C) At a February 10 lunch for UN Special Adviser on Burma Ibrahim Gambari hosted by UN Resident Coordinator Khalid

Malik, Gambari briefed the Charge, the Ambassadors from France, EU, and the Czech Republic (as EU President) and the DCM from the UK Embassy on his January 31-February 3 visit to Burma. Gambari noted the Burmese Government provided him no advanced schedule for his visit and that he usually learned each day's schedule on the night prior. He speculated that such short-notice was due to the fact that every event on his schedule had to be approved "from the very top."

¶3. (C) Though he had met Senior General Than Shwe during his first three trips to Burma, Gambari noted, this was the fourth consecutive trip that he did not meet Than Shwe. Gambari believed that because Than Shwe met with UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon during a May visit to Burma, the Burmese leadership had decided that PM Thein Sein was the most appropriate official for Gambari to meet.

Military Regime to Implement Road Map to Maintain Rule

¶4. (C) Gambari stated that the Burmese regime's objective was to implement its seven-step road map, leading to the organization of elections in 2010 that will be won by a military-based political party. The military would then take control of the three most important ministries (defense, internal affairs, and territorial affairs). He said the regime had "no idea" what would happen if Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and her democratic opposition party, the National League of Democracy (NLD), were to win. Gambari noted that ASSK "has learned the power of saying 'no'." She and senior NLD leadership did not want Gambari to discuss elections because the NLD did not agree to the regime-drafted constitution under which the elections would be organized.

¶5. (C) In response to Gambari's proposal to open a permanent UN political office in Burma, the Burmese regime agreed only that he could send staff for short periods as needed. Gambari delivered a list of top 50 prisoners to release on compassionate grounds but received no substantive response from the Burmese Government.

UN SYG Ban to Visit Burma?

¶6. (C) Gambari noted that he briefed UN SYG Ban in New Delhi after departing Burma. Ban in Delhi called on "all sides" to resume dialogue without conditions, and the NLD "welcomed that statement" (contrary to the position the NLD communicated to Gambari, Gambari noted). On plans for Ban to visit Burma, Gambari said that UN SYG Ban could not go to Burma and come back empty-handed. Given concerns about managing expectations, Gambari believed it necessary to return to Burma to see what the Burmese regime had to offer before Ban would decide to visit.

¶7. (C) Gambari observed that positions on Burma within the international community "are hardening." No consensus on Burma existed among the UN Security Council (UNSC) membership, he said, noting that the United States, France,

and the UK were split from Russian and China.

China Opposed to Addressing Burma in the UNSC

¶8. (C) Turning to his discussions with Chinese officials, Gambari said he met VFM He Yafei for lunch and a meeting but met for only five minutes with FM Yang Jiechi. Gambari said he pressed VFM He to echo Ban's statement and Gambari's five-point plan (reftel), to get members of the focus group (China, Burma, Indonesia and Vietnam) more involved, and to help prepare the way for Ban to visit Burma. Gambari told VFM He that the arrival of a new U.S. Administration offered a new chance to send positive signals that might encourage greater rapprochement with the United States. VFM He responded that China broadly supported Gambari's five-point plan but encouraged the international community to "listen to neighboring countries" in addressing Burma. VFM He reiterated China's position that the situation in Burma did not constitute a threat to international peace or security and therefore should not be discussed in the UNSC. Gambari said he pushed back, noting that in Africa, neighbors "step up" and act, as in Kenya, and that Burma's neighbors should take more concerted action. He noted at the UN-hosted lunch with Western mission reps, however, that ASEAN countries indeed opposed sanctions. He also observed that the Indian Vice President had arrived in Burma as Gambari was departing and added, "The Indians are worse than the Chinese" (on the Burma issue).

¶9. (C) Gambari suggested that a possible way to convince China to bring pressure on Burma would be to point out that a lack of NLD participation in the 2010 elections could have an adverse effect on stability in Burma. Gambari thought VFM He would convey this point to the regime, stressing that in the interest of maintaining stability, the NLD should be included in the election process. The current situation where NLD was outside of and not interested in the road map could not lead to stability. The French Ambassador noted that China's interest in stability in Burma was related to its pursuit of Burma's natural resources. China would never support sanctions, he said.

¶10. (C) Gambari said he planned to travel on to Tokyo to discuss with the Japanese government its interest in contributing to "a tool box of incentives and disincentives." Gambari said that after first returning to New York he would also travel to Brussels to seek EU contributions to the tool box.

¶11. (C) Gambari reported that UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Ojea-Quintana planned to travel to Burma February 14-19.
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