

Viewing cable 09BEIJING2868, PRC/BURMA: A/S CAMPBELL'S MEETING WITH ASIAN

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09BEIJING2868	2009-10-14 10:46	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Beijing

VZCZCXRO9594

OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHGH RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHVC

DE RUEHBJ #2868/01 2871046

ZNY SSSSS ZZH

O 141046Z OCT 09

FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6436

INFO RUCNAE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 6793

RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 2016

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 9400

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 4955

RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 4790

RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY 9702

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 002868

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2029

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SUBJECT: PRC/BURMA: A/S CAMPBELL'S MEETING WITH ASIAN
AFFAIRS DG YANG YANYI

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

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In an October 13 meeting with EAP A/S Kurt Campbell, MFA Asian Affairs Department Director General Yang Yanyi said that China saw many positive aspects in the U.S. review of its Burma policy and suggested proceeding based on its conclusion, despite PRC concern over continuing sanctions. Yang asserted that the junta was committed to building a peaceful, modern, democratic Burma, but stability remained paramount to them "for now." She claimed the regime was committed to a fair election in 2010 and was renewing efforts on developing the economy. DG Yang cautioned that the regime could not be replaced, and counseled patience on development and democratization efforts given the complexity of Burmese society. Chinese officials had told the Burmese to consider China's legitimate interests in dealing with the situation in Kokang, but also stressed that China would not interfere in the internal affairs of Burma. A/S Campbell cautioned that steps by the regime toward progress on nuclear technology would make dialogue more difficult and the U.S. and China had a shared interest in partnering to prevent such progress. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) A/S Campbell briefed MFA Asia Department Director

General Yang Yanyi October 13 on the recently concluded Burma policy review and expressed U.S. concern over the deplorable humanitarian situation in Burma. He sought Chinese views on the situation there and how to use dialogue with the junta to improve the situation, and explained the deep concerns on the U.S. side over possible efforts by Burma to develop nuclear technology with the help of the DPRK.

Positive PRC Reaction to the U.S. Policy Review

¶3. (C) DG Yang replied that the Chinese government remained keenly interested in the situation in Burma. On the U.S. policy review, Yang said that China saw many positive aspects, in particular the conclusion that continued isolation of Burma would have direct negative consequences beyond Burma's borders, and that the strategic goal of the United States was to bring about a unified, peaceful and democratic Burma. She reported that China was encouraged by U.S. decisions to engage in direct dialogue with the Burmese regime and expand humanitarian assistance, as well as by the U.S. call for close cooperation on the issue with Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore as well as China and India. Yang expressed concern over the conclusion in the review to maintain existing sanctions and noted U.S. skepticism at the 2010 elections. Overall, Yang said, China supported and encouraged the U.S. to proceed based on the conclusions of the policy review. She added that China had been pleased to play a role in the first direct meeting between the junta and the U.S. side in 2007.

Burma, the View from Beijing

¶4. (C) DG Yang acknowledged that the U.S. and China might have different views on the current situation in Burma and asserted that the junta was committed to building a peaceful, modern, democratic Burma. She cautioned that stability remained of paramount importance to the junta, "for now." Burma viewed positively the advice of the international community and recently had taken positive steps, including meetings by top Burmese officials with UN leadership and a meeting between Senior General Than Shwe and Senator Jim Webb. She claimed that Burma had expressed its commitment multiple times to free and fair elections in 2010. The regime was emphasizing economic development and paying increased attention to the needs of the Burmese people, particularly in the wake of Cyclone Nargis. The regime had taken positive steps, Yang claimed, in advancing the democratization process.

Problems Remain, but the Regime Cannot Be Replaced

¶5. (C) DG Yang cautioned that many problems remained. The regime had "tried its best," she claimed, but had been unable to realize true national reconciliation and economic

development. The Burmese people, she noted, were unsatisfied with the state of affairs. Despite the problems, the regime

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could not be replaced, and long-term stability and development would take time, especially given the complexity of the situation in Burma. The people of Burma could best determine the course of the country's internal affairs. Yang said that during her many visits to Burma, she had found the Burmese to be a proud nation but also very sensitive, which was one reason that sanctions were ineffective and would only isolate Burma.

The Junta: Illegitimate, and with Total Control

¶6. (C) A/S Campbell responded that one of the basic problems in Burma's political system was that the junta lacked legitimacy but maintained a total grip on power, while the National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition groups had legitimacy but no access to power. He stressed the importance of efforts from the regime that would allow opposition groups to participate in next year's elections, and called on China to support dialogue that could lead to such an outcome. Otherwise, the election could be seen by the Burmese people as illegitimate. He noted that Aung San Suu Kyi had expressed willingness to engage in dialogue with the junta. Yang responded that under the new Burmese constitution, next year's elections should be open to all groups, and that the Chinese side would encourage the junta to implement this rule.

How to Talk to Than Shwe

¶7. (C) Based on her several meetings with Senior General Than Shwe in the past, Yang reported, he was "easy-going" and not difficult to engage in conversation. She said that he held other countries, including the United States, in high regard, and was "not seeking enemies." She suggested engaging the junta in a positive way and on an "equal footing," as well as avoiding discussing difficult issues at the beginning of the dialogue. She claimed that the regime had drawn conclusions from the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq that led to regime change there, and thus lacked confidence in U.S. intentions. She added that the regime was committed to dialogue with the international community.

PRC Would "Not Allow Burma to Fall into Chaos"

¶8. (C) Responding to A/S Campbell's question about the Chinese view on last month's violence in Kokang, DG Yang said that with elections next year, the regime had felt it had to take some action on the situation there. She acknowledged

that the regime's actions had had ramifications for China but stressed that Beijing hoped the regime was working out the situation through dialogue. China opposed use of force to resolve issues in the border areas, and "would not allow Burma to fall into chaos." Yang added that Chinese officials had told the Burmese to consider China's "legitimate interests" in dealing with the situation, but noted that Beijing had also stressed that China would never interfere in the internal affairs of Burma.

Nuclear Program Barrier to Engagement

¶9. (S) A/S Campbell stressed the importance of preventing progress by the regime on nuclear military technology. He noted the increase the United States had detected in Burmese purchases of military equipment and arms from North Korea, as well as the alarming increase in students from Burma in Russia studying nuclear-related fields. Stressing that the United States wanted dialogue to deal with Burma's troubling domestic political situation, he cautioned that active steps by the regime toward progress on nuclear technology would make dialogue more difficult. China, as a neighboring country, had a strong incentive to try a new approach to achieve progress with the regime in partnership with the United States. A/S Campbell extended an invitation for a group of PRC officials to open a dialogue with USG counterparts to provide advice and suggestions, as well as hear about U.S. approaches to humanitarian assistance. Yang replied that China was monitoring the situation closely, and that China would continue to push the regime to proceed with economic development and democratization.

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¶10. (U) A/S Campbell's delegation cleared this message.
HUNTSMAN

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