

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
1ST DISTRICT, HAWAII
WHIP-AT-LARGE



COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
OFFICE OF
SECRETARY
COMMITTEE ON
RESOURCES
200 AUG -1 AM 12:17

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
July 27, 2000

The Honorable William S. Cohen
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Cohen:

I was pleased to see your appearance on the *Charlie Rose Show* last week where you discussed your recent trip to China and the proposed National Missile Defense system. However, I am concerned that a comment you made might be misperceived.

At the beginning of the interview you mentioned you were concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and that there are a number of states that can or already have developed nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons with which to threaten the United States. Mr. Rose then asked, "Can I suggest you name those six?" You replied, "North Korea, Iran, Iraq. We have Pakistan. *India has tested nuclear weapons recently.*"

Mr. Secretary, this last statement about India concerns me very much. When Mr. Rose asked you to "name those six" I assume he was talking about *countries of concern*, formerly rogue states. As you undoubtedly know, India is not one of the six countries of concern, and to mention India in this context does a grave injustice to that country. While India possesses nuclear weapons, it does not directly threaten the United States.

As the world's most powerful democracy, it is in our interest to make every effort

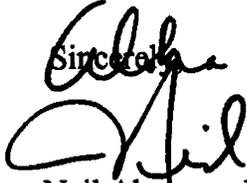
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to enhance our relationship with the world's most populous democracy. I know it is difficult to be put on the spot during an interview when you are asked to name a particular world leader or recite a particular list of countries. I therefore hope this was an inadvertent comment and does not reflect your personal view or the Department of Defense's view of India.

Sincerely,

Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000



AUG 23 2000

Honorable Neil Abercrombie
U.S. House of Representatives
1502 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear Neil:

Thank you for your letter concerning my interview with Charlie Rose on the subjects of China, Russia, and National Missile Defense. You expressed concern regarding my naming India among countries for which we have concerns regarding proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

As you know, I am deeply concerned about the proliferation of such weapons. The discussion I had with Mr. Rose was wide-ranging and covered the more general issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as well as the specific issue of National Missile Defense and our need to counter potential threats to the United States.

While it was not my intention to imply that India (or Pakistan) is in the same category as North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and others, who present a potential direct WMD threat to the United States, it is important for me to register the Administration's grave concern that Indian and Pakistani WMD capability is destabilizing and, over the long-term, threatens our security by undermining global nonproliferation regimes. I might add that it also threatens their security by introducing and legitimizing WMD in their very tense theater—India and Pakistan have fought three major wars and continue to engage in skirmishes and tense rhetoric over unresolved disputes.

Our relationship with India continues to warm—due in no small part to our shared democratic traditions. Nonetheless, the relationship cannot be fully realized while India remains outside of the international mainstream by failing to accede to global non-proliferation regimes.

Sincerely,

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