

# Exhibit 34

August 2013 Kerry Statement



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# Kerry, in Pakistan, Expresses Optimism on Ending Drone Strikes Soon

By **MICHAEL R. GORDON** AUG. 1, 2013

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Secretary of State John Kerry said Thursday that the United States had made significant headway in its drone campaign and that he hoped the strikes in Pakistan could end shortly.

“I believe that we’re on a good track,” Mr. Kerry said in an interview on Pakistani television. “I think the program will end as we have eliminated most of the threat and continue to eliminate it.”

Asked if the United States had a “timeline” for ending the drone strikes in Pakistan, Mr. Kerry said: “Well, I do. And I think the president has a very real timeline, and we hope it’s going to be very, very soon.” But he did not specify what the timeline was, and a State Department statement issued later said, “Today, the secretary referenced the changes that we expect to take place in that program over the course of time, but there is no exact timeline to provide.”

Mr. Kerry was in Pakistan to strengthen ties, and was meeting with the nation’s new prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, and other members of the Pakistani leadership.

His remarks followed President Obama’s speech on drone policy in May,

in which he asserted that the reduction in American troop levels in Afghanistan and progress in the fight against Al Qaeda had reduced the need for drone strikes. But Mr. Obama did not go as far as Mr. Kerry in talking of ending the strikes. Mr. Kerry's comments, and the State Department's qualifying statement, illustrated the difficulty the Obama administration is having in trying to balance its desire to strengthen ties with Pakistan with its determination to strike militant groups who mount attacks into Afghanistan from safe havens in Pakistan.

As part of a push to improve ties, Mr. Kerry met Thursday with Mr. Sharif, who delayed a trip to Mecca for the meeting; Sartaj Aziz, the prime minister's foreign affairs adviser; and Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Pakistan's powerful army chief, among others.

As Mr. Kerry tried to focus on developing a broad relationship, however, the issue of drones kept intruding in his agenda and public appearances.

The United States' drone strikes are hugely unpopular in Pakistan. With Mr. Kerry standing by his side, Mr. Aziz said they should end.

"Drone attacks are counterproductive to our relationship," Mr. Aziz told a joint news conference. "We are asking for stopping."

In an effort to avoid inflaming public sentiment here, the Obama administration has cut back on the number of drone strikes in Pakistan.

According to the New America Foundation, a nonpartisan public policy institute, there have been 16 drone strikes in Pakistan this year, compared with 48 in 2012, 73 in 2011 and 122 in 2010.

Mr. Kerry said the United States was working with Pakistan on the issue, leaving open the possibility that the strikes might end only after the Pakistani government cracks down on the militant havens or takes steps to encourage a peace settlement between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

However, Pakistani officials said nothing on Thursday suggesting that such tough action might be imminent.

Asked what action the Pakistani government might take against militant havens in Waziristan, Mr. Aziz said that Pakistan's forces were "overstretched right now" and that the government needed to try talk with local leaders first.

"Obviously, dialogue has to go along with military action, so we will explore that option first," Mr. Aziz said. "And if that doesn't work, then we'll see under what conditions and by what time frame we'll do the alternative actions."

On another pressing issue, Mr. Kerry told a news conference on Thursday that he expected the United States and Afghanistan to complete a security agreement that would allow American forces to stay in Afghanistan after 2014.

"I am personally confident that we will have an agreement," Mr. Kerry said during a visit here.

Several prominent lawmakers in the United States have criticized the White House for failing to say how many troops it plans to keep in Afghanistan after 2014 and even stating that the White House has been considering pulling out all forces from there — the "zero option." That approach, they have argued, has backfired by heightening insecurity in Afghanistan.

Mr. Kerry declined to say what issues remained to be settled in the talks over the Bilateral Security Agreement, the accord that is being worked out by the United States and Afghanistan.

Nor did he indicate when Mr. Obama would decide how many troops should remain in Afghanistan. But Mr. Kerry said he expected that American forces would remain, along with troops from allied countries, to train Afghanistan's forces and carry out commando raids against terrorist groups as it takes over security of the country from coalition troops.

“The United States is drawing down, not withdrawing,” Mr. Kerry said.

There was no comment from Afghan officials on Mr. Kerry’s statements. But one irritant was removed when Afghanistan, faced with the possible loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in American aid, backed off a threat to impose fines on the NATO-led coalition over missing paperwork for cargo shipments, Afghan and coalition officials said Thursday.

Afghan officials had contended that the coalition, which is allowed to import supplies duty free, had never filed paperwork to claim the exemption on most of the material it had brought to Afghanistan. They estimated that 70,000 containers had been imported over the past decade and said each was subject to a \$1,000 fine now that the coalition was taking its material out. The fine could have totaled \$70 million.

The compromise announced on Thursday would see the Afghan government waive the fines in exchange for a coalition pledge to abide by the rules in the future, according to Finance Minister Omar Zakhilwal.

Matthew Rosenberg and Azam Ahmed contributed reporting from Kabul, Afghanistan.

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