



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

**BUENOS AIRES • ARGENTINA**



**Undersecretary, Political Affairs – R. Nicholas Burns**  
**Press Conference 09/02/07**  
**PAS Conference Room**

Good evening.

I apologize for not speaking in Spanish but as I do not speak Spanish I prefer an interpreter so that you can understand me. I also want to apologize if we kept you waiting. We were just over at a meeting with Minister de Vido, was quite long so that is my reason for being late. It was an excellent meeting and a good day.

Let me say just a few words and then I would be happy to take any questions you may have.

Tom Shannon and I came to Argentina because our government has a very deep and sincere interest in strengthening our relations with Argentina. I think I can say that we were confirmed in our judgment that it was well worth it. We are very positive today that, all the meetings were very good and we had the kind of in-depth and very detailed exchanges on many diverse and important issues that true good friends ought to have.

I think you know that we saw Minister Fernandez this morning and during that meeting President Kirchner was nice enough to come in and greet us and say a few words and we appreciated that gesture very much. We also had a meeting and a lunch with the Foreign Minister and his senior colleagues which lasted several hours and was an excellent exchange on global and regional issues. And on behalf of Secretary Rice, I invited the Minister to make an official visit to Washington as soon as that's convenient for him, as a guest of Secretary Rice.

Ambassador Wayne, Tom Shannon and I also went over to the AMIA association. And we all laid flowers at the three memorial sites there from the bombing in 1994. And then, we had a very fine meeting with the AMIA board.

As I said we have had an excellent meeting with Minister De Vido.

I would just break down the relationship into two broad sectors. There are lots of issues pertaining to the region and some global issues where our relationship with Argentina is about as close and supportive as it could be.

We are partners in supporting the UN mission in Haiti, particularly in Minustahh, where Argentina has deployed 575 troops and I would say how grateful the whole international community is to Argentina that is a great contribution to the success of such mission.

I think in many ways Argentina is our strongest partner in the region on non-proliferation issues. And since issues are at the very heart of American foreign policy, this is obviously an area of great interest to us.

But I would say that Argentina is the leader in three respects.

First, in the IAEA where it is a very active and very strong member voice of the international community on non-proliferation issues, including the issue of Iran's nuclear efforts.

Secondly, we have two global initiatives, one is called the Proliferation Security Initiative. It is a major international effort for Argentina is the only country in the hemisphere to be a participant along with Japan and the United States and Russia and China and many other countries.

It is also a growing international effort to try to create international regulations and safeguards for containers in ports because that would be such an obvious and easy way for terrorist groups to infiltrate in society and Argentina is only one of two nations in the hemisphere that belongs to that. So, you can see in these three areas it is a viable partner of all of us; including my country.

I would also say that on trade and investment we had quite a number of detailed discussions about this today. I think we have a broad agreement between the governments that we want to do more to attract investment in each other's countries; trade, including in the area of biofuels.

Finally, I would say that there is a second area where we cooperate both regionally and globally and that is that we have the same interest, in my judgment, on a safe and stable and peaceful hemisphere and world. So we had a very open, respectful discussion, in some cases quite lengthy, about Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and some of the other countries of the region where I think that we listened a lot and where we have, I think, the basis of a very good longer-term dialogue with the government.

So I can say we have a strong friendship that has the capacity of even become stronger and we are very grateful for the quality of the meetings, for the respect with which we treated each other in those meetings and I am optimistic that under Ambassador Wayne's leadership here in Buenos Aires, this relationship is really going to improve quite significantly in the months ahead.

Thank you.

**Q:** Mr Burns, you said today that you talked briefly with the President and I believe that you said with Minister De Vido, about the case of the energy company and you have said that there was a misunderstanding. Could you elaborate a bit more, what kind of misunderstanding?

**A/S Burns:** I would be happy to. I want to be precise. We had an extended discussion on this issue with Minister Fernandez and Minister De Vido. We have not discussed it with President Kirchner because we had this kind of a brief social hello with him and we were very grateful to him coming in to say hello. I was a very nice gesture on his part to do that.

And I can say with complete confidence based on the two discussions with the two ministers; this was a misunderstanding and we have agreed to put it behind us. I think that all of us recognize that's the job of every Embassy in the world whether it is an Argentine Embassy or an American Embassy or any other embassy to advocate on behalf of their companies for trade and investment. In fact, we had specific assurances from both ministers that they will like us to continue to try to encourage American companies to invest and they expect us to be making representations on behalf of them. So in that sense, I think it was a misunderstanding that is behind us. We in both conversations left a very good understanding.

I should also add that both ministers, in fact everyone whom we've met today, had nothing but praise for the way Ambassador Wayne has opened up a lot of doors for the United States since his arrival. He has been very active and set a very positive tone for the relationship.

**Q:** Argentina now appears to be (question on Venezuela).

**A/S Burns:** Well listen, we have great respect for President Kirchner and an excellent relation with his government. I cannot say the same for President Hugo Chavez and I cannot speak as glowingly about our bilateral relationship, but we have great respect for the Venezuelan people obviously. I didn't mean at all to characterize Argentina's views about Venezuela; I am just characterizing Americans view about Venezuela. On the question of Iran which you refer to in the first part of your question, Argentina has been at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, has been one of the leading countries to make sure that Iran honored its agreement with AEA. Argentina and the U.S. are part of the same group which includes China, Russia, India, Brazil, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Ghana, all the European countries, Canada, Australia, Japan, all of these in one group saying to Iraq it is O.K. for you to have civil nuclear production, it is not O.K. for you to have nuclear weapons, and so we really appreciate that Argentina is in this International main stream with us.

**Q:** On the Iran issue there were several developments today, AEA cut back half of the assistance project to Iran..... is not going to a conference in Europe and the head of the

AEA said that both sides should take a time out, meaning that Iran should have .. temporarily suspend the enrichment.... and .... Would Washington seriously consider a time out and if could comment on this other .... ?

**A/S Burns:** Well Iran seems to be determined to further isolations internationally on the issue of nuclear weapons, and I described this large group that exhibits in the AEA, there is also a small group, the small group is Russia, China, Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States. We made a proposal to Iran on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 which essentially said if you would suspend your enrichment programs at your nuclear plant ... we will sit down and negotiate with you and we agreed that we would suspend the sanctions, if there were sanctions, and there are sanctions ... those negotiations. Now that was our proposal back on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Iran said no. I am happy to read right today that the offer is still on table to Iran for us to negotiate. But Iran is digging a hole deeper and deeper for itself. I think that the only four countries, that I can determine, that actually support Iran, is a gang of four, is Cuba, Venezuela, Syria and Belarus. I do not think there is any other country supporting Iran. Our advice to the Iranian government is that there is a way out, there is a diplomatic path forward, and we are very serious and wishing to go down that path. We believe there is a diplomatic solution to this problem and ready available and they ought to listen to countries as diverse as Russia, China and the United States, because we are all saying the same message. I am sorry to say that it looks like when ... report to the Security Council on February 21<sup>st</sup> on whether or not Iran is meeting the conditions of resolution 1737, it is absolutely sure that Iran is not and that is a shame. We hope that Iran will reflect on this and reconsider and choose diplomacy and negotiation.

**Q:** You said today at CARI that the United States admired the government's examination of human rights abuses during the military dictatorship. Is this an acknowledgement of errors by the U.S.?

**A/S Burns:** Not at all, not in any way. It is because we believe that we are champions of human rights in the world, my country, The United States. But just being here and talking to a lot of different citizens in Argentina as well as the government officials, it is apparent that the military dictatorship was a horrible period for the Argentinean people, it is right that the government and the people of Argentina pursue investigations that would protect the victims of military dictatorship. I told both, Minister Fernandez and also the Foreign Minister that we respect what they are doing. We support what they are doing because ... I am an infrequent visitor here, ... I do not come here often and you cannot come here and not be impressed by the atrocities committed by the military dictatorship.

**Q:** I would like to know what that you hear about the relationship between Venezuela and Iran...NATO...

**A/S Burns:** We did not discuss ... that I remember,, we did not discuss with anyone Venezuela's relationship with Iran and on the second question the foreign minister and many of his colleagues made it very clear what they do want and ... in a relationship with NATO, they explained that there have been personnel changes made by the Argentine Ministry of Defense but they wish to continue to have a good relationship with NATO.

We did have a very good discussion with the Foreign Minister about Argentina ... operations peacekeeping which we very much support and there is a great need for professional peace keeping groups in Africa and in the Balkans as well as in this Hemisphere and we'll support Argentina in playing a big role in that respect.

**Q:** (Question on Venezuela's nationalizations)

**A/S Burns:** We have a very clear view of this. We believe that trade and economic opportunities and open economic relationships can produce in most of the situations, in most countries both the economic growth and jobs. Conducting properly we believe an open trading and investment relationship can actually lift people out of poverty and therefore meet the clear public expectation ... in Latin America, the social justice ... part of the dialogue. Look at India and China, an extraordinary progress of 50 millions of peoples out of poverty in both countries through trade and investment. In our judge, the policies of Chavez to nationalized industries and return to state socialized marks a return to the failed policies of the past, and we do not believe it is going to bring the kind of benefits that Venezuelan people clearly deserves to have. It's completely out of ... where were all the dynamic developing countries in the world are now heading from China to India to Indonesia, to Malaysia, to Singapore, to Israel, and Israel the miracle is really economic growth, to Mexico, there's so many examples where forward looking, open policies and free trade due pay ... And frankly you have to wonder if Chavez plans is became president for life. Which is also ... with the trends in this region and in most others regions around the world where democracy should be build in the ground protected and not ... In this sense we don't see Chavez so much as a threat directly to the United States but as a problem to his own region.

**Q:** Why is President Bush not coming to Argentina?

**A/S Burns:** Well, I mean, the President, you know, has limited time obviously, he cannot go to every country in Latin America and of course, he was at Mar del Plata at the Summit of the Americas on one of his last trips to the region so he will be visiting the five countries that were announced in the White House yesterday. We are obviously sending a signal to Argentina that we want to have a better relationship by inviting the Foreign Minister to Washington and Mr. De Vido is going to be coming to Washington, Tom and I came here for one reason: to express our interest in a better relationship. So we hope, I think that signal has been seen by the government.

**Q:** (Question on meeting at AMIA).

**A/S:** I had a very good meeting with the Board of AMIA, I expressed complete sympathy with the tragedy that occurs 12 years ago, on behalf of my government, and I express our support to the government of Argentina in their exemplary efforts to pursue justice on this difficult issue.

**Q:** (Question on

**A/S Burns:** Well, because something is best left of private discussion among governments, there are some things that you talk about and some things that you don't talk about.

**Q:** (Question on biodiesel agreement with Brazil).

**A/S Burns:** Are you part of the Boston ... Clan? ... You are?. That's too bad. I'm a Yankee fan, you know. (Laugh.) It's like Boca-River Plate, right? Yankees and Red Socks. It is the same, right? We actually, did not sign an agreement in Brazil, we talked about it. Both of our governments want to build up a global market for ethanol, more regional cooperation and more research and development. And we have been working with Brazilians for many, many months on all three areas, an agreement in all three areas. I think, you know, President Bush will be visiting Brazil on the first stop of his trip and seeing President Lula in Sao Pablo, so I will leave it to ... I think it is best to let the two presidents discuss where we are heading on this.

**Q:** Did you have a discussion on biofuels with Argentine officials?

**A/S Burns:** Yes we did have it, I think with every minister a good discussion about fuels and we certainly want to work with Argentina and others... too.