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**2005 POL-MIL TALKS
Ambassador Likins Comments**

On behalf of the Secretary, I want to extend to you and your delegation the same type of hospitality that you extended to us when you hosted the annual U.S./UK talks in London last year. We're all very happy to have you here today and look forward to a productive two days of dialogue on the many crucial issues surrounding our mutual interests in Diego Garcia.

During these talks, we have great hope that, together, we will be able to advance our mutual interests. Our discussions will cover issues that involve political, economic, environmental, security, and jurisdictional concerns. As you continue to discuss the issues put before you, keep in mind the benefit that our unique strategic partnership and what we've mutually accomplished during past globe spanning operations, for instance during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the Tsunami effort as well as the Global War on Terrorism. These are a;; reminders of the tremendous benefits that accrue from our special relationship that is based on shared strategic visions and goals, which form a basis for dialogue, even when our views are not exactly identical.

We all can agree, that given the strategic importance of secure forward operating bases in today's world, the United States Government is particularly grateful to Her Majesty's government for this valuable partnership. Since the Talks last year, there has been an ongoing exchange of letters between our governments, and we've progressed on several significant environmental, legal, logistics, command-relations, and foreign employment concerns. I expect this positive trend to continue.

With that in mind, we hope that you agree that our common objective with regard to Diego Garcia is to ensure that the national security interests of our governments are protected. Neither of us wants to open the Chagos Archipelago to activities that could adversely effect the security of Diego Garcia.

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