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Statement by David C. Mulford

U.S. Ambassador to India
Roosevelt House
New Delhi, India

Thank you for coming this afternoon to Roosevelt House. I would like to make a brief statement on the issue of Mr. Narendra Modi's visa status.

The Chief Minister of Gujarat state, Mr. Narendra Modi, applied for a diplomatic visa to visit the United States. On March 18, 2005, the United States Department of State denied Mr. Modi this visa under section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act because he was not coming for a purpose that qualified for a diplomatic visa. Mr. Modi's existing tourist/business visa was also revoked under section 212 (a) (2) (g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Section 212 (a) (2) g) makes any foreign government official who "was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom" ineligible for a visa to the United States.

The Ministry of External Affairs requested that the Department of State review the decision to revoke his tourist/business visa. Upon review, the State Department re-affirmed the original decision.

This decision applies to Mr. Narendra Modi only. **It is based on the Fact that, as head of the State government in Gujarat between February 2002 And May 2002, he was responsible for the performance of state institutions At that time. The State Department's detailed views on this matter are Included in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and the International Religious Freedom Report. Both reports document the violence in Gujarat from February 2002 to May 2002 and cite the Indian National Human Rights Commission report, which states there was "a comprehensive failure on the part of the state government to control the persistent violation of rights of life, liberty, equality, and dignity of the people of the state."**

I would also like to speak specifically to the charge that this action Was directed at the BJP institutionally or Gujaratis as a community. The United States is deeply appreciative of the role that the BJP, and the Vajpayee government in particular, played in opening the way for the positive transformation in U.S.-India relations. I would note also the great respect the United States has for the many successful Gujaratis who live and work in the United States and the thousands who are issued visas to the United States each month.

As Secretary Rice said regarding her recent visit to India, on behalf of President Bush she shared with the Indian leadership "a vision for a decisively broader strategic relationship, to help India achieve its goals as one of the world's great multiethnic democracies. This vision embraces cooperation on a global strategy for peace, on defense, on energy, and on economic growth."

The United States and India, as two great and vibrant democracies, share common values on the freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and representative government. It is our goal to build on those common values as we strengthen our bilateral partnership.
