



Remarks With UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Kabul, Afghanistan
February 7, 2008

[View Video](#)

PRESIDENT KARZAI: (Via interpreter.) The sisters and brothers, you're most welcome to the press conference today. I'm very happy and pleased and there are many issues of today that I will be discussing it with – friend, Secretary of State of the United States and British country. Today, they are – came with a message of friendship and I welcome them to Afghanistan and I appreciate and I'm thankful to the assistance that they have given Afghanistan.

Our talks were about the strengthening of the relationship between the countries to fight terrorism, improve my economy, and the (inaudible). And they, as always, promised their commitment at a time when Afghanistan stands on its feet and they will – they promised that they will fight the terrorism together and (inaudible) – I welcome both to Afghanistan and I am thankful to the extraordinary assistance that both country has given to Afghanistan.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for welcoming me here and for welcoming me here with Foreign Secretary Miliband. It has been a very good day for us in Afghanistan. We had the opportunity to go to Kandahar and to meet with the multinational coalition forces there. It's extraordinary to see the range of countries that have bound together to help the people of Afghanistan, to help them to have a more secure environment, an environment in which they can prosper, reconstruct and engage in good governance at all levels.

I want to thank you again for your leadership of this country. And we have now been partners since 2001 and I think that it is fair to say that if you look at the Afghanistan of 2001 and the Afghanistan of now, there is a remarkable difference for the better. It is our intention as partners for you and your government and for the people of Afghanistan to continue that progress and to indeed intensify that progress. You have determined enemies; we know that. The Taliban and the al-Qaida who laid waste to this country and to the hopes of the Afghan people over such a long period of time continue to be determined to make life difficult for ordinary Afghans who only want to live in peace and security. But we know, too, that they have turned increasingly to tactics of coward; that is, to go after the innocent, to bomb people who are defenseless and to kidnap people who are defenseless. And in that way, we know that we have more work to do. But it is not discouraging; it is encouraging to continue to build the Afghan security forces, to build the police forces and to continue the determined efforts of the coalition to help the Afghan people to obtain security.

So thank you again for having us here. We will continue to work together and all best wishes to you and to the Afghan people.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Thank you very much, Secretary. Mr. Miliband.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: President, it's a great privilege to be back in Afghanistan for some really excellent discussions with you, with your team and also with some of the coalition forces and diplomats that we met today.

I'm here really for three reasons. First of all, to recommit the British Government to the plans that the Prime Minister set out in the House of Commons in December, at the heart of which is a determination to work with you against the shared enemies that we have, the enemies of terrorism which Condi Rice has rightly spoken about, but also the enemies of poverty, the enemies of ill health, the enemies of low-standing economic development, all of which conspire against the aspirations of the Afghan people to build a decent life for themselves. And it's to help the Afghan people build a decent life for themselves that I'm here.

Secondly, to reflect on progress, to recognize the refugees coming back to the country, to recognize the children going to school, to recognize the improvements in healthcare; none of which would have been achieved without your leadership. But also none of which would have been achieved, I think it's fair to say, without the support of the international community, absolutely.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Absolutely.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: And so the third reason I'm here is to assert the mutual responsibilities that we have to support each other. I hope you don't mind my saying that in our meetings you talked, I thought, brilliantly about a shared cause that we have. And it's in that spirit that I'm here to talk about what the British Government can do about the responsibility of the international effort and about the way we look forward to the work that your government's going to do on a national, provincial and local level to help build the structures of government, clean effective government that the Afghan people have a right to receive. And so it's in that spirit that we'll be taking forward a discussion later today and tomorrow and beyond, we continue on doing work together.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Thank you very much, well spoken. David (inaudible), very nice of you.

Well, questions – Dr. Rice will you pick up the first question?

SECRETARY RICE: I will. Anne Gearan --

PRESIDENT KARZAI: And make our lives easier.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, Mr. President, I will do that. Anne Gearan of the AP.

QUESTION: The question first for President Karzai. Do you agree with the assessment last week by an independent panel in the United States that said that Afghanistan is the forgotten war and that the state is at risk of again failing unless there is a more concerted international effort?

And for Secretary Rice, it's been about three years, I think, since you were first here as Secretary and you spoke at that time with great hope about the democratic gains that you said you saw taking place there. I wonder if you anticipated then that a visit three years later would require the kind of intensive security and secrecy that has attended your joint visit today.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: On the first question ma'am, when we began six years ago, first of all, the defeat of the al-Qaida and terrorism that were around for so many years was achieved in less than a month and a half. For that itself alone, the Afghan people are extremely grateful. That for us brought a liberation that we much desired and much deserved.

Second, since then Afghanistan has moved forward towards having completed almost the (inaudible) highways of the country, extended to the rest of the country with roads mowed, asphalted, paved and secondary roads. (Inaudible) healthcare for the whole country -- I'm very, very happy to note that. Eighty-five thousand children being saved now in Afghanistan that we could not four years ago, a better economy and better wages, more business, a better life, and a constitution and democratic institutions and a free press and so on. I will not go on to talk about that. Afghanistan, if given more attention, will be very, very glad and thankful. But it is not right that Afghanistan was forgotten. Had Afghanistan been forgotten, we would not have been able to save thousands of children's lives today. Had Afghanistan been forgotten, we would have not had the thousands of kilometers of roads and the improving, more capable administration every day.

Now, the report has certain recommendations that we agree with. More attention to Afghanistan, welcome. More real cooperation, a very good recommendation. More attention to all aspects of (inaudible) security and reconstruction, welcome. But Afghanistan having been forgotten, no.

SECRETARY RICE: Anne, when I was here three years ago as the new Secretary of State at the time, I did speak about what I thought to be the remarkable progress of Afghanistan in developing its democratic institutions and beginning to provide for its people, in providing through the international community roads which this country essentially did not have.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: None of it.

SECRETARY RICE: And I see that that progress continues. Could we all expect that the security situation would still be difficult? Yes, because Afghanistan has determined enemies who, as I said, laid waste to this country over a period of more than a decade. And it was at that time a country that was only coming out of 25 years of civil war. So of course, it's going to be difficult to rebuild the institutions like the security institutions. I think the Afghan Army has progressed really exponentially from that time. The Afghan police -- we've now turned our attention in the international community and the Afghans to police, which is always the harder job to build police forces.

But you have to remember what the President said not too long after September 11th, which is this is a long war because the terrorists will not be easily defeated. But I just want to repeat something that I said. I remember standing before many of you when you talked about the spring offensive that was coming in 2006 and then coming in 2007. And in fact, I think if you talk to military commanders they will talk about how aggressively and how successfully NATO and the coalition forces met the challenge of Taliban forces trying to come in large formations. And they have turned to tactics that, unfortunately, are aimed at the most helpless and innocent people. And what that says to me is that not only are they dangerous, but they are morally bankrupt and they are brutal. And the people of Afghanistan are the ones who are turning against that kind of barbarity.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Mr. Miliband.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Well, Mr. President, none of the hands that have gone up I recognize as being British hands, so this is a -- it's a form of journalistic blind date that is happening here. (Laughter.) But this man says he is British, so I'll let him --

QUESTION: Jerome Starkey from the *Independent*.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Ah, the *Independent*.

QUESTION: President, Secretary of State, Foreign Secretary, it's been reported that there's a 23-year-old journalism student in the north of the country who's been sentenced to death for circulating material which has been deemed blasphemous. Secretary of State, Foreign Secretary, you've both said in the press that you were uncomfortable about this and that you would talk about it today. President, I'd be intrigued to know what you think and what you've agreed.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Yes. Both the Secretary of State and the Foreign Secretary spoke to me about this. This is an issue that our judicial system is handling. But I can assure you that in the end of the day, justice will be done in the right way.

My turn? Well, I'll pick up -- lady, please.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Mr. President, thank you. I'm from German television and I would like to ask you one question concerning --

PRESIDENT KARZAI: German television?

QUESTION: German television.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Welcome.

QUESTION: -- concerning -- thank you -- the request of the Americans and of NATO that other members should increase their troops in Afghanistan. Do you think that the Germans should participate in the fight against the Taliban in the south?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Well, ma'am, Afghanistan is trying to keep away from these negotiations on the level of troops, on the increasing number of troops, on where each country should go. We are grateful to all the NATO members for having contributed to Afghanistan in whatever way they have. The United States, Britain, Germany, Canada, Netherlands, Italy, France, Poland and also other countries in Europe have contributed to Afghanistan's progress and stability and development to a better future. We are grateful for that. Now, if all the members could contribute more, we would be very, very happy. But I would leave the decisions on troop levels and all that to the military men within NATO.

SECRETARY RICE: Helene Cooper, *New York Times*.

QUESTION: Hi. President Karzai, have you come around to the idea that a United Nations special envoy will not infringe on Afghan sovereignty?

And to the Foreign Secretary and Secretary Rice, are you and President Karzai any closer to an agreement on this?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: We were -- we were close to an agreement on this before, too, and I'm very, very sorry that Mr. Ashdown could not begin his job, that it didn't work out. It's a personal matter of unhappiness for me.

But on the Secretary General's representative to Afghanistan, we did discuss; and whoever the Secretary General picks up to come and serve in Afghanistan with the backing of the international community, Afghanistan will support.

SECRETARY RICE: And let me just say one thing about this role because it will be a very important role. But the role is clearly to help the international community be more coordinated and more effective and more efficient in its support for the Afghan Government. And it should be clearly understood that when the Secretary General chooses an envoy -- and again, I want to echo what the President said; Mr. Ashdown is a fine public servant and I'm sorry that that could not work out. But when that person is chosen, the role has always been and will always be to make sure that the international community, which after all -- let's be very frank about it, there are a lot of cooks in the kitchen here; we have a lot of countries that want to help Afghanistan. And when you have a lot of countries that want to help Afghanistan with overlapping

authorities and many different bureaucracies and many different groups, not to mention the very fine NGOs who work here and the UN, I can understand why sometimes there may be some confusion on priorities and what needs to get done when. And we owe it to President Karzai and his government to have a more coherent international approach to supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to provide for its people.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: I think it's important to say that we're not just united in our admiration for Lord Ashdown; we also want to see a strong and effective international coordinator in place sooner rather than later minding the confidence of the UN and of the Afghan Government. And that is something that is very much at the heart of the idea that the international community has responsibilities that it has to fulfill in the most effective way. That provides the basis for the Afghan Government then to be the partner that's able to help lead the country forward.

Gideon Rachman is here from the *Financial Times*, so I hope you'll let me choose him (inaudible).

QUESTION: Thank you very much. The question I want to ask, I guess is principally to President Karzai. You were quoted in the press as being quite critical of what was going on in Helmand and apparently of the British effort there. Is that still your view? How do you think the British are doing down there?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: I was misquoted. I didn't say that. Now, do you want me to repeat all that? I was asked if there was a part of the country where we were not present as a government. I said yes. But this was not to criticize. Britain is the second largest donor to Afghanistan. It has the second largest number of troops in Afghanistan. It has had losses of life in Afghanistan. We respect Britain as a country that is delivering assistance to Afghanistan. This has been at the forefront of the rural developing, planning of Afghanistan and contribution to that, at the forefront of support to the education of Afghanistan and to Afghanistan and the health services and security and backing to Afghanistan.

I'm sorry, but that day, the press quoted me in a manner that I had not spoken. And the next morning, I had a meeting with Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who I find a very exceptionally good man, and I told him that I am terribly embarrassed that this has come up. That is not what I said. We appreciate British (inaudible) in Afghanistan and the contribution that they have made. Yes, we have all made mistakes over the years of moving from that point to today and we're all trying to correct them and to move forward.

Let me pick up an Afghan press. We'll go – well, which one? Your turn will be next. Which TV are you? (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) Madame Rice, welcome you to Afghanistan. My first question, I'll address this to you. Strategies of the United States and NATO countries in Afghanistan in fighting terrorism and fighting poverty, building transparent government -- hasn't been so effective. Is the United States considering to revise the strategy regarding Afghanistan?

And my question to President Karzai, even though it's repeated I would like to -- Mr. Paddy Ashdown was envoy in Bosnia that had a good fight against corruption, Afghanistan is also drowned in corruption. Don't you think that his coming to Afghanistan wouldn't have been effective in fighting corruption? Did you personally decided about his coming as the UN envoy to Afghanistan?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you very much. First of all, I believe that what we've been doing in the counterinsurgency struggle in Afghanistan is having good effect, but the work is not complete. And if you think about how one does this or how we do it, it is that you have to have a population that is secure from terrorists and insurgents and that is the role of the coalition forces and the Afghan army.

You then have to have the ability for the population to remain secure by having enough police forces and enough people who can prevent the terrorists from returning. You then have to have an effective program of building, of providing services for people, and all of that has to be done in the context of improving the capability of the Afghan Government to govern its people at different levels: at the national level, at the provincial level, at the district level, and indeed at the local level.

And that's hard work for a country, in a country which had such a long period of really being a failed state, for more than 25 years, a country that was either ungoverned or had civil war or was governed – or was ruled, I should say, by the brutal Taliban. And so it's not work that's going to be completed overnight. I won't repeat the statistics that David and the President have cited about the number of children saved from infant mortality. Infant mortality rates in this country were through the roof by all standards. They've come down.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: The highest in the world.

SECRETARY RICE: Highest in the world. This was a country that effectively had no road network. That road network is now emerging and by the way, when you don't have a road network, it's awfully hard to fight insurgents and terrorists and to maintain order without a road network. It was a country that had essentially no economic life. That economic life is coming back to life. You could just drive down the streets in Kabul and see that.

So I don't mean to suggest by any means that the work is done and certainly, we will have to make adjustments as the enemy tries to make adjustments to strategies that have failed for them, like taking on the coalition in a military way. That clearly failed. They tried to adapt other – adopt other tactics like going after innocent people. We will have to adopt too. The Afghan Government, the Afghan forces will have to adopt. But to say that it's not working; I think I would say it's not complete, but the strategy is one that I believe is having a good effect.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: (Via interpreter.) The duty of the UN Envoy in Afghanistan is a creation of coordination and good management of – between international community, especially those countries who are helping and assisting Afghanistan and coordinating all (inaudible) coordination with the Government of Afghanistan. Fighting corruption is the (inaudible) of Afghanistan and it is the duty and responsibilities of the Afghans and it's not the duty of foreigners. And if you could not – if we allow foreigners to resolve our own internal problems, then the thing will not work. Therefore, when Afghanistan has to decide, it is the Afghans who have to do the work.

The international community is providing the means of life for today and to the reconstruction for today. In order to lay down the basis of a good future, and we are very thankful of receiving that, but building Afghanistan and governing Afghanistan and cleaning the Afghanistan from corruption and lawlessness and the suspect to law is not the duty of international community. It is the responsibility of Afghans to do the work.

Any more? That's enough? Let us have one more question so that the Afghan press won't be disappointed.

SECRETARY RICE: All right.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: The man on the left, (inaudible).

QUESTION: (Inaudible) TV. (Via interpreter.) Today, from international press, it was published that Mr. Gates expressed his concern that if this – the – among NATO, the discussions and the debates continues – did you think that there will be a diversion among NATO forces on these discussion – this discussion?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: (Via interpreter.) Disagreement of opinion about the NATO forces, again, how to approach sending the military and financial support, of course, there will be difference of opinions. Of course, inside the Government of Afghanistan and in each regime, there are definite opinions and it will not result that they will -- they are just becoming apart and of course, I'm sure that NATO will continue as a unified organization, will continue to support Afghanistan, and Afghanistan will go to a better future tomorrow and of course, security for today and good security for tomorrow.

2008/T4-5

Released on February 7, 2008

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.