



Remarks with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Afghanistan Kai Eide After Their Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC
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SECRETARY RICE: I would like to welcome Ambassador Kai Eide to the United States for conversations with the U.S. Government about the very important role that he has assumed as the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. He was at the Bucharest meeting, and I hope that you felt the strong support from NATO and that you have felt the strong support from the United States and the allies there. We have no more important mission together than to help the Afghan people to find security, development, and, ultimately, prosperity and peace within their newly democratic state.

It is a tough job, Ambassador. We understand that. There is a lot of work to do to improve the coordination among the international donors to Afghanistan, the many countries that are on the ground. But I do think there is a good spirit and a good will. I look forward to working with you also to make certain that the Paris conference in June is a success. We have a lot of work to do, but we're going to do it together. And the Afghan people deserve to have that kind of support.

I know, too, that you have met with President Karzai, that you've been on the ground in Afghanistan, and we want to do everything that we can to support his leadership in this democratic government.

AMBASSADOR EIDE: Thank you very much. I am very grateful to you for receiving me and my team here today and for the way you receive us here in Washington. I have felt, since taking on these duties, and I feel that strongly today, that there is full U.S. support for what we are trying to do. That is important. I also feel that we do have the confidence of the President of Afghanistan and his government. And with that and the sharper mandate that we have, I believe that we have the tools available to us that are important to succeed.

We are also looking forward to the Paris conference and are doing what we can to prepare that. It will be important that the donors who have perhaps not been too generous in the past try to mobilize the resources that the Government of Afghanistan need. And then, of course, we are starting to prepare the very important elections that will take place in 2009. So, I think we have our priorities set, and we look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead. Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE EIDE: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: A question (inaudible). Does the assassination attempt in Kabul this weekend underscore for you the fragility of the Karzai government?

SECRETARY RICE: What it underscores for me, Anne, is that Afghanistan has, as we've said many times, determined enemies who will do anything to try and disrupt the democratic progress that the Afghan people have made. President Karzai is a strong leader and he has responded, I think, in a strong fashion to this. They will certainly find the perpetrators and they will bring them to justice.

But obviously, Afghanistan is a young democracy, it is a country that comes out of decades of civil war, it is a very poor country. It has a lot of challenges of governance, it has challenges of building an economy, and it has security challenges. But I'm also quite confident that with the work that NATO is doing, with the work that the UN is doing, with the work, most importantly, that the Afghan government and the Afghan people are doing, that they're going to succeed.

MR. MCCORMACK: All right. Thanks, guys.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

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