



Remarks With Afghan President Hamid Karzai

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Kabul, Afghanistan
October 12, 2005

PRESIDENT KARZAI: *(English interpretation not available.)*

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, Mr. President. It's a delight to be back in Afghanistan for the second time since I have been Secretary of State, and it comes at a time of great promise and hope for Afghanistan. It is, of course, a little over four years since the liberation of Afghanistan began and the brave Afghan people, in concert with their coalition partners, were able to liberate this land from the Taliban. And you yourself, of course, played a major role in that.

Afghanistan is now inspiring the world with its march toward democracy, with the successful presidential elections that brought you, the first elected President to Afghanistan, and then the parliament that has just been elected. And in both cases we recognize that the foundation is being laid for a strong and democratic Afghanistan.

The President and I had an opportunity to talk about the continued progress toward democracy here, also about a number of the challenges that continue to face Afghanistan and its people. It is a country, of course, that has emerged now after more than 25 years of civil war to face an economy and an infrastructure that is seriously degraded, and we know that the Afghan people have a tremendous spirit and a great spirit of entrepreneurship that can be tapped to rebuild this economy if they are given the chance. And we look forward to working with you, Mr. President, to rebuild this Afghan economy.

I had a meeting a little bit earlier with some women entrepreneurs who are involved in the efforts to bring small and medium size businesses into Afghanistan, and that and other economic activities through the United States and through the international community should support the economic revival of Afghanistan.

We talked also about the importance of Afghanistan in this region, where Afghanistan (inaudible) a land bridge for the entire region, and the need to rebuild regional economic ties.

We talked also about the challenges, as you said, Mr. President, of narcotics and your great desire to have Afghanistan rid of it. We, with our lead partner, the British, have been very involved in that effort and we will redouble our efforts with you to help to educate the Afghan people, to help to eradicate, to help to bring alternative livelihoods to those who choose a legal path, and also to support your efforts at criminal justice for those who continue in those activities.

And finally, we talked about U.S.-Afghan relations, bilateral relations, the war on terrorism, our growing and deep security cooperation. I wanted to assure the President again what I've said before: The Afghan people have a long-term partner in the United States. We are not going to leave, as we once did. It was a mistake for us. It was a mistake for the Afghan people. And so you can count, Mr. President, on our continuing friendship, our long-term partnership, a relationship in terms of security cooperation and the fight to bring peace and stability to this region that will be enduring.

Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: You are most welcome. Before we go to the questions, if you'll allow me, Madame Secretary, I'd like to say something on the earthquake.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, of course.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Before we go to questions, I would like to speak before the press -- as my first opportunity after the very, very sad earthquake in Pakistan. I would like to convey through you to our brothers and sisters in Pakistan that the hearts of the Afghan people are full of grief and pain and sorrow for our brothers and sisters in Pakistan, for those who have suffered.

And I would like to make also an appeal here to all of us, the Afghan people and the international community. Just as we are overtaken with sorrow, our hands should be extended with the maximum help that, all of us, we can afford.

SECRETARY RICE: Do you want to call on someone first?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: You do -- you get the first one.

SECRETARY RICE: All right. Anne Gearan from AP.

QUESTION: This question is for both of you. There have been five suicide bombings here in the last two weeks and yesterday saw the deadliest attack yet on the Afghan police force. Are we seeing some of the tactics of the Iraqi insurgency taking hold in this country? And how does the continued problem of violence affect your calculations about how long and in what numbers U.S. and NATO troops need to remain in Afghanistan?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: The attacks after the elections are a clear indication of the frustration in terrorism of the success in Afghanistan of the political process. We are not very sure -- I'm not very sure -- if all of those attacks were suicide attacks. They may have been something else. They may have been the use of innocent or not so innocent people as traps for explosives.

The incident the day before yesterday in which we lost 18 of our policemen in a place called (inaudible), close to that, is being investigated. We tend to believe, as matters stand at this point, based on the information that we have so far, that that probably is more related to a cooperation between the drug dealers, the drug trade, and terrorism. That's an area which is affected strongly by the drug trade activity which we have attacked once or twice before, which we'll continue to attack because where there's a marketplace for drugs and that incident is probably more related to the narco trade and terrorism.

With regard to the continuation of attacks, we will have terrorism attacking us in the cowardly manner that they have for quite some time. But the progress will go on, the success will go on, and the rebuilding and the construction will go on.



QUESTION: And I can only add that the Afghan people will have partners through NATO and of course through the coalition forces and through American forces for as long as they are needed in whatever numbers they are needed to make certain that we defeat the terrorists and that Afghanistan becomes a place of stability and progress. Because we've learned that when Afghanistan was not a state in which people were prosperous, when it was a state that I think many would have referred to as a failed state, that this territory came home to the United States of America on September 11th.

And the President gave a speech the other day in which he made very clear that we're not going to let that happen again. We are doing everything that we can to defeat the terrorists. We cannot simply defend ourselves. We have to be on the offense. We are on the offense with our Afghan partners here in Afghanistan. That is critical for the security of the Afghan people but it's also critical for the security of the American people.

And so I am quite certain that the President and Secretary Rumsfeld and our commanders will be certain that we are here in whatever numbers and for whatever amount of time we are needed.

QUESTION: Afghanistan is the last hope for the United States to have military bases in middle Asia. What is your comment, please?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States is in Afghanistan because we, together with our Afghan partners, are fighting a war on terrorism, a war of extremists who would try and make as much of this area look like what Afghanistan looked like under the Taliban as possible. That's their goal. Nobody wants to see that. The Afghan people have now been freed from that horror. People throughout the region of Central Asia, the Middle East, Southwest Asia, are expressing their desire and aspiration for freedom and liberty and for a better way of life. And the United States wants to be a partner with them in seeking that way of life and we've been very clear that we want to be a partner because we want to see this region develop and be democratic and prosperous, but it is also in our security interest because there has to be an antidote, there has to be an answer, to extremism and terrorism, and it is prosperity and peace and democracy.

Our forces are here for those purposes. And as I said when I was with President Bakiyev yesterday, the United States is fighting in the war on terrorism. We are not in the business of seeking to be any place that we do not want to be and any place that we are not wanted and any place where we do not have partners. We have strong partners here in Afghanistan. Our military cooperation is strong, but it is in a common cause, and that is the defeat of terrorism and extremism.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: I would like to answer that. To add to Madame Secretary's remarks, sir, the partnership between the United States and Afghanistan was actually in terms of the strategic partnership of which you were speaking earlier in different forms, is actually the initiation of the Afghan people. It was Afghanistan that approached the United States to have the strategic partnership so that Afghanistan would continue to have the benefit of the presence of the United States here for the security and safety of our people, and also for the build-up of the institutions of Afghanistan that will eventually take the responsibilities of defending this country and for the reconstruction of the country. So it's an Afghan initiation, sir.

SECRETARY RICE: Warren.

QUESTION: Warren Strobel with Knight-Ridder newspapers. Madame Secretary, there recently have been some allegations that members of the Afghan administration itself are involved in the drug trade or in covering up for the drug trade, and I'm wondering, did you raise those specific concerns in your meetings here today?

And President Karzai, can you tell us what you're doing to keep your government clean of drugs? And we understand maybe you've made some decisions recently to be more aggressive on that.

Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: I have found no stronger voice in favor of clean and good governance and accountability of officials than President Karzai. He has said to us, and we have every reason to trust his word given our now long partnership, that he wants the Afghan Government to be responsive to the people, to be a government that is known to have fought corruption and to continue to fight corruption, to have institutions that are not tainted by corruption. That means, by the way, the drug trade, terrorism, bribery. Because the future that the President and his government and indeed his people have sketched out for Afghanistan is one of good governance, and so I know that there are efforts to improve the ability of Afghanistan to discover corruption wherever it is, and I'm quite sure that he means wherever it is, but also to build a legal and judicial system that can protect people's rights, that can give people due process, but that will build confidence first and foremost among the Afghan people that corruption is being fought and then among the international community, because it is also an important step to improving the climate in Afghanistan for investment.

And so yes, we have had those discussions, but I can tell you that they are discussions that are initiated by the President himself.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: I would like to add to this. The question of drugs and the question of corruption emanating from drugs or corruption emanating from other sources is one that will determine Afghanistan's future as a state that's on its own feet, as a state that's governed by its own people, as a state that's doing well, as a state that has respect and admiration in the international community, or as a state that will collapse and fail and fall back into the hands of terrorism.

So if we fight drugs, corruption, we will be a state respected and standing on our own feet. If we fail, we will fail as a state eventually and we will fall back in the hands of terrorism. Therefore, if you give us an option, the Afghan nation will take the first option, the option of fighting drugs and being a strong, powerful, very, very respectable state. That's the desire we have and we shall fulfill it.

Last one. Let's have a lady. No ladies asked any questions today. (Inaudible).

QUESTION: *(English interpretation not available.)*

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Did you get the question?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, yes, I understood.

Well, the first point that I would like to make is, of course, the United States is a member of NATO and has been very actively encouraging therefore and involved in the planning for the NATO responsibilities under the International Security Assistance Force. NATO is our strongest alliance. The United States is the lead member of NATO. And so when you talk about NATO, you're also talking about the United States and we have great confidence in NATO and the role that it has already played here and an expanded role that it might play. Particularly, there are a number of members of NATO who have been able to develop Provincial Reconstruction Teams throughout the country. There will be, I am sure, some changing of one lead of a Provincial Reconstruction Team for another lead. There is a re-shuffling that is going on within the country as political and military conditions dictate and permit.

But the United States will remain the lead in the coalition that is fighting terrorism, as we have been since we, together with the Afghan people, participated in the liberation of Afghanistan. And there America and some other coalition partners have capabilities that are specific to the needs of certain parts of the country where there remain serious terrorist or other threats. And so the combination of NATO being able to provide certain kinds of forces, training, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, support here in Kabul through ISAF, and the ability of the United States to participate as a NATO member but also as the lead of a coalition that is fighting terrorism in particularly difficult areas, I think has been a formula for success. It is going to continue. We will always continually review what needs to be done in light of military and political circumstances.

But I want to repeat what I said earlier: The United States knows now in very difficult and graphic terms what it meant to have Afghanistan be a haven for terrorism. We know what it meant that we left this area and did not sustain a presence here when it was needed. We know that the United States cannot simply defend itself, that it has to fight terrorism on the offense.

Because it is in our own interest and because we have a good partner here in Afghanistan, we are going to do what it takes to be with the Afghan people while they make their transition to a stable and prosperous democracy, and we will do what it takes in terms of numbers and support to help them achieve that goal.

Oh, one more.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Yes. (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: *(English interpretation not available.)*

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Thank you very much.

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