



Remarks With Afghan President Hamid Karzai After Their Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Kabul, Afghanistan
June 28, 2006

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Media members, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored (inaudible) Afghanistan welcomes Her Excellency.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, Mr. President. And first let me, on behalf of the American people, on behalf of President Bush, thank you for your friendship, thank you for your commitment, thank you for your superb leadership of a country (inaudible) since the war you have brought unity, you have (inaudible) the Afghan people and indeed to the region and to the world. Thank you very much for your leadership.



We had a broad-ranging discussion of our joint fight in the war on terror, but also about how to answer the hopes of the Afghan people for a better life, a more prosperous life. (Inaudible) reconstruction (inaudible) bring further security to the Afghan people, not just through coalition and American forces but also the strengthening of Afghan security institutions, something that the President has been concerned about and that we, too, are concerned about.

Mr. President, I want you to know that we consider Afghanistan to be a friend for the long term. The commitment of the United States is a strong commitment but also one that will be an enduring commitment. I have said before that we made the mistake once before of leaving Afghanistan and of not sustaining our commitment to our relationship here. We will not make that mistake again. America will be committed and a friend of the Afghan people for a very, very long time to come. Thank you for your leadership.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Welcome, ma'am. Welcome. Questions?

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, (inaudible). Aren't you concerned that (inaudible) United States (inaudible)?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I have the greatest confidence that the democratic institutions and the democratic future of Afghanistan are indeed getting stronger and getting stronger each day. That Afghanistan has determined enemies is no surprise to anyone. That they are brutal and ruthless enemies who will take innocent life is also not a surprise to anyone. These are people who raped and pillaged and tried to destroy this country over an extended period of decades and there are small numbers of them who are still trying to destroy this country but they will not succeed. They will not succeed because Afghanistan has an elected president, an elected parliament. For the first time Afghanistan has strong coalition partners, not just in the United States but in NATO. It has the respect of the international community. And because the security forces of Afghanistan, which really barely existed just a few years ago, are now really coming into full being and are being strengthened.

So yes, Afghanistan has determined enemies and they are ruthless, but they will not succeed in undermining or in rolling back the democratic gains of the Afghan people. We are here committed to those democratic gains and I know that the Afghan people themselves are committed to those democratic gains.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: I would reconfirm the remarks of Dr. Rice. There is absolute certainty that Afghanistan is going to strengthen the gains of the past five years. Whatever was asked of the Afghan people in the Bonn agreement has been fulfilled on time. We have constitution, elections for the president, a very vibrant parliament and a strengthening civil society.

Now, terrorism will definitely try to work very, very hard, seeing the success of Afghanistan, they will try to hurt us. But the success is moving further and further and that is the story in Afghanistan.

Now, yes, we do have incidents of security and some of them are serious. That causes the Afghan people concern and that is what we are working on together with the international community on a daily basis.

As for myself, ma'am, perhaps it doesn't get out to the international press. Every month I am in one of the Afghan provinces. Just yesterday I was in Baghlan Province in the northern part of the country, northeastern part of the country, inaugurated a road that links that part of the country with a major border of Afghanistan with Tajikistan and a port and what I saw there impressed me a lot. There was a vibrancy of agriculture and a construction there and agricultural feats. There were so many new schools. In a drive of about 20 minutes I saw three new schools built there and met lots of children going to school, met with people there, met with boys and girls and asked them about their aspirations. A lot of them wanted to be pilots, engineers, doctors and some of them wanted very much to be president of this country.

So Afghanistan is not what you hear in the press. It's just a lot more than what you see in the press in terms of success that this country has had, and that success will continue.

QUESTION: Dr. Rice, within past two years the Afghan Government repeatedly asking its international friends to help this war against terror in a strategic way, which means it should move to the place where (inaudible) and equip it. Why it is not possible to do so?

And second, you have stressed again greatest cooperation between Kabul, Washington and Islamabad. Is there any difference between your present trip and between -- between present and previous trips? I mean that is there any signs to minimize the (inaudible) between Afghanistan and Pakistan?

And let me add one more fact. Recently *The Washington Post* had an article was saying that President Karzai is losing support of his Western allies. What do you think about that? Three questions.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, thank you. Well, three questions. Let me start with the last question and I think that the press corps that was traveling with me, so to speak, got an earful about that article. I don't know anyone who is more admired and respected in the international community than President Karzai, for his strength, for his wisdom and for his courage to lead this country first in the defeat of the Taliban and now in rebuilding a democratic and unified Afghanistan. And I can tell you I am with foreign ministers and with heads of state all over the world. I sit in the councils of NATO. I sit with the EU. I sit with people all over the world and there is great admiration for your president and also for what the Afghan people are doing here. And I just want to say to the Afghan people that that commitment from the international community is very, very strong and will remain so.

As to the war on terror and the regional issues concerning Pakistan, concerning other neighbors, we have a situation in which all of these countries, including, by the way,

the United States, are threatened by the same enemy and we need to stay focused on that. The same people who destroyed Afghanistan and then harbored the terrorists who attacked New York are the same people who have tried to kill President Musharraf, the same people who are still attacking innocent Afghans, the people who have extended their war to places like Bali and to places like London and to places in Russia. This is an international force that is determined to try to undermine the aspirations of free people and they're not going to win. They're simply not going to win. They don't have a positive agenda for anyone. All that they have is a view of destruction and backwardness and hopelessness, and that is not going to win.

And it's not going to win because there are strong leaders who will not allow it to happen. They will not win because we have military operations that are going after them. And indeed, sometimes when you hear about violence in places like Afghanistan, it is because military operations are being conducted against these terrorists. We have intelligence cooperation that is going after them and we are accelerating our efforts to build local security forces in places like Afghanistan to counter them as well.

It is also the case that when I was in Pakistan I talked about the fierce fight that Pakistani forces are engaging these terrorists, who, if they could have their way, would also threaten Pakistan.

And so we have to realize that we have a common enemy. We can all do more. We can all work harder. We all need to constantly assess our strategies, look at our tactics, make certain that we are responding to their changing tactics, because this is a thinking enemy that changes its tactics, too.

But the commitment of Pakistan, of Afghanistan, of the United States, indeed of the international community, against this enemy is going to succeed. We are not going to tire. We are not going to leave. They should know that we are in this fight until it is victoriously concluded.

And I just want to say, as I flew into Kabul just now, I saw the flags of the International Security Assistance Force. It is a remarkable show of unity by the international community with this country and with the antiterrorism front.

QUESTION: Hello, President Karzai. I'm Janine Zacharia with Bloomberg News. You gave us a very -- we know you're an optimist. You gave us a very optimistic assessment. Perhaps when you're standing next to a top U.S. diplomat it's difficult to express any concerns, but do you have any concerns about the resurgence of the Taliban? Can you assess for us what that is or can you really travel freely in the south? That's the first question.

Secondly, we were in Pakistan yesterday and the Pakistani Foreign Minister told us that Afghanistan is not providing them with actionable intelligence in the border area. Is that true?

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Ma'am, concerns? Yes, we have. We, all of us, have concerns. We are fighting terrorism and they're trying to attack us where they can. But we have won. The very fact that Afghanistan is where it is today is testimony to the fact that we have won. And we have won massively in Afghanistan. There are 4.5 million refugees back in this country. Those who were running away from this country five years ago, 4.5 million have come back. There are 60,000 Pakistani workers working in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's trade with its neighbors has gone up so many times that if I told you, you wouldn't believe. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan in the Taliban were 25 million. Today they stand at 1.3 billion. Iran's exports to Afghanistan were barely 10 million or so. Today they are 350 million. And apply that to other neighbors as well. Success is there.

We have problems, too. The reason we are working, the reason we are talking, is also to get at the problems. So when we speak of success, it doesn't mean that we are forgetting the problems. We are continuously working with the problems to make this country better and better and to free the whole world from terrorism that we are still fighting.

As to the southern part of the country, ma'am, I was in Kandahar about 25 days ago, went to the hospital, visited people. I met with (inaudible), went around the city, and just before that I was in Zabul inaugurating a very good hospital, a hospital that was built with the help of the United Arab Emirates, and went to English language schools and computer school courses that were set up by the American PRT there for the children of Zabul, both boys and girls. So it isn't like that. I and any other member of the government can and do travel to any part of the country. The trouble is that we don't communicate what we do properly to the rest of the world.

SECRETARY RICE: If I could just -- Janine, just let me say the President has no hesitancy communicating his concerns. None, because we are partners and we are allies. And when he has concerns I want to hear them, President Bush wants to hear them and we want to jointly respond to those concerns and those problems.

So his optimism or my optimism about what Afghanistan has achieved is not a matter of trying to ignore the problems and the challenges, but simply to say that in a country that five years ago was still under the rule of the Taliban, the progress has been extraordinary in this country. There is still a lot of hard work to do, but the Afghan people need to know that we appreciate their commitment and their sacrifice and how much they have achieved.

PRESIDENT KARZAI: Now, that doesn't mean that when we speak of success that we are either oblivious or not aware of problems. Afghanistan has problems. Afghanistan has still a very weak bureaucracy. Afghanistan still has a very weak police force. Afghanistan has a problem to handle corruption in this country. Afghanistan still has the drug problem to address here. There are problems and some of them very serious ones, but that is the situation all over the world. All countries have problems unique to themselves. We know Afghanistan's problems. Some of them we share with the rest of the world. Some of them are unique to us. But we, as any other government, are working stage by stage to correct.

QUESTION: The Voice of America.

QUESTION: (In Pashtu.) Is the international community (inaudible) a different vision of the security situation in Afghanistan?

SECRETARY RICE: We have exactly the same vision of Afghanistan, which is why we are here in partnership with Afghanistan: that it will be a strong, democratic, prosperous country that can reclaim its rightful place in the international system and that will be a vital ally in the war on terror.

We are making great progress toward that vision and toward that goal. We share our views about changes that might be made in tactics or even in strategy when it is necessary to respond, as I said, to a thinking enemy. It is not as if the enemy simply sits and doesn't change tactics, so we must (inaudible).

And I can tell you that when I talk to our diplomats, Ambassador Neumann or our people at the Embassy or I talk to our military commanders, the military commanders of the International Security Assistance Force, we are determined to continually look at what we can do better, what we need to accelerate, what we need to slow down. And we have in President Karzai the kind of partner with whom we can have the most open and candid and frank discussions possible. We would want nothing more and nothing less than that. We expect that from our partner and that's what we're doing.

Thank you. Thank you very much.
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