



## Interview by Mohammad Ekram of Voice of America

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Kabul, Afghanistan

June 28, 2006

**QUESTION:** It is nearly five years after the war and insurgency is worse than it was before. What has gone wrong?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think that, in fact, yes, we knew that Afghanistan had determined enemies. We knew that. We knew that the Taliban, having been thrown out of power, would try to fight back. But I would say that so much has gone right in Afghanistan, that of course Afghanistan's enemies are trying to undo that: a new elected president, an elected parliament. The international presence here is remarkable, the number of countries that are supporting Afghanistan. Reconstruction is taking place all over the country.



Yes, in some parts of Afghanistan there has been more intense fighting this year than in a while, but that's in part because we are really engaging - the military forces of the coalition are really engaging the enemy. So I know that there are parts of Afghanistan where people do not feel secure. We consider it our responsibility, along with President Karzai, to address that situation, to strengthen the Afghan security forces and police forces. And I'm quite sure that with that kind of commitment, we will be able to resolve the security problem.

**QUESTION:** Do you now think that it was a mistake to have so few soldier in the south of Afghanistan between 2001 and now?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the number of forces in the south has always been determined by military commanders on the ground who understand the situation. Clearly now there is a need for more force and more forces moving in. NATO forces are increasing in that region. U.S. forces of course are still there and we will have significantly more police also in that region. So to the degree that the south now needs more forces, they will be provided.

**QUESTION:** In your talks with General Pervez Musharraf, he was able to reassure you that there is no support from the Taliban from inside Pakistan?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I think that the Pakistanis would say that of course there are terrorists operating inside of Pakistan. That's why Pakistan is fighting so fiercely in places like Waziristan. They've lost soldiers fighting the terrorists. Of course there are people crossing the border. Everybody understands that.

But the question that I asked is: Are we committed to fighting those terrorists? And I think that we have good commitment from Pakistan, strong commitment from Afghanistan, strong commitment from the coalition. We all have the same enemy and we all have a lot to lose if that enemy is strong, and so Pakistan and Afghanistan and the United States have a trilateral mechanism to coordinate our efforts against the terrorists and I am sure we will be successful.

**QUESTION:** Several newspapers have reported that because of ongoing corruption and inability of President Karzai government to control situation he no longer has U.S. support or the support of your allies. What would be your comment about these reports?

**SECRETARY RICE:** These reports have no basis -- and I want to repeat, no basis -- with the United States or with other governments in the coalition that I speak with all the time. President Karzai is admired. He is admired for his courage. He is admired for his leadership. He is admired for what he has done to bring this country from civil war and now to a democratically elected government. He is really one of the world's most admired leaders and he has our complete and total support.

**QUESTION:** In the U.S. and elsewhere there is the issue of criticism that war in Iraq is actually taking away attention and vital resources from the war on terror in Afghanistan. There is also the debate going on in the U.S. about that issue. What would be your assessment and response from such critics?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes, we have always believed and have always insisted that we are able to do what we must in Iraq and what we must in Afghanistan, and we are doing both. We believe that democracy in Iraq and democracy in Afghanistan will have the effect of changing this entire region.

The United States has plenty of forces. The coalition has plenty of forces to do both. I would just note that this is now my third time in Afghanistan in a very short period of time, I think my fourth time since I was Secretary. I've been in Iraq several times as well. We have both countries very much in mind and our commitment to Afghanistan is complete and strong.

**QUESTION:** One more question that (inaudible) to ask you, the Iranian situation.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Where do you stand? The U.S. and European have presented the proposal to Iran Government but Iran President said that he will address this in August. And there are some worrying reports coming from Iranians officials about their talks. What is your comments about it?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we are waiting for an answer from the Iranian Government and they should answer through Javier Solana, who has been our negotiator, and we look forward to hearing from the Iranian Government as to what their attitude is towards this proposal. It's a good proposal. They should take it.

Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much.  
2006/T17-5

Released on June 28, 2006

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