



## Press Conference Following Meeting with President Nazarbayev

**Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State**  
Presidential Administration  
Astana, Kazakhstan  
October 29, 2004

**RA:** Ladies and gentlemen, thanks very much for coming out. I had a wonderful day and it started this morning when I had a meeting with the Speaker of the Senate. I also met with the National Security Advisor, the Minister of Defense. I got to thank the wonderful young soldiers who served in Iraq. I had a meeting with the Foreign Minister. I met with leaders of the political parties. And of course I just finished meeting with President Nazarbayev.

I came for several reasons, but most importantly to thank the government and the people of Kazakhstan for the support in Afghanistan that led to the election of Hamid Kharzai and also for support in Iraq. I also wanted to gain an appreciation for my interlocutors here about the regional situation. We discussed the question of terrorism and I also got an update on domestic issues here in Kazakhstan. I'd be more than happy to try to answer any of your questions now, if you have any.

**Q:** (Gist): What were the topics of discussion during your meetings here and what domestic issues did you cover.

**RA:** We had a long discussion, we discussed U.S.-Kazakh relations, the regional situation. We discussed the hopes and the aspirations President Nazabayev has for the people of Kazakhstan. We discussed the U.S. political situation, the U.S. presidential race. And we had a discussion of developing sovereignty, developing economic openness, market economies, and the democratic developments.

**Q:** How might the outcome of the U.S. elections affect U.S.-Kazakhstan relations?

**RA:** Well, I can't tell you exactly how the elections in the United States are gonna come out, though I have my own favorite. I would say that no matter who is president of the United States, that our interests remain the same and the interest in a free, open, sovereign, democratic, strong Kazakhstan would remain the same, no matter who wins the U.S. presidential election.

**Q:** What impressions will you take back after your meeting with the political party leaders?

**RA:** Well, I was quite energized by the discussions with them, with their very strong views. They have a healthy appreciation for the political process. They seemed to have a great affection for the democratic process and certainly for Kazakhstan. So I enjoyed the discussion very much and I would hope to be able to come back here and have it again.

**Q:** Who will you vote for?

**RA:** I already voted by absentee ballot and I voted for President Bush. Thank you very much.

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