



Remarks With Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev After Their Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
October 11, 2005

PRESIDENT BAKIYEV: (*Via Russian Interpreter*) At the meeting today we have discussed a broad range of issues regarding economic cooperation, political cooperation and also a number of issues concerning security cooperation between the two states. We have achieved full understanding in regards to every matter.



SECRETARY RICE: (*Given in English*) (Inaudible) that was, by all accounts, the freest and fairest that took place ever in this region, and indeed we appreciate that now that those elections are done that there is hard work ahead for Kyrgyzstan on matters of constitutional and political reform, on matters of economic reform and the fight against corruption.

I know that these are issues that are a high priority for you and I am glad that we had the opportunity to discuss how the United States can assist in these economic and political reforms.

I have said to all of my interlocutors today that I know that the people of Kyrgyzstan, having elected a government, are now impatient for results on the economic side. And we want to help see Kyrgyzstan become a strong and functioning economy. The President mentioned to me that they planned to spend a lot of time and effort on development of small- and medium-size businesses. This is something that we will (inaudible) because we do believe that small- and medium-size businesses are the key to economic growth and job creation.

We also talked about support for agriculture. This is a very important here in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the importance of the region as a whole developing in a way that creates a situation, together with Afghanistan, a stronger economic base for entry into the international economy.

We talked about our excellent cooperation on the fight of the war on terrorism. We appreciate very much Kyrgyzstan's support and hosting of our soldiers at -- the coalition troops -- at Manas, which contribute to the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan under the United Nations mandate, and we look forward to keeping these excellent security ties.

I finally said to the President that we want Kyrgyzstan to make political and economic reforms. To have good relations with its neighbors is very important. We do not believe that there is any reason that Kyrgyzstan has to choose between good relations with the United States and good relations with Russia -- we have good relations with Russia -- or good relations with China, that Kyrgyzstan should have the very best possible relations with all of its neighbors.

So thank you, Mr. President. Kyrgyzstan and the United States are strong partners and (inaudible) partnership (inaudible).

QUESTION: (*Via Russian Interpreter*) Mr. President, you have already mentioned the security issues have been discussed. What are the prospects of the presence of the coalition air base in Kyrgyzstan. My question to Madame Secretary is that will this air base be strengthened (inaudible) and what are the prospects of involvement of Kyrgyzstan in the restoration of Afghanistan?

PRESIDENT BAKIYEV: (*Via Russian Interpreter?*) We have repeatedly emphasized, and I made a number of statements, that the coalition air base in international Manas airport will be (inaudible) until the situation in Afghanistan is completely stabilized, as long as there are peacekeeping forces supported by UN mission; that is, the term of presence is directly tailored to the improvement of the situation in Afghanistan.

QUESTION: (*Given in English*) (Inaudible) I wanted to know what kind of (inaudible) we need and why and I wanted to know (inaudible) to the fact that (inaudible) Russia and China.

PRESIDENT BAKIYEV: (*Via Russian Interpreter*) (Inaudible) our strategic partner and at the same time good economic and partnership relations with the United States (inaudible) established since the very early days of independence, and these relations are bound to continue and to develop. We are committed to continue developing our relations in economic field, political field, and security field. There is no saying that Kyrgyzstan jeopardizes its relations with Russia while giving preference to relations with the United States or vice versa by giving preference to the Russian Federation.

Kyrgyzstan is committed to good and even relations with all the states it has cooperated so far both bilaterally and multilaterally, and then we are committed to fulfillment of our (inaudible).

SECRETARY RICE: (*Response in English*) (Inaudible) very well and the desire to have broad economic and political relations with the entire region as well as the United States (inaudible). (Inaudible) economic cooperation, I think we need to realize that we all have a stake in the context of the international economy that is increasingly integrated. The United States has very strong and (inaudible) relations with, of course, China. We seek growing economic ties (inaudible) Russia and indeed we are working with the Russians (inaudible) Russia

In that context, America's economic cooperation and deepening economic relations with Kyrgyzstan, with Kazakhstan, and the other neighbors here is (inaudible) in the context of the world economy that is moving in that direction. We are prepared to help Kyrgyzstan (inaudible) for a stronger role in the region and a strong role in the international economy, and (inaudible) of relations (inaudible).

QUESTION: (*Via Russian Interpreter*) (Inaudible) to the Millennium Challenges Account?

SECRETARY RICE: (*Responding in English*) (Inaudible.) While we did discuss the Millennium Challenge Account and the Millennium Challenge grant, and Kyrgyzstan's desire to qualify for a Millennium Challenge grant. Let me say first and foremost that we want Kyrgyzstan to succeed and we want to work with Kyrgyzstan so that it can qualify for the MCC.

The requirements for qualification for the MCC are quite strict and they are written into our law about what it takes to qualify for the MCC. First of all, there must be good governance, openness, democracy, investment in people's education and health. And we talked about the importance of the anti-corruption struggles, which is one of the most important elements of our policy toward the MCC.

The President talked about how important it is to him and to the government that the struggle against corruption be accelerated, that perhaps some means are going to

be taken to further establish ways to take on corruption. We will work very closely with Kyrgyzstan to see if Kyrgyzstan can qualify. In the meantime, we do have other sources of assistance for Kyrgyzstan. We are talking about what USAID can do in agriculture, what we can do in terms of small business development. There are a number of ways we can help. But the MCC has very specific criteria and we are going to do everything that we can to help Kyrgyzstan to meet those criteria, but of course Kyrgyzstan itself has to do the work to meet the criteria (inaudible).

PRESIDENT BAKIYEV: (*Via Russian Interpreter*) (Inaudible) contribute to its (inaudible) that you have heard, Madame Secretary, to emphasize that one of the most important criterion is combating corruption. Journalists present here know very well that the we, the new leadership of Kyrgyzstan since very early days after the revolution have started combating corruption in the most practical way by taking most practical steps. The additional revenues that the budget receives from the tax and customs services provide evidence that Kyrgyzstan is going beyond pure declaration towards making practical steps.

Second of all, if you look at the process of election of the new government, I do not believe you have seen similar process in the past year. Today, where the structure of the government has been approved, the Parliament was involved at every stage. Election of every member of the cabinet also involves the Prime Minister, the President, and the Parliament. Election of members of the cabinet was done in totally transparent and open way. As you know, some nominees were rejected, but I can also tell you that appointment of local leaders and officials is also done in the complete transparent way with involvement of the local councils and local communities.

We have, I believe, made very good progress in reducing the corruption, if you know about the level of corruption existed before the revolution. But once again, as Madame State Secretary emphasized there's a lot of things to do in order to reduce corruption in the country, in order to reduce the informal economy in the country.

Honorable friends (inaudible) here to ask just a final question.

QUESTION: (*Asked in English*) Mr. President, I wanted to ask you how will you decide that Afghanistan is stable enough that the base be closed? Are you waiting for the United Nations to make that kind of determination or would ask that the United States decide how long it wants to stay in your country?

PRESIDENT BAKIYEV: (*Via Russian Interpreter*) I believe that the issue of a presence of the Coalition base in Kyrgyzstan is fully tailored to the situation in Afghanistan, and then the final decision can only be made bilaterally by Kyrgyzstan and the United States. The full stop will be made only upon agreement of the two countries. However, we will look at the mission of the United Nations peacekeeping forces, and we will watch the mandates of the United Nations [peace]keeping forces.

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