



Interview on Fox News Sunday With Chris Wallace

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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QUESTION: We're joined now by Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Secretary Rice, welcome back to Fox News Sunday.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Nice to be with you, Chris.

QUESTION: As we said, the President has confirmed that he authorized the National Security Agency to spy on people, including U.S. citizens in this country, without a court warrant. Why was that necessary?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, what the President authorized is for the National Security Agency to be able to collect information on a limited number of people with links to al-Qaida. This is about the geographic space of the United States. People may or may not be American. But if you'll remember, Chris, probably one of the most compelling outcomes of the 9/11 Commission was an understanding that our intelligence agencies looked outward, our law enforcement agencies looked inward, and a seam had developed between them.

And so, using his constitutional authorities, using authorities granted to him, the President wanted to make certain that that seam did not exist, that people could not communicate inside the United States about terrorist activity with people outside the United States, leaving us vulnerable to terrorist attack.

We simply can't be in a situation in which the President is not responding to this different kind of war on terrorism. We exist now in a world in which terrorist attacks are taken from within the United States and that's what the President addressed. He is fully not just aware of, but determined to uphold, his responsibilities and his obligations to protect America and to protect our civil liberties as well.

QUESTION: But let me ask you about what I think concerns some people. Historically, the Executive Branch has had to go to a court to get approval from a judge, get a warrant, before it could spy domestically in this country on people. It's part of our separation of powers. Why not go to the courts? Why not get a warrant before you engage in this kind of activity?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, in fact, the Administration is using FISA and using it very actively to try to deal with the threats. But the President also has additional authorities and he's drawing on those to deal with this different kind of war. I'm not a lawyer, Chris, but the President --

QUESTION: What I'm asking was a policy question.

SECRETARY RICE: No, but the President has been very well informed that he has the constitutional and other authorities to do this. There is a certain urgency to the kind of information that is attached to detecting terrorist threats within the United States, a certain urgency that is attached to understanding communications between people who are communicating inside the United States with terrorist organizations or activities outside of the United States. And I think we don't ever want to be caught again in a situation in which we were before 9/11, where we know, for instance, that terrorists in San Diego were communicating inside the United States and we didn't know about it.

QUESTION: So is the point that -- because there is a system in place, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which can grant emergency wiretaps. Was the feeling that the existing system was too slow?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the intelligence professionals here do use FISA and we've used FISA, but FISA is a 1978 act; it does relate to a time when we were principally concerned about the activities of people working on behalf of governments or the activities of governments. This is a different circumstance and the President, in order to discharge his obligations to detect and thereby prevent terrorist attacks inside the United States, has drawn on additional authorities that are granted to him in the Constitution and in other statutes as well.

QUESTION: You didn't have to be an expert in body language to see that the President was not too pleased yesterday when he had to acknowledge the existence of this top secret program. Is the Administration going to investigate who leaked this?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, that is something that is going to be left up to people to discuss. But let me just say, it is really a serious matter when we get the disclosure of a program like this because, after all, what we must do is protect from those who are trying to hurt us knowledge of how we follow them, how we follow their activities. Because we once knew about Usama bin Laden's communications because we knew about his telephone; we were able to track it. And then a story appeared in the newspapers and we stopped using it.

I don't know whether that would have prevented an attack, but you can imagine that being able to follow Usama bin Laden's communications was critical. The more that we get the exposure of these very sensitive programs, the more it undermines our ability to follow terrorists, to know about their activities. We have to remember that in this war on terrorism we're not talking about criminal activity, where you can allow somebody to commit the crime and then you go back and you arrest them and you question them. If they succeed in committing their crime, then hundreds or indeed thousands of people die. That's why you have to prevent, and intelligence is the long pole in the tent in preventing attacks.

QUESTION: All of this comes in a week when the President had to give in to overwhelming support in both houses of Congress among both parties, for the McCain amendment, which sets new limits on the treatment of U.S. detainees anywhere in the world. And the Senate, with four Republicans going along, voted to block, continue to block, renewal of the Patriot Act. Why do you think that there is growing concern in Congress across party lines with whether this President is exceeding his powers in conducting the war on terror?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the debate that took place around the McCain amendment and the eventual outcome, I think was, in fact, good for the country because the President and --

QUESTION: You guys fought it for months.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, but the President and the Congress came to a place where I think the President believes that he can protect the country and we can continue to live up to our international obligations and to our laws here in the country. But the fact is we're in a new era, Chris, and I'm not surprised that people are going to

debate and discuss how we prosecute the war on terrorism -- the war on terror.

I do know that as the President sits in the Oval every day and he sees a stream of terrorist threat information coming in, most of it, by the way, not specific enough to act on, and so your desire or your obligation as President, your obligation as an officer serving the United States, is to get as much information as possible about what those threats might be and prevent an attack. The President does that cognizant of, determined to respect, his obligations under the Constitution not just to protect the country but to protect civil liberties, to protect our international obligations and to live within our laws. But this is a different kind of war and perhaps it's not surprising that we are having some discussion of how to fight this war.

QUESTION: The President says that he will not agree to a three-month extension of the Patriot Act while Congress works to try to formulate a compromise; that he will let at the end of the year when it's due to expire, he will let those provisions expire. Isn't he playing politics with national security?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the President feels very strongly that the Congress needs to renew this act which has helped to save lives. We have to remember that immediately after September 11th the Administration and the Congress were united in the notion that additional tools were needed to close some of these gaps between what our intelligence agencies were doing outside and what our law enforcement agencies were doing inside. Chris, we set up this system of intelligence and law enforcement and walls between them at a time when the paradigm was threats come from the outside, attacks come from the outside; and then, on September 11th, the very terrible surprise was that these attacks came from within the United States by people who had been sitting here for months, who knew our system and who were communicating outside --

QUESTION: But would you really let the -- the Patriot Act, if it's so important, would you really let it expire rather than just allow a three-month extension?

SECRETARY RICE: I think the President feels very strongly that we need to do this now and we need to confront this issue now.

QUESTION: All right, let's turn to Iraq. And you know, it is so amazing -- the news business -- because it's been a remarkable week in Iraq.

SECRETARY RICE: Hasn't it, yeah.

QUESTION: Eleven million people voted, more than 70 percent turnout. But after the election last January, it took Iraqis almost three months to create a new government. Can we afford that same kind of a delay this time?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, when you talk to Iraqis, they recognize the need to sustain the momentum out of this election, they need to sustain momentum for the expectations of the Iraqi people, they need to sustain it because of the insurgency and the terrorists, they need to get a strong message that the political system is moving forward. Yes, they are trying to do something very difficult, which is to overcome a lot of fissures -- historical fissures, traditional fissures -- through a political process. And so they will need to take the time to make sure that that's done, but I think they all understand that they should do it as quickly as possible.

It's also the case that this election is different than the January election because this time Sunnis voted in very large numbers.

QUESTION: And I want to ask you about that. I think you would agree, one of the key things now is how do you bring the Sunnis in? How do you build on the momentum of the election where so many Sunnis gave up the bullet, gave up violence for the ballot and the political process? How do you give them a stake at the table? What does the U.S. Government do? What does the Iraqi government do?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it essentially has to be the Iraqis who come to this national compact about their new government. But the good news is that the Sunnis have now demonstrated that they are determined to be a part of the political process. They are going to have a voice now that they did not have after January. I think they knew that it was a mistake to boycott those elections. And they had to in a sense, in the constitutional process, be grandfathered into the process because they didn't have representatives in the process; they hadn't voted. Now they will have representatives in the process. But I heard a Sunni leader say that he's ready to talk to anybody who's ready to talk about the future of a united Iraq. I think that is an attitude that is shared by many Shia, many Kurds and many others, and I expect that they're going to try to come to a government that is broadly representative and that can send a strong message to the insurgents that the road ahead for Iraq is a political one, not one of violence.

QUESTION: Let's engage in what I know is your favorite part of appearing on Fox News Sunday, and that is a lightning round with quick questions and brief answers, if you will, Madame Secretary.

SECRETARY RICE: Right.

QUESTION: The trial of Saddam Hussein. Iraq's Vice President has said that this has become a platform for Saddam and wonders who is the genius who is producing this farce. Do you share any of his concerns that Saddam is seizing control of the trial?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, these are difficult -- these big trials are -- as we've seen with Milosevic in The Hague. So it's difficult. But you have to say that the tremendous courage of this judge who sits there and confronts Saddam Hussein, I think that's what's really coming through, not Saddam Hussein and his rantings.

QUESTION: All right. Iran's new President says that Israel should be wiped off the map, that the Holocaust is a myth. You've been talking about this for months, that we've got to do something about this. And I must say, I looked back at an interview that we did in June; we were talking about this. How frustrating for you that you can't get the European allies, Russia, China, to go along to isolate Iran by imposing sanctions?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I am convinced that this will end up in the Security Council if Iran doesn't change course, and I see no evidence that Iran is going to change course.

QUESTION: If you'll forgive me, you were saying that last June.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, diplomacy takes some time and it is important that we do this at a time of our choosing. Right now, the Iranians are not enriching and reprocessing. That's good. But the more that we hear from this Iranian Government, the more that people recognize and acknowledge publicly that this is a government that shouldn't even expect the international community to trust them with technologies that might lead to a nuclear weapon.

QUESTION: All right. And finally, because the one time I don't ask you, you're going to have something to say on this subject. Are you still ruling out a run for President in 2008?

SECRETARY RICE: I guarantee I'm not going to have anything more to say on that subject. That's not my calling.

QUESTION: All right. Now, having said that, I've got a new one for you.

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, goodness.

QUESTION: If the Republican nominee for President in 2008 came to you and said, "Condi, we need you on the ticket as the Vice President."

SECRETARY RICE: We've got an awful lot of good people who can run at the top of the ticket and in the second spot. I'm somebody who wants to go back to California or maybe to the NFL.

QUESTION: To the NFL? The commissioner, not a player, right?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, that's great. Not a -- well, last time I looked, I'm not really qualified to be a linebacker.

QUESTION: Any pick in the Washington Redskins-Dallas game today?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, that's dangerous territory, Chris.

QUESTION: Forget the Middle East.

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah, forget the Middle East. Right. I'll say that I think the Redskins will win this one.

QUESTION: Well, we'll see. Secretary Rice, thank you so much for coming in and, as always, please come back.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Great to be with you.

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