



Roundtable with Press

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
Foreign Commonwealth Offices
London, England
December 1, 2008

SECRETARY RICE: All right. Sean, what are our ground rules?

MR. MCCORMACK: We're on the record.

SECRETARY RICE: Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: We have about half an hour. We have to see the Prime Minister.

SECRETARY RICE: Great. All right. So why don't we just start around? Richard, do you want to start?

QUESTION: Sure. Well, I suppose the big issue that's been occupying our minds for the last week has been, obviously, the events in Mumbai.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: And I know you're going there on Wednesday. And I guess the big fear now is that this incident is going to spark some new tension or potential conflict between India and Pakistan. And so I suppose I would like to know what you're planning to do to prevent that happening.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the most important thing that can happen now is to have absolute commitment on the part of everyone to investigate what happened and bring people to justice for what they did, and in doing so, perhaps, to also learn of any further activities that this group was – might have been involved in. That's going to require great cooperation between India and those of us who have been active in the war on terror, like the United States and Great Britain.

And I know that that cooperation is going on, but it's also going to require the cooperation of Pakistan. And the Pakistani Government has said that -- President Zardari has said rightly that extremism in any form is a threat to Pakistan, as well as to India. And I fully expect, therefore, the commitment of Pakistan to absolute transparency and wherever the leads go to completely follow them up. And that's just going to be absolutely necessary. The United States, like Great Britain, lost citizens and so we have a special interest in this. And we're going to pursue every avenue that we can to find out what happened here.

So that really is the issue now, and we continue to hope that the Indian and Pakistani Governments will maintain the open lines of communication that they've thus far had. And we will continue to impress upon them the importance of those open communications, but this is a very serious time for commitment to getting to the bottom of this.

Should we just go around, or --

MR. MCCORMACK: Yeah.

QUESTION: Okay. But my question wasn't on -- maybe a bit disjointed --

SECRETARY RICE: Okay. Well, do you want -- does anyone want to follow up on India?

Yeah, sure.

QUESTION: Let me just follow up on Richard's. What you're outlining -- of course, the investigation is very important, but what you're outlining really is just a whole new strategy. Because it is -- basically, people in this room are reasonably clear of what sort of results the investigation will throw up. Then the question is what kind of response from India is proportionate, possible, too dangerous. The (inaudible) is quite possible if it's demonstrated this is done by groups, not necessarily under the control of the Pakistani Government, but operating out of Pakistan. The Indian Government cannot afford to do absolutely nothing in that direction.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's remember that wherever they're operating from, they are extremists and terrorists who have -- who want to destabilize not just India, but also many of them want to destabilize Pakistan. So I think a firm response by the Pakistani Government, should it be demonstrated that some of this was coming in -- coming from Pakistan, will be very important.

I don't want to jump to any conclusions about precisely how this happened. But there are two reasons to this. First, to be really transparent, to be really tough on this and very committed, number one, because people need to be brought to justice. But equally importantly, as we learned with terror incidents of this sort, there are often wider efforts or intentions to do other things, and so you really want to get to the bottom of it, both as a preventive and as a -- and bringing them to justice. So I don't think it's a holding pattern. I think it is right now the most important thing we can do.

QUESTION: Some people are asking the question today, is it possible for the U.S. to say to India that there should be a controlled response to this, when the U.S. itself takes such a robust response to the problem of core al-Qaida in the FATA region and the tribal areas? Is there a problem? Does that sort of hamper you in some ways in making the case for a controlled response?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, what you want to do is to make a response that is going to deal with the problem, first of all, and prevent future attacks, and

that is going to -- not going to have unintended consequences and, therefore, make the situation worse. And so I think when you talk about making a response, those very circumstances or those various elements have to be kept in mind.

And what the Indians have been saying, and we are in full agreement with them, is what they want most right now, what they believe is absolutely critical, is to find out, with full cooperation from Pakistan, how this happened and what these people were planning and how they carried it out. And that is what they've emphasized, and that is, we think, the right course. So that's how you think about a response, is how do you deal with the circumstances at hand, but how do you also prevent attacks in the future, and how do you bring people to justice for what happened.

I think the Indians also are spending a good deal of time looking at their own capacity to prevent attack, and we will try to be helpful there. But you know, let me just say a word about prevention and warning and all of those issues having been through this. The fact is that the terrorists only have to be right once; you have to be right 100 percent of the time. And that's a tough fight. And so I know that there will be a lot of looking at what the Indian Government might have known or should have known or could have known. But these terrorists are not easy to -- they can't be deterred and they're not easy to preempt. And so we will help on that score as well.

QUESTION: But I mean, do you at all equate the two? I mean, it could -- using the same justification that the United States has used for sanctioning cross-border attacks in Pakistan from Afghanistan, could the Indian Government launch cross-border attacks against similarly determined terrorist cells they find in Pakistan?

SECRETARY RICE: Look, I'm not going to speculate on what the Indian Government may choose to do, Anne. But the question is: How do you best deal with the fact of the attack, the consequences of it, and prevention of future attacks? And the best way to deal with that would be through cooperation between Pakistan and India, and that's what we are encouraging. And in fact, this is a time for absolute transparency and for letting evidence lead where it may.

QUESTION: But the chances of getting full cooperation from an Indian perspective are probably quite slim, aren't --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't think so. I -- it depends on what actually did happen here. But it also is incumbent upon Pakistan to realize the seriousness of what happened here. First of all, let's remember that this isn't the first attack. Bad things happened in Afghanistan, to India as well. Secondly, this attack was broad and pretty brazen. And it clearly was meant to target not just -- not just to terrorize, but in fact, going as it did after Mumbai, an Indian financial center, hotels that foreigners frequented, to try and shake the confidence of the international community and the safety of India.

And it also, of course, went after Americans and it went after Brits because they were Americans and Brits, and Israelis as well. So this is a qualitatively different -- they're all serious, but this is a qualitatively different set of circumstances than we have seen in the past, and it requires a qualitatively different response on the part of Pakistan.

QUESTION: The attack on the Indian parliament was followed by Indian troops going to the border. Everyone got very concerned. So do you think that -- given that there is huge domestic pressure, there are elections coming in India, do you see that as a potential response? Do you think that the United States could persuade India not to do that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, as I said, you -- I think you look at response for effectiveness, what is it going to do about the problem, and not to try to create or not to have unintended consequences in trying to deal with the problem or to create new problems in trying to deal with this one. So I am hopeful, and in conversations with Indian counterparts they are very focused on the -- getting to the bottom of this. And again, it's not -- it is getting to the bottom of it before the matter of bringing people to justice, but it's also getting to the bottom of it to prevent further attacks. And so that is the focus now.

It is also -- it has been a different relationship between India and Pakistan. The relationship has evolved a lot since 2001, and hopefully that will give some space for a joint and cooperative approach to dealing with this very serious matter. But I do not want to under -- to diminish the seriousness of what has happened here, and very serious.

QUESTION: You're going there to show solidarity to the Indians, but are you also going there to urge restraint on their part so that this doesn't escalate into a much broader --

SECRETARY RICE: I'm going there to show solidarity, but also to talk about what can be done, and should be done, to get to the bottom of this so that this threat can be dealt with in a way that -- you can never eliminate the possibility of further attacks, but that really, really begins to diminish it.

QUESTION: When you talk about absolute transparencies, doesn't that require President Zardari to admit that he has a problem inside his own state of (inaudible)? Is that something you can really, really stick him to --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think what it requires of Pakistan is to let the evidence fall where it falls and to react accordingly. Because the last thing that this Pakistani -- new Pakistani civilian government needs is to have this continue. You know, ultimately, Pakistan needs to be seen as a place that has a handle on extremism if it is to grow and prosper and have the good relations around the world that it's seeking. And everybody has goodwill toward this government. I was at the Friends of Pakistan meeting at the UN back in September at the UNGA. There's a lot of goodwill toward this government because this is a new chapter in Pakistan with the civilian government there. And everyone knows that it's difficult and everyone knows that this is the -- there are historical problems that this government is trying to deal with. But that really is the task before them. Because if they can't deal with the extremism, then Pakistan is not going to prosper.

QUESTION: Does President Zardari have enough authority over his own security agencies to guarantee the kind of cooperation and transparency that you've asked of him?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, he brings something to the table that hasn't been there for a long time in Pakistan, which is the legitimacy of having been elected, and having been elected with a commitment to the rule of law and having been elected with a commitment to civilian rule and control of the security institutions. Everybody knows that one doesn't have day one with a military government and day two with a civilian government and everything works perfectly, right? So I'm not trying to paint a picture here of the ease with which this can be done, that this can be done with ease, but this is a critical moment for Pakistan to bring all of its institutions into a common strategy to defend Pakistan. And defending Pakistan means rooting out extremism. Defending Pakistani interests means cooperating fully. Defending Pakistani interest means investigating this so that further attacks can be prevented. President Zardari has said many times that Pakistan itself is suffering more and more from extremism. Well, you can't have different colors of extremism. Extremism is extremism and they come from the same root. And therefore, this is an important time for Pakistan and all of its institutions to defend Pakistani interests.

QUESTION: Did you have any evidence that the people who perpetrated this were possibly trying to weaken the U.S.-led operations against the tribal areas in Pakistan?

SECRETARY RICE: You know, we – I can't say that we have all that much insight into motive at this point. I suppose over time. But again, this is – we have to think of this as a whole. And extremism that has been dealing – has been the (inaudible) this region has several different faces.

Now, I want to – I've said a lot about Pakistan's obligations here. India also has obligations, which I'm sure that they will exercise, to also be transparent and to work closely with the Pakistanis and with the United States and with Great Britain. And I think that they will do that. This is a time for everybody to pull together and take on this event.

MR. MCCORMACK: We have about five more minutes so if there is any other line of questioning.

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah. Yes.

QUESTION: I want to ask you about Guantanamo. Do you think it should be closed down and how difficult would it be to close it?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the President says – he said for a long time that he'd like to close Guantanamo. And I think it's well-known that I've been an advocate of that. The problem is you've got 200-plus very dangerous people, and the question is what do you do with them. And these are people who say regularly: If I'm let out of here, I will go immediately and start killing Americans again. And so you clearly can't simply release these people on civilian populations. And there are a number of issues with trying to put them into kind of normal prison populations, as you might imagine. So I – we've brought down the population of Guantanamo quite a lot by transferring people back to their homes, their countries of origin. In some circumstances we can't do that because of fear of persecution. When we can't, we've tried to find third country options for them.

But I think this speaks to a larger issue. John Bellinger, our legal counsel at State, has been doing a lot of work and traveling around a lot to try to get a conversation going about what kind of framework we really do need to deal with this particular threat, where you are having to – where the kind of traditional legal framework, particularly in the United States, in which holding someone on a basis of future threat is difficult, even though you know that this person is a future threat, we don't really have a legal framework for that, which is why it's been done within a war framework. But if you don't hold a person who you know is a future threat, then you risk the deaths of thousands of innocents. So I do think that this is something for the international community to take up. And John has gotten a lot of interest from various counsels around the world about trying to look at the framework for dealing with terrorists, both in terms of detention power and in terms of how to deal with information garnered from them so that you are not compromising your ability to actually prevent attack. And I think ultimately this is going to have to require a new legal framework internationally.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, can we go back to Hillary?

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah.

QUESTION: There are more and more women chosen as foreign ministers around the world. You have been working on women's empowerment. How do you explain the fact that there are more and more women head of diplomacy? Is it that because they are more diplomats or they are more convincing or how do you explain that?

SECRETARY RICE: (Laughter.) No, it's a really interesting question. This will be three out of four in the United States, which is pretty remarkable when you think about it. And the other was a black man, so white men are trailing pretty badly. (Laughter.)

I don't know, Sylvie. I've long – I used to do work as an academic on something called the politics of elites and that was not about elite people. What it meant was looking at how people actually end up being chosen for different positions and how – what kind of funnel puts people into positions. And I think what you're seeing is that increasingly the pool of people who might become Secretary of State is diverse in the United States. And so you had a black national security advisor, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who becomes a major figure and becomes secretary of state. Now, you probably 30 years ago would not have had that person. So Colin Powell is in the pool because he's had these other jobs.

In the case of my own case, you know, I come out of an academic background, as does Madeleine Albright. But you know, I sign on with an unknown governor from Texas and do the campaign side and end up as national security advisor. So you have more and more women and minorities in those pools. So these things don't come out of thin air. You know, it's also the reason, by the way, that I think you're starting to see and will see more women and minority candidates for president.

Where do we get our presidents? This will bore all of you, but I'm sorry for the American history lesson here. But where do we get our candidates for president? Overwhelmingly, senators and governors, the occasional general. So if you don't have blacks and women who are senators, governors or generals, they're not going to be president. So when you finally get that pool right, then you start to see people rising to those positions. And that's what I really think is happening. I don't think there's some sort of natural selection that's taking place for foreign minister. But I do think you're seeing more and more people in the pool.

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay. We have one – we have one last question. Who hasn't had a question here?

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask about Russia. You're going to NATO tomorrow.

SECRETARY RICE: All right?

QUESTION: You've already signaled that, and I think President Medvedev has welcomed the fact that Georgia and Ukraine won't be invited to join the Membership Action Plan and that maybe there are other ways, okay. You also earlier at the press conference talked about – it sounded as though you were talking about the time being right to resume talks with Russia within NATO. And I wondered if you could explain within what framework --

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah, sure.

QUESTION: -- and whether you feel that – what's the (inaudible) of this? Is it because actually the United States has slightly revised its view of what happened in August, that there were mistakes made by President Saakashvili? Is it because there were a lot of other crises; here's one with India and

Pakistan, there's the financial crisis? And the last thing one needs is to have a major row with Russia?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, let me just--on the question of NATO contacts with Russia, I said in principle, we don't have any problem with it. I think the timing is really a matter of -- is Russia continuing to meet its commitments to President Sarkozy and is Russia acting on its quite ill-tempered decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia? And I think those are the -- for me, the touchstones of when it makes sense.

Now, let me just pick it up there. I'll come back to Bucharest in a minute. Look, this turned out badly for Russia, very badly. Their invasion of Georgia just turned out badly. They didn't -- they did not succeed in bringing down the Georgian Government, even though Sergey Lavrov told me that that was one of their aims, they didn't. Georgian democracy is intact. Not only that, they didn't succeed in bringing down the Georgian economy. Georgia now has one of the largest assistance packages for a country of its size that one can remember. So if they did anything, they managed to increase international support for Georgia, not decrease it. Third, they are sitting in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with responsibility for two populations that are difficult at the very least. And finally, they recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia with the resounding support of Nicaragua and Hamas. Now, if that had happened to the Bush Administration, you would have all been writing headlines about the enormous failure of our diplomacy. So I could add to that the problems that this brought for the already weakening Russian economy given lowering oil prices and the effects of the global financial crisis.

And I think, by the way, it set everybody to questioning what is Russia, who is Russia, did Medvedev have any -- was there any substance to Medvedev's claims of wanting to reach out to the world in a different way and so forth and so on. So this turned out badly. And I hope that given that it turned out badly, that it will be a deterrent to Russia for trying anything like that ever again. Because the Soviet Union could invade Czechoslovakia, occupy its capital, overthrow its government, and not care very much, frankly, what the world thought. Well, it turns out that that's not Russia, which leads me to the point that this is not actually a new Cold War.

Russia does not have, as the Soviet Union did, pretensions to an alternative way to organize human history. This is not an ideological conflict. And so while we have difficulties with Russia, particularly around its periphery, we have managed to continue to cooperate with the Russians on the Middle East, on North Korea, on Iran, on the global financial crisis, et cetera, et cetera. So it's not -- the key for us was to come out of this crisis in Georgia with Georgian democracy intact, with the Georgian economy intact, with Georgian territorial integrity intact. And it's not intact, but it's also not recognized by anybody -- the secessionists are not recognized by anybody -- and to make clear to Russia that this kind of behavior was, in the 21st century, not just unacceptable, but not very fruitful. And I think we achieved all of those goals.

QUESTION: So even though they haven't fulfilled their commitments, the time has come to resume the NATO-Russia --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I said we should look at fulfilling the commitments. I didn't say -- I said in principle, we do not have -- we don't have a problem with it. We have resumed at lower levels. But I think you'd want to be very careful, for instance, about doing things that look military-to-military, because the Russian military is still sitting in the secessionist states.

Just to Bucharest really quickly -- or Brussels. The Bucharest declaration has a very clear line: These states will become members of NATO. Now it also says we would review MAP in December. It's our view that the question of MAP -- we don't need to review the question of MAP. We can pursue the fulfillment of Bucharest through the commissions and other -- it will be a long time. I don't think any Georgian or Ukrainian would tell you that they're anywhere near ready for membership.

So this is all about preparation to fulfill Bucharest, and frankly, I don't see why we're -- why there's any tension around this at all.

MR. MCCORMACK: All right. Now we have to --

QUESTION: Just to be certain that I understand what you said about --

MR. MCCORMACK: All right. We have to -- we really have to -- the Secretary has to --

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah, I just said -- I just said --

QUESTION: Cooperation -- I mean, are you saying that -- what you're really saying is that the Europeans need to be more cautious in terms of --

SECRETARY RICE: No, I didn't say that.

QUESTION: Well, are you saying --

SECRETARY RICE: Sue, did I say that?

QUESTION: No, I'm trying to --

SECRETARY RICE: When did I say that? I said that in principle, I have no problems with NATO-Russia Council activities. I said we should be very attentive to what the Russians are doing, and are they living up to their obligations. And I said that there are certain sorts of activities like military-to-military contacts that seem to me to be problematic when the Russian military is sitting in Georgian territory, or in the separatist states.

But I don't want to try to make a general rule here, because frankly, I think that we've denied Russia -- the United States and Europe together -- and I want to very much emphasize that -- the United States and Russia -- the United States and Europe together denied Russia any strategic gain from its invasion of Georgia in August. I have to go. Thanks.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

2008/T30-3

Released on December 1, 2008

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Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.