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Remarks to the Press en Route London

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC

February 3, 2005

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I thought I would come back in the first hour of the flight and just have a chance to...(cross-talk) ...answer any questions that you might have. Obviously this is an important trip for me and for the administration. The President wanted very much after the State of the Union and after the Inaugural to have an opportunity for me to go out in advance of his trip and to begin the discussions with our allies about the tremendous opportunities ahead of us.

We have been through a period in which we fought two wars, in which we've experienced terrorist attacks. We, obviously, are still united and working in cooperation to deal with the threats before us: the threats of terrorism, the threats of weapons of mass destruction and proliferation. But, we also are having an opportunity now to look forward to the opportunities ahead of us: the opportunities to spread freedom and liberty into places where they've never been, places like the Middle East, like Afghanistan and Iraq. We have opportunities before us to work on the agenda of development, in conjunction with the Millennium goals and the Monterrey consensus that looks to good governance as one of the important prerequisites for the good use of development assistance. And we have an opportunity to work together to solve regional conflicts.

I think it is fair to say that in everything we do the allies with whom I'm going to be visiting, and some with whom I will not have a chance to visit, are among our most important partners in facing global challenges. And that's the message that I'll be taking. This is an alliance that has faced down threats before, has seized opportunities before, and has always done so on the basis of common values. That is really the purpose of this trip. I am also...of course, will have the opportunity to go to Israel, to go to meet with the Israeli government, and then to go to the West Bank to meet with President Abbas.

We really do have potentially good opportunities now to make progress on the Road Map. The parties themselves have begun making fundamental choices and in terms that the President laid out in his June 2002 speech. And so it's time to see what we can do to help sustain the momentum that has been achieved lately after the election of President Abbas.

I expect that when I'm in London, and also with our other European colleagues, to be able to discuss what we can all do

to support the process of peace in the Middle East, and of course, the planning for the London conference goes on--on March 1st--which will focus on what the international community can do to help the Palestinians build the institutions that can form the basis for statehood, that can deal with issues of reconstruction and economic development, and of course, that can help the Palestinians to build security forces that can be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

So, that's the agenda in general. We're going to make, I'm told, 10 stops in seven days. But, hopefully there won't be any sleeping overnight on the plane. So, with that I'll be glad to answer questions. Andrea?

QUESTION: The president gave what some people may think was a mixed message on Iran last night. Maybe you could explain what he meant when he talked about reaching out to the young Iranians who hunger for freedom, but also what options he has in mind when he talks about Iran as a terror threat. Just what is the mix of carrots and sticks, and how you explain that to Europeans who think that we have not been forward leaning enough on Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: The President's message last night was a message not unlike the message that he delivered in the Inaugural and has delivered innumerable times, and that is that the United States of America has to stand with people who are seeking their freedom and seeking liberty. It's, by the way, not the first message to the Iranian people that the President has delivered. If you look back you'll see that several times he has talked about the importance of the Iranian people whose aspirations are being suppressed by an unelected few, that those aspirations need to be met.

In terms of Iranian misbehavior in international politics, there are many examples of it, and, of course, we are pursuing a number of different courses. When it comes to Iranian support for terrorism, I would strongly hope that all of those who are...or desire peace in the Middle East, who desire a peace between Israelis and Palestinians, recognize that the Iranians are one of the strongest supporters of the rejectionists in that process, whether it's Hezbollah or Iranian help to the Palestinian rejectionists, and you can't have it both ways. You can't say that you want peace between Israel and the Palestinians and not do everything that you can to disable the Palestinian rejectionists and Hezbollah. And that will be a message that I think we will want to discuss with the Europeans.

The Iranians, also of course, are engaged in activities that are attempting to use the NPT cover of the seeking civilian nuclear power, to disguise activities that we believe could lead to a nuclear weapon, and we are attacking that problem on a number of fronts. First of all, in an increasing consensus that any cooperation with the Iranians of the kind that, for instance, the Russians are engaging in at Bushehr, must have certain safeguards and so we've been pleased that the Russians talk now about a take-back of the fuel and the need for the Iranians to sign the additional protocol. It isn't proliferation risk-free, but it helps.

Of course, the IAEA has been very active in trying to get verification means in place, inspections in place, and, of course, the activities of the EU-3 to try and convince the Iranians to live up to their international obligations and obviously any step that helps the Iranians, or that gets the Iranians to live up to their obligations, is welcome.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, the new EU Ambassador to Washington told some of us at lunch the other day that one thing they would really like to see from this administration is more confidence in how serious the Europeans are taking the Iranian issue and that they are committed to trying to settle it. Do you think that...will you have any discussions along those lines on this trip? And do you think it's possible even to send a back-channel message to let the Iranians know that we are serious about the outcome of those discussions, as well?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't think that the Iranians need a message to tell that we are serious about the nuclear problem and that we are serious about any efforts that anyone can take to deal with the nuclear problem and to get them to live up to their international obligations. What we need--we, the Europeans, the Russians, the IAEA--is unity of message to the Iranians and unity of purpose with the Iranians, to let them know in no uncertain terms that they cannot enjoy the benefits of NPT membership without fully living up to its obligations. The Iranians have not shown any real indication that they are prepared to live up to those obligations. They continue to play games every time they can, but again, we appreciate the efforts and we are working closely with the Europeans, coordinating closely with them. And I expect we'll have more discussions while I'm here about how to get a very clear message to the Iranians and unity of purpose in dealing with the Iranians.

QUESTION: A long time listener, first time caller. Can you tell us whether the United States Government had any role in the development, the creation of this summit, in the Middle East, and how it happening while you are abroad may or may not affect your trip and your plans here?

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, we greatly welcome the Egyptian initiative and think that it is a very important step in what is now a series of steps that are lending momentum to the Israeli-Palestinian issue and to efforts to get back onto the Road Map. We really want to be supportive of the parties and their efforts. Not every effort has to be an American effort. It is extremely important that the parties themselves are taking responsibility. It is extremely important that the regional actors are taking responsibility. You might remember that when the President spoke in June of 2002, he didn't just talk about the responsibilities of the Israelis and the Palestinians, he talked about the responsibilities of the Arab states, as well. And we appreciate Egypt exercising some of those responsibilities.

I think my timing of my trip is pretty well placed. I will have an opportunity to talk with the parties before those meetings take place, to encourage them and to represent American interests and engagement in activity in what they are doing. But again, as long as the parties are making steps in the way that they are, I think that is all for the better. I will also, of course, talk with my Egyptian counterpart and others in the region to see what more we can do. But I don't expect at this point any change in plans.

QUESTION: Can I follow up? What is in practical terms the most we might expect to see in practical concrete steps or discernable changes that we might expect to see to come from this kind of event?

SECRETARY RICE: I would think of it, James, as just a steady set of steps towards getting everybody back onto the Road Map. And a steady set of steps to help the Palestinians get prepared for governing, to help the Israelis to achieve a peaceful withdrawal from the Gaza, a coordinated withdrawal from the Gaza with the Palestinians, and what I hope what we won't get into: the habit of looking for the flash breakthrough.

This is now a process that is moving and moving effectively, and as long as it is moving and moving effectively, we should be deeply satisfied with what is going on here. We have to remember that we have some very big fundamental changes that have taken place in the Israeli decision to withdraw from the Gaza, in the Palestinians' new leadership and their preparation for elections again, parliamentary elections, and the international community's engagement starting with the London conference. But I would expect that you will also see the Quartet re-engaging again very soon, too.

So, the point is that there are a lot of very good trends here, some fundamental changes that have taken place, and we

just need to make steady progress along the way back onto the Road Map and on from there.

QUESTION: Moving all around here, on Iraq, are the allies, European allies, doing all they can to support us? And with the elections finished, they've gone fairly well, are you going to have specific things you are going to ask them to do?

SECRETARY RICE: I think there has been a steady evolution since really the granting of, the return of sovereignty, of contributions from the allies, the allies who were not part of the military coalition, to Iraq's future. I would just note the NATO engagement, the training that the Germans are doing in the UAE, the debt relief that was provided by the G-7 and other states--these are extremely important mechanisms of support for the Iraqis. I don't think there will be any dramatic changes, but I would certainly hope that every European, and not just European: every state, particularly those states in the region--would look at what the Iraqi people risked on Sunday to show that they are ready to take hold of their own future, to show that they want to build a democratic and unified future, and to assess what can be done to support that. Because, in every case, there comes a time in a nation's history, in the history of a people, when they take control of their own future, when they express in no uncertain terms that they want to go in a particular direction. And I think you have seen that little by little, but you saw it in dramatic form in Iraq on Sunday. And so, it is time for the entire international community, the Europeans, others and particularly the states in the region, to assess what more they can do to help the Iraqis.

QUESTION: Can you talk a little bit more...last night the President mentioned Egypt and Saudi Arabia, that they should be working on more democratic institutions...what does that really mean, specifically and concretely?

SECRETARY RICE: The President has often said that we cannot impose, and do not wish to impose, an American way of democracy on anyone. That it is our role, along with our European allies, and Asian democratic allies and others, to open up possibilities for others to find their own way. And this was really just a call to two of the most important states in the region to begin to find their own way toward more open political systems.

I would note that back at the time of the Alexandria conference, President Mubarak of Egypt gave a speech about reform. The Crown Prince has talked about the need to reform and has launched municipal elections. These are welcome steps. There need to be more, because ultimately the region has to find its way to greater political openness, to greater economic progress and to better hope for its people. The United States doesn't have the answers on the...how that process is going to take place. That's a process that's going to have to be indigenous, but it is something that the President put on the agenda, starting really with his Whitehall speech, and it is an agenda that I think people are starting to respond to. That's why I think you have the Arab League having a discussion of reform at their last summit.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, is the issue of the EU's lifting of the arms embargo against China important to you? I mean, do you expect to try to talk them out of what apparently is a decision in principle?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it is an important issue. And we have had discussions, and I think we'll continue discussions. I've found the Europeans open to our concerns, that they understand our concerns, and we are trying to make clear the concerns that, first of all, there is an obvious concern about the military and technological balance in the region. There is a concern about the message, in terms of human rights, given that the embargo was placed there because of Tiananmen. And so, this is still an open discussion, and we'll continue to have that discussion, and see how far we can get.

But, partners are not always going to agree. What's important is that we have an atmosphere in which we can express our concerns, and do that with partners willing to take each others' concerns into consideration as they make policy decisions.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madam Secretary. President Bush's announcement of \$350 million for the Palestinians represented, if you measure it certain ways, a four- or five-fold increase for American aid. Are you going to try and use that as a point of persuasion to get Arab countries and European allies to think about increasing their own aid along the same magnitude? And can you be more specific about what the aid will go to pay for? Thanks.

SECRETARY RICE: On the second question, Steve, we're going to have to engage in discussions with the Palestinian leadership, with the Quartet, with those at the London conference, about what is going to be most useful in terms of the reconstruction of the Gaza and the West Bank and economic assistance for the Palestinians. We've had some conversations with the finance minister, Salam Fayyad; we've had some discussions with the World Bank, but I think it would be premature to try and say exactly how we think the funding will be spent. We will work with the Congress, because obviously there are concerns there about how the money will be spent. And we will work with them so that there is a clear route ahead for how the resources will be spent. But it's a discussion that is still going on.

In terms of encouraging others: absolutely, we need to encourage others to contribute. The EU has been an important contributor to Palestinian needs, and we understand that. Some in the region have been important contributors. Some in the region have not been as generous as they might be, and I think it is time for everybody to look deep inside and say, "if we want the Israeli-Palestinian peace to be achieved and to sustain momentum, what more can we do in terms of assistance, in terms of dealing with terrorist organizations, in terms of sending strong messages to Iran and Syria--that they will not be allowed to frustrate the efforts of the Palestinians and the Israelis." Those are all messages that I think all of us now need to look to, because now that we have some momentum, it's important to sustain it.

There is still a very hard road ahead. Now we're all encouraged by what we're seeing, but let's not forget that the Palestinians have a lot of institution building to do. Let's not forget that there are still rejectionists that will try and frustrate the progress. Let's not forget that terrorist acts are still being committed, and let's not forget that there is a difficult road ahead in terms of the Israeli disengagement. So, we have a lot of hard work to do and one of the reasons for the way this trip is arranged, going both to Israel and the Territories and then also talking with the Europeans, is I think we need a real discussion on how we are going to support what the parties are doing.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, if I can just return for one second to Iran, there have been some grumblings in Europe that the EU-3 talks are not going to get anywhere unless the United States becomes much more directly involved. How do you respond to that, and will the United States at some point become more directly involved?

SECRETARY RICE: The Iranians know what they need to do. It's not the absence of anybody's involvement that is keeping the Iranians from knowing what they need to do. They need to live up to their obligations; they need to agree to verification inspection; they need to stop trying to hide activities under cover of civilian nuclear power. And it's a pretty clear message. And, you know, the Iranians have been at this for a while, and they just need to do what's being asked of them.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, I'm wondering if you could talk about the story now that North Korea provided uranium hexafluoride to Libya through the A.Q. Khan network. What's the significance of that, and what does it say about

the proliferation efforts of both those two countries?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'm not able to get into much of the specifics here. Let me just say that we've been long concerned about North Korean activities, and what they might be engaged in, and it's ever more reason for all of the parties to the six-party talks to tell the North Koreans that it's time to make a strategic choice to give up their weapons programs, to dismantle them verifiably and irreversibly. It's time for the North Koreans to come back to the six-party talks, which is the right form in which that can be done.

The North Koreans have no reason to believe that the United States intends to attack North Korea, or invade North Korea. The President has said that. Any force of instability on the Peninsula would be from the North Koreans continuing down the road that they're on, and there are other paths for the North Koreans. And those are laid out for them, and it's time for them to get involved in that.

We are also, of course, continuing to watch the proliferation threat. We have means to do it, like the Proliferation Security Initiative, which allows under international law the interdiction of suspicious cargo, and we will pursue it to its fullest.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, U.S. policy on Iran so far has been enunciated in a single statement from the White House, dating back from July 12th, I think three years ago. Is it the intention of this administration to come out with a more robust policy, and to be firmer with the Iranians? And will it support active regime change?

SECRETARY RICE: The policy toward Iran, I think, should be very clear. The policy is that the United States, in a variety of fora and with a variety of different partners, is seeking to deal with the destabilizing effects of Iranian behavior: Iranian behavior toward terrorism, Iranian behavior toward nuclear weapons and civilian nuclear power, Iranian behavior in trying to deal with Iraq in ways that are not transparent. And so, the policy is to make very clear to the Iranians that those behaviors are not acceptable and to work with others to try and deal with them.

Now, in terms of the Iranian regime, I don't think anybody thinks that the unelected Mullahs who run that regime are a good thing, for either the Iranian people or for the region. The region is going in a quite different direction, and the President last night again said that the Iranian people deserved better, essentially. I think our European allies agree that the Iranian regime's human rights behavior, and its behavior towards its own population, is something to be loathed.

QUESTION: That doesn't answer my question.

UNIDENTIFIED: What was your question?

QUESTION: My question was: is the U.S. interested in regime change?

SECRETARY RICE: Robin, we are engaged in a process with many others that is aimed at making clear to the Iranians that their behavior, internally and externally, is out of step with the direction and desires of the international community.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, two things. One, on the aid to the Palestinians, will any of it be given directly to them... will any of the new aid to the Palestinians go directly to them? And secondly, and more broadly, during your tenure as Secretary, would you like to visit Tehran or Pyongyang?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we'll see what opportunities are there in Tehran and Pyongyang.

The Palestinians and direct aid: I think some of it will clearly be direct aid. We've done direct aid in small amounts. We'll have to work with the Congress to see what might be done through direct aid, but I would expect that at least some of the assistance would be direct aid.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, you talked during your Senate hearings about troubled waters with some of the European allies over Iraq. How much do you expect to hear from them about that and how much of an answer will the elections last Sunday be?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the elections last Sunday clearly remind us why we fought to liberate the Iraqi people from that terrible dictator. Because underneath that repression there are people who want a better future and who want to build a democratic future and who want to build a united Iraq. And who, if they are successful in doing so, could change very dramatically the face of the Middle East. And I know it has been difficult in Iraq, we all know that it's been difficult in Iraq, but I would trade any time the false stability that was there under a dictator like Saddam Hussein for the sometimes difficult and often tumultuous path that the Iraqi people are engaged on, that leads to an outcome like Sunday.

And I think it should just remind us all that those of us who have the good fortune to live on the right side of freedom's divide have an obligation to those who were left on the other side of freedom's divide, to try and help them to achieve their aspirations. I think what that message...we and even those who didn't agree about what we did when we did it can find a common path in the future, because I don't think that there is anyone in Europe or anyplace else that believes that the Iraqi people deserved Saddam Hussein. Now there are a lot of people who disagreed with the timing, or didn't think it was time to hold him accountable, but we have a lot of basis on which to move forward, and I think that's what we're going to do.

QUESTION: Are you going to answer my question? Do you support regime change in Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: Robin, what we support is that the Iranian people should have a chance to determine their own future, and right now under this regime they have no opportunity to determine their own future. They should be no different than the Palestinians or the Iraqis or the Afghans or peoples around the world, the Ukrainians, who are determining their own future. It's the basis of human dignity that people should have an opportunity to change...to change their own future. That's the bottom line.

(cross-talk)

We're going to travel a lot, and I wouldn't want anybody to feel lost. Therefore I have for each of you the Pocket World Atlas, as a little memento of our first trip together.

QUESTION: Are you going to inscribe them to all of us?

SECRETARY RICE: They're all inscribed. (Applause)

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