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Interview With Andrea Koppel of CNN

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Ankara, Turkey
February 6, 2005

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, I'd like to begin with where you're going to be spending the next couple of days. In his State of the Union this week, President Bush said that with Congressional approval, he would like to offer the Palestinians 350 million dollars to try to help them out. There didn't seem to be a whole lot of enthusiasm for this based on the reaction in Congress. Part of that could be because the Arab world has not made good on its pledge for about a billion dollars. A couple of things: are you confident that you are going to get Congressional approval? And what is the U. S. going to do to get the Arab world to ante up?

SECRETARY: The Congress has been supportive in the past, for instance when we have made direct aid in small amounts of money to the Palestinians -20 million dollars- just a few months ago, because I believe that people understand that it is a new day with the Palestinian leadership, that in fact they have put financial controls in place. There is greater transparency in Palestinian economic affairs. Frankly, for a long time there wasn't, and so it was understandable why there were concerns. I'm quite sure that as this process moves forward, that we will get support to have the United States be in the forefront of helping the Palestinian people to build the institutions of democracy to reconstruct areas that are, from which the Israelis will withdraw, because it will be an important element of an overall program. It's not just the money, but an overall program of reconstruction and reform in the Palestinian political leadership and Palestinian political institutions.

As to the rest of the Arab world, yes the Arab world should be more generous. Some have been very generous; others have made pledges that have not been fulfilled. And it will be part of our diplomacy to go to them and say that now is the time because you can't have it both ways. You can't say that there needs to be an Israeli-Palestinian peace on the one hand, and on the other hand, fail to put up the resources to help that move along.

QUESTION: You mentioned the transparency within the Palestinian authority and now there is a new Palestinian President. There is still a perception among the Palestinian people that the Palestinian authority itself is corrupt. Are you going to tie U.S. aid to a pledge from President Abbas to launch an anti-corruption drive?

SECRETARY: There's no doubt that we cannot be in a position of giving aid where there is not transparency. All of American development assistance in recent years, like the Millennium Challenge account for instance, insists on good governance as one of the prerequisites for the granting of American assistance. And so I would think that we would also expect good governance in the Palestinian territories if American aid is going to be flowing there.

But I have to say that I've been encouraged by some of the things that the president has done, President Abbas has done, but also his finance minister, Sam Fiyad, who has gone a long way in putting controls- economic controls- and has gone a long way to transparency, publishing for instance the Palestinian Authority budget on the internet. And so, there's a lot to work with here, and I'm quite certain that we can manage this.

QUESTION: So you don't think that an anti-corruption drive would be necessary?

SECRETARY: Well I think that an anti-corruption drive is absolutely necessary. But it's not just necessary for the grantee of American aid; it's necessary for the confidence of the Palestinian people. They need to know that this is going to be a government that is different than the one that they've experienced for the last decades. And it's going to be important for the democratic progress of the Palestinians that there be an anti-corruption drive, and we are prepared to help in any way, and I believe that President Abbas and his cabinet will be devoted to such.

QUESTION: One of the mistakes of the past is that the U.S. didn't do enough to try to get the Arab world vested in the peace process. What is your strategy to do that?

SECRETARY: That is absolutely right that the Arab world, I think, was not as vested in the process. They were concerned that the process take place, but perhaps not as active in it. There are very good signs in this regard. The decision of each to invite the Palestinians and the Israelis to Sharm el-Sheik this coming week is an example of the Arabs, I think, taking responsibility and stepping forward in the peace process. Egypt and Jordan have been very – and Jordan will of course be there- Egypt and Jordan have been active on the security front, and that's very good.

QUESTION: It's true, but they are both the Arab states that have diplomatic relations with Israel. What about the rest of the Arab world?

SECRETARY: Well the rest of the Arab world should be active. I would note that the Saudis, from Crown Prince Abdullah, did put forward an initiative that had some good elements several years ago. And perhaps we could build on some of those initiatives and some of those overtures to greater involvement of the Saudis as well. When the Quartet has met, for instance, it has often been the case in the past, that there have been consultations with the Arab states including with the Saudis, either before or after those Quartet meetings.

QUESTION: You and the President have placed a high priority on democratization and certainly you must be aware of the fact that in recent elections, municipal elections in Gaza, Hamas - one of the Palestinian rejection groups- one of those committed to the destruction of the state of Israel has swept those elections and seems poised now to win legislative elections this summer. What is the U.S. going to do if Hamas is legitimately elected?

SECRETARY: Well there's a long time between now and those elections for the legislative council.

QUESTION: About six months

SECRETARY: Well, that's a long time in politics. And I would note that these were municipal elections not national elections. If you look at what happened in the national elections Mahmoud Abbas won a very sizable majority because I think that the Palestinian people do not accept a plan and a program that they recognize would simply result in the continuation of violence.

The reason that Mahmoud Abbas I believe was popularly elected is that he has said that there should not be an armed intifada, that in fact they need a peaceful road. I can't believe that Palestinian mothers want a world in which people strap suicide belts onto young girls and young men so that they blow up other young girls and young men. And so a program that appeals to that, I simply don't believe is going to be successful. And the Palestinian authority for its part will have to show that it is able to do some of the things that the people were voting for in municipal elections- like run orphanages, deal with the social welfare of the people and fight corruption.

QUESTION: One of the expectations of the summit that's expected to happen on Tuesday in Egypt is that there could be a ceasefire between Israelis and the Palestinians. What is the U.S. prepared to do to help stabilize the ceasefire?

SECRETARY: Well, in any case if there can be a period of calm in which there is not fighting the most important elements will be to have some monitoring of that situation but also to take the most difficult steps that would really ensure its permanence. There will have to be efforts to fight terrorism. There will have to be efforts to unify the Palestinian security forces and train them so that they are part of the solution, not part of the problem. And the United States will be very actively involved both bilaterally and probably trilaterally to try and stabilize the situation on the ground but also to help to bring about Palestinian security forces that can actually fight terror.

QUESTION: Are you prepared to appoint a Mideast envoy? Do you think that this is the time?

SECRETARY: The President and I have talked about it. It's not any particular objection to the concept of an envoy. The issue is when and what would an envoy do. And right now we believe that the path that the parties are on in which they really have a sustained a good deal of momentum themselves can be helped along by American engagement in the security side, in the reconstruction side...

QUESTION: ... perhaps boots on the ground, so to speak?

SECRETARY: Well putting people there or working with people who can go there frequently to help the parties keep moving ahead. We are not yet at that part of the Road Map that talks about final status. There is a lot of work between now and then. But if we use this period well - the period of reform of Palestinian institutions, reconstruction efforts, reform of the security agencies, the peaceful withdrawal of Israelis from the Gaza and the four West Bank settlements - if we use this period well and achieve those, then we will be back on the Road Map. And I'm quite certain that we will be well along the way to the President's vision of two states living side by side in peace.

QUESTION: I'd like to end by asking you Iran. During his State of the Union, the President said, as you stand for your

liberty, America stands with you. What happens if the President gets his wish, the Iranian people rise up and the Mullahs oppose them with force and it's not a velvet revolution, a rose revolution or an orange revolution. What will the U. S. do to support the Iranian people?

SECRETARY: Well we've all learned that we can never predict how history turns out, and therefore it's really not a good thing to speculate about how it might. But what the President is doing is that he was saying to the Iranian people "you're not forgotten in this great sweep of reform that we are encouraging and seeing in the Middle East".

Iran and its unelected few are out of step with trends that are taking place in the Middle East. Imagine the specter of Iranians, of Afghans voting in Iran for a free Afghan government of Iraqis voting in Iran for a free Iraqi government, but Iranians being presented with the prospect of sham elections in a few months which nobody will recognize as having anything to do with free and fair elections.

So Iran is not immune from what is going on around them, and we also recognize that the Iranian people have demonstrated time and time again their desire for democratic development; that there's a vibrant civil society, and vibrant business groups and women's groups. Reaching out to them is important to say to them that we know and associate ourselves with the aspirations of the Iranian people.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY: Thank you.

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