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## Interview With Andrea Mitchell of NBC

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

London, United Kingdom

March 2, 2005

**QUESTION:** Secretary Rice, thank you very much for joining us. There are indications now that the Administration may be shifting its position on Iran. Senator Biden told us yesterday that he is hearing from the White House that the Administration is prepared to work with the Europeans, and perhaps provide incentives to Iran to reinforce the European strategy. Is there a shift here, or is there an intention to give Iran some incentive to cooperate?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well since the President's visit to Europe last week, he has been, with his national security principals, examining how we might best support the European negotiations that are underway. He had discussions when he was here with his colleagues. We talked about a common purpose and a common front with Iran, that Iran would get a common message. But no decisions have been made about how that might be done, but he's definitely talking with people about what we might be able to do to support the Europeans. We've said we support the diplomacy, that this issue can be resolved diplomatically if there is a common front and that is what the President is looking at.

**QUESTION:** While we understand that no decisions have been made, what about giving WTO (World Trade Organization) membership to Iran? Might that be the kind of incentive that would motivate them in the right direction?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well there have been a number of possibilities on the table in order to support the European negotiations. The most important thing though is that the Iranians need time to understand that they are the ones that need to perform. This is not really an issue of what the United States does, or what Europe does. The Europeans have given the Iranians a path to a different kind of relationship with the international community, in which they establish confidence that they are not trying to build a nuclear weapon under the cover of a civilian nuclear program. So, the real issue is what are the Iranians prepared to do. But, of course, the United States wants very much to support what the Europeans are doing.

**QUESTION:** How could the United States support what the Europeans are doing?



**SECRETARY RICE:** Well we are looking at that. We've given a lot of verbal support to it, a lot of political support. I think simply saying to the Iranians that there is currently no other course for them but to take the chance, the opportunity, that the Europeans are giving them to come into line with their international obligations.

**QUESTION:** But are there some carrots there? Could you give some examples without decisions having been made?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I don't want to get into speculating on this. We are talking to our European colleagues. There has been plenty of speculation about the kinds of things that might be possible.

**QUESTION:** Airplane parts, WTA's...?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Plenty of speculation about what might be possible. But the most important element here is that the President came to Europe, he listened to his European colleagues. He's gone home now, I've had further discussions with my European colleagues, and we are designing, I think, an important common strategy with Europe so that Iran knows that there is no other way.

**QUESTION:** On Syria, you have suggested that the Syrians had advance knowledge of the planning of the attack on Tel Aviv. Can you tell us...

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let me be very specific.

**QUESTION:** ...how firm the evidence is?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Let me be very specific. The issue is that Palestinian Islamic Jihad, operating in Syria, had advance knowledge of the attacks in Tel Aviv. I think none of us know the extent of Syrian involvement, and we want to be very careful not to get outside the limits of the information that we have. But one has to say, that this is a direct result of Syria allowing these kinds of groups to operate on its territory. Many times in the past, when former Secretary Powell went to Syria, when Assistant Secretary Burns went to Syria, when Rich Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State, went to Syria, always said to the Syrians, close down these terrorist organizations, these rejectionist organizations that are operating on your territory.

**QUESTION:** But you seem to be taking a step back, though, from saying that Syria itself had advance knowledge and involvement in planning?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I believe that what we've said is that the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, operating in Syria, had advance knowledge, indeed probably engaged in the planning, of the attacks in Tel Aviv. We will see, I don't think that we know the degree of Syrian complicity. I will note that Syria is a pretty controlled society and this is one reason that saying to the Syrians, don't allow these groups to operate on your territory. And by the way, it's not just Palestinian rejectionist groups, its insurgent groups that are causing havoc in Iraq, causing the death of innocent civilians as they did perhaps today. This is the kind of activity that is taking place on Syrian territory. The Syrians either need to get control of that activity, expel these organizations, close down their operations, close down their offices, or the Syrians are going to continue to have to answer for what's going in their territory.

**QUESTION:** What more can be done to Syria, they are already under sanction?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The Syrians are beginning to get a very unified message from the international community that this kind of behavior is not tolerable.

**QUESTION:** But at the same time as you say the message is unified and the pressure certainly has been escalated verbally in the last few days, General John Abizaid was testifying to the Senate Arms Services Committee that the Syrians have tried to be more helpful against the insurgency along the border. Isn't that a mixed message?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well perhaps the Syrians are starting to get the message. But they need to do more than just be helpful along the border.

**QUESTION:** And also in the capture of Saddam Hussein's half brother?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I can't go into that issue. But I can say, that what we need from the Syrians is maximum effort, not a little bit here and a little bit there. Not help a little bit here and hold back a little bit there. The Syrians now need to make a maximum effort. They need to make a maximum effort on the Iraqi insurgency, they need to make a maximum effort to get these Palestinian rejectionists groups out of their territory and they need to make a maximum effort to conform with the requirements of Resolution 1559, which requires the withdrawal from Lebanon.

**QUESTION:** If they were to withdraw from Lebanon, couldn't that create a power vacuum which would then be filled immediately by Syrian intelligence services, Hezbollah and other terror groups?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the point is that the Syrians need to get their intelligence services out of Lebanon too. Because, you rightly point out, that it is not just Syrian military forces but Syrian intelligence services that operate in Lebanon. But a lot has happened since 1983 in Lebanon and the horrible events there. The international community has called for the Syrian withdrawal. I believe, and am certain, that the international community will want to discuss what can be done to help the Lebanese in any transition.

**QUESTION:** What could be done? Do you think that the UN force that is already on the ground there could be redeployed, expanded? What security could you provide -- the international community provide -- so that we don't have more chaos in Lebanon after a Syrian withdrawal?

**SECRETARY RICE:** It is important not to get ahead of ourselves. The first is to make certain that the Syrians are serious about conforming with 1559. We should have discussions about what the Lebanese want and what the Lebanese will need. But the first focus has to be to get free and fair elections, that are carried out without foreign interference, and we have the opportunity to do that over the next several months. We have very good international cooperation on this matter, and not only did I have the opportunity to talk with my French counterpart, cosponsor of 1559, but also with the Secretary General Annan and with other colleagues here. There is a lot of interest in trying to help a democratic Lebanon be born.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much Madam Secretary. Thank you for joining us.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you.

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