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Interview With The New York Times

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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QUESTION: Iran. It feels as if we're sort of at a dead end, perhaps, in terms of our efforts to deal with their nuclear program. It doesn't seem as if the IAEA has the votes to refer the matter to the Security Council. Even if they did, we probably would have a difficult sell there. So where do we go from here?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, Phil, I'm not ready to come to that set of conclusions yet.

QUESTION: Okay.

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, let's look at where we've been. We were in a situation a number of years ago where I think we and maybe a couple of others were the only people who believed that there was something to be suspicious about, about the Iranian nuclear program and where the Iranians were claiming that this was all just for peaceful civil nuclear uses. And over the last period of time, we've been able to support the EU-3 negotiations to the point of the EU-3 putting on the table a quite generous proposal to the Iranians about how they might meet their civil nuclear needs and yet convince the international community that they were going to live up to their obligations not to use that for a nuclear weapons program. We've been able to support that and where we and the Europeans are completely united on this matter.

The Russians, too, in the way that they constructed the Bushehr deal, suggests that they also do not want to see the fuel cycle in Iran. And so there seems to be very strong international consensus that an Iran that has behaved in the way that it has over the last couple of years really should not have the fuel cycle. So that's the beginning point.

The Iranians have chosen, to date, not to take the deal that was put on the table. And I think we expect that the next step will be to work with others to make certain that there are consequences for that behavior. And we believe that the

Security Council is a reasonable next step. Now, there's a lot of work to do between now and the ElBaradei report. I don't think we want to put a timetable on when we will stop doing the diplomacy to get an outcome that is commensurate with what the Iranians have done, but there are an awful lot of countries that are united around the view that the Iranians should not have the fuel cycle. And I think we'll start from there and we'll work with people to see where that leads.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, there are also an awful lot of countries, even on the Board of the IAEA, who feel that Iran is entitled to a peaceful nuclear -- to be able to do its conversion and reprocessing under international inspections. So isn't the fact that the IAEA wouldn't refer the issue this time an indication of sentiment on the IAEA --

SECRETARY RICE: Nobody sought referral from the IAEA Board of Governors this time. What we sought was the resolution that we got this time. So let's wait and see what the diplomacy of the IAEA will turn out to be when -- within the IAEA when ElBaradei does what he was asked to do, which was to submit a comprehensive report.

But it was not -- the United States did not seek -- and I want that to be very clearly understood -- we did not seek a referral to the Security Council at this IAEA Board of Governors meeting that just transpired. We had agreed in advance with the Europeans that we would seek a statement from the Board of Governors that the Iranians should return to suspension and that we would seek a report, comprehensive report from ElBaradei, to be delivered sometime in the first part of September. That was what was sought and that's what we got.

QUESTION: By the way, President Bush's comments --

SECRETARY RICE: And by the way, I know because, you know, actually, I'm Secretary of State. (Laughter.) So whoever -- if somebody's telling you we sought something else, we didn't.

QUESTION: Well, I thought the Europeans -- not to beat this -- were saying that if Iran proceeded with the conversion activities, this was a week or two ahead of time, that the next step would be to refer it.

QUESTION: They issued a statement saying that.

SECRETARY RICE: Sometime before the Iranians actually resumed the conversion process, or broke the seals and made that notification, we and the Europeans agreed that this should be a two-stop process: that there would be a call for the Iranians to come back, in part to build consensus within the Board of Governors; and then there would be a report from ElBaradei and a referral. So, in fact, that was the decision and that decision had been taken prior to the Iranians actually breaking the conversion.

QUESTION: I see. Just a quick question. President Bush's comment the other day to the Israeli broadcast media seemed at first to be kind of a repetition of a standard formula, but it's being -- been taken as something more than that. Can you tell us whether it was anything more than that, like a signal or a warning?

SECRETARY RICE: It was a clear restatement of what I think almost every American President has said and should say, which is that the President of the United States always retains all his options. And I think in most quarters it was understood to be precisely that.

QUESTION: On a similar subject, North Korea. Both Russia and South Korea have said publicly that they are not entirely sure that North Korea should not be allowed peaceful use of nuclear -- of nuclear facilities. Are we in a situation once again where we may not be in a position to get what we want here? Are we going to have to (inaudible)?

SECRETARY RICE: Look, we are in a recess of a negotiation that has actually achieved quite a lot in the six-party talks this time. I think everybody believes that we've made some progress. There needed to be time to go back to capitals for consultations. That's what's going on now. I fully expect that the negotiations are going to resume in a couple of weeks.

I think it's important that we don't get caught up in certain semantical -- semantics about what is really going on here. The fact is that I don't think anybody believes at this point in time that the North Koreans can be trusted with civilian nuclear power given that they turned a research reactor into a nuclear weapons plant. I mean, how much do you have to do to demonstrate that you can use "peaceful" -- a peaceful apparatus to create nuclear weapons?

So, I don't think that anybody is arguing that the North Koreans ought to be trusted with so-called peaceful uses of nuclear weapons -- nuclear power. And one of the reasons that the South Korean proposal, energy proposal, is so attractive is that it is a non-nuclear option for power generation in the North.

Since the North Koreans are not currently in the NPT, having withdrawn; since they're clearly not in good standing in the NPT, having withdrawn and kicked IAEA inspectors out, I think we'll deal with first things first, which is that the North Koreans need to concentrate on what the other parties are telling them, which is that they have to abandon their nuclear weapons programs and their nuclear programs because I don't think anybody really trusts to them to have civil nuclear power. And they're not a part of the NPT by choice at this point, having walked out.

QUESTION: What if they do not agree to do that? What if they --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think they will have demonstrated that they're not prepared to make a strategic choice to give up their nuclear weapons programs.

QUESTION: And then what do we do?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think that we still have a lot of -- that there's still legs to the six-party process that may indeed bring about exactly the outcome that we're looking for. And I've never been particularly interested in speculating on what comes next because I think you focus all your energies on trying to make this work.

But again, if you step back as to where we were several years ago, you had the North Koreans cheating on the Agreed Framework, you had the United States and others paying money into a consortium to build a light-water reactor in North Korea which I think we all have doubts about whether it would have been possible to really safeguard it given the history there, and you had the North Koreans essentially arguing that the problem was the United States and it really was a bilateral relationship so it was hard to tell that it wasn't just the United States was the problem.

Now you have all of North Korea's neighbors, most especially the Chinese but also the South Koreans, the Japanese, the Russians, the United States, in a multilateral framework insisting that the North Koreans give up their nuclear weapons programs verifiably, completely, irreversibly, all of those things.

Diplomacy does take time. Multilateral diplomacy, particularly, takes time. But in both the case of Iran and the case of North Korea, we have moved from a place in which it was the United States and Iran, or the North Koreans and Iran, to the point that it is the international community and Iran or the six -- the five parties, at least, and the North Koreans. And that's just a much sounder place to be to try to get a resolution on these issues.

QUESTION: Your envoy, Ambassador Hill, has now given a couple of briefings where he -- it's very striking how much he feels the North Korean attitude in these talks have been businesslike. I don't think he's used the word "constructive" or "productive," but I don't think you've commented publicly about how you find the North Korean attitude in the most recent round. Can you elaborate a little bit?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, my source for this would be Chris as well because I wasn't in the room, but I know that --

QUESTION: But you're the Secretary of State.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I may be that, but I wasn't in the room. (Laughter). Look, I think that, by all accounts, Chris's account and accounts of some of the other delegations, that these were very businesslike talks, that they were absent the kind of histrionics that have sometimes characterized the talks. It doesn't mean that they're not difficult. It doesn't mean that it isn't difficult sometimes to know exactly what it is the North Koreans are insisting upon, and that doesn't change from time to time. But by all accounts, they've been very businesslike and I think that's good.

The North -- one of the things that we asked was that the North come back ready to make a strategic choice, but also ready to negotiate seriously. And I do think that, by the accounts, they have come back prepared to negotiate seriously. Whether it means that they've made the strategic choice, I think is still -- the jury's still out on that. But that they have come in a spirit of actually trying to negotiate seriously, I think they did.

QUESTION: Before we leave this topic, let me ask a question about the nonproliferation regime. The international norms that have governed nuclear energy and proliferation have been bent and obviously need to be revised. We have a situation now -- and this is a kind of academic question maybe, but maybe you'll believe that's a good thing to do.

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, hard. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I bet the world "academic" is not a --

SECRETARY RICE: It's not a pejorative to me, no. (Laughter).

QUESTION: But, look, we have a situation now where there don't seem to be any norms anymore. It's just the United States and whatever allies it can find making a judgment on who gets to live up to this norm that was established maybe in the early days of the Cold War and who doesn't, who's a good guy and who's not a good guy.

We say to Iran, "You can't have what you're entitled to under the NPT because you've been a bad actor." Same thing to North Korea. Yet, to India, we say, "You're a good actor so we'll make an exemption for you." Shouldn't we move beyond a system where just the powerful countries of the world get to decide who's good and who's naughty and who's nice?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the NPT was founded on an assumption that all states that signed onto it would treat it with equal care and that they would live up to the obligations that were within it. And what we've learned over time is that that doesn't happen to be the case, that there are states that sign onto the NPT and then violate it.

Now, you can continue to pretend that under those circumstances the norm holds and whether you violate it or not doesn't matter, or you can live with the implications and consequences of that and say, "Well, there are states that therefore should forego certain of the benefits that might have been there." And, again, you know, it is not the United States alone that has been concerned about Iranian behavior. It's the IAEA. It's the way that the Russians have dealt with Bushehr suggests that they've been concerned about it. Clearly the way the EU-3 has dealt with the fuel cycle issue suggests they're concerned about it.

In the case of North Korea, they've been, of course, more frontal in simply, you know, using the benefits of the NPT and then withdrawing from it, kicking out inspectors and so forth.

So I don't see how it helps an international regime to just ignore that and say, "Well, you still therefore may pursue these things even though your behavior has been really terrible in regards to the NPT."

The other point, Steve, is that there is also a loophole in the NPT that I think people have recognized in later --

QUESTION: Yes.

SECRETARY RICE: -- which is the reprocessing and enrichment loophole. And the President made some proposals, as you know, at NDU to try to deal with that loophole. There is interest internationally in countries foregoing reprocessing and enrichment and perhaps relying instead on assured fuel supply, maybe even international assured fuel supply.

So, again, it's not the United States -- this is a problem, I think, that is increasingly recognized by a large community of states, and people are trying to deal with the fact that there was certain things that were perhaps not envisioned by the NPT. The NPT still remains the cornerstone, still remains the key, but that there has been erosion of it is clear and you have to deal with that erosion.

Of course, there are a couple of things that are outside of even the NPT framework. I don't think people envisioned the kind of A.Q. Khan problem, which would be a non-state actor providing dangerous technologies, nor the difficulties that would arise as a result of terrorism and potential intersection of WMD and terrorism.

So the world changes and you can't sit and pretend that the world has not changed because then the NPT or any other international regime will cease to have meaning to the realities in which we are living. So I find the behavior of the international community to actually be pretty responsible in trying to, while keeping the NPT regime intact, deal with the fact that there are violators and there are those of whom violation is -- the suspicion of violation, and to try to deal with the kind of black market problem, the terrorism problem. We're going to have to deal with all of those.

Something like the Proliferation Security Initiative, which, you know, 60-plus countries have signed onto, suggests that something that people talked very little about a few years ago, counterproliferation, is becoming more important

because there has to be an active intelligence and defensive response to suspicious cargo and so using the international laws to do something like the Proliferation Security Initiative is yet another response to the erosion of the nonproliferation regime.

QUESTION: We had a pretty rough summer here with China and various things happening that really riled up people in this city. Do you think this temperature has sort of dropped now and, if so, why?

SECRETARY RICE: The relationship with China is just big and complicated and it's got good parts and it's got not so good parts. But what we try to stay focused on is the understanding that China is going to be influential in international politics one way or another. And the notion that you can somehow isolate China or -- you can't. It is a major power and it's going to be an even more major power.

And so in a macro sense, what you try to do is, first of all, acknowledge that. And I said to the Chinese leaders that, in fact, we want a strong and confident China. I actually think a weak, not-confident China is potentially much more, much more dangerous because a China that can be a good partner would be actually a very positive thing for international system.

But with that comes certain responsibilities, and let me take the economic side first. China is a huge and growing economy. It is a huge factor in the international economy. It has to be rules based. It can't be that China is a developing economy when it's good to be a developing economy and a developed economy when it's good to be a developed economy. It is unique in the international economy and so it has to have a currency that makes sense in terms of a flexible market-based exchange rate. It has to have intellectual property rights enforcement that is of a standard that was anticipated with China's accession into the World Trade Organization.

It has to have -- it cannot have laws, like one that has apparently been considered, that would take government procurement of -- that would not permit the government, the Chinese Government, to procure foreign software. I mean, that would be a protectionist measure of --

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it's not passed into law, we're told it's there, not passed into law. This would be protectionism of a kind that would be devastating, I think, to those who want to enter that market. So there are certain rules that come with being a big economy and so part of our goal has been to try and press our case.

Secondly, there are issues of human rights and religious freedom and we are, at least, capable of having reasonable discussions with the Chinese. We actually got some movement last year on a number of issues. We're going to continue to press those issues.

Finally, there's the question of Chinese military power; and yes, to many, including to me, it looks outsized. The Chinese military modernization looks outsized for its regional interests and so to comment on that is not to suggest that we believe China is becoming an adversary, but simply to say that that is something that has to be watched, and of course, that the United States is going to continue to improve its own military capabilities so that the balance in the Asian Pacific is maintained.

I put it that way, Joel, because I think it explains why there are sometimes spikes in, as you called it, the temperature, because there are always these underlining issues in the U.S.-China relationship. But on balance, it is a good relationship. On balance, it is a relationship that is --that I think has a considerable benefit in the war on terrorism, that is -- North Korea -- the proliferation issues. And our job is to continue to press the positive forces forward while not ignoring the fact that there are, in this very complicated relationship, a lot of difficult issues.

QUESTION: The only reason I wanted to talk about the temperature, as I called it, is that there are these very serious protectionist measures in Congress, one of which as you know about got 67 votes in --

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: And so temperature seems to be important right now --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, when, certainly, when I talk to the Chinese, or when Bob Zoellick talks to the Chinese or others talk to the Chinese, we remind them that the President is a free trader but he is a free trader who believes there has to be a level playing field for American workers and farmers and American goods. And so to the degree that China lives up to the obligations it undertook in the WTO and doesn't engage in protectionist measures and undertakes the structural reforms that are needed to adjust some of the trade imbalances, then we're going to continue to be able to have a productive economic relationship. But a lot is incumbent on China to make the changes in the Chinese economic structures that keep this a level playing field and that's what's being reflected in Congress.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask about words because different Administrations have used different bumper stickers, in effect, to describe the relationship with China: rival, partner. What do you have a -- does this Administration have a phrase that you think of?

SECRETARY RICE: If I were more effective with words, maybe I would. I just -- I don't think it's a relationship that is easily given to a kind of phrase because it's so complex. It's big and it's complicated and it's got upsides and downsides and puts and takes. But on balance, since China is a very important -- I used to say emerging power, but I'll say emerged power, our goal has to simply be to try to deal with the downsides of the relationship but press forward on the considerable potential, I think, for strengthening the relationship. But it takes the Chinese, too. I mean, I think what you were seeing in Congress was a response to the fact that there do need to be certain structural economic changes in China.

QUESTION: Can we go to the Middle East?

QUESTION: Well, let me ask one more question, then we'll go to the Middle East. We just spoke with Bob Zoellick the other day -- you may know -- and one issue he talked about was sort of the stovepipe nature of the government relationship with China. And the State Department is trying to be a positive force. DOD, maybe the air's coming out a bit hotter; Commerce, it's coming out hotter still; and Congress, it is coming out as a blowtorch.

How difficult is it for you to manage a relationship with China with these divergent views coming from other areas of the government?

SECRETARY RICE: I actually don't think they're divergent. I think they are all two halves of the same walnut. That's what I was just saying to you. DOD is absolutely right that the Chinese military buildup is a problem and they're right that unless there is a U.S. -- a consistent U.S. effort to make sure that we have kept our technological edge in the Asia Pacific, which is, by the way, why the EU embargo was such a problem, then we could face a significant imbalance militarily in East Asia.

And I think that's what the report was saying, that's what Don's speech was saying and it is something with which I fundamentally agree. That the Chinese economy has got to reform structurally so that there are not -- so it's not an unlevel playing field because if the Chinese economy is both big and not playing by the rules, that will be a problem for the international economy. If it is big and playing by the rules, it will increase the capacity of the international economy to grow. Those are two very different outcomes, but a lot depends on what the Chinese do.

And so when people make those arguments, they're absolutely right. So when I go to talk to the Chinese or when Bob goes to talk to the Chinese, we don't say, "Oh, by the way, you know, we won't talk to you about them. We're not going to talk to you about the military relationship." We talk to them about the whole relationship.

And I give them exactly the argument that I just gave you: This relationship is complex. It's got good sides and bad sides and we're doing everything we can to improve the chances that this comes out with a China that is responsible and a positive force. But you've got to work to do. Don't ignore what people are saying to you about the problems of a Chinese economy that is big and unreformed. Don't ignore what people are saying to you about your military buildup. Don't ignore the fact that you put on the books an anti-secession law on Taiwan that caused problems for everybody. Don't ignore the fact that you have a human rights record that is not defensible on many grounds.

So I don't see the State Department role as somehow minimizing the problems in the relationship. I see the relationship as having all of these sides.

QUESTION: Israel.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: A complete change.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. (Laughter)

QUESTION: How do you assure, given what's going on in Gaza right now, how do you assure that that is not the last step for a good while? I used to be based in Israel and I can see what's going to happen. The pictures of these settlers being dragged out is going to play on television for months. There's an election campaign coming up next year. Nothing's likely to happen before the new election.

So it's going to be at least a year before there can be any meaningful new movement, a year in which the Palestinians will grow ever more frustrated and perhaps the violence will ratchet up again, giving the new government an excuse not to do anything. That's a scenario. How do you avoid that scenario from occurring?

SECRETARY RICE: You're right, that's a scenario and our job is not to let that scenario materialize.

Let me say, first, a word about Gaza disengagement and the withdrawal that's going on. First of all, it is an enormously courageous decision on the part of Ariel Sharon and his government. And it is a decision that, in having talked to these people a lot, they took because they believe it is the right thing for the Israeli people and that it is going to improve the security of Israel.

I know, in having talked to them and watched how hard and I think everybody empathizes with what every Israeli has to be feeling and with people uprooting from homes that they have been in for a generation and the difficulty and the pain that that causes. And so I watched Prime Minister Sharon's address to the nation and it was really remarkable statesmanship.

And I just think we have to sometimes pause and think about what this means. It means that the father of the settlement movement, the Likud, Israel is ceding territory. And then, if you look at the other side of that, of course, it is also giving to the Palestinians an opportunity to breathe freely in Gaza, to live without the shadow of settlers and the Israeli army and to begin to build the institutions that are, I think, ultimately going to be the institutions for statehood, whether it is the security forces that are being reformed or the economic structures that I think will start to come into being, you know that Jim Wolfensohn has a significant plan for Gaza but it will be not just for Gaza, it really is for the creation of the basis for economic prosperity for Palestine. And so -- and you can associate, at the same time, with the joy of the Palestinian people that there's a chance that life will get better and so this is a really quite dramatic moment in the history of the Middle East.

And it's very easy to kind of move on to the next thing, but if you stop and reflect and pause, it also helps you to see that because -- and, you know, and we all hope that it continues to go relatively smoothly -- that because of this experience you would hope that confidence and trust between the Palestinians and the Israelis is also grown up because they had to have practically daily contact and meetings at every level of government in order to be able to pull this off. And if they indeed do, I think you will have created conditions and a level of trust that is unparalleled between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Then the question is how do you build on that? What do you do with that? And the roadmap is there. There are certain obligations for both sides in the roadmap. Even Prime Minister Sharon said at one point that he thought that this might reenergize, I think he said, the roadmap. And at the very minimum, I think you want to try to return to the obligations in the roadmap and to continue to move, but there are also things that are going to be happening in parallel in terms of the continued emergence and strengthening of these Palestinian institutions.

So I don't think you're going to see just something stop. I do think you'll have some momentum coming out of this.

QUESTION: Let me follow up on that, if I may. Although trust may be building between the leadership of both sides, the Israelis are also saying publicly in the Knesset, their military officials are saying, that while this disengagement is taking place, Hamas is building up a popular army. It's alleged to be training that army in Gaza, they -- and preparing for more suicide attacks after the disengagement and stockpiling rockets.

First, the facts. What is your assessment of those assertions?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't know how extensive the Hamas "preparations" have been, although we suspect that there have been some. I don't know how to scale what you just said, but that there is some Hamas activity -- that is true. But --

QUESTION: Some increased Hamas activity?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, well, I don't doubt that Hamas is trying to train and to increase its capacity. It would be one of the things that we've talked to the Palestinian Authority about is that Hamas very often uses periods of calm to try and enhance its capacity.

QUESTION: Its capacity to do what?

SECRETARY RICE: Its capacity to cause trouble. It's a terrorist organization. But, of course, the Palestinian Authority is enhancing its capability as well in this period of time. That is why the continued security reform is important.

QUESTION: But in terms -- excuse me for interrupting.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, sure.

QUESTION: But if -- we were just talking about moving from disengagement to the roadmap, does it continue --

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. That's where I was going. That's exactly where I was going. This comes to the fact that you cannot simply let a terrorist organization sit forever, that you cannot -- that there is an obligation in the roadmap to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism, not just coexist with it.

QUESTION: Right.

SECRETARY RICE: And so that is one of the most important next elements. I know that the Palestinians have been concerned and so are the Israelis, to have calm in this period of time. It has been a good thing that thus far the Palestinian factions have more or less respected that calm, but that isn't a substitute for the dismantling of the terrorist organizations, because as Abu Mazen himself has said, you can only have one authority and one gun.

QUESTION: Right.

SECRETARY RICE: So the answer to the question, what comes next, is that one of the obligations in the roadmap is that the Palestinian Authority should have unified security forces that are all under the authority of the Palestinian Authority and its leadership, its elected leadership. There will be elections in January. But the Palestinian Authority is going to have to deal with the infrastructure of terrorism, that's one of its obligations.

QUESTION: So the -- is it still then the U.S. position that disarmament, dismantling are the next steps for Israel in the expected steps on the right --

SECRETARY RICE: No, I'm not talking about a sequencing here because the roadmap is assiduously not sequencing one step after another. It gives, in parallel, certain obligations to both sides. And the obligation of the Palestinians has to do with the dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and organizations and they're going to have to do it.

QUESTION: And so what should Israel do right now, after Gaza?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the Israelis will have certain obligations as well about the continued freeing of Palestinian movement and conditions on the West Bank. That's one of the obligations. I think that we would hope that there is progress again on the Sharm agenda where the Israelis, if you remember, were handing over cities to the Palestinians.

QUESTION: Right. Which has regressed since then.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, no, I just think it's -- it's, frankly, people have been very focused on the disengagement and that's fine. Let them do this well. But my only point to Joel is that there is plenty to do after the disengagement that is already really prescribed in things that they've agreed to in the past, so let's get back on that track. Nobody wanted them to be so focused, I think -- at least we did not -- on what might come next, that they didn't nail down the details on how to get to Gaza disengagement.

There also is going to be a period of time, of course, when after the settlers are out and the idea is demobilizing out of Gaza, where the Palestinians are going to have to -- it's not as if the disengagement is going to end --

QUESTION: No. It's weeks.

QUESTION: Two quick questions on --

MR. MCCORMACK: These are going to have to be the last two quick questions.

QUESTION: Are you --

SECRETARY RICE: I know Steve has a couple of questions he wants to ask.

QUESTION: This is a quick one. Do you think you'll go back there in the fall to keep the momentum going?

SECRETARY RICE: Let's see, you know, what's required. We will have a Quartet in New York because the world comes here for the UNGA. And we'll certainly have a Quartet meeting at that time. There's a Quartet envoys meeting that's scheduled for this week and part of their job is to kind of prepare the meeting of the Quartet and I think we'll look at where we are. But by no means do I think that this is the end.

The other thing is, just to close off this question, the question has been put repeatedly to the Israelis and to us that it cannot be Gaza only and everybody says no, it cannot be Gaza only. There is, after all, even a link to the West Bank and the four settlements that are going to be dismantled in the West Bank. Everybody, I believe, understands that what we're trying to do is to create momentum toward reenergizing the roadmap and through that momentum toward the

eventual establishment of a Palestinian state.

QUESTION: So now since we're here at the sufferance of the Secretary of State, I guess I have to ask the question -- (laughter) --

SECRETARY RICE: I have to deal with these guys after you leave for the *New York Times*.

QUESTION: I have to ask the question that you're waiting for me to ask and I'm trying to figure out -- (laughter) -- but I think it might be about public diplomacy.

SECRETARY RICE: That's what I thought you forgot. (Laughter).

QUESTION: I think it's quite unclear what you have meant by restructuring and revamping public diplomacy. Maybe a better investigative reporter than I would have found out by now. But it has been half a year since you said that there were going to be some dramatic changes. Can you give us an inkling?

And, in that context, I want to ask about a statement that you and Karen Hughes have made, which is that public diplomacy is going to have more of a priority now in setting policies. Where can we look for that? For instance, the policy of detaining people in Guantanamo and other places is clearly what seems to be hurting the United States in the Muslim world, almost more than anything else and almost more than any, overwhelming the other things maybe that are positive that are going on. Can we look for some changes in those policies as the United States becomes more conscious of its public image and the damage that that's doing to American interests?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let me kind of rephrase what I think we've been saying, which is that -- not to question your phrasing of it -- but what I remember saying is that I believe fully in the integration of public diplomacy into the policy process because what you can't do, I think, is just, you know, you have policies and you hand them off and you try to communicate them as well as you can. In the modern world, with 24-hour communication and people watching satellite TV and all the time, message and policy are very much a part, you know, two parts of the same coin. And if you don't have both right, then the policy itself is less effective.

And so Karen has been, and will be, very much a part of our policymaking process. She sits in all my major, you know, staff groups. And I expect her to have a role in helping us to see how certain policies will be seen, what the role of certain messages might be. Because if you can't not just communicate the policy, but if the policy and the message are not linked up, I think you have a lot of difficulty in today's world.

As to the question of the six months, I first had to get the right person to do this. And that's how, I think, you have to manage a place like this. I can't do Gaza withdrawal and North Korea and handle my budget reviews and go run public diplomacy. And that's not how one operates a big group, a big department like this. You get really good people in whom you have confidence and you say to them, here's what we want to achieve that goal, let's go do it.

And Karen is that person. She's got my confidence. She's got the President's confidence. She cares about these issues. She's spent an awful lot of time working on Afghanistan, which was a very integrated inside effort, very early on. And so she's got all the right tools to do it. She has been already, in the few days that she's been here, very active.

And by the way, you know, Dina Powell got here ahead of her and has been very active. They are, you know, they're setting up a rapid response unit that is going to work to deal with misinformation and misinterpretation. Sometimes we find that something just gets out into the ether and it's very hard to pull it back once a story has gotten out that the United States is doing X, Y, or Z. We found this out during Afghanistan, that the Taliban would put out all kinds of lies about what we were doing and before we could respond it was already a part of the --

QUESTION: Well, the Koran episode is a good example.

SECRETARY RICE: The Koran episode is a good example. I mean you really have to be responsive. We're putting together a rapid response unit.

QUESTION: Would that involve people in the regions?

SECRETARY RICE: I -- yeah --

QUESTION: It will be sort of super public diplomacy.

SECRETARY RICE: Right. Well, I'll leave it to Karen to, at some point, describe this whole system because one thing that she's doing is she's consulting pretty widely right now with our public affairs officers in the field, with our ambassadors, with people who know how -- the problems with how we've been operating and I think once she has done that -- and she's doing that really rather rapidly -- she intends to make some recommendations on exactly how this would work. But what we found with rapid response is it does have to be 24-hour and at least a lot of it has to be in the field, not back in Washington, just because of the nature of the time cycle.

She's been reaching out -- you know, one thing we understand very well is that we have to have better -- we have to listen more to what people are trying to tell us and she's been meeting with Muslim groups and I think she's been meeting with Muslim students and Muslim clerics and she has been meeting with people like Ed Djerejian, who have been doing these reports and she's also planning some listening events, where she probably will go out and travel and listen to people.

We are both huge fans of exchanges because, you know, whether it was Anwar Sadat or Tony Blair or the many, many people that sit across the table from you when you are with other governments, it seems the number of people who were students in the United States or were on international visitor exchanges, it's an experience for people.

QUESTION: Can you see -- look toward an increase in resources for this?

SECRETARY RICE: I think we will -- we actually increased resources of the --

QUESTION: You have --

SECRETARY RICE: -- '06 request. Yeah.

QUESTION: Over the last few years.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. And I did in '06 and I think we will again.

QUESTION: Additional ones?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we want to do that, but we also want to find a way to have a kind of multiplier effect on that. You know, if 12 people visit, it's one thing. If there were some way to make that experience available so that 1,200 people saw it, that is a -- there's a multiplier effect on that.

So she's got -- she briefed a lot of this to the President and the Vice President and Don and me down in Crawford. So she and Dina are, you know, they're very aggressively pursuing this. And I think you'll see a lot of it.

QUESTION: When will we see the rollout of all of this?

SECRETARY RICE: I think pretty soon.

QUESTION: Besides this weekend in the *New York Times*?

SECRETARY RICE: (Laughter.) I think pretty soon. Pretty soon she'll want to do that.

QUESTION: Did you want to maybe come back to the Guantanamo issue specifically?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, what I don't --

QUESTION: I mean, not to be argumentative but --

SECRETARY RICE: What I don't want to imply is that we're going to change policy because it's unpopular. You know, let me just give you an example that's not Guantanamo. I know that the detainee issue has been very difficult to handle. I think that's partly because not just -- not particularly Guantanamo but because, frankly, some of the images that were there from Abu Ghraib really were inexcusable and inexplicable. And when something like that happens, you just have to say it's inexcusable.

The question on some policies, like detainees, you have to take people out of the fight. You know, we've released some people, they've gone back into the fight and we've met them on the battlefield again in Afghanistan. There's an obligation also to take people off the battlefield, dangerous people off the battlefield, but it's evolving. Guantanamo is a different place now than it was at the beginning. The efforts to make certain that, you know, people are -- that religious issues are treated sensitively have been really, I mean, pretty remarkable at Guantanamo. And a lot of people have been released and sent back and we're still working with other governments to do that. So again, we have to get more of this out, but it's a hard problem. Public diplomacy isn't going to help us with the fact that there's still some hard problems that we're going to have to deal with.

But, you know, if I could just step back for a second, okay, this is a very remarkable time in -- these are big historic changes, not small ones. These are big historic changes. And big historic changes are, by their very nature, pretty complicated, pretty tough, often violent and never move in a straight line. And what I'm doing now, and I'll take a couple of days this week to do, is to look ahead and say, what do I think I'll be trying to do in the fall, you know, what will I be concerned about and worried about and we've organized to do between September and January, because given the pace of events out there, four months is about all we can handle at a time.

And when I look out there and I think about, you know, Iraqi referendum followed by Iraqi elections, Afghan election for the parliament, Egyptian contested elections for the first time. You've had the withdrawal of the Syrians from Lebanon and elections in Lebanon. So we're now internationally, particularly with the French, but also with others, working on a kind of framework to help the Lebanese Government move forward.

We've got reform efforts that we're tracking in Jordan. Of course, women had a right to vote for the first time in Kuwait. The kind of pace of change in the Middle East is such that when I step back and I think, would this have been my list two years ago in August, no. Something very dramatic is changing in the Middle East and it's changing in the direction of -- and I only say "in the direction of" more open, more pluralistic, contested, political environments in which leaders across a wide spectrum are finding it necessary to make at least some reforms toward more open political assistance.

I think you have to say that the effect of Iraq, particularly I would say the elections in Iraq, the President's Second Inaugural, pressing the case that freedom and liberty and democracy are, in fact, universal, not giving in to this argument that you're somehow imposing democracy, you know, as I continue to say to people, you impose tyranny. Democracy is actually more natural for people to want to be able to say what they think. I think it's had a tremendous effect. And of course, it is -- it's complicated and it's difficult. And if you look at a situation like Iraq, it is in many ways much easier to see the violence on your TV screen every day than to see a political process that is going on, sometimes going in a straight line, sometimes zigging and zagging but nonetheless going ahead toward the election of the first free permanent government, really, in the center of the Middle East.

And if you add to that, you know, what we were talking about before, yes, I'll be concerned about what the post-Gaza disengagement environment looks like. This is just a time of tremendous and dramatic change and I think we've had a -- we've made a difference and our goal now is to try to help continue to move those trends forward.

QUESTION: Well, if we had more time, we would ask you about all of those things. (Laughter).

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.
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