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## On-the-Record Briefing by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC

January 12, 2006

(1:00 p.m. EST)

**SECRETARY RICE:** Good afternoon. I have a statement and then I'll be happy to take some questions.

The United States fully supports the decision announced today by the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, France and Germany and by EU Council Secretariat President Solana. We agree that the Iranian regime's defiant resumption of uranium enrichment work leaves the EU with no choice but to request an emergency meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors. That meeting would be to report Iran's noncompliance with its safeguards obligations to the UN Security Council.

We also agree that the removal of seals by the Iranian Government, in defiance of numerous IAEA Board resolutions, demonstrates that it has chosen confrontation with the international community over cooperation and negotiation. As the EU-3 and EU have declared, these provocative actions by the Iranian regime have shattered the basis for negotiation.

We join the European Union and many other members of the international community in condemning the Iranian Government's deliberate escalation of this issue. There is simply no peaceful rationale for the Iranian regime to resume uranium enrichment. We're gravely concerned by Iran's long history of hiding sensitive nuclear activities from the IAEA, in violation of its obligations, its refusal to cooperate with the IAEA's investigation, its rejection of diplomatic initiatives offered by the EU and Russia and now its dangerous defiance of the entire international community.

The Iranian regime's actions have only made worse the "confidence deficit" that IAEA Director General Mr. ElBaradei has previously described. As a result, the IAEA Board of Governors must go forward with a report to the UN Security Council, so that the Council can add its weight in support of the ongoing IAEA investigation.

The Council should call for the Iranian regime to step away from its nuclear weapons ambitions. The United States will encourage the Security Council to achieve this end. We will continue to consult closely with the EU-3 and the EU, with Russia, China and many other members of the international community in the coming days and weeks, as this new diplomatic phase begins and proceeds.

We continue to encourage a peaceful diplomatic solution to this issue, which spares the world from the threat posed by a nuclear armed Iran and which benefits the Iranian people with the possibility of renewed relations and integration with the international community.

Now, I'm happy to take your questions. Anne.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, as you alluded to, there's a pretty loud international chorus for going to the Security Council. Here's a yes or no for you: once there, are you confident -- do you have assurances that you have the votes for the Security Council to impose sanctions or take some other meaningful action?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the first step is to refer this matter to the Security Council and I think there will be an extraordinary meeting and I believe that that step will be taken. There are a variety of options, a variety of tools at the disposal of the international community, once it has been referred to the Security Council. And I think that we will, at a time of our choosing in the international system, begin to actually apply those various means. But I think the first thing to focus on today is the extraordinary outcry from the international system for Iran's defiance, a very strong course of support for further action by the international system. And I think beyond that, we will continue to consult.

Saul.

**QUESTION:** Before you get to the Security Council, how much support do you have from Russia and China? Are they willing to vote yes to refer Iran to the Security Council?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm not going to speak for other countries, but I would just note that there have been many representations to the Iranian Government prior to their taking this action, including representations by other governments you mentioned, that they should not take such an action in defiance of the international community. There have also been statements since the Iranians broke the seals from all of these countries, saying to them that this was a very serious matter. I would note, even today, the Foreign Minister of Russia saying that this kind of activity -- and I'm paraphrasing here -- could cost Iran Moscow's support.

And so, I think it's very clear that everybody believes that a very important threshold has been crossed here, but I don't want to speak for other countries. That's what consultation is for.

Barbara.

**QUESTION:** How do you go about punishing the Iranian regime without punishing the Iranian people? Can you give us some sense of the options that you are thinking about that perhaps could be targeted in a way that they would send the message you want to send?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, it's a very important question, Barbara, and I don't want to try to get into specifics, but I do want to note that we consider what has happened to be at the fault of the Iranian regime. And indeed, the government of President Ahmadi-Nejad has done nothing but confront the international system ever since he came into power, confront the international system in their behavior on the nuclear issue, confront the international system with outrageous statements that I don't think have been made in polite company in many, many, many years.

And so, this is about the Iranian regime and it is the Iranian regime that is isolating Iran and I think you make a good point. Nobody wants to see the Iranian people, for whom we have enormous respect -- it's a great culture, it's a great people that should be on the road to modernization and integration into the international system. We don't want to see those people isolated.

I have said before that I hope that there will be an opportunity for Iranian students to continue to be welcomed in places. I hope that there will be opportunity for Iranian musicians who, if reports are right, can no longer play Beethoven in Tehran, to be outside of Tehran. I would hope that it would be possible for Iranian athletes to be welcomed in places, because this should not be about the Iranian people and I think we will have to look hard at how a strong message is sent that this is really the Iranian regime that is digging into isolation. The Iranian people, frankly, deserve better.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Madam Secretary, with the Palestinian election coming up on January 25th and obviously, a new election in Israel late in March, do you think that Iran is doing this at this time to influence both elections in a negative way? And of course, they've been possibly working along with the Syrians that you've condemned in the last half-day.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, there is no doubt that there are a couple of states in the Middle East that are outside of the direction that the Middle East is generally going, which is a direction toward reform, which is a direction towards support of a resolution between the Palestinians and the Israelis that would be peaceful and, therefore, allowing for the establishment of a Palestinian state. And Syria and Iran are outside that consensus.

If you look at Iran's support for terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah, but also Palestinian rejectionists, if you look at the support that Syria has given to try and destabilize and intimidate Lebanese, then obviously, these states have that in common. Now, I can't judge the motives of the Iranian regime in picking this particular time to pick a fight with the international community. They've been on this path for some time.

I'd go back to March of last year, when our -- yes, of last year, when the United States made the decision to try and give new impetus to the EU-3 negotiations by agreeing, for instance, that the Iranians should be allowed to apply for WTO membership, for removing our objections to that. I talked about potentially spare parts for Iranian aircraft. This was a time when Iran, I think, could see the international community coming together around the strategy that, while recognizing that this was not an issue about their rights to peaceful nuclear energy, would have given them access to peaceful nuclear energy.

We have been on a course, ever since then, where they've not taken repeated opportunities to take the world up on that, so I can't speak to the timing, but I'll say they've been on this course for a good time.

Andrea.

**QUESTION:** Madam Secretary, what is your analysis of why Iran has taken this step? Most people believe that this is not just its very controversial leader, that this is a decision taken by the Ayatollahs as well. So, Iran seems united, as a government, in taking a step that has alienated the rest of the world. And its people seem to be supporting this. If this is for domestic political consumption, what is your analysis of why Iran is moving in this direction? And also, isn't -- aren't economic sanctions a very blunt instrument (inaudible) on an oil producer that will also affect the global market and the United States, the consumers?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we are not yet at the point to talk about specific measures that might be taken once we're in the Security Council. There will be a menu of possibilities, given that once you're in the Security Council the Security Council brings certain authority to an issue like this that the IAEA can not have on its own. So, I think we'll see.

But Andrea, it's entirely possible that the Iranian regime has miscalculated, that they somehow believed that the international community would not unite. I know that there were many expressions of surprise by the Iranian regime on -- at the November 24th vote, when I think it was Venezuela that voted with them. And they were apparently surprised by that and so, perhaps it's just a regime that has miscalculated, that believes that the world will not react in the way that it is indeed reacting. And I would hope that now seeing the very powerful reaction of the international community that Iran would take a step back and look at the isolation that it is about to experience.

As to the Iranian people, the Iranian people -- they can't speak for themselves. This is not a government that is much given to dissent by its people. In fact, it's a government that's gone backwards in those terms over the last several years, a regime that's gone backward. And you do have an unelected few, whom you've mentioned, the Guardian Council and the mullahs, who of course are not connected to the people at all in any process.

So, I don't know how to assess the view of the Iranian people. I do know that everyone is saying that Iran has every right and expectation to be a great technological power, to be a power where science can take place. The Russians' joint venture would have offered Iran a part in an activity concerning nuclear power, but offshore, and without access to technologies that are -- have proliferation risk. So, people were trying, and by the way, if you look back at what the EU-3 -- the package that the EU-3 was offering, people were trying to offer Iran a way to begin to actually realize its potential in the international system.

Now, obviously we have a lot of problems with Iran that are not related to the nuclear issue: the terrorism, the human rights and diplomacy and democracy issues. But what we don't have is a lack of understanding that the Iranian people don't have the capability to speak in their own voice. We understand that the Iranian people deserve better than they've got.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, with the language that you're using here today and that we've heard in this crescendo to the Security Council, people are starting to make comparisons about how it sounded as we led up into the Iraq war. Is that a comparison that you would find appropriate for anyone, including the Iranians, to observe?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think it's always a mistake to reason by analogy. The situations are, of course, very different. The Security Council is a very important step because it brings a certain weight to the IAEA requirements that is currently not there. We would hope that what this will -- we will be able to do is to get the answers that the Iranians need to give to

the IAEA. We would hope to get -- to use the Security Council to get clarification on some of the issues that the Iranians have refused to answer to this point.

So, I would just want to underscore that this is not an issue of the end of diplomacy. I have heard some people say that diplomacy has failed. Well, this particular phase with a specific set of negotiations has not succeeded, but we now enter a new phase in diplomacy and as we prepare to try and achieve a referral, our diplomatic efforts have been quite intense. On Monday, Under Secretary Burns will go to London for a Political Directors meeting. Under Secretary Joseph is on his way -- will be on his way to Vienna to have consultations at the IAEA, but also then onto other capitals. We've gone into major capitals today to talk about the seriousness of this and the importance of a referral and I've been constantly on the telephone. So, we're entering a new phase of diplomacy, but it is still diplomacy and we believe that if the international community stays united, it has a chance to work.

Peter.

**QUESTION:** Yes, Madame Secretary, following up on that, is the EU-3 negotiating process now effectively dead? And if it does go to the Security Council, is there a prospect of reviving the same package and same process there if the Iranians want to (inaudible)?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, this is a question that I think you would have to put to the EU. I read some of the comments that were made in the press conference today. One, I think it was the German Foreign Minister who said it had reached a dead-end. I think that the statement essentially says the basis for negotiation is no longer there, because what the Iranians did was to unilaterally destroy the basis on which the negotiations were taking place, which was that there was going to be a moratorium on these activities, it would be given time to work through these issues, to try to find a solution and they unilaterally -- basically blew up the negotiations. So, it's hard to see what happens in that regard, but clearly, if Iran wants to return to a course where it suspends these activities, stops threatening the world with its defiance, starts answering the questions of the IAEA -- and there are a lot of very important questions in the IAEA, then I suppose that other courses are open. But so far, the Iranians have shown no inclination to do any of that.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, what other tracks are you pursuing to stop Iran from developing nuclear development or capability, such as nonproliferation measures, and how much of your concern about Iran's moves right now are in relation to the President's comments about Israel and wiping Israel off the map and --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, I think that the Iranians should not be confused -- and any of the Iranians, most especially, the President of Iran, should not be confused that his threats about wiping Israel off the map have convinced anybody that they ought to have access to this technology. I mean, in fact, he certainly helped to seal the view that this is a very dangerous power.

But of course, there are many deterrents to Iran trying to carry out any kind of activity against its neighbors or against others in the region and I think that they're probably not confused on that point either. But quite clearly, the world is going to have to pursue this course, which is to try and get appropriate answers. I would hope that there would be greater cooperation to work through things like the Proliferation Security Initiative, to deny, if it should be the case, the transfer of technologies that might be helpful in this regard.

The Iranians have a long history, you know. They were dealing, at one point, with A.Q. Khan. Well, A.Q. Khan was not in the business of peaceful nuclear energy. And so, I think everybody will want to watch for those sorts of issues, so of course, there are other methods, but the main arena is to try and deal with Iran in a way that it will understand its obligations.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Madame Secretary. Can you tell us if there's anything the U.S. can do to increase China's willingness to cooperate? I mean, China has a voracious appetite for oil and they seem to be unlikely to go along with anything that would be near sanctions on Iran's oil, which is something like 2 million barrels a day. I mean --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, again, we're not yet at the stage of discussing specific things that might happen in the Security Council. I think the first thing is to enhance the international coalition that is prepared to hold Iran to account by taking them to the Security Council. I think that that will happen. I will be talking with my Chinese counterpart, I think, very shortly to talk about this.

But China, in its own way, has made clear to Iran that its activities are deeply troubling and I don't think it serves anybody's interest to have a nuclear-armed Iran. And the reason that people are exercised today, as Iran has, in a defiant way, begun these enrichment activities again, is that this could lead to the technologies that lead to a nuclear weapon. And since nobody trusts Iran's protestations that this would be a peaceful program, people are duly alarmed.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, thank you. First of all, Happy New Year.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** This is the first time that I may have come across a leader of a country making such negative and weird statements against another country and also, many calls him a madman in Iran and he doesn't care about his people, he doesn't care about international community, and he is saying that "I will do whatever I have to do and nobody can stop me."

My question is, Madame Secretary, that -- how do you compare him with another madman who is in jail and on trial, Saddam Hussein, and also, do you see any China link with this nuclear weapons with Iran, Madame?

**SECRETARY RICE:** A China link?

**QUESTION:** Link, yeah.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the Iranian activities have been and are being investigated thoroughly by the IAEA and I think they will certainly go to every corner to try and determine where Iran may be getting -- may have gotten its assistance. We do know that there was an A.Q. Khan link at one point.

I'm not going to try to compare people who behave in the way that each of these people has behaved. They have their own -- each of them has their own qualities, let me put it that way. But Ahmadi-Nejad is currently the sitting president of

an important state in the Gulf and on the edge of the Middle East and it is extraordinary that he would say some of the things that he has said.

The one thing that we do know, it has done nothing but increase Iran's isolation every time he's opened his mouth. And so, I don't think he is having a positive effect for the Iranian nation and he's not having a positive effect for the Iranian people.

One final question, yeah.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, you said there are many deterrents to Iran trying to carry out any activity against its neighbors or in the region, but can you tell us what kind of a deterrent Iran's extraordinary influence in Iraq is to the U. S. right now or how that might limit our options?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we are taking Iraq on its own terms. We understand that Iraq and Iran are neighbors and that they should have good relations. And you would hope that this would be an Iran that could pursue relations that were transparent and that were neighborly relations. There's a long history there, though, and I don't see any evidence that the Iraqis, having thrown off the yolk of Saddam Hussein, particularly want to put on the yolk of Iranian mullahs.

It is obviously the case that there are a lot of people who are now part of the governing structure of Iraq who, during the exile days, spent time in Iran, have contacts with Iranians. But I believe you're looking at Iraqi patriots who want a particular future for Iraq and certainly, not one in which you have a Guardian Council -- an unelected Guardian Council that is making, as far as we can tell, most of the important decisions for a population that then has no say. That's not the course that Iraq is on.

I might note that the specter of Iraqis in exile in Iran -- displaced people in Iran voting for a free election in Iraq from the territory of Iran and the specter of Afghans earlier than that voting from the territory of Iran for free elections in Afghanistan, there's a deep irony in that, that Iranians have got to take notice of. And the neighborhood is changing; it's changing quite dramatically. And while there are a couple of states, among them, Syria and Iran, that seem to want to engage in pushing toward some kind of Thermidor, it's not going to happen.

The course of development in the Middle East is toward more openness, not less, toward more democracy, not less, toward a realization that Islam and democracy can exist in the same circumstances. And that, in the final analysis, has got to be threatening to an Iranian regime that relies on coercion and relies on control of its population, not on the consent of its population.

Thanks very much.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:25 p.m.)

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