



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

KEYWORD SEARCH

[Subject Index](#)



[Home](#)

[Issues & Press](#)

[Travel & Business](#)

[Countries](#)

[Youth & Education](#)

[Careers](#)

[About State](#)



You are in: [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#) > [What the Secretary Has Been Saying](#) > [2006 Secretary Rice's Remarks](#) > [February 2006: Secretary Rice's Remarks](#)

Interview With George Stephanopoulos of ABC's This Week

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC
February 12, 2006

02/12/2006 -- [Interview With Bob Schieffer of CBS's Face the Nation](#)

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Good morning, everyone. It is not hot here in the Northeast. We've got our first big snowstorm of the year, but our headliner made it in. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, welcome back to This Week, Madame Secretary.

SECRETARY RICE: Thanks, George. It's nice to be with you.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Let's begin with Iran. Yesterday, the President of Iran, Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad, kicked up the nuclear confrontation again. He said that Iran was considering withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. What are the consequences of that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, clearly Iran is -- if they do so, would only deepen their own isolation. The really remarkable thing over the last several months is that there is really now a tremendous coalition of countries that are saying exactly the same thing to Iran, a coalition of countries in the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors that has now reported the Iranian dossier to the UN Security Council. All members of the Permanent 5 -- China, the United States, Russia, Great Britain and France -- joined in that consensus. Countries like India are in that consensus.

And so the Iranians now need to step back, look at where they are, see that they're isolated on this issue and return to a state in which they go back and seal the activities that they have begun, get back into good graces with the IAEA and get back into negotiations with those who are prepared to offer them a course for civil nuclear power.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: But they seem so intent on pursuing this peaceful nuclear program, and in the past President Bush has said we simply cannot tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran. Can we tolerate an Iran with a nuclear weapon?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's make a distinction here. Iran has a path to a peaceful nuclear program. The Russians have given them a proposal. The Europeans gave them a proposal. There are many ways that they could seek a peaceful nuclear program. The question is: Will they be allowed to have technologies that could lead to a nuclear weapon? That's reprocessing and enrichment. And there, nobody trusts them with that because they've been lying to the international community for 18 years.

An Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a threat, a grave threat, to international peace and security. I think everybody understands that.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The *London Daily Telegraph* reported this morning that strategists at the Pentagon are drawing up plans for devastating bombing raids on Iran and they quote a Pentagon advisor saying, "This is more than just a standard military contingency assessment. This has taken on much greater urgency in recent months."

Have we moved closer to a military strike in recent months?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States remains dedicated to a diplomatic approach to this. We believe that a diplomatic approach that is as robust as the one that we now anticipate, with Russia and China and others united about this, will give us a way to resolve this problem. The President never takes any of his options off the table. People shouldn't want the President of the United States to take options off the table. But there is a diplomatic solution to this. Now that we are in the Security Council, there are many steps that the Security Council can take, authority that the Security Council has, to help enforce IAEA requirements on Iran.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: You singled out the governments of Iran and Syria for inflaming these riots over the Danish cartoons and I want to show you what Secretary General Kofi Annan said about that: "As to the question of whether some governments are manipulating this or not, I have -- it's difficult for me to say that. No evidence to that effect."

What evidence can you offer the Secretary General?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I can say that the Syrians tightly control their society and the Iranians even more tightly. It is well known that Iran and Syria bring protestors into the streets when they wish to make a point. Everyone understands that about totalitarian societies.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: So why do you think he's soft-pedaling here?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'm not going to get into a -- Kofi Annan and I have talked about this issue. We've all talked -- we've talked about the need for governments to act responsibly, for people to walk back now from violence on this issue. Everybody understands, George, that there is a sense of outrage, that there is a sense of -- that these cartoons were inappropriate in the Muslim world, and in much of the world it is viewed that way.

Obviously there is an issue of free speech, but there's also an issue of press responsibility and the United States has been very clear about that. But you don't express your outrage by going out and burning down embassies in Syria. You don't express your outrage by violence that kills innocent standby -- standers-by. You express your outrage peacefully, as people have done in some places.

And let me just note that in some countries -- Afghanistan, the Government of Lebanon, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani -- this point has been made and made over and over that whatever the sense of outrage, violence is not the answer.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: The Danish Prime Minister said, "We are today facing a global crisis that has the potential to escalate beyond the control of governments." Do you agree with that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, certainly if governments do not act responsibly we could face a sense of outrage that spins out of control; and particularly if people continue to incite it, it can spin out of control. I would like to have heard from the Iranian Government, for instance, in terms of what the Iranian Government -- not a threat to start publishing Holocaust cartoons but rather to say that people should not resort to violence. That would have been a responsible response.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: You know, you have singled out both Iran and Syria. While you were doing that, I want to show our viewers and picture. Muqtada al-Sadr, a radical cleric in Iraq, controls about 30, 40 seats in the parliament, was meeting with the Syrian President Bashar Assad and talking about taking on our common enemies, the United States and Israel and Great Britain.

I guess the question I have for you, he's got -- controls many seats in the parliament. You've had other Iraqi officials meet with the Iranians. If you have a government in Iraq that is making this kind of alliances with Iran, with Syria, has the American sacrifice been worth the effort?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States is dedicated to an Iraq where the Iraqis can freely express their views. They have done so now in three elections.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Even if they ally with Syria and Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think you're going to see an Iraq "allied with Syria and Iran." These are their neighbors. They need to have good relations with their neighbors. We have never suggested that Iraq should not have good relations with either Syria or Iran.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: But he's talking about "our common enemies" -- the U.S., Britain and Israel.

SECRETARY RICE: This is a particular figure within Iraqi politics who, I might note, will now have to operate within the context of a broader coalition of forces within Iraq who see the United States as a supporter and friend. I think one shouldn't simply take out the comments of Muqtada al-Sadr. Look also at the comments of the larger elements of the Shia alliance. Look at the comments of the Sunnis who are now working closely with us. Look at the comments of the Kurds. Iraq is a complex place; there's a lot of voices.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: But he's a significant force behind the new Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari, isn't he?

SECRETARY RICE: There are many forces behind the apparent election of -- or selection of Jafari for the UIA candidate for prime minister, but there are many forces in Iraq. George, the good thing about a democratic process is that you have many voices, not one. And when you think about the Kurds, who are also a significant bloc, a more significant bloc,

by the way, that Muqtada al-Sadr, or when you think about the Shia forces that are not radical forces, when you think about the Sunnis who have organized themselves also into a significant bloc, you can see that what Iraq is driving toward is a government of national unity where of course there are going to be voices that we don't like, but there are also an awful lot of voices that are talking about an Iraq that is a tolerant Iraq, an Iraq that will fight terrorism, an Iraq that will be open to trade and investment and an Iraq that is going to be an Iraq where all Iraqis have a place.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: On another matter, this week we saw from the special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald, he had a letter where he said, "It is our understanding Mr. Libby" -- Lewis Libby, the Vice President's National Security Advisor -- "testified that he was authorized to disclose information about the NIE," National Intelligence Estimate, "to the press by his superiors." You were National Security Advisor at the time. Did you authorize anything like that?

SECRETARY RICE: George, this arises in the context of a legal case, it arises in the context of an investigation, and I'm going to respect the legal process. I'm not going to --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: So no comment at all? Not a --

SECRETARY RICE: No comment.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Finally, the politics of national security really came front and center this week as well. You saw in the open Vice President Cheney, Senator Clinton. Let me show you a little bit more about what Senator Clinton had to say: "I take a back seat to nobody when it comes to fighting terrorism and standing up for national and homeland security, but even there we could have done a better job than we have done. You cannot explain to me why we have not captured or killed the tallest man in Afghanistan. (Laughter.)" Of course, Usama bin Laden. Can you give the senator an explanation?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, certainly. He's hiding and he's hiding effectively. But I'll tell you, he's on the run. He's not the figure who sat for the entire period of the 1990s in Afghanistan with training camps there able to carry out operations, able to use the territory of Afghanistan as a base for his operations, able to launch effective attacks against the United States, against our embassies, against the Cole and ultimately against us on September 11th, 2001. So yes, we are dealing with a figure who has been able to hide, but he's on the run. His organization has been significantly weakened because of the international effort against al-Qaida in places like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. We now have an ally in Afghanistan that is fighting against Usama bin Laden and al-Qaida. We now have allies in Pakistan who are fighting against Usama bin Laden and al-Qaida. That's a very different situation than we faced in the '90s --

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Should national --

SECRETARY RICE: And even if it's going to take us time to find Usama bin Laden, we are breaking up the al-Qaida network and having an effect.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Should national security be fair game in an election year?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, obviously there's going to be a debate about national security. We're a democracy. It's going to happen. But I will, and I know the President will, stay focused on what we need to do. And what we need to do is to continue to break down these terrorist networks, continue through law enforcement and intelligence to do that, but also

to have a hopeful future to which people can rally, a future that is a democratic future, a future in which people have the right to say who's going to govern them, a future in which women have a place. That ultimately is going to create a different kind of Middle East, a Middle East that will not spawn the kind of hatred that produced the terrorists of 2001.

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Madame Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much.

2006/176

Released on February 12, 2006

 [BACK TO TOP](#)



[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[About state.gov](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)