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Interview on Hearst TV with Laurie Kinney

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC

April 13, 2006

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, thanks for spending time with us today.

SECRETARY RICE: A pleasure to be with you.

QUESTION: You said several times this week that when the United Nations reconvenes on the issue of Iranian nuclear ambitions, that they must take very strong steps to stop Iran from continuing to enrich uranium. Can you be specific about how strong sanctions you would support up to and including possible limits on Iranian oil exports?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the Security Council has many options at its disposal. Clearly, we're going to have to consider measures that are consistent with Iranian behavior. Iran has done nothing since the last Security Council -- the presidential statement in the Security Council -- but defy the international community. So we're not going to have another presidential statement.

Now, what measures we will take, obviously we will have to discuss with other members of the Security Council and there are different means that could be used. You could use asset freezes, you could use financial measures. No one has to jump to the idea -- you could use political isolation. And by the way, the Iranian Government is doing a very fine job of isolating itself already from the international community, not the Iranian people, nobody wishes to isolate, but the Iranian regime, so there are any number of possible measures. I know that our European colleagues have been talking about what might be possible, but the Security Council has got to act. That's the most important thing, so that we can maintain the credibility of the international system.

QUESTION: Is U.S. military action on the table?

SECRETARY RICE: Look, the President isn't going to take any of his options off the table. We are on a diplomatic

course. We believe that a concerted, strong diplomatic activity, action, can indeed work, that Iran is not a state that wishes to be isolated. And that if the world community really stays together with a strong, singular message that, in fact, we can get Iran to comply. But the President doesn't take any of his options off the table.

QUESTION: What is the Administration's position on regime change in Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we believe that the Iranian people certainly deserve all of the rights that are there for other people around the world. The President's been very clear in his democracy agenda that he believes that there are no people on earth who should not have the ability to choose those who are going to govern them, and I mean really choose them, not have some number of people put up by a Guardian Council and other people rejected as candidates. The President's been very clear that he believes that the right to free speech is something that every human should have, and so the Iranian people deserve those rights as well.

QUESTION: Do you hope that regime change will, in fact, occur?

SECRETARY RICE: We're concentrating on the behavior of this regime. We're concentrating on the fact that it is a regime that has defied the international community on its nuclear ambitions and a regime that is the central banker of terrorism in places like Lebanon and the Palestinian territories and that it's behaving badly in Iraq in ways that are really exacerbating an already tense security situation. And of course we're concerned about the treatment of the Iranian people. But this is about the behavior of the regime. That is where the international consensus is and we are part of that international consensus.

QUESTION: Let's talk about Iraq for a moment. Where do we stand now in comparison with where we perhaps had hoped to be at this stage?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, clearly the Iraqis are in a struggle for the establishment of a stable and prosperous democracy. But you have to expect that after years of tyranny and years of sectarian division, years in which this was a society that found ways to overcome its differences through either repression or fear or violence that it was going to be difficult to build a democracy and I don't think anybody expected anything but that.

Now, I've seen tremendous changes in Iraq and to the positive side. I was in Iraq just very recently. I had been there in November. When I was there in November, I saw a Sunni leadership that was actually pretty isolated from the political process, where there was not a really strong Sunni voice in the process of coming to terms with what kind of government they would have. The security forces have certainly improved. I was on the highway between the airport, the so-called international zone, it is now protected by Iraqi forces; that was not the case only a number of months ago.

So, yes, it's still difficult. There clearly are threats of sectarian violence. It's clear that the Iraqis need to get a government and get one quickly. But they've also made a lot of progress and we need to note that.

QUESTION: As an original architect of the Iraq policy, how do you feel when you see the President's approval ratings sinking lower and many attributing it to what has become an unpopular war?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I know that the President cares only about one thing, and that is that the Middle East is a

place that is more secure, more democratic, that's no longer producing the kind of ideology of hatred that led people to fly airplanes into our buildings one fine September day, and that this is a President who is always going to do what is right for the international system and right for history.

Now, the fact of the matter is that you can't judge these things in daily headlines or daily polls. You can only try and lay a foundation for a better world. It takes bold, sometimes controversial and difficult decisions to do that, and this President took the right decision in deciding that it was time to deal with the threat of Saddam Hussein, time to give the people of Iraq a chance for a better future. And in doing so, time to lay one of the pillars for a different kind of Middle East which will not just make the Middle East better but will make America more secure.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you briefly about North Korea. There's a new threat from North Korea this week. They're saying that they're going to take this break in the disarmament talks to build up their purported arsenal. Are they going to be allowed to multiply their arsenal on the Administration's watch?

SECRETARY RICE: The North Koreans say all kinds of things all the time. And what they need to do is come back to the six-party talks. Now that's what all of their neighbors want them to do. That's what the international community wants them to do, because this is really a regime that is isolated from the international system and it's only deepening its isolation with these threats and with these words. I might note just, too, that of course the North Koreans are not confused about the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. We have a very strong alliance with the South Koreans. We have, of course, a good deterrent with our forces and with theirs. And so I don't think the North Koreans are confused about the security situation on the Peninsula.

Thank you.

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