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Interview on Fox & Friends

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

New York City

May 10, 2006

MR. KILMEADE: Iran's president defends his country's right to pursue nuclear technology, but the U.S. and several European allies continue to search for a diplomatic solution and it's not easy. With us right now is a woman that knows how hard it is, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Ms. Secretary, thanks so much for coming to the studio today.

SECRETARY RICE: Thanks, a pleasure to be with you.

MR. KILMEADE: We've moved to make sure it was nicer for you. Do you like the new studio?

SECRETARY RICE: I like the new studio. It looks great.

MR. KILMEADE: I think it's ready for you. Now first off, some tough sledding when it comes to Iran. They pen an 18-page letter. I had a chance to go through it after translation, trusting the translation; kind of direct, kind of meandering; the President's not adhering to Jesus' principles, 9/11 planned by the intelligence community, democracy has failed. Aside from that, did you get anything out of it?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't think it was a diplomatic overture, as some have asked, "Why did you not take it as a diplomatic overture?" It clearly wasn't. It was, as you said, a kind of philosophical, historical, and, indeed, religious attack on the President's policies and on American policy and, indeed, on our very system of government. But the sad thing is that it didn't take the opportunity to actually address the problems that the international community is concerned about: the nuclear ambitions of Iran, Iran's activities with terrorism. None of that is addressed in this letter.

MR. KILMEADE: In response, you dismissed the letter yesterday. Would you say that's accurate? In response, your counterpart over in Iran says, "This could have been a turning point in relations with the U.S., but the Secretary of

State has squandered it with her hasty reaction." Do you see the fact that the first time they tried to communicate in 27 years was a positive?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, had it really been a communication that said, "Let's talk about the problems that we face," rather than a simple attack on the United States and on everything that we've done and really no opening on the issues that are of concern to people -- so I didn't consider it a diplomatic overture. And we are in the midst of diplomacy concerning Iran. I think that that diplomacy will ultimately work, but this letter did not have an effect. For instance, it had absolutely no effect on the meetings and discussions that I had with our ministers.

MR. KILMEADE: You have France, the U.K., and the U.S. all on the same page.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

MR. KILMEADE: You have China and Russia on the same page, which doesn't seem to be your page. Have they said to you behind closed doors, "Look, I really don't care what you do. We're not going to extend -- we're not going to just have sanctions against them no matter what you want?"

SECRETARY RICE: Well, what we have is a complete agreement that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon and complete agreement that the Security Council needs to send a strong message. We have some tactical differences on how that message might be sent. And so our allies, particularly the Europeans, thought that it would be a good idea to continue for a couple of weeks to lay out a very clear course for the Iranians that says, "Here's the path in which you get a civil nuclear program that's acceptable to the international community. Here is the path in which you end up isolated."

There will be action in the Security Council. The question is, is Iran perhaps ready to take the option of a civil nuclear program that's acceptable? But we're going to take action in the Security Council. We felt that a couple of weeks to try and bring everybody together was not too much to pay.

MR. KILMEADE: Do you think -- why is it, do you think, that China and Russia don't see Iran getting a nuclear weapon as a threat? Why do you think that they're almost responding to us rather than reacting in their own interest in viewing them as a threat?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I wouldn't put it quite like that. I do think they see Iran with a nuclear weapon as a threat. After all, Iran lives a lot closer, for instance, to Russia.

MR. KILMEADE: But Ms. Secretary, isn't it true that -- didn't China just sign, like a \$100 million deal, pact with Iran just a couple of weeks ago?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the fact is that a lot of countries have economic relations with Iran, including some of our allies, lots of trade relations with Iran, a lot of economic activity with Iran. But Iran needs to understand that a lot of that may be at risk if it continues down this path. And while we are pursuing the course in the Security Council, and there will be action in the Security Council, we're also looking at what likeminded states may wish to do on the financial side if the Security Council is not able to act. Because it is important to let Iran know that there's going to be a price to be paid for the activity that they're involved in.

MR. KILMEADE: And do you think it's important to keep the military option on the table?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the President's going to keep all of his options on the table and I think people shouldn't want the President of the United States to start taking options off the table. But he is committed to a diplomatic course. We believe that a unified diplomatic course will work. And Iran does not want to experience the kind of isolation that it will experience if it continues down the path that it's on.

MR. KILMEADE: You're a master of diplomacy and you're also a master of the Soviet culture, now the Russian culture. But it was the Vice President of the United States that was in with the Russian officials and had a statement to the effect of, "Oh, by the way, don't use your oil to blackmail and what about the rights you had 10 years ago? They seem to be gone." Is that going to help or hurt Russian relations?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it's just a statement of fact about U.S.-Russian relations and I think we have to be straightforward and clear with the Russians what we think.

MR. KILMEADE: Still an ally, though?

SECRETARY RICE: The Russians are clearly still, in many ways, an important partner. But what the Vice President was speaking to and what we've spoken to, really, for the last couple of years is that there is concern about the course internally in Russia, where freedom of the press, nongovernmental organizations are not free to operate as they once did. And this strategy now that emerged at the new year of using oil and gas as a kind of political weapon against neighbors is really troubling.

MR. KILMEADE: Which they denied, by the way, but the Vladimir Putin that you met six, seven years ago one-on-one as a national security advisor and the one you have today, has he changed course?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I do think that this was a country -- is a country that has been evolving. And of course, nothing is set, but the direction on the internal politics has been in a direction that I think we would not have wanted to see. But let me just say, look, as the President said, the jury is still out. Nobody is going to give up on Russia. It's too important a relationship. But we have to speak clearly about what we really think is going on there or we're not going to be able to have an effect on policy.

QUESTION: What has changed about our stance with supporting the Hamas Palestinian Government?

SECRETARY RICE: Nothing changed with the Quartet statement. As a matter of fact, yesterday the Quartet statement, the international body that oversees the peace process, really made a very strong statement that Hamas has not lived up, has not acceded, to the requirements to recognize that Israel has a right to exist, to forego terrorism and violence; and that as a result, we are concerned about the Palestinian people and their well-being, and so we agreed to look at an international mechanism that might be able to get funding directly to the Palestinian people rather than to the Hamas government. But I think it's probably telling: the Israelis, who have said that they support this; Hamas has not.

QUESTION: But you have not said for sure you're going to give humanitarian aid directly to the Palestinian people yet,

but you're considering doing that?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, no, we want to give humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. Indeed, yesterday we made available \$10 million in in-kind for medicines, needed medicines. We are going to give humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. The question is: Is there a way, a mechanism, to be able to help with essential services for the Palestinians and the like? And that's what was being addressed yesterday.

QUESTION: The Prime Minister of Iraq during the last year or so seems to be a -- seemed to have been a complete failure, maybe well-intentioned but the charisma of an old shoe. This new Prime Minister, he's given you a reason for hope; am I correct?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I do think that the new Prime Minister-designate is somebody who shows a kind of energy and focus and an understanding that, as he put it, the Iraqi people have had enough and it's time to respond. But to be fair, this Prime Minister has the advantage of heading the first permanent government for Iraq. Every other government was there to do something else, to set up elections or to write a constitution. They now have the responsibility -- this government -- of governing for four years, and I think you're seeing a difference in attitude as a result.

QUESTION: So, and hopefully coming together and he's close to naming his cabinet?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: There's one thing that's caused a little attention on our set. You have a lot of anchors to choose from on Fox and Friends to have lunch with, and oftentimes I'm hungry and I look at the phone and it doesn't ring, and Steve and Edie have said the same thing. And I think okay, I'm on my own again for lunch. You did make a choice of a Fox and Friends anchor to have lunch with. Full-time he's a running back with the New York Giants: Tiki Barber. Why Tiki? Why not us?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I watch him when he's on the show. He's a great anchor. He's also a great running back. That might have had something to do with it.

QUESTION: What kind of eating partner was he and is there going to be a subsequent event? Because he's bragging that every time he goes to D.C. you're a phone call away.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we had a wonderful time. We talked some about foreign policy. As you know, he has a great interest in foreign policy. And of course we talked a little bit about analyzing the NFL draft as well. It was just the week after the draft.

QUESTION: And then it's back to Iran. It's more fun to break down the draft than it is Iran, actually?

SECRETARY RICE: Sometimes I think that's right. The analysis is pretty tough.

QUESTION: But if you had Leinart at number ten, I'd truly be in awe of you. Who would have thought the Cardinals

were going to take him?

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah.

QUESTION: But Ms. Secretary, I know you're going to have your hands full today. And overall, the last statement just about Iran. Are you optimistic that we're going to see five Security Council members shaking hands saying we've got something?

SECRETARY RICE: I do believe -- I'm optimistic -- that we are going to have action in the Security Council. We are going to take the time to try to bring the Security Council together in a more unified way. We are going to take the time so that the Europeans can show the Iranians what a path might look like. But there will be action to demonstrate to the Iranians that they can't continue on the path that they're on. That has to be the case.

QUESTION: Hopefully, they get the message. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, always great to see you.

SECRETARY RICE: Good to see you, too.

QUESTION: It's good to see you're enjoying the job so much, even though it seems to be a whole lot of pressure.

SECRETARY RICE: Right. No, I am enjoying it very much.

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