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Interview by Thalia Assuras of CBS News

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Vienna, Austria

June 2, 2006

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you got the deal you came here to get, but Iran rebuffs any preconditions. So how is this going to work?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I hope that the Iranian Government will take a little time to think about the proposal that is being presented to it. This is a way out of the impasse if Iran indeed wants a way out of the impasse. Iran has said that it has a right to civil nuclear power. That is acknowledged. But that civil nuclear program has to be one that is acceptable and doesn't have the proliferation risk associated with fuel cycle work on Iranian territory, enrichment and reprocessing.

So the Iranians I hope will take a little time. They don't yet have a proposal. That proposal is now agreed and I think we'll go to them in the next several days. But let's give it a little time.

QUESTION: But if Iran doesn't engage, there are punitive measures. Will they have any real teeth, say a boycott of Iranian oil?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I'm not going to get either into the positive incentives or into the path that we will take if Iran does not negotiate. But let me say that there is absolute seriousness and commitment on the part of the countries that met here in Vienna that Iran now has two paths before it. One is a path that would give Iran considerable benefits, including civil nuclear power. The other, though, is a path that goes to the Security Council again and can use then the full weight of the Security Council to isolate Iran. So this is an important choice for the Iranian Government. I think we're all prepared to wait a few days and talk to the Iranians first before there is a public discussion of what is in the package.

QUESTION: You have said again and again there are two paths here, but this is a moment of truth. It sounds an awful lot like an ultimatum to Iran.

SECRETARY RICE: There's not an ultimatum here but there is a choice, and the international community needs to know if Iran intends to negotiate seriously. After all, this has been going on now for a very long time. The Paris talks broke down more than two years ago. The Europeans have put proposals on the table. The Russians have put proposals on the table. Now the United States has said that it's prepared to join the negotiations. And the condition that Iran suspend its program has been the condition of the IAEA Board of Governors, of the presidential statement in the Security Council, indeed the Europeans' own condition at the time of the breakdown of the talks.

So it is a moment of truth, but Iran should take this opportunity.

QUESTION: You just said that this has already been going on for a very long time, this new offer to face-to-face talks multilaterally with the United States. How much longer then is the United States willing to deal diplomatically?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we need to know and I think we need to know not in months, we don't have months to wait. But we have some time here. I think weeks, not months, is the way to think about it. And let's give the Iranians a little time. I'm quite certain that there is a lot to digest and, as I said, they've not yet seen the proposal. But what is clear is that the international community understands that Iran faces a choice, and so hopefully they'll make the right choice.

QUESTION: Weeks, not months. What does that really mean?

SECRETARY RICE: I'm not one who's given to deadlines and timetables. I think we want to have the diplomacy take its natural course now. But it's obvious to everyone that this has been going on for a while and we need to know whether there is a real opportunity for negotiation or not.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, thank you very, very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much.

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