



## Remarks with Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Stockholm, Sweden  
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#### [Video Excerpt](#)

**PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT:** Good morning to you all. We have had very good talks. We have touched on a number of foreign policy issues, although the main focus, of course, has been the discussion on the development in Iraq. A stable and successful Iraq is in the strategic interest of all of us. The International Compact with Iraq Conference is an important step in showing that the international community must increase its engagement to support Iraq, not least through trade and investments and also increased diplomatic presence.

Although there has been progress as regards security and stability, we need to permanently break the downward spiral in Iraq. National reconciliation is central to achieve a political process that promotes long-term stability and security. This is necessary to clear the way for political and economic development in the country, but also to promote human rights, not least for women.

I have today brought up that – the issue of Iraqi refugees during our meeting. Sweden has received more than 40,000 refugees from Iraq since 2003, by far the largest share of all EU countries and more than the U.S., and I stressed the importance of burden sharing among nations and the special responsibility of the U.S.

We also talked about the situation in the Middle East, and I welcome the U.S. President's increased efforts during his last months in office to work towards peace in the region.

Madame Secretary.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much, Prime Minister, and I want to thank you first of all for welcoming me here in Sweden. I also want to thank you for hosting this very important Compact meeting for Iraq. This is an opportunity for the international community to take stock of the situation in Iraq, to look at the obligations that the international community has undertaken, as well as the obligations that Iraq has undertaken, to achieve the goal that we all share, which is a stable, democratic, and peaceful Iraq that can be a good citizen in the region and a good citizen internationally.

The Swedish Government, I know, has worked very hard on this Compact meeting and I look forward to its proceedings later today.

I want to thank you, too, for the work that you have done for Iraqi refugees. It has been a difficult circumstance. The security situation has necessitated many people leaving their homes. Sweden, indeed, has done a great deal and it is very much appreciated, not just by Iraqis but by the United States.

The United States is the largest donor to the UN effort for the Iraqi refugees, and we are trying to improve our capacity to bring Iraqi refugees to the United States. I've done so by having an Iraqi Refugee Coordinator, who works full-time on this work for me. But it is also important to note that as Iraq becomes a safer place, Iraqis should be able to return to their home, Iraq. And our conversations with the Iraqi Government about putting resources into the refugee issue, making it possible for Iraqis to return home in an orderly fashion, it's very much a part of the conversation that I have had with Prime Minister Maliki, with Foreign Minister Zebari, and we will continue to press that case.

Thank you also for the very good discussion that we had of the Middle East and for Sweden's longstanding support of Middle East peace and the efforts there. We've also had a chance to discuss Kosovo and also climate change and the upcoming EU presidency for Sweden. In terms of climate change, I assured the Prime Minister that the United States is thoroughly committed to a success for the UN Framework Convention, thoroughly committed to dealing with the problems of greenhouse gas emissions, of climate change and of their human dimension, and thoroughly committed to a system in which all states, including the emerging economies like China and India, can participate to deal with this very difficult problem.

And so thank you. I think we had a very good beginning and I look forward to further conversations.

**MODERATOR:** Okay. Questions. The first one over there in the back.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, (inaudible), Swedish television. What does this Administration hope to achieve in Iraq before the next president is sworn in?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the Iraqis themselves are making considerable progress toward the achievement of an Iraq that is more stable, that has functioning institutions, and where security is improving. And it is therefore the Administration's intention to help them do that. This is not something that America can achieve or that the coalition can achieve. It's something that Iraqis must achieve. And if you look at the most recent developments on the security front, you see that the Iraqi state, in the form of Iraqi security forces, did take on militias and criminals in Basra and return Basra to Iraqi state control. You see that Iraqi security forces are patrolling Sadr City. You see that Iraqi forces are fighting in Mosul to rid that country of al-Qaida. Now, that's very much a part of it. But Iraq is increasingly a functioning state. The question is: Can it be a capable and functioning state?

And one reason that this meeting is important to the International Compact is that the Iraqis – this isn't a donor conference. The Iraqis don't need large sums of money. They do need large infusions of technical assistance, project support, helping to build adequate police forces, helping to build an adequate justice system, helping to build the capacity to execute their large budgets down to the provincial and the local levels.

These are the kinds of things that, now that the security situation is improving, I would hope the international community would accelerate its efforts to help make Iraq a capable state. They're passing the legislation for national reconciliation, but they need to be a capable state. And I mentioned to the Prime Minister that this is, of course, not an artifact of the last five years. This is the fact that from the time of Saddam Hussein and the tyranny there, followed then by very difficult and, frankly, fairly harsh international sanctions, the state simply hasn't functioned. And now, we have to build it into a functional, functioning and decent state. So helping them on matters of corruption, helping them on matters of human rights, that's – these are the things that we look to do.

**QUESTION:** Yes, Madame Secretary. Now it's on. Okay, now it's on. How can you lead a new international consensus on rebuilding Iraq when there are these new charges from Scott McClellan detailing that the Bush Administration misled the U.S. and the world into an unnecessary war in Iraq?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm not going to comment on a book that I haven't read, but I will say that the concerns about weapons of mass destruction in Saddam

Hussein's Iraq were the fundamental reason for tens – for dozens of resolutions within the Security Council from the time that Saddam Hussein was expelled from Kuwait in 1991 up until 2003. It was not the United States of America alone that believed that he had weapons of mass destruction, that he was hiding weapons of mass destruction that led him to throw inspectors out, effectively to so limit them that they left in 1998, leading the Clinton Administration to take military action against Iraq. It was not the United States alone that knew that Saddam Hussein had, of course, used weapons of mass destruction both against his own population and against Iranians. And it was not the United States alone that asked why Saddam Hussein would not answer the questions of weapons inspectors even under the threat of serious consequences after Resolution 1441 in 2002.

So the story is there for everyone to see. You can't now transplant yourself into the present and say we should have known things that we, in fact, did not know in 2001, 2002, 2003. The record on weapons of mass destruction was one that appeared to be very clear. Now, if the world did not believe that at the time, then I would ask: Why was Iraq under some of the most severe sanctions that the international community has ever imposed? I think it is because the world knew that Saddam Hussein was a threat; he was a threat not just because of his appetite for weapons of mass destruction, but he was a threat also because he continued to flaunt the terms of the armistice which he had signed in 1991 to end that war, he continued to threaten his neighbors, and of course, he didn't just threaten but, in fact, tyrannized his own people, including 300,000 Iraqis in mass graves.

So the threat from Saddam Hussein was well understood. You can agree or disagree about the decision to liberate Iraq in 2003. But I would really ask: Do people really believe that he was not a threat to the international community? And if you believe that he was not a threat to the international community, then why in the world were you allowing the Iraqi people to suffer under the terms of Oil-for-Food?

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, what is America's biggest mistake in Iraq?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Oh, look, I've said many times that there will be plenty of time to go back and look at what we might have done differently. I'm sure there are many things we could have done differently. I will go back to Stanford and I will probably oversee dissertations about mistakes of the Bush Administration. I'll happily do it from my academic perch.

But it is the character of history to not understand the full implications of what has been done until well into the future. I remind people all the time that history's judgment and today's headlines are rarely the same.

The one thing that I am certain was not a mistake was to liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein. They are in the process now of building a decent society in which they actually are beginning to solve their problems by politics, not by either violence or repression. They have a chance to build a decent society and to integrate into the international community rather than be shunned by it, as they have been during the time of Saddam Hussein because of his actions. And they have an opportunity to be, actually, a stabilizing force in the Middle East that, frankly, could use decent, democratizing, tolerant states.

So I am very sure that the liberation of Iraq from Saddam Hussein was the right thing to do. And I'm sure that there are many things that we might have done differently to make the road easier. We did some things well, probably some things not so well. And over time, history will have a chance to judge.

**QUESTION:** You can't mention one mistake?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I said, I will assess those issues at an appropriate time. But the one thing that I know that was not a mistake was to liberate the Iraqi people from the monster that was Saddam Hussein.

**QUESTION:** I wanted to ask both of you about Iran. I just wanted to clarify something, Madame Secretary, beforehand. I don't think the issue here was whether Saddam had been a threat, but whether the Administration misled the American people and its allies internationally about the reasons for going to war. So if you can just briefly address this.

**SECRETARY RICE:** The President was very clear about the reasons for going to war: Saddam Hussein was a threat; Saddam Hussein was a threat to his own people and to the international community; he had flown in the face of repeated Security Council resolutions that demanded that he do something about his weapons of mass destruction, that he allow full access, that he come clean about what he had there, and that Resolution 1441 threatened serious consequences if he did not. And I think if you go back and you read, you will see that's exactly what the President said.

**QUESTION:** And on Iran, the Iranian Foreign Minister is here and Iran is a full participant in this process on -- in the International Compact. The Swedish Foreign Minister yesterday said that as far as Iran has been engaged in this process it's actually been helpful. But I wanted to ask you there are reports that Iran is using its hundreds of billions of dollars for oil revenues not for its own economy and its improvement, but to pretty much buy off other countries and buy support from other countries for its own nuclear program that you say is in violation of international norms. Do you have any indication that, indeed, Iran is using oil revenues for -- to buy influence around the world, and are you concerned about that?

**PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT:** Well, of course, we are concerned about the role of Iran. You are now in Sweden. This is a country built on the belief that people of different beliefs should be able to live side by side with each other. And when we come to Middle East, to Iraq and Iran, it's very much the belief that you should point out from what kind of group you are coming from. Are you a Shia? Are you a Sunni? Are you a Christian believer? And of course, we see a link between Iran and, of course, the view that the Shia Muslims should be -- should be in control. And this is a discussion that we also have here in Sweden. So we had a discussion about how we could put diplomatic pressure on Iran not to have a negative role, first of all, in Iraq, but not a negative role in the whole of the region.

**SECRETARY RICE:** I don't know how to trace how Iran is using its money for influence. I can tell you that it is having a much more difficult time using its money, period, because it is being denied access to the international financial system. And we should be doing everything that we can to even -- to deny it in even greater fashion access to the international financial system for ill-gotten gains. And so whether it is through UN Security Council resolutions that insist on vigilance in terms of export credits for Iran, or whether it is through the designations that the United States Treasury has done of the IRGC and the Qods Force and a number of Iranian banks which are engaged in transferring funds around from activities for terrorism or to activities for terrorism or for proliferation, we should be doing everything that we can. Because as my colleague Hank Paulson said, when you're doing business with Iran, you don't actually know who you're doing business with.

And given that, I think the investment and reputational risk of learning that you may be dealing with those who are dealing with terrorism or proliferation is worth countries taking a second look.

**PRIME MINISTER REINFELDT:** Okay, Madame Secretary. Thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you.

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