

## Interview With the CBS News Editorial Board

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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**QUESTION:** I'm told by your staff that it's an on the record session, which is great for us. Do you want to introduce yourself, just so we know who you are?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Sean.

**MR. MCCORMACK:** Sean McCormack. I'm the Press Secretary at the State Department.

**MR. GUNDERSON:** Brian Gunderson, the Chief of Staff at the Secretary's office.

**MR. WILKINSON:** Jim Wilkinson, Senior Advisor.

**QUESTION:** Right -- we had a lot of time to bond with him. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** We know everybody.

**SECRETARY RICE:** You can't find from a better person and he is terrific.

**QUESTION:** I know you have a really packed week, you know, in New York and we're very glad you included us in your schedule and we welcome the chance to catch up on a bunch of fronts. I thought maybe Bob could start us off.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Why don't you tell us what's been going on in Baghdad? We've all been focused on the hurricane. How are you -- what's the situation in Iraq right now?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Right. Well, let me talk a little bit about the political situation

because I think that the most interesting thing to me about Iraq is that politics has broken out in Iraq in a really major way. And the Iraqis seem to enjoy politics. Not always to a conclusion on a deadline that we might have hoped for but they are continuing their political dialogue about the constitution. So the constitution is in draft. There are still discussions going on. I would not say about major changes to the constitution but about whether an issue here or an issue there might bring a little bit more support for the constitution when it goes to referendum.

Even those who have said that they don't like certain elements of the constitution have said that there are elements of the constitution that they do like. And I think it's going to be a very interesting set of discussions leading up to the referendum. It'll be, I think, a very active discussion among the population.

The most interesting fact to me is that Sunnis are registering in droves for the elections in December. And that is a tremendous reversal from when there was either the pressure from Sunni leadership to boycott the elections or the level of intimidation where people couldn't participate.

So I think the political process is very active and pretty healthy. They have some very difficult issues. When you're talking about trying to get people to deal through a political process with a lot of fault lines and differences that in a society were only covered by coercion in the past, of course it's going to be a difficult process and it's going to be an active process and there are going to be some people who are disappointed and some who are happier with the process. But on balance, I think they're doing a remarkable job.

Similarly, because you defeat an insurgency, not just militarily but politically, the continued progress of that process is extremely important to breaking any hope that the insurgency might have for a political base within the society. I would be the first to say that they can continue to blow up innocent children. They can continue to wreck havoc through their brutality – through their terrorism and brutality. But the real issue that we have to keep a focus on is can they gain a political foothold that is a challenge to the political process that was laid out almost two years ago and now will culminate in the December elections. And I think so far the answer to that is no, they cannot.

So it's a very interesting time in Iraq. It's a complicated time but big historical changes of this kind are always complicated.

The other final point I would make is that security forces are being trained and getting better. They are not yet capable of operations, that the entirety of them is not yet capable of operations on their own, but there are some Iraqi forces who are capable of operations on their own.

**QUESTION:** When do you think they'll be able to stand alone there – as security forces?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, they are making pretty rapid progress and in some places not

only have they taken over – in places like Najaf -- but they actually are in some of the harder places running counterterrorism operations on their own.

I don't have – I would be stretching my knowledge because I'm not on the ground to tell you how many of them I think can actually engage in operations that are independent of us. I think it's not an overwhelming number, but there are some. And I think those numbers will grow over time.

What the military decided to do that, I think is very (inaudible), is they embedded mentors with them. And so these young officers who can spot difficulties on the ground with a particular unit – is it a problem of equipment; is it a problem of training; is it a problem of leadership – and you can then go and fix that problem on the ground with that unit because if you're not careful, what you get is a kind of macro look at the Iraqi armed forces or the Iraqi security forces and really, it is a unit by unit story that has to be understood.

And so I think as we've gotten people embedded down at lower levels, we're making a lot more progress a lot faster.

**QUESTION:** Given this is such a complicated situation, to use your words, is there any sense of a timeline? How long it'll take to really do the job?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I don't think that we think in terms of timelines. What we think in terms of is what conditions will permit then the draw down of coalition forces and the transfer of responsibilities to the Iraqi security forces. Nobody is asking that there be no violence in the country before that transfer takes place. There undoubtedly will be terrorists who can continue to carry out operations.

But that the Iraqi security forces ought to be capable of providing a secure environment for a political evolution in Iraq or that they are capable of providing that with our help. I think that's what we're looking for.

The elections will be telling because that's the next really important step in the maturing of the political process. But I think they're making a lot of progress. I'm actually quite amazed at how well they have stayed on the political course and how energetic the political course has been and how it is now starting to encompass the entire society in a way that I think you could not argue it had eight or nine months ago.

**QUESTION:** Is there a fear factor in that if things are starting to work and the process is taking hold in any kind of a draw down that that's a signal that would allow insurgency greater impact. So it's like – if the assessment is okay, it's better; but yet, a signal to this country that with – we're making progress, there will be a draw down, you know, and a transfer of power from us to them, although they have the power but the support base – is there a fear factor and a draw down that that shakes the balance?

**SECRETARY RICE:** As long as any draw down of coalition forces is directly related to what Iraqi security forces can do, that's an argument that we can make and sustain and that I think, frankly, the insurgency would understand because in many ways, their worst fear is a capable Iraqi security force because they would probably prefer to have those capabilities principally in the coalition because they don't really want to be Iraqi – that takes away last arguments that they might have about, you know, "the occupation of their country" and so forth.

So I think we're on a good course here. It is, to be fair, bumpy. And it is, to be fair, one that is not a straight line. It tends to zig and zag and things go right and things go wrong. But I'm enough a student of international history to know that when you are looking at big changes in the international system or big historical changes, that it is never a straight line. And that what you need to keep your eye on is, are you staying on a strategic path that leads you ultimately to the outcome that you want? And for us, that is to have laid the foundation for a stable and democratizing Iraq that can be at peace with its neighbors and take care of itself. I think that, right now, we're on that course.

**QUESTION:** To what extent do you feel that American public opinion is putting additional pressure on the – not be as patient as you sound like you're willing do?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The remarkable thing about – you know, I read the polls, although I'm – I have to tell you, I'm – social science is always rather skeptical of polls, just in my nature. But if they tell you one thing, it's that the American people understand that this job has to be finished; that they're not talking about early withdrawal; that they're saying we have to finish the job because having made the commitment, we have to leave the situation better than it is now and that means capable Iraqi security forces and that means an insurgency that cannot threaten the political stability of the country, even if they can continue to bring a lot of violence.

And so I'm confident that the American people understand the importance of getting this done and that we'll have the time –

**QUESTION:** What about the hurricane, though, and the impact of that on the President's job approval rating -- his ability to govern the Congress? I mean, it's obvious that if he goes up there and has to ask for more money for Iraq, it's going to be harder to get. I mean –

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, again, you know, the United States has to be able to complete what is an essential task for American security and I think that's understood in the Congress and I think it's understood among the American people. I don't have any doubt that the, you know, the new financial and resource requirements will be challenging for the nation as we go forward; but frankly, what we've been trying to do with the reconstruction funding that we did was to – that the Congress provided – was to put the Iraqi infrastructure in a place where a combination of some foreign assistance but also Iraqi resources, plus the World Bank, plus the IMF and others could begin to fill in

that remaining piece.

I can't say that there will or will not be need for further resources for Iraq on the economic side. Certainly, we will need to continue to make sure our military forces have everything that they need. We will need to continue to make sure that we are properly funding the efforts at security and reconstruction that do provide the circumstances under which our forces can draw down.

But we just need to keep reminding everybody and I think people understand that that this Iraq situation – how Iraq turns out – is the key to what kind of Middle East emerges.

I always found – there was an argument, you know, was Iraq supporting al-Qaida and all of these things and you know, we could round and round those arguments. I think there is plenty of evidence that there is an al-Qaida presence in Iraq. But let me set that aside for a moment. I think the issue about the link between September 11<sup>th</sup> and Iraq was not – was al-Qaida in Iraq.

The link between September 11<sup>th</sup> and Iraq was if you believed that the cause of September 11<sup>th</sup> was the 19 hijackers who flew those planes into the building, then Iraq has nothing to do with September 11<sup>th</sup>. If, on the other hand, you believe that the problem that we experience and the tragedy we experience on September 11<sup>th</sup> was indeed because the Middle East had become so toxic that this ideology of hatred and extremism produced the people who flew those airplanes into buildings. And that you now had to deal with the very nature of the Middle East itself – then Iraq is central because you cannot image a different kind of Middle East, with the Iraq that we had. You can imagine a different kind of Middle East in which one of the pillars is a stable, democratizing Shia majority, non-sectarian Iraq as one of the pillars of a different kind of Middle East.

And I think we just have to keep making that case that when Iraq is – when we've laid the foundations for a different kind of Iraq; when we've made process on the Israeli-Palestinian issue; when you've had broader reform in the Middle East of the kind that we're beginning to see, then you're going to be able to start creating a Middle East that does not produce people who fly planes into buildings. That's the link that I think we've got to keep making.

**QUESTION:** May I ask a related question? The *New York Times Magazine* yesterday reported that some high-level Bush Administration officials believe that one of the biggest mistakes in the war against terror was not providing more troops to Tora Bora in December of 2001. And I was wondering whether -- with the idea of capturing Usama bin Laden, I was wondering whether you are one of those officials and what, if anything, is being done to track him down today.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, a lot is being done to track him down and his world has gotten pretty small. You know, he has to live in a fairly rugged area and I suspect with less

ability to -- certainly with less ability to direct and communicate than he had at the time when Afghanistan was a base, but probably far less even than over the last -- because one thing, the Pakistanis are really pursuing al-Qaida now in the frontier areas, in places where Pakistan had never even gone into. So their world is considerably smaller and there's a very high-level team that worries about this issue every single day. I think we're --

**QUESTION:** Does anyone know where he is, have any better idea where he is?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, if we knew, I think we'd --

**QUESTION:** Well, I mean, I'm just curious. Do you think it was a mistake not --

**SECRETARY RICE:** No, no, I am not one who wants to rewrite Tora Bora, no. First of all, I think that I am quite certain that General Franks, who was nothing if not aggressive in what he was doing in those days, used what forces he thought necessary and capable to deal with the Tora Bora problem. I also know that it was an area where Afghan forces had certain advantages, Afghan fighters had certain advantages over larger numbers of American fighters; and that if we'd sent a whole lot of American fighters in there and gotten nothing, then people would have been saying you should have done it with Afghan fighters.

Now, this is -- again, I'm a student of history. We'll really know the stories about this, if we're lucky, in 20 or 30 years when this all plays out. And I think the second-guessing about Tora Bora is just, you know, it's a waste of time, frankly. I think they did it the way they thought they should do it. I don't have any reason to believe that that was anything but right.

**QUESTION:** I'm going to be seeing Bashar Assad in the next week or ten days.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Are you?

**QUESTION:** As a reporter, what should I be asking him?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I would ask him --

**QUESTION:** And it can either be a question from you or -- not a question from you, but one that --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yeah, you don't want to ask a question from me. He certainly won't answer it. But from you.

The Syrians need to account for how it is that Lebanese -- high-ranking Lebanese security officials with well known ties and links to Syrian security officials got entangled in

the murder of Prime Minister Hariri. And what does he think about that and do the Syrians really claim that they knew absolutely nothing about what was happening in Lebanon, given their extensive security networks and given their extensive ties to the Lebanese security people who are now being questioned by Mehlis?

Because I think the issue of what Syria did or did not know about the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri is probably the most important issue right now.

**QUESTION:** Why is it?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Because the Resolution 1559 insists that the Syrians be completely out of Lebanon. We know their military forces are out of Lebanon. A lot of people suspect that they maintain intelligence presence there. And we need to know that Syria is carrying through on its obligations to get out of there and stay out of there. And it shouldn't be that an external power somehow was involved in the assassination of the prime minister of another country -- of the former prime minister, then a candidate for prime minister. So I think this whole Mehlis investigation is extremely important, extremely important.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that the Syrian Government falls apart if the security system falls apart and what are the consequences?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I don't know because, you know, it is a very opaque system in Syria. I do know that Syria should be fully and completely out of Lebanon, that they ought to recognize Lebanon as an independent state. For instance, it would be very good if they actually had an embassy and an ambassador in Lebanon, which would be a signal that they don't think of Lebanon as some kind of Syrian --

**QUESTION:** Outpost.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Outpost. Exactly. And then we'll see. But the Syrians need to cooperate with this investigation because there are a lot of questions about what Syria did and did not know.

**QUESTION:** We're satisfied with what they're doing so far?

**SECRETARY RICE:** We have not been and the UN had not been satisfied. We'll see. They've said now they're going to offer cooperation. I don't know what Mehlis has been able to get.

**QUESTION:** As long as we're doing a cook's tour of that wonderful part of the world, let's look over the fence to the neighbor Iran, which is going to be significant on the UN's agenda this week. Do you see -- what do you see happening there? And it looks like the saber-rattling has already begun and people haven't even got to town yet.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let me start with the Iranian nuclear issue. The world is united in one thought: The Iranians cannot have a nuclear weapon. Everybody is united in that. But then the question becomes: How do you make certain Iran does not have a nuclear weapon? And it's important not to let the Iranians rewrite this history. The reason that the EU-3 negotiations began was that Iran had engaged in suspicious activity that the IAEA cited -- activity, by the way, that was exposed by Iranian dissidents, so it wasn't as if the Iranians came forward and said, oh, by the way, this has been going on. It was discovered.

Rather than go the immediate course of referral to the Security Council, the EU-3 entered into these negotiations with the Iranians to see if they could get what they called objective guarantees, meaning that the Iranians would engage in no activities that the world could believe might lead to an Iranian nuclear weapon. Those negotiations included substantial incentives for Iran on the trade and political front.

The agreement was that the Iranians would suspend any activities associated with the fuel cycle. They have now broken that agreement. And it can't be the case that that's just okay. That's the wrong signal. And so the international community needs to come together and say that that kind of behavior is not acceptable and that Iran should return to the negotiations having suspended the activities that have caused this crisis.

We are completely supportive of what the European Union has been trying to do and the diplomatic route. But the overall problem here is that you have a state in Iran that is increasingly out of step with the development of that new Middle East that we were talking about. You have an Iran where the political trends inside Iran have gone backwards, not forward. People say, well, "compared to" and then name a country, Iran is more open. But this is a question of trends and Iran's trends are in the wrong direction, not the right direction.

Secondly, Iran remains the principal supporter, along with Syria, but Iran even more so, of terrorist activity, including Hezbollah, and the Palestinian rejectionists at a time when Mahmoud Abbas is trying to build a Palestinian apparatus that is free of terror. And so whether it's on the nuclear front or the human rights front or the terrorism front, Iran is a problem for the international system and it is a problem for the Middle East.

That's the point that the United States is making. This is not because we hold grudges against Iran, though we of course remember precisely what Iran did to American diplomats, something that is fairly unparalleled in modern times. So our job is to continue to work the nuclear issue but to hope that people will not lose sight of this broader question. And you now have a new government in Iran. We would hope that it's going to try to take a new, different course, although there is no evidence that it would.

**QUESTION:** Do you expect the President to repeat this week that all options are on the table for dealing with Iran?

**SECRETARY RICE:** If the President is asked, I'm sure he'll repeat it. You know, it's --

**QUESTION:** Is that still -- that's still our view?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The President of the United States is never going to take an option off the table. You wouldn't want him to. The world shouldn't want him to. We've said that we believe that the way to solve the Iran problem is through diplomacy, that we think that there is a diplomatic track here and that, as I said in Europe, the question of the use of force isn't on the agenda at this time but nobody is ever going to remove options from the President. But we are pursuing a diplomatic course and we're pursuing it aggressively and I fully believe that if the international community comes together and sends the right signals, we'll actually -- we'll succeed diplomatically.

**QUESTION:** What is the contacts between us and Iran? Obviously, we don't have relations with them, but I mean, do you talk to anybody indirectly or --

**SECRETARY RICE:** No, no. We have a channel that we use to effectively pass messages in New York, which we have used from time to time. And the Swiss represents our interests and are usually the channel that we use diplomatically.

**QUESTION:** In the best of all possible worlds -- forgive me for getting back to Syria -- what can Syria do to diminish U.S. hostility or skepticism about Syria? And how can Syria best help us, conceivably, in Iraq?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes. Well, all the way back well before the Iraq war, Colin Powell went to Syria and he -- this was at the time that we were trying to re-invigorate the sanctions -- the smart sanctions -- and said, you know, cut off this pipeline. It didn't happen. Every time the United States has gone to the Syrians at a diplomatic level and said here are things that need to be done, the Syrians have either done nothing or done the absolute minimum that they could do.

The question is: If Syria doesn't want to be a problem in the Middle East, why is it continuing to strangle or try to strangle Lebanon in the way that it is? I will tell you, I was in Lebanon and you feel the dead hand of Syria in Lebanon. You really feel it. And at the time, they were cutting off 47 percent of the trade across that border because they know it will destroy the Lebanese economy. All right, if they're really living up to Resolution 1559, if they really bear the Lebanese people no ill will, why are they are doing that?

Secondly, if they really are in favor of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and a Palestinian state, then why are they supporting Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Damascus and Hezbollah and getting money to Palestinian rejectionists at the time that Mahmoud Abbas is trying to cut off terrorist activity and make peace with the Israelis?

Third, if they really are supportive of a peaceful neighbor in Iraq, why are Iraqi -- foreign

fighters who are fueling the terror against Iraqis continuing to flow out of Syria?

**QUESTION:** They do, still?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes. And look, they come from Damascus airport. This isn't people crawling across the border.

**QUESTION:** Who are these foreign fighters? Do we know?

**SECRETARY RICE:** They're coming from a number of countries around the region. But --

**QUESTION:** They come to Damascus, and Damascus --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, and then they can cross the border. Because yes, the border is a pretty permeable border.

**QUESTION:** Porous border.

**SECRETARY RICE:** But the Syrians cut off the Lebanese, didn't they? When they wanted to really make a difference, they cut off the Lebanese trade within hours. If they want to cut this off to Iraq, they can do it. And they have been given ways to do this, and if they really are not going to be, as they are now -- right now, they are undermining the Palestinian-Israeli peace, they're undermining Iraqi aspirations and they're undermining Lebanese aspirations.

So my view is --

**QUESTION:** To what end?

**SECRETARY RICE:** This is not -- well, this is not hostility toward the United States. I guess I would ask: Why are they hostile toward the Iraqi people, the Palestinian people and the Lebanese people?

**QUESTION:** Well, why?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I guess because the Syrians have decided they want to be a problem in the Middle East, not a help. It's a good question. What --

**QUESTION:** Is he the boss, by the way?

**SECRETARY RICE:** What strategically is the purpose here?

**QUESTION:** Is Bashar the boss or are his buddies still -- not his buddies -- or his father's buddies still in charge?

**SECRETARY RICE:** He is the President of the country and he's responsible. You know, he is responsible for what happens in Syria.

But really, I just want to repeat, you know, this is not an issue of hostility toward the United States. This is an issue of hostility toward the three major changes that are taking place right now in the Middle East: the Palestinians and their chance to make peace with the Israelis; the Lebanese and their chance to be free of Syrian influence and have a real democracy there; and the Iraqis to be free of foreign terrorists who are crossing that border and blowing up little children who were waiting in line to get candy from American soldiers.

**QUESTION:** Will you be talking to anybody from Syria while you're here in the bilaterals?

**SECRETARY RICE:** No.

**QUESTION:** No?

**SECRETARY RICE:** No.

**QUESTION:** Peg.

**QUESTION:** Have you ever been approached by international diplomats representing that the Baathist wing of the insurgency wants to have a high-level meeting between themselves and top U.S. officials?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I have not and I don't know of any such approach. I think one reason this question continues to emerge is that we are actively engaged, as are others, in outreach to the Sunni community. It is sometimes murky, the associations of certain Sunni groups and certain Sunni leaders and what their relationship is or is not to the insurgency. And I think that's where you get the argument that there are discussions going on with the insurgency.

We are not trying to talk to people who are blowing up American soldiers. The insurgency has had some contacts with some in the Sunni political base and we try to keep our contacts with the Sunni political base as broad as possible. And I think that's why there's sometimes confusion on our position.

**QUESTION:** Are you hopeful that this week's talks on North Korea in Beijing are going somewhere?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I thought Chris Hill put it very well. We're ready to go back

and negotiate, and that's how we used the last month. The question is how did the North Koreans use the last month. And we will know that, I think, fairly soon.

I thought that we did make a lot of progress in the last round. The talks were businesslike without histrionics, which had not been the pattern before. There is good unity among the other states other than the North about what it is we're trying to achieve.

There's been a tendency for the goal posts to move at the last second with the North Koreans so I can't tell you that I know exactly where we're going to go in. I know where we left off but I'm not quite sure where we're going to go in. We'll have to see when the North arrives.

But there is an awful lot that is favorable to North Korea if they choose to take it. If they will abandon their nuclear weapons and nuclear programs and really get on a course of verifiable dismantlement of this, it unlocks a great deal for them economically and politically.

Now, we do have concerns other than just the nuclear issue. We have human rights concerns in North Korea. We have -- the Japanese have human rights concerns, humanitarian concerns, the abduction issue. But there are ways to deal with all of these issues, but the North is going to have to make the strategic choice. And there were times in the last talks where they seemed close to it but we didn't quite get over the bar, and so we'll see where we are when we go back.

**QUESTION:** Could you clarify our relationship with China? (Inaudible.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, again, like most big relationships, you know, it's a complex, kind of mixed relationship. There is no doubt that I think in terms of our diplomatic engagement and the engagement of the President, the engagement throughout the layers of government, the relationship is probably better than it's ever been. That doesn't mean that there aren't serious issues between us. I think we're cooperating very well on the six-party talks on North Korea. I think we're cooperating very well on the war on terrorism. We've even managed better cooperation recently on Sudan and a number of other issues like that.

Our trade relationship is huge and complex and it is -- there are many elements of it that are quite beneficial to America and to American consumers. The problem is that the Chinese economy is very big, getting bigger and has still not undertaken some of the reforms that really are required by integration into a rules-based system like the WTO.

For instance, intellectual property rights. This is the core, this is the base, of the modern economies that we are building. And if you don't have protection of intellectual property rights and if you don't have prosecutions of people who engage in piracy, then an economy of that size is going to be a real problem for the international system.

**QUESTION:** Well, this meeting is already available on DVD over there. (Laughter.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** It probably is. I'm sure you've experienced this. (Laughter.)

You know, the Chinese can't write a law that says government procurement of foreign software is prohibited but private procurement of software -- when most of the economy is still government. So all we're saying to the Chinese is recognize how some of these things affect the international economy because this is not a small economy that can kind of play outside of the rules. The whole reason for the integration of China into the WTO, which I was out of government but fully supported, was so that this big economy would be inside of a rules-based structure. And so they've got to play by the rules. That's why people were upset about the currency issue.

Now, on the military side, you know, we are not overstating the case but it is the case the Chinese military buildup looks outsized for their regional concerns, and that has to be an issue for the United States since the defense of the Pacific, along with our allies in South Korea and Japan, has been an American concern.

**QUESTION:** Tell us about Wu Yi you know --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Oh, Mrs. Wu. Mrs. Wu. Yes. I call her Madame Wu.

**QUESTION:** Mike is on a first-name basis with everybody. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** In this list of the 100 most powerful women in the world, you're number one and Madame Wu is number two.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yeah, and being at the top of that list and three dollars will get you coffee. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** A small coffee.

**SECRETARY RICE:** A small coffee. Is that what it costs now? A small coffee. Okay, right.

She is a formidable person. She is. She is --

**QUESTION:** What's she in charge of?

**SECRETARY RICE:** She is in charge of anything that is hard in China, I've decided. They put her in charge, for instance, when the SARS crisis hit. They have given her a portfolio having to do with intellectual property rights. She is a very formidable person and she was a -- she is very funny. She'll tell you about how when she was the floor manager of a plant back when she was a young woman, and I have this image of this

Chinese woman back, you know, not too long after the Cultural Revolution as a floor manager on a plant. She's really something.

Women have been pretty powerful in China. I mean, this is not the -- the role of women is, I think, not -- has not really been an issue in China. But as China's political system hopefully develops in a more open way, then political rights for everybody will include enhanced political rights for women. But she's wonderful. I'm really quite fond of her.

**QUESTION:** How do we reconcile our relationship with Saudi Arabia considering their treatment of women there?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I mentioned trajectory and trends, and not every state is starting out at the same place on the reform agenda. And the good news about Saudi Arabia is that I actually do think you have in King Abdallah now somebody who is sensitive to the need for reform and is trying in his context to make some of those reforms. I thought that, you know, the fact that they had municipal elections was important. I'll return to that in just a moment.

I've read that he insisted that he had an audience of women come to do whatever it is you do to the Saudi King. They have these delegations come in and he put on television a delegation of women, which apparently stirred a lot of talk in Saudi Arabia.

It's not where Saudi Arabia needs to be and I was pretty outspoken standing next to the Saudi Foreign Minister on television. I said women ought to be able to vote and there's no question in my mind that they have to be able to vote.

But countries are going to move at their own speed and I think this a pretty deeply conservative society and they just have to, through a combination of pressure from within and a international environment that is insistent on reform, they need to make a lot of progress. I think it is probably a good thing from the point of view of Saudi politics that Kuwait granted the franchise to women because that means that's the last Gulf state in which this is an issue.

So slowly but surely, I think a little bit of progress is being made. The reason I mentioned coming back on the municipal elections was that one picture really stuck in my mind, which was of a man who, when he voted in the municipal elections, he handed the ballot to his daughter to put in the ballot box, which says something about how he sees the future for his daughter.

But we'll keep pressing and we're not shy about pressing forward for change.

**QUESTION:** Getting back to the Iranian --

**MR. MCCORMACK:** Time for one last question.

**QUESTION:** The Iranian Foreign Minister was pretty strong yesterday in talking about efforts to bring this question in the Security Council. Where do you see this going? This seems to be an escalating problem. And you talked about negotiation, but what specifically are we going to do to try to get this thing resolved, or is this getting out of hand?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the EU-3 was involved in negotiations with the Iranians based on an agreement that they made in Paris. It's that agreement that the Iranians have broken. And so the first question is to the EU-3 and others: What are you going to do about an agreement that the Iranians broke with you? Not an agreement, by the way, that the Iranians broke with us. An agreement that the Iranians broke with the EU-3.

I can assure you that I don't think that the best way to deal with that is to simply say to the Iranians, well, okay then, that's all right, we'll just kind of assume -- we'll pretend that didn't happen and then we'll move forward. Because that says to the Iranians that there is no consequence whatsoever for having broken out of this agreement, which, as I said, they got into for having suspicious activities to begin with. It wasn't as if they just one day decided to have an agreement. It was because they were facing IAEA referral the last time.

I think what we're trying to do is to get the world to rally around a position that says to the Iranians we want to resolve this diplomatically, we can resolve this diplomatically, but it needs to be done in the context of Iran being back inside the agreement that they signed, not outside the agreement that they signed. And that shouldn't be, frankly, a stain on or an insult to Iranian national pride because they're the ones that signed on to the Paris agreement, so going back to the Paris agreement should not be somehow considered something that is humiliating for the Iranian Government. It's what governments do. They negotiate.

So we're talking with our counterparts and we'll see. I think that at some point this has got to end up with a resolution. But I think there's still some room to work toward an agreement with the European-3, but not under circumstances where the Iranians have just walked away from the negotiations. I think that's really the issue here.

All right, thank you very much.

**QUESTION:** We really appreciate it. But should we have asked you about the meeting you just came from?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Oh, with Musharraf?

**QUESTION:** Musharraf.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Oh, it was a good meeting. It was predictable though so I don't

think you missed anything. Yeah, he's doing a lot though. He really is. I mean, this decision to have Kasuri meet with Shalom, you know, with the Israeli Foreign Minister, is pretty remarkable.

Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

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