

## Joint Press Availability with Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Baghdad, Iraq

November 11, 2005

**PRIME MINISTER JAAFARI (via interpreter):** The Prime Minister welcomed Secretary Rice to Iraq and he affirmed that her visit, which is not the first visit, shows the support of the United States for Iraq, also the support of the political process, democracy and elections. And at the end, he also again welcomed Secretary Rice and (inaudible).

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you for hosting me here. Indeed, it has been a pleasure to be in Iraq now for the third time, the second time as Secretary of State.

I said to the Prime Minister and I've said to others that the American people, and I think the world, continues to be impressed and inspired by the commitment of the Iraqi people to their democratic future. Even though there are many hardships, the fact that Iraqis continue to vote in large numbers and are preparing for free and fair elections, this will be inspirational.

And the United States will support the political process here in Iraq and the elections that are coming up. We will support no particular candidates or parties. That is for the Iraqi people to decide. But we do support the principles of democracy and support efforts to bridge the differences among Iraqis that may be differences of history or tradition or culture or ethnicity, but in a democratic process these differences can be a strength rather than a handicap.

I was also glad just spending a little time this morning in Mosul and to talk to provincial leaders there about the Provincial Reconstruction Teams that Ambassador Khalilzad is arranging with General Casey to try and bring services and development to the Mosul and provincial populations.

So it is a delight to be here and let me finally say that we again admire what the Iraqi people are doing and they can be certain they have a committed partner in the United States.

**QUESTION:** (In Arabic.)

**PRIME MINISTER JAAFARI:** I have said that many times as far as the multinational

forces are concerned, this is an issue that was decided by the Iraqi people and the new government that they elect.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes, I am in complete agreement and, of course, the multinational forces are here under a United Nations mandate and will continue to assist the Iraqi people as long as the Iraqi people may want their assistance.

As to the Arab League initiative, I was very glad that Mr. Amr Moussa came to Iraq. It is important that Iraq be fully integrated into the Arab world and also into its neighborhood.

I hope that the Arab states will support Iraq, condemn the terrorism that is killing innocent Iraqis and establish diplomatic relations here with embassies and ambassadors. There are many embassies and ambassadors here, but not a lot from the Arab world.

And as to the initiative itself, I think it is up to the Iraqi Government, the elected government of the Iraqi people, to decide how (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Anne Gearan. (Inaudible) overwhelming no-vote (inaudible) in the referendum last month. What gives you confidence that (inaudible) in equal numbers in the December election and feel vested in the result?

**PRIME MINISTER JAAFARI:** The fact that there was a large participation in the referendum is a very positive statement. Some people voted yes, some others voted no, and that's the nature of democracy. Dialogue continues inside (inaudible) occurring. The National Assembly (inaudible) all parties together and that the dialogue would also continue at the conference that's initiated by the Arab League and the dialogue will continue after the elections.

**SECRETARY RICE:** I would just add that the Sunni participation was indeed encouraging in the referendum, but also the activity that has been going on since then. I've been meeting with nongovernmental organizations that are assisting in the political process and they talk about the very active Sunni participation now to form political groupings and put forward a list, to educate voters, to encourage voter turnout. And so I think that the remarkable thing is that there is such high activity among the Sunni population, and that should be encouraged and I'm sure that the Prime Minister and other leaders of Iraq are going to encourage that participation.

**QUESTION:** First of all, a question to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, the President of Syria al-Assad said that the Iraqi Government is not cooperating on patrolling of the borders. So what is your response, Mr. Prime Minister, to that?

And Secretary Rice, the Iraqi Government (inaudible) at the participation of the Baathists in the elections and the political process to be (inaudible), but it seems that there are signals that the American Administration is competing with (inaudible) Baathists. So what do you say about that?

**PRIME MINISTER JAAFARI:** It is Iraq (inaudible) reasons that (inaudible) is the victim of terrorism. It is Iraq that has the right to make a question about others' cooperation or non-cooperation. It is known that there are infiltrations from the Syrian border of terrorists into Iraq. There are also training camps there and every Iraqi knows that. It is us who need to ask the question of others to cooperate and control the borders because we do want good relations with the Syrians and everybody else and people are desperately unhappy if the infiltrators enter and keep coming into Iraq (inaudible).

**SECRETARY RICE:** And on the second question, the reconciliation efforts that are taking place in this country to try to bring as broad a range of Iraqis into the new Iraq is a process that must be led by the Iraqi people. And that is the process that we respect.

We try in the communities in which we work to work with as broad a range of Iraqis who are committed to a new kind of Iraq and want to forego violence (inaudible). But this is a process that has got to be an Iraqi process.

Los Angeles Times. Tyler.

**QUESTION:** A question for you both. The Arab League conference on reconciliation will also include some insurgent groups. Madame Secretary, where is your line in terms of which groups should be allowed to participate and which should not?

And then for the Prime Minister, which groups would you not be willing to sit down with?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I would hope that those who participate in the Arab League events -- Arab League-sponsored -- will recognize that they are participating with an Iraqi Government that has indeed been elected and that the Iraqi Government that is elected after December will be even more representative. And so the lead on this really ought to be with the Iraqi Government, and any people coming out of a period of tyranny, as the Iraqis have, and now out of a period of violence, have to find a balance between inclusion and reconciliation and justice. And that is a process that I'm sure the Iraqis themselves will lead. But the justice for those who (inaudible).

**PRIME MINISTER JAFARI:** I hope that the conference -- the conference is for all of those who are part of the political process in Iraq, whether they are in the government, the National Assembly, those who participated in the draft of the constitution, and other personalities. But we will not accept at this conference becoming a platform for terrorism and for high-level Baathist officials from the former regime. But it should be big enough for all patriotic Iraqis who believe in the political process (inaudible).

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