

Remarks at Stakeout With Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Baghdad, Iraq

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SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. How are you? We've had the opportunity yesterday and yesterday evening to spend some time with the newly appointed, nominated Prime Minister for Iraq, who of course will now work very hard to form a government with the presidency council and with the speaker and his deputies. We also were able to pay a call on Prime Minister Jafari. I think that it's fair to say that all of these Iraqi leaders recognize the challenges before them, recognize that the Iraqi people expect their government to be able to meet those challenges. It is obviously going to take some time to do this work, and we found a government, or government representatives, who are focused, who are inspiring in listening to them and I think who understand very much the work before them.

Our message here was that the United States wants to be a supportive partner in that work, that we are prepared to do whatever we can to help the Iraqi Government meet the challenges before it. But it was a really inspiring time, because these are great patriots who very often, at great personal risk, are taking on the work of building this democratic and prosperous Iraq, and they're going to have a good friend and partner in the United States in doing it.

Any questions?

QUESTION: Madame Secretary and also Mr. Secretary, the Zarqawi video (inaudible) upswing in U.S. casualties. What is it that the Iraqis can do and what can they talk about doing to regain the initiative, to establish their credibility and to quell the sectarian violence?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: Well, the first step, obviously, for the government is to fashion a cabinet, the heads of the various ministries, soon with people that demonstrate to the Iraqi people, who went out and voted for them, that they have stepped forward and assumed responsibility for their sovereign nation, and then to continue the work to develop the Iraqi security forces. I think that the impression that the people of this country will have of the government will be the impression that Secretary Rice and I garnered from our meetings with them; that they are serious people. They recognize the difficulties of the tasks they're facing and they intend to get about the task of governing this country in a responsible way. So I come away very encouraged by them.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary.

SECRETARY RICE: I really don't have much to add. Obviously, the key now is to get the government up and running, to get ministers who are capable and who also will reflect the values of a national unity government, and then to get about the work of dealing with the security situation,

dealing with the economic situation. But I think that these are very responsible and capable people.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, (inaudible) Allawi. He previously said that Iraq was in a state of civil war. I just wondered if you remain far apart from him in your assessment of the situation and if so, why?

SECRETARY RICE: The conversation this morning with the former Prime Minister Allawi, Mr. Allawi, who is a good friend of the United States and an Iraqi patriot, was about the future here in Iraq and about the need for a government that takes advantage of all of the very capable people who have fought to bring Iraq to this point; that is, an Iraq that is free of Saddam Hussein's tyranny and that is now in the work of trying to build a stable government. And so that was our discussion. That was our conversation.

And I don't know anybody more devoted to the notion of national unity than Mr. Allawi and they're all very devoted to that notion. And that's the best answer to those who are trying to and who believe that they can tear this country apart. There are leaders here and I'm quite certain the great majority of the Iraqi people who are determined that they will not be torn apart.

MR. MCCORMACK: Thank you all very much.

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