



## Briefing En Route Jerusalem

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Shannon, Ireland

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**SECRETARY RICE:** (In progress) how they see that. The trip is short in large part because I have to return to the United States because, as you know, the United Nations General Assembly will start this weekend. And at the General Assembly there will be a number of meetings that relate directly to the work that we're doing on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. There will be a Quartet meeting. I'll have a chance before that meeting to meet with Tony Blair. There will be an AHLC meeting chaired by Norway on assistance to the Palestinians. I have a number of bilateral planned with various foreign ministers from states that are in one way or another associated with the peace process. So this is going to be a very intensive period for diplomacy, but I wanted to come out even if it has to be for a brief time, to see what we can do to advance the process here on the bilateral track and also to talk to the parties about how we move forward.

This isn't going to be the last trip, I'm quite certain, between now and the international meeting, and I suspect that we'll have a number of other international events also leading up to that meeting. So that's the purpose of this trip. Nick.

**QUESTION:** I wonder if you can tell us whether you plan to raise with the Israelis the issue of North Korea and Syria, specifically about sharing information that you and Israelis have. And how is the reporting that we've seen in the past several days going to affect any dealings within the six-party talks and the capabilities that actually Syria might have in the nuclear field?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I've seen the reports that many of you have written. But let me just say something about the proliferation issue. It's obviously been at the top of the President's agenda since he became President, and most especially since September 11<sup>th</sup>. We take the proliferation issue very seriously. Obviously, we don't have any illusions about the North Korean regime. And one of the reasons that it is very important to shut down the North Korean program in all of its aspects is, of course, associated with the prospect of proliferation. And we've been very clear about that. In fact, in the six-party talks it has been and it will be – continue to be an aspect of what we discuss in the six-party talks.

We've also, of course, on the proliferation front used the Proliferation Security Initiative to try and ward off and to halt any activities that may be related to states transferring or being involved in proliferation activities. And of course, bringing down the A.Q. Khan network, which we believe was associated with North Korea, has been a major victory for the proliferation issue.

So this is an issue that we are going to continue to follow, we're going to continue to watch and we're going to continue to work on. But the six-party talks, having as that forum does all of the really relevant states with the right set of incentives and the right set of disincentives to deal with shutting down the North Korean program, denuclearizing the North Korean – the Korean Peninsula and dealing with all aspects of the North Korean program is the right place to deal with those issues.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** If anything, I would think that it would be a reason – anything that relates to North Korean proliferation is an issue that makes us even more intent on the importance of the six-party talks.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, (inaudible). Several officials on the Israeli and the U.S. side, including one of your own deputy assistant secretaries, have alluded to the fact that Syria is cooperating on a nuclear program with North Korea. Are you concerned that Syria is developing a nuclear program? Deputy Assistant Secretary Semmes said that there were North Koreans possibly dealing with secret nuclear suppliers. Are you going to talk to the Israelis about this?

And also on the North Korean front, does this give you pause that the North Koreans are not making that strategic choice? The deal is already on the table for them and they're already in the process of implementing it, you hope, so does this give you pause that they're very serious about implementing this deal?

Thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let me repeat, Elise, we don't have any illusions about the nature of the North Korean regime and we've been concerned about proliferation from the very beginning. Proliferation is an issue in the six-party talks. Proliferation was an issue for 1718. Proliferation was an issue in bringing down the A.Q. Khan network. Proliferation is an issue in the PSI. So it is not as if we haven't long been concerned about North Korean proliferation activities. And it is, again, a very important reason to concentrate on shutting down as rapidly as possible the North Korean nuclear program in all of its aspects. And the six-party framework is by far the best framework in which to do that because it is not the United States that simply has concerns about this issue. It's South Korea, it's China, it's Russia, it's Japan. And I think one reason that you see the entire international community so supportive of the six-party talks is that they recognize that this is the right group of states to incent North Korea to shut down that program. And I mean in all of its aspects.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike)

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm not going to comment on reports that have been in the newspaper about all of this. You know that we've also had concerns about Syria, that we watch very carefully activities concerning Syria. But again, the President has a very active and aggressive policy concerning proliferation wherever it might be occurring, and that policy has given rise not just to policy statements. It has given rise to real tools to deal with proliferation activities, including the Proliferation Security Initiative, including the – and including the activities that we undertook to shut down the A.Q. Khan network, which we know was a major source of proliferation.

So this isn't something that comes new to us. This is something for which this kind of concern has been out there. But I'm not going to comment on specific reports.

**QUESTION:** On the international meeting, you have said that you want to build on the progress that Abbas and Olmert are making on their own. But how will you define success for that meeting and are you concerned that in the absence of that definition others are defining it for you?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I think we'll have more to say about the international meeting in the coming days. We are going to meet as a Quartet. I think that's an important time also to discuss the international meeting.

But I've been very clear that this meeting has to, in a substantive way, support the activities and the efforts of the parties to lay a foundation for the negotiation of a Palestinian state as soon as possible. And that's really what this meeting needs to do. I think everybody expects it to be serious and substantive. I think everybody

expects it to address critical issues and, you know, we don't expect anything less. I mean, the idea that somehow the President of the United States would call an international meeting so we can all have a photo op I think is just very far-fetched.

So we'll be giving greater definition to the meeting in the very near future, but I do want to spend some time consulting with the parties on how the international meeting can support and advance their negotiations because – in their discussions. Because after all, the bilateral track has to be at the center of any resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** There are a lot of issues that have to be discussed, and I'll be saying more about this as we go along.

**QUESTION:** Just a question on Iran. France this week raised the specter of a war with Iran. Does this mean that diplomatic solutions are running out, number one? And secondly, there are some such as Russia and China who think that the IAEA should be given more chance to work its own diplomacy before any military action or new sanctions – i.e., a third round of UN sanctions – are imposed.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let me just start with the fact that the IAEA is not in the business of diplomacy. The IAEA is a technical agency that has a Board of Governors, of which the United States is a member. The IAEA's role is to carry out the inspections, to report on activities, to make sure that the various agreements that states are signed onto are indeed carrying out those agreements, that the – that new protocols can be signed. We've worked with the IAEA, for instance, on issues like assured fuel supply, which we think they have the technical capability to help work with. There are a lot of elements that the IAEA needs to be concerned with. And the one that they need to be concerned with with the – with Iran is to make a clear declaration and clear reporting on what the Iranians are doing, whether and when and if they are living up to the agreements that they have signed.

Now, the agreement that the Iranians and the IAEA have made to close outstanding issues, that's a good thing. But this wouldn't be the first time that the Iranians made an agreement only to break it, and so the other thing that I will just note is that there is, of course, also a UN Security Council track. The IAEA Board of Governors is one thing; the UN Security Council is another. And the UN Security Council has in two resolutions unanimously set forth obligations that Iran must fulfill. And it is not up to anybody to diminish or to begin to cut back on the obligations that the Iranians have been ordered to take under Chapter 7 unanimous Security Council resolutions.

We will be – I'm going to talk with my counterparts when we're in New York. The political directors are working on a Security – on, you know, text – not text, on elements of what might constitute a Security Council resolution. And we can talk about when that Security Council resolution goes forward. Obviously, we've got the UNGA coming up. We've got a lot of activity. But I just want to be very clear, we are proceeding on a diplomatic track because the President believes that diplomacy can still resolve this issue. But diplomacy has to have, obviously, a set of positive incentives, but it also has to have a set of disincentives. And the UN Security Council is setting some of those disincentives. So, increasingly, are private sector entities which are reacting to the reputational and investment risks of dealing with Iran. And you're seeing it day after day after day. So --

**QUESTION:** What about the question of the French Foreign Minister's comments talking about, you know, basically saying that France is making preparations for a possible war?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I don't want to try to comment on what Bernard said. I think it's best to let him comment on that. I think that the key here is that we are committed to a diplomatic track. The President hasn't taken any of his options off the table. And we are in circumstances that are necessary, like in Iraq, for force protection reasons confronting Iran when we find their agents in dealing in activities that are going to be harmful or that are harmful to our troops. But we believe the diplomatic track can work, but it has to work both with a set of incentives and a set of teeth.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, the Israeli Prime Minister said yesterday that he was ready to start peace talks with the Syrians, and he said previously that he would have done that but he was prevented by U.S. opposition. So I wanted to know if you are opposed to peace talks between Israeli and the Syria, and if you think that Syria should participate in the international meeting you are preparing.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, as I said, I'll have more to say about the international meeting after I've consulted with people and when we're ready to give a little bit more detail to that.

But in terms of Israeli-Syrian negotiations, we're not standing in the way. If Israel and Syria believe that they can come to agreement, then they should come to agreement. I think we haven't seen anything in Syrian behavior to this point that suggests that Syria is doing anything but acting in a destabilizing way in the Middle East, but you know, the United States is never going to stand in the way of states that want to make peace.

Now, that is not, of course, a substitute for peace between Palestinians and Israelis because, as I've said many times, the Palestinians have waited long enough for their states and the Israelis have waited long enough for the security that's going to come from having a democratic neighbor.

**QUESTION:** Good afternoon, Madame Secretary. I'm Brian Bennett from Time Magazine. I was wondering if you could, please, characterize your conversation with Prime Minister Maliki yesterday, if he was – expressed anger or sadness about what happened with the Blackwater shooting, and whether you think that the Iraqis have legitimate concerns about the vagueness of the law and with regard to the accountability for security contractors operating in Iraq.

And with respect to the fact that the Blackwater will no longer be able to in the near future operate outside of the Green Zone, thereby hampering the ability of U.S. diplomats to function in Iraq, will you as the head of the State Department be looking at the reliance on security contractors to do the diplomacy that you do and look to reevaluating how much the U.S. relies on Blackwater and specific in Iraq, and security contractors in general to do that?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first, my conversation with Prime Minister Maliki was one of a conversation among allies. I mean, it was cordial. I expressed our regret at the loss of life, noted that it is a very dangerous environment and that one has to take that into account, but I committed to him that we were as interested as the Iraqi Government in having a full investigation into what happened, a transparent investigation into what happened, and to working with the Iraqi Government to try and make certain that this sort of thing doesn't happen. As I said, it's an extremely difficult environment and I think that needs to be said. And I think the Prime Minister understands that.

I think the Prime Minister was, of course, very concerned and very saddened by what had happened. He is the Prime Minister of a great country and he has responsibilities to its citizens. And we fully understand that. We fully support that.

It's early to talk about what – how this might all come out. We're going to begin the investigation. We're working with the Iraqis because I think we will want to work with them on all of these issues. And so we're looking to do that.

But I did emphasize to Prime Minister Maliki, and he agrees, that it's very important for us to be able to do the work that we're doing. We're there to strengthen the capacity of the Iraqi Government. We're not able to do that all in the green zone. We are there to strengthen the capacity of provincial and local governments. And so we're going to be working through all of these elements. After my call to Prime Minister Maliki, I know that our Deputy Chief of Mission met with his government today and that they are working toward mechanisms that might allow us to address these issues together.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** It's very early to try to do that kind of analysis, I think. Right now, I think we need to have the investigation, get to the bottom of what happened, and see what we can do to try and prevent it in the future. I mean, these are people, you know, security people who are trying to operate in a very difficult environment, and so I want to keep that in mind as well.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, do you feel confident – back to the Mideast conference and what you're coming out here to do. Do you feel confident that you're – when all is said and done, you're going to be able to produce some sort of agenda that addresses the final status issues, as Saudi Arabia and some of the other countries are demanding in order to – for them to come? And if not, do you think it's at all possible to have a meaningful conference without the attendance of Saudi Arabia?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, as I said, we'll get to the question of participation at another time. But the key here is that everybody who is interested in and has an interest in this issue, and I would include in that the parties, the regional states and a number of international actors as well, the Quartet for instance – we all have an interest in a meeting that advances the cause of Palestinian-Israeli peace. Nobody wants to have a meeting where people simply come and sit and talk and talk and talk. We want to advance the cause.

Now, there are several ways to do that and we're exploring them all. But the – what I have heard from everyone, and it's not just the Saudis, I've heard it from everyone – is make this conference serious and substantive. And I think it's extremely important from our point of view that it be serious and substantive. What are we trying to do here? We're trying to support the forces in the Middle East, and in this case most especially the Palestinians and the Israelis, who see a future for the Middle East in which former enemies can live in peace and security side by side, people who believe that that is going to be achieved through a negotiated two-state solution, who believe in a two-state solution. And I've said on any number of occasions the people who believe in a two-state solution have got to be shown that, in fact, it is possible to have one. We can't simply continue to say we want a two-state solution. We've got to start to move toward one. And I think the bilateral track that the Palestinians and the Israelis have themselves established and the teams that they are going to appoint are dedicated to doing exactly that. And this international meeting is also going to be doing exactly that. This is not a matter just to declare that we all want to see a two-state solution.

Thank you.

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