



Briefing by the National Security Advisor

Dr. Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor

Foreign Press Center Briefing
Washington, DC
May 14, 2003

1:55 P.M. (EDT)

[Real Audio of Briefing](#)

MR. DENIG: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Washington Foreign Press Center. Welcome also to journalists gathered in our New York Foreign Press Center. It is a distinct honor and privilege to be able to introduce to you this afternoon for a briefing someone who needs no introduction, President Bush's National Security Advisor, [Dr. Condoleezza Rice](#). She'll have an opening statement to make, and after that she'll be glad to take your questions.

Dr. Rice.

DR. RICE: Thank you very much. I am very happy to be here. It's my first visit to the Foreign Press Center, but I assume it won't be my last, if I'm invited back. And I just want to talk for a few minutes about the fact that we look forward, tonight, to welcoming President Roh of South Korea. He will meet with President Bush late this afternoon, and then they will have a private dinner together in the White House residence.

President Bush is looking forward to his first face-to-face meeting with the new South Korean President. It's a very timely meeting, coming in the year of the 50th anniversary of the alliance between our two nations. It is a strong, vital, multifaceted alliance that is of mutual benefit.



President Bush will take this opportunity to thank President Roh for his support during the liberation of Iraq. The two leaders will also discuss issues of mutual interest, including the situation with North Korea and multilateral issues like the war on terrorism and issues of the world economy.

The President will look forward to this meeting. He has a number of other meetings coming up. This is a time of intensive diplomacy for the President and for the United States. But with those opening remarks about the meeting today, I am happy to take your questions.

MR. DENIG: Very good. Let's start right over here.

QUESTION: Giampiero Gramaglia, Italian News Agency ANSA.

Dr. Rice, are you satisfied with the level of cooperation you received in the past and you are receiving now from Saudi Arabia in the fight against terrorism?

DR. RICE: We have, indeed, very good cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the war on terrorism, very good cooperation in a number of aspects of it. We have been intensifying our cooperation, for instance, on stopping the financing of terrorism. And we expect to have even more intensive discussions and relations with Saudi Arabia. It was just a reminder the other day that the war on terrorism goes on, that our work is not done, that there is hard work ahead.

I might mention that we had also this week bombings in Chechnya, which remind us that the war on terrorism is not done. This is a worldwide and global effort, and everybody must participate and participate to the fullest. But we have had good cooperation with the Saudi Government, and I am sure that in the wake of this terrible incident in Riyadh, that we will seek to intensify our cooperation. We can always do better. All of us can always do better, and we look forward to working with the Saudi Government.

QUESTION: T.V. Parasuram, Press Trust India. Recently, you met Mr. Mishra, so did the President, and also the Foreign Minister India is meeting Secretary of State. I was wondering, recently Mr. Mishra made a suggestion that India, United States and Israel should join together in the war against terrorism. I was wondering whether you view that as a feasible thing, and how you generally view the war on terrorism.

There has been a feeling in India that the United States does not take the war on terrorism against India as seriously as it takes the war against terrorism against Americans. Is that a legitimate thing to say, or how do you react to it?

DR. RICE: Thank you for the question. The President is very firm in his commitment that terrorism, wherever it is carried out, against whom it is carried out, is not a legitimate means for advancing a political agenda. All terrorism is wrong. And, in fact, we have had very good cooperation with the Indian Government in the war on terrorism.

At the time of the attack on the Indian Parliament, more than a year ago now, the United States spoke out very strongly about that terrorism. The United States also has listed a number of organizations that have been involved in terrorism against India, including Kashmiri-based organizations that have been involved in terrorism. And we will continue to speak out about terrorism wherever it might occur.

Let me just use the opportunity though to say that our relationship with India is a broad and deepening relationship. It goes beyond security matters. It goes beyond proliferation issues. It goes beyond regional issues. And this President has been dedicated to strengthening and broadening the Indian relationship to make it in accordance with the fact with that India is the world's largest democracy, that it is a country that has a potentially very important role to play as a stabilizing force in the region.

We have had good cooperation and consultations on Afghanistan, for instance, and we intend to continue to have this very good relationship. The recent steps by Prime Minister Vajpayee and the reciprocal steps by Pakistan are to be welcomed for what they may mean for a diminution of tensions, and hopefully a road to peace for the two parties, and we have had discussions about that and we stand ready to help in any way that we can as the two parties try to reenter dialogue.

QUESTION: Thank you. Dolia Esterez with El Financiero from Mexico City.

Good afternoon, Dr. Rice. I have a quick question for you. After your meetings last week with the Foreign Minister of Mexico, are you now counting with Mexico's vote for in the Security Council for the new resolution on Iraq? And can you confirm the reports that President Bush will be traveling to Mexico in November, meeting with folks and also to attend the Special Summit of the Americas? And what -- how would you describe at this point the status of the bilateral relation with Mexico?

DR. RICE: One question. Right. (Laughter.) It's one, yeah, though -- I agree. I understand. I understand.

First of all, on a trip to Mexico, we've not yet finalized the Presidential schedule for the fall. We are in discussions with countries about what might be done to give a little push to the Summit of the Americas agenda in the interim, but nothing has been planned yet.

As to U.S.-Mexican relations, Mexico is a friend. The President and President Fox have had a good relationship and continue to have a good relationship. It is important to recognize that we have been through a difficult period. Obviously, the UN process did not work out in a way that we would have hoped, given the importance of this issue as a security matter for the United States. It was unfortunate that we were not able to get an 18th resolution against Saddam Hussein. We believe that there was more than enough authority in Resolution 1441 and the previous resolutions, but it would have been good had the Security Council been able to affirm once again its willingness to defend its resolutions.

But that is now behind us and we are now in a UN process, UN Security Council process, that really has to be aimed at helping the Iraqi people. That is all that we should be worried about at this point in time. The coalition is on the ground. The coalition has certain responsibilities as well as certain authorities to help the Iraqi people get back on their feet and move toward their future, and we expect all UN Security Council members, including Mexico, to react positively to the need to lift sanctions. It cannot possibly be said that it was all right to lift sanctions against Saddam Hussein, but now that he is gone it is not a good thing to lift sanctions. This simply makes no sense.

And so we have put forward a resolution for the lifting of sanctions. We put forward a resolution that is pretty minimalist in terms of what we need to be able to do to help the Iraqi people to establish a democratic path, and so we expect cooperation from all Security Council members, including from Mexico.

QUESTION: Amal Chmouny, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper. How genuine is the statement by the American administration

for Syria to withdraw its troop from Lebanon? And where do you put the relation between USA and Syria?

DR. RICE: Well, the relationship between the United States and Syria has been problematic because the policies and behavior of Syria have been problematic: the Syrian support for terrorism, particularly for Hezbollah, but also other rejectionist organizations where it comes to peace in the Middle East; the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, which has long been U.S. policy that it should end.

And the Syrian relationship has been very difficult. Now, it doesn't have to remain difficult. There is a path that could create conditions in which this could be a much better relationship, but we are not there.

We were very concerned about Syrian activities closing in on the end of the Iraq conflict. It was obvious that people were escaping into Syria. It was obvious that they were not being stopped. There was some improvement in that after we raised the issue, but there is a lot of work to be done. Syrian weapons of mass destruction programs have to be accounted for, and Syria should stand up and renounce those and make it possible to verify that they have given up any aspirations to weapons of mass destruction.

But it is, frankly, a very difficult relationship and it is not one that is likely to improve without some major changes in Syrian behavior.

QUESTION: This is Umit Enginshoy with Turkey's NTV Television.

Dr. Rice, we are aware of the difficulties between Turkey and the United States with regard to the Iraq war. From this point on, what could you -- what measures -- what specific measures would you advise the Turkish government to take to re-improve relations with the United States? Thank you.

DR. RICE: Well, I am not in the habit of advising the Turkish government, but I can tell you that we are certainly aware of our joint strategic interests with Turkey. This is a longtime ally. It is an alliance that is based on friendship and interest, and I expect that it will be well into the future.

We have a lot of work to do. Turkey has a very strong interest in the establishment of a stable and unified Iraq. The United States has a strong interest in the establishment of a stable and unified Iraq.

This is an area in which we can work together. We actually have worked together pretty effectively at the end of the conflict, and I expect that we will in the future. Turkey, I would hope, would be involved in the reconstruction effort in Iraq, lending support to that, because a stable Iraq will be a good neighbor for Turkey, and I am sure that that is what Turkey wants.

We obviously are NATO partners. And the evolution that is going on in NATO, which is really quite dramatic, as we bring in more new states, as NATO has to redefine its mission in terms of the threats of the 21st century, which are terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, potentially the nexus between them, Turkey is an important member of NATO and ought to be very involved in carrying out that agenda.

We obviously have interest in dealing with the Cyprus problem. We had made some progress on Cyprus. The UN General Secretary has made heroic efforts to try and resolve that, and we would hope that Turkey would put its weight behind a settlement of the Cyprus issue.

So we have many, many goals ahead of us together. Turkey is important as a message to the world that democracy and Islam can exist side

by side, that they can exist in a way that is organic and is to the good of its people. And so we will be working with Turkey.

Yes, we went through some difficult periods of time, but this is a strong relationship. It's going to remain a strong relationship and we look forward to continuing to work with it. As a matter of fact, the President talked with President Sezer the other day to express his condolences on the earthquake. And I believe that Prime Minister Erdogan and the President are speaking today about the matter of the bombing in Riyadh. So contacts continue.

QUESTION: Patrick Jarreau of Le Monde.

Dr. Rice, what is the purpose of the discussions in Geneva between the U.S. and Iran? What is the scope of those discussions? Is it Iraq? Is it proliferation, terrorism? And is Iraq still a member of the "axis of evil"?

DR. RICE: Iraq or Iran?

QUESTION: Iran.

DR. RICE: Yes, right. Iraq, I think, is quickly not going to be a member of the "axis of evil" any longer.

Iran continues to engage in behavior that is deeply troubling and antithetical to American interests: Iran's weapons of mass destruction program, its nuclear program. The United States has raised alarms about this nuclear program over a long period of time. And now with the IAEA visit to Iran, which seemed to raise a lot of questions about what the Iranians were doing under so-called civil nuclear uses measures, really those concerns have got to be addressed.

The IAEA needs to be very tough in making sure that those questions are answered, because we believe that this is a disguise for a nuclear weapons program. We have lots of evidence of that. And now the suspicions that are there as a result of the IAEA visit, I think, really give to the world new impetus to want to know fully what is going on in Iran, and Iran should be responsive to that.

It is also the case that Iran is one of the chief sponsors of terrorism -- Hezbollah operating out of Iran. And Iran cannot continue to support rejectionist organizations as we try to pursue peace in the Middle East.

Clearly, the Iranian Government also, which was elected by the Iranian people in overwhelming numbers to fulfill their aspirations for liberalism and democracy and for rights, has done nothing but frustrate those aspirations of their people, and we stand firmly with the Iranian people in their aspirations for freedom.

Finally, we are concerned about al-Qaida operating in Iran, and we have made that clear from time to time to the Iranians. And we expect Iran to behave toward the new Iraqi government as a good neighbor in a transparent way. We understand Iran is a neighbor of Iraq, just like Iran is a neighbor of Afghanistan. And of course it's going to have relations with those countries, but they need to be transparent, state-to-state relations, not relations that are aimed surreptitiously at importing the Iranian form of government into Iraq.

So we have a wide range of issues that are very difficult with Iran. We are not, in the discussions in Geneva, in discussions about broad relations between the United States and Iraq -- Iran. These are only discussions about very specific matters having to do with Afghanistan and we expanded those at a point in time to do very specific discussions having to do with matters in Iraq.

We are in the same neighborhood, so to speak, at this point in time, and so it's important not to have any misunderstandings. But nobody should construe the discussions that are going on in Geneva as discussions that are meant to lead somehow to broad improvement or normalization of relations with Iran. That is not their purpose. These are very, very narrow in scope.

QUESTION: My question is -- excuse me. She said yes.

DR. RICE: Well, I don't know who you were pointing to. He's got the pen.

QUESTION: Yes. Dr. Rice, thank you. My name is Daniel Rocha from WorldNet. I have a question on Colombia. How is the U.S. Government cooperating with the Colombian government to rescue the three American was kidnapped by the FARC?

And after the meeting with the President Uribe, is any new plan to help the Colombian government to resolve that problem of the narco-guerrilla?

DR. RICE: Well, we are very impressed with the administration of President Uribe. There have been a couple of meetings. We've had wide-ranging meetings with ministers there, minister of defense, minister of foreign affairs, of course. The President is just immensely impressed with the courage and the resolve of President Uribe to take his country back, on behalf of the Colombian people, from the narco-terrorists who operate there. And we are doing everything that we can to support that effort through more effective sharing of intelligence, through more effective coordination.

The problem in Colombia is a problem of terrorism against a democratic state, and that means that a state like the United States that is devoted to the war on terrorism has got to be an active partner with a country that is trying to fight off that attack on democracy by terrorism.

As to the hostages, we are hopeful that we will be able to do something about that, but we stay in very close contact with the Colombian government about how to handle that situation. The one thing that we expect no one to do is to somehow negotiate with terrorists. It only emboldens them.

QUESTION: My name is Ogata with Kyodo News.

Dr. Rice, one quick question about North Korea. Did the United States Government already decide to continue the three-way talks with the North Korea? And if not, what kind of economic sanction are you preparing on the table right now?

DR. RICE: Our policy toward North Korea can really be summed up as follows. No one should be willing to give in to the kind of blackmail that the North Koreans have been practicing on the world for a number of years now, especially not the United States.

And in order not to give in to blackmail, in order to do something that is, this time, effective, the President believes that we have to have a multilateral approach to this. This cannot just be the United States. The North Koreans would like nothing better than for this be a problem between the United States and North Korea. This is not a problem between the United States and North Korea. This is a problem between North Korea and the world, because North Korea has completely shunted aside its international obligations not to do certain things. Announcing from time to time that it's getting out of this agreement, or that agreement is null and void, this kind of behavior simply cannot be tolerated.

So this is an issue between North Korea and the world, and that's why we have insisted on multilateral talks, multilateral talks that include the neighbors and the most affected states.

So the Beijing talks, we believe, were useful. We were especially appreciative of China's role. China, after all, has very big interests in a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. China has said that the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula would not be in China's interest. And so we were able to make common cause with China to create a place at which we could begin this discussion.

Now, we believe that those talks will only be really effective and fruitful when South Korea, Japan and possibly Russia are involved in them --

and others who are interested.

If there are to be further talks, though, the attitude ought to be more constructive. The North Koreans used the trilateral talks to posture and to threaten and to try and blackmail. That is not the spirit in which we would expect to conduct any further talks. But we are not fearful of talks, and if we believe that they are useful at some point in time, we would be more than willing to reenter them.

QUESTION: Kiyon Gud with Segye Times. President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea strongly objects to the idea of a preemption targeting North Korea, but I hear you keep saying that all options are on the table. So how can you reconcile the different perspectives on the North Korean issue?

DR. RICE: Well, the United States and South Korea agree that a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula is in the best interest of stability in Asia. And they're not the only ones that agree. Japan agrees. Russia agrees. China agrees. There is broad-scale agreement on this matter.

We believe and have communicated to all of our partners that there is a peaceful resolution of this that is possible if we are all strong in insisting that North Korea live up to its obligations. So we, too, believe that a peaceful resolution is possible and, of course, preferable.

The President never takes his options off the table in any circumstance. And we have always said, on just going to the broader matter of preemption, that preemption says only that you will not allow a threat necessarily to hit you before you hit it. It has never been the first option for the United States. This is after other things have been tried. We do believe that this can be resolved peacefully, but that is going to require everybody to be firm and to be strong, and not to allow the North Koreans to blackmail us.

It is going to require that the North Koreans understand that their only way into the international system is by peaceful means. It's really rather sad because last summer North Korea was doing rather well. It had the Japanese Prime Minister there, who was talking about a path to normalization. You had intensification of the North-South dialogue, the opening of rail lines, and the like. You had the President of Russia there. You had the Foreign Minister of North Korea meet Secretary Powell in Brunei.

North Korea was really doing very well in trying to enter the international system. And then, all of a sudden, because they were confronted with the fact that they were violating the Agreed Framework, the North Koreans decided they were going to go back to blackmailing people into letting them engage in peaceful relations. It's not the way to behave, and the North Koreans have got to be told that in no uncertain circumstances.

MR. DENIG: Lady back here please.

QUESTION: Hilary Mackenzie, Canada News Service.

Dr. Rice, could you comment on a report that the person, the commander behind the attacks on Riyadh may have been Abdul-Rahman Jabarah, a Canadian citizen of Kuwaiti origin, whose younger brother, Mohamed Mansour Jabarah, was arrested in Amman last year, returned to Canada, and is currently being interrogated in the U.S.?

DR. RICE: I'm sorry. I can't comment on those specific reports. Obviously, this is an unfolding story. We are going to do everything that we can, in cooperation with the Saudi Government, to find the perpetrators, to find not just those who carried out the attack, but those who planned this attack. Al-Qaida is obviously still operative. It has been hurt. There is no doubt that pulling out important field generals like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abu Zubaida and others hurts the organization. But we have always known that they were still capable of striking, and we have got a lot of work to do and will continue to do that.

MR. DENIG: Lady in the second row.

QUESTION: Dubravka Savic, Belgrade daily Vecernje Novosti, on Balkans. Given the fact that there is presence, U.S. and NATO presence in Serbia and Montenegro, and that country is not part of any structures like Partnership for Peace, how do you see prospects for that to happen? And also, how do you see overall engagement, U.S. engagement in Balkans?

DR. RICE: In the Balkans. Well, first of all, the Balkans is in many ways the beginning of a success story, let me put it that way. If you look at where we were several years ago in the Balkans, we have seen the coming of democratic states. The violence has stopped. There is no longer civil war. And the civil presence is beginning to make some difference in the lives of the people. But there is an awful lot of work to be done, particularly on the economic reconstruction.

And I was reading some material the other day about the need to really intensify the economic reconstruction in these places because people are still without work, and you want people to have hope, and on the basis of that hope then to commit to a peaceful future. And so there is still a lot of work to be done. I would not despair that the Balkans are not yet a part of the structures that Europe has. I am sure that they will be in time.

I think that there have been contact groups that have been very effective in making certain that there are channels of communication about security and other issues. I expect that through NATO, the fact that there are new NATO members who make their homes in the Balkans will make a difference to the Balkans' contact and proximity to NATO. And, eventually, all of these countries should recognize that President Bush's Warsaw dream that all democratic states should expect that NATO would welcome them, that that is something to aspire to. But it is an aspiration that has to be satisfied through actually making changes on the ground. And so what I would say to countries like Macedonia is that not yet; however, that does not mean not ever. And if the hard work of reform is done in the way that countries like Slovenia and Slovakia, or the Baltic states that have just come into NATO, took on that mantle and did the hard work. They are now members of NATO. NATO is an open organization. And when those countries are ready, I am sure NATO will be ready for them.

QUESTION: Samir Nader, Radio SAWA. President Assad of Syria said in an interview in *The Washington Post* last Sunday that he is not willing to withdraw Syrian troops from Lebanon until the achieving of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Is this acceptable to the U.S.?

DR. RICE: I think this is something that we should not think of as a sequence, you know. It is important that Syria be willing and ready to end its occupation of Lebanon. The Middle East peace, if I can use the question as an opportunity to talk a little bit about that, we do have a tremendous opportunity now. We have an opportunity, thanks to the victory of the coalition forces in Iraq, which removed one of the really terrible tyrants and in one of the destabilizing forces in the Middle East, we have an opportunity because there is a new Palestinian leadership emerging that will, we hope, be dedicated to rolling back terrorist organizations and recognizing that a Palestinian state can never be founded on a foundation of terror, but only on a foundation of democracy and peace.

And the President is intending to seize this opportunity to push the process forward. We have published the roadmap. We are getting comment from the parties. It's a good thing to get comment from the parties, because, ultimately, the parties have to own the roadmap and have to implement it. But we don't want to spend time negotiating it. We really want to get people moving forward.

But, in that context, we would hope that Syria would recognize that it is Syria's responsibility to become a contributing power to peace, rather than one that detracts from peace by its position in Lebanon and by what it does in the support of terror.

QUESTION: My name is Andrei Sitov with the Russian News Agency TASS. First, thank you, Dr. Rice, thank you to the FPC, for this opportunity.

Obviously, the question about Russia. The upcoming summit in St. Petersburg, will this be strictly a fence mending after Iraq, or do you expect to move forward on a positive agenda? What, specifically, would you have in mind? And do you expect any high-level contacts before the summit and after the Secretary Powell's visit to Moscow?

Thank you.

DR. RICE: Thank you. Well, of course, we have already had a number of contacts. I was in Moscow. Secretary Powell is now in Moscow. The presidents have talked on the telephone, and I am sure that they will again. And there may be other high-level contacts as well.

St. Petersburg will be yet another opportunity to move the relationship forward. Now it's true that we don't have that much time in St. Petersburg. We are principally there to celebrate the glorious 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg, and we all look very much forward to that -- especially, I, as a Russian specialist -- to be at the 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg is going to be like a dream. So that's the primary reason that we will be there. But we will also advance the agenda, I am quite certain of it.

I might note that the Moscow Treaty, I believe, was ratified by the Duma today. It was ratified a little over a month ago by the American Senate. So we are moving the relationship forward. We continue to work hard in the war on terrorism and to have very fruitful cooperation there.

We have common security problems. And, yes, we had difficulties over Iraq. It's unfortunate. But I am hopeful that the Russian Government, as I said about the Security Council, is now ready to move forward in a way that helps to do what we need to do for the Iraqi people. That's really the key. We all owe it now to the Iraqi people to get a UN Security Council resolution that is in their interest.

And I have to say that the atmosphere in New York thus far, and the atmosphere in capitals, as we have discussed the resolution, has been quite good. It doesn't mean that there won't be continued discussions, but the atmosphere has been good.

And so we look forward to St. Petersburg. We expect it to indeed advance the agenda, and U.S.-Russian strategic partnership we believe is on track.

Thank you very much.

MR. DENIG: Thank you, Dr. Rice. I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to please remain seated until Dr. Rice has exited. Thank you.



[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[FOIA](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)