



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

KEYWORD SEARCH

[Subject Index](#)BOOKMARK     ...[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Countries](#)[Youth & Education](#)[Careers](#)[About State](#)

You are in: [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#) > [What the Secretary Has Been Saying](#) > [2005 Secretary Rice's Remarks](#) > [December 2005: Secretary Rice's Remarks](#)

Press Availability at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

NATO Headquarters
Brussels, Belgium
December 8, 2005

SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. I'm pleased to have engaged so far in very productive discussions with my NATO colleagues. I think that today's discussion and what we will do this afternoon demonstrates that NATO is truly a multilateral organization that is vibrant, that is a contributor to global security. It has European roots, of course, but if you look at what it is now doing -- it is involved in helping the people of Darfur; it is involved, as the Secretary General discussed, in Afghanistan, in training in Iraq -- this is an alliance that is indeed beginning to really meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We had an extended discussion this morning of the need to prepare well for what we are calling a two-summit strategy, meaning that the heads of state will meet in both '06 and '08. Those summits will be very important to the further development of NATO's capabilities and partnership and to ensure that this alliance has not just the will but also the capabilities and funding to meet the greatest threats to our security and freedom: global terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

I believe that the Secretary General has briefed in some detail at what I believe is really one of the most important outcomes of this ministerial, and that is the significant expansion or the decision to significantly expand NATO's role in Afghanistan. We endorsed a plan that has been put together by the military committee that will expand NATO's ISAF presence into the south of the country. We want to underscore that NATO wants to work on a long-term plan of security cooperation and training and support for Afghanistan to help reform and strengthen its defense institutions. We will do this, of course, in partnership with the Afghan Government, which is now a fully elected Afghan Government, the Bonn process having been completed.

ISAF's mission will also give special attention to problems of counternarcotics, and we discussed that as well.

In addition to the work that we are going to do on Afghanistan, we reaffirmed the importance of the training mission in



Iraq and the need to support the new government of Iraq once those elections have been completed in December and a new government has been formed.

You may remember that at the last summit the President called upon NATO to be -- President Bush called upon NATO to be a forum, a transatlantic forum, for intensive political dialogue. I think we are definitely fulfilling that charge. At our ministerial breakfast this morning, a small breakfast, a breakfast for ministers only, we had a very extensive discussion of the Middle East, the broader Middle East, about the various efforts that are going on there. We talked about the Israeli-Palestinian issue. We talked about Iraq. We talked about Afghanistan. We talked about Iran. And we talked about the challenges that we face in the Middle East, which is changing very dramatically.

I also just want to underscore where I began: NATO is an organization that is transforming in accordance with the new challenges. Just on a personal note, I can remember back in the early or late -- 1990, 1989-1990, when the Soviet Union was breaking up and indeed when the Warsaw Pact went out of existence, that people asked whether NATO indeed had a future. And I think we now, more than ten years later, some 13 years later, we really now know the answer to the question -- sorry, 16 years later. We now know the answer to that question. NATO not only has a future, it has a very bright future. And it has been involved in delivering humanitarian aid to the victims of Katrina and Pakistan, the earthquake in Pakistan, and it's an increasingly active global trainer. So it is really fulfilling its historic function of being a place where democracies gather to ensure their security and, in doing so, to increase the prospects for a more secure world.

Let me say very briefly that as the Secretary General said, we also had a very good discussion last night at dinner of the questions concerning the war on terrorism and detainee policy. I asked that we do that first at the dinner because I thought it was important that we have ample time to discuss and reassure and have a really extensive discussion of that issue. In fact, it was a very serious discussion in which people talked about the many dilemmas that we really do face in the war on terrorism as great democracies who face a brutal new enemy, an enemy that wantonly kills innocent people -- not collateral damage of civilians but rather that literally goes after innocent people, whether it is at a transportation hub in London or at a Palestinian wedding celebration or on a fine September day in New York or Washington.

And we all recognize as stewards of our own political systems that we have an obligation to protect innocent life. We talked about the need as countries who respect the rule of law to do that in a lawful way. I think that the discussion was extremely important. It was enlightening. It was also an opportunity to put this very difficult and important issue on the agenda in a place that was filled -- by the way, it was at 32, so it was NATO plus members of the EU -- and it was an opportunity to put this issue on the agenda among friends, among people who share values. We talked about that for some time and then we moved on to talk about the Balkans, where we had an extended discussion of the Balkans and the importance of the key work that is going to be done there over the next several months.

So that was the agenda. We will have further partnership discussions this afternoon with the EAPC, with Russia and with Ukraine. Thank you.

MR. MCCORMACK: First question to Sylvie Lanteaume, AFP.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, having stated the U.S. Administration's position on torture, aren't you now in the position where every time an abuse is discovered people will question your credibility? Aren't you afraid your declaration of yesterday could one day be remembered like Colin Powell's speech at the UN about WMDs?



SECRETARY RICE: Well, the United States is quite clear and quite determined to carry out the President's policy, which he articulated clearly, that the United States does not engage in torture, doesn't condone it, doesn't expect its employees to engage in it.

Will there be abuses of policy? That is entirely possible. Because just because you are a democracy, it doesn't mean that you're perfect. We saw in Iraq at Abu Ghraib under the traditional framework of the Geneva Convention that we had actions that were outside of U.S. policy and those actions were investigated, investigated thoroughly, and people have been punished. That is the only promise that we can make to people, which is that if we find abuses we will investigate them thoroughly and we will punish them.

I want to say that when abuses are alleged it is also important to respect the obligation of due process for those who are accused. And so when investigations take place, they have to take place in that context as well. But yes, if abuses are discovered, then we'll investigate them and punish them.

MR. MCCORMACK: Next question to (inaudible) from *International Herald Tribune*. (Inaudible) from the *Financial Times*.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) *Financial Times*. Madame Secretary, a lot of your colleagues have come out with quite supportive statements about your discussion yesterday, but do you feel that you've managed to convince European public opinion about U.S. policy on detention and on rendition? And is this something, a process that you've now closed out or do you actually see this as quite an arduous task to turn around European public opinion in the months ahead?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I appreciate the supportive comments that a number of colleagues have made. I appreciate the fact that when we've discussed this, we've discussed it as friends. I appreciate the fact that people have recognized the dilemmas that we face as democracies dealing with this particular enemy.

I also understand that there has been a lot -- and we talked yesterday about a lot of -- that has been in the papers and that has been reported -- and that what this gave us an opportunity to do was to address this in a transparent way from the point of view of what American policy really is, what it intends to do, how we intend to live up to our international obligations and U.S. law.

I think that it's only natural that sometimes we have these discussions. Questions or concerns arise. We should discuss them. We should discuss them in a serious way among friends. Now, whether or not it will continue to be a matter of discussion, I can't say. I am perfectly happy to continue to have the discussion because I actually think that the great democracies have, obviously, an obligation to remain a standard for the rule of law. Around the world we are talking to people about the importance of the rule of law, and so we have to also live under the rule of law.

We have an obligation also in these difficult times to protect our citizens. And I have said that intelligence and the gathering of intelligence and the use of intelligence is something that I'm quite certain is very often misunderstood because intelligence, by its very nature, is done in a closed environment. By its very nature, it has to be that way. But if we can get our citizens to understand that in this new kind of war, intelligence is the key to preventing attacks, then I think we will have accomplished something very important here. We have to do everything that we can to protect our citizens in a lawful manner. But we have to use every tool at our disposal in a lawful manner to do precisely that.



And I just want to emphasize, this is not like normal criminal activity where you wait until something has happened and then you arrest the suspects and then you try them and then you punish them. Once the crime is committed in this case, 3,000 people are dead in New York and Washington or people are dead on July 7th in the scores in Great Britain or a Palestinian wedding party has been attacked in Jordan. Intelligence is the only way that you prevent an attack and we learned after September 11th and in what I think was a very important inquiry in the United States into what happened on September 11th, that none of know if we could have prevented September 11th, but an awful lot of that focused on the need for better intelligence. And if we can have that discussion, if that has been an outcome of these questions, I think that will have been an important one.

MR. MCCORMACK: Glenn Kessler, *Washington Post*.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, the decision -- the detainee issue appears to have affected the discussion about the ISAF expansion in Afghanistan. The Dutch have asked for a clear memorandum of understanding with NATO and Afghanistan that no prisoners they take get the death penalty and that the detainees be treated according to the Geneva Convention, the Convention Against Torture and other international treaties. Do you support their requests?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I will simply state we are a member of NATO and that means that obviously we are signed on to NATO's policies concerning the ISAF. And the Secretary General has reaffirmed NATO's ISAF policy concerning detainees and I think that ISAF's policies on detainees are well known, have been practiced for now the entire existence of ISAF, and I would hope that that would clarify the matter. But the Secretary General has -- we're a member of NATO so, obviously, we're signed onto the ISAF policies.

QUESTION: You're saying they don't need this memorandum of understanding?

SECRETARY RICE: I am not going to make a judgment on what the Dutch Government needs or does not need. I just know that -- and I think you'll see in the communiqué when it comes out that ISAF policies are reaffirmed as ISAF policies on detainees. And we, through our military committee and our North Atlantic Council, our NAC, have established those policies and, of course, the Dutch have been party to that.

MR. MCCORMACK: Warren Strobel, Knight Ridder.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, people around the world obviously are analyzing very closely your statement yesterday regarding the detainee issue. And because the Bush Administration in the past has sometimes tried to make carve-outs or exceptions on this issue, they're wondering is there a loophole. So can you assure us? Are there any loopholes, asterisks, exceptions, carve-outs to what you said?

SECRETARY RICE: Warren, I can only say what I said, which is that U.S. policy is very clear to live up to its international obligations, to live up to U.S. law and its obligations. I think what I said yesterday, which I assume has caused some of the questions, is that we recognize our obligations, our policy recognizes our obligations, whether activities are undertaken inside the United States or outside the United States. And that's the clarification that I can give.

MR. MCCORMACK: Last question to this gentleman here.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) from *Le Monde*. Mrs. Secretary, could you --

SECRETARY RICE: I'm sorry. (Inaudible)

QUESTION: Yeah.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. Thank you.

QUESTION: Could you confirm that in case of CIA flights to Europe, the European government concerned is always informed in advance?

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, we respect the sovereignty of our partners and allies and we, again as a nation of laws, follow the requirements and the procedures and the statutes of any place that we are operating in terms of aircraft. We follow those procedures.

Now, I've made very clear, too -- it's not your question, but let me just restate what I said -- that we -- I did give assurance that we have not used airports or airspace for the purpose of transferring people, detainees, to places where we believe that they are going to be tortured. And in fact, we believe that it is our obligation if we have a concern, to seek assurances from any place to which we are transferring people that they will not be tortured.

But let me just try to put this again in context. Sometimes the best answer in terms of what to do with a detainee, if you are not able to charge or prosecute a detainee in the United States or in some other place, is to transfer that person to a place where there may be charges against them or where they may, in fact, be a citizen. That has been a practice for a long time. And by the way, this practice of rendition predates September 11th and predates the Bush Administration.

But our willingness, our obligation to live up to the law and to the obligations that we have undertaken, I think is very, very clear and I just want to make certain -- as I said to my colleagues last night and I was very pleased that a number of them spoke up and affirmed that they understood this about the United States, we are a nation of laws. The President of the United States is not going to ask American citizens to violate U.S. law or to violate our international obligations.

Thank you very much.

2005/T20-8

Released on December 8, 2005

 [BACK TO TOP](#)



[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.

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