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## Interview on CNN's Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Washington, DC

June 4, 2006

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, welcome back to Late Edition. Thanks for joining us.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thanks. Pleasure to be with you, Wolf.

**QUESTION:** I want to get to Iran in a moment, but first the U.S.-Canadian relationship, the arrests of 17 Canadians, Canadian citizens, Canadian residents. What does this say about the threat potentially to the United States from terrorists perhaps coming in from Canada?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, it says that the Canadians have had a very great success in their counterterrorism efforts. We have excellent counterterrorism cooperation with Canada and we're very glad to see this operation be a success. We don't know of any indication that there is a U.S. part to this, but by all means we have the best possible cooperation. We're going to share information. And it just shows that the Canadians are on the job. That's what it really shows.

**QUESTION:** Is there anything you need Canada to do right now to strengthen the border security with the United States that it's not doing?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we have had a very good relationship with Canada in terms of border security. Mike Chertoff has taken the lead in that. We've improved border security immensely through technology and also through cooperation. So we are very comfortable with the counterterrorism cooperation with Canada and the border security cooperation.

**QUESTION:** Let's talk about Iran, a dramatic development this week. You announced it earlier this week at the State Department, a readiness potentially to resume after 27 years direct talks with Iran under certain conditions. This is the response from the Ayatollah Khamenei, the spiritual leader of Iran, today: "If you, the United States, make a wrong

move regarding Iran, definitely the energy flow in this region will be seriously endangered. We are committed to our national interest and whoever threatens it will experience the sharpness of this nation's anger."

What do you make of this reaction?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, we're not going to react to every statement that comes out of Iran. We have set in train a diplomatic process. That diplomatic process needs to work now with Iran being given the proposals that the six parties put together in Vienna with Iran recognizing that it now has a path ahead that would allow an end to this impasse, but also that the international community is committed to a second path should that first path not work.

The oil card, let's just remember that Iran is some 80 percent dependent on oil in its budget and so not really able to live without -- with a disruption as well. Let's just allow the diplomacy to work. I don't think this is a time to react to every statement that Iran makes.

**QUESTION:** So you're not worried about Iran imposing an oil embargo against the United States?

**SECRETARY RICE:** We're just not going to concern ourselves with such. Let's let the diplomatic path that has been put before Iran unfold. I might just note, Wolf, that this is a path that really is logical given the President's decision more than a year ago to fully support and back the European-3 negotiations with Iran with some steps that the United States took, for instance, removing our objection to a WTO application for Iran. The next step of offering to join the talks should Iran suspend its enrichment programs, conditions set by the IAEA Board of Governors, that's a logical step in a policy that's really been set for more than a year.

**QUESTION:** The European-3 being Germany, France and Britain.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Germany, France and Great Britain.

**QUESTION:** How much time -- you've said they have a matter of weeks to respond to this offer from the U.S., the Europeans, the Russians, and the Chinese. You've said they have a matter of weeks. Are we talking a handful, five weeks, ten weeks? What kind of a number do you want to put before the weeks?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Wolf, I think you know I don't believe in setting timelines and deadlines. The only point here is that this can't be endless. The Iranian program is progressing the international community needs to know if there is a negotiating option that really has life in it. It's why it's important for Iran to receive this proposal, to receive it without having to read it in the newspaper -- that makes perfectly good sense, which is why the parties agreed that we weren't going to talk about what's on either path. We're going to present this to the Iranians and see what they say. But it can't go on.

**QUESTION:** Let me interrupt for a second.

**SECRETARY RICE:** It can't go on forever.

**QUESTION:** Less than two months, I assume?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let's let this process go forward. But the Iranian program moves on and the international community needs to know whether this is going to work or not.

**QUESTION:** They say they may publicize this offer from the world powers. Would it be better for them to publicize it or for you to publicize it?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I hope that given that the powers, the world powers, the six parties, have given them the opportunity to see this without having it public, that this would be a serious now diplomatic process in which not everything is in the newspapers. But at some point obviously it's going to be known that these two paths are there and probably what's on the two paths.

**QUESTION:** Here's what the President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad said on Friday: "Their opposition to our program is not because of their concern over the spread of nuclear weapons. They are worried that Iran would become a model for other independent countries, especially Islamic countries, for access to advanced technology."

Do you want to respond to that?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, if what Iran is looking for is civil nuclear technology, a peaceful program with civil nuclear technology, no one is trying to deny them that. In fact, I know they've said from time to time that they have a right to a civil nuclear program. We accept that. I said that in the statement that I made.

The question is: Can they have a civil nuclear program that does not have the proliferation risk associated with having fuel cycle technologies on -- certain fuel cycle technologies on Iranian territory. That's the issue, given Iran's history with the IAEA and its record of noncompliance. And so the offer that Iran would look at is one in which they could have civil nuclear power. No one is trying to deny them that.

**QUESTION:** Why is it okay for Pakistan, for example, to have a nuclear bomb but not Iran?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, obviously no one wants to see the spread of nuclear weapons anywhere, but Iran's role in the Middle East, Iran's history with the IAEA, we stand for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to any state. That's why the United States works so hard through the nonproliferation regime to prevent that from happening.

**QUESTION:** Your British counterpart, the British Foreign Secretary Margaret Becket, in announcing this agreement the other day in Vienna, also said this. Let me read it to you. She said: "If Iran decides not to engage in negotiation, further steps would have to be taken in the Security Council."

Can you elaborate what kind of steps you're talking about?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think that Margaret Becket said it very well. She talked about two paths. She talked about a path that was a real opportunity for Iran and she talked about a path in the Security Council should Iran be unwilling to take up that way out of this impasse. We have agreed as the six parties that we're not going to talk about what is the on either of those paths. It is only fair that this now be a serious proposal to the Iranians that they can see without reading about it

in the newspaper, and I'm going to honor that commitment to our partners.

**QUESTION:** The Israeli Prime Minister was here the other day. I interviewed him -- Ehud Olmert. And he said that the Iranians are a lot closer to building a bomb than a lot of people might suspect. I want you to hear what he said to me on Late Edition: "This technological threshold is nearer than we anticipated before. This is because they are already engaged very seriously in enrichment. It can be measured by months rather than years."

Do you agree with him?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, clearly the Iranian program is progressing and the reason that the President decided that we needed to give the diplomacy a new life and a shot in the arm and see whether or not there is indeed a negotiating path that is available, is that we are concerned about the forward progress of the Iranian nuclear program.

Look, it isn't an issue of trying to define within a few months or even years exactly how long Iran has to this path. It is that the international community needs to mobilize to stop the forward progress of this nuclear program. It needs to mobilize so that the IAEA has full and complete access to ask and get answered all of the questions that are there on behalf of the international community. And that's what we are determined to do.

**QUESTION:** But is your assessment and the Israeli assessment basically the same or is there a divergence there?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm not going to get into intelligence assessments here. We do -- we are in conversation with the Israelis and with other states that have assessments of what is going on in the Iranian nuclear program. And of course we have the assessments of the IAEA which are in many ways the most reliable assessments since the IAEA is on the ground in Iran. Everybody is concerned about the progress of the Iranian program. No one believes that this is something that we can allow to continue. Everyone is concerned that the Iranians have begun enrichment activities and indeed feeding the feed stock, the UF-6, into the centrifuges. So those are common concerns in the international community and it is what is driving an effort to accelerate the diplomacy.

**QUESTION:** I want to talk about Iraq but one final question on Iran before I do so. Some have suggested that this break, this readiness to begin talks, direct talks with Iran predicated on a suspension of their uranium enrichment, but one thing that's missing is a suspension of their support for terrorism. You say that Iran is a terror nation right now. Why not also demand that they suspend supporting terrorists as a condition for U.S. talks?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we have made very clear our concerns about terrorism and we do in fact say to the Iranians stop engaging in terrorist activity. And, Wolf, this isn't some kind of grand bargain where we are talking about normalization of relations of the kind that we have achieved with Libya after Libya gave up its weapons of mass destruction and ended its support for terrorism. We're talking about trying to get at a specific problem here, which is the Iranian nuclear problem. We're talking about doing that in the context of multilateral talks with partners who we've been supporting for more than a year in their negotiations. And so this is a rather limited program of engagement. Obviously, if we can solve this, then perhaps other paths are open, but no one is going to lose sight of our concerns about Iranian behavior worldwide.

(Commercial break.)

**QUESTION:** Welcome back to Late Edition. Just a little while ago I spoke with the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Here's part two of my interview.

Madame Secretary, let's talk about Iraq right now. A serious issue, the Haditha alleged massacre by U.S. Marines. The Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said something on Thursday that was very disturbing to a lot of U.S. officials. He said they crushed them with their vehicles and killed them just on suspicion, went on to say this is completely unacceptable, referring to the behavior of U.S. troops in Iraq. This from someone who was seen as a close ally, a friend of the United States.

**QUESTION:** Well, first of all, this was in the context of a much longer statement and I wouldn't want to take the comments out of context. Everyone is worried about what happens when forces have to engage the civilian population in a counterterrorism fight and American soldiers go to great lengths to try and protect innocent civilian life when they are engaged in counterterrorism operations. I know Prime Minister Maliki. I know that he believes that the coalition forces are necessary, that they are there to protect Iraqis, that he understands and has thanked me personally and thanked Secretary Rumsfeld personally for the sacrifices that American soldiers are making on behalf of Iraqis.

When Iraqi forces are able to do more of this on their own, and they are getting more capable, then American forces will be able to step back from some of these counterterrorism operations. But I think that Prime Minister Maliki is someone who fully understands the role of the coalition forces and appreciates it.

**QUESTION:** Did you ask the U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to get clarification from the Prime Minister when these remarks were publicized?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, of course the remarks are, as I said, in a larger context and Prime Minister Maliki has been very clear of his support for coalition forces, of his recognition of the sacrifice that they are making. As I said, he has personally said that to us.

We are concerned, too, about any allegations that there has been misconduct of any kind. And as the President said, these are serious matters and troubling matters. But there are a couple of things that we're going to do. We are going to be certain that there is a thorough investigation of any of these incidents. We are going to protect the rights of the accused so that there is due process. And then there will be action taken given the outcome.

But I think it's also important for everyone to remember how much American men and women in uniform are sacrificing (inaudible) and loved ones in Iraq. I've been with soldiers who have paid with limbs or with grave injuries for what they are doing in Iraq. American soldiers are serving with honor, they're serving with dignity, they are protecting Iraqis and they're giving Iraq a chance for democracy. And we need to remember that as well.

**QUESTION:** I interviewed the new Iraqi Ambassador here in Washington, Samir Sumaidaie, earlier in the week. He was very blunt -- his family is from Haditha -- in saying this may not necessarily be an isolated incident. Listen to what he said candidly here: "I believe he killed intentionally. I believe that he was killed unnecessarily. And unfortunately, the investigations that took place after that sort of took a different course and concluded that there was no unlawful killing. I would like further investigation."

The Ambassador was referring to his cousin, who was killed in Haditha in a separate incident, not this incident that's now widely publicized. Pretty blunt talk from the Iraqi diplomat, top diplomat in the United States.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, of course everyone wants incidents of this kind investigated and they will be investigated. That's what democracies do when there are allegations of misconduct. And when those investigations are finished, I am sure that there will be appropriate punishment if people are indeed found guilty.

But the key here is to allow the investigation to go forward. It is being handled at the highest levels and it will be a serious and thorough investigation.

**QUESTION:** I'm going to move on to Afghanistan right now because there's also some blunt talk from the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, about U.S. military behavior in Afghanistan. On Thursday he said this, and he's a close friend and ally, as you know, of the United States: "The coalition opened fire and we strongly condemn that. I have to say all the time we tell them to be careful because we have one joint aim, which is the struggle against terrorism."

What's going on in Afghanistan?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, in Afghanistan we are fighting the continued presence of Taliban and of al-Qaida terrorists, though the Taliban at this particular point is the force that is most engaged in the south.

But President Karzai is right. Of course people are told to be careful. But it is a matter of war, a war zone in which our soldiers are trying, as he said, jointly to root out terrorists. Afghanistan is a country that is making tremendous strides towards stability. It still has particularly in the south determined enemies who are killing civilians wantonly, who are killing innocent people because that is what they do. And we're working with the Afghans. We're working with Afghan forces and, by the way, NATO forces. When they've moved into the south, it's perhaps not surprising that there's been what I'll call some testing by the Taliban against those new forces. And I think they're learning a lesson that those are going to be very tough forces because they're taking huge casualties in the face of the resistance of their efforts by coalition forces.

**QUESTION:** As we're speaking right now, the new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, presumably talking about Olmert's plan for a unilateral Israeli disengagement, as they call it, from the West Bank if peace talks can't get off the ground. Does the U.S. support Olmert's proposals?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The President was very clear when Prime Minister Olmert was here. They spoke to this, that these are bold ideas and the President listened and looks forward to hearing more. But they both agreed, too, that a negotiated solution to this conflict would be by far the very best solution. And Prime Minister Olmert committed to giving that negotiated track an opportunity to succeed. And so we are going to continue to be very closely working with the Israelis and with other allies in the region to try and establish a Palestinian partner who can work this through negotiation.

I think it's also important to say that the President has been very clear that final status is really something that has to be mutually acceptable, and so there is much agreement here with the Israelis and we are prepared to move ahead and try to get a two-state solution, to try to get back on the roadmap to a two-state solution.

**QUESTION:** We're almost out of time. A quick follow-up before I let you go. Jordan, a key country in that part of the world which occupied the West Bank between 1949 and 1967, do you see Jordan playing a role in the West Bank again, perhaps as a bridge between the Israelis and the Palestinians?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I wouldn't want to speculate on what the West Bank will look like once we've gone through the process of trying to make progress toward this two-state solution. We are in very close contact with Jordan and the United States, of course, has said to the Jordanians that we want to make sure that their interests and their secured concerns are also met by whatever path we take to a two-state solution.

**QUESTION:** I want to thank you for coming in. I also want to thank you yesterday, Madame Secretary, for participating in the Race for the Cure to come up with a cure for breast cancer. This is an issue that hits close to home. Your mother had breast cancer.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** We have some video we'll show our viewers. What was it like, though, participating in this?

**SECRETARY RICE:** It's such an inspirational event. Nancy Brinker is a good friend. Susan G. Komen was her sister. It's really inspiring to see all of these cancer survivors in their pink. I talked to women who said, "I'm a one-year survivor," one woman who said, "I'm a 24-year survivor."

I think the point now is that, yes, racing for the cure is extremely important. So are better treatment options for women. There weren't very many treatment options when my mother had breast cancer in 1970. And also that I would just encourage women to get screened. There are a lot of screening options and the earlier you catch this disease, if you're unfortunate enough to have it, the better off you are. And so I was honored to be a part of the event yesterday.

**QUESTION:** I'll second that. Thank you very much.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you.

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