



## Transcript: Condoleezza Rice on *FNS*

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**FOX NEWS**

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TONY SNOW, FOX NEWS: Speaking to reporters before a Saturday meeting with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the president turned up the rhetorical heat, telling U.N. members to get a backbone.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BUSH: The U.N. will either be able to function as a peacekeeping body as we head into the 21st century, or it will be irrelevant. And that's what we're about to find out.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SNOW: For more on these developments, we turn to President Bush's national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice.

Dr. Rice, let me talk about a couple of other breaking news stories. There's a report out of London today that the British government is putting together a dossier that tries to establish a link between Al Qaeda and Iraq.

Without going into the particulars of that report, the president seems to have been arguing in recent weeks that, in fact, there is a link between Iraq and Al Qaeda. Is that true?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR: Well, there are clearly links between Iraq and terrorism. and there are Al Qaeda personnel that have been spotted in Baghdad. There are some evidence that there have been various meetings concerning Iraqi personnel and Al Qaeda personnel.

No one here, Tony, is trying to establish that Saddam Hussein somehow planned and plotted 9/11. But this is a regime that has hostile intent toward the United States, that has all kind of people in Baghdad who are involved in terrorism -- Abu Nidal, who also has had links with Al Qaeda.

We are working very hard to put together the full picture. We do think that there are links there, but let's be very clear: There is plenty to indict Saddam Hussein without a direct link to 9/11. He clearly has links to terrorism.

SNOW: All right. And links to terrorism would include Al Qaeda? I just want to be certain.

RICE: Links to terrorism would include Al Qaeda, yes.

SNOW: All right. Now, Ramzi bin al-Shibh has been captured in Pakistan, widely rumored to have been a guy who tried over and over and over to become the 20th hijacker and clearly was involved in the September 11th operation...

RICE: Yes.

SNOW: ... are we going to get custody of him?

RICE: Well, we will work with the Pakistani officials. We certainly want custody of him, and we certainly want to be able to find out what he knows.

What this really does show, though, is that we're having a lot of success in the war on terrorism. The president said to the American people that this was going to be a war that was going to be fought on many fronts, that law enforcement was going to be as important, if not more important, than what we did militarily in Afghanistan. I think we're now seeing that phase play out.

RICE: We've had very good cooperation with the Pakistani government. Abu Zubaydah, of course, was another important operative who was brought to justice.

So this is very good news, and we will see what we're able to learn from him, but it's very good news.

SNOW: The man reportedly considered the real mastermind of the September 11th attacks, the guy who did all the logistical organizations, is named Khalid Sheik Mohammed. He appeared recently on an Al-Jazeera piece with Ramzi bin al-Shibh. Do we think Pakistani authorities also have captured him?

RICE: I don't think we know. We obviously are looking for all of these people. There had been a lot of focus on one or two people. In fact, the real focus has been to bring down this network, to go after people who are involved in facilitation, that's extremely important, to go after people who might have been plotting and planning and, most importantly, who might have information about any further plots that might be out there for further attacks.

And so, I don't think we know. But we're going to continue to work with the Pakistani government to bring these people to justice.

SNOW: The reason I ask, the Pakistani government says there's one other person of interest that they have captured and they haven't identified that person.

RICE: Yes.

SNOW: Can you rule out?

RICE: I wouldn't rule anything out here, but I think that we'll just wait and see how this unfolds.

SNOW: Is Al Qaeda still an effective and functioning terrorist organization?

RICE: It depends a little bit on the definition of "effective." They clearly are not the organization that they once were. They don't have bases in Afghanistan. They don't have the protection of the Taliban government. They can't run training camps and commanding and control and communications from a secure base in Afghanistan. That part has been extremely effective.

But we've always thought that this might be an organization that could function in a fairly decentralized fashion, and so there continues to be concern about remnants of the organization that might still be plotting and planning.

One of the issues is, how decentralized is the decision-making? Does there have to be an order to go ahead and launch an attack? And we're learning a lot more about the organization from these people that we're capturing.

But it has caused us to fight on several fronts, not just Afghanistan, but to do law enforcement activities of the kind that we're doing in Pakistan, to work with governments like Yemen to make sure that these remnants can't coalesce again in a place like Yemen.

It's not the organization that it once was, but we believe that the better part of valor is to continue to consider it a dangerous organization.

SNOW: Five American citizens in Lackawanna, New York, have been arrested on charges of being Al Qaeda members. Should they be charged with treason?

RICE: That's a law enforcement matter, and we'll see how this unfolds.

What we do know is that it's an important thing to try and see whether there might be cells operating in the United States. On a number of occasions we've said that the U.S. was not immune from the possible operation of Al Qaeda cells. And so we'll see how this unfolds.

SNOW: You are one of the people consulted when it comes to creating a national threat assessment. We now are on a high state of alert. Does this arrest -- might this arrest make it possible to lower the alert level?

RICE: This is something, Tony, that we're assessing -- we assess practically every day in light of the threat information. This was one factor, but not the only factor in the heightened sense of alert.

SNOW: So there maybe other cells operating in the United States right now?

RICE: Well, and there may be other plots. A lot of the concern was about what we were seeing abroad, that there might be attacks against American interests abroad.

So you can be certain that we'll continually assess it and see when we might lower the threat level. But given September 11th, given some of the chatter that was out there, we thought it was best to raise at that time, and there's no decision yet to lower it.

SNOW: The president said this week that he would like to see Saddam Hussein submit to complete, open and unconditional inspections sooner rather than later. He said in a matter of days and weeks, not months and years.

Would you like to see the United Nations Security Council put deadlines, specific deadlines, on his compliance with the 16 Security Council resolutions he's violated?

RICE: Well, the president didn't pre-judge the form of how Iraqi compliance might take place. And, in fact, one of the concerns is that whatever we do going forward, that it is different than what we've done in the past, that this time it's effective.

SNOW: But that would include deadlines, hard deadlines?

RICE: Clearly, this can't be a matter that goes on and on. And yes, it's going to have to include some kind of deadline. And it's not going to be something that you negotiate with the Iraqi government.

RICE: This is a regime that has flaunted the United Nations' security resolutions, that's hiding its weapons of mass destruction activities. Why one would try and negotiate now with the Iraqis what they will accept would be a mystery to us.

So one thing that we want to be very clear on is that when there is an understanding among the Security Council members as to what would constitute Iraqi compliance, it is not an offer to begin negotiations with the Iraqis on what that might look like.

SNOW: So, clear conditions, clear deadlines, and then it would be possible under Article VII for the United States or other powers to use military force?

RICE: Well, obviously there will have to be some consequences if Iraq does not comply, but we'll see how those are expressed.

SNOW: The president and everybody else in the foreign policy establishment, including you, have been talking a lot about Iraq. Why is it so important to act now, as opposed to a month, two months, three months from now?

RICE: Well, the real question is, why should you wait to attack later? This has been a long history now with Iraq of defiance, since '98 -- since 1998, the United States has had a regime-change policy.

So we have to do this sooner or later. And we believe, given the growing threat, given the vivid images from September 11th that show us what happens when people who want to do you ill do you ill, we think it's best to act sooner, not later.

SNOW: Regime change, the primary objective of the administration policy?

RICE: Regime change remains the objective of U.S. policy because, going all the way back to 1998, it was the collective wisdom of the then administration, the Clinton administration, and the Congress that this was not a regime that was ever going to satisfy the international community concerning its intentions. And that's why regime change became the goal of the American administration.

SNOW: You have noted that Congress had a regime-change policy in 1998. In fact, Democrats authored it in response to a speech by President Clinton.

But now there's a different view. Senator Joseph Biden, the other day, asked about whether he'd seen sufficient evidence to move forward, had this to say. Let's take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

U.S. SENATOR JOSEPH BIDEN (D-DE): I don't see a sense of urgency, in terms of days or weeks, either on the U.N. resolution or, quite frankly, on us, the United States Congress.

Some members are going to draft a joint resolution authorizing the president to use force. I think both those things are premature at the moment.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SNOW: Why is he wrong?

RICE: Well, if it was bad in 1998, it's not gotten any better in 2002. And I simply don't understand how an argument that this regime was a threat to peace and security in 1998 doesn't hold in 2002.

SNOW: So why would Senator Biden, who chairs the Foreign Relations Committee, has real obligations to the American people, why would he say such a thing?

RICE: Well, Senator Biden has also talked about the Iraqi threat. I simply don't understand how one can make the argument that we voted for this in 1998, and in 2002 it doesn't hold.

The situation with Iraq has, if anything, gotten worse. We've had September 11th to demonstrate to us with great clarity what happens if you don't act. And those who say, "Well, there's no urgency to this," I don't think any of us in the administration want to sit there one day and say, "Oh my God, we should have acted," because the first time that we knew that he had a nuclear weapon was when he used it on somebody. It simply doesn't make sense to wait until he somehow gets good at the delivery of weapons of mass destruction.

SNOW: OK. A number of the Democrats want to postpone a vote on any kind of authorizing resolution until after the elections. Senator Biden, and I'm going to read you a quote now, has also said that you made personal representations to him.

Here's what he said: "I even went so far as to ask if there were any October surprises, and I was told no, no October surprises." He was talking about a conversation with you.

Did you tell Senator Biden that there would be no military action before the election?

RICE: I told Senator Biden that the president keeps his options open but that we were in a position to consult with allies, that we had work to do with the allies, and the president has begun that process.

Now, what is the president asking the Congress to do? He is asking for an expression of support from the Congress for the policy that he has now put before the United Nations. He's not asking the Congress to authorize the use of military force tomorrow. In fact, he has said that he doesn't even know if military force is the necessary option. So people are getting a little bit ahead of themselves here.

But if the United Nations is going to deliberate, it needs to deliberate with U.S. leadership, and U.S. leadership is going to be best expressed in unanimity between the American Congress and the American president.

SNOW: The House of Representatives has drafted a resolution. Does the White House support that draft?

RICE: We're going to work with the Congress to see what they will offer. Obviously, it is up to the Congress to offer resolutions, not to the administration.

But it ought to be clear in whatever is offered that the president has the backing of the Congress to deal with this problem. The problem's been around too long, the consequences of inaction are too great. The American people need to hear from their representatives that they understand that and that they're prepared to act.

SNOW: And hear before Election Day?

RICE: The president has made very clear that he expects this resolution before the recess.

Parliaments around the world are going to begin to debate this. The British are going to come back. The United Nations is going to be debating this. It would be hard to imagine that the U.S. Congress wants to be behind that debate. It ought to express the will of the Congress and the will of the American people before others express it for them.

SNOW: I want to ask you a couple of quick questions. I know you have other appointments, so we will make this quick.

Do we fear oil shocks if there is military action?

RICE: Well, I took note today of the comments of the Saudis, that they would do whatever they could and would encourage other OPEC members to make certain there that there were not oil shocks. Obviously, we will be working to do that.

But let's be realistic. The Iraqi regime has tried from time to time to put this argument forth as a reason for inaction. It's not a reason for inaction. It is a reason for other oil producers to step up and not let that be the case.

SNOW: Does Israel have the right to strike back should Saddam Hussein use chemical or biological weapons against Israeli citizens?

RICE: Obviously, we will be in consultation with the Israelis about the implications of whatever we do should the president go down the military road, the implications for Israel of whatever we do.

We believe that the important thing here is to take into account anything Saddam Hussein might do. Obviously you have to do that in your military planning.

But I think it was Foreign Minister Peres who said that Israel's greatest concern is the continued presence of this horrible dictator, who is not just destabilizing the region, but is increasingly active with groups that are trying to destabilize Israel itself through support for terrorism.

SNOW: Final question. Many of our European allies say they're with us. Many U.N. representatives say they're with us. Do you expect, if Saddam Hussein does not accept the conditions that the United States has outlined, do you expect the U.N. and our European allies to support us?

RICE: I fully expect the allies to support us, and our allies around the world, because the president made a compelling case on Thursday that Saddam Hussein is a threat on many fronts, that this problem has gone on for far too long, and that the United Nations, the authority of the United Nations itself is at stake here.

We do not want the United Nations to become the League of Nations. There was a reason that the United Nations Security Council was created with teeth, with the ability to deal with tyrants. And if the United Nations is going to be incapable of dealing with the threats of the 21st century, there's going to be no choice but for countries like the United States or others to deal with those threats without the United Nations.

And so, this is a chance for the United Nations to show that this can be done in multilateral fashion. One of the finest moments of the U.N. was when it stood up to Saddam Hussein in 1990. That has been eroded by his behavior. It's high time to act.

SNOW: Condoleezza Rice, thanks for joining us today.

RICE: Thank you very much.