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HEADLINE: Dr. Condoleezza Rice talks weapons inspections in Iraq and Dr. Hans Blix's report

BODY:

MR. RUSSERT: And with us now, the president's national security adviser, Dr. Condoleezza Rice.

Dr. Rice, welcome.

DR. CONDOLEEZZA RICE (National Security Adviser): Nice to be with you.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me show thank you scene from around the world yesterday. There's New York City, and then on to London and Berlin and Hong Kong and in cities around the world, millions turned out to protest a war with Iraq, against U.S. policy. Why is popular opinion so apparently against the United States when it comes to Iraq?

DR. RICE: Well, I can't speak for popular opinion from demonstrations. Clearly, there are a number of people who feel strongly that the war against Iraq is an option that should not be pursued. The problem is that in this country and in the countries that are there on television one has the right to protest, and it's a very, very good thing. One has that freedom. One, of course, does not have that freedom in Baghdad, where the wishes and the concerns and the suffering of the Iraqi people seems to be falling by the wayside as we talk about the way to respond to Iraq. I thought that Prime Minister Blair was really quite eloquent the other day, on Saturday, when he talked about the long-suffering Iraqi people. These are people who are tortured, who are beaten, whose tongues are cut out for saying anything against the government.

We need to keep this in perspective. Yes, it is fine to protest. It is fine to have different views about what we should do about Iraq. But we should not lose sight of who is in power in Baghdad. We should not lose sight of the character of the Iraqi regime and we should not lose sight of the threat that Iraq poses to free men and women everywhere.

MR. RUSSERT: As you well know, on Friday, Hans Blix, the weapons inspector, testified before the Security Council. The Washington Times said U.S. Rebuffed. The New York Daily News said Setback--in the lead sentence--Was An Embarrassing Setback for U.S. Diplomacy. What happened?

DR. RICE: Well, this is simply the ins and outs of diplomacy. What Secretary Powell reminded the Security Council of on Friday is that Resolution 1441 is not a resolution that calls for more inspectors, it is not a resolution that calls for a little bit of progress or a little bit of cooperation from Iraq. It calls for full and complete compliance with this resolution, which gives Saddam Hussein a last chance, a last opportunity to comply. This is not a three-month process. This is a process that began 12 years ago with Saddam Hussein, time and again, defying the United Nations. And Secretary Powell had to remind his colleagues of that on Friday. There were a number there, who, after signing on to Resolution 1441, seemed unwilling to come to terms with the fact that that resolution calls for serious consequences in the absence of compliance. So Secretary Powell did have to keep reminding the people in that chamber that this is about compliance; nothing else.

MR. RUSSERT: What's with the French?

DR. RICE: Well, we are discussing, of course, with the French. They are friends and allies. But this is about a resolution of the United Nations that the French signed on to. It is a resolution that says Iraq has a final opportunity to comply. You cannot get around the language of Resolution 1441. You cannot get around the fact that Iraq filed a false declaration, a declaration that nobody can defend. You cannot get around the fact that Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei continue to call for greater cooperation from the Iraqis because the Iraqis are not fully complying. What the Iraqis are doing is that they're playing a game of cheat and retreat, deception. They've done this time and time again.

You know, Tim, in November of 2002, shortly during the time of the debate of the resolution, Saddam Hussein told an Egyptian newspaper that Iraq just needed to buy more time because if they could buy more time, the British-American, as he called it, coalition would break up from pressure. This is the game that Saddam Hussein has played for 12 years. He's still trying to play this game. And it was unfortunate on Friday that I think some gave him the impression that he can play this game.

MR. RUSSERT: Including the French?

DR. RICE: Well, I think that the calling for more time, calling for more inspectors, carrying out vitriolic and rather elaborate arguments about why war is a last resort, everybody knows that war is a last resort. But you need to keep the pressure on Saddam Hussein. And that meeting did not keep the pressure on Saddam Hussein. In fact, I think that the Iraqis went away and said it was a great meeting, that, in fact, the good forces in the world were now speaking out in favor of Iraq. Is this where the governments of Europe, the French, the Germans, others, really want us to be? I think not.

MR. RUSSERT: So their behavior gave encouragement to Saddam Hussein?

DR. RICE: Well, any time you have a situation in which you are calling for more time, rather than calling for Iraq to immediately comply, it plays into the hands of Saddam Hussein. And what Secretary Powell and Minister Straw and the Spanish foreign minister were saying is if you want a peaceful resolution to this crisis, the way to get it is to not

take the pressure off Saddam Hussein, not to give him the view that he can somehow continue to play cheat and retreat, but to let him know that the Security Council is going to stand united this time, it is going to enforce its resolutions this time, and that he'd either better comply and disarm or the world will disarm him. We have to remember that the only reason that there's a single inspector today in Iraq is because the Security Council, prodded by President Bush in his September 12th speech, has put enormous pressure on the Iraqis. If that pressure releases, I can assure you that we are not going to get to a peaceful solution.

MR. RUSSERT: Some in Congress are suggesting that Americans should boycott Perrier and champagne, not go to see the Eiffel Tower as a way to saying to the French, "We saved you, liberated you 50 years ago and don't treat us this way."

DR. RICE: Well, no. The French are carrying out their views. I think that we are in discussions with them. We're in conversations with them. We don't need to allow this to become a street fight between the United States and France and the United States and Germany. But we do need to remind everybody that tyrants don't respond to any kind of appeasement. Tyrants don't respond to negotiation. Tyrants respond to toughness. And that was true in the 1930s and 1940s when we failed to respond to tyranny, and it is true today. The world needs to pull itself back together here and to send a very strong message to the Iraqis that we're not going to go through what we've gone through over the last 12 years. In 1996, we went down exactly this road with the Iraqis negotiating with the inspectors, certain changes in the inspection regime, repeated calls from the United Nations for the Iraqis to comply and, finally, Iraqi behavior that was so bad in 1998 that the inspectors left. They were not there for four years as a result of that unwillingness of the Security Council to stand up to the Iraqis in 1996. We cannot go back there. It is time for this to end. Enough is enough.

MR. RUSSERT: The French foreign minister has called for a meeting of the Security Council March 14. Is that a good idea?

DR. RICE: Well, clearly, the French can call for a meeting of the Security Council any time that they want. But I do believe that continuing to talk about more time and more time and more time is simply going to relieve pressure on the Iraqis to do what they must do.

MR. RUSSERT: Will you be willing to set March 14 as a deadline for Iraq to start cooperating completely?

DR. RICE: Yeah. We've not set any deadlines at this point. We're in a diplomatic window here to discuss the best way forward. But what we must not do is continue on the path that was established in 1991 when Saddam Hussein started then serially abusing his obligations to the United Nations. We have a lot of very tough issues ahead of us. North Korea was just referred to the Security Council. We have a lot of proliferators out there, rogue states that are trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. We have terrorism to fight. The United States believes that the Security Council needs to be strong in order to carry out that fight. But strength comes from resolve, and the Security Council needs to show resolve.

MR. RUSSERT: Will the United States and Great Britain come forward with another resolution before the Security Council this week?

DR. RICE: Well, the president has said that he would welcome a Security Council resolution, another Security Council resolution, I might say, the 18th; not the second, the 18th Security Council resolution, that would this time make very clear that the Security Council is prepared to carry out the implications of 1441. It cannot be a delaying tactic, but if the world wants to come together around a resolution that does affirm 1441, then we would find that welcome, and we're prepared to work toward that end, Tim.

MR. RUSSERT: Do you have the votes for it?

DR. RICE: Well, we're prepared to work toward that end. We will see where we come out.

MR. RUSSERT: Will the United States insist over the next few weeks that Iraq allow scientists to leave the country, to be debriefed without their minders, that U-2 flights be allowed to go over Iraq unfettered, with complete cooperation, and that Iraq destroy the rockets that have a range which is against the law according to the United Nations and the agreement they signed in 1991?

DR. RICE: Right. Well, the United States doesn't have to do this. 1441 is pretty clear, and other Security Council resolutions, that these are Iraq's obligations. And so the United States and others should insist that the Iraqis carry out their obligations. On the missiles, for instance, an independent expert panel determines that these missiles are of prohibited range, the Iraqis have an obligation to destroy them, and the Iraqis have other obligations as well, including one that we think the inspectors should take advantage of. No Iraqi citizen is going to speak freely sitting in an Iraqi hotel that can be easily monitored in a country that cuts the tongues out of people who speak against the regime. So, yes, people should be interviewed outside the country where they can speak freely.

MR. RUSSERT: If by March 14 the Iraqis have not allowed the scientists to leave to be interviewed, they have not agreed to destroy the rockets that have the additional range, and they do not allow unfettered reconnaissance flights, will the United States then say on March 14, "That's it," and go forward with military action against Iraq with or without the French, Germans, Russians?

DR. RICE: Well, let me just say, Tim, March 14 is not a date to our point of view. This was a date that the French had put out, but we believe that immediate compliance is necessary with 1441. We will see when it would be most feasible to get a reaffirmation of 1441 through another resolution, if that is indeed what the Security Council decides to do, but **Iraq has many tests before it right now. It keeps failing these tests.** We don't need to keep putting new tests before them. Those tests are all there in 1441. What we need is immediate Iraqi compliance, immediate Iraqi cooperation, and by the way, not cooperation on process, not cooperation on allowing a few scientists to speak in a hotel, quote, unquote, "unminded" even though the hotel, of course, can be easily monitored, not a few matters of process of opening up places that the Iraqis know have already been

cleansed but rather substance. We need to know what happened to all of that sarin gas, to all of that VX, to the anthrax, to the botulinum toxin. We need to know what has become of the mobile biological weapons laboratories that, now repeated people have told us, exist in Iraq. We need Iraqi compliance on substance, not on process.

MR. RUSSERT: Military planners say, however, that if you wait until end of March, April, it gets very, very hot in Iraq and it is not the optimum time to be conducting military operations.

DR. RICE: The president has made clear that we are talking about a matter of weeks here and not months in any case. I would not try and subscribe to what others may be saying about what is possible in terms of military operations. If the president decides to order American forces into battle, I'm sure they will be ready and they will be prepared to fight, but we are in a diplomatic window here but a diplomatic window that frankly cannot last very much longer because the uncertainty is unfair to states in the region. The uncertainty is unfair to the Iraqi people. Frankly, the uncertainty, which the Iraqis are using to split the council, to buy more time, is unfair to the reputation of the United Nations Security Council. This will have to come to an end pretty soon.

MR. RUSSERT: If the president, though, has committed 200,000 troops to the region, he has drawn his sword, is there any way he can possibly draw down?

DR. RICE: Well, I have to tell you that it is hard to imagine the circumstances under which the Iraqis, given their behavior, since the December 8th declaration that they filed, that they are going to give the world any comfort that they intend to carry out their obligations. Every day that passes, they do instead what they've done in the past. And so the United States, and an increasing coalition of willing states, are ready to disarm Saddam Hussein if he will not disarm voluntarily, and any indication that he intends to disarm voluntarily seems to be receding into the background.

MR. RUSSERT: An Iraqi journalist was kicked out of the United States on Friday. Why?

DR. RICE: Well, the United States has to protect itself against those who are believed to have means, and, indeed, perhaps, intentions, against the United States that are hostile.

MR. RUSSERT: Was he a spy?

DR. RICE: I can't go further than that.

MR. RUSSERT: Are you concerned that the Iraqis will retaliate by removing American journalists from Baghdad?

DR. RICE: Well, I would hope that the Iraqis will recognize that to do so would clearly show that they are trying to cover even further what has to date been a pretty effective campaign of deception. But if they do, there would be nothing that would be parallel in these. There would be nothing that should say moral equivalent. The Iraqis are doing things in this country under cover that American journalists do not do.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me show you Dr. Blix's testimony on Friday and give you a chance to react. Let's watch.

(Videotape, February 14, 2003):

DR. HANS BLIX (UN Chief Weapons Inspector): We have conducted more than 400 inspections, covering more than 300 sites. All inspections were performed without notice and access was almost always provided promptly. In no case have we been seeing convincing evidence that the Iraqi side knew in advance that the inspectors were coming.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: Now, that directly contradicts Secretary of State Colin Powell, who has said that the inspectors had been--the Iraqis had been tipped off the inspectors were coming. Is Dr. Blix wrong?

DR. RICE: Well, what Secretary Powell said is that the Iraqis--and he showed sites, and, in fact, he chose one among as many as 30 sites where the Iraqis were cleaning up activity before inspectors can get there. Now, you can read that several ways. Perhaps they just decided to clean up every site where they thought inspectors might be. That would still be a campaign of deception. But in Iraq, in Baghdad, with that extensive security network, I think it would not be at all surprising if the Iraqis know, with the many, many thousands of people that they have around to monitor and mind the inspectors, that they are being tipped off as to where things are going.

MR. RUSSERT: We have hard information?

DR. RICE: We have sources who tell us that the Iraqis, through their intelligence efforts, are working very hard to frustrate the inspectors.

MR. RUSSERT: This is what Mr. Blix said specifically about Secretary of State Powell's presentation.

(Videotape, February 14, 2003):

DR. BLIX: The presentation of intelligence information by the US secretary of state suggested that Iraq had prepared for inspections by cleaning up sites and removing evidence of proscribed weapons programs.

The reported movement of munitions at the site could just as easily have been a routine activity as a movement of proscribed munitions in anticipation of imminent inspection.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: Routine activity.

DR. RICE: Well, one would have to believe that at as many as 30 different sites, they were just engaged in routine activity. I think, frankly, that just gives the Iraqis a benefit of

the doubt that they do not deserve.

MR. RUSSERT: Will we provide all our intelligence to the UN inspectors?

DR. RICE: We are providing to the UN inspectors the highest priority intelligence that actually they can act on. Not all intelligence is of equal value in trying to carry out inspections, but I would just say we are providing a lot of intelligence to the inspectors that we think would actually be useful in going to these sites. But the intelligence alone, in providing intelligence in this way, is not the only tool that the inspectors have and they have to use them all. They do need to do interviews outside of the country because the best information that we get about Iraqi programs has tended to come from people, not from other means. It has tended to come from people who are outside the country, who can speak freely. We have offered other reconnaissance platforms to the inspectors, other than U-2s. So far, they've not taken advantage of those. There are a number of ways to use this intelligence, and we hope that the inspectors will use it all.

But all of that said, Tim, intelligence is not a substitute for Iraqi cooperation. Let's remember that the purpose of 1441 was not for the world to prove that Saddam Hussein did or did not have weapons of mass destruction. It was for Saddam Hussein to come clean, have one final opportunity to do what countries do when they want to come clean, which is to say to the world, "Here's what I have. Come in, inspect it, verify." The inspectors were never intended to be detectives with a little bit of intelligence information here and there. They were intended to verify Iraqi cooperation and compliance. And when you listen to Dr. Blix, when you listen to what Mohamed ElBaradei have said, they both say that Iraqi cooperation is lacking. That is the key, that is what people signed on to, in 1441, and we have simply got to get back to that. This is not hunt and peck around the country the size of California.

MR. RUSSERT: But in terms of the battle for public opinion and you have to make your case, Dr. Blix would say that we haven't found any weapons of mass destruction yet. A group called Win Without War Coalition, headed by former Congressman Tom Andrews took out a full-page ad in The New York Times and this is what they recommend. "Imagine thousands of inspectors stationed throughout Iraq. Imagine they had ready access to American intelligence gleaned from satellite photographs, U-2 flights, intercepted phone calls. Suspicious activity is detected at a factory, a power plant, a palace. Within minutes, inspectors could be dispatched, intercepting vehicles, confiscating suspicious material. Disarming Iraq."

In a peaceful way with inspectors, why not give that more time?

DR. RICE: It completely misunderstands the nature of Iraq. This is a closed totalitarian society that is on a deliberate campaign to deceive the inspectors. We have given inspectors overhead reconnaissance. We have given the inspectors intelligence that comes from different kinds of sources. But they're fighting a tremendously uphill battle when you have the communications with the Iraqis telling people in the field, "Don't ever say nerve agent in a wireless communication," or people in the field talking about moving around prohibited vehicles, so that the inspectors can't find them. Saddam Hussein has complete control of this country, and we have always known that inspectors--in fact, Dr.

Blix has said, "Inspectors cannot disarm Iraq. Iraq must decide to disarm, and inspectors can then verify that disarmament." We are not prepared to turn the mission of the inspectors into that of detective and flying in the face of what we all signed on to in 1441.

And I would just remind everybody, even with inspectors in the country, it was the defection of Saddam Hussein's brother-in-law that revealed a biological weapons program that then forced the Iraqis to admit that indeed they did have a biological weapons program. And the fruits of that program, the anthrax, the botulinum toxin, are now missing from the Iraqi inventory. Sooner or later, you have to say, "How long is the world going to be prepared to deal with this tyrant in this way?"

You know, the U.N. Security Council is unfortunately getting a history now of being unable to react. The U.N. Security Council couldn't manage to get it together to do something about the slaughter of civilians in Kosovo that Milosevic was carrying out. From the entire period of the '90s, the U.N. Security Council could not bring Iraq into compliance because it simply wouldn't force the issue. The Security Council has to be an instrument of peace, but it has to be an instrument of peace that has teeth, or it is never going to be able to deal with the myriad difficult actors out there in international politics who intend to disturb that peace.

MR. RUSSERT: There is a CIA analysis which said that if Saddam's back is against the wall, he becomes more dangerous, that it would increase the likelihood of terrorist acts here in the United States and that he very well may have a pre-emptive attack of his own of chemical weapons against U.S. soldiers. Do you concur with that?

DR. RICE: We cannot rule out, of course, that Saddam might try, in some kind of desperation, to use the chemical or biological weapons. But you have to do everything that you can in the following way. First of all, to prepare militarily to deal with the ways that he might deliver that, to send a very strong message, as the president has done, to Iraqi soldiers and officers who have to carry out those orders that carrying out those orders on behalf of a dictator who will be defeated will put them at personal risk, and therefore, deterring them from doing it. We are prepared...

MR. RUSSERT: Will we use a nuclear bomb against them?

DR. RICE: The president, like every other president, is not going to talk about what his options might be. But very clearly, we are working to deter any Iraqi use.

Now, it's very interesting, for somebody who doesn't have weapons of mass destruction, to threaten to use them. I just want to say on the terrorism piece, Tim, it did not take potential conflict with Iraq for al-Qaeda to carry out 9/11. It did not take potential conflict with Iraq for them to carry out attacks in Bali. It did not take a conflict with Iraq for a poisons network to spread through Europe. The terrorists are going on their own operational timeline to try and hurt us. That is why every day, the president begins his day not with Iraq, but with a threat matrix that talks about terrorist attempts on the United States with the FBI director and the CIA director because disrupting those terrorist networks remains the highest priority of the American government.

MR. RUSSERT: But if we do go to war, what happens inside Iraq--the Shiites, the Sunnis, the Kurds? How do they possibly stay together? What happens to Israel if they're attacked? Do they get in? What happens in the Arab streets? How long will we be there? How much will it cost? Will the president address all those issues?

DR. RICE: The president has been addressing these issues. The United States has made clear that it expects the territorial integrity of Iraq to be maintained, and that it will work to guarantee that. That's important to Iraq's neighbors. It's important to peace and stability in the region. The United States will also be committed to making certain that the Iraqi people are taking care of the humanitarian assistance and the like. It's provided to them, should war come; that sectarian violence is kept under control; that, in fact, the Iraqi people, having been liberated from Saddam Hussein, have a chance to build a better future.

No one is saying that this is an easy task. If we have to disarm Saddam Hussein by force, it will be difficult. But you cannot, knowing that it would be difficult, simply push it down the line and down the line and down the line, sort of kicking the can down the road and hoping for the best down the road with Saddam Hussein. The greater danger is that Saddam Hussein, left to his own devices, will perfect his means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction with longer-range missiles than he is allowed, with unmanned aerial vehicles that can deliver biological weapons, and that some president, if not this president, will face a Saddam Hussein who again carries out his murderous ambitions in the region or who, through his ties to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, simply gives a vial of anthrax to a terrorist to let them do the dirty work. This is a possibility that no American president, no leader in the Free World, should be prepared to contemplate. And so, yes, it's hard, but putting this off is not an option.

MR. RUSSERT: We are going to give Turkey \$6 billion in economic aid, perhaps \$20 billion in loan guarantees to assist us in this effort against Saddam Hussein, if it comes to that. Why not go to North Korea and offer them the same package we're giving Turkey? And why shouldn't you fly to North Korea, sit down face-to-face and hammer out this deal?

DR. RICE: Well, the Turks are good friends and allies, to begin with. And we want the Turkish economy to succeed. We want Turkey, if conflict should come, to not be harmed by that conflict. Turkey is one of America's great strategic allies for more than half a century now. And so it makes perfectly good sense for Turkey and other front-line states to receive assistance in order to deal with what may be impacts of war. North Korea is a situation in which, again, things have gone on for a long time. We tried in the '90s to negotiate our way to a management of the North Korean problem, and what we got was a North Korea that found another route to a nuclear weapon while "freezing" the route that was prescribed under the agreed framework.

So North Korea we are dealing with through multilateral means. We know that what the North Koreans want most is for this to become a bilateral crisis between the United States and North Korea. We refuse to let that happen, because the United States has interest here, but so do South Korea and China in particular and Russia and Japan. Everybody has to pull their weight here. It was a positive step that this was referred to the Security

Council the other day.

MR. RUSSERT: But we have to stop them?

Dr. RICE: It is absolutely the case that the North Koreans should not continue up this ladder of escalation, but it is not just the responsibility of the United States to make sure that that happens. It is the responsibility of North Korea's neighbors and the responsibility of the world.

MR. RUSSERT: Before you go, Time magazine reports that members of Congress were targets of assassination attempts and that there were several multiple attacks that the FBI believed planned for Wednesday, for February 12th. Can you confirm that?

DR. RICE: Well, there has been a lot of chatter about the period of time, and there was some concern that the terrorists might try to use the end of the hajj in this way. But we are working to disrupt these terrorist networks every day. This is something that didn't begin yesterday, and it's not going to end just because the hajj is ending. This is the primary preoccupation of the United States government.

MR. RUSSERT: To be continued. Dr. Rice, we thank you for joining us.

DR. RICE: Thank you very much, Tim.

MR. RUSSERT: Coming next, he led NATO forces in Kosovo in 1999. Now he's thinking about his own political future and expressing concerns about a potential war with Iraq. Retired General Wesley Clark; he's next, only on MEET THE PRESS.

(Announcements)

MR. RUSSERT: General Wesley Clark, his views on Iraq, after this brief station break.

(Announcements)

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