



RICE ON IRAQ, WAR AND POLITICS

September 25, 2002



National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice talks with Margaret Warner about Iraq, the United Nations, the United States' new pre-emptive strike doctrine and recent criticism from Democratic leaders.

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MARGARET WARNER: Welcome, Ms. Rice, thanks for joining us.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Thank you. It's nice to be with you.

MARGARET WARNER: As I'm sure you know, the Senate Majority Leader, Tom Daschle, went angrily to the Senate floor today and accused the president of politicizing this debate about going to war. What's your response to that?

Sen. Daschle's comments

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: The president has never politicized this concern about war and the national security of the American people.

The president believes that this is a time for unity of the American people's representatives and it's Executive Branch, which is why he made the decision to go to Congress for the resolution to support - American activities to deal with the threat of Saddam Hussein - and the article in question or the comments in question that the president made were in the context of homeland security and if you actually read those comments, the president said that some Senators had had a tendency to put special interests ahead of national security and he went on to praise Democrats and Republicans who were pulling together on the security issues that face the American people.

So there simply isn't any politicization here. The



I think there has been some frustration that there hasn't been movement forward on the homeland security bill in the Senate, but it's the body, not the partisan matter of Democrats and Republicans about which the president was speaking.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
National Security Adviser

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president welcomes very much the very good working relationship that we've been enjoying with Congress as we've been working toward a solution, including the leadership that Majority Leader Daschle has shown in helping to pull together this resolution.



MARGARET WARNER: Well, we are reporting the full context of what the president said, but the sentence was that the Senate is not interested in the security of the American people. Did he just speak more broadly than he meant?

CONDOLEEEZZA RICE: No. If you read the very next lines, it talks about Democrats and Republicans who are pulling together in this matter - so this cannot be considered partisan.

I think there has been some frustration that there hasn't been movement forward on the homeland security bill in the Senate, but it's the body, not the partisan matter of Democrats and Republicans about which the president was speaking.

Congressional resolution on Iraq

MARGARET WARNER: All right. Now turning now to the resolution that you've sent up to Congress.

Henry Hyde today, the Chairman of the International Relations Committee in the House, proposed a compromise that many Democrats and Republicans at least seem interested in.

It would make it clear essentially that this use of force being authorized or endorsed is limited to Iraq and does not - as your draft had suggested - did not apply also quote "to restore international peace and security in the region."

Would the White House be comfortable with making it clear it's limited to Iraq?

CONDOLEEEZZA RICE: I don't think there's any doubt in our mind or in the president's mind that this is about Iraq. In fact I think the title of the resolution is "Regarding Iraq."

So certainly we're working with the Congress on language that is acceptable to both sides, but this resolution relates to Iraq.

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Any relationship of this to peace and security in the region is simply to note that Iraq is a problem for peace and security in the region. But this relates to American use of force and the authorization and support to do so against Iraq.



MARGARET WARNER: So I take it that the White House would have no objection to making that explicit?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Well, we'll work with the Congress to see how this language comes out, but this is about Iraq. It was always intended to be about Iraq.

MARGARET WARNER: Now, the Hyde resolution also ties this to the War Powers Act, and would require the president to report back to Congress every 60 days. Would the president accept that?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Well, as you know, it has long been traditional in these matters that the president is willing to act consistent with the War Powers Act.

There are of course a lot of constitutional questions about the War Powers Act itself. But the president today as a matter of fact continues to report consistent with the War Powers Act about American activities in the Balkans, for instance, so I'm certain that there's some language that can be worked on this matter as well.

The U.N. resolution and inspections

MARGARET WARNER: Now there are also some Democrats - this is not in the Hyde proposal - that somehow want to come up with language that would in some way - I don't want to say obligate the president - but would tie this use of force to first going through the U.N. and trying to get the weapons inspectors back in. How would the White House feel about that?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Well, we think it would be a mistake for the United States Congress to somehow tie its action to U.N. action. The president is going to the United Nations through the Security Council.

He has made that very clear; he has made very clear that we want a U.N. Security Council

We know ... that several of the detainees, in particular some high-ranking detainees, have said that Iraq provided some training to al-Qaida in chemical weapons development.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
National Security
Adviser

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Resolution that will finally deal with the problem of Iraq and hold Iraq accountable, but he's also said that if the United Nations Security Council cannot find a way to act, then the United States and other states that may wish to go with us will have to find a way to act.

The key here is that the United States is leading the world toward a solution to the Iraq problem. The United States needs to speak with a united voice - executive and legislative branches.



And the United States needs to speak so that the U.N. knows that America is capable of acting with or without U.N. authorization.

Nonetheless, the president is committed to going to the U.N. and trying to work this out, but we think it would be a mistake to tie American action somehow to U.N. action.

MARGARET WARNER: Where do you stand on getting this U.N. Resolution? For instance, do you believe you'll have one before the chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, meets with the Iraqis in Vienna - I believe that's on Monday.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Well, we'll see about the timing. We're working very hard with the permanent five members. Colin Powell met with them shortly after the president's speech.

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I think people understand the task before the Security Council. This has a kind of timing dynamic of its own, and I don't think we can predict precisely when there will be a resolution, but we're working very hard at it, and we'll certainly want to get one as soon as possible.

MARGARET WARNER: Secretary Rumsfeld in Europe today said - and it was a rather cryptic and brief remark - but when asked if there was evidence tying Iraq to al-Qaida - said, yes. He did not elaborate. Are you prepared to elaborate?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE: We clearly know that there were in the past and have been contacts between senior Iraqi officials and members of al-Qaida going back for actually quite a long time.

We know too that several of the detainees, in

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particular some high ranking detainees, have said that Iraq provided some training to al-Qaida in chemical weapons development.

So, yes, there are contacts between Iraq and al-Qaida. We know that Saddam Hussein has a long history with terrorism in general. And there are some al-Qaida personnel who found refuge in Baghdad.

No one is trying to make an argument at this point that Saddam Hussein somehow had operational control of what happened on September 11, so we don't want to push this too far, but this is a story that is unfolding, and it is getting clear, and we're learning more.

We're learning more because we have a lot of detainees who are able to fill in pieces of the puzzle. And when the picture is clear, we'll make full disclosure about it.

But, yes, there clearly are contacts between al-Qaida and Iraq that can be documented. There clearly is testimony that some of these contacts have been important contacts and there's a relationship here.



MARGARET WARNER:
And if you don't get this
toughly worded
resolution, a sort of new
resolution dealing with
sending inspectors back,
would the U.S. then

oppose returning the inspectors under the old rules?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Well, the old rules are unacceptable. The United States believes very strongly - the president has said it - the vice president has said it - the Secretary of State has said it - that inspections are not an end in themselves.

This is a matter of disarming the Iraqi regime, because that's the danger, is that Saddam Hussein with nuclear, chemical, biological weapons will be a threat to his people, his neighbors, and to us. So this is not a matter of just returning inspectors.

It is getting a regime that can make a difference, and when you have presidential sites placed off limits for inspectors, when you have the Iraqis

deciding to whom you can talk and to whom you can't and have Iraqi military and intelligence personnel sitting around while you're interviewing people, that is simply not tolerable, so, no, the United States is not prepared to accept the resolutions as they currently exist and that's why the president has made very clear there has to be a new resolution.

Pre-emptive strike plan and pre 9-11 intelligence

MARGARET WARNER: Let's turn now to the new national security doctrine that you all rolled out last Friday and I understand you had a great role in drafting.

And, as you know, there's been a lot of criticism particularly about the doctrine of pre-emption which you laid out in writing, and let me just - I'm going to read you just one - this comes from the French president, and he actually spoke even before you rolled this out - the piece of paper - but he's called the whole doctrine extraordinarily dangerous - "As soon as one nation claims the right to take preventive action, other countries will naturally do the same."

What do you say to that?

CONDOLLEEZZA RICE:

Well, I would say that the idea of preventive action is not a new concept. In fact, the idea that you have to wait to be attacked to deal with a threat seems to us simply to fly in the face of common sense.



The United States has always reserved the right to try and diminish or to try to eliminate a threat before it is attacked. It simply wouldn't make sense to sit and wait to be attacked if you thought that you could eliminate a threat.

Let me give you an example from the 1960's. In 1962, we had the Cuban Missile Crisis. And the United States engaged in what is an act of war, that is, a quarantine of Cuba, a blockade of Cuba, because there were missiles that were about to become operational against the United States.

The Kennedy Administration didn't wait until there was an attack from Cuban soil against the United States. It simply doesn't make sense to say that you have to wait.

Now, to be sure, anticipatory self defense, or preemption has to be used carefully. One would want to have very good intelligence. You probably would have wanted to try a lot of other means before you move to eliminate the threat in this way --

MARGARET WARNER: Because some would argue certainly that in the Cuban Missile Crisis the president did not go attack Cuba - he blockaded Cuba.

CONDOLLEEZZA RICE: Well a quarantine and a blockade is an act of war - and I'm quite certain that had someone run that blockade the United States would have been faced with another preventive decision - so the fact is that you don't want to wait until a threat fully materializes if you can avoid having that happen.

There are lots of ways to deal with threats; diplomacy is one way; counter proliferation -- that is taking active measures against an emerging threat.

But there may be in a small number of cases circumstances where you can only use military force. And in those cases the American president has to reserve the right to do it -- and in this day and time when we know the cost, after September 11, of being attacked without warning and a case in which we were not able to react to the threat before they got us it would simply not be appropriate or the president would not be fulfilling his obligations if he is prepared to let threats materialize or until they have actually - until there's actually been an attack against American territory.

MARGARET WARNER: Another part of the strategy document I wanted to ask you about was the one that asserts the goal of maintaining - of the U.S. maintaining military superiority globally, indefinitely - is the aim to dominate the world militarily for the indefinite future?

I mean, the language that says essentially - our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing or even equaling the power of the United States.

CONDOLLEEZZA RICE: Well ask yourself if you'd rather have the converse- which is that an

adversary actually catches up and overtakes the United States - the United States is a very special country in that when we maintain this position of military strength that we have now, we do so in support of a balance of power that favors freedom and indeed we don't want to do it alone; we welcome and hope that there will be military contributions from other like-minded states to maintain that balance of power that favors freedom.

Secretary Rumsfeld was just at NATO suggesting that the NATO allies increase their military capability, transform it to deal with today's threats, so that those of us who love freedom, the freedom loving democracies of NATO, can together provide a balance of power that favors freedom, provide a shield against threats.

But if it comes to allowing another adversary to reach military parity with the United States in the way that the Soviet Union did, no, the United States does not intend to allow that to happen, because when that happens, there will not be a balance of power that favors freedom; there will be a balance of power that keeps part of the world in tyranny the way that the Soviet Union did.



MARGARET WARNER: Let me close by asking you a couple of questions about the joint inquiry into the pre-9/11 intelligence failures because you just referred to the attack without warning.

You had said back in May, "I don't think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center, that they would try to use an airplane as a missile."

Now, as you know, the joint inquiry found otherwise; they found there was a lot of historical evidence that, one, terrorists planned and were capable of attacks in the U.S. - and two, that they talked a lot about using airplanes as weapons. Given everything that has come out, do you still believe that the attacks were unpredictable?

CONDOLLEEZZA RICE: Yes, I do still believe that the attacks were unpredictable. Look, the 1998 reports that apparently some intelligence analysts looked at and made an analysis that perhaps

al-Qaida wanted to slam planes into buildings were simply not made available to the Bush Administration.

We weren't here in 1998, and I think you have to look at the fact that this was among a host of other intelligence analyses that suggested that car bombs and attacks against nuclear plants, and other means of terrorism were more likely.

But the fact is when I spoke in May about what was presented to the president on August 6, it is absolutely the case that what was presented to the president and what was analyzed for him and what was analyzed throughout the administration was traditional methods of hijacking - in fact that the hijacking might be to try and win release of al-Qaida prisoners or something like that.

There wasn't any mention or analysis of people slamming planes into buildings; it simply wasn't there.



MARGARET WARNER: I guess the question these hearings brought up is whether there should have been more information available to you - that there was a whole

problem of coordination, there were all these disparate pieces of information out there -- that the U.S. Government was not structured in a way to really respond, that the FBI agents in the field didn't know George Tenet of the CIA declared war on al-Qaida.

I mean, you know the litany and I just wonder if you as the National Security Adviser, who's responsible for making sure that all these agencies ultimately coordinate for American security - that in retrospect you feel that perhaps you just didn't - you all didn't and the Clinton Administration before you - appreciate really the urgency of the threat and the need to change things to deal with it.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: I think people appreciated the urgency and the threat, and I think both we and the Clinton Administration were trying to deal seriously and aggressively with al-Qaida - but we have learned since September 11, that there was inadequate intelligence sharing for a host of traditional and cultural and in fact reasons going to the very nature of who we are

about what the FBI and the CIA could share.

And we know that now. It's why Director Mueller - Director Tenet - the president in the creation of a Homeland Security Department - are moving to fix the stovepiping that obviously did exist. Everybody knows now that there was inadequate intelligence sharing prior to 9/11.

We've learned a lot of lessons from that. And organizational changes are being made to deal with that. A Homeland Security Department would, for instance, be a place that all of the vulnerabilities of the United States could be analyzed, that the intelligence that's coming in could be matched and mapped on to those vulnerabilities and that responses could be programmed and taken; that simply didn't exist in 1998, didn't exist prior to September 11.

We really do believe that the key here is to try and take what we've learned and to move forward and to make those organizational changes, and they are being made.

MARGARET WARNER: Condoleezza Rice, thanks so much.

CONDOLLEEZZA RICE: Thank you very much.

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