



In Focus

- Medicare
- Iraq
- National Security
- Economic Security
- Homeland Security
- More Issues
- En Español

News

- Current News
- Video
- Press Briefings
- Proclamations
- Executive Orders
- Radio Addresses

News by Date

- November 2003
- October 2003
- September 2003
- August 2003
- July 2003
- June 2003
- May 2003
- April 2003
- March 2003
- February 2003
- January 2003
- December 2002
- November 2002
- October 2002
- September 2002
- August 2002
- July 2002
- June 2002
- May 2002
- April 2002
- March 2002
- February 2002
- January 2002
- December 2001
- November 2001
- October 2001
- September 2001
- August 2001
- July 2001
- June 2001
- May 2001
- April 2001
- March 2001
- February 2001
- January 2001

Appointments

- Nominations

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [November 2003](#)

 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 14, 2003

Interview of the National Security Advisor by WAGA-TV, Atlanta, Georgia

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

November 10, 2003

2:53 P.M. EST

Q Dr. Rice?

DR. RICE: Yes, it's nice to be with you.

Q Thank you so much for joining us. What about the detainees and today's Supreme Court decision? Are basic human rights being violated? And should the detainees be allowed access to the American court system to plead their case?

DR. RICE: Well, I'm not going to comment very much on an ongoing case. And we understood as of a few hours ago that the Supreme Court has decided to take this up. We believe that the law is on our side. We've always said with the detainees that are being treated consistently with international law. And we believe that we're right in this.

Q Dr. Rice, as you know, another U.S. soldier killed today in Iraq, the 38th so far this month. It seems to be getting more dangerous there. The Pentagon, though, talking about reducing troop numbers over the next several months. My question to you is, do you think that's premature? And to what extent does election year politics play into that decision?

DR. RICE: The President is going to do what is most effective in Iraq, and he gets recommendations from his commanders on troop levels and what is needed. No decisions have been made about future troops levels. But what the President is looking at right now is a plan that requires increasing numbers of Iraqis to be involved in their own security. And that's because that's the effective thing to do.

We have nearly 118,000 Iraqis now involved on a daily basis in their own security. Much is at stake for the Iraqi people. It is their progress that is being attacked by these remnants of the old regimes and foreign fighters who don't want progress to take place in Iraq.

It is also the case that when you are fighting what is essentially an insurgency of dead-end people from the old regime, that Iraqis are going to be more effective at knowing who these people are, at rooting them out, at going after them. We will, of course be there, and will be there in large numbers to be a part of that activity. American and coalition forces are engaged every day in major raids that take down cells that are trying to hurt us, that arrest people, and in some case, kill them.

But it is most effective to have more Iraqis involved in their own security. And that's what we're doing through the acceleration of the training of Iraqi police, civil defense forces, and so forth.

Q Dr. Rice, over the weekend, we heard that Iraqis were across applauding the downing of a U.S. helicopter. You say they want us there, but how many are for us being there? And how many are against it, really?

DR. RICE: We have every reason to believe that the vast majority of Iraqis want us to help them create a

■ [Application](#)

Photos



■ [Photo Essays](#)

Federal Facts

■ [Federal Statistics](#)

West Wing

■ [History](#)

better life for their people. There's not a family in Iraq that wasn't somehow touched by the brutality and the horrors of the Saddam Hussein regime.

What we're now facing is a group of people who have no future in a new Iraq, people who benefited for Baath Party rule, people who murdered and tortured and maimed their fellow Iraqi citizens. And they're trying to preserve or bring back the old order. It's not going to happen. Iraqis don't want to return to the days of mass graves, of children being put into mass graves and into prisons, of torture publicly for having anything marginally bad to say about the old regime. Iraqis want a better future, and we're there to help them build it. And most importantly, as we help them build that better future, we are bringing about a more secure region which will bring a more secure America.

This is about American security, making the United States more secure in the wake of September 11th, when we lost 3,000 lives on one day.

Q Well, as you know, 19 of the hijackers from Saudi Arabia. There was a bombing in Riyadh, another one over the weekend. And the administration is offering help to Saudi Arabia in terms of counter-terror. But do you think that the Saudis are really serious about wanting to fight terror?

DR. RICE: The Saudis are very serious partners in the war on terrorism. They understand that these terrorists were not just going after the United States and other members of the coalition, they're going right for the heart of the Saudi kingdom, which is why this attack in Riyadh, by the way, killed more Arabs than anybody else. This was an attack on the heart of the Saudis. And they understand that. They've been very active, particularly since the last Riyadh bombing, at this. They're very good partners in the war on terrorism. And we want to give them all the help that they can -- that we can in succeeding.

Q Dr. Rice, back to Iraq, the death toll continues to rise. In your estimation, how long -- how much longer will we be there?

DR. RICE: The worst thing that we can do is to try to put an artificial time limit on really getting this job done. We have to remember why we're there. We are in Iraq because the world and America will be more secure when there is a stable, prosperous Iraq that's on a democratic path, when the Middle East is a different kind of place out of which these ideologies of hatred don't flow that lead people to drive airplanes into buildings, as they did on September 11th.

Now, on September 20th, I sat in the Congress and listened to the President address the American people, only nine days after the attacks. And he said, we're going to fight on the offense. We're going after them where they live. We're not going to sit back and try to defend the country -- and to defend here from home.

It absolutely the case we're doing a lot in homeland security and in trying to protect our borders and in trying to know who's here in the country. But if we want to remain the America that we are, open and able to enjoy our freedoms, we're going to have to win this war on the offense. And Iraq is part of winning the war on the offense.

The President mourns the sacrifice of every life. But he also knows that nothing of value is ever won without sacrifice. And he calls upon the American people who have been tremendously supportive to recognize that we have a difficult time ahead, but it is a time of consequence, which will have great benefit to America's security.

Q Dr. Rice, I think we've used too much of your time. You've been very generous. But can I ask you quickly, do you think that getting Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein is important from a practical standpoint? Will it change things on the ground? Or would that be more of a symbolic victory at this point?

DR. RICE: Well, it's a good question. Obviously, we would like very much to have Osama bin Laden and we'd like to have Saddam Hussein because they are symbols. By the way, very different symbols -- Saddam Hussein is, of course, the symbol of brutality and fear; Bin Laden of a different kind of terror that perverts -- subverts a great religion. But of course, we would like to have them. I will emphasize that, particularly, in the case of al Qaeda, however, we have taken down two-thirds of its leadership. We have gone after its field generals. It's organizers, the people who planned and plotted these attacks. We're making progress against

al Qaeda, even in the absence of having gotten Osama bin Laden.

Q Dr. Rice, thank you so much.

DR. RICE: Thank you.

Q We appreciate it.

DR. RICE: Good to be with you.

END 2:59 P.M. EST

 [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

[President](#) | [Vice President](#) | [First Lady](#) | [Mrs. Cheney](#) | [News & Policies](#) |
[History & Tours](#) | [Kids](#) | [Your Government](#) | [Appointments](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Contact](#) | [Text only](#)

[Accessibility](#) | [Search](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Help](#)