



Remarks With UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Lancaster House and of course, above all, welcome to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who I'm absolutely delighted to welcome back to London. Condi Rice has been a great friend of the UK in her time as Secretary of State and of course, in her previous role, and a great proponent of transatlantic partnership with the UK and other European countries. We've had really excellent and deep dialogue today covering a wide range of issues. We obviously talked about the situation in Kenya, we've talked about our cooperation in respect of Iran, we talked about the situation in Iraq, and we've also talked about the very important work that the Secretary of State is leading in respect to the Middle East peace process.

But obviously, we've also had the chance for intensive discussion about the situation in Afghanistan. We welcome the attention that's been given to the situation in Afghanistan over the last few weeks. The challenges there are very large and it's because the challenges are large that we are so committed to being there. Both of our countries are committed to our work in Afghanistan for the long term. We're committed to bring together the economic, social, and military aspects of our work and we're committed to active support of the Afghan Government as it strives to build a decent society in that very poor country. And we're committed to rallying an international alliance of many countries to effectively support the Afghan Government.

We're clear, as are the Afghan Government, about the priorities in respect to the governments, in respect to security, in respect to counternarcotics, and in respect to counterinsurgency, more generally. And we'll continue to work together to take forward this very, very important partnership with the Afghan Government and with the Afghan people.

I'll ask Condi Rice to say a few words and then we're happy to take a few questions, although we don't want to delay (inaudible), so we won't have time for that many.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, David. It's a pleasure to be with you and thank you for welcoming me here. We very much indeed had a very good discussion on the whole range of issues that you've addressed and we will continue to have those discussions because, of course, the United States and the UK are very centrally involved in global management and also in trying to help spread our values of democracy and prosperity to people who have been denied them.

And in that regard, the extensive discussions that we've had about Afghanistan, I think, have been particularly helpful. I might note that we're all taking a hard look at the challenges that we have in Afghanistan as the alliance prepares for the Bucharest summit and a commitment to Afghanistan as a long-term commitment for the alliance. One of the heartening things, when we sit in Brussels together, is the degree to which this alliance that, at one time, was dedicated to stopping the forward march of communism in the Soviet Union, now finds itself dedicated to trying to provide support to a young democracy in Afghanistan.



It is hard work. It is different work than NATO perhaps thought it would ever be involved in and it has, therefore, brought certain challenges in really understanding how to fight counterinsurgency, a strategy which must marry the ability to bring security, reconstruction, and governance all at the same time. And working with the Afghan Government and with our Afghan allies, we've made a lot of progress in a country that was – had dissolved into civil war for a period of decades, that is still very, very poor, but a country that is making progress in terms of providing for its people in healthcare and infant mortality rates are down.

But it still has a long way to go, so I very much appreciated the conversations that we've had here among our experts. We will continue those conversations and we'll, of course, (inaudible) with our allies as well as we try and meet this very difficult, but necessary challenge not just for the Afghan people, but for our own security because a failed state of Afghanistan brought us the worst terrorist attack on the United States in our history. We have been heartened by the way that we and our allies have bound together to fight the war on terrorism, but one thing that we know is that we cannot allow failed states to sit (inaudible) again. And so I look very much forward to continuing those discussions. Thank you.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Thank you very much. (Inaudible)

QUESTION: Welcome, Madame Secretary. Foreign Secretary, in the House of Commons today, there was a claim that a recent parliamentary committee that was over there was told by the British senior officers they are at least 600 men under strength. They've requested them; they have not gotten them. Are you confident that Britain has sufficient numbers to fulfill your foreign policy objectives there?

And Madame Secretary, what do you want from your European allies?

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: I'm confident that the 7,700 troops that we've got in Afghanistan are the right number. They are doing an outstanding job with bravery and skill and intelligence and they're working, obviously, with coalition partners. But they're also working with the Afghan National Army, now 42-, 44,000 strong, an army which, when I was in Afghanistan in July, I asked very plainly to a group of British soldiers going out on patrol about their feelings of working with the Afghan National Army, the degree of trust they had and the degree of belief they had in their partners from the Afghan National Army. And in a private meeting, they told me of their confidence in their work that they were doing with those brave Afghan soldiers.

And so I think it's important, obviously, to talk about the commitment of the international community, but it's also important to talk about the development of Afghan capacity and Afghan institutions, because we are not in Afghanistan to create a colony. We are in Afghanistan to help an independent country and now a democratic country run its own affairs and that's what we are determined to do.

SECRETARY RICE: And that, in a sense, is what I think we as an alliance are trying to do. This is obviously extremely important to our security and I think we have to put that at the top of the headline that this is important for Afghans, but it's important for our security as well. And we're looking to the alliance to fulfill the commitment that it has made, to do that in a way that brings the Afghans the capability to deliver for their people, to secure their people. And we obviously need to share the burden in the alliance so that everyone is contributing.

But when I say that, I just want to underscore that allies are contributing. And if we look back on NATO's history -- and I'm an old Soviet specialist, so I have a special perch from which to do that. We used to have extensive arguments about out of area and would NATO ever go out of area. Well, we're out of area in a very big way, but that says that NATO has made a transition from a Cold War alliance to a 21st century alliance. It's not come without difficulty. It's not come without some growing pains. But I think we're going to keep working at it. And the long-term commitment of this alliance to the security and prosperity of Afghanistan is essential.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Condi, would you like to choose one of your Americans –

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, sure. AP. Oh, okay. Paul, you'll be first and then --

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, two troubling reports regarding Afghanistan over the last day. One, the Director of National Intelligence McConnell reported that al-Qaida is regrouping and consolidating on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. And today, the UN reported that opium production is up 34 percent. I wonder if both of you could comment on how the alliance can deal with both those developments?

SECRETARY RICE: Sure. On al-Qaida, we've long said that al-Qaida is not defeated, that it remains lethal and that it is an everyday proposition to continue to try to weaken it. Now it is a different terrorist organization than it was – the one that did 9/11. We've taken out lots of layers of different leadership. There was another important al-Qaida leader that was brought to justice not too long ago last week. And we're going to continue that effort. But of course, al-Qaida keeps regenerating and continues to be dangerous. We're on the hunt for them and I think it's worth saying that even though they have the capacity to regenerate, they are also meeting a tougher test every day than they did as an organization in September 11th.

We did not have anything like the worldwide umbrella of law enforcement, intelligence and military activity against them that we have now. The level of cooperation of the international community in confronting al-Qaida, in being organized to do so, in cutting off their finances, in going after their leadership, in sharing intelligence, in stopping plots is worlds apart from what we had on September 11th. So it's one thing and it's important to look at what the organization itself was doing to try to regenerate, but it's also important to look at what they're running up against as they try and carry out attacks.

But I've said many times, fighting against terrorism is an unfair fight because they have to be right once, we have to be right 100 percent of the time. And that's why all of the efforts that we're undertaking are so important and they're going to have to continue. And it's important to confront them not just by trying to protect our cities as we're doing, but also to confront them in an offensive strategy. It's why again, going back to Afghanistan denying them the kind of territorial base that they once had is extremely important.

And we're working with Pakistan in what has essentially been an ungoverned area for its entire existence. It's tough work. The Pakistani army has tough work to do there. But we are, of course, concerned about the political situation in Pakistan and the need for democratic elections there. We are also concerned to continue to support Pakistani institutions as they fight the counterterrorist fight, whether it is with military assistance or with assistance to win the hearts and minds of the Fatah area.

As to counter-narcotics, it remains a real challenge. And it is especially a problem in areas where there's great violence and where the Taliban tends to be strongest. And so it is simultaneously a counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight. We are working very closely with the British on this issue, but the Afghans also have to step up. They have to step up against corruption; they have to step up against cartels. It is simply not true that these are all tiny little farmers who grow poppy because they can't grow something else. There are a lot of very big fish involved in this. And a law enforcement activity or a law enforcement effort that goes after those who are really profiting from the poppy crop is ultimately essential and we'll have that discussion when talk with President Karzai. I had that discussion when I talked with President Karzai.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Let me just say a word about the link between the drugs and the security situation. We have some detail today about those (inaudible) changing. And I think it's very clear that where there's insecurity, there is room for the drugs trade to prosper. The UN report that you referred to, which I looked at last night, the word that's left out from that report to me was that drug production had peaked in Afghanistan and I think that's very significant. That's not the same – I think declining, which is what we wanted to see. But first of all, you have to peak before you can get declines. And I think that those interim figures that have come through in that UN report do show not just that there are 13 poppy-free provinces, but also in Helmond where the security and drugs problems are particularly acute and interlinked. There are grounds for believing that we are beginning to provide the sort of security infrastructure.

Helmond is, of course, where the Taliban have been beaten back over the last six or seven months. We're beginning to provide the security infrastructure that can help make progress on the counternarcotics front. And I associate myself very, very strongly with what, Condi, you have said about the mutual responsibilities of the international community and of the Afghan Government as we together try to come to terms with this problem (inaudible) government in Afghanistan, and coordinated international effort are the right partners. (Inaudible)

QUESTION: (Inaudible) from the BBC. Madame Secretary, Foreign Secretary, you've talked about the contribution the alliance has made. You've also talked about the situation on the ground. Now, the Taliban is not winning, but it certainly hasn't – obviously hasn't been defeated. But many ordinary people think it extraordinary more than six years after 9/11 that the Taliban who sheltered al-Qaida in Afghanistan have not been defeated by this enormous military alliance, within NATO.

Is the alliance simply broken because so few of the powerful nations are prepared to put soldiers into the front line and get involved in combat? How are you going to persuade more nations to come forward with fighting troops? And are you worried that consent, public consent, both within Afghanistan and in your own countries, may simply drain away if this war isn't seen to be more decisive?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I remember when the President addressed – President Bush addressed the Congress shortly after 9/11 and he talked about the long war that we are engaged in. I think it is really – we shouldn't expect that one wins counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fights in short order. That's not the nature of the beast. The fact is that the Taliban is unable to generate the kind of large-scale, very organized offensives against the Afghan army, against coalition forces, that people had feared. Their spring offensive did not materialize. They've been beaten back every time they've come at the coalition forces in anything that approximates a traditional military structure. And so what they've done is that they've gone to tactics to terrorize the population with suicide bombings and kidnappings and hit-and-run activities. And it is a sign of a metamorphosis toward something that is different, not less troubling mind you, but different. And that's a harder fight and it takes a long time to root out counterinsurgency because it does have to be married not just too military force but with governance and with reconstruction.

And as to the alliance, yes, I do think the alliance is facing a real test here. And it is a test of the alliance's strength. But we shouldn't underestimate the transformation that NATO itself has gone through in being able to really learn how to fight this fight. This is a different fight than NATO was structured to do. It's taken some time – it may take some more time – but if the commitment is there and the will is there – and you're absolutely right about being truthful with our populations. Our populations need to understand that this is not a peacekeeping mission, this is a counterinsurgency fight, and that's different. The military aspects of this are equally important, the security aspects are equally important with what we do in reconstruction and in governance.

But the flip side of that is true; what we do in reconstruction and governance is equally as important as what we do on the military side. And so we have to perhaps give a better line – give our populations better visibility in what it means to both defeat the Taliban militarily and provide an environment in which they cannot regenerate or come back. And it – again, to go to David's point, it also requires on the part of the Afghan Government and Afghan institutions difficult decisions from the Afghan side about taking care of problems of corruption and clean governance.

So it's a tough fight. I think it's why it hasn't "been won" yet. But if one looks at Afghanistan now and one looks at Afghanistan in the past, we've made quite a lot of progress.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: Could I just pick up on the word that is commonly used: a test. There are two aspects of the test that I think are important. One is the military aspect, and I think it is significant that the Taliban should have been forced to change tactics and resort to terrorist (inaudible) including civilian (inaudible). That is a significant development. It is a choice they've been forced into making, not one that is (inaudible) not wanting to make. And I think it reflects the bravery and sacrifice that's been made by troops from many nations. That is a change that is underway.

There is a military test, and it's a test about fighting forces that had to put themselves in very, very dangerous situations. It's a test about how those military forces are coordinated. And there's a second aspect to the test, which is how we knit together a military strategy with an economic, social and political governing strategy. And in the

end, governing has to be done by the people of Afghanistan through their democratic institutions at a local, regional and national level. And it seems to me that that second test that we have to also attend to, NATO is one part of the equation but it's not the only part. And that's why the appointment of a new UN special representative, a strong figure that would play the coordinating role that is needed and to provide the partnership with the Afghan Government is going to be an important next step in taking forward this process.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: I think people ask two questions about foreign policy engagements of this sort of size, of this type. First they ask: Is it right that we're there? And I think that there is compelling evidence about why it's right that we're there, not just because Afghanistan is a very poor country, 174th out of 178 in the World Development Bank, but also precisely because of the incubator that it's provided in the past, the terrorism that can threaten our citizens whether in our own lands or elsewhere in the world.

The second test that they apply, the second question that they ask, is whether we're making a difference. And I think no one can visit Afghanistan or even read the statistics in Afghanistan without recognizing that the international community is making a difference. The five million refugees who've returned to the country, the five and a half million kids who are in school, the two and a half million people who are getting healthcare, those are all evidence of the difference that is being made.

And it's a difference being made, I'm confident enough to say, that wouldn't be made by the Afghan Government alone. It's being made because of the partnership with the international community. That's not to say that the challenges don't remain very, very large indeed. And that's why I said at the beginning, the reports that have come out in the last three weeks echo the analysis that has informed the Prime Minister's statement in December and the speeches and comments that Condi Rice herself has made.

There is actually a real convergence of opinion about the nature of the problem. And I think that the second question that people ask about the difference we make could also be addressed. And as we gear up our strategy for the next phase of this campaign, I think we can continue to make a difference. And that's the way, in a very honest and sober way; we address the concerns that people have.

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah.

QUESTION: I'm Lachlan Carmichael with the AFP news agency. It sounds like you don't yet have a strategy to defeat the Taliban. And Madame Secretary just said that the populations need to understand it's a counterinsurgency, and we see that the allies have not agreed to send all the troops necessary to fight in the south where the insurgency exists. And two, the other problem is that should you include Pakistan as part of the strategy to defeat the Taliban? Why don't you talk about a super coordinator for both Afghanistan and Pakistan?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, on the strategy, I think we do know what it takes to defeat the Taliban and I think we are -- we and the Afghans, and I want to keep emphasizing that this has to be an indigenous effort -- that there is progress being made. It goes to what David mentioned again: The Taliban has had to change tactics because they've not been able to confront NATO in a military way.

I can remember standing before many of you a couple of years ago when the spring of '06 was coming up, when there was all the talk, well, this is about to be handed off to NATO and U.S. forces are going to be handing off responsibility to NATO and, therefore, the Taliban will make a huge spring offensive. And I think, frankly, the Taliban thought they would make a huge spring offensive. Well, they were sorely disappointed because NATO fought well and fought back, and they were pushed back and they were defeated in those efforts. And I think they learned a tough lesson, which is coming at the alliance in a concerted military way doesn't work very well, so they're going after innocent people. It frankly doesn't take much courage to blow up a school or go in and shoot a bunch of teachers or kidnap an unarmed aid worker. It doesn't take very much courage. It takes a certain amount of brutality and moral bankruptcy to do so. And so part of the strategy is to work with the Afghan people to repulse this terrible scourge which isn't trying to govern them. It's trying to intimidate them, brutalize them and terrorize them. Now, when you have that strategy from them, it means that you have to continue the work to pick up their leaders, to repel them, to kill them if necessary, but you also have to provide something in place, which is better governance and better services and reconstruction for the people. And I think one thing that we've not mentioned is the degree to which our Provincial Reconstruction Teams are working very hard at the local and provincial level to deliver goods and services to the people closer to the people.

It is obviously the case in a country as big and decentralized as Afghanistan that local levels of governance may be more capable than just relying on a top-down strategy. And one of the things that we discussed today is enhancing the ability of local and provincial leaders to actually deliver for their people. So there is a strategy for dealing with it. We are pursuing it. I think the Taliban has changed tactics and we have to be smart enough to deal with that situation.

But I just want to underscore what David said. This is a country that has made a lot of progress from a failed state in 2001, that was the epicenter of al-Qaida's efforts against the world, where infant mortality was among the worst in the world, where girls were not only not going to school but being prevented from doing so, and where women were being beaten or executed in a stadium given to them by the international community to play soccer. This is a country that has come a long way. And yes, it's hard, and yes, it's going to take more time. But it is an effort that is very much well worth it.

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILLIBAND: I'd just say briefly, sir, that if you look at what the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons in December, you'll see very clearly set out the six or seven key elements of the British Government's contribution to this, covering the critical issues about governance, the disruption of the insurgency effort, the counternarcotics campaign, the coordination of the international community. And I think that that strategy bites on the legal challenges that now exist, which have changed in their nature and the dimensions over the last five years.

And it's right that you raise the issue of the relationship with Pakistan. It's something that Condi herself mentioned in her earlier remarks. The next ten days or so are very important for Pakistan. The best hope for Pakistan is for free and fair elections that deliver the sort of voice for the people through the ballot box that is the guarantor of a safe society. And that's in the interest of Afghanistan as well because we need those two countries to forge the sort of links at government level that can help them both tackle, what is in many ways are shared problems for both of those countries, those threats of terrorism and drugs that face the rest of us as well.

I'm very sorry, ladies and gents, I don't know whether it was the length of the questions or the length of the answers -- (laughter) -- that means we're going to have to bring this to a close. I do want to make sure that I get the Secretary to the Prime Minister without any more delays. But thank you very, very much for coming on today and I look forward to further discussion.

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