



## Briefing With UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband En Route Afghanistan

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

En Route Afghanistan  
February 7, 2008

**SECRETARY RICE:** Good morning. We just thought we'd come back and take your questions because we've been talking a lot. So who would like to lead off? Anne?

**QUESTION:** At Davos, President Karzai apparently had some criticism both of the United States and Britain for the military strategy in southern Afghanistan, basically, according to quotes, blaming the U.S. and Britain for leading him astray. I know there have been some -- there's been a British response to this, but I haven't seen an American response to it. And could you both just sort of address this? Was there anything about the way the U.S. designed and Britain designed their actions there that would have made things more difficult for him?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm not quite certain what he was referring to, so I'm not going to comment on comments that I didn't actually hear. Look, it's a complicated situation for the President of Afghanistan because he's meeting rising expectations of his people after years and years of civil war, he's trying to fight against a pretty tough insurgency and build a country that's coming out of abject poverty all at the same time.

But it's interesting; when you have a conversation with him, he does nothing but thank the coalition for the efforts that it is making, and those efforts include training Afghan forces to do the fighting. But right now, Afghan forces are not capable of doing that alone. And we talked yesterday about the complicated world of counterinsurgency and how one has to get the military operations and the reconstruction aid and the governmental all wrapped into one. So I'm not going to comment on that.

Obviously, the Afghan Government itself has responsibilities, too. And we've talked a great deal about the importance of good governance, the importance of fighting corruption, the importance of making certain that the Afghan people understand the mission that we're on and that they're benefitting from it. So this is a two-way street, and I think everybody has to step back and concern ourselves with the Taliban.

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** We met President Karzai at Davos and he said he'd been misquoted in some of those allegations. I think Condi's phrase, the two-way street, is absolutely right. We've got responsibilities that we're determined to live up to and obligations that we're determined to live up to, and ditto for the Afghan authorities. And that's something that we want to follow through.

And I think at the heart of both of our strategies is the belief that this has to be done with the Afghan Government and, in fact, needs to be led by the Afghan Government with our support. And that's really what we'll be taking forward over the next 24 hours.

**QUESTION:** A basic question, really. Why are you doing this trip together? Is it to show unity and also to encourage others to come forward and to share the burden and to do a lot more?

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** I think the first reason that we are here together is that we're working closely together; so if our teams are working closely together, then so should we go see for ourselves and hear from ourselves, from our people and Canadians and others who will be meeting, so that we've got a shared perspective.

Secondly, we obviously want to make sure that we are receiving and giving a consistent message both to and from the Afghan Government and to and from the Afghan people and more widely to the coalition of countries that you refer to.

And thirdly, that our people, both diplomats and armed forces, are working so close together, I think it is good for them to see us working closer together.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Ditto. I don't have anything to add to that. That's exactly my (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** What happens if you can't convince your colleagues in NATO to send more troops to the front line? Are you going to do it yourselves? What other option is there?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the United States is, of course, already making available a rotation of 3,200 Marines in order to give additional fighting power for this phase. Frankly, I hope that there will be more troop contributions, and there need to be more Afghan forces. So some combination of forthcoming NATO contributions and increased Afghan contributions has got to come together to give you enough military power to do what we need to do on the front end of the counterinsurgency effort.

And that's an account that Bob Gates is working very actively. They're in Vilnius. He's working it very actively. I know Des Browne is working it very actively as well. And I think that in the final analysis you will see more troop contributions. The problem is that we have to make sure that they're the right troop contributions and in the right places.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** But everybody is asking that the alliance meet this test and that we step up to this test. And just to be clear, it's not an overwhelming number of forces that's being sought here. I mean, you're not looking for tens of thousands of forces. So I'd like for people to get out of their heads that we're looking for huge troop contributions. There are some holes that need to be plugged. We need to do more on the training side. There are some places in the region that -- in various regions that need more forces. But I think in the final analysis, this is a troop contribution level that NATO can meet and should meet. We've already had some new -- as I understand it, new equipment offers from some members of NATO. So we'll just keep pressing at it.

**QUESTION:** For both of you, I'm curious about the sort of the decision to start your trip in -- never mind. Sorry about that. Sorry about that, guys. I'm curious about the decision to start off in Kandahar. Are you trying to shame European governments by going to the place where so many of them have been unwilling to send their soldiers?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I thought that the important reason to go to Kandahar is that it's one of the more active parts of Afghanistan. It's a place where UK, Canada and the U.S. are all working together. There's a very good PRT there. It's just the rationale of being able to get outside of Kabul and see one of the areas that is being -- that is very active. And so I don't think there's any message there to anyone. But the Canadians are active there, the British are active there. And as I said, there's a very good PRT. But it's really more an opportunity to get out of Kabul than anything.

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** I think it's also important that Kandahar does have iconic status in the history and position of Afghanistan. And I hope that we'll be able to take a message about what is really a new phase in this drive, a new phase in terms of the counterinsurgency and the way in which military and political effort are going to come together. And I think that one of our messages is that we have to build local as well as build national, and getting out of Kabul within the time constraints, this is a way of demonstrating that but also understanding some of the particular challenges outside the capital. And we'll obviously be talking about security issues within Kabul and the changing nature of the threat there. I think it's also important to keep sending a message that building local is important.

**QUESTION:** Can you elaborate (inaudible)?

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** Well, I think if you look at what our Prime Minister said in December in the House of Commons, he set out there the sort of three or four key aspects of what we mean by new phase. First of all, the emphasis on local development as well as on national democratic development to build on the, I think, 18- or 19,000 community democratic -- community development councils that have been established around the country.

Secondly, a new phase because the nature of the threat is changing. It's moving in. There's the conventional war fighting that continues, but there's also the increasing terrorist threat.

Thirdly, it's how we build on the economic and social gains that have been made -- the kids going to school, the healthcare services being provided, the roads being developed.

Fourthly, there's the very, very important work of disrupting the insurgency, sometimes put under the label of reconciliation of those aspects -- those people being willing to work within the constitutional status.

And I think in those -- in a number of those elements, we see ourselves moving into a new phase.

**QUESTION:** People compare the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan all the time. And after the Iraq strategic review last year that led to the surge, people pointed to indicators of success. In Afghanistan, it seems like it's sort of harder to measure success because there are so many different actors doing different things. And in a way, we've had a lot of tactical successes because of -- against the Taliban. But I was just going to ask both of you how you would measure success in Afghanistan.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, perhaps one of the most important points to make is that there isn't a kind of blinding flash of success. What you have is kind of milestones along the way that you try to reach. And in any of these efforts, there is a point at which the insurgency is really no longer able to kind of live off the land, if you will, both because we've managed to disrupt their command-and-control and their military strategy, so to speak, because we have been able to separate those who might wish to go back into society and who are not those who are carrying on the bloody attacks against civilians, and the population turns and says no more here. I mean, that's one kind of milestone that you look for in any counterinsurgency effort.

You also look for a milestone at which governance is possible at multiple levels in a country -- at the local level, at the provincial level and at the national level -- and where through that governance people are beginning to experience some of the benefits from their democratically elected government, whether it's simply the sewer system works better or you're able to send your kids to school or there is a decline in the rates of child mortality and so forth. And I think that's another milestone. And there are obviously progressive milestones along the way in each of those.

And I think you can make the argument that in Afghanistan you've seen progress along both of those sort of big milestones, but there's obviously a great deal more work to do. And the point that David made about the local provincial -- local and provincial levels is, I think, the one thing that we've learned, and we've learned it also in Iraq, is that that is often the level at which you get the most intensive and the most effective support to the population in security terms but most especially in the delivery of services.

And so when I look for milestones, I don't think of kind of benchmarks of did they do this or did they do that, but is the population beginning to experience the benefits. And I think you have to make the point that in a country as poor as Afghanistan that has been through as much, the population is definitely beginning to experience that.

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** I think now comes better security and more development. Those are the two indices and they're obviously linked. And the critical thing is to reinforce that link because that's how you get people onside as well as governments onside.

**QUESTION:** I wonder if you could both answer how satisfied you are with the efforts being made by the Karzai government to get out of Kabul, to reach out to the provincial leaderships, the local leaderships. Are they doing this? Are they building the kind of integrated government they need to, or is there a tendency to stick too much on their home turf?

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** I think it's important that in a partnership like this we don't go around giving governments marks out of ten. I mean, that's not -- I wouldn't want to start answering a question that way because people might want to give us marks out of ten as well. So it's a two-way street, this.

I think that what's important to say is, first, Afghanistan has never had the sort of government and state capacity that the Karzai government is talking about building and that we're trying to support, and so I think we've got to recognize the very large challenge that's inherent in this, notwithstanding the fact it's also a very poor country that is threatened by a dangerous fighting insurgency.

Secondly, I think that there's different levels of local capacity around the country, and one of the things -- this is my second visit to Afghanistan. One of the things that becomes clear very quickly is that it's important not to generalize, that there are different systems and different tribal traditions, actually, in different parts of the country. So I'd want to start getting a bit of granularity into answering the question.

And there's obviously a different relationship between the security and development issues in different parts of the country. We're obviously focusing on the Helmand situation where you've got the added complication of the drugs issue. But I think it's important to have a bit of granularity in this.

Thirdly, in the meetings, private and public, that we've had with President Karzai and his teams, they do stress, in fact, a three-way partnership that we stress, too, which is with the international community but also with the Afghan people. And so to come to your point about the reaching out locally, I think they do understand the importance of the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, and that's the three-way partnership that certainly I see at the heart of this.

**SECRETARY RICE:** The other thing is that you have to build mechanisms by which the central government can do that. It's not just a matter of calling people on the phone or showing up once in a while. You know, there are issues of can a local or provincial government execute budgets and projects if the resources are made available from the center. So that's the kind of work that Provincial Reconstruction Teams do to try to improve that capacity. Afghanistan has a central infrastructure problem, simply being able to get roads forward. We've spent a lot of resources building first primary roads and now secondary roads that can link the country. So it's not just a matter of will and desire to link the center to the provinces. It's also a matter of actually building the mechanisms to do it because Afghanistan has not traditionally had them.

Thanks.

**FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND:** Thank you.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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