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Interview With Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Radio Farda Correspondents Golnaz Esfandiari and Mosaddegh Katouzian

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Prague, Czech Republic

July 8, 2008

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, thank you so much for this interview with Radio Farda. Let me start with a question that's on the mind of many Iranians these days. Will there be a U.S. or Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, we believe very strongly and President Bush has made very clear that this problem with Iran about its nuclear technology can be resolved diplomatically. That is what we're working on. We want very much for the Iranian people to be able to have good relations with the United States. There's no reason that this great civilization with a great history and a great culture should be isolated from international politics. And so there is a diplomatic way to do this, and that's why the United States, as a part of the group that is Germany, France, Great Britain, Russia, and China, has made a proposal to the Iranian Government that we hope they will accept.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, Iran insists that its nuclear program is peaceful and, defying UN resolutions, continues with the enrichment of uranium. Is it a precondition for United States for bilateral talks and for lifting of the sanctions for Iran to end its enrichment program, and could you perhaps envision future talks without preconditions?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the reason that it's important for Iran to suspend its enrichment and reprocessing, to come to the table once it has suspended, is that we shouldn't be in a position of talking while Iran continues to improve the very technologies that could lead to a nuclear weapon.

But if Iran wants a peaceful program, it can have a peaceful program. Russia has a reactor, the Bushehr reactor. The United States has been supportive of what Russia is doing there. We have offered, in the proposal that the P-5+1 have made, to help Iran with civil nuclear technology at the highest possible levels. It's just that when you enrich and reprocess, you are perfecting the technologies that can lead to a nuclear weapon; and because of the Iranian regime's history of lying to the IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency, it can't be trusted with enrichment

and reprocessing. But it can have civil nuclear power.

And so when the Iranian regime tells its people that the West is trying to prevent Iran from having very sophisticated technology, it could not be further from the truth.

QUESTION: There are press reports in the U.S. and they are quoted by Iranian media that Washington is spending \$400 million for covert operations in Iran. These reports claim that U.S. or CIA operatives are already in Iran or in neighboring countries working to incite ethnic unrest. How would you respond?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States has made very clear that we are prepared to deal with the Iranian regime if it is prepared to change its policies. I have said many times that I am willing to meet my counterpart anytime, anyplace, anywhere, to talk about anything. Iran only needs to suspend its enrichment and reprocessing. I know that from time to time the Iranians say, well, the United States is talking about changing the regime, regime change. We have said we want to change the regime's behavior. That is what this is about.

And so, Iran knows the many opportunities that are before it for better relations with the United States. The American Government represents a great people, the American people, and Americans have no permanent enemies. We don't believe in permanent enemies. We believe in finding a way to cooperate. We've done so with Libya, a country with which we had terrible relations at one point, and now we have improving relations. So that is the goal of American policy.

QUESTION: It ties very well into the next question that I'm going to ask you. Apart from the hostile remarks coming from the Iranian establishment, much indicates that majority of Iranians enjoy having friendly relations with United States. Recently, there have been reports about U.S. opening interests section in Tehran. Is that true? And what could be done in both Washington and Tehran to improve the relations between the two countries, to normalize the relations between two nations? What's realistic?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we certainly hope that we can find ways, even in the absence of normal relations between our countries, to have increasing contact between the Iranian people and the American people. The United States hosted a group of Iranian artists under the age of 40. It was a wonderful show of a great culture. We had an American wrestling team in Iran, and I know they were very well received everywhere. We've had people who are in disaster relief and humanitarian issues to come and work with some of our humanitarian relief agencies. So there are many ways to improve the contacts.

And we have made no decision about an interests section, but we are looking for ways that Iranians can have access to the United States. I know that right now it's hard to get a visa to the United States. We would like to find a way that Iranians can come to visit the United States. We have nothing against the Iranian people. It is the Iranian regime that is isolating the Iranian people from the rest of the world.

QUESTION: Fighting the war on terror and also promoting democracy are two key aspects of U.S. foreign policy. How do you reconcile them when the U.S. needs bases or other favors from authoritarian regimes?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, the United States is always going to stand for democracy, and the Iranian people deserve to live in a democratic state. When we talk about going ahead and talking even to the Iranian regime,

we never – on Iraq or if they suspend their enrichment, we never lose sight of the fact that true peace comes when people can live in democratic societies. And so throughout the Middle East, the United States is standing for democracy.

It is true that sometimes we have to deal with regimes that are authoritarian. It is in our interest do so. For instance, when we are trying to be against a threat or to have a defense against a threat, we have to sometimes deal with regimes that are not democratic. If we are trying to make peace between Israelis and Palestinians, sometimes we have to deal with regimes that are not democratic in order to give support to the Israelis and Palestinians.

But the United States, and I do and the President does -- in every conversation, we talk about democracy. Because democracy is not a gift to Americans. It is something that every human being should enjoy. The blessings of liberty are what the President has called the non-negotiable demands of human dignity. Every man, woman, and child deserves to be free.

QUESTION: On a different issue, Madame Secretary, the food and fuel prices, together with climate change, that is on the top of the agenda of G-8 summit in Japan. How could the world – how should the world avert these three challenges, face these challenges, so that a crisis of the kind we are facing so far as fuel and food is concerned could be done away with or at least reduced?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, unfortunately, some of these are – have no short-term answers. The food crisis – the United States has made a lot of food available. The United States is, by far, the largest food donor to countries in need, and we donate food without regard to political issues. So we have been a large funder of food for North Korea. At one time, we even gave food to Afghanistan when it was under the Taliban. So we have no political test for humanitarian help. And so we are a major food donor.

But ultimately, to deal with the food crisis, we have to increase productivity. We have to get the right fertilizers and the right productive capabilities to farmers. We have to have better transportation for food. In many places, it's hard to get food to where it's needed because of inadequate roads, for instance. So there are some longer-term problems that have to be addressed.

We also believe that the ability for people to grow crops that are drought-resistant, through the biotechnology that is now available, will be important. But in the short term, we're trying to help the neediest people. The President has increased our food assistance billions of dollars in order to be able to do that.

Now, as to energy and climate change, they go together. We have to find a way to have – to wean ourselves, to get out of our dependence on hydrocarbons, on oil. That means alternative fuels. That means nuclear energy. That means the ability to use all of the possible alternatives so that we're not using so much oil and lessening our dependence on oil, and by the way, as a result, making the climate cleaner because hydrocarbons and carbon emissions are very much at the center of the greenhouse gas problem.

What they're doing in the G-8 is that they're looking at ways that all of the economies, whether they're developed like the United States or the European economies, but also China and India, which are increasingly part of the problem in emissions, can share in technologies, can share in ways to manage this problem. But I'm afraid the energy problem, we're going to need more production because we're not going to wean ourselves from oil very quickly. But we also are

going to have to take some longer-term approaches to dealing with this issue.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for your time.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

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