



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

KEYWORD SEARCH

[Subject Index](#)+ BOOKMARK    ...[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Countries](#)[Youth & Education](#)[Careers](#)[About State](#)

You are in: [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#) > [What the Secretary Has Been Saying](#) > [2008 Secretary Rice's Remarks](#) > [July 2008: Secretary Rice's Remarks](#)

Remarks En Route Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

En Route Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

July 21, 2008

SECRETARY RICE: I'm happy just to take your questions. We don't have to start with any formalities.

MR. MCCORMACK: And no windup.

SECRETARY RICE: No windup. No windup. We'll take the pitch.

QUESTION: Can you give us a little reaction to, you know, what happened yesterday in Geneva? Did you all go into the meeting – by you, I mean the P-5+1 – with the idea that if they said, eh, you know, that you would give them two weeks? Or was that something that was done there on the spot?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we expected to hear an answer from the Iranians, but as has been the case so many times with the Iranians, what came through was not serious. And so Javier Solana decided to say to them two weeks. I think they had a little conversation about it among themselves at the P-5+1. Seems fine to me. But I thought that Solana was absolutely firm and clear that it's time for the Iranians to give a serious answer.

And from all reporting, the unity of the P-5+1 has never been greater than it was in that meeting or at this moment. And I do believe that it is, in part, because the United States showed its seriousness in backing this proposal with Bill's physical presence. But it was also a very strong message to the Iranians that they can't go and stall and make small talk and talk about culture, that they have to make a decision. And I think it's also very clear that there are going to be consequences if they don't.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY RICE: A positive decision.

QUESTION: Is that what they did? They talked about Iran's wonder – culture? Is that what you heard back?

SECRETARY RICE: I understand that it was, at times, meandering.

QUESTION: So it – excuse me, is that a (inaudible) -- I can't remember the right word. Is that a charitable description of what --

QUESTION: Or a euphemism?

QUESTION: Is that charitable on your part?

SECRETARY RICE: I'll just leave it at meandering.

QUESTION: So, in two weeks time, if they don't give a serious answer, what's going to happen?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, if there's not a serious answer, then we still have the New York track available to us. I don't expect any imminent action, largely because of schedules. We are getting into August. But I do think you'll also continue to see additional moves. We will certainly continue to look at designations. I think the Europeans are looking at what more they might do. And so the – but the main thing is, I think we'll have to start considering what we do in New York.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY RICE: In the Council. In the Council.

QUESTION: But Madame Secretary, are you disappointed that Iran seemed to stall, meander, and not offer anything specific in these talks? I mean, you could – this was the first time that the United States was involved in these talks. You seemed to make a concession by being there. Are you disappointed that they seemed to be, for want of a better phrase, messing you around?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, quite the opposite. I think the fact that we went may have been a bit surprising to the Iranians, and they didn't react in a way that gave anyone any confidence in them. And so what it did was to serve to reinforce the unity of the P-5+1. And I'm not in the least surprised that the Iranians weren't serious. They haven't been serious to this point, and I'm not in the least surprised. But we gave them an opportunity, and they have thus far demonstrated again why there are three Security Council resolutions that are isolating Iran and making their isolation deeper and deeper.

QUESTION: But does this narrow the choices that you have? I mean, does this mean that you are now going to proceed to far more punitive measures, not only at the Council but – you know, but elsewhere? I mean, the President has always said that all options are on the table. Does this narrow your choices in the future – your diplomatic choices?

SECRETARY RICE: It clarifies Iran's choices. And we will see what Iran does in two weeks. But I think the diplomatic process now has a kind of new energy in it because, as you know, Sue, I've always considered the

diplomatic process to have two very important elements. One is possibility of negotiation, and we've made the strongest possible play now in terms of the possibility of negotiation. The other is the possibility of punitive measures, and we are in the strongest possible position to demonstrate that if Iran doesn't act, then it's time to go back to that track.

QUESTION: Do you expect – not – maybe multilaterally, not at the UN but – not at the Security Council, but maybe individual states, if Iran comes back in the two weeks and says, sorry, we're not interested, do you expect something quick from anyone? Not in the UN – not in the Council, but I mean (inaudible)?

SECRETARY RICE: I think given schedules and the oncoming August schedules, I wouldn't anticipate anything really quick. But I think we'll start working.

QUESTION: There's been a lot of discussion about an interests section opening up in Iran and that there is somehow a sort of a thawing in the icy relations that you've had. Are you looking at opening up an interests section? How far are you along in the deliberations, and do you think that this would enhance the people-to-people contacts that you're looking for?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't want to get into internal deliberations. We are always looking for ways to relate to the Iranian people to make it easier for them to relate to us, but we are still having that set of discussions. I would just remind that in – we have an interests section in Cuba, so I wouldn't read thawing of relations into anything.

QUESTION: Would you link these talks, the answer from Iran in two weeks, to the interests section? Would that have any impact on this discussion?

SECRETARY RICE: We continue to look for ways to have access to the Iranian people, and for them to have access to us. This agreement with them about their nuclear policy is with the regime.

QUESTION: Why – there are some who disagree with the whole freeze-for-freeze idea and think – and I won't name names, but they're not just John Bolton with the freeze-for-freeze. Why is it that you're okay with now another two weeks? So essentially, even if the Iranians say yes, they get eight weeks of, you know, status quos. It seems like they have basically left you high and dry, kind of. They – that they're getting delay after delay after delay. Is that not the case?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, two weeks is not very long.

QUESTION: Well, but it makes it two months --

SECRETARY RICE: And – no, two weeks is not very long. And I think that Javier Solana was pretty clear that people are tired of the Iranians and their stalling tactics. And they have – sometimes they say that they're not fully ready to answer something; Jalili clearly wasn't. But I hope that what he saw – I know that what he saw was a very united P-5 +1. And perhaps when he takes that message back, they can determine their policy more quickly.

Now, in terms of the freeze-for-freeze, six weeks is also not very long, when nothing is happening. And I just remind you that the UN Security Council sanctions that are in place remain; it's that no news ones are added. And so from our point of view, the status quo, the sanctions, continue. We have designations in place that continue. Iran stops adding to its nuclear capability. But after six weeks, if they have not decided to suspend, then we would be in a situation where we have

to return to the Security Council track.

QUESTION: Can you give us a bit of background on how you came to send Bill Burns to Geneva? Did you approach the President? And what did Dick Cheney say about this?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, again, I'm not going to talk about internal deliberations. But this was something that everybody understood the need for and thought that, as a tactic, it was fine. And this is a tactic. We – the strategy is to get Iran to accept the package or to have great enough unity in the P-5+1 to bring consequences if they don't. That's the strategy. And accepting the package means suspending enrichment and reprocessing and negotiating with us. So that's the strategy.

Now, the tactic of sending Bill Burns was the bookend tactic to my signing the letter, so that the Iranians who sometimes sit and tell our European colleagues we don't really believe that the Americans are behind this offer -- they actually say that -- now, they can't say that. And so, we talked it through among the Security Council – among the national security council principals and people were comfortable with it. And yes, of course, it was the President who made the decision.

QUESTION: But what I asked, you know, how you came to propose that. Was it because Motaki gave a very positive response to your signature on the proposal -- on the incentives package? Was that one of --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, in fact -- look, there were mixed signals coming from the Iranians. But I think that was less the issue than – and from time to time, it's important to invigorate the diplomacy, to give a little push to the diplomacy, because we – obviously, this P-5+1 coalition has remained together over now – a little over two years. That's a long time. But from time to time, it's important to give a little push to the diplomacy, and that's what this was meant to do.

QUESTION: Was this an idea going back to – you've mentioned several times the bookend. When you signed the letter and when it was transmitted, was this being considered -- sending Burns to go?

SECRETARY RICE: It came up at the time among the allies. But I thought that signing the letter was enough. And again, we always want to be vigorous on the diplomacy, but both parts of it. And by being vigorous on the part of it that demonstrates American commitment, you can also be vigorous on the side of consequences. And so that was the point. But it came up during that period of time. We decided not to do it. It came up with the Europeans, not so much in our counsels. I made the determination in London that the signature was enough.

QUESTION: You've said several times in interviews that this was a one-time deal. So are you planning to join Javier Solana in two weeks time when he goes back to see the Iranians? Would that be a useful tactic, or did the tactic stop in Geneva?

SECRETARY RICE: I think we've done enough to demonstrate that the United States is serious, and to assure our partners that we're serious, and to show the Iranians that we're serious. I think we've done enough.

QUESTION: And then – can -- okay.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Okay. Can we ask you a little bit about your –

SECRETARY RICE: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Can we ask you a little bit about your other historic meeting on Wednesday with the – it will be your first meeting with the North Korean? Why have you decided to meet at this particular time, even though it's apparently in an informal setting, and what do you hope will emerge from that meeting?

QUESTION: Can we go back? Can you just give us just a -- what are you doing in – what are we – what are you doing in Abu Dhabi?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Is this Iran? Is this Iran – Iraq? Is this –

SECRETARY RICE: No. We've been looking for an opportunity – the GCC colleagues plus Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq have been looking for an opportunity to get together to discuss a variety of issues: Iran, of course, but also the Middle East peace process. A lot has happened. Lebanon has a government. There's just a – the Middle East is fast-moving. And it was – actually in discussions when I called Abdullah bin Zayid to tell him that I was sorry I couldn't be at Camp David when he and the Crown Prince were there. We talked about the importance of doing a GCC+2 -- +3 soon. The Jordanian was just there. He said, you know, we really should do one soon. And this provides an opportunity because I can swing through, do the dinner. It's an informal – it's not a formal meeting with press conferences and all that. It's just a consultation.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) what you just described, nothing else? It's basically just Iran – developments on Iran --

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Palestinian-Israeli issues. Most likely, Afghanistan, as well. It's the, sort of, GCC agenda that we always do. But things are moving quickly enough that it's important to keep talking.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Right. Could you tell us a little bit about your hopes for the meeting on Wednesday with the North Korean? What do you think that this particular meeting is going to achieve? And also on the, sort of, historic significance of it, it's your first meeting with a North Korean minister, isn't it?

SECRETARY RICE: I wouldn't put too much weight on this meeting. Eventually, there will be a Six-Party ministerial to – when -- as phases in -- the new phases begin. But this just seemed like a very good opportunity, since we'll all be in the same place, to have a kind of informal opportunity to talk about what's going on in the – you know, there is progress being made, but there are more steps to take.

You might remember that two years ago we had a meeting of the five because things were not going very well at that particular point in time. So it's just an opportunity for us to talk. I wouldn't call it either historic or monumental or even consequential. I think it's just really in the consultation category.

QUESTION: But you will discuss what the third phase is going to look like and the roadmap for --

SECRETARY RICE: I think -- yeah, I think what we'll do is we'll certainly review progress in the second phase. And I believe there'll be a very strong message that the obligations need to be met, and that the verification protocol really needs to be completed, and that it has to be a verification protocol that can give us confidence that we are able to verify the accuracy of the North Korean declaration, and that we have a way to address proliferation as well as all nuclear programs, including highly enriched uranium. So that's what the verification protocol is doing. And we'll undoubtedly have a chance to talk about that and talk about the importance of getting that done.

On the other hand, you know, we want to look forward. And so beginning to talk about the third phase is -- it's a useful opportunity to do that.

MR. MCCORMACK: Okay, guys.

QUESTION: Just one more little thing, actually. The Arab League has come out and has been being very -- given a very angry response to the International Criminal Court plan to indict Bashir, and they're planning to send an envoy down there to discuss it. I wondered whether you had any reaction on the ICC's moves? And also, the Arab League seems to be lending a lot of support to Bashir.

SECRETARY RICE: I've not seen the Arab League's statement. I've just seen reports of the Arab League's statement, so I don't want to comment on a statement that I've actually not seen. Look, we've been clear that what needs to happen here is that, first of all, Sudan needs to live up to the obligations and responsibilities that have been put upon it by the UN Security Council. And we need to get these forces in and the like. But, of course, the President has already called what was going on in Sudan a genocide, so our views on this are clear and haven't changed.

QUESTION: Thank you.

2008/T21-1

Released on July 21, 2008

 [BACK TO TOP](#)



[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[About state.gov](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)