



For Immediate Release  
Office of the Vice President  
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## **Interview of the Vice President by Bret Baier, FOX News**

Beit al-Bahr Palace, Aqaba, Jordan

11:05 A.M. (Local)

**QUESTION:** Mr. Vice President, thanks for being with us. Since we last talked, you've met one-on-one with a number of Arab leaders for long periods of time. What did you accomplish?

**THE VICE PRESIDENT:** Well, my assignment from the President was to come out and talk with our friends in the region -- most of them are old friends of mine, people I've known and dealt with over the last nearly 20 years - to focus specifically on the problems in the region, issues such as Iraq, what's happening there, the Iranian situation, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, seek their advice and counsel as well as tell them what our thinking is on those major issues of the day.

**QUESTION:** President Mubarak's spokesperson came out and said that the Egyptian President told you that the Iraq issue and the Iranian nuclear issue cannot be resolved without restarting the Middle East peace process. Do you agree with that?

**THE VICE PRESIDENT:** I don't want to characterize the conversations I had with any of the leaders. My experience has been generally throughout the region that everybody is really focused on the Iranian situation. It's a top priority, if you will, in terms of concerns and the prospects of the Iranians developing nuclear weapons.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace issue obviously is also very important. But you can't retard or not work on one issue because the other one isn't solved; you've got to address them both.

**QUESTION:** Without talking about the private meetings, do you think there's a link between solving these problems and the Middle East peace process?

**THE VICE PRESIDENT:** I think we have to address all the problems and we don't have the luxury of ignoring any of them.

**QUESTION:** There's another question about messages. You were on the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis 150 miles from the coast of Iran. You delivered a warning to Iran, a very visual warning, and now we have confirmation that these meetings in Baghdad are moving forward with the Iranians. Help people understand the different messages there to the Iranian Government.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, the meetings in Baghdad will be at the ambassadorial level and the President has made it abundantly clear that they are to focus specifically on the situation in Iraq. The Iraqis have been interfering - or, excuse me, the Iranians have been interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq and that subject will be discussed at the ambassadorial level.

That's got nothing to do with the fact that we are obviously opposed to what the Iranians are trying to do in the nuclear area. They appear to be determined to develop the capacity to enrich uranium in order to produce nuclear weapons. The UN Security Council now has twice unanimously passed resolutions calling for an end to that Iranian nuclear program. So far, the Iranians have ignored it. They shouldn't ignore it. They ought to comply with the UN resolutions.

QUESTION: You've often said and the administration has often said that there's not a lot of hope that the Iranians are going to change their ways. Do you see hope that these talks in Baghdad are somehow going to change the way that Iran is operating?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I can't predict what's going to happen. The President made the decision that we will have these talks at the ambassadorial level in Baghdad, and we'll see what it produces. But again, the point here to be emphasized is this is about specifically the situation ongoing in Iraq and Iran's, we think, illicit activities inside Iraq, and not any other issue.

QUESTION: Last time we talked, we talked about George Tenet's book a little bit. In that book, he says that the al Qaeda leadership is inside Iran; and while they're under some loose house arrest, they may have been plotting attacks and they have plotted attacks from Iranian soil. Do you believe that to be true?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We are confident that there are a number of senior al Qaeda officials in Iran and they've been there since the spring of '03. About the time that we launched operations into Iraq, the Iranians rounded up a number of al Qaeda individuals and placed them under house arrest and they're still there.

We think obviously there are other elements that are responsible for overall leadership of al Qaeda, specifically Osama bin Laden, Zawahiri. They are not in Iran, but there are some senior officials in Iran. They've been held there for some time. But activities they've been engaged in, I'm really not at liberty to discuss.

QUESTION: But clearly they're there and operating?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We know they're there, and I don't want to go beyond that.

QUESTION: So the dual track, is that fair to call it a dual track, good cop/bad cop with Iran?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Good cop/bad cop in what sense?

QUESTION: You're sitting down with them and talking with them and then you've delivering a message

on an aircraft carrier with F-18s behind you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I think the important thing is that Iran has become the major source of instability in the region. We saw them last summer support Hezbollah's attacks on the Israelis. We see them active in terms of resupplying Hezbollah and working through Syria. Syria has, in effect, become an ally of Iran working inside the Arab world. That's got a lot of people out here very upset. We see obviously continued support by them for Hezbollah. They've been and have been for a long time a prime state sponsor of terror.

And then, of course, there's the whole nuclear issue in addition to the activities they're undertaking inside Iraq. We have in recent weeks cracked down inside Iraq and arrested some Iranian Quds Force personnel that we caught operating inside Iraq.

The decision the President made is that there will be conversations at the ambassadorial level on the issue of what Iran is doing in Iraq. Meanwhile, there are all these other issues that are of concern to us and obviously we need to take action to make certain that we safeguard our interests.

QUESTION: On the debate about Iraq at home, do you believe that someone who opposes the war wants terrorists to win?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I think they have to be responsible for the consequences of the policy recommendations they make. If, in fact, they advocate complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, then they are, to some extent, accountable for what would happen when that policy followed, what happens inside Iraq, what kind of encouragement that might give to al Qaeda. Al Qaeda has based its entire strategy on the proposition that they can break the will of the American people, that if they kill enough that eventually the U.S. Government will withdraw. They believe that. They think they saw that before in Beirut in 1983, for example.

So if you're going to be a public official advocating withdrawal from Iraq, you, in fact, are also saying that what you're recommending is validating the al Qaeda strategy. There are consequences to all of these decisions and all of these actions, and a responsible public official has to accept the responsibility for the consequences of what they recommend.

Now, I think there's been not enough attention paid to the consequences that would flow if we were to adopt the policies that have been recommended by a majority of the Democrats. Nancy Pelosi and 169 Democrats last week voted for immediate withdrawal from Iraq. I think that would be a disaster. Everybody I've talked to in the region - everybody - thinks it would be a disaster.

And it's important that we succeed in Iraq. If we can't succeed in Iraq, then it does have consequences for the broader war on terror. There's no question about it. Yet some people want to say they want to fight the good war in Afghanistan, not the bad war in Iraq. Well, I'm sorry, but it doesn't work that way in the real world. We've got al Qaeda in both places right now. Al Qaeda has said Iraq is the central front in their war on the United States. You do not want to withdraw and give them a victory in Iraq.

QUESTION: Last thing, on the home front. Your friend Paul Wolfowitz, head of World Bank, is under

fire. Do you believe he should stay in his job?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I do. I think Paul is one of the most able public servants I've ever known and I've worked with him a lot over the years. I think he's a very good president of the World Bank and I hope he will be able to continue.

QUESTION: Thank you, sir.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

END 11:15 A.M. (Local)

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