



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice En Route Moscow, Russia

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October 21, 2006

SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. We're on our way to Moscow. And the purpose of this is to continue the discussions about the North Korea nuclear test and adherence to Resolution 1718. Obviously, since Russia is also a member of the six-party framework, we can talk, as we have in other places, about the path back to diplomacy should North Korea choose to take that path.

I'm sure there will be other issues, too. We will talk about Iran, although the principle action on Iran is now in the Security Council being discussed among perm reps. So I don't expect that to dominate our discussions.

And I also expect to have a chance to talk about a couple of bilateral issues. We are making positive progress on WTO. There are still issues to be worked out, but I would hope that we can see progress there. And of course, we continue to be concerned about the situation in Georgia and Georgian-Russian relations and are asking the Georgians and the Russians to do everything that they can to de-escalate the tensions that have been evident in that relationship.

So I'm sure we'll talk about the wide range of issues, but the trip to Moscow really is a continuation of the work with the members -- with the five parties on the North Korea file.

So I'll take a couple of questions. Glenn.

QUESTION: It's just on North Korea. It seems the North Korean strategy is to kind of ride out this storm and hope that a level of anxiety in the region begins to dissipate. How do you maintain the intensity of the moment without escalating tensions if sanctions are implemented?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, in fact I think those two are linked. If we are seen not to be escalating tensions but rather now to be effectively and persistently carrying out Resolution 1718 but in a businesslike manner and an effective manner, I think that's the way to sustain the adherence to 1718 over time -- over whatever time is needed.

The North Koreans I think actually would like to see an escalation of the tensions rather than a kind of matter of fact effective implementation of a resolution that has a potential to have a real effect on their activities. And so we're going to continue talk to friends and allies. We're going to continue to talk to members of the international system. The working group discussions on practical measures to implement 1718 are going to continue, and I think practical measures -- more and more practical measures will come into existence, like detection and monitoring equipment. So I think that's the way to really maintain the effectiveness of this regime that's been put in place under 1718.

QUESTION: The North Koreans obviously put a lot of planning into the test and presumably are prepared to withstand a fair amount of pressure for a while. Are you concerned that it will be difficult really to have an impact on them because they have prepared? And also if you could just clarify, there was a lot of confusion yesterday over what Tang did or did not hear from Kim Jong-il. Did Kim Jong-il say he regretted the test? Did Kim Jong-il tell Tang that he would not test again? Thanks.

SECRETARY RICE: Counselor Tang did not tell me that Kim Jong-il either apologized for the test or said that he would not ever test again. So I've seen those reports. I don't know the sourcing, but that is not what Counselor Tang said to me.

The matter of North Korea having prepared, well, we'll see. We'll see whether or not they are prepared for both the ability of the international community to deny them, for instance, luxury goods and for the ability of the international system to safeguard against the risks associated with an active North Korean nuclear program. I think that they were surprised by a 15-0 Chapter 7 resolution. It's very often the case that what happens is that there is a lot of talk about how this won't happen or it can't happen or threats and then it does happen and it turns out to be harder to deal with the effects of that than the state realizes. So I think we'll just give this some time while continuing to say that obviously a diplomatic route remains open.

QUESTION: On sort of the two nuclear issues together, does the fact that the resolution went through, as you say 15-0 and relatively quickly, make it harder or easier to get this finally done -- the same done on Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't think you'll have the kind of resolution on Iran that you have on North Korea. After all, this is a program that's much further along. It was a nuclear test. But we will have a resolution on Iran. That's been in the works for some time, and it has its own logic. But I think what really does help is that there is now a sense of the Security Council really taking responsibility for its nonproliferation responsibilities. And that helps to create an atmosphere in which no one is going to want to have a successful resolution against North Korea and no action against Iran, which also at a different level is a threat to the nonproliferation regime.

And so I think it really does help to create a momentum about the Security Council's protection of nonproliferation. And by the way, it's been going on for a while. We had two resolutions in July, one on missiles with the North Koreans, the other on the Iranian -- making mandatory the suspension of enrichment and uranium for the Iranians. So there's a kind of momentum on the nonproliferation side, and I think it will help -- this very strong resolution will help to sustain that momentum.

QUESTION: Are there practical steps that you would like the Russians to take when it comes to North Korea? I know they have some significant or meaningful banking relationships with North Korea. And is there any particular meaning in your giving an interview Novaya Gazeta when you're there?

SECRETARY RICE: Novaya Gazeta is the pronunciation. Yeah, look, obviously the fate of journalists in Russia is a major concern. And on Anna Politkovskaya was a particularly well-known and well-respected journalist. So I think it's important to note that, but Novaya Gazeta is also one of the best independent voices in Russia and there is still an independent print press, and I want to -- I've done it in other ways. I've been on Ekho Moskviy, which is an independent voice on radio. Unfortunately, there is not much left of independent television in Russia, but I've tried to always go and be interviewed by those who are trying to be independent voices. So it's for that reason as well.

In terms of what the Russians can do, they have, too, -- you know, everybody has specific kinds of relationships with the North, and I think I'll listen to them how they plan to implement 1718. Again, I've not come out with my own list about implementation of 1718 but, again, the Russians have made very clear to us that they plan to implement it and implement it fully and strongly. And so we'll talk about whether there are some measures that we might even be able to take cooperatively because Russia, of course, participates in the PSI, and that might give some further cooperatives measures that could be discussed.

QUESTION: What is your message going to be to President Putin in terms of Georgia? Are you going to put pressure on him to sort of lower the rhetoric because it seems to be escalating and the tensions seem to be escalating? And also, what do you think about the new humanitarian law in Russia? Several agencies are now

pulling out because of the registration date.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I certainly will raise the NGO law. I remember at the time of the passage of the law Sergei Lavrov said to me well, a lot of this is going to be in how it's implemented. In some cases it's being implemented in ways that are making it difficult for NGOs to operate. And so I think we have to go over that. There are some -- I understand that they are proposing to register some NGOs that we have been concerned about, and I just want to check to make certain that that is the case, some American NGOs that there had been questions about. So there's a lot of work to do on the NGO issue.

As to Georgia, the rhetoric really needs to be lowered. Georgia and Russia are neighbors. And I know that there are tensions there. And we've been very strong with Georgia, too, that Georgia should not engage in provocative acts. We helped, through the OSCE, to actually resolve the crisis concerning the four Russian soldiers who were taken prisoner by the Georgians because of alleged intelligence activities. So I think we've been clear with both sides that cooler heads need to prevail here. People need to step back and realize that they are neighbors. And I would be especially concerned that there be no rhetoric that might encourage activity, military or provocative activity, in the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia or South Ossetia. I think that is something that really everybody has to be very careful about because that's the kind of problem that could get out of control. So I will talk with the Russians about that problem.

Just a couple more.

QUESTION: I know you've already addressed this several times, but this report that began with the Chosen Ilbo newspaper is become subtle wisdom. Some of our editors are asking us to do stories on Kim Jong-il's regret. I just wonder if when you say that he said nothing like that to you, I mean is that an outright -- it doesn't sound like an outright denial. Is it simply that in the kind of briefing you got that he did not bring it out? Or could you deny it outright if --

SECRETARY RICE: Here's a suggestion. Why don't you ask the Chinese what he said. I was not in the meeting. What I'm telling you is that State Counselor Tang did not say to me that Kim Jong-il had regretted his test. So I don't know what the sourcing is for the South Korean story. But State Counselor Tang did not say to me that Kim Jong-il had regretted the test.

QUESTION: *(off mic).*

I don't know what I don't know. I don't -- my concern here is that I don't want to be associated with a story for which I have no independent sourcing. All right? So let me just be very clear why I'm not going to go down that road. I don't know whether or not Kim Jong-il said any sort of -- any such thing. But the Chinese did not, in a fairly thorough briefing to me about the talks, they said nothing about an apology for having launched a test.

QUESTION: You know, the Chinese have had a very consistent policy towards North Korea for half a century now, the whole fraternal relationship, fear of instability. Did you get the sense that that is fundamentally -- they're fundamentally rethinking that because of the change in the strategic situation and the change in their sort of role in the world?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think that there is any doubt that Chinese attitudes about North Korea are evolving. I cannot conceive of even a short time ago China agreeing to call North Korea's behavior a threat to international peace and security. That's what a Chapter 7 resolution does. And then making mandatory sanctions against North Korea when, in fact, it's been generally China's view that sanctions in general are not appropriate because of issues of sovereignty. For instance, the Chinese did not join in the vote on sanctions about Sudan at one point I think on those grounds. And so I think it's very unusual and quite significant that China has decided to do this.

Now, it's a longstanding relationship and clearly it's a relationship that is of some importance to China for a variety of reasons. And so I don't expect that overnight you're going to have a 180 degree turn in the China-North Korea relationship. And indeed, China also seems to be trying to use that relationship to bring about more responsible North Korean behavior so that we do know that they've used that relationship to warn against tests, to warn against further escalations, to try to get them back to talk. So I think they're still trying to use the relationship, but that they would in fact subject the North Koreans to international sanctions and brand their behavior a threat to international peace and security, I do think that's a pretty significant turn.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask you there are these reports that the President has asked General Abizaid and some of the other generals to come back to the White House apparently to discuss Iraq. Is there any adjustment or something under consideration at the moment?

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, the President frequently talks with his generals including the kind of Saturday meeting that is taking place with General Casey and others. I myself attended one of those a couple of weeks ago. So he has frequent contacts with his military commanders, and General Abizaid comes up from time to time. I think he was in town a little less than a month ago. So he comes up from time to time. So I wouldn't read into this somehow that there is a, you know, full scale push for a major re-evaluation.

The Baghdad security plan was always to be re-evaluated at the time of the end of the plan, which is the end of Ramadan. So I'm quite certain that those are going to be the discussions. You know, they are always looking at what course we're on, whether or not it's working, what's working and what isn't working. And I'm quite certain that given the problems of violence in Iraq and the fact that the violence is not coming down to the degree that people would have hoped that there is going to be a lot of discussion about how we address that.

But the President has regular discussions with his military commanders. And as I said, I attended one of these -- one of these Saturday meetings just a couple of weeks ago when I was up at Camp David.

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