



Remarks With Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

The Treaty Room
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SECRETARY RICE: Well, we're seated which is an unusual circumstance. I don't know whose idea this was but it's very nice to be seated. (Laughter.) Finally, I would like to welcome --

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD: We should let them stand.

SECRETARY RICE: We should let them stand; that's right. (Laughter.) That's a good idea.



I'd like to welcome His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia. We have just had extensive discussions. First of all, we had some time together to discuss regional issues of interest and global issues of interest, how to consider the prospects for peace in the Middle East, how to convince Iran to follow the international consensus that there should be a negotiated and diplomatic solution to the problem in which Iran and the international community now finds itself. We discussed the coming of a new government in Iraq and our desire to support stability and peace in Iraq and a unity government that can serve all Iraqis. We had a chance to talk about Lebanon and about the need to fully implement the resolutions on the sovereignty of Lebanon that have been passed by the UN Security Council.

The principal purpose, however, of this meeting was to have our second session of the Strategic Dialogue. A Dialogue that was chartered by then-crowned Prince Abdallah, now King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia, and President Bush when they were in Crawford. We had the first meeting of this Dialogue in Riyadh and this was the second meeting of the Dialogue. The Dialogue is broken into several working groups that look for concrete progress on issues of interest and concern to us. We have a working group on counterterrorism, which obviously discussed both the challenges that we face in counterterrorism and the opportunities to cooperate in matters of intelligence, law enforcement and training in counterterrorism. We have a working group on human development that talks about the possibilities and opportunities for exchange of Saudi and American citizens from universities, from the business communities, from indeed civil society. They talked about issues of reforms, about -- reform, about issues of women's rights and empowerment, and also about the deeply concerning issue of trafficking in persons. But we very much want to explore the positive possibilities for particularly the exchange of young people between the populations of Saudi Arabia and the United States.

We have a working group on consular affairs dealing with issues of great concern to our citizens, on economic affairs welcoming the work that has been done since the WTO discussions with Saudi Arabia. We talked about the changes that are taking place in terms of economic reform in Saudi Arabia and how to increase U.S. investment in Saudi Arabia and how to increase our economic relations and trade.

We have an energy working group which obviously everybody is very interested in these days, and I think it's a shared view that very high energy prices are not a good thing for the international economy and for growth and that the answer, however, is to try and provide a stable supply over time and we welcome the efforts that Saudi Arabia is making to increase its production in the medium term and to invest in its energy infrastructure, again, efforts that were first foreshadowed when Crown Prince Abdallah and President Bush met in Crawford.

And finally, we have a working group on our military-to-military relationship, our strategic relationship. It goes back a very long way.

I think you can see from the broad range of issues that we deal with that this is a relationship that is both deep and broad, a relationship that goes back decades and a relationship that is critically important not just to the peace and security of the region but to the peace and security of the world.

And so I welcome you very much, Foreign Minister, and look forward to your comments and then we'll take a few questions.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD: Thank you, Madame Secretary. First of all, my thanks to you and your colleagues for the welcome that we have had here. The discussions have been, as you have heard from the Secretary, have been wide-ranging. As a matter of fact, in the meeting we mentioned that maybe it's better to talk about things that we didn't talk about, that it would make a shorter list than the things that we talked about. It's a reflection of the maturity, I think, of the relations between the two countries that they can have an open dialogue with no restrictions, no holds barred, and each country is considerate of the other and sensitive to the issues that face the other. We work for peace. We do not work against or plan against anybody, and so the work that we do is to the benefit of the international community as well as to the benefit of the people of our two countries.

We talked on many issues, as the Secretary has told you, and pleasantly surprised. Though some of the subcommittees met only a very short time ago, already we have some concrete results that they have agreed to and that hopefully they will start working at implementing them in the future.

We talked about the development in Saudi Arabia, about the activities that the Kingdom is undertaking to establish its process of reform and we indicated these reforms are indigenous, they emerge from the dialogue that is happening between Saudis in Saudi Arabia, the measures that are undertaken are undertaken cumulatively and emerging from this dialogue to reflect the interests and the wishes of the Saudi people.

Aside from that, we talked about the Middle East, which carried a great deal of the conversation between us. And all in all, I think at least this side of the table was satisfied with the discussion that we have had. And one advantage that I learned from the press is the love of the Secretary about music, especially U2 and Brahms (Laughter.) So I was able to sneak one on her by bringing her two tapes of both. I thank you for being here.

SECRETARY RICE: And I look forward to listening to them. I can tell you that.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, on Iran, Henry Kissinger has become the latest in quite a long line of former officials and others to say that the United States should engage face-to-face or one-on-one with Iran. Is any of this changing your mind and what do you make of his particular suggestion that a multilateral dialogue with the United States, perhaps in company with Russia and China, might produce results that the current strategy of isolation has not? And for the Foreign Minister, what is your view of whether the United States should engage more directly be it one-on-one or in this sort of multilateral setting with Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let me just say a word about what we are doing and it's been a very intensive two or three weeks now concerning Iran's program. First of all, there is agreement that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, should not have a nuclear weapon, must not have a nuclear weapon and that the goal of the international

community must be to achieve an outcome to this problem by diplomatic means and we are committed to that diplomacy.

The United States has been committed to the negotiations that have been going on now for the better part of a year. We have been supporting those negotiations actively, so it is not as if we are not involved in the diplomacy that is going on here. There are many ways that we can communicate our concerns and we do so. Henry Kissinger, of course, is a terrific strategic thinker. I talk with him frequently and I really appreciate his advice. I think what we need to do is to have the three tracks on which we are proceeding: one, the UN Security Council track where we will have action in the Security Council; secondly, a track that allows us to support by as many means necessary as we possibly can the negotiations that the EU-3 has launched with Iran. And then third, we will pursue with like-minded states, if necessary, steps that we can take outside of the Security Council. But we are committed to making this diplomacy work and that's our overwhelming preoccupation these days. There will be some meetings next week and I just think we have to keep pressing ahead.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD: Well, I wouldn't presume to talk for either country in this case. The issue is already complicated (inaudible) another voice may complicate the issue further. It is up to both countries to decide what is in the best interest. What we do hope is what we have anxiety about is the stability and security of our region and definitely the spread of atomic weapons or the threat of the spread of atomic weapons in the region is a threat to the countries of the region. And therefore we hope that all the countries of the region would ascribe to the policy of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League of having a Middle East, including the Gulf, free of atomic weapons.

QUESTION: Yes. Prince Saud, I'm having a quote from you at the various (inaudible) of this dialogue. You said there is what I would call a misunderstanding about Saudi Arabia among the U.S. public and there is misunderstanding about the United States among the Saudi public and you both trying to influence this. How better you are today? And Secretary Rice, there is a quote from Prince -- for Prince Saud he said about Hamas that, shutting off aid to the Palestinian Government and isolation, its new Hamas leader will radicalize the population over there and set back the course of peace with Israel. You want to try to read your thought on this.

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, what we're going to do in terms of the perceptions and misperceptions of people in either countries, we really do believe that just for starters, increasing contact between our populations is very important. We especially want to accelerate and promote university exchanges and exchanges of students. I have really noticed that when I go to the kingdom, I very often meet people who have been students in the United States. I think that those people have understanding of and perceptions of the United States is different than people who have not been to the United States and so this is one way that we can increase understanding. And I would hope that more Americans would go to Saudi Arabia as well. So these are some of the things that we're talking about on that front.

As to the Middle East peace process, we are both committed to the roadmap and to a peaceful resolution, based on a two-state solution. That is the underpinning of the Arab initiative that Crown Prince Abdullah launched a few years ago. It is certainly the underpinning of President Bush's belief that a two-state solution is the only way that Israelis and Palestinians will be able to meet their aspirations. And we have a practical problem which is that out of an election that was clearly a legitimate election, one that we support, one of the parties now does not recognize the existence of one of Israel. The party also has not renounced violence. And so the goal has to be to get back on the roadmap and it's very difficult to do that, when one of the parties doesn't accept the existence of the other party. And so we will continue to press for that.

I just want to note that we have been very insistent that we do not want the Palestinian people to suffer without their essential needs met. We have, indeed, made major efforts to have humanitarian assistance get to the Palestinian people. We are working with our partners in the Quartet to have an international mechanism that would help to meet some of the essential needs of the Palestinian people. So I just wanted to be very clear that there are prohibitions that we will not cross in dealing with a terrorist group like Hamas. But the Palestinian people deserve our support. We also are partners with Abu Mazen who is the elected President of the Palestinian Authority and we're going to continue to pursue efforts at peace. We believe there is no other way that Israelis and Palestinians can meet their aspirations.

QUESTION: Mr. Minister, there's been criticism of your country for the way the textbooks are written and though the country has pledged to change the language in the textbooks, there are still charges that not enough changes have been made. Can you bring us up to date on that and tell us whether all language which is offensive to some religions other than Islam has been excised?

And Madame Secretary, can you talk back on the Palestinian issue? We now have a situation where there are two different security forces on the streets in the Gaza and the West Bank. Can you tell us what your view is of that and whether you've made any calls about that?

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD: The education reforms in Saudi Arabia go beyond textbook rewriting. And they go into teacher training, directions or the messages that are given to children in the formative years and this is done for our own security and our own education and standard the ability of our young people to compete in the marketplace with anybody else in productivity. They have to be educated in the proper system of education. And so the whole system of education is being transformed from top to bottom. Textbooks are only one of the steps that has been taken by Saudi Arabia.

QUESTION: And on the specific issue of the language (Inaudible)

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUDI: This is taken out.

SECRETARY RICE: As to the situation in the Palestinian territories, yes, it is a very tense situation and one that we hope will be resolved. We obviously believe that President Abbas who we believe has the confidence of the Palestinian people should be able to exercise his responsibilities as president of the country. And all Palestinian parties ought to respect the need of the Palestinian people to have a secure environment and not to have a situation in which there is violence in the streets. Now, this goes back a ways and the Palestinian President has talked about the need for there to be one authority and one gun. And I have to say that I can't think of any stable environment, especially any stable democratic environment, in which you have multiple militias and multiple security forces. That is the meaning of one authority and one gun. And by the way, that is also anticipated in the roadmap that there should be a Palestinian security force that is unified and that is committed to peace and stability.

So yes, it's a very dangerous situation and it's also the case that a lot of innocent Palestinians are being caught in the violence and criminality that continues to be a problem in the Palestinian territories. And the Palestinian leadership has every obligation to get control of it.

QUESTION: (*Via interpreter*) It is known that Saudi Arabia is the largest producer and exporter of oil in the world and the United States is the largest consumer and it is known that there is an energy crisis at this time. Do you have, your Royal Highness, any detailed plan for increasing the production and also to return the equilibrium and the balance to the markets? And also is there any plan for a visit of King Abdallah to the United States any time soon?

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD: (*Via interpreter*) As for your first question and the plans for increasing the production, Aramco, the oil company, has already published plans about creating balance between offer and supply. And this does not really affect the current situation because there is no shortage in the supplies. But on the contrary, there is a surplus and it is weird at this time there is a surplus, but at the same time we have this ongoing problem. I can tell you that there is a shortage with respect to refineries and the structure that has to do with the aspect of consumption.

Now, with respect to your question about the visit of King Abdallah to the United States, you know that there is a special and deep relationship between President Bush and the custodian of the Holy Mosque and each one of them, when they want to see each other they will determine the appointment and the visit will occur.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much.

FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD: Thank you.

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