



Remarks With Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Reykjavik, Iceland
May 30, 2008

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: Good morning. On behalf of the Government of Iceland, I'm very happy to welcome Secretary Rice to Hofdi House, this historical setting. And it's a special pleasure to be able to host a meeting exactly here. Secretary Rice's visit takes place at a significant time point in Icelandic history, since the U.S. forces left Iceland after 55 years uninterrupted presence here in Iceland. We have now ourselves become fully independently in charge of our defenses. And we do not – I'd say this for the foreign journalists here, we do not have a military or intend to have one, but we will aim to support peace and security by taking an active and responsible part in international cooperation.

Today, the Secretary and I, we were able to develop earlier discussion on several issues. Just to mention a few, it's empowerment of women, which is an issue of special interest, I think, to both of us. And particularly, we were discussing this in connection with Security Council Resolution 1325, which is, I think, a very important resolution from the Security Council.

Iceland will aim to commit resources to establishing a website as a vehicle of communication between members of the Women's Leaders Group which, actually, Secretary Rice founded several years ago. We exchanged views on the Middle East peace process and the greater Middle East. We discussed Afghanistan and cooperation on defense issues. I also communicated to Secretary Rice the resolution adopted unanimously by the Althingi yesterday on the detention camp in Guantanamo Bay, and then we exchanged some views on whaling.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, we did. (Laughter.)

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: Ms. Rice, Secretary Rice.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much and thank you very much for welcoming me here, and I'd like to also thank the Mayor for welcoming me here to Reykjavik. I know you were mayor at one point.

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: That's right.

SECRETARY RICE: And so it's, for me, particularly personally a great pleasure and honor to be in this house. Some of you may know that I was once a specialist on the Soviet Union. And of course, I firmly believe that what happened in this house, perhaps even in that room, really did lead to the end of the Cold War. In many ways, it was the beginning of the end of the Cold War. And I am really very gratified to stand here in such an historic place.

It's also great to be here to celebrate and to review the relationship with Iceland, a relationship that has been built on values, that has been built on an important defense relationship that was not just important for the protection of Iceland, but also for the entire alliance of NATO at the height of the Cold War. But I think it was only fitting that we modernized then that defense relationship with Iceland, as you've said, taking responsibility for its own defenses, but also with a very clear commitment from the United States to continue our defense cooperation, to be able to provide air policing for this area, and to keep an eye on developments in the High North as they come about so that we can make certain that our defense cooperation is meeting all of the challenges that we have.

We have had an opportunity to talk about Afghanistan and the very significant contribution of Iceland there. And I appreciate Iceland's willingness to continually review its contribution in Afghanistan. NATO, of course, has made Afghanistan one of the central pillars of its own policies going forward, and we recommitted at Bucharest to a long-term commitment to Afghanistan, to the people of Afghanistan, and to helping them to form a stable and decent democratic state that can no longer, and never again, be used as a base for terrorism.

And I want to thank you very much for the decision to establish the website for the Women's Leadership Network. We are doing a lot of good work and we will continue to do so. I suspect we'll meet again at the UNGA. I hope you will join me in that.

But the empowerment of women worldwide is something that we feel very deeply about. Obviously, no society can be really effective if 50 percent of its people are somehow disenfranchised, and in so much of the world that is, unfortunately, still the case. But it is also the case that it is not just that countries should not, on moral grounds, disenfranchise women. But when women are fully empowered, we know that those are societies that are more prosperous, that women because they are so engaged in the family that children do better, and that the societies as a whole are more decent and better citizens. And so I believe that women's empowerment is not only important from a standpoint of values, but also from a standpoint of prosperity and security. And so thank you for the contribution of the website and I look forward to working with you.

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Inaudible) first question.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, will you reverse the decision to withdraw Fulbright scholarships from the Palestinians in Gaza? And apart from that, what else can you do to reassure the Palestinians that you won't just side with Israel in whatever they do? I'd like to add – I'd also like to know more about the air policing thing you mentioned. (Inaudible) tell us about that.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we can talk about the – the Defense Cooperation Agreement envisions that once American forces had left that there would be air policing. In fact, NATO countries are taking this responsibility. I believe the French are currently –

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: They are here now.

SECRETARY RICE: -- deployed here. And the United States will deploy again in the fall. And so, we agreed today that one of the things that we will do is to several months out, as we've had more experience with this agreement, that we will look at how its terms are being met and what more needs to be done.

As to the story this morning that the Palestinian Fulbrighters in Gaza will not be able to take up their fellowships, I will tell you it was a surprise to me. And I am definitely going to look into it. I obviously have to look into the reasons. But we really have to be concerned about the future of Palestinians and the future of Palestine. And if you cannot engage young people and give them – give complete horizon to their expectations and to their dreams, then I don't know that there would be any future for

Palestine or, frankly, since I believe the two-state solution is so important to Israelis and Palestinians, to the people of that region who want to have decent lives. We will take a look. I will certainly – I've already begun to ask questions about why that's the case. But I'm a huge supporter of Fulbrights. I'm a big supporter of Fulbrights for people in places that have been isolated from the international community. And we'll see what we can do.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, as the Foreign Minister said last night, the Icelandic parliament approved this resolution condemning inhumane treatment of prisoners held at the U.S. detention camp in Guantanamo Bay and the parliament called for the camp to be closed. Did you and the Foreign Minister discuss this matter in any detail? And what is your response to the position of the Icelandic parliament?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we did have a discussion and the Foreign Minister passed along the resolution to me. I strongly object to the notion that there are human rights violations at Guantanamo, as is suggested in the resolution. Guantanamo is a place that the President himself has said that he would like to close. There is, of course, a problem with what you do with the dangerous people who are there. The United States has been trying to return people to their countries of origin. In many cases, we've been able to do that. In some circumstances, unfortunately, we have done that only to meet these people again on the battlefield, most recently in a case where a released Guantanamo detainee engaged in a bombing in Iraq that ended up killing innocent Iraqis. And so, we also have an obligation that the people who are in Guantanamo because they committed terrorist acts should not be released on unsuspecting populations.

Now, I would strongly recommend that before people make judgments about what is going on at Guantanamo that they perhaps avail themselves of the report that was done by the OSCE Parliamentary Committee. It was done, I believe, with a Belgian head. And it would be an interesting report for your parliament to read, and I will make it available.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary Rice, Iranian Foreign Minister has sent you a message through the press yesterday asking you to correct your policies in the region. What would you answer?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the Iranian Foreign Minister doesn't have to send messages to me through the press. He is receiving very soon a message from the six foreign ministers of the P-5+1 – that would be the United States, Russia, China, Germany, France and Great Britain – that Iran should, in accordance with the Security Council resolutions that have been passed, suspend its enrichment and reprocessing, come to the negotiating table, and that there is a very good package of incentives for Iran to do so.

So at some point, I hope we'll get an answer to that message.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, there is much talk about which (inaudible) in the Arctic sea.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes.

QUESTION: And Russia is flexing – flexing its muscles to get in the area. Can we expect a renewed – a renewed interest in Washington (inaudible) for this now?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you. I am concerned about – and the United States is concerned about the High North. I've had discussions and expect we will have further discussions when we see (inaudible) about security in the High North. It's a subject that I spent a good deal of time talking with the Norwegians about when I was recently in Oslo. And you may note that there's just recently been a meeting in the last couple of days in Greenland of the Arctic Council. Deputy Secretary John Negroponte represented the United States there.

So there is attention to this issue of the High North, of resources. The United States – we believe very strongly that international law needs to be respected here. This is certainly – it shouldn't be an issue of conflict, an area of conflict. It can be, actually, an area of cooperation in the High North and in the Arctic. And so it is something that we're paying attention to. I look forward to John Negroponte's report on how the meeting of the Arctic Council that the Danes hosted went. And again, as we talk to allies, I think we have to be concerned not just about the resources but about the resurgence of some activity that the Russians have been engaged in. We're quite aware of it and we speak to the Russians about the – not only the – that this is not necessary, it's not helpful.

MODERATOR: Thank you. I am told that the ladies have to leave and that –

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: Time is up.

MODERATOR: Yeah. But before that, the Icelandic Foreign Minister will wrap up very briefly in Icelandic.

FOREIGN MINISTER GISLADOTTIR: (In Icelandic.)

2008/T16-6

Released on May 30, 2008

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