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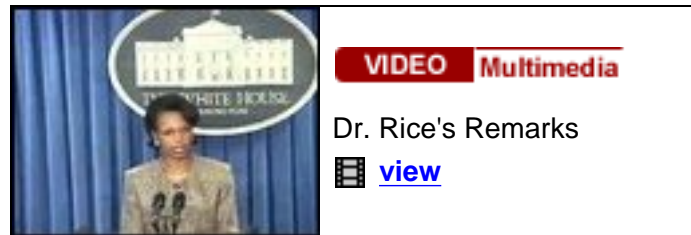
Dr. Rice Previews President's Trip to Asia and Australia

Press Briefing by National Security Advisor, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, on the President's Trip to Asia and Australia

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

3:26 P.M. EDT

DR. RICE: Good afternoon. This is your APEC pre-trip briefing. So I'll get started, and then I'll be happy to take questions. First let me give you a brief overview of the President's schedule for his trip to Asia and Australia.



The President will travel to Asia and Australia to stress the crucial importance of our longstanding alliances in the region, the herald the transitions to democracy that are enhancing our partnerships, to express his gratitude to these nations for their cooperation and support in the global war on terror, and to work to strengthen the region's commitment to free and fair trade that benefits all.

After a stop in California, the President and the First Lady will arrive in Tokyo on Friday afternoon. During this layover the President will meet and dine with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, before departing Saturday morning for the Philippines.

In Manila, the President will address a joint session of the Philippine Congress, the first American President to do so since Dwight David Eisenhower in 1960. The President will also call on President Arroyo, who will host a state dinner in his and the First Lady's honor Saturday evening.

Later that evening the President will depart the Philippines for a state visit to Thailand and attend there the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders Conference in Bangkok. At APEC the President will discuss our shared goals for free trade an open markets with APEC's leaders. He will also stress the need to put security at the heart of APEC's mission because prosperity and security are inseparable.

During his stay in Thailand the President will deliver remarks to the troops of the Royal Thai Army who have been integral contributors to Afghanistan and Iraq. The President will attend a state dinner hosted by the King and Queen. He will also hold bilateral meetings with President Roh of Korea, President Fox of Mexico, President Hu of China.

On Tuesday, October 21, the President will depart Thailand for Singapore. That evening he will meet with President Nathan and then meet and dine with Prime Minister Goh. The following morning, the

President will depart Singapore for Bali, Indonesia, where he will meet and have lunch with Indonesian President Megawati. The President will also meet with moderate Muslim leaders to pay tribute to the tradition of religious tolerance in the world's most populace Muslim nation. That afternoon, the President will depart Indonesia for Canberra, Australia.

On Thursday morning, the President will meet with Prime Minister Howard and address the Australian Parliament. The President will depart Australia for Hawaii that afternoon.

Now I'm happy to take your questions. Steve.

Q Are you hoping at the APEC summit to come up with a unified statement urging North Korea to comply with giving up the nuclear weapons program?

DR. RICE: Well, as you know, last year, Steve, we got in the APEC statement a statement urging a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. And given that all of the members of the six-party talks are in -- will be at APEC, we would expect that, in that context, something might be said. But I think that this is being spoken now so clearly from the six parties -- or from the five parties in the six-party talks, that how it appears in the APEC statement is perhaps less crucial. But, yes, we would expect that it would, at least, be acknowledged.

Q When he's in Bangkok, will he make any specific attempt to get money or troops from the APEC countries as a group rather than individually?

DR. RICE: The President will, obviously, talk about the importance of a stable and prosperous Iraq to all countries. But we've gotten really excellent cooperation from many of the countries there, particularly Singapore, Thailand -- Philippines is a very good warrior in the fight on terrorism. And as I've said, the Thais have actually been very instrumental in helping in Iraq and Afghanistan. So I'm sure he'll have those discussions.

But this isn't an effort for the President to go out and make on his own behalf specific requests for troops or for money. He will, undoubtedly, remind people that we have a donors conference coming up and that we would hope people would be generous.

Q What are you doing on the issue of currency manipulation by China and Japan?

DR. RICE: The President said earlier in an interview that we believe, of course, in market-setting exchange rates. We continue to have, for the United States, a strong dollar policy. And the President said that he will raise this issue with both President Hu and Prime Minister Koizumi.

Q Not to try to preclude what he's going to say in those meetings, but what kind of discussions could you have with them to convince them to stop what they've been doing?

DR. RICE: Well, John, John Snow was out talking to leaders about this, and believes that we're making some progress in convincing people -- or making an argument with people that this is an

important issue. But I don't think it's a good thing to go further than that; we'll let the President have those discussions.

Q Dr. Rice, two questions. You mentioned that last year in the APEC statement there was a reference for a nonnuclear -- hope for a nonnuclear Korean Peninsula. In your judgment, is the Korean Peninsula right now nonnuclear? And, if not, how many weapons do you believe the North has?

And, secondly, on the Philippines trip, why isn't the President staying overnight? Usually in state visits he does.

DR. RICE: The President is doing what he needs to do for his schedule and he's going to the Philippines, he'll have a state visit. It is a rather crammed schedule; we have a lot of bilaterals to get to in Thailand. And so this was the best way. As you might imagine, this is a complicated trip to arrange because of flying a very, very long way, having to go great distances, we wanted to make maximum use of time on the airplane overnight and so forth. So the President will have a very good visit in the Philippines and then go on to other important issues that he has.

On the North Korean issue, look, the North Koreans have been saying all kinds of things about what they may or may not be doing with their nuclear weapons programs. The United States has long suspected the North Koreans and accused the North Koreans of pursuing nuclear weapons. That was the reason that the agreed framework was signed in 1994; it was the reason that Jim Kelly confronted them about another path to a nuclear weapon last year.

And so whatever the state on the Korean Peninsula, it is not an acceptable state. And that has been said by all of the parties to the six-party talks -- or by five of the parties to the six-party talks.

Let me be very clear that the President is committed to this particular forum, the six-party talks, because he believes that this offers the best opportunity for an effective solution to getting a nonnuclear Korean Peninsula. Six months ago we had all kinds of people telling us that the best thing we could possibly do would be to sit down bilaterally with the North Koreans and make a deal with the North Koreans. The President, himself -- and it is the President who has really constructed the rationale for this policy -- the President, himself, said, bilateral talks with the North Koreans are going to get us nowhere. Because in 1994 there was a major bilateral agreement with the North Koreans and it was violated and we are, in a sense, back where we started. And so the President has been very firm in saying that bilateral talks would not work.

Now, very few people gave us a chance of engaging in this way -- China, South Korea, Japan and Russia, collectively -- to fight for or try to bring about a nonnuclear Korean Peninsula and, therefore, saying to the North Koreans in no uncertain terms that their nuclear ambitions and their nuclear programs are unacceptable. We're just simply in a much stronger position in the six-party format than we would have ever been in a bilateral format. And I would just note that the role of China here has been quite remarkable. People wonder at the fact that the Chinese are actually acting in this way. And one of the things that the President looks forward to doing is meeting with President Hu, thanking him for the role that China is playing, and talking about how we might move forward.

Q My question was what your assessment was of --

DR. RICE: David, whatever the state of the nuclear programs of the North Koreans, they are unacceptable.

Q Follow on Korea?

DR. RICE: Follow on Korea? Sure.

Q Do you have any word about South Korean troops perhaps going to Iraq? And are you concerned about the instability in the South Korean government now?

DR. RICE: South Korea is a vibrant democracy. And I -- President Roh, who was elected by the South Korean people, I think will find whatever means he needs to continue to make that democracy work. And so, this is an internal South Korean matter.

As to troops, the South Koreans, from time to time, have said that they might be interested in sending troops to Iraq. It's certainly something that we would be most interested in discussing with them.

Let me just say that we have no really stronger alliance than the alliance that we have with South Korea. We had the great pleasure of visiting there more than a year ago, and seeing the cooperation between the troops of the Republic of Korea and the troops of the United States serving together up at the DMZ. This is a very strong alliance, a very strong relationship, and I'm quite certain that based on that strong alliance and relationship, the South Koreans are going to continue what has been very good support for our policies in Iraq.

Q Dr. Rice, the President is leaving at a critical moment for the resolution before the U.N. This is the third resolution. Is there a sense that it's time for the Security Council members to show their cards now on this resolution? And second, with respect to sovereignty for Iraq, is it possible for U.S. forces to relinquish sovereignty with Saddam Hussein still at large?

DR. RICE: Well, the process for getting to a fully-elected government in Iraq has to be one I think that is related to the process that they need to go through. In other words, the writing of a constitution -- they're talking about a constitutional convention -- the writing of a constitution, elections, a sequence that will allow them to create institutions that can then structure and frame what is a society that really hasn't had a national conversation about its politics for more than 30 years. And I think that's what we have to stay focused on.

Whatever the case with Saddam Hussein and his dead-enders, they are going to be defeated. And as the Iraqi people begin to really engage their own political future, as they are really doing -- there is a lot of activity politically at local levels; there is a lot of activity with the ministries now held by Iraqis with the Governing Council -- as that continues, we all believe that the Iraqi people are going to be less and less tolerant of the dead-enders and the Baathists and Saddam loyalists who want to take them diving back into the dark days, when Saddam Hussein tortured and raped and murdered people and created

mass graves.

So there certainly can be a return to Iraqi sovereignty, to a fully-elected regime under any conditions. But I do believe that we're making a lot of progress with the Baathists and in rooting them out because the Iraqi people do not want to return to those days.

Q Can I follow on that, Condi? Could I follow on that?

DR. RICE: Sure, Jim.

Q On the U.N. resolution, the French, Germans and Russians have jointly introduced a number of amendments. What is the thinking now about whether or not those are acceptable?

DR. RICE: We are looking at what the Russians and others have proposed. We think that the resolution we put forward is a very good resolution, that it is, first and foremost, a good resolution for the Iraqi people in that it both paints a horizon for the return -- I shouldn't say the return. Under Saddam Hussein it's not as if the Iraqi people were really sovereign. So let me say for the establishment of a freely-elected and sovereign government in Iraq. It paints that horizon.

It begins to bring into the system the United Nations in a way that is appropriate for the United Nations at this stage, as opposed to when 1483 was passed, and encourages international organizations, particularly the international financial institutions to get involved. So we think it is a very good resolution. But, of course, we're happy to look at suggestions that others might have.

Q Dr. Rice, the President today said that the United States has a strong dollar policy. At the same time he criticized the Japanese and the Chinese to intervene to essentially prop up the dollar and affect their own strong dollar policy. Does the President think that the dollar is over-valued against those two currencies? Which way does he think it should be going?

DR. RICE: The President believes that the market ought to set these rates, and the President is adhering to a strong dollar policy which has been U.S. policy for a very long time.

Q Does the President have any plans or specific goals with regard to terrorism in this part of the world? And could you address the security concerns about this trip, heading to a dangerous area?

DR. RICE: Well, it's obviously a part of the world that has had a lot of security challenges. If you just think about the challenges the Philippines has faced, the challenges that Indonesia has faced. It obviously -- Southeast Asia is an area of great concern on the terrorism front. It is an area that has al Qaeda affiliates; it's an area that has extremist organizations. And part of what the President will want to do is to encourage those governments in Southeast Asia to remain, as they have been, to remain resolute in the fight on terrorism, to see what more we can do to assist. We're, of course, assisting in a major way in the Philippines where we've been helping in training the Philippine Army to deal with the Abu Sayyaf group and with other terrorist groups.

But we have really excellent relations with these governments. They face real challenges, and this is an opportunity for the President to talk about that, and to talk about practical ways that we might enhance cooperation. It's one reason that we believe APEC needs to discuss security issues, because while APEC is an economic forum, economics and security are inextricably linked. You only have to look at what happened in a place like Bali, when you had the terrorist attack there, you can see that the economy and terrorism are linked. So this is a place, this is a region with a lot of challenges, and it will be a major issue.

Q Some senior Pentagon officials are saying that your memo establishing the Iraq stabilization group as a low-level reorganization does not affect the Pentagon, does not affect Secretary Rumsfeld, that Secretary Rumsfeld is still in charge of the reconstruction of Iraq. But others inside the Beltway are saying it's a major reorganization, that it's a slap at Rumsfeld. Can you tell me very definitively who's in charge -- you, Rumsfeld, Powell, Alexander Haig? (Laughter.)

DR. RICE: Well, first and foremost, of course, this is the policy of the President of the United States and we all work for him. But as the Secretary said -- and we are in complete agreement about this, and if you actually read the story it makes very clear that the Defense Department and Secretary Rumsfeld remain the lead agency in the reconstruction of Iraq. They're on the ground. Jerry Bremer and the CPA report to the Pentagon, up through the Pentagon to the President. Nothing has changed in that; nothing was intended to change in that.

What this is, is an effort to provide here better support to the CPA in the field, to the Pentagon in their role, and to make certain that there is good interagency coordination and work so that this reconstruction can go forward. And since we're on, as Jerry Bremer said, an accelerated reconstruction calendar now, we have to make sure that there are not bottlenecks back here. We have to make sure that we're mobilizing the entire U.S. government. The Treasury Department has an important role to play. The State Department, obviously, has an important role to play. Justice has an important role to play. We're trying to mobilize the entire U.S. government to support this effort.

But I want to be very clear: I'm the National Security Advisor; what I do is coordinate policy. I don't operate, I don't implement, I coordinate policy. It is the Secretary of Defense who will continue to run the postwar reconstruction, as he has done and as he has done well.

Q On the bilateral with the President of Mexico, what are you going to expect from President Bush? Just another confirmation, of talking he's committed to the immigration reform? Have you got any proposal, real proposal to Congress? There are people who said the President is going to speak about, again, immigration, because he wants to get the bulk of the Latino community in this country -- because he's committed to a real reform of immigration.

DR. RICE: The President has been a longtime proponent of a humane and safe policy for issues of immigration -- obviously concerned that immigration be legal; recognizing that we have had circumstances under which we have to worry about that humane treatment of people who try and come illegally. The President, after all, was governor of Texas, and he was well-known for his views on this.

Now, as to what we might be able to do with Mexico, President Fox and President Bush have discussed this issue on a number of occasions. They discussed it when President Fox was here, and they came up with, I think, a formula that has served us quite well, which is that there are some principles that they both adhere to: humane treatment, willing workers and those willing to work -- a range of principles.

But the important thing, as they said, is to get it right, not necessarily to try and do it fast. Because there are a lot of sensitive issues involved and they're going to continue to work on the issues. Secretary Powell and General Ashcroft are co-chairs of a task force that works on these issues, works on the issues with their counterparts in Mexico. And we're going to continue to try to come to a policy that makes sense.

Q What do you expect from the meeting? Just the continuation of talking --

DR. RICE: I think they will continue to talk about it. And this is not a meeting in which -- these are all fairly short bilats; I would not expect major breakthroughs in any of these bilaterals. But is an issue that remains on the agenda of the President, remains on the agenda of President Fox, and one that they believe strongly ought to -- on which they ought to make progress.

President Fox does want to discuss, he's told the President, the kind of NAFTA next phase. And there is an initiative on trying to improve the reach of NAFTA so that you don't have a situation in which it's just the northern part of Mexico that is benefiting from NAFTA. This has been something that's very important to President Fox. They will discuss that. Because, ultimately, the ability to make Mexico's economy really work so that, as President Fox has said, the most ambitious people stay home is really the long-term goal here.

Q Dr. Rice, you and the President are calling for increased pressures on Castro and Cuba. How much pressure can you really impose? And don't you have to wait for Castro to die and then what guarantees do you have that the island we want to shake up is --

DR. RICE: Well, the President remains committed to a democratic Cuba and believes the Cuban people should not be forgotten in a hemisphere that is now overwhelmingly democratic. I mean, it's a reason that at the OAS the only empty seat is Cuba. And the President the other day announced some additional measures, including tightening up travel restrictions, which people have been using the ability to travel for, say, humanitarian purposes to travel for other reasons -- tourism. Those monies then go to Castro in hard dollars -- or in hard currency. He effectively takes the arbitrage and pays his workers in pesos. That's enriching this brutal and horrible regime.

Now, one reason that we believe we can bring more pressure on the regime is that Castro's true colors have always, I think, been understood by this administration, but their really getting exposed internationally. Last year, the President had what he called the new Cuba initiative. He said to Castro, we will improve our relations with Cuba if you'll just allow free elections and some basic freedoms for your people. And what did Castro do? He cracked down even harder on dissidents. That was his answer. As a result, he's getting condemnation across the world from places that never condemned him before for the kinds of activities he's engaging in.

We believe this is a time for maximum international pressure on Cuba. But the day will come when the Cuban people are free. And just like people all over the world, this is a universal appeal of freedom. And one of the ways the President wants to get ready for that day is that he's appointed a commission co-chaired by Secretaries Martinez and Powell which will help mobilize the U.S. government to be ready to support a free Cuba.

Q Do you have anything on the report that one of Osama bin Laden's eldest sons, Saad bin Laden, has emerged as a senior al Qaeda leader and is operating out of Iran?

DR. RICE: I don't have anything on that, Suzanne. I've read the reports, as well. You know that we have had concerns about al Qaeda in Iran, that we've raised those with the Iranians, and we continue to raise those with the Iranians.

Q Also on Iraq. In light of the bombing of the Turkish embassy and calls in the region for reconsideration of the Turkish deployment, are we reconsidering whether it's a wise thing --

DR. RICE: I'm sorry, I didn't quite hear. The Turkish deployment?

Q Yes. Deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq -- is there any reconsideration of whether that's a good idea or not.

DR. RICE: Clearly this is a sensitive issue, but we have welcomed what the Turks have done and we're in discussions with them. And we're in discussions with the Iraqis about how this might work. And so we will see where we end up, but we are discussions with all the parties.

Q The Taiwanese leader said, again, there's one country on each side of the Taiwan stream, referring to mainland China and Taiwan. Is the White House going to tolerate this, or are you going to do anything about it?

DR. RICE: The U.S. is very clear on our policies about Taiwan, one China policy. We are basing our policy on the three communiques. And we, of course, always remind people that we also have obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act to help China -- to help Taiwan defend itself. So those are the basic blocks of American policy. It is our very strong belief that nobody, nobody should try unilaterally to change the statue quo here, that this will come to a peaceful resolution. There must be a peaceful resolution of the cross-straits issue. And so the United States will continue to remind all parties that that is the position of the United States government and that it is a position to which we expect everyone to adhere.

Q Dr. Rice, is there any evidence that you've seen that suggests that in the whole of this region they're making any progress in terms of the war on terror on a couple of fronts -- both hardening infrastructure targets, and also preventing terror groups known, unfortunately, well outside that area from mobilizing, from meeting, from plotting the way that we know they have prior to September 11th?

DR. RICE: David, I'm sorry, I didn't quite understand --

Q Is there progress in this region that you can --

DR. RICE: Oh, in Southeast Asia?

Q Yes, that they're hardening the targets and they're preventing terrorists from operating out of that part of the world.

DR. RICE: I think you have very good cooperation in that part of the world. Just the Philippines and Hambali is an example. Remember that hardening, of course, is important, but what's really important is intelligence and law enforcement cooperation to run this down and to capture these people and to take the intelligence that you find from those people to follow other leads. And I think that's a quite robust cooperation with the entire region.

The Philippines and Indonesia clearly have the most serious issues and they have been very serious, so, yes, there is evidence. There have been important arrests and captures in Indonesia, as well. I think this is an area that's trying very hard to step up to the plate. It's complicated. These groups have been around for a long time. It's complicated territory, particularly when you talk about Indonesia, which is an archipelago, it's complicated territory. But I think the will is there and we're working very hard with them.

Q Can I just follow on one point, which is, if Iraq is, in the estimation of the administration, the central front on the war on terror, how does Southeast Asia or this area that we're going to compare?

DR. RICE: It's a very important front; there's no doubt about it. And there have been, from time to time, concerns that as al Qaeda and others were kind of eradicated eventually in the region more closely to the Middle East, that there might be even some attempt to migrate. It's -- with terrorism, if you clamp down one place, that it emerges someplace else. And there have been concerns of that kind about Southeast Asia, and that's why these cooperative efforts that we have with the Southeast Asians are so important. It's why it's important for APEC to take up the issue.

Q On Burma?

DR. RICE: Yes.

Q Does the President plan to have any discussions on how to promote democracy in Burma?

DR. RICE: Absolutely. And also, about the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi, because we have been in constant contact with the U.N. representative about this, and asking that she be visited and that we know her state. And you can believe the President will talk quite a lot about the need for freedom in Burma.

Q -- with the Thai government --

DR. RICE: He will also talk to the Thais about this, yes.

Q This is an economic summit, and I wondered if you had any specific proposals to open up the markets there, or advancing any new trade initiatives, in particular because there's been so much about the growing Chinese influence.

DR. RICE: Well, the President -- as you know, we have a free trade agreement with Singapore. We are in discussions about what might be possible with Thailand. We, of course, are in negotiations with Australia. There's a lot that's going on in this region. And this fits nicely into the President's multi-tiered approach on trade, which is first to try and make the global trade round, the WTO work. And I should just say that Cancun was a missed opportunity. And the President remains ready to begin those discussions again when people are ready to be serious about moving forward. And I think he will try and elicit support for that position when he's there.

Secondly, there are regional efforts. And for instance, last year the President talked about empowering ASEAN for opening up markets and for ways to enhance cooperation economically -- not a free trade area, but ways to enhance market access. And he had a long discussion with the ASEAN countries about those issues. And then, of course, the individual free trade agreements that we are negotiating. So the President will carry that message very much to APEC.

Q On the China side, is there any concern that the Chinese economic influence is eclipsing the American influence?

DR. RICE: Trade is open, and I think the President believes that if the playing field is level and if we are engaged in free and fair trade, Americans can compete anywhere. The President will urge the Chinese to adhere completely to their WTO obligations, and to be certain that as they begin to implement those, that they are really, practically following the letter and the spirit of what they've signed on to. And he will have that discussion, most certainly.

Q Dr. Rice, South Korean President Roh called for a referendum in December. What is the reaction for the United States involvement on that?

DR. RICE: On the referendum on -- this is a matter for the South Korean government. Because it's a vibrant democracy, I'm certain that South Korea can figure this one out.

Q Dr. Rice, while the President's in Bali, has there been any discussion of him laying a wreath at the memorial site of the Australian, Indonesian, and American victims there, or has it been ruled out because of security reasons?

DR. RICE: It is not on the schedule. The President will meet with President Megawati and he will meet with Muslim leaders.

Q Dr. Rice, does he expect any commitment from the Japanese troops or money during the stopover in Tokyo?

DR. RICE: Well, the Japanese are in the process of determining what they can do. And, as I said, the President is not going there to try to get actual troop or financial commitments. He's made the call, he's in discussions with people, people are coming up to the donor conference. And Japan has been such a supportive ally and such a good friend on Iraq that I'm certain that they will do what they can.

Q Dr. Rice, on North Korea, will the President be sharing ideas with the other members of the six-party talks on security assurances for North Korea?

DR. RICE: What the President will be doing is to reinforce with his counterparts his desire for successful six-party talks, because he's committed to this as the right forum. And I'm sure he will have discussions about the way forward.

Thank you, very much.

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