



Daily Press Briefing  
**Richard Boucher, Spokesman**  
 Washington, DC  
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**TRANSCRIPT:**

12:45 p.m. EST

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't have any statements or announcements right now, so I'd be glad to take your questions. I just want to note we're going to be putting out a statement later this afternoon on the three Americans still held by the FARC in Colombia, and more detail in the statement about them because tomorrow is the

anniversary of their capture.

George? Questions?

**QUESTION:** Could you give us something on the diplomatic contacts with the four partners in the six-party talks?

**MR. BOUCHER:** We have, I think, begun to have contacts through embassies and our ambassadors. As you know, in China, it's Chinese New Year, but I think we've spoken to the Chinese Embassy here and to some people out in Beijing. We are also in touch with the other members of the six-party group, the other five -- the other four besides us and not North Korea.

We -- the Secretary herself looks forward to upcoming meetings on Monday. She'll be meeting with the Foreign Minister of South Korea. Foreign Minister Ban is coming. They'll have a chance to talk then about North Korean issues. She -- I expect she'll call Foreign Minister Li of China in the coming days if they can make a connection. And then we have the Japanese Foreign and Defense Ministers coming on the 19th to continue our discussions with them in that two plus two setting that we do sometimes. And I'm sure they'll want to focus as well on North Korean issues at that moment. So it's an opportunity for her and Secretary Rumsfeld and their Japanese counterparts to talk about these issues together.

So what I think you can expect to see over the next, you know, week or ten days at least, is a fairly intense period of consultations with our friends and allies. We all wanted North Korea to come back to talks. We all still want North Korea to come back to talks. I have seen a variety of statements from other people, from China, from Japan, to Russia, South Korea and everybody is indicating that and I think that remains the position, as North Korea has a chance to have a more normal relationship with the world and they should come back to talks and deal seriously with the issues at that -- in that forum.

Joel.

**QUESTION:** Richard, with respect to North Korea, there's been a radio report that Libya's received enrich uranium very recently. And isn't part of the stipulation of diplomatic relations and warming of economic ties that, in effect, that they get out of this nuclear business?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Absolutely. North Korea's behavior, with regard to nuclear exports, has got to be of concern to all of us, and one of the issues that has to be on the table in terms of eliminating their nuclear weapons developments is eliminating any potential for them to export nuclear weapons-related materials.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** Richard, I have two issues, really, on the North Korean situation. This is no surprise to anybody. We've known for some time, or at least our intel has said, that North Korea has had one to five nuclear weapons.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, back in the early 90s, we reached the conclusion that they had sufficient material to make nuclear weapons. And so since then, our policy has really been premised on the idea that they probably did.

**QUESTION:** So why is everybody going to general quarters now? Suddenly the announcement's very obvious, they're trying to play a weak card here.

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's not a question for me. That's a question for your colleagues.

**QUESTION:** All right. Let me then ask the other question I had. Can you tell me specifically what is General Ward's mission? What is his chain of command? To whom does he answer here and/or at the Defense Department? And does he have the mandate? Is he empowered, if necessary, to use U.S. forces to keep down violence between Israel and the Palestinians?

**MR. BOUCHER:** A couple of things on General Ward. General Ward remains a military officer, and, of course, he has his chain of command, but in this -- terms of this job, he'll be, I think, working most directly with Dr. Rice, with Secretary Rice. He'll be coming in this afternoon to see her. She announced his appointment in -- I think it was a Tel Aviv press conference on Monday.

**QUESTION:** Sunday night?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yeah. And she's seeing him on the first day back. They'll talk about his mission. She expects that he'll go out probably between now and the London conference on Palestinian reform issues. He'll go out and, first of all, make contact, talk to the parties themselves. He'll talk to other regional players.

**QUESTION:** When is the London Conference?

**MR. BOUCHER:** March 1st.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Before the end of the month, he would go out there, establish contact with the players, not only the parties themselves, but also the regional players, start looking at how to build Palestinian security services that can handle the violence and other ways to ensure that current steps to try to end the violence are made more effective, and looking at how we and others can support that. So that's his call.

**QUESTION:** What about the use of U.S. troops possibly?

**MR. BOUCHER:** He's not going to have U.S. troops out there with them. So it's a moot point.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** About Assistant Secretary Burns' visit to Libya, he expressed to the Libyan Government growing concern over the case of Fathi El-Jahmy. Did the Libyan Government explain to them -- to him -- their position? And can we expect anything positive from expressing grave concerns to the Libyans? Did they promise anything?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I would leave it to the Libyans to describe what they may or may not do on this case, but it is a case that remains seriously -- of serious concern to us, and Ambassador Burns, when he was in Libya, raised the case of Mr. El-Jahmy. We have repeatedly raised those concerns very directly with the Libyan Government and we'll continue to seek resolution of the case. But as far as what the Libyan Government might do, I'd leave it to them to have to say.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up on that?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Okay, sure.

**QUESTION:** Do you --

**QUESTION:** Oh, sorry.

**QUESTION:** Did you have clarity on exactly what has happened to him? Because the human rights group reports that I have seen all say he was apparently taken back into custody in March, two weeks after he was released, but there doesn't seem to be clarity on whether he is, indeed, in Libyan custody.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, our information is that he was released in March of 2004. We welcomed that, and I think the President even welcomed that when it happened. We then saw his re-detention in April of 2004, and that, his continued detention over the last ten months, is what we're concerned about at this point. We're not aware of any charges having been placed against him either. So, again, our belief is that this re-arrest and detention for the last ten months is a matter that we should be concerned about. There are also reports that he's in poor health. And so we continue to press the Libyan Government to release him.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any detail on his ill health and what's the matter with him?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, I don't.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up, please?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, your colleague here wanted to follow up, too.

**QUESTION:** But on the same question.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Same question.

**QUESTION:** Did they at least promise to allow medical help to --

**MR. BOUCHER:** Again, you're asking me to speak on behalf of the Libyan Government about what their intentions are. I can't do that. We'll, obviously, be following very carefully what they say and what they do, but as far as explaining what they might do or might agree to, you'll have to ask them. Elise.

**QUESTION:** Can you talk about a lifting on the limitations of travel by Libyan officials in the country? Are they free to travel anywhere in the U.S. now?

**MR. BOUCHER:** We, I think, have put out a statement on Ambassador Burns' overall visit to Libya and the continuing process of engagement. Certainly, at this point, with the Libyans having effectively ended, eliminated, all their nuclear weapons programs, as well as their chemical/biological programs, converted, adapted and ended missile programs that might be over the MTCR limits, we're looking at other ways to move forward with Libya in some of these other areas: terrorism, human rights, these kinds of things that we're dealing with.

And we have consistently along the way taken steps to, for example, upgrade missions from -- to liaison offices and things like that to reciprocate, as the President promised we would, the changes that Libya was making. We have made changes from the U.S. side in terms of the economic dealings, exchanges, other things like that.

One of the things that we've done recently is we determined that there was no longer a need to restrict the movement of Libyan diplomats who are assigned to the liaison office in Washington or to the UN mission in New York. The decision, as I said, was made in terms -- in the context of our improved bilateral relationship, and, in fact, in terms of the growing cooperation we have with Libya on counterterrorism issues.

The recent improvements in our relations in this vein, including the decision to restrict the -- to rescind the restriction on the use of U.S. passport for travel to Libya, elimination of various Treasury sanctions and other things like that, Libya is similarly lifting its reciprocal restrictions on U.S. diplomats. These steps will ease our ability to conduct normal diplomatic functions in Libya and Libya's ability to do the same here.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Do the lifting of these restrictions mean that the U.S. is satisfied with the Libyans' explanation regarding the alleged plot to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, it doesn't really have anything to do with that.

**QUESTION:** Why not?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Just we -- our agencies sat down and looked at the restrictions on 25 miles and felt it was no longer necessary and could be lifted. This is not one of the terrorism sanctions. There are a different set of sanctions that are on Libya because of the terrorism issue, and as long as they remain on the list, we won't be able -- we would keep those in place.

**QUESTION:** But the statement yesterday didn't make explicit reference to the case of the alleged plot, although it did say that some terrorism, past terrorism issues, had been raised. Was that specific issue raised in Secretary Burns' meetings and did he get any satisfaction?

**MR. BOUCHER:** My understanding is that issue was raised, and, as you know, we've reinforced our concerns about the allegations in all the high-level meetings that we've had with the Libyans. We've been doing that since the beginning. We know that in December of 2003 the Government of Libya assured us that it does not support the use of violence to settle political differences between states, and we expect the Libyan Government to uphold that commitment.

**QUESTION:** Has the issue been laid to rest? Did you hear anything from the Libyans yesterday that will allow you to lay that issue to rest?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't have anything new that would allow me to characterize it that way at this point.

Okay, let's keep -- can we keep moving back? Sir.

**QUESTION:** Yes. Sorry, this may sound like a naïve question. Can you spell out why it's so bad to have bilateral discussions with North Korea? You're obviously

prepared to have these multiparty talks but not to discuss with North Korea directly.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Let me -- well, let me say a couple things about that. First is, let's remember the facts here. We do speak directly to the North Koreans, in the context of the six-party discussions. We have a New York channel that we use occasionally to communicate with the North Koreans. But the way to solve this issue is in the six-party talks. When the U.S. and North Korea had direct negotiations to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program, we got a deal and then North Korea started cheating on the deal very quickly, within a couple years.

The fact is, six-party talks have the people who need to be there, the people who are as concerned about a nuclear weapon on this peninsula as we are. It has the neighbors there, the people who need -- North Korea needs to deal with as well. But it also has the people who can help North Korea in terms of what North Korea wants from the world, in terms of assurances from all of the parties, in terms of the kind of economic support North Korea might need along the way, kind of energy support North Korea might need along the way.

So it's not only -- it's the appropriate place to deal with it, but the appropriate place where the concerns of everybody in the neighborhood get dealt with, but also the appropriate place for North Korea to draw some of the issues that it wants in terms of its relationship with the world. And so we want to deal with all of these shared concerns with the North Koreans, and six-party talks remains the best place and the most important place to deal with them.

**QUESTION:** Can I just follow up?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** I mean, the North Koreans are saying that they will come back to the multilateral process, but first they want to have these direct discussions. And it seems that all this --

**MR. BOUCHER:** First of all, we've seen all of these quotes and statements. Yesterday, they said they won't -- they were suspending indefinitely. Today, they said they will come back under certain conditions. You know, I don't want to try to parse the rhetoric too much.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But it does seem that, you know, the decision by the U.S. to pull out -- by the North Koreans, sorry, to pull out and all of this to and froing is about the North Koreans concerns about its relationship with the U.S. It doesn't seem to have a problem with the other parties. So if it's going to make the North Koreans more productive and more facilitating in the six-party process, then what is the problem with just talking to them first and allaying their concerns?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Again, I'll go back to what I said. First of all, I don't think the propositions that you're stating are necessarily true, that, you know, just talking to them would make everything fine. The fact is North Korea has to make some serious decisions. Libya made some serious decisions, and we've shown in the Libyan context that we can reciprocate those decisions and move towards a more normal relationship.

But North Korea has to make some serious decisions about denuclearization on the Peninsula. They say they remain committed to us. But the six-party talks are the place to work it out, and we're willing, in that context, we've had direct contact with the other parties, including the North Koreans. So there should be no obstacle to that.

I do want to remind you, we tabled a forward-leaning proposal at the third round of talks in June 2004, described an approach where we would participate in security assurances on a multilateral basis, we would participate in a study of North Korea's energy needs, start talking about the steps necessary to lift remaining economic sanctions on the North, as the North Koreans take steps to dismantle the nuclear programs in a verifiable and irreversible way.

That proposal has been made and remains on the table, and that is a path for North Korea to resolve these issues. So it's not like the U.S. has been somehow reticent to put forward a path for resolution. We have, indeed, done so, and we keep looking for the North Koreans to come back and discuss that path to resolve these issues.

Arshad.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up on that, please? You said -- you noted that you have had direct discussions with each of the other parties in the six-party talks, including North Korea, in the past within the context or under the framework -- under the aegis of the six-party talks, and therefore there should be no obstacle to that. Can you take it just a little further and say that you're -- are you -- you're quite open to talking to them directly under that -- in that --

**MR. BOUCHER:** In the six-party talks, we would expect to have direct contacts with the other delegations, including North Korea, at future rounds, as we have in the past.

**QUESTION:** Including direct bilateral, i.e., not with other people in the room.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Including direct contacts with all the other delegations, including the North Koreans.

**QUESTION:** But without -- you know, just the two of you, not other parties?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yeah. We've done that before. We'd do it again. Is that simple enough?

Okay, George.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. No, that's what I wanted and I finally got it.

**QUESTION:** When this process started a couple years ago, the North was thought to have one or two weapons and now you're hearing reports of higher numbers of nuclear weapons. Doesn't this suggest that time is on North Korea's side, the longer they can string this out, the more menacing they become?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No.

**QUESTION:** Why not?

**MR. BOUCHER:** The first is to remember that the U.S. and South Korean allies have a deterrent capability on the Peninsula. It can deal with whatever eventualities might occur. The second thing is to ask yourself, what does North Korea get by having nuclear weapons at all, much less having more of them? Does it feed their people? Does it develop their economy? Does it give them opportunities in the world?

What really happens over time is North Korea becomes more and more isolated, that the people, including most of their neighbors who want them to go back to talks, are increasingly offended as they don't. You see that in some of the statements coming out; that the opportunities that are lost by the North Koreans every day are really multiplying; and very sadly, that the North Korean people, who deserve some better economic life, some better opportunities, are not getting them because this Government has failed to establish the kind of relationship with its neighborhood that could allow it to deliver that. So that's what happens over time.

**QUESTION:** Well, I understand the EU and China and South Korea have economic -- growing economic ties with North Korea, and that --

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think if you look at the facts of the matter, you'll see all those things are actually held back by North Korea's behavior and particularly by taking stances such as this recent one.

Let's keep going, Sir.

**QUESTION:** Can we change the subject or are we still on Korea?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Please.

**QUESTION:** I just wondered if you had any response to the President of Kenya who announced that he's ordered an investigation into some security contracts that may, you know, some people feel were corrupt, and obviously the U.S. has decided to withdraw its money for anti-corruption efforts in the country. Do you feel that President Kibaki's actions are sufficient to restore funding for this -- these anti-corruption efforts?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Let me look at that and get back to you, have something for you later.

Yeah, sir.

**QUESTION:** Could we preview the Egyptian Foreign Minister's visit next week a little bit?

**MR. BOUCHER:** You can do that as much as you want. Egyptian Foreign Minister will be here next week. Secretary Rice will meet with him on Monday, pretty sure.

**MR. CASEY:** (Inaudible.) I think it's Tuesday. Next Tuesday.

**MR. BOUCHER:** We take out the piece of paper and -- expect Secretary Rice to meet with him on Tuesday. This is a great chance to meet with one of our partners in the Middle East peace process, to discuss with him the Sharm el-Sheikh summit that we're -- that Egypt hosted, which we think was quite a success, and we really appreciate Egypt's taking that initiative and taking that role, to talk to the Egyptian Foreign Minister about the way forward. She has stressed the importance of regional players, and I think especially the United States, Egypt, Jordan, for that matter, and perhaps others have a role that we can play together in helping the Palestinians build up their security services to control the violence, build up the institutions that are necessary to support a Palestinian state, and build up their economies so that Palestinians can have better lives.

**QUESTION:** Can you go a little bit more into when that might -- that process might begin to happen on the ground?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think it's already begun, in terms of planning, in terms of the money that's been offered. The United States will undertake as -- \$40 million of current funds that we've identified, that we can use for quick jobs programs, quick rebuilding programs, and we'll be moving -- you know, that's already moving, in terms of doing that, the Secretary announced that when she was in Ramallah last Monday. And so it's a process that's already underway and will continue.

Okay, we're going to stick to Egypt. Somebody wanted to stick to Egypt.

**QUESTION:** Do you expect to raise the case of the opposition politician, the Ghad party leader, Mr. Noor, who was, I think, being held in custody for 45 days on allegations of fraud?

**MR. BOUCHER:** We'll see where we are next Tuesday. We have raised Mr. Noor's situation directly with the Egyptian Government several times, including, for example, Assistant Secretary Burns during his travels out there. Our Embassy has followed up, so I wouldn't be surprised if the Secretary raised it. I'm sure she will talk about the need for reform and democratization throughout the Arab world, including in Egypt. The President stressed that in his State of the Union and it's a matter of our policy that we continue to pursue and will continue to pursue at all these kinds of opportunities.

**QUESTION:** And do you have any opinion on -- Egypt has apparently released the deputy head of that same party today, although he's apparently still under investigation. Is that a step in the right direction that one of Mr. Noor's colleagues has been let out of --

**MR. BOUCHER:** Don't know. I'll have to look at that and see.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** Off Egypt. I know the Department doesn't generally discuss individual cases, but right now I guess in Cuba there are two American residents who are being held after their fishing boat drifted near Villa Clara. Does the Department know anything about their situation, their whereabouts, their condition?

**MR. BOUCHER:** We do discuss particular cases if we have the ability to do so and we know something to talk about. At this point, all I can say is we've seen these reports that there are these two individuals being detained in Cuba. At this point, we're still looking into them and trying to ascertain the whereabouts of these individuals and see if there is anything we can do on their behalf.

**QUESTION:** Richard, one quick clarification. Will the Secretary and General Ward meet with us after their meeting this afternoon?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, that's not expected. It's an internal U.S. Government meeting. There's normally not any kind of press associated with it.

**QUESTION:** Can I just follow up on that? Are you expecting General Ward to go to the conference in London as well with the Secretary of State?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Don't know at this point. We'll see.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** My question is on the Congo. Any guidance on the sex (inaudible) scandal that's taking place down there and any pressure that the U.S. can bring to bear by toughening up --

**MR. BOUCHER:** In fact, the U.S. has been concerned about this situation in the Congo with UN forces and we have been, I think, pretty consistent in raising the level of concern and encouraging the United Nations to take forthright action, including many of the actions that the UN has already taken to get to the bottom of this and make sure that the rules are changed, punishments are made, and that the matter is thoroughly -- that this kind of behavior is thoroughly eliminated.

The sexual abuse of vulnerable persons is reprehensible and intolerable. It's a violation of UN Code of Conduct as well as humanitarian law, and those who have a responsibility to keep the peace are -- it's abhorrent to see those who are responsible for keeping the peace engaging in these kinds of human rights abuse.

We have strongly supported the United Nations zero tolerance policy on sexual abuse. It is critical that the offenders be held accountable. Department officials, including former Secretary Powell, have raised our concerns about these issues numerous times with the Secretary General and other senior UN officials. We supported UN Resolution 1565 in October of 2004 that asked the Secretary General to take appropriate action against perpetrators. Secretary Powell and Japanese Foreign Minister Machimura sent a joint message to Secretary General Annan expressing our concern.

So this has been a very consistent matter of concern, and, indeed, initiative by the United States to try to get the United Nations to take action on these.

And we've seen quite a bit of action from the UN. We expect all troop-contributing countries, member-states, to investigate all alleged misconduct and to take appropriate disciplinary action. We insist also that contributing countries investigate and prosecute allegations against their nationals. So we've had a pretty thorough and strong policy on this one.

**QUESTION:** A follow-up as well. (Inaudible) the tensions in Congo, particularly between Hutus and Tutsis, and UN officials on the ground seem to know who is directly responsible but they say that they're limited by the UN Security Council mandate. Is there anything that the U.S. can bring to bear that might increase the mandate so that they can go after these people?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Our view is that the parties really have to take these -- address these problems directly and that we need to do everything possible to have them do that. The UN -- the presence of UN forces is important and they've recently deployed new and significant forces to the conflict areas, and they are working hard to protect the civilian population. But we are consulting with the UN and other parties about how we can collectively support a more effective operation, so that subject is under discussions.

But I'd point out as well, the United States has hosted, I think, five rounds of Tripartite discussions, the Great Lakes talks that we've talked about between Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda. We've been trying hard to solve these problems in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Our Assistant Secretary has been in regular touch with the parties. Secretary Powell made some phone calls in the past, and we've sent out Deputy Assistant Secretary Don Yamamoto to the region several times to try to push them on cooperation and action by the parties to quell violence.

We are in close contact with European partners about the Eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo. Indeed, it was a fairly extensive part of the discussion between the Secretary of State and the Belgian Prime Minister two days ago, two nights ago, three nights ago, in Belgium. You can check the schedule for when we were in Belgium. I don't happen to recall exactly myself.

But the Secretary and the Belgian Prime Minister did discuss at some length their concerns about what was going on in this region and how we could work together in the UN and elsewhere to try to calm the violence, remove some of the forces that are causing, you know, where there are problems, and really get a solution between these countries, as well as internally in some of these countries that will lead to peace in that region.

Okay. Elise.

**QUESTION:** Different subject?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** This was when the Secretary was at the National Security Council, so I don't know if you'll have anything to say about the release of a memo from a former counterterrorism official, Richard "Dick" Clarke to Secretary Rice about the need for an urgent Administration -- high-level Administration meeting on al-Qaida that the Secretary testified about in the 9/11 committee that -- meeting. The letter has been posted on the National Security archives.

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's nice. Is there a question connected with it?

**QUESTION:** Well, I mean, it was in April 2001, I believe, calling for an urgent level meeting and that meeting didn't take place till -- that was in April but the meeting didn't take place till days before 9/11. And the Secretary was under a lot of scrutiny during the 9/11 Commission --

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think she really addressed all those matters pretty thoroughly. The fact that now the memo or letter has been released has -- just provides you more information, but I think she's really already discussed all these matters pretty thoroughly.

Yeah. Okay.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) to China. After Secretary's meeting with European leaders in Brussels, their analysis say Secretary has softened her tone on opposing to lift the arms embargo to China by the European countries. Do you have any updates? Is it fair to say now, U.S. is ready to accept the Europeans' position?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, it's not. Secretary Rice made very clear in her discussions that the United States doesn't think this is a good move for two reasons: one, the human rights signal it might send, since political prisoners from Tiananmen are still in jail; and second of all, the potential security problems that such sales of European technology might entail. It is a matter, though, that the European Union is addressing over coming months, and one that we both want to keep talking to each other about and we'll keep working on it together with them and see if we can't find some -- well, work this one out, let me just put it that way. But we have not changed our position. I don't think the Secretary changed her position during the course of the trip.

**QUESTION:** And if European countries are to draft regulations before they lift the embargo, will the U.S. participate or get involved?

**MR. BOUCHER:** That would be up to them, but I would just have to say -- I wouldn't speculate at this point. We'll just have to see.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher -- Greece -- Mr. Boucher, did Madame Secretary, Condoleezza Rice, discuss the Aegean issue with the Turkish Government during her recent trip in Ankara and to which extend, in your recollection?

**MR. BOUCHER:** That's the problem, see? I believe it came up in passing. They discussed more extensively Cyprus, and certainly our desire to see the Cyprus issue solved on the basis of the Annan plan. Aegean issues, I think, came up only in passing.

**QUESTION:** And do you know if Madame Secretary of State invited the Greek Foreign Minister, Petros Molyviatis, to visit Washington during her recent trip to Brussels since a question of mine to this that is pending on the yesterday's briefing.

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think we do have an answer with you, just to say there's nothing scheduled at this point. She obviously looks forward to seeing her Greek counterpart at various fora, but directly as well when they can.

**QUESTION:** And do you know when Madame Secretary Condoleezza Rice is going to visit Athens in the framework of NATO and EU, as she stated prior to her recent trip to Europe?

**MR. BOUCHER:** No, I don't. I don't have a schedule for visits to further NATO allies, but she has made clear her desire that either she or her Deputy, when he is confirmed by the Senate, visit all the NATO allies, all the alliance countries, at an early period, within the first few months.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Boucher, since you mentioned Cyprus, do you remember if you discussed the Annan plan, too, with the Turks?

**MR. BOUCHER:** As I said, she discussed our desire to see the Cyprus issue resolved on the basis of the Annan plan and that that remains our position when we talk about Cyprus.

**QUESTION:** According to CNN, your commercial officer in your Embassy in Ankara is going to visit the occupied territory of Cyprus by Turkish occupational forces, accompanied by big U.S. commercial companies representatives. Do you have anything on that?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Basically true, but flip it around. There's an American business delegation that's coming to the northern part of Cyprus from Turkey. It's a private delegation that's looking at potential business opportunities in the north. This delegation is consistent with our goal of easing the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots by expanding business contacts on and off the island. And the group will be accompanied by the U.S. Commercial Attaché from Embassy Ankara. He is going along to help facilitate their work. That's a standard practice worldwide with business delegations.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any idea when is going to happen this trip?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Hang on. Let me get that for you, if I can.

**QUESTION:** Okay, thank you.

**MR. BOUCHER:** Sir.

**QUESTION:** Richard, President Abbas is headed to Gaza City today to confront the militants, and also the Hezbollah has warned the Lebanese, "to bury a UN resolution," which calls for the disarming and the Syrian troop pullout from Lebanon. Since President Hosni Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan hosted that conference at Sharm el-Sheikh, would you like to see, or could you see, Egyptians, as well as Jordanians send their police into both Gaza and West Bank prior to the discussions in London on March 1st?

**MR. BOUCHER:** The answer to your specific question is the timing will have to be worked out by the parties. The second answer to your specific question is what we're really all talking about is helping the Palestinian security forces get organized, get equipped, get trained and get the command structure that allows them to take care of security problems. And so whatever -- I don't know if there will be trainers or other personnel that might go in to help them do that from Jordan, Egypt or other places. But that would be the goal of anybody who goes in is to help the Palestinians, who have a lot of security forces, who need to organize the command structure and the equipment and the training to make sure that they're capable of -- become capable of effectively doing the job.

We have seen quite a commitment from President Abbas to ending the violence and terror and we've seen him take a number of concrete steps, including in Gaza, firing top security commanders and trying to get a better, more committed leadership there. So we're going to support those steps. I'm sure the number of countries in the region -- Europeans as well as the United States -- are going to support those steps so the Palestinians can have the kind of effective security force that any state requires. Let's remember, that, too, is part of this sort of building up the institutions of a state, building up the institutions that can support the Palestinian state.

**QUESTION:** And to follow up on that, you've said no U.S. combat troops, I guess -- you didn't use the word "combat," but the implication was --

**MR. BOUCHER:** Well, I didn't use the word "combat" on purpose because there are not going to be troops --

**QUESTION:** But I'm saying, looking at what's going on training the Iraqi security forces, could there possibly be U.S. military trainers?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I don't know what kind of trainers might eventually go out there, so I can't predict yes or no. But I think there are a variety of ways to do this training and most of them, perhaps all of them, would not necessarily require U.S. trainers. Remember, we're talking about internal security, domestic police forces, rather than purely military.

Okay?

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR. BOUCHER:** All right. We've got one more in the back, one more in front.

**QUESTION:** On the Balkans. A question of mine is pending since yesterday's briefing regarding the case of George Anagnostopoulos, who is writing propaganda-type stories in the *Southeast European Times*, in the website controlled by the Department of Defense. According to DOD chief spokesman, Lawrence DiRita, as it was reported in *Washington Post*, February 5th, this project is done in close coordination with the Department of State. I'm wondering how do you respond to this?

**MR. BOUCHER:** I think we just did respond to it. There is a piece of paper up on the bulletin board. You can see.

Sir.

**QUESTION:** Real quickly. Do you know, and in fact, can you give us the date on which the travel restrictions were lifted on the Libyans -- on Libyan diplomats?

**MR. BOUCHER:** Let me see if I have it with me. I have to get it for you.

**QUESTION:** Okay, great. And then the other one, just quickly. The Commonwealth has said that it believes Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf should give up his dual role as president and chief of the armed forces by 2007. Do you endorse that?

**MR. BOUCHER:** We have seen their statement. I think -- excuse me -- gentlemen -- thank you.

I just want to repeat U.S. policy, that we have made very clear it's in Pakistan's interest to continue its transition towards a fully functioning and stable democracy. We expect to see continuing progress towards this goal, which is central to Pakistan's becoming a modern and moderate nation, as democracy involves more than elections and more than uniforms.

We would hope to see Pakistan strengthen its institution, particularly its judiciary and parliament. We intend to continue to support the electoral process, which is currently scheduled to culminate in national elections in 2007. We would like to see an election that meets international standards and includes the full participation of all political parties. As you know, this issue has come up before. We've said, yes, we think it would be a good step for him to do that, but there is a lot more to building a democracy and we want to see -- the chief concern is to see the national elections in 2007 come off as good elections and open elections.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:30 p.m.)  
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