



## Interview With James Rosen of Fox News

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Vilnius, Lithuania  
April 21, 2005

(7:40 a.m. Local)

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, thanks for your time today. Are you quite sick to death of me yet?

**SECRETARY RICE:** (Laughter) No, I would never be, but by the end of next week, I may be (laughter).

**QUESTION:** (Laughter) Right, if you could push a button and be rid of me, you'd be [tapping noise] (laughter).

**SECRETARY RICE:** Of course not.

**QUESTION:** Thank you for your time today.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** I'd like to begin by asking about the situation in Ecuador. How troubled are you by events there and how good are U.S. relations with the new President there?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we do have relations with the former Vice President, now President, and we are simply asking everyone to keep calm in the area. There should be no violence. There needs now to be a constitutional process to get to elections and that is what is in the future.

We've been watching the situation in Ecuador for some time. We've been in contact with all of the parties. Our people in Ecuador, our people in the Embassy in Quito, are just fine. But this is really a time for the entire region, in particular, and the international community to try to support a democratic process there, a constitutional process.

**QUESTION:** And in a sort of similar situation, how much trouble is Silvio Berlusconi in right now?

**SECRETARY RICE:** As I understand it, this is simply going on inside the political system of Italy. I'm sure they will resolve it, as Italy has many times in the past.

**QUESTION:** And you would like to see him stay where he is?

**SECRETARY RICE:** This is a matter for internal Italian politics. Obviously, Berlusconi has been a good friend; Italy is a good friend, but this is a matter of internal Italian politics.

**QUESTION:** You met yesterday with President Putin. Have your perceptions of him, what kind of man he is, what kind of leader he is, how committed to democracy he is, at all changed over time?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I believe that this is a strong leader for Russia. He is someone who cares deeply about his country. He's actually quite easy to talk to. He is willing to talk about difficult subjects and does it without being defensive. And he is someone who obviously wants his country to succeed. We haven't always agreed about the future course of Russia, but there is no doubt that this man is a patriot, he cares deeply about his people, deeply about his country, and I think is trying to do his best to take Russia into a better future.

**QUESTION:** What percentage of Russian nuclear materials does the United States consider to be securely under lock and key?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm not able to go into numbers here. Let's just say that we have worked hard since the collapse of the Soviet Union to secure as much Russian nuclear material as possible. We --

**QUESTION:** Is even 50 percent?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, James, I'm not going to go into numbers. I will say that we have been working as hard as possible and as quickly as possible and accelerated the timeline in the Energy Department programs to secure nuclear materials, not just in Russia but in general in the space that was created by the former Soviet Union. We have very active programs to do that. And we and the Russians have been working on this problem, but I don't want to go into specific numbers.

**QUESTION:** So you can't even assure me that even half of the nuclear arsenal of that country is under lock and key?

**SECRETARY RICE:** James, I'm not going to get into numbers. I don't think that people should believe that we have a huge problem with a lack of security of nuclear material. We do have concerns that in the post-Soviet period and up till now that are being met through the programs that we have for trying to secure those materials.

**QUESTION:** Let's switch gears a bit. Do you and President Bush still believe that the new Iraqi constitution will be submitted on time?

**SECRETARY RICE:** We certainly believe that it has to be submitted on time because the one thing that we've learned really about Iraq over the last couple of years of now working with the Iraqis is that everybody says that they won't make certain timetables and they do make those timetables. They do it in their own way. They obviously are engaged right now in a very intensive political process. But it's amazing the degree to which every deadline, every schedule, they've met all the way from the time of getting a Transitional Administrative Law written, to the transfer of sovereignty, to holding elections, which everyone said couldn't happen on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Well, they did have them on January 30<sup>th</sup>. And I'm quite confident that the Iraqis understand the importance of getting a constitution done.

**QUESTION:** There is, of course, a sovereign government in Iraq now so the United States is by no means calling the shots there with regard to the criminal justice

system. But if you could please tell me what your understanding is about the conditions under which Saddam Hussein is being held, his access to legal counsel and the timetable for whenever he is going to get a trial.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, he is being held, according to our information, humanely. He is being visited --

**QUESTION:** By whom?

**SECRETARY RICE:** He has been visited by the International Committee of the Red Cross. He is also able to have legal counsel, as anyone in that position would.

The Iraqis have not established a firm timetable, and I think everyone understands that this is a trial that needs to be done right, and we're trying to help them in terms of the preparation, not of the substance of the trial so much but in terms of getting ready to do a trial that can withstand international scrutiny. They have other international experts who are helping them on that. And I'm quite sure as soon as the trial is ready that they will put him on trial.

**QUESTION:** Is there any reason to doubt that he is mentally fit to stand trial?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I have no way to make that judgment, but I have also no information that he's not mentally fit to stand trial.

**QUESTION:** It's been almost 90 days since you announced General Ward's mission. What has he accomplished?

**SECRETARY RICE:** General Ward is currently in the region, in fact, along with Assistant Secretary David Welch and NSC Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams. And General Ward has been in discussions with the Israelis and with the Palestinians about how to make a more secure environment going forward. He has had extensive discussions with the Palestinians, including with those who are helping them, like the Egyptians and the Jordanians, about the concentration of the security services into a few reliable services, about unification of those services. They've had discussions about the need for retirements to take place when things are not working. They have had discussions about the future course of training and equip.

I think we will see that General Ward has put together a very good plan for this and we expect to review it early in May with the Quartet.

**QUESTION:** One last question on government and politics, and then we'll move to my off-the-charts questions, which I know you cherish (laughter).

It's been almost a year since the last round of six-party talks with North Korea. Every time you're asked about North Korea your answer basically involves exhorting the North Koreans to return to these talks. They haven't done so in almost a year. They were desultory when they were last held. There are a lot of people who, with all due respect, Madame Secretary, would simply say that this policy is not working, this approach is not satisfying American aims. Why should anyone take it seriously when you next tell us, "We urge the North Koreans to return to these talks"?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think people should look at what we've achieved by having the six-party framework. The North Koreans would like nothing better than to be one-on-one, so to speak, with the United States throughout this process, where they can negotiate and threaten and get the United States to respond and then go to others to get similar responses and to sort of divide and conquer in the international community. They aren't able to do that in a six-party framework. They have in a six-party framework to face five states that have told them that they have to get rid of their nuclear weapons if they want to have a better future. They're --

**QUESTION:** Well, what framework is there if they -- there haven't been those talks in a year.

**SECRETARY RICE:** But the framework is still there because --

**QUESTION:** What framework?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The framework is still there because the five countries of the six-party talks are saying very clearly to the North Koreans you cannot have international acceptability and your nuclear weapons programs, and it's costing them.

**QUESTION:** How?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, when the President of South Korea was recently in Germany he talked about the fact that there could never be full development of economic relations with the North while the North developed a nuclear weapons program.

**QUESTION:** But they're building weapons. They're building bombs. Our aims are not being met; don't you agree?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The North Koreans are saying all kinds of things. Our aim is, indeed, to get the North Koreans to abandon their nuclear weapons ambitions, but we're only going to do that in a context in which they face the entire international community, not just us. That context is now there.

Now, we reserve the right and the possibility of going to the Security Council should it be necessary, of putting other measures in place should it be necessary. I think the North Koreans are not confused about the fact that the United States maintains a significant deterrent against North Korean nuclear weapons if, indeed, they have gotten to that state. I think they are not confused about the fact that we have a very strong military alliance on the Korean Peninsula that is actively deterring North Korean aggression.

So we are in a process that has put the framework in place in which we can resolve this problem. But let no one be confused: The North Korean threats and their attempts to get attention for them also have to be understood in the context of a very strong deterrent on the Korean Peninsula.

**QUESTION:** And how long do you stay with this?

**SECRETARY RICE:** We'll see. I don't like trying to give timelines because you should always assess these situations. We are absolutely willing, when the time is right, when we believe that we've exhausted the possibilities of the framework that we're in, to go to the Security Council. But again --

**QUESTION:** How will you know when it's exhausted?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we will know when we've had the discussions with our allies and with our colleagues in the six-party talks when it's time to do that.

But I just want to reiterate to you: The North Koreans are not confused about the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. There is a strong deterrent on the Korean Peninsula. There is a strong effort to monitor North Korean activity. There is a Proliferation Security Initiative that has the potential to intercept suspicious cargo. It is not as if we are sitting idly by waiting for the North Koreans to come back to the six-party talks. That's the best course for what the North Koreans would like, which is acceptance into the international community and therefore the possibility to get economic assistance. But we have a strong deterrent. Our allies -- our alliances are strong in the region. Security is being maintained.

**QUESTION:** I am not confused about what happens when I disregard Emily Miller when she says that time is up, but I know that you're enjoying yourself so much right now that you're prepared to stay just a little while longer to answer some off-the-charts questions.

**SECRETARY RICE:** All right.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**SECRETARY RICE:** As long as they don't go on too long because we have to go.

**QUESTION:** What is the most influential book that you have ever read, excluding the Bible?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Excluding the Bible?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Probably the most influential book for me was a biography that -- several biographies that I've read of the Founding Fathers. I'm a big fan of biography and that's really what I read, and to me these biographies of the Founding Fathers show that though these were giants in terms of the development of institutions and foresightfulness really of what it would take to have a stable democracy for a long time, they were also imperfect people, and they were trying to find the best way forward at any given time. And I think that's a really good lesson for all of us.

**QUESTION:** No parallels drawn with the current day, of course?

**SECRETARY RICE:** No, of course not.

**QUESTION:** What album have you listened to more times than any other album?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I've probably listened to the Brahms's F Minor Piano Quintet more than anything else because it's something I've struggled to learn, and I tend to, when I'm learning a piece, to listen to other versions of it to get ideas. And it's probably my favorite piece in the world.

**QUESTION:** In your office I saw prominently displayed a copy of -- an aging paperback copy of *Malcolm X Speaks*.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Do you admire Malcolm X?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I think certainly he was a critically important historical figure. I don't admire some of the things that he stood for, but as an historical figure at that particular point in Black history, he was an important man.

**QUESTION:** How so?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, because there was, at the time, a struggle in the Black community to better understand what we were going through in the '60s, how to do it. Obviously, I, myself, believe that the decision not to use violence was the right decision. But there was a kind of need for pride in a Black community that had been systematically denied any sense of pride.

**QUESTION:** Wouldn't you look, maybe, to a different figure, like Mohammed Ali, for that?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I looked to Martin Luther King, of course, for that. I looked to people like Dr. Dorothy Height for that sense of pride. I looked to my own parents and my own grandparents, who maintained an extraordinary sense of pride. And they did it not rejecting America but really accepting the ground rules of what it meant and took to get ahead in the United States. And that's probably why, even though Malcolm X was a great historical figure, an important historical figure, he was not particularly a figure that I would have admired.

**QUESTION:** Final two questions. I have Woody Allen, by the way. That's what I have- (laughter) Mel Brooks - that's what I have.

**SECRETARY RICE:** I like Mel Brooks, too.

**QUESTION:** All right. Final two questions.

Secretary of Defense Robert MacNamara, during the Vietnam War resigned because he came to oppose the Vietnam War policy. Do you think that you would execute a policy with which you disagree or you would sooner resign?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I can't answer a question like that in the abstract. But obviously, I think if you are unwilling in good conscience -- and I do mean in good conscience - to carry out a policy, then you probably have no other choice.

**QUESTION:** Final question. And this is somewhat personal in nature. I know you don't like to talk about yourself.

**SECRETARY RICE:** No, I don't.

**QUESTION:** So that's why I'm doing it (laughter). But many people would look at you, either if they know you well or perhaps especially if they don't know you well, and they would say: "Here is a woman who has achieved extraordinary status and power. Here, too, is a woman who never married and who will remain childless." And they might be tempted to look at those two situations and draw a causal connection or at least say -- infer that that reflects your priorities, per se. Is that a fair inference to draw?

**SECRETARY RICE:** No, I've never understood this juxtaposition. My view is that you don't get married in the abstract, you actually would like to marry some one. And since that's never come along for me, it's not the rejection of marriage, I don't think that I've been too busy doing other things. I don't see these as choices somehow. I see them as the way life has unfolded.

And I do think that sometimes there's a misunderstanding that if you did not marry, that you somehow do not have a life. I've read that, you know, about myself from time to time: "Well, it must be all work." I have great friends and family and hobbies and avocations and many, many things that I love doing. I have a tremendously full life and I think that's true for a lot of people who chose-who did not marry.

**QUESTION:** So you think that had you chosen-or had not chosen- you think that had you been married and been raising kids, you still possibly could have achieved the-- the power and the status that you have?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I really don't know how you can make a post hoc determination of something like that. Life has unfolded the way the way life has unfolded. And probably because I'm also a deeply religious person, I believe it's unfolded as it should have. And I'm awfully glad that it's unfolded this particular way.

**QUESTION:** Unfortunately, it's brought you to this moment with me, but (laughter) thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Yes, there-- there are down sides, James (laughter).

**QUESTION:** Thank you for your time, Madam Secretary.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you, thank you.  
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