

THE AIPAC NATIONAL SUMMIT

A SPECIAL ADDRESS

**DR. CONDOLEEZZA RICE
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BERNICE MANOCHERIAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon.

The first time I had the pleasure and the opportunity to hear from our very special speaker was during a meeting of AIPAC's executive committee in Washington, D.C. more than four years ago. Dr. Rice was in Washington for a series of meetings, one of which was taking place at the hotel where AIPAC's executive committee meetings were also taking place. She dropped by to bring greetings from the Bush campaign. That afternoon she exhibited what would become her signature: a passion for and a mastery of the complex issues which face Israel and for shaping American policy in the Middle East. Four years later, just after I assumed the AIPAC presidency this spring, it was Dr. Rice who invited Howard and me to a private meeting at the White House to discuss the many challenges confronting the United States and Israel.

Dr. Rice, I want to thank you personally for the kindness that you have shown to me and for the steadfast friendship and support that you have demonstrated to our community over the years.

(Sustained applause.)

In both meetings and in the years in between I have been moved – greatly moved – by Dr. Rice's deep commitment to the welfare and strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship, and her laser-beam focus, her unfaltering devotion to the search for workable solution to age-old problems. She is the consummate insider, occupying one of the most powerful jobs in the world. As the chief advisor to the president of the United States on national security issues, Condoleezza Rice is a constant presence, a driving force in working to build and strengthen the U.S.-Israel alliance.

Just look at the series of major Israel-related policy decisions made by the Bush administration, and you will see the steady hand, the influence and the unflinching commitment of Dr. Rice. She was instrumental in working to ensure emergency loan guarantees and military aid for Israel when constant terrorism and an economy in crisis gripped the Jewish state. (Applause.)

She advised the president and helped to craft the now-famous June 24th speech, stating without equivocation that Yasser Arafat was no longer a partner for peace. (Cheers, applause.)

This April, Dr. Rice was the driving force when the president gave voice to his peace principles and exchanged detailed letters with Ariel Sharon, pledging the continued support of the United States in Israel's search for peace and for security. She continued to stand firm, ensuring that the United States vetoed the many one-sided resolutions

against Israel in the Security Council of the United Nations. She has been a key partner with Israel in trying to find ways to neutralize Iran and put a stop to the country's nuclear ambitions. More recently, Dr. Rice stands shoulder-to-shoulder with key Israeli advisors to find appropriate ways for the United States to help Israel ensure security during and after the conclusion of the disengagement from Gaza.

Dr. Rice continues to be one of the central architects of U.S. policy in the Middle East. From the war on terror to the promotion of democracy in the region, Dr. Rice has played a seminal role. She has stood by her strong conviction that terror is terror, whether it is attacking Americans in New York or Washington, or blowing up Israelis on the streets of Jerusalem. She has made it clear that when it comes to supporting terrorism and maintaining a friendship with the United States, countries cannot have it both ways. (Applause.) She very clearly stated you cannot help us with al Qaeda and hug Hezbollah and Hamas. (Applause.)

Just after returning from a trip to Israel in the year 2000, Dr. Rice said of the experience, "It was like coming home to a place I had never been." She has translated her passion and personal commitment into action. She has emerged as one of Israel's strongest supporters in the White House.

Dr. Rice, everyone here appreciates this critically important role you continue to play during these challenging days for our country as well as for Israel.

And in addition to all of these wonderful acts of friendship to our community, I have to add a personal reaction, a personal reason for my great admiration and affection for Dr. Rice. As a woman with three young granddaughters, I cannot imagine a better role model, someone who represents what is truly best about America. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to introduce the national security advisor of the United States, Dr. Condoleezza Rice. (Sustained applause.)

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: Thank you. Thank you. (Cheers, applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. (Sustained applause.) Thank you.

Well, thank you so much for that very warm welcome, and Bernice, thank you for that extraordinary introduction. I'll never forget it. Thank you.

To Amy Friedkin, thank you very much for the invitation to be here -- the AIPAC board of directors, Howard Kohr, executive director, and all of you who are here to support this organization. I appreciate very much the chance to spend a few minutes talking with you about some of the challenges that we face in the war on terror.

I want to start by relaying to you something that happened to me about a year after the September 11th attacks. I was in London at the American embassy, and embassy personnel had taken the front pages of major newspapers from September 12, 2001, and they had mounted them on the wall. And when I first saw those newspaper accounts, I

realized that I had actually never read a newspaper account of September 11th because, frankly, after the attack I was too busy to do so.

But as I stood there in the embassy, I couldn't take my eyes off the newspapers. The story they told was familiar: America attacked, thousands of Americans dead, our financial markets at a standstill. Central bankers standing by to intervene should markets collapse, American armed forces placed on high alert, Americans fear follow-on attacks. I remember thinking that the killers who perpetrated those attacks were not just trying to terrorize us; they were trying symbolically to bring us down. They chose the center of our economic might, they chose the headquarters of our military power and the seats of our democratic government. These were not criminal acts; these were acts of war designed to cripple us as a nation. We had been drawn into a global war against a determined enemy.

Now there are different views of what the global war on terror calls us to do. For some it is a limited engagement whose goal is to go after Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, assume a more defensive posture here at home, and one day be able to put it out of our minds. They see this as a narrow struggle against a narrow enemy.

But this is not the struggle that we face. What happened to us on that September day should have changed us all, and it most certainly should have changed the strategic direction of American foreign policy. The global war on terror calls us – as President Bush immediately understood – to marshal all elements of our national power to defeat terrorists and the ideology of hatred that sustains them and recruits others to their ranks.

Yes, we must capture or kill bin Laden, and as we meet today, American and Afghan and Pakistani forces are hunting him down. Moreover, more than three-quarters of al Qaeda's known leaders and associates have been detained or killed. We've frozen millions of dollars of their assets and we have ended their sanctuary in Afghanistan.

Three years ago, that nation was home to dozens of training camps that graduated thousands of trained killers over the course of the decade. Today the Taliban regime, which sheltered and supported al Qaeda has been overthrown and has been replaced with a free Afghan government that is helping American soldiers to hunt Taliban remnants and al Qaeda terrorists who still hide in caves. (Applause.)

Yes, we must defend the homeland and we must make it more secure. We have tightened security at our airports and seaports. We have developed a comprehensive plan for biodefense. We've broken down the bureaucratic walls and legal barriers that prevented the sharing of vital threat information between our domestic agencies and our foreign intelligence agencies, and we are reorganizing our government and reforming our intelligence agencies.

But the terrorists only have to be right once. We have to be right 100 percent of the time. That is an unfair fight on the defense. And so the president believes that this is a war that we must fight on the offense. (Applause.)

The fact is that unless we change the circumstances that produced this ideology of hatred and hopelessness so great that it causes people to fly pl

we seized a large shipment of centrifuge parts bound for Libya – just in time to help convince Colonel Qadhafi of the wisdom of his decision. (Applause.) Less than a year ago, a network headed by the Pakistani nuclear scientist, A.Q. Khan, was selling nuclear plans and equipment to countries like Libya and Iran and North Korea. Working closely with other governments, we painstakingly pieced together the nature of that network whose operatives spanned three continents. Today this dangerous source for deadly weapons is no longer in business. And it was the United States that blew the whistle on Iran and North Korea and their dangerous efforts to get nuclear weapons.

Now the world, through the International Atomic Energy Agency, is focused on Iran, and the five nations – China and Russia, South Korea, and Japan, and the United States – have delivered a clear message to Pyongyang: Your nuclear weapons program must be eliminated.

But ladies and gentlemen, these are all just battles in the global war on terror. To achieve permanent victory, we must do more. We must affirm the truth that we have learned the hard way time and again in our history. In World War I, in the lead to World War II we learned that tyranny must always be opposed. (Applause.)

We must affirm the truth that when freedom is on the march, America is more secure, and when freedom is in retreat, America is more vulnerable. That is why the president has broken with 60 years of excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East in the hope of purchasing stability at the price of liberty. (Applause.)

The stakes could not be higher. As long as the broader Middle East region remains a region of tyranny and despair and anger, it will produce men and movements that threaten the safety of America and our friends. Already our commitment to freedom is helping to spur a great debate throughout the broader Middle East. From Morocco to Jordan to Qatar, we are seeing elections and new protections for women, and the beginnings of political pluralism. Political, civil society and business leaders have issued stirring calls for political, economic and social change.

President Bush's forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East is now unfolding in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Earlier this month in Afghanistan the world witnessed the extraordinary testimony to the power of the vote.

A U.S. soldier in Afghanistan reported with awe what he saw as the Afghan people exercised their new-found right to choose their leaders. This soldier talked about Afghans that began lining up hours before the vote in the snowfall. He talked about lines of patient Afghans, some of them amputees, waiting to vote in lines that reached, in one case, two-and-a-half kilometers long. And he talked about former Taliban elements who came into one Afghan town to try to intimidate the local citizens and were literally run out of town.

To those that have seen only chaos, to those who have said that Afghanistan was a failure, to those who do not believe that freedom can change people's lives or that

America is somehow trying to impose freedom, the Afghan people have delivered a crushing rebuke. The Taliban could not stop the advance of freedom, votes have been cast, and the elections were a success. (Applause.)

Challenges lie ahead, but Afghanistan shows what is possible when democracy is an answer to terrorism and fear. When Iraqis go to the polls next year to elect a government and to try to put behind them their brutal history, democracy's power will be affirmed again. That opportunity exists today because America and a coalition of like-minded states acted to remove one of the most brutal and dangerous regimes in the Middle East, a regime that could no longer be tolerated in that vital region. (Applause.)

Now to be sure, the period since the liberation of Iraq has been difficult, but an interim Iraq government is now preparing for transitional elections next January. They will be the first free and fair nationwide elections in that country's history. Iraqi security forces will number 125,000 by the end of the year as Iraqis take more responsibility for their own security. The Iraqis are bravely and defiantly meeting the challenges that confront them, and it takes bravery in the face of what they see.

Next year, an elected transitional assembly will draft a new constitution with a bill of rights that provides the framework for a permanent government, and under that constitution, the people of Iraq will go to the polls again in December of 2005 to elect a permanent government. There will be 145,000 men in the security forces by February, and 200,000 at the time of their permanent election. And at that point, Iraq will have achieved for themselves what people all over the world have sought for centuries: a decent government that protects their rights and allows them to fulfill their aspirations in freedom and peace.

Through suicide bombings and beheadings and other horrific acts, terrorists and Saddamists are trying to ensure that the Iraqi people never achieve that goal. And there will be more violence in the coming weeks. These killers know that a free Iraq will be free of them and free of their cruelty and their ideology of murder. They know that the success of democracy in Iraq will be a mortal blow to their ambition to impose Taliban-like rule throughout the Middle East. Iraq is the central front in the war on terror, and there they must be defeated – and they will be defeated. (Applause.)

To be sure, their tactics grab headlines with their brutality and their daily toll in blood and treasure. But this strategy will not work. They seek to intimidate Iraqi leaders through assassination and other forms of violence, but those leaders refuse to be intimidated. They seek to demoralize Iraq's security forces and to discourage new recruits. No matter the atrocities, every day brave Iraqis come forward to volunteer to serve their country. They seek to sow sectarian violence, but Shi'a and Kurd and Sunni and others continue to build toward a unified Iraq. The future that the Iraqi people seek and that they deserve will be achieved.

This forward strategy of freedom is also at the heart of the president's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. President Bush is the first American president to support the

creation of a Palestinian state. As a committed friend of Israel, he views a peaceful and democratic Palestinian state as being in the best interest of both Palestinians and Israelis. But he is also the first American president to say clearly that the nature of any Palestinian state is as important as its borders. A Palestinian state must have a just and democratic government that serves the true interests of the Palestinian people and that is a true partner for Israel in peace.

Creating such a government is the right role. It's the only role to realizing the president's vision of two states; Israel and Palestine living side by side. A Palestinian state will never be achieved through terrorism. Israel will not permit it and the United States of America will not permit it. (Applause.)

The president's refusal to meet with Yasser Arafat reflects his absolute determination that people know clearly the American view: There is never an excuse for terrorism, and we will not legitimize those who employ it. (Applause.)

Our strategy is beginning to change the terms of debate in the Middle East. Palestinians are beginning to demand accountability and transparency from their government and to voice their frustration with years of corruption. The Palestinian people must replace the failed leadership of decades and build a practicing democracy based on tolerance and liberty. A Palestinian state will require a vibrant economy and it will find friends to help it build that.

Other states have responsibilities as well. Arab states committed to peace must end incitement to violence in their official media, cut off public and private funding for terrorism, and establish normal relations with Israel. (Applause.)

Israel, for its part, must take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable Palestinian state. As violence subsides, freedom of movement must be restored, permitting innocent Palestinians to resume work and normal life. And in accordance with the road map, settlement activity in the occupied territories needs to stop.

Prime Minister Sharon's plan for disengagement from the Gaza can significantly advance this vision of greater peace and security, and that is why the president has supported it. The plan stands to do more than just begin the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the dismantlement of Israeli settlements in the Gaza and in the four settlements in the West Bank. This disengagement plan could provide a new opportunity for reform of Palestinian institutions and the emergence of new leadership there.

I'm often told that relations between Israel and the United States have never been closer. This is due in large part to the fact that the president has spoken openly and candidly about the conditions that we must all fulfill so that Palestinians and Israelis can live in peace. It is also due to the fact that this president recognizes that no cause justifies terrorism and that terror – not an absence of will – remains the single largest impediment to peace in the Middle East. (Applause.)

I began today by saying that there are different views about what the global war on terror calls us to do. Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a limited engagement; this is the struggle of our time. As I stand here today, American men and women in uniform are in peril on the frontlines of freedom. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice and others have suffered wounds that will change their lives forever. Their sacrifice is honored and every death is mourned. But we know, too, that nothing of value is ever won without sacrifice. And we are not the first generation to face a defining struggle or to be called to defend freedom.

The last time I was in government – 1989 to 1991 – I was pretty lucky. I was the Soviet specialist in the White House at the end of the Cold War. (Applause.) I got a chance to participate in the liberation of Eastern Europe, I got a chance to participate in the unification of Germany and to see the beginnings of the breakup – the peaceful breakup of the Soviet Union. It was an incredible and heady time.

But you know, when you look back, you realize that we were just harvesting good decisions that had been taken in 1946, in 1947 and 1948, when Truman and Acheson and Kennon and others recognized that we were not in a limited engagement with communism; we were in the struggle of those times. And how difficult the world must have looked to them when in 1946 the communists in Italy and in France did exceptionally well in elections – above 40 percent in both countries. In 1946 Germans were still starving and people said that the reconstruction of Germany had failed. In 1947 there was civil strife and civil war in Turkey and in Greece. In 1948 Germany was permanently divided by the Berlin crisis and Czechoslovakia fell to a communist coup. And President Truman had to make the fateful decision to whether or not to recognize the struggling young Jewish state of Israel. In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear weapon five years ahead of schedule and the Chinese communists won the civil war.

Those weren't just tactical setbacks. The world must have seemed a place hostile to the forward march of freedom. And yet the people of the United States and their leadership understood that there was no reason for retreat, that instead we were called to dig deep within ourselves, to believe in the power of liberty and the power of freedom, and the power of democracy; to stand fast against the Soviet threat, to mobilize all elements of our national power, and to win the struggle of ideas. And because they did, 50 years later, when President Bush sits across the table from German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder or Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, he sits across from not just a friend and ally, but a democratic friend and ally. Europe and Asia are safer because they understood that our security and our values are linked.

The promotion of democracy and political reform, of economic growth and open societies, of educational opportunity and freedom of speech are not marginal to the war on terror; they are central. They provide the path to a future of progress and hope. As they have done for human beings across the globe, so too it shall be in the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MS. MANOCHERIAN: Dr. Rice – is this on? Can you hear me? Dr. Rice has consented to answer a few of our questions, for which we are very appreciative. The first one – why don't you get over there, and I'll stand to the side -- the first one is about Iran. We are grateful for President Bush and for your own efforts to deal with the threats posed by Iran. Despite these efforts, Iran is getting closer to acquiring nuclear weapons and the means with which to deliver them. What do you see as the next steps for the United States to take to deal with this problem, and what will we do if diplomacy appears to be failing?

DR. RICE: Well, it was really the president who put Iran on the international agenda. I can remember conversations three years ago, and nobody was particularly interested in the activities that the Iranians were engaged in, and we kept saying, no, no, you have to see what is really going on here. And in fact, I think we have gotten people's attention – even, for instance, the Russians who said that they will only finish the reactor if the spent fuel is returned to Russia. We have the IAEA involved.

I think that we can make the diplomacy work here because, if the world is willing to stand tough; if the world is willing to say to the Iranians, you cannot have it both ways, you cannot be integrated into the international community, you cannot trade with the world, you cannot be a member in good standing of the international community and have a nuclear weapons program; then I think you may see the kind of safeguards that we need to deal with the Iranian problem. It is very important, for instance, that the Iranians not be able to enrich uranium. It is very important that the Iranians not be able to reprocess. And if those can be cut off, it is not that it gives us 100 percent surety, but it certainly helps to improve the chances to deal with the proliferation threat.

I do believe that – we believe that the Iranians are going to have be referred to the Security Council because, when they continue to refuse to live up to their obligations, that is the course that is prescribed. That in turn could bring some obligations on the members of the Security Council to act against Iranian interests. So I believe we still have a number of steps ahead of us that should work to put pressure on Iran, which after all is not as isolated a regime as Iraq or as North Korea. We of course never – the president never takes any of his options off the table, but we believe that we have a chance here to work this out diplomatically. (Scattered applause.)

MS. MANOCHERIAN: Thank you. The next question is about Syria. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad two years ago promised Secretary Powell that he would move against Palestinian terrorist organizations operating out of Damascus. In the meantime, Syria has not only supported terrorism against Israel but has fostered terrorism against our own forces in Iraq. What further measures should we consider to pressure Syria into a more moderate posture?

DR. RICE: Well, thank you, and I know that some in this room worked very hard to get the Syrian Accountability Act, which the president signed and which is a tool for

us. We have further steps that we can take under the Syrian Accountability Act, and we will certainly look at doing that. We have had pretty intense conversations, discussions with the Syrians about their activities in Iraq and about sealing their border -- the Iraqis have had conversations with the Syrians about that, and we continue to press the Syrians on the matter of their support, particularly in Lebanon, for terrorist elements that are rejectionist against Israel.

The Syrians, I would say, don't seem yet to have gotten the message consistently, but I'm confident that if we stay on course and continue to pursue that message, they too will understand that there isn't another course for them. One of the things that we have to do is that it can't just be the United States that engages in this diplomacy. It is extremely important that the Europeans and others carry their weight in pressuring states like Syria, and we did have one rather remarkable success in that regard when we and the French actually cosponsored a resolution for the Syrians about noninterference in Lebanon and about getting their forces out of Lebanon. I actually think it shocked the Syrians for a moment that they were no longer feeling protected somehow, so we will try to do more of that.

But one of the things that we have done in Iraq by taking down Saddam Hussein's regime is that we have a chance here as this plays out, as Iraq evolves, to change the geostrategic balance in favor of those who want to fight the war on terror instead of those who want to be a part of it. And countries like Syria and countries like Iran that are watching the democratization first of Afghanistan and now of Iraq do realize that they have new neighbors, that the geostrategic circumstances around them are changing.

When people ask whether Iraq is a part of the war on terror -- well, of course. Not only did Saddam support terrorists, not only was he a weapons of mass destruction threat and all of those things, but he was a tremendous barrier to change in the Middle East. With that barrier gone, and when Iraq is more stable, I think you may start to see some pressure on these other regimes to moderate their behavior. (Applause.)

MS. MANOCHERIAN: This is the last question -- Dr. Rice has to leave -- it is about disengagement. Prime Minister Sharon is taking many courageous steps in pursuing disengagement from Gaza despite the lack of a Palestinian partner. Can we trust Egypt to assist in this process? What steps are we considering to help Israel deal with the security problems that they may face due to the lack of a Palestinian partner after it disengages from --

DR. RICE: Thank you. Well, it's a very good question. Obviously, we have been very supportive of the disengagement plan and hope that it can be carried through because it has the potential to make Israel safer and to give a spur to the peace efforts and the efforts of the Palestinians as they take responsibility for Gaza to be more responsible in their leadership. Now, the Egyptians, as I understand -- and I worked and talked with the Israelis a good deal about this -- there is some progress being made between the Egyptians and the Israelis on means to help secure the Gaza. That is very important, but there also has to be, finally, a conversation, a discussion, with Yasser Arafat by those

who still talk to him – we are not among those, but there are those who still talk to him – to say, all right, land is now being returned to the Palestinian people. You said that is what you wanted all these years. Now is the time to step aside, allow an empowered prime minister to take power, allow the cleaning up and the restructuring of the security forces under that prime minister so that Palestinians can also play a role in securing the Gaza. Right now the Palestinian security forces are not only corrupt and disorganized and unable to participate in security on behalf of Israel, they are having trouble participating in security on behalf of the Palestinian people.

This can't continue, and so we are talking to a number of our allies around the world to say that at the time when the disengagement is ready to begin, the time when Egyptians are playing their role – this is going to be the time that people are going to have to draw together and say to Yasser Arafat, all right, the game is up; you really do now have to do the things that the Palestinians agreed to do under the road map.

We will see. I think we are a long way from two years ago when the president first said that we would not deal with Arafat, that he was not a partner for peace. I think we have come a long way in most of the world now expressing considerable frustration with him as a block to peace. The next step is that they are going to have to act. (Applause.)

MR : Thank you, Dr. Rice for sharing your time and your thoughts with us today and for your constant involvement and dedication to hastening the day when Israel and our world will know security and peace. Thank you.

Next week, Jews around the world will remember the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the occasion of his yartzeit. So much has taken place in the span of less than one decade and yet, despite the great changes and devastating loss of life that Israelis have experienced during the second intifada, I believe the prime minister's words from his final speech on November 4th, 1995, still have resonance.

From the stage in November nine years ago at the close of one of Israel's largest peace rallies, the prime minister said -- speaking about the Palestinians -- "We will demand that they do their part for peace just as we will do our part for peace in order to solve the most complicated, prolonged and emotionally charged aspect of the Israeli-Arab conflict, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This is a course which is fraught with difficulties and pain, but for Israel there is no path that is without pain."

But friends, it is our role to ease that pain, to help give the country and its citizens the strength and support to continue in its fight to protect its citizens and to continue in its search for a lasting and secure peace. In that quest, may we continue to meet each other we face with courage, with perseverance and tenacity.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, May 22nd, 23rd and 24th, and to hearing about the many successes in your home

communities between now and then. Thank you all, and have a safe journey home.
(Applause.)

(END)