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Is A War With Iraq Inevitable?

WASHINGTON I by Bootie Cosgrove-Mather

(CBS) Chief Washington Correspondent BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on Face The Nation: Are we going to war? Our guest is the national security adviser,

Condoleezza Rice.

The United States will make the final push this week for international support for war. But what happens after that? Is war now inevitable? What will we do if the United Nations does not approve? Just a few of the questions for Condoleezza Rice. Tom Friedman, foreign affairs columnist for The New York Times, will join in the questioning and a roundtable after. Then I'll have a final word on the conscience of Saddam Hussein.

But first, National Security Adviser Rice on Face The Nation.

Announcer: Face The Nation, with CBS News' Chief Washington correspondent, Bob Schieffer.

And now, from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And with us now, the White House national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice. Joining the questioning this morning, Tom Friedman of The New York Times.

Dr. Rice, thank you for coming. The secretary of State is telling reporters this morning that he thinks that the United States may get nine, possibly 10 votes when the United States calls for a vote in the United Nations this week. That, of course, would be the number needed to authorize some sort of action. So the yes votes, I suppose, would be the United States, Britain, Spain. Can you tell me who the others are that you're counting on?

Dr. CONDOLEEZZA RICE, White House National Security Adviser: Well, we've not really done a serious vote count at this point. We -- we have some indications here and there. But what we're trying to do is to persuade people that it is really

time now for the Security Council to take on its responsibilities and defend Resolution 1441 which, after all, was a final opportunity for Saddam Hussein to -- to disarm. It was not a final opportunity for him to make a little bit of progress. It wasn't a final opportunity for him to have more inspectors. It was a final opportunity to disarm.

We think that anyone who voted for 1441 has to now admit that he did not file a declaration that was full and complete, that he has not cooperated, he's not given the documents that are needed. He has not allowed interviews except in buildings that can easily be monitored. And so that's what we're doing, and that's the nature of the conversations.

SCHIEFFER: Well, obviously, France was one of those who voted for 1441, and there's every indication that France intends to veto, to vote no.

Number one, do you have any indication that they're backing off a veto? And number two, if this passes -- even if this does pass with the majority needed, if -- if we know France is going to veto it, what -- what good would that resolution do?

RICE: Well, I can't speak for the French, and we'll see what the French do. I can say that I think the Security Council is facing an important test here. We need the Security Council to be strong. That's why the president went to the Security Council in September and Secretary Powell last month, and repeatedly we've gone to the Security Council. But the Security Council needs to act.

It's unfortunate that it couldn't act when the Kosovo crisis had reached really mammoth proportions with people being killed daily in -- in the Balkans. It was unfortunate that the Security Council couldn't act in Rwanda. There was a very poignant discussion yesterday by President Kagame of Rwanda, saying that sometimes the Security Council isn't right, that somebody should have acted, despite Security Council inaction, to save a million people in Rwanda. We have to get a Security Council that is capable of taking tough action, and that's the case that we're making to people this week. We will see what people do.

SCHIEFFER: Tom.

TOM FRIEDMAN, The New York Times: Dr. Rice, governments aside, and their positions -- and clearly, we can use all kinds of pressure and inducements to get certain governments on our side. If anyone took a global poll today or if anyone just looked at polls from across the globe, it's clear that public opinion isn't just slightly against this. It's -- it's overwhelmingly against this in the Middle East and Europe, in Asia. How did you lose a public relations war with Saddam Hussein?

RICE: Well, Saddam Hussein has been winning against the Security Council for 12 years. People have kind of gone to sleep about Saddam Hussein. Apparently there is the...

FRIEDMAN: Well, why?

RICE: Well, the -- because I think after 12 years of managing to manipulate the process, manipulate his neighbors, to do this all rather quietly and in secret and since 1998 he has had no inspectors, there has been a tendency to be lulled to sleep, which is why the president put it back on the agenda in September. And nobody suggests that this is an easy vote for anyone. No one wants to go to war, most especially this president. And sometimes public opinion -- it trails behind very difficult decisions.

Now not all public opinion is against this. Americans understand, perhaps because of what we went through on 9/11, the need to deal with tyrants early, rather than to wait until they've already hurt you. But Saddam Hussein is doing it again. And one reason that we think it is time to call a deadline and get this done is that he is trying to split the council. There are reports that he believes, at least, that all of this is support for him. I don't believe anyone who -- and most of the people who are protesting are supporting Saddam Hussein. I don't believe it for a minute. But because the council has not been speaking with one voice, he believes that he is off the hook again; that he is going to be able to delay.

You know, he gave an interview to an Egyptian newspaper a few months ago in which he said 'All that I have to do is buy some time and the British and the American coalition will come under such pressure from the international community that they won't be able to do anything.' He's counting on that.

This time he is wrong because the president of the United States, with a coalition of the willing, is determined that his game -- the games that he has been playing are over.

FRIEDMAN: Isn't there a natural one last compromise that's out there, and it is to say to the French -- and I was struck -- the French foreign minister said in his speech the other day 'We realize inspections can't go on forever.' So is there not a compromise that we sit down with the French and the Russians and basically say the following, 'Look, how many months of inspections do you want? One, two or three? Can we agree on a list, a very specific list of what kind of compliance you expect? And at the end of that, if he doesn't meet that compliance, you agree to use of force?' Isn't there a natural compromise out there?

RICE: Unfortunately, Tom, we've been down this road all through the '90s.

FRIEDMAN: But have you tried that compromise now?

RICE: I've -- we think that the time is now because -- I can assure you, if we start talking about more months, it's going to be 'Well, maybe he's making a little bit more progress,' because he's a master at playing this game. He'll destroy a few more missiles here or there, he'll give up a document here or there, maybe he'll allow an interview here or there.

But 1441 was not structured in that way. When people voted for 1441, they voted for one final opportunity for Saddam -- Saddam Hussein, to show that he'd made a strategic decision to disarm. He could do that tomorrow. He has not done it. He doesn't intend to do it.

And what he intends to do is to keep stringing this down the road.

I would remind everyone that Resolution 1284, which created UNMOVIC, and which now everybody says was the resolution that we should be living under, the French and other -- they abstained from that resolution. In 1999, the Clinton administration was trying desperately to hold sanctions together because people were talking about starting to release sanctions. Today Saddam Hussein is out saying, 'Well, I'll cooperate but you have to agree to lift sanctions.' The fact is, he has played this game before.

It's time to stop this game.

SCHIEFFER: Dr. Rice, let -- let me ask you -- I want to ask you two questions, and these are very simple questions that people ask me. Does the government know more about the threat that Saddam Hussein poses than it's telling us?

RICE: The president and Secretary Powell have told the American people and the world why we think this threat is so grave. This is some -- a man who has a history of attacking his neighbors, of cavorting with terrorists, of using weapons of mass destruction on his own people.

SCHIEFFER: I -- I understand that, but is there something back there that has not been told that makes you all the more convinced that this has to be dealt with?

RICE: I think there's quite enough on the record that shows that this man is a threat. And you have to make I -- you...

FRIEDMAN: Why aren't people convinced, then?

RICE: ...well, because the president of the United States is -- constitutionally given a judge -- has to make a judgment here. And he has the lonely responsibility of deciding that if he has to -- to use American military forces, that it is in a cause worth pursuing. And what he is saying to the American people is, 'I will not stand by while these dark clouds gather. I will not stand by until the moment when Saddam Hussein is good at delivering biological weapons, by unmanned aerial vehicles. I will not stand by to the moment when he uses chemicals again or blackmails us or attacks someone and says, "Now I dare you to stop me from my Middle Eastern ambitions."'

SCHIEFFER: I agree with you with everything you say. I agree that what we know about this man poses a grave threat, but is there -- to go back to my

original question, is there something beyond those clouds that you describe that has not been revealed?

RICE: We have not made every piece of information available for -- for lots of reasons, having to do with source protection. But the -- the story is out there. I do not want anyone to think that the president is somehow holding back pieces of the story that are key to understanding this threat.

SCHIEFFER: You -- you're not saying this morning, 'There's -- you've just got to trust us on this one. If you knew what we knew -- you're...

RICE: No, I think that...

SCHIEFFER: ...saying you...

RICE: No.

SCHIEFFER: OK.

RICE: The -- the president has -- we've made the case, but the president is doing what leaders have to do. When leaders don't take on tyranny soon enough, it only grows and it gets worse. When leaders don't take on tyranny soon enough, you have 9/11 but perhaps the next time with biological weapons. And that's what the president is saying.

SCHIEFFER: Let -- let me ask you -- OK. Let me ask you one more...

RICE: He's not withholding somehow information from the American people.

SCHIEFFER: ...question. What is the link? What is the strongest link between Saddam Hussein and the events of 9/11?

RICE: The strongest link of -- of Saddam Hussein to al Qaeda -- we've never said that he somehow masterminded 9/11 or was even involved in 9/11. But the strongest -- although there are a lot of tantalizing meetings that -- with people who were involved in 9/11. But the strongest links to al Qaeda are really two.

First of all, a poisons master named Al Zakawi who has his own network in Baghdad -- or in -- in Iraq, not in the north of Iraq where Saddam Hussein is arguably not in control but in central Iraq, a man that they have known is there because we told him that he was there, a man who is spreading poisons throughout Europe.

And secondly, a very strong link to training al Qaeda in chemical and biological weapons techniques. We know from a detainee that -- the head of training for al Qaeda, that they sought help in developing chemical and biological weapons because they weren't doing very well on their own. They sought it in Iraq. They received the help.

Now the al Qaeda is an organization that's quite disbursed and -- and quite widespread in its effects, but it clearly has had links to the Iraqis, not to mention Iraqi links to all kinds of other terrorists. And what we do not want is the day when Saddam Hussein decides that he's had enough of dealing with sanctions, enough of dealing with, quote, unquote, "containment," enough of dealing with America, and it's time to end it on his terms, by transferring one of these weapons, just a little vial of something, to a terrorist for blackmail or for worse.

SCHIEFFER: Tom.

FRIEDMAN: Dr. Rice, if we do take on this military mission, we will own Iraq. We break it, we own it. We'll own a country of 23 million people, the size of California, more like Yugoslavia than any country in the Arab world.

How long is it going to take to stabilize that place? How -- how much money?

And how frightened are you? Surely, somebody must be waking up in the middle of the night saying, "My God, you know, we're going to own the Arab Yugoslavia."

RICE: Well, the Iraqi people will own the country again. Right now they don't own it. It is owned by a brutal dictator who represses them and who threatens his neighbors. The Iraqi people will again own their own country and own their own future and that's something...

FRIEDMAN: Dr. Rice, the last time they owned it, it was a bloodbath...

RICE: ...something to build from.

FRIEDMAN: ...be -- between '58 and '68.

RICE: Well, it's been a long time since they owned it.

FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

RICE: And things have changed in the world and in the world environment. Nobody says, Tom, that this would be easy to build an Iraq or to, in coordination with the Iraqi people, build an Iraq that's prosperous and -- and has -- on the way to a democratic future. Everyone understands that, but the cost of inaction is extremely high, because you have a cancer in the Middle East in this Iraqi regime that is doing all kinds of things, has already attacked its neighbors, wants to dominate the regions and wants to do it with weapons of mass destruction.

Now we are prepared to stay, as the president has said, as long as we're needed and not a moment longer.

We hope early on to have Iraqis taking more and more control of their own future. There are Iraqis outside the country in the diaspora. There are Iraqis inside the country who can and will emerge to -- to be able to do this.

If you look at the one place that Iraqis actually have had some control in the Kurdish areas, they've actually done rather well in feeding their people. The malnutrition in Iraq is in the part run by Saddam Hussein, not in the Kurdish areas. Yes, there are a lot of different ethnic groups. There are Turkmen and -- and Syrians -- and the Syrians and Sunni and Shiite, but -- and, of course, Kurds, but we believe that proper institutional structures can get people to the place that they can live in harmony.

It is a country that is blessed with great resource wealth, and when that resource wealth is turned to the good purposes of the Iraqi people rather than to a dictator, Iraq is going to have resources beyond most states on the globe.

This is not Afghanistan in that sense.

FRIEDMAN: Well -- but to take this on alone -- you know, I've traveled with Secretary of State Baker 10 years ago in advance of the first Gulf War -- seven trips around the world as I recall that we took. If I were to total up the number of days senior Bush officials have spent in the Middle East, the place we're about to invade in the last year, I don't think I'd need more than one hand. Maybe I'd need two. And as far as Europe, the same thing. Where -- where have you guys been diplomatically?

RICE: Well, the president has traveled. Secretary Powell travels. You know, we also have traveled to other parts of the world.

FRIEDMAN: I -- I don't think they'd need much more than one hand, though.

RICE: But -- but -- but, Tom, it is not as if Secretary Powell and others have spent insufficient time with their colleagues. Whether they are here or we are there...

FRIEDMAN: What about the people?

RICE: ...and -- and we won't be alone. We won't be alone.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this, Dr. Rice. This week, it was revealed that documents that this administration has been referring to, to show that Iraq was shopping for enriched uranium in Africa, it has now been revealed that those documents were false, or at least that's the report. Were they false and do we know who did this?

RICE: Well, that's an assessment -- but let me very -- be very clear.

We have never rested our case on nuclear weapons programs in Iraq on this issue about some uranium from Niger. I think

Secretary Powell...

SCHIEFFER: But we were citing those documents.

RICE: No. I think you'll find that this has been not cited as a core to our case. What we've said is that we believe the weakness in Saddam Hussein's program is the absence of fissile material, and we do not know whether he has acquired fissile material. This was a particular report that had to be investigated and run down, but we've always said that his strength is that he has the infrastructure in place, he has a procurement network that is out buying pieces of a nuclear infrastructure.

SCHIEFFER: Do we know who did this?

RICE: He has the scientists in place, but what we don't think he has or know whether he has is the fissile material.

SCHIEFFER: Do we know who forged the documents?

RICE: I am not certain about the character of these documents. We've heard that some in the IAEA say that they're forged documents, but I don't think we know very much about what -- on what they base that.

But I want to be very clear. We've always said that we do not know whether he's acquired fissile material, and that every lead that he might have needs to be run down. It has not been central or even really important to our arguments about nuclear weapons program.

SCHIEFFER: One final question and I'd ask for a short answer. If Saddam Hussein does not disarm, does that mean there will be military action?

RICE: If he does not disarm, we're going to have to disarm him, and when we disarm him, we're going to have to change that regime, because nobody can trust that someone who has acted as he has, even in the face of tremendous military buildup, still making demands today on the United Nations, is ever going to be anything but a security risk for the region.

SCHIEFFER: Thank you very much, Dr. Condoleezza Rice. Thank you.

RICE: Thank you very much.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be back in just a moment.

(COMMERCIAL)

SCHIEFFER: So we're back again with Tom Friedman to talk a little bit about this. Tom, let's say that you were still a working reporter, not a columnist, and you had to go back to The New York Times this afternoon and write the story of what Condoleezza Rice said today. What would you make the lead?

FRIEDMAN: Fasten your seat belts, put your seat backs and tray tables into a fixed upright position, because the chances we're going to war, Bob, very soon are extremely high.

Basically what Dr. Rice told us are two things. One is this is all the information you're going to get, folks. You've got to make this judgment about war on whether you believe Saddam Hussein is a threat right now. We have no secret nukes, secret 9/11 connection, you know, back in the closet that we're going to unveil later, number one.

And what she also told us is that there isn't going to be a last, last, last 11th hour attempt to reach a compromise with our allies by basically saying to the French, 'Look, you guys have said inspections can't go on forever. All right. We'll give you one, two, three months if you'll agree with us on specific criteria that Saddam Hussein would have to meet for full disarmament, and that if he doesn't meet it, then it would be UN approved use of force against him.'

We're not going to go for that sort of last-minute compromise. Therefore, there's going to be a vote this week, Tuesday or Wednesday, she seemed to indicate, and whether we get a majority or not, it seems that this president is dedicated to going to war.

What that means, Bob, basically, I think, for the American people is you're going to have to decide which mess do you want? Do you want the mess of walking away from this operation now with the view that Saddam wins and that we kind of leave our allies in the region naked to him, because we just decided the whole thing was a bridge too far, or do you want a war that's going to be a total Hail Mary pass in terms of what the implications could be globally, vis-a-vis the United States, and that will leave us -- because we break Iraq, it will leave us owning Iraq alone, and therefore, with the full responsibility for rebuilding it basically alone?

SCHIEFFER: I think there is virtually no chance now that there will not be some kind of military action, because when the president, in his State of the Union message, said, 'If Saddam Hussein does not disarm, we will disarm him,' he left himself virtually no wiggle room from that point, because once that statement was made, it seems to me, that the United States, frankly -- talk about picking your messes -- cannot back away without leaving the impression that Saddam Hussein has won, has stared us down.

And it seems to me that would probably be the most dangerous and -- and destabilizing situation of all.

So I would agree with you on that point. I think the chances are now 99 percent that we are going to have some kind of military action.

It seems to me that what Dr. Rice was saying this morning, when she was talking about taking this vote, even knowing in advance that the French are going to veto it, the United States wants to show it has as much support as it can possibly muster, and in a sense, I suppose, isolate the French by letting them veto. Secretary Powell was telling people this morning, 'We'll get these votes and then we'll see who wants to veto it.' I think they want -- as the president said in his news conference the other night, he wants people now to stand up and show their cards.

FRIEDMAN: The problem is, they could all show their cards against us, that -- that we could have this 'Come to Jesus' vote in the Security Council, and it turns out that not only do the French veto it but we really don't even have a majority among the other members.

SCHIEFFER: Thank you very much, Tom.

FRIEDMAN: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: I'll be back with a final word in just a minute.

(COMMERCIAL)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, President Bush once told me that he first realized the awesome responsibility of the presidency when he visited a military base and understood that if young men and women of the military were ordered into combat, it was his responsibility and his alone to send them there.

It had been one thing, he said, to think about that in the abstract, before he became president, quite another when he actually had the power. He will soon decide whether to exercise that power.

And as I have watched this crisis building, I have wondered if Saddam Hussein ever had those kinds of reservations about putting his young people in harm's way? I doubt it. Sending soldiers into combat is probably easier for a man who has killed his son-in-law and gassed his own people.

I'll be honest. I'd feel a lot better about this coming war if the administration could show a direct link between Saddam Hussein and 9/11, if a smoking gun had been found. But it is hard to argue that the world would be safer if we allow Saddam to build the kinds of weapons North Korea already has.

North Korea flaunts those weapons to extort money from the West. We can deal with that, and will.

But Saddam thirsts for power, not money, and he has willingly sacrificed the lives of his young people and used whatever weapons he thought necessary when his power was threatened.

I hope against hope that there is a way out of this war, but I keep coming back to this: A man who is willing to kill his son-in-law is a threat to as many people as his weapons can reach.

That's it for us. I'll see you next week right here on Face the Nation.

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