

© 2009, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.
PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS CBS
TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



September 27, 2009 Transcript

GUESTS: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
Secretary of State

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM
R-South Carolina

GUEST MODERATOR/
PANELIST: MR. HARRY SMITH
CBS News

This is a rush transcript provided
for the information and convenience of
the press. Accuracy is not guaranteed.
In case of doubt, please check with
FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
(202) 457-4481

TRANSCRIPT

HARRY SMITH: Today on FACE THE NATION, exclusive, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the new threat from Iran and the question of more troops for Afghanistan.

Last week the United States divulged a new Iranian nuclear site. Is it built for war or peace? Is Iran headed toward crippling sanctions? Are Russia and China on board? And when will President Obama decide on whether to send more troops to Afghanistan?

We'll ask Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Then we'll get reaction from Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina and member of the Armed Services Committee.

But first, Secretary Clinton on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from Washington, substituting for Bob Schieffer, anchor of THE EARLY SHOW, Harry Smith.

HARRY SMITH: Good morning. Today the Iranian military conducted missile tests in the wake of Friday's stunning news about the secret nuclear facility. We spoke with Secretary of State Clinton Friday afternoon.

(Begin VT)

HARRY SMITH: Madam Secretary, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us.

HILLARY CLINTON (Secretary of State): Thank you, Harry.

HARRY SMITH: The President said about the secret facility that's been uncovered in Iran--that it is inconsistent with a peaceful nuclear program. What does the United States think this secret facility is for?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, we believe that it is a covert facility designed for uranium enrichment. It has not been disclosed and, therefore, it raises additional suspicions about the Iranian intent regarding their nuclear program. And this week we had several very important developments. First, we had in this room a bilateral meeting with President Medvedev and President Obama. And in a very small setting where I was there the President, you know, talked with great specificity with President Medvedev about the dual track that we are on regarding the Iranian nuclear program and the upcoming meeting on October 1st, and opened the discussion about the information that we had concerning this facility.

HARRY SMITH: So he told President Medvedev?

HILLARY CLINTON: Yes, yes. And what we also saw happen today-- later that day, was an agreement by all the members of the so-called P-5 plus 1--United States, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Russia, and China--all in agreement saying that we expected answers from Iran in the October 1st meeting and that we were working on what's called a dual track. We're pursuing the answers. We have made it clear to Iran that they have a right to peaceful nuclear energy for civilian purposes under appropriate safeguards and monitoring, but not to a nuclear weapons program. And if we don't get the answers that we're expecting and the changes in behavior that we're looking for then we will work with our partners to move toward sanctions.

HARRY SMITH: You talked this summer about if-- if diplomacy failed, you called the sanctions crippling sanctions would be in order. What would those be?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, Harry, we're exploring how you broaden and deepen sanctions. Now sanctions are already in place as you know, but like many sanction regimes they're leaky. But in the last eight months since we've been dealing with North Korea on a similar set of issues we have forged an

international consensus around very tough sanctions. And that's given us some additional information about how to proceed on the Iranian front.

But this is a very serious matter. The Russians have come out with a-- a strong statement saying that the burden has now shifted. It has shifted to Iran. They have to come to this meeting on October 1st and present convincing evidence as to the purpose of their nuclear program. We don't believe that they can present convincing evidence that it's only for peaceful purposes, but we are going to put them to the test on October 1st.

HARRY SMITH: They've managed to hide a nuclear weapons development system for almost twenty years. Do you suspect that this is other than peaceful purposes? Because they have insisted for the last half dozen years or so that the only reason they're interested in enriching uranium is for nuclear power for electricity.

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, it certainly is hard to accept that at face value--this latest incident concerning the facility at Qum. It would have been disclosed were it for peaceful purposes. There would've already been IAEA inspections. We have been following this for several years in cooperation with some of our international partners, watching and assessing what the Iranians were doing. And then when this became known actually through the Iranians beginning to provide some information about it, we disclosed the fact and gave the information we had to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

So I guess one has to ask, if it's for a peaceful purpose, why was it not public? Why was the fact of it not generally known instead of through our working with partners to discover it?

HARRY SMITH: Because the IAEA guidelines basically dictate that--

HILLARY CLINTON (overlapping): That's right.

HARRY SMITH: --if you're even going to do anything like this, you have to send us your plans to start with.

HILLARY CLINTON: That's exactly right. And-- and, of course, as you point out rightly, there have been many other actions along the way that raise similar doubts. Now, the Iranians keep insisting, "No, no, this is just for peaceful purposes." Well, I think as the Russians said in their statement and as we believe and what this meeting on October 1st is to test is, fine, prove it. Don't assert it. Prove it. And we are looking to see what they have to say.

HARRY SMITH: You keep talking about the Russians and it's interesting because President Medvedev almost did cartwheels once the President announced that the radar shields were going to not be constructed in the Czech Republic and that the missile systems were going to be constructed in Poland. Do you really have-- does-- does-- is Russia really in tune with the United States on this, because they've made verbal statements in the past and then when it's come time to have the rubber meet the road, so to speak, they haven't been there. Will they really be there this time?

HILLARY CLINTON: I think Russia has begun to see many more indications that Iran is engaging in threatening behavior. Certainly these last incidents seem to confirm that. And, finally, the Russians were very supportive of our sanctions against North Korea. President Medvedev said in this room that sanctions may not be preferable but they may be inevitable.

So I think this is-- this is what diplomacy and engagement is about. We are doing what we think is right for the United States--the missile defense decision, the Iranian process--this is in the interest of our people, our security, our safety, and our friends and allies. But we also believe that in working closely with Russia, sharing information, that they have been quite helpful this past week.

HARRY SMITH: Is there anything the Iranians can do in this meeting on October 1st to dissuade you from what you believe they're up to? What-- what can they say in this meeting to say we're really-- all we're trying to do is make electricity?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, they can't say anything because they've said that for years, but they can open up their entire system to the kind of extensive investigation that the facts call for.

HARRY SMITH: Is that the only thing the U.S. and the other nations that will be there-- is that the only thing you'll be satisfied with, if they completely open the doors?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, we-- we have to be satisfied. And there may be other approaches short of that. But, you know, I think it's really essential that we satisfy ourselves and the international community, which has passed numerous resolutions against Iran's program, pointing out that they're violating U.N. and IAEA obligations and the non-proliferation treaty. So, words are not enough. They're going to have to come and demonstrate clearly to the international community what they're up to.

HARRY SMITH: In a region and as-- in a nation that has known some instability over the last couple of months, what do you think this means in light of that as a backdrop?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, Harry, that's a-- a really important question, because we know that there has been instability. It's not only what we see on the television screens but what is reported to us. But we're dealing with the government that is there. We encourage the free expression of ideas and political choices, but this nuclear program really is the core of our concern right now and we are very urgently pursuing the engagement strategy that the President talked about while simultaneously working to get the kind of very tough sanctions that, you know, may well have to be imposed.

HARRY SMITH: All right. Let's talk about Afghanistan for a couple of minutes. General McChrystal made his report to President Obama. One of the things he says is there is a year window in which the United States has to act in order to ensure that the insurgency doesn't basically take over the country. Do you agree with that assessment?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, let me just put General McChrystal's report into the broader context, because it doesn't stand alone, it is part of a process. And-- and let's look at what we've done during the last nine months under President Obama's leadership. We inherited a situation, we didn't reject it out of hand, we didn't accept it out of hand. We engaged in a very thorough review. We reached some critical decisions including looking at both Afghanistan and Pakistan together because, of course, the threat goes back and forth across the borders. We also reaffirmed our commitment to going after al Qaeda--to dismantling, defeating them.

We believe, and we've seen just this week here in New York, we believe that al Qaeda poses a direct threat to the United States, to friends and allies throughout the world. So we are very clear about our mission. Our mission is to protect the United States and protect our friends and allies and to go after the scourge of al Qaeda and related extremist groups.

Now, the decision that was made to add troops in the spring has not even been fully implemented yet. You know, you don't get up and just deploy the 82nd Airborne and they get there the next day. We are only now reaching the end of the deployment cycle. We also know that going hand in hand with our military strategy was our civilian strategy--a much more focused effort, a much more accountable one, dealing with the government of Afghanistan. So we not only saw the change of commanders in the military we saw a change in our ambassador and a beefing up of the embassy in Kabul.

At the same time Afghanistan is going through an election. And this is not like an election, you know, in Western Europe or in the United States. To carry out an election under these circumstances was going to be difficult under any conditions. It's not over yet. We have to wait until it is resolved, hopefully very soon, then make a new commitment about how we're going to meet our strategic goals.

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm.

HILLARY CLINTON: And it's going to be up to the President to determine how best to achieve that. So, you know, General McChrystal, the new commander, was asked for his assessment. There's other input that's coming throughout the government that the President will take on board, but I think we ought to look at it in context.

HARRY SMITH: There's dis-- growing sort of discontent with sending more troops into Afghanistan. And one of the issues is the Karzai government, which is corrupt at least and may, in fact, have tried to steal this most recent election. Is it worth American blood and treasure to help support a regime like that?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, with all respect, we're doing this for the United States. We're doing this because we think that a return to a safe haven in Afghanistan with al Qaeda, with Taliban elements associated with al Qaeda with the same purpose to basically run a syndicate of terror out of either Afghanistan or the border region is something we cannot tolerate. And-- and-- you know, we have to recognize that this was always going to be a challenge.

Now, having said that, does the Karzai government or whoever is the next president have to do more to fulfill the needs of the Afghan people, to understand what is expected from the rule of law--transparency and accountability? Absolutely. But again we inherited a situation with a set of expectations and behaviors that we have gone about attempting to influence and change. And one of my highest priorities is once this election is finalized to work with our entire civilian team, with special representative Holbrooke, with Ambassador Eikenberry and everyone else to really impress upon the new government what is expected of them.

But let's not forget, Harry, this is about us sitting right here in New York. This is about making sure that we've got the intelligence and the capacity to interrupt potential attacks, that we try to continue our effort to destroy and defeat al Qaeda, which are, unfortunately, still to this day attempting to kill and destroy Americans and others.

HARRY SMITH: Najibullah Zazi went to Pakistan--

HILLARY CLINTON: Right.

HARRY SMITH: --through the border areas in order to get bomb training.

HILLARY CLINTON: Mm-Hm.

HARRY SMITH: Is Pakistan doing enough to clean up its own house?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, look at, again, what has happened in the last nine months. Pakistan has increased its commitment in the fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda.

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): They were successful in Swat valley.

HILLARY CLINTON: Absolutely successful. A lot of people thought that would never happen. I believe that if we engaged very intensively with our Pakistani friends, and we did through meetings in Washington and in Islamabad. If we shared information, we listened to each other, that there would be a decision by the civilian and military leadership that the threat was directed at them, that it could undermine their government, in fact, you know, would lead to very dangerous consequences in terms of the survivability of the state in many parts of the country. So, yes, have they taken action? Absolutely.

HARRY SMITH: Have they done enough was the question?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, you know, we are always working for more. I mean, I just finished saying we're-- we're not satisfied with anything. This is not a-- you know, a checkbox kind of experience where,

"Oh, we're done with that, we're done with that." But look at what has been accomplished. And, I think, that we will continue to see a very close coordination. But it is important for Americans to understand that focusing on al Qaeda and the Taliban who are largely, but not exclusively, now in Pakistan, cannot be done if we allow them to return to a safe haven in Afghanistan. So this has to be viewed as part of the overall strategy.

HARRY SMITH: Madam Secretary, we thank you so much for your time.

HILLARY CLINTON: Thank you, Harry. It's always good to talk to you.

HARRY SMITH: Thank you.

We'll be back in one minute with Republican Senator Lindsey Graham.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

HARRY SMITH: We're back with Senator Lindsey Graham who joins us this morning from Clemson, South Carolina. Senator, good morning.

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-South Carolina): Good morning, Harry.

HARRY SMITH: Let's first start with Afghanistan. General McChrystal apparently wants forty thousand more troops. Should he get what he wants?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: Yes. I would give the General the resources he needs to regain lost momentum. He says in his report while the situation has deteriorated success is possible, but to regain the momentum we've lost we're going to need additional troops. And without better security, without dislodging the Taliban, this new effort at governance will fail. You can't have a second shot at governance until you get the security situation right. This counterinsurgency strategy of General McChrystal's has been well thought out. I hope the President will give him the troops he says he needs.

HARRY SMITH: You have made numerous trips to Afghanistan. Before we went on television during the commercial break you said the situation there has deteriorated measurably.

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: Yes.

HARRY SMITH: How bad is it?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: Uh-- you can't travel like you once could. I was there about a year ago. And the environment of getting off the base is much more difficult. You could have ten thousand Department of State lawyers over there working on the rule of law. You could have all kind of agricultural experts trying to help, you know, do away with the drug problem or replace it with commercial agriculture. You just can't travel. Civilians just can't operate right now. So, we need more combat power, not just us but NATO, to take the fight back to the Taliban because they have reemerged because of the lack of governance and lack of enough troops. The sixty-eight thousand American soldiers there now cannot turn Afghanistan around without some help. And that's the big question.

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): How--

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: I hope they get the help they need.

HARRY SMITH: How urgent is this decision?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: He said-- General McChrystal said if we don't do it within a year the insurgency cannot be defeated. Here's my concern about the next eighteen months. We're looking at a trifecta of disasters here: If Iran is not checked, they're going to have a nuclear weapon in the next

eighteen months. If we don't reinforce Afghanistan now and turn around the military situation the Taliban are going to take over part or all of Afghanistan. And if NATO doesn't jump into the fight with both feet they're going to become a paper tiger. We could have three major disasters that affect our national security for years to come if we use half measures. Reject half measures.

HARRY SMITH: I tried to get an answer from the secretary of state. Do you really believe the Iranians are currently working on a nuclear weapon?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: Absolutely, I believe they are. I believe the holocaust existed. I've got one rule of thumb. If the President of a country denies the holocaust you should believe the worst not the best about what they're doing. Clearly they're hiding nuclear programs for a purpose. They're trying to develop a nuclear weapon. And if they are successful the Sunni-Arab states in the region will want a nuclear weapon, Israel becomes much at risk, and we're walking down the road to Armageddon.

We have about eighteen months using the international community to decisively act. No more half measures. China is supplying one third of the refined petroleum to Iran. They need to join with the Russians, the United States, and the international community to bring this regime to reality. Sanctions only work if they change behavior.

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): All right.

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: We need to empower the Iranian people and deter their regime.

HARRY SMITH: Crippling sanctions have been talked about. And the idea that--

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (overlapping): Yeah.

HARRY SMITH: --all options should be left open, opens the door to military action. When might military action-- when-- when should it be considered?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: At the last resort, when all meaningful sanctions fail. And what we do in Afghanistan will affect the ability of Iran to get the message. This regime needs to be delivered a message that the international community is deadly serious about stopping their nuclear program. So we have not tried meaningful sanctions yet. We've got a little bit of time to do that. But at the end of the day the worst thing that could happen to this country, in my view, is for Iran to get a nuclear weapon because that changes everything in the Mideast for the worst. And what we do in Afghanistan I think will affect the outcome in Iran.

HARRY SMITH: So, let's stay on Afghanistan for a second. What if Afghan-- if General McChrystal doesn't get the forty thousand troops he asked for?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: We're going to lose. We'll be driven out. The Taliban will come back stronger than they were before. The moderates in Afghanistan will go back in hiding or get killed. NATO will be seen as a failure. And America will go it alone in the future. We cannot let NATO fail in Afghanistan. This is NATO's fight, just not America's fight. The Taliban have come back for a reason. But the good news is the Afghan people don't want them back. With additional military power, we can defeat them.

And we have got to do what Secretary Clinton said--push the Karzai government or the next government to do better. But until you get the military situation right you'll never get better governance. So failing in Afghanistan is a disaster for NATO and it will affect Pakistan. The same people trying to fight the Pakistani government are the same ones trying to come back in Afghanistan.

HARRY SMITH: Senator Lindsey Graham, we thank you so much for your time this morning.

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: Thank you.

HARRY SMITH: All right. We'll be back in a moment.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

HARRY SMITH: That's our broadcast. We hope you'll tune in to 60 MINUTES tonight to CBS News correspondent David Martin's exclusive interview with General Stanley McChrystal, the head of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Bob will be back next week. I'll see you tomorrow morning on THE EARLY SHOW.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

ANNOUNCER: This broadcast was produced by CBS News, which is solely responsible for the selection of today's guests and topics. It originated in Washington, DC.