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FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: Dr. CONDOLEEZZA RICE
Secretary of State

Rep. JOHN MURTHA (D-PA)
Member, House Appropriations
Committee; Chair, Subcommittee
on Defense

ROGER SIMON
Politico.com

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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***FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, from Katrina aid to the war, the administration faces fierce new attacks. Today, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will respond. The secretary of state finds herself under congressional subpoena this morning to tell what she knew about the intelligence reports that led America into Iraq. Will she comply? Just one of many questions for her this morning, as the president and Congress head toward a showdown on the war. We'll get the other side from Congressman John Murtha, who wants to begin a withdrawal. We'll get analysis on the political side of that and other issues from Roger Simon of Politico.com, and I'll have a final word on the passing of a Washington legend, Jack Valenti.

But first, Secretary 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 good morning again. Joining us first, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Madam Secretary, welcome. But I must say, it's difficult to know where to begin. I can't recall since maybe back in the days of Watergate when an administration has found itself and its credibility being challenged on so many different fronts. Now we have this explosive new book by George Tenet, the former head of the CIA, who got a Medal of Freedom from the president when he left, now charging that there wasn't even a serious debate about going to Iraq, that the top officials in the administration had their minds made up from the start. Is that true?

Secretary CONDOLEEZZA RICE (Secretary of State): Well, George was a very good public servant, and we worked very well together during very difficult times. But the president came in, in 2001, determined to try to deal with the Iraqi situation perhaps even by sanctions, by smart sanctions. The president gave his first press conference, he said the sanctions had become Swiss cheese. We went through an extensive period of time of getting the states to tighten the sanctions at the UN through the sanctions committee. We went to countries in the region--Syria, for instance--saying, can you stop the illegal flow of oil? We knew that the Oil for Food program was causing difficulty. Don Rumsfeld led an effort to try to make more robust the no-fly zones against Saddam Hussein. We tried...

SCHIEFFER: So you're saying that his charge is not true.

Sec. RICE: There was an extended period of time of trying other efforts, including the president's September address to the UN in 2002 where we did get another resolution to compel Iraq to put weapons inspectors in.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just go--he talks about this in an interview tonight with Scott Pelley on "60 Minutes." And one of the things he talks about, he puts on the record the story that came out in Bob Woodward's book that you did

not take him seriously about the threat of al-Qaeda in the days before 9/11.
Let's just listen to a portion here.

(Beginning of excerpt from "60 Minutes")

SCOTT PELLELY reporting:

By the summer of 2001, Tenet was alarmed by repeated specific intelligence warning that an attack was coming. He asked for an immediate meeting to brief then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice.

Mr. GEORGE TENET: Essentially, the briefing says, 'There are going to be multiple spectacular attacks against the United States. We believe these attacks are imminent. Mass casualties are a likelihood.'

PELLEY: You're telling Condoleezza Rice in that meeting in the White House in July that we should take offensive action in Afghanistan now, before 9/11.

Mr. TENET: We need--we need to--we need to consider immediate action inside Afghanistan now. We need to--we need to move to the offensive.

PELLEY: In his book, Tenet says that even though he told Rice an attack on Americans was imminent, she took his request to launch pre-emptive action in Afghanistan and delegated it to third tier officials.

(End of excerpt)

SCHIEFFER: So what he is saying is that you just sort of brushed him off.

Sec. RICE: Well, it's very interesting because that's not what George told the 9/11 Commission at the time. He said that he felt that we had gotten it. And in fact, the very next day or the day after, Steve Hadley--hardly a third tier official, sat with the intelligence agencies to try and determine what more we could do. We were concerned, for instance, could we go after Abu Zubaida, who might have some information? But the idea of launching pre-emptive strikes into Afghanistan in July of 2001, this is a new fact, and I will have to look. I can't...

SCHIEFFER: Well, why would he say something like that?

Sec. RICE: Well, I don't know. The--I don't know what we were supposed to pre-emptively strike in Afghanistan. Perhaps somebody can ask that.

SCHIEFFER: He also says that when he talked about it would be a slam dunk, he meant it would be easy to make the case for going into Iraq. And he says, instead, officials--and I guess he means you, too--sort of hung him out to dry and then used as an excuse to say why we went in.

Sec. RICE: That's very interesting. When George said "slam dunk," everybody understood that he believed that the intelligence was strong. We all believed the intelligence was strong. The sad fact of how all of this has

gotten--gotten talked about is that there was a problem with intelligence. But it wasn't just a problem with intelligence in the United States, it was an intelligence problem worldwide. Services across the world thought that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations thought that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction or would not have had these draconian--the draconian sanctions that were being levied against Iran--Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: But you just don't--you don't take what he said--do you take it seriously?

Sec. RICE: And so--so we--certainly...

SCHIEFFER: What is your response?

Sec. RICE: I can only remember once speaking to this "slam dunk"--or a couple of times. And what I said is what I've just said to you. Yes, George said it; but we all thought the intelligence was strong.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let's just move on then. You find yourself currently in this dispute over Iraq with the White House and--the Congress. You find yourself now under subpoena from Congress to tell what you knew about Saddam's weapons programs. Are you going to comply with that subpoena?

Sec. RICE: Well, first of all, this is one of the most examined issues, how the Niger language got into the president's speech, what was its genesis, it was in the NIE, what was thought of it. This has been examined by bipartisan commission, by Chuck Robb and Larry Silverman, by the Senate Select Intelligence Committee. I was asked about it in questions for the record for my confirmation hearing. I have given Chairman Waxman hundreds of pages of documentation...

SCHIEFFER: So you're not going to do it?

Sec. RICE: ...including several letters. Let me just say, I respect the oversight role of Congress. And I'm perfectly willing to continue to try to answer whatever questions Chairman Waxman may have about this very thoroughly investigated issue, but there is...

SCHIEFFER: But you will not testify in person?

Sec. RICE: This is a White House issue, and I was national security adviser. That means I was, at the time, an adviser to the president, and there's a constitutional issue here that the White House will have to handle.

SCHIEFFER: So at this point, you are going to resist that subpoena?

Sec. RICE: This is a matter for White House counsel, but I'm perfectly happy in appropriate ways to continue to try to answer Congressman Waxman's questions.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about what's coming up on Tuesday. Apparently the

Congress is going to send the president a bill to fund the war, but it's also going to have a--language in there that says we have to begin withdrawal of our troops in October. We're told the president is definitely going to veto that, Madam Secretary. What happens next? Is the administration willing to accept any kind of conditions on funding?

Sec. RICE: Well, when the president vetoes this measure, I know that he wants to have leadership down and relevant parties down to talk about it. We need to come together on a way to move forward. The benchmarks that are there are benchmarks that were set by the Iraqi government. So they're benchmarks that they know that they can meet, should meet. We've been working with them and telling them that our patience isn't limited. But the problem is, why tie our own hands in using the means that we have to help get the right outcomes in Iraq? And that's the problem with having so-called consequences for missing the benchmarks.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just play the devil's advocate here. We've been doing that. We've been telling the Iraqis, 'Look, you got to shape up or we're going to ship out,' basically. That's been our message. It doesn't seem to be doing any good. How does it hurt the president's cause, your cause, the country's cause to tell these people, 'Look, this is it, and it's written down here, and if you don't get going here, figure out a way to share power, we're out of here.'

Sec. RICE: Well, it assumes that it's going to give incentives to the right people. I'm afraid it might give incentives to the wrong people. People who don't want it to happen will simply wait us out. Because the Iraqis, many of whom are paying great sacrifice to try to make this national unity government work, want to be able to move forward on the reconciliation.

Look, they are not moving quickly enough. Secretary Gates told them that, I've told them that, the president has told them that. But General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have a plan and a way forward. To begin now to tie our own hands and to say, 'We must do this if they don't do that' doesn't allow us the flexibility and the creativity that we need to move this forward.

SCHIEFFER: One other question, as if you didn't need more trouble right now, The Washington Post reports this morning that while the State Department was telling countries around the world, 'Thanks so much for your help on Katrina,' that in fact we weren't collecting it. Almost none of it was collected through bureaucratic red tape and incompetence that we never got the money.

Sec. RICE: No. In fact, what happened, Bob, is that we were grateful for what people were offering. It was, frankly, a new circumstance for the United States to be flooded with offers of foreign assistance.

SCHIEFFER: So that story's false.

Sec. RICE: No, Bob, the United States was very grateful for what--we did tell some people we couldn't use certain kinds of in-kind contributions. We told people that it might be more efficient to help the Bush/Clinton private effort

or the Red Cross. And many of those--much of that assistance was used, including, for instance, money that has gone to help historically black colleges in Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as libraries in those states.

SCHIEFFER: So, as far as you're concerned, it was handled properly. You don't have a problem with it.

Sec. RICE: It was--it was a new circumstance, and I would be the last to say that everything was handled perfectly. But we were very grateful for what countries had done, and to the degree that they delivered on their pledges, I think those pledges were well used.

SCHIEFFER: One final question. You said earlier this morning you're going to this conference on Iraq, people from Iran will be there. Will you meet with representatives from Iran?

Sec. RICE: I would not rule it out. We will be there, not to talk about US/Iranian issues, but to talk about Iraq and how Iraq's neighbors can help to stabilize Iraq, and I won't rule it out.

SCHIEFFER: But would you also not rule out that you might talk to Iran about its nuclear program?

Sec. RICE: The proper channel for Iran's nuclear program is through Javier Solana, the EU high representative who is representing all of the six countries that have made Iran a very generous offer concerning the development of civil nuclear power.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Madam Secretary, thank you so much.

Sec. RICE: Thank you very much.

SCHIEFFER: Now we taped that interview, it was unedited, about an hour ago.

For reaction we turn now to Congressman John Murtha, who's sitting in the same seat. He is the chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. One of the original members of Congress to say we need to begin withdrawing the troops.

Congressman, your reaction to what the secretary said.

Representative JOHN MURTHA (Democrat, Pennsylvania; House Appropriations Committee): Well, the problem we've had right along, Bob, has been overly optimism about this whole--this whole invasion of Iraq. The fact that the weapons of mass destruction weren't there, her response that Tenet said this or said that, he doesn't set policy. All he does is tell the objective analysis of what they should look for. They make the decision about whether they're going to go to war or not. They've been blaming everybody for everything. I'm concerned that they continue to do that. I'm concerned that they don't want to accept any responsibility themselves. They even blamed Clinton for a while. Then they blamed the Democrats. The Republicans were in

control of Congress as well as the White House at the same time. And now we hear the secretary of state saying, 'Well, we're maybe going to meet with the Iranians. We had no responsibility here. George Tenet didn't tell us about that.' Dave Obey yesterday, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said to me yesterday in Wisconsin, he said, 'Let me--let me tell you. I remember George Tenet saying to us that they have weapons of mass destruction.' I believe George believed that. But he also said he didn't think the Iraqis would use the weapons of mass destruction unless we attacked them. Now, that was right before we voted on the legislation. But I'm concerned that this administration has intimidated the military, they've intimidated all the people that work for them, and they aren't willing to speak out. It's almost as if they all have talking points, and we go in and say what the administration wants them to say.

SCHIEFFER: Well, they also have a talking point that says members of Congress, people here in Washington, ought to not be trying to run the war and trying to take the job away from the generals. How do you respond to that, congressman?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, we have a responsibility under the Constitution to pay for a war. We also have a responsibility to make sure the troops are taken care of. One of the things we said in this legislation, plus the fact we gave them \$4 billion more than they asked for for all the proposals that needed in this war itself, we fully funded everything he asked for. We also said, 'Look, the troops can't be sent back before they're home for at least a year.' They finally decided to do that. We said you can't extend them. Now I visited Fort Hood, Fort Bragg and Fort Stewart. The troops are burned out. They're extending to 15 months. Bob, I hear rumors in the Pentagon they're going to extend them to 18 months. They're not going to be able to sustain these deployments. So they're violating every guideline that the military has.

Now look at the benchmarks which you mentioned to the secretary of state. The benchmarks, the Iraqis agreed to it, the president agreed to it, we're saying to them, 'Well, let's put some teeth into the benchmarks.'

SCHIEFFER: And just for our viewers who might not follow that that closely, what you're talking about are benchmarks is that the Iraqis have to show some progress in figuring out a way to share power. They have to figure out some way to share the oil wealth and see that that's equally distributed. They have to rein in these militias. Those are what we're talking about when we're talking about benchmarks. But let me ask you about one other thing, congressman. The vice president came down very hard on the Democrats, saying that this legislation, if it has this withdrawal timetable in it, that it's just a recipe for disaster, that it's legislation to announce a surrender. Now, that's pretty tough.

Rep. MURTHA: Well, it's tough, Bob, but what's--the surrender is in what's hurting the troops. You know, they always bring this back to say it's hurting the troops is the fact that they're deployed so long, the families are suffering, they never put enough money into it, they never put enough troops

into it, they never had the body armor they needed. And oil production's the same level or below level that--when we invaded Iraq. Electricity production the same way. So all the things they've said have been overly optimistic. Bob, if they don't start to plan for redeployment--they're going to redeploy, but if they don't start to plan, they're going to have...(network difficulties)...just like they had when they went into Iraq and didn't plan for the transition to peace.

SCHIEFFER: Now, let's go over that again, because I think that's an important point that you're making, or I'd say alleging at this point. You're saying that whatever happens, they should start planning for withdrawal now?

Rep. MURTHA: I've been saying the military right along...

SCHIEFFER: What kind of signal is that?

Rep. MURTHA: I've been saying right along, `You'd better start to plan for redeployment because you're going to redeploy. There's no--the progress that they talk about is not there, any of the economic things that I've seen doesn't show any progress. We've had 330 people killed since the surge began, more people killed in the last four months than were killed at any other time during the war, 53 percent increase in American deaths. And this White House keeps saying we're making progress.

SCHIEFFER: All right, let me--let's just get to the--to the--where the rubber hits the road here. Clearly, the president's going to veto this.

Rep. MURTHA: Right.

SCHIEFFER: What are Democrats going to send back to the White House? Will it be a bill that has some kind of conditions? Because, in the end, aren't you going to have to fund these troops to keep from putting them in harm's way?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, in the first place we gave the president everything he asked for and then some. We gave him \$4 billion more. We gave him for PTSD, we gave him for brain damage, all those kind of things, more money for Walter Reed to take care of those problems. But what--if he vetoes this bill, he's cut off the money. But obviously we're going to pass another bill. It's going to have some stringent requirements. I'd like to see two months. I'd like to look at this again in two months later...

SCHIEFFER: Just fund it for two months, rather than a year.

Rep. MURTHA: Fund it for two months, instead of a year, and then look at it again.

SCHIEFFER: White House says no.

Rep. MURTHA: White House says no. But the White House has said no to everything. They say we're willing to compromise, and then we don't get any--we've compromised on waivers for the requirements of the troops, which is

their own requirements, and also goals instead of requirements for the benchmarks. So we've already compromised, and we need to make this president understand, 'Mr. President, the public has spoken.' There are three ways--four ways to influence a president, and one is popular opinion, the election, third is impeachment, and fourth is--and fourth is tighten the purse.

SCHIEFFER: Are you seriously talking about contemplating an impeachment of this president, congressman?

Rep. MURTHA: Bob, what I'm saying is there's four ways to influence a president.

SCHIEFFER: And that's one of them?

Rep. MURTHA: And one of them's impeachment...

SCHIEFFER: And that's one option--that's an option that's on the table?

Rep. MURTHA: ...and the fourth one that is on--I'm just saying that's one way to influence the president. The other way, is your purse. And the purse is controlled by the Congress, who's elected by the public. In the last election, public said we want the Democrats in control.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Thank you very much, congressman.

Back in a moment with a little political roundtable in a second.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now, our old friend Roger Simon, a long-time observer of politics in this town, now the chief political columnist for Politico.com, the Web site all politics all the time.

Well, I must say, Roger, now we have the term "impeachment" actually put on the table by John Murtha. We hear rumors of that here and there, but I mean, is--do you think there's any chance that Democrats, if this doesn't work out on this war funding, would actually think of impeaching this president?

Mr. ROGER SIMON (Politico.com): I don't think the Democrats want this on the table. For one thing, do they really want Vice President Cheney to become President Cheney? I mean, is that their goal? Secondly, I think they want to fight an election campaign next year. I don't think they want to fight to impeach a president, to prove that he's actually committed high crimes and misdemeanors, to go through a trial in the Senate. I think they just want to win at the ballot box next November.

SCHIEFFER: Do you have any doubt that Iraq will be the number one issue?

Mr. SIMON: If the war is still going on, and I think we'd have to expect that it will be, it's going to be the number one issue. It's determining the

positions of each candidate in each side right now.

SCHIEFFER: What do you think will happen if there's no change in the situation in Iraq by, let's say, this summer? What will be the political fallout from that?

Mr. SIMON: The Democrats, already, have been pushed, really, by the rank and file of their party. This came up in 2004. The Democrats weren't ready then to be against the war. Now they certainly are. They're responding to pressure from their actual voters. On the Republican side, there is no serious candidate who's going to break with the president on this war. But they all need--and feel they need--to promise change, that they can't just promise an endless continuation to this war.

SCHIEFFER: We had the first debate of the Democratic candidates. What is there, nine of them, or so?

Mr. SIMON: No, there were eight. Yeah.

Schieffer: Did anything happen there of significance? I mean, I'm not sure that it did, because they each of them had so little time to really talk.

Mr. SIMON: Recognizing that debates are divorced from reality, that no president makes snap judgments and then defends it in a 30-second sound bite--at least we don't want him or her to--in general, I think people watch debates and say, 'Am I seeing someone on the screen that I can imagine in the Oval Office, that I can imagine protecting this country, getting us on the right track domestically, renewing and restoring our image abroad?' And I think on those broad points the Democrats did pretty well. Next week the Republicans will have their chance. We'll see if they do better, they do worse, they do the same.

SCHIEFFER: Is it fair to have all these people out there? I mean, it is a free country. Everybody wants to run for president should have that opportunity and does.

Mr. SIMON: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: But clearly, somebody like senator--former Senator Mike Gravel is not going to be a serious candidate, and yet he gets equal time, and in the--I would just say it honestly, in my view, it just wastes time.

Mr. SIMON: I think it's a problem. I think nobody wants the media picking their candidates for them. But I think there's a way to deal with that. You can first set up a bar that you have to get over in a national poll. This is what they do in a general election debate. Let's say you're--if you're not at 5 percent, you don't debate. Or a second way. Let's do it in two tiers. Let the first tier debate for 90 minutes, and then another day or the same day, if anyone can stand that much, let the second tier debate for 90 minutes, and that way everybody gets their viewpoints known. But the top tier, we can hear a little more from.

Schieffer: Pretty good suggestions. Roger, thank you very much.

Mr. SIMON: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: It's always interesting to talk to you. I'll have a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, I lost a good friend this week, and Washington lost a legend. Jack Valenti, once Lyndon Johnson's closest adviser and, for nearly 40 years after that, the man who spoke for the movie industry in Washington, died of a stroke. He was 85, so it was a good run. He would have called it a grand run because he never spared the superlatives, and who could really argue? He could point to dozens of accomplishments, had a wonderful wife and kids, and, at 85, had just finished a book, had dozens of irons in the fire, worked out every day and still played golf on Saturday.

Jack knew everybody and a little about everything, most of all human nature. He once gave me a tip on tipping: Give a guy a little extra, he said, and he'll say thanks; double the usual tip, he'll remember your name. That was Jack, king of over-the-top. A tiny man, maybe just 5'5", but everything about him was large, almost operatic. He was the best example I know of the influential Washington insider because he understood that influence was based on long-term integrity. Mislend someone on an issue and you'll have less influence on the next issue. And he also recognized the cycles of Washington, that today's back-bencher may be tomorrow's powerful chairman. He remembered people when they were down, so they remembered him when they were up. And that's why he got things done, why his counsel was so constantly sought, and why he forged hundreds of lasting friendships along the way. Jack Valenti did have a grand run. He was a grand man.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.