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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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Press Gaggle with Ari Fleischer and Dr. Condoleeza Rice

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Entebbe, Uganda

12:15 P.M. (Local)

MR. FLEISCHER: Good morning. Let us begin. The President will shortly arrive into Uganda, where the President will have a meeting with the President of Uganda. I anticipate the main topics of discussion will be AIDS, trade. Particularly here in Uganda, however, the President wants to highlight for all the world to see the successful Ugandan model and how they have tackled aggressively and forthrightly the issue of AIDS with success.

The President will, after the meeting, arrive at the AIDS Support Organization Center, where he will receive a briefing on actual AIDS treatment programs that are innovative, up and running, and successful. He will meet with people who have AIDS who are being treated. He will take a tour of the TASO sector, and then he will depart en route for Abuja, Nigeria, where he will spend the night.

Dr. Rice has reflections on the overall trip and then we're happy to take your questions.

Q Are we on the record, now?

MR. FLEISCHER: On the record.

Q Can we do it on camera, then?

MR. FLEISCHER: It's gaggle.

DR. RICE: We're on the record or background?

MR. FLEISCHER: On the record. This will be a gaggle.

DR. RICE: Okay, fine.

The President has had a great trip to Africa thus far. I think he has had an opportunity to highlight American interests in the future of Africa, American hopes for the future of Africa.

He's talked quite a lot about trade. Yesterday, he had an opportunity, for instance, to see what AGOA has meant for small artisans in Africa. He saw different displays of carvings and weavings that people had done. And he mentioned, in fact, last night that it had been heartening to -- it's one thing to have AGOA on paper, it's quite another to have a chance to see some of the products that people are now selling as a result.

He's had very good meetings with the leaders and now -- and had a chance yesterday in Botswana to pay a tribute to President Mogae, who's one of the real leaders in terms of democracy and free markets and trade on the entire continent. He also had a chance with President Mogae to look at the efforts Botswana is now making to deal with what is an exceptionally high infection rate of HIV/AIDS -- believed to be as much perhaps as 38 percent of the population, which is extraordinary -- and talked with the Minister of Health and others who are at the forefront of trying to deal with that problem.

When he goes to Uganda, as Ari said, he will be meeting with President Museveni, who, frankly, has been one of the inspirations for the President's own interest in AIDS, because the Ugandan success in reversing the trend shows that it can be done with education, with openness about the problem. And of course, now, given the President's commitment, large commitment of \$15 billion to the AIDS pandemic, we also hope to treat and save lives through the availability of anti-retrovirals.

The President had a chance also to talk about some of the deep conflict situations in Africa. That's been very important on the first day, of course, with the President of ECOWAS, Kufour. But today when he talks to President Museveni, he'll underscore the important of Ugandan support for the peace process that is underway in the DROC, because the DROC's neighbors, as well as the leadership of the DROC, have to be committed to the Lusaka process. So he will talk to them about that, and then he'll go on to Nigeria. And we can talk about Nigeria tomorrow.

By the way, we went to a great game preserve yesterday and saw nature in action. (Laughter.)

Q Dr. Rice --

MR. FLEISCHER: Child credits. (Laughter.)

Q -- love nature like you'd like to be loved yourself.

DR. RICE: Yes, the elephants weren't nearly so rambunctious by the time we go there. (Laughter.)

Q The elephants were shut-ins, now that you think about it.

Q Dr. Rice, in the Congo, has the United States decided to support a larger U.N. peacekeeping force there? And will Bush talk about that or announce that today?

DR. RICE: There won't be any announcements today, but we are in discussions with the U.N. about sizing properly the force in the Congo. And we've generally been supportive in making some alterations to that, if possible.

The Congo has a real chance of getting resolved here because there is a plan for a transitional government that -- President Mbeki described his work with President Kabile on that. We have the French force in place for a short period of time. And I think everybody understands that we need very much to seize the initiative. So if there's more that can be done, the United States is going to be supportive of that. But the President's not

making any announcements of it because we're still in consultations about that issue.

Q Is he going to be talking with anyone about the Sudan? Is Danforth going to be with him?

DR. RICE: We will talk about the Sudan. Again, it's an opportunity. They are in a position to have a deal on the Sudan, which when you think about a couple of years ago seems pretty remarkable. The President will talk to President Museveni, again, who's one of the major players in that. He has talked recently to Senator Danforth, who is going back to Sudan and to the region, I think, in five or six days. So, yes, he will talk about the Sudan. But nobody wants to prematurely get too hopeful about what has been a really tough situation. But there's a lot of belief that we actually have a chance to get something done there.

Q Can I just interject one more time? Is there a reason why we wouldn't do this on camera if Dr. Rice is on the record?

MR. FLEISCHER: Because this is our standard way of doing gaggles, especially in the back of the plane.

Q But it's usually on background.

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, we standardly come back on the plane and try to mix it up. Remember Secretary Powell came back on the previous European trip on the record, but on gaggle, to begin the European trip. This is my way of trying to bring other people back here for people to get questions.

Q I appreciate that. But I just want to register a complaint for the networks that all of these comments are going to be on the record and in the newspapers and on the wires, but we're not going to see her on camera.

Q Do we expect any kind of announcement on Liberia on this trip before we go back Washington?

DR. RICE: No, I don't think you should expect an announcement while we're still on the trip. The assessment team is out there. It's doing its work. It has been very beneficial for the President to be able to talk directly with President Kufour and with others about what might be needed in Liberia. But we're going to have to get back. The President is going to have to hear from the assessment team. And we have to look at what's necessary.

What should be very clear is that the President has said that the United States is committed to trying to help the U.N. and the regional leaders find a way to bring stability to Liberia and to get Charles Taylor out of office and to get a political process begun there. But the exact nature of that involvement, we're going to have to wait to see what's really needed.

Q What's the back-and-forth on Taylor at this point? I mean, he says he won't go until the force is there. And we're suggesting that there shouldn't be a condition. Is this subject to negotiation?

DR. RICE: It's not a subject of negotiation. There shouldn't be any conditions for his leaving. I think the timing of his leaving is something that will have to be worked out with the people who are working with him. But he shouldn't be making conditions at this point.

Q Is it still your position that he has to leave first before any troops arrive?

DR. RICE: I don't think we've ever said he had to leave first. What we've said is he has to leave, because he is the source of instability. And no force of stabilization is going to be able to stabilize with him there. I mean he

is the problem. So it's a practical point.

Q But are you worried that he seems to be imposing new conditions every time he opens his mouth?

DR. RICE: Well, there shouldn't be any conditions.

Q Right.

DR. RICE: He really should understand what he's done was contrary --

Q On AIDS, the President wanted \$2 billion the first year. The House has voted for a sum that less than that. The exact figure escapes my mind right now. But Secretary Powell said yesterday, essentially, we'd work with what we can get. Does the President not intend to try --

DR. RICE: No, obviously, we'll work with what we can get. But the President believes very strongly in full funding of this.

Q -- fight for it --

DR. RICE: We are fighting for it.

Q Is he going to fight for the problem --

Q Give us -- how are you fighting for it? Is he calling people?

DR. RICE: Call on the telephone, and we're making phone calls. The President believes that this commitment -- which just so everybody is clear on the breakdown, it's \$10 billion in new money, but this unifies the \$5 billion spent, plus the \$10 billion into a single program. Some of it will go into the Global Fund; the rest into bilateral programs. This is an AIDS emergency, and the emergency portion of this, the President feels very strongly we've waited too long. It's not as if there aren't good uses for the money, and so he's pushing very hard on Congress to fully fund.

Q I'd like to ask one on the trip and one on the Niger situation. On the trip, the President has made a lot of broad commitments, including the money on trade. How committed are you to really following through on these things when you get back? Especially on trade, when you're going to have to take a lot of political heat on agricultural subsidies, on textile imports. Coming into an election year, it's easy for Africa to get pushed to the back burner again. How do you make sure that this really gets done?

On Niger, we understand there's --

DR. RICE: Let me answer that first.

Q Okay.

DR. RICE: Then we'll get to the rest of that. The President is a person who believes in free trade because he believes it's good for global growth. That means it's good for the United States, it's good for American workers, and it's good for the development of places like Africa. And so it's a fundamental part of his program. And so he's going to continue to push on free trade.

He's already said that he wants AGOA extended to 2008 because we believe this has been extremely beneficial for Africa and for increasing development. You can talk a lot about development assistance, but really, trade is a real multiplier for developing countries. And so he's going to continue to press on these issues.

On agricultural subsidies, the U.S. position is clear: We think that agricultural subsidies ought to be rolled back. But the Europeans -- we can't do this unilaterally -- the Europeans are the real problem when it comes to agricultural subsidies. Our markets are pretty open to third-world product.

And so the right way to deal with this particular issue, really, is in the context of the WTO. And so we welcomed the moves that the Europeans made recently on agricultural subsidies. Bob Zoellick is going to continue to work with his WTO colleagues and also with Lamy on this issue. But the President is going to continue to push free trade.

Q As the only European on the plane, could I just ask you -- so if the Europeans were to lower their subsidies, would you do the same?

DR. RICE: The United States has always believed that lower subsidies are a good thing.

Q But you only imposed the high ones a year ago?

DR. RICE: No, but -- it's a long story, but the farm bill, in terms of aggregate numbers, does not increase the subsidies, in fact, it lowers it.

Q Dr. Rice, there are a lot of reports, apparently overnight, that CIA people had informed the NSC well before the State of the Union that they had trouble the reference in the speech. Can you tell us specifically what your office had heard, what you had passed along to the President on that?

DR. RICE: The CIA cleared the speech. We have a clearance process that sends speeches out to relevant agencies -- in our case, the NSC, it's usually State, Defense, the CIA, sometimes the Treasury. The CIA cleared the speech in its entirety.

Now, the sentence in question comes from the notion the Iraqis were seeking yellow cake. And, remember, it says, "seeking yellow cake in Africa" is there in the National Intelligence Estimate. The National Intelligence Estimate is the document that the Director of Central Intelligence publishes as the collective view of the intelligence agencies about the status of any particular issue.

That was relied on to, like many other things in the National Intelligence Estimate, relied on to write the President's speech. The CIA cleared on it. There was even some discussion on that specific sentence, so that it reflected better what the CIA thought. And the speech was cleared.

Now, I can tell you, if the CIA, the Director of Central Intelligence, had said, take this out of the speech, it would have been gone, without question. What we've said subsequently is, knowing what we now know, that some of the Niger documents were apparently forged, we wouldn't have put this in the President's speech -- but that's knowing what we know now.

The President of the United States, we have a higher standard for what we put in presidential speeches. The British continue to stand by their report. The CIA's NIE continues to talk about efforts to acquire yellow cake in various African countries. But we have a high standard for the President's speeches. We don't make the

President his own fact witness, we have a high standard for them. That's why we send them out for clearance. And had we heard from the DCI or the Agency that they didn't want that sentence in the speech, it would not have been in the speech. The President was not going to get up and say something that the CIA --

Q Dr. Rice, it sounds as if you're blaming the CIA here.

DR. RICE: No, this is a clearance process. And a lot of things happen. We've said now we wouldn't have put it in the speech if we had known what we know now. This was a process that we've followed many, many times. But I can just assure you that if -- and I think -- maybe you want to ask this question of the DCI, but we've talked about it. If the DCI had said, there's a problem with this, we would have said it's out of the speech.

For whatever reason -- and I'm not blaming anybody. The State of the Union -- people are writing speeches, a lot is going on. But I can assure you that the President did not knowingly, before the American people, say something that we thought to be false. It's just outrageous that anybody would claim that. He did not knowingly say anything that we thought to be false. And, in fact, we still don't know the status of Saddam Hussein's efforts to acquire yellow cake. What we know is that one of the documents underlying that case was found to be a forgery.

Q Dr. Rice, given that, does the President -- given that the CIA cleared the speech, does the President remain confident in the CIA's Director?

DR. RICE: Absolutely. The CIA Director, George Tenet, has been a terrific DCI and he has served everybody very, very well. And we have a good relationship with the CIA. We wouldn't put anything knowingly in the speech that was false; I'm sure they wouldn't put anything knowingly in the speech that was false. In this case, this particular line shouldn't have gotten in because it was not of the quality that we would put into presidential speeches, despite the fact that it was in the NIE --

Q But, Condi, it's apparently the case that the CIA didn't even check the documents, didn't even discover the forgery until after the speech. And now there's a report that in September of '02 -- if I have this correct -- the Post is saying the CIA was encouraging the British to back off of that claim. So I'm trying to understand the sequencing here. Are you saying -- so my question is, in hindsight, would you say that the CIA did not properly vet this alleged sale?

DR. RICE: David, this was a complicated matter of a sale. There were other reports, as well, about Saddam Hussein trying to acquire yellow cake. It was not this Niger document alone. There are even other African countries that are cited in the NIE, not just Niger.

We also knew, let's remember, that this is the context of a nuclear program in which the seeking of yellow cake is only a small piece of the story. It includes training of nuclear scientists; it includes rebuilding certain infrastructure that had been associated with nuclear weapons; it includes a clandestine procurement network. Things that we're finding out now -- for instance, that the scientist buried uranium -- I'm sorry, centrifuge pieces in his front yard. So one thing that you have to do is to put this piece about seeking yellow cake in the broader context of what was known to be an active effort by the Iranians to try and reconstitute their program.

But let me just go to the point you made, David. The CIA -- I've read the reports that you've also read, that there were -- the British were told they shouldn't put this in the paper. I've read those reports. All that I can tell you is that if there were doubts about the underlying intelligence in the NIE, those doubts were not

communicated to the President. The only thing that was there in the NIE was a kind of a standard INR footnote, which is kind of 59 pages away from the bulk of the NIE. That's the only thing that's there. And you have footnotes all the time in CIA -- I mean, in NIEs. So if there was a concern about the underlying intelligence there, the President was unaware of that concern and as was I.

Q You just said that the sentence, itself, was constructed reflecting some thoughts that the CIA had on the doubt. If I recall, the President said in his speech that, the British are reporting this -- about the transfer. Should we infer from that that there were some doubts within the Agency about the veracity of the claim, so that in the speech it was safer to defer to what was the British intelligence that they were confident in?

DR. RICE: The British document was an unclassified document, and so cite the unclassified document. The underlying intelligence to the British document is in the NIE, which is both talking about what a foreign service had said and talking about other attempts to acquire yellow cake. So the underlying documentation here is the NIE. The Agency cleared the speech and cleared it in its entirety.

Q If I could just follow up. On that sentence, you said that the CIA changed the -- that things were done to accommodate the CIA. What was done?

DR. RICE: Some specifics about amount and place were taken out.

Q -- taken out then?

DR. RICE: Some specifics about amount and place were taken out.

Q Was "place" Niger?

Q You won't say what place --

DR. RICE: No, there are several -- there are several African countries noted. And if you say -- if you notice, it says "Africa," it doesn't say "Niger."

MR. FLEISCHER: Yes. To be clear, the sentence in the State of the Union, just off the top of my head, stated, according to British reports, Iraq is seeking to acquire uranium from African nations or Africa. That's the sentence that was stated.

Q Dr. Rice, if the intelligence was the same used by the British government and by your government, and you had doubts about this, did you communicate to the British government at some stage that their continuing insistence --

DR. RICE: You'll have to ask the CIA what they communicated to the British government. I'm not -- I don't know --

Q But they were still wedded to this information while you, at some stage, already said, well, this is not --

DR. RICE: No, no. That's not what we said. Let's go back over what it is we've said. We've said that given subsequent information about the Niger documents, this -- and some of the apparent uncertainty that was out there -- it doesn't rise to the level that we would put in a presidential speech. We don't say it's false. And I heartily object to headlines that say it was false, because nobody has still said that this was false. There are still reports out there that they sought materials from the DROC, that they sought materials from Somalia. In

fact, there is -- if you look at what has even come back on Niger, it says that the Niger government denies that they sold it. So I'm not standing here to say to you, we know that these claims about Africa are false.

What I'm saying to you is we have higher standards for the President's speech, and that's why we have a process that we send speeches to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence Agency, and any other affected Cabinet officer.

Q What do we know about the source, or sources of the documents? Are they people -- again, without getting into anything that would compromise anybody or any operation -- are they people with a proven track record? Did that come up?

DR. RICE: There are a couple of bodies looking at this, including the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, and I think they'll be able to answer those questions. We don't generally get into that kind of issue.

Q But in the back-and-forth, especially with the massaging the language to the satisfaction of the -- I mean, was there any, even casual discussion about --

DR. RICE: I'm going to be very clear, all right? The President's speech -- that sentence was changed, right? And with the change in that sentence, the speech was cleared. Now, again, if the Agency had wanted that sentence out, it would have been gone. And the Agency did not say that they wanted that speech out -- that sentence out of the speech. They cleared the speech.

Now, the State of the Union is a big speech, a lot of things happen. I'm really not blaming anybody for what happened. But there is a fact here, in the way that we clear speeches.

Q So a week later, Colin Powell goes to the U.N., and he decides, as he told us yesterday, not to put that sentence in at all. So what was the new development in those seven days that led him to take it out all together?

DR. RICE: Well, first of all --

Q The time line seems a bit curious.

DR. RICE: He took out a lot of things. But I was with Secretary Powell when he was doing a lot of this. You will remember that it was the Secretary's own intelligence arm, the INR, that was the one that within the overall intelligence assessment had objected to that sentence, had said that they doubts about -- not to that sentence, had doubts about the uranium yellow cake story. So remember that it was the Secretary of State's own agency, the INR, that had in the consensus report, the NIE, taken a footnote to that.

Q But isn't it slightly strange that you have different agencies with different reports and different sentences? I mean, not everyone is singing from the same song sheet here.

DR. RICE: But let me just go through the process, because it's not at all unusual. We have several intelligence agencies, not just one. We have the Central Intelligence Agency, a Defense Intelligence Agency, the State Department has its own intelligence agency. And there is a process which the Director of Central Intelligence, who is the coordinator for all of those agencies, runs which is called the National Intelligence Estimate. The National Intelligence Estimate is supposed to come to a conclusion that is the considered, joint opinion of all

of those intelligence agencies. If at the end of that process, a particular agency still has a reservation, they take a footnote. And so the INR took a footnote in this case.

Q But it's in the Estimate?

DR. RICE: It's in the Estimate. It's, by the way, in another section, but it is in the Estimate. But the DCI is responsible for delivering a judgment, a consensus judgment of the intelligence community, which is called the National Intelligence Estimate. And that's what the President --

Q Is there a chance that that particular citation could be declassified, so we could see it?

DR. RICE: You know, we don't want to try to get into kind of selective declassification, but we're looking at what can be made available.

Q -- the kind of terminology of how footnotes -- if the CIA had taken a footnote, would that have meant that's the end of the sentence?

DR. RICE: No.

Q What are footnotes --

DR. RICE: I understand. The Americans --

Q Bear with us, bear with us.

DR. RICE: No, no, no.

Q We're old Europe here.

DR. RICE: The CIA sits as the CIA, as the Central Intelligence Agency. Its head is both the Director of Central Intelligence and the head of that agency. Then you have a DIA and INR, and so on and so on. I'm now speaking from my own experience, not from my -- it's fairly rare that you get a CIA objection to a DCI product, because they are one and the same.

Q Some are more --

DR. RICE: Well, the CIA is the premier intelligence agency for the United States. And it is the one with a worldwide network, and so forth. So it's maybe not so surprising. But you do get footnotes from other agencies to the consensus argument fairly often. But what INR did not take a footnote to is the consensus view that the Iraqis were actively trying to pursue a nuclear weapons program, reconstituting and so forth.

Q So, Condi, if you look at this --

DR. RICE: And as you remember, the aluminum tubes, INR also had a part.

Q So if you step back from this, Secretary Powell said yesterday that relying on and reporting out intelligence amounts to a judgment call. So there was a choice here. You all could have been cautious or aggressive on this intelligence. You chose to be pretty aggressive, even though in a State of the Union speech, you hung it on the British.

DR. RICE: David, the British report was an open-source report, all right?

Q But the American people don't know all the this. What they know is when the President stands up in the State of the Union to declare something, pretty important --

DR. RICE: When the President stood up in the State of the Union and said, we had reports from -- the British were the primary reporters on this, I mean, the NIE also relying on the British reporting on this particular piece -- that we had reporting that Saddam Hussein had sought yellow cake in Africa. That's all it says.

Now, as I've said to you several times, that may well still be true. It is not, given all that we know of equality, that we would put in a State of the Union, which is why we've been saying to you, look, it should not have gotten in. It's not that it was false. It's not that it was erroneous. It was that there was a certain quality to the reporting that we now believe doesn't rise to the level of a presidential speech.

Q You would agree you were pretty aggressive in your interpretation then?

DR. RICE: No. The NIE says, he's seeking to acquire yellow cake, and cites several African countries. There's nothing aggressive about that. But now, knowing that some of the underlying reporting was problematic, we wouldn't put it there. But again, David, we do have a clearance process and the Agency cleared it.

Q During the week leading up to Secretary Powell's presentation at the U.N. then, was it the State Department's concerns about this intelligence that led to the review and then the decision by Secretary Powell not to put this in? Or was it something that the CIA or you or British intelligence or somebody else was concerned about?

DR. RICE: It was not even discussed in that way. Again, the Secretary has an intelligence arm. That intelligence arm had a particular view of this issue. If you got to the Secretary's statement, you will also see that on the aluminum tubes, the Secretary says that there's some disagreement about the nature of these aluminum tubes. That was also a consensus judgment of the NIA that the aluminum tubes were likely for nuclear centrifuges. The INR had taken an exception. So the Secretary noted that exception, as well.

But I want to go back to something. This is in the context of a broad set of -- broad and deep record of intelligence about procurement networks, about training of scientists, a man who in 1991 was way closer to a nuclear weapon than anybody thought that he was, and that where there were no doubts that he was trying -- he wanted to acquire nuclear weapons and was trying to keep that infrastructure in place. So you have to put it in that context.

Q Then what happened in those seven days --

DR. RICE: I'm saying that when we put it together, put together the Secretary's remarks, the Secretary decided that he would caveat the aluminum tubes, which he did -- he said there's some disagreement about what this might be -- and he decided that he would not use the uranium story. The Secretary also has an intelligence arm that happened to hold that view. But the NIE, which, by the way, the Agency was standing by at the time of the -- the time of the State of the Union, and was standing by at the time of the Secretary's speech, has the yellow cake story in it, had the aluminum tube story in it. Now, if there were doubts about the underlying intelligence to that NIE, those doubts were not communicated to the President, to the Vice President, or to me.

Q What we're trying to get at -- we're trying to get at, was there in the week -- again, only a week passed

between when it was useful information, worth putting out to the public, and when the Secretary decided it wasn't. We're trying to get at what discussion there was, if any, or whether it was a triage, you have other examples that he liked better? I mean --

DR. RICE: -- but I -- there was no discussion in which I was involved about any problems with this, and therefore, the Secretary would not use it. I'm not surprised that given that the Secretary's own agency, the INR, had reservations with it, that the Secretary would decide --

Q Is it fair to conclude -- is it --

Q -- you're saying that the Secretary of State is overruling the President --

DR. RICE: He's not overruling the President's judgment. The Secretary of State said, you know, I don't want to use this particular piece of information, as I understand it. I don't remember this -- I don't think this discussion took place of this specific piece of information, but it did not get into the Secretary's remarks because the Secretary decided not to put it there. He told me yesterday that he decided it was not of that quality.

Q Is it fair to say then, Dr. Rice, that the only thing that changed in the seven days was just the person speaking?

DR. RICE: I can't give you -- I can't say yes or no to that. All right? What I do know is there wasn't a discussion of, oh, this should never have been in the President's speech, let's not put it in the Secretary's speech, no.

Q Were they put together on separate tracks?

DR. RICE: To a certain extent, they were moving along in parallel.

Q But isn't this a crucial issue? Did the President -- but you're discounting this. You're saying that the President relied upon a judgment by the CIA that it was solid enough to report out this intelligence in the State of the Union. A week later the Secretary of State decides it's not solid enough to do so. And you're saying it's because he had his own intelligence? You're shaking your head -- tell me what I'm not getting.

DR. RICE: No, David, what you're not getting is the following: The President made a statement in the State of the Union that in the NIE was the judgment of the intelligence community. The President didn't exaggerate that statement, he didn't make it up. The NIE says Saddam Hussein was seeking this yellow cake, and there are reports that he's seeking it in other African countries. It goes into the State of the Union.

The Secretary of State is putting together, on a somewhat parallel track, a presentation before the United Nations Security Council. And it's very broad and it's got lots of stuff in it. There is a lot of things the Secretary decided not to use and a lot of things that he decided to use. I'm going to tell you, we never really thought that this yellow cake issue was a major issue, because the overwhelming story about Iraqi nuclear reconstitution was really based fundamentally on every -- on these other factors. And so this yellow cake issue, we did not consider to be a major issue. So I'm also not surprised the Secretary didn't put it in.

Q But when we reported the State of the Union address, that was one of the headlines that came out of it.

DR. RICE: Yes, much to our surprise.

Q But it was written as such, as well. I mean, we were meant to notice that line.

DR. RICE: It cited a public document, which probably helped. It was also Britain which probably helped.

Q That was my next question. Sorry, Dr. Rice.

DR. RICE: But the fact is, this was one among many issues about the nuclear program. And so when the Secretary talks about the nuclear program, he talks about -- he was also, by the way, mostly concerned to do things that fit into a presentation that had some impact. So there were a lot of things he left on the cutting floor because they couldn't be visualized. There were a lot of things he left on the cutting floor because it didn't make the case powerfully enough. So a lot got left on the cutting floor.

Q Just one brief one, Dr. Rice. Are you saying that in hindsight, with the experience that we're going through now, you would be more careful to rely on British intelligence in the future --

DR. RICE: No.

Q -- especially when it comes to putting it into State of the Union addresses?

DR. RICE: No. It has nothing to do with British intelligence, nothing to do with British intelligence. We have great trust and faith in British intelligence. It is the fact that the underlying -- some of the underlying information later turned out not to be true, or turned out to be -- there apparently was a forged document involved. Anybody who, knowing that, would not say, oh, perhaps we shouldn't have put that in the State of the Union, would be pulling your leg. Of course, you step back and say, had I known that there was a forged document here, would I put this in the State of the Union? No.

But even with the forged document, there are other reports of his seeking yellow cake in Africa. It's just that we have a higher standard for the President. We don't make him his own fact witness. That's why we send things out to people and say, you know, you have problems with this.

Q Did the Secretary of State, during this seven-day period between the State of the Union and when he delivered his address, did he discuss with you or anyone on your staff his concerns about the yellow cake issue?

DR. RICE: No. In fact, we had a much more extensive discussion of how to characterize the aluminum tubes, frankly. I mean, that was a much more extensive discussion, because we had -- we had a real debate going on about IAEA and the Department of Energy and so forth. That we discussed in some depth. This we did not.

Q Dr. Rice, when did you all find out that the documents were forged?

DR. RICE: Sometime in March, I believe. Is that right?

MR. FLEISCHER: The IAEA reported it.

DR. RICE: The IAEA reported it I believe in March. But I will tell you that, for instance, on Ambassador Wilson's going out to Niger, I learned of that when I was sitting on whatever TV show it was, because that mission was not known to anybody in the White House. And you should ask the Agency at what level it was known in the Agency.

Q When was that TV show, when you learned about it?

DR. RICE: A month ago, about a month ago.

Q Can I ask you about something else?

DR. RICE: Yes. Are you sure you're through with this?

Q Actually, wait a minute. Would it be -- I mean, it would probably be instructive and useful at some point before we get back to Washington to have Secretary Powell explain to us his thought process.

MR. FLEISCHER: But he did explain. He didn't think --

Q He didn't go into it -- we'd like to know why this was left out, whether it was the subject of internal debate with him and his people, that kind of thing.

MR. FLEISCHER: We can't hear you. Everybody is speaking at one time.

Q I'd like to know whether it was a subject -- you know, any kind of ticktock about thoughts and discussions he had about this. We know he didn't discuss it with you. That's fine, but any of his own deliberations, why he left it -- ultimately, why he left it on the cutting room floor.

MR. FLEISCHER: I will pass that on. But look at the transcript last night, because he was asked that last night.

Q What you're saying is, even at the time of the State of the Union speech, the INR, the Secretary of State's intelligence arm, had reservations about the underlying intelligence for --

DR. RICE: As I explained -- well, the INR footnote says, we -- I should actually -- we're dubious about some of these reports about yellow cake. It's also not very specific, by the way. But what I'm saying to you is that there is a process called the National Intelligence Estimate that takes into account that some agencies may have reservations. And that's why it appears in the way that it does. It appears as a judgment and then it appears -- or as information passed. In this case, it is --

Q Rather like a court of third opinion in the dissenting view.

Q -- seven days later, why didn't Powell's -- Secretary Powell's presentation, you say, well, he relied upon the INR --

DR. RICE: No, I didn't say that. I said, the Secretary --

Q -- you said --

DR. RICE: No, I said, it is not surprising to me, given that the Secretary had -- that it was his agency that had some reservations. I'm sure he talks to his people.

Q But weren't they speaking with -- I mean, wasn't the administration speaking with one voice --

DR. RICE: And there were things that got left out of this talk.

Q No, but you're saying that they got left out for time, but he made it clear that it was left out because it was a --

DR. RICE: David, don't put words in my mouth. I said that there were several -- first of all, things got left out because they didn't make the presentation. Secondly, the Secretary chose to leave out some things and to caveat some things that the NIE did not caveat. The NIE is -- on the aluminum tubes, the judgment is they're for particular things. The Secretary says, there's a debate about this. But going back to the President's speech, which is really the issue here, the President of the United States went up to give the State of the Union on the basis of information that was in his National Intelligence Estimate and that everybody thought to be true. The fact of the matter is, it may well still be true. But having very high standards for what we put in a presidential speech, knowing now that at least one of the documents underlying this story was a forgery, we wouldn't have put it in the President's speech. It doesn't mean we disagree with the British that it may well still be true. The British may well be right about that. There are other African countries that are cited, which is one reason that the President's speech refers to Africa, not simply to Niger.

So the process is an NIE that is the basis of this, and then if the Agency had reservations about information that was in the NIE, then the DCI -- and I think he will tell you that if he had reservations, he did not make those known to the President, to the Vice President, or to me -- if he had reservations.

Q If you take into account the issue that we've just spent the last half an hour --

(end side one of tape; begin side two, same Q in progress)

Q -- (in progress) -- the fact that it hasn't been found yet, the fact that Saddam Hussein is still at large, the daily attacks against American troops, how would you classify the overall situation? And do you think there's a problem that ordinary Americans might think, why did we go down this route at all?

DR. RICE: I don't think there is a problem in that way, because the President told the American people early on that when we went to war to deal with the menace that was the Saddam Hussein regime, and that had defied the world on weapons of mass destruction for more than a decade, and that was known to have had unaccounted for stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction -- U.N. reporting, not our own -- a menace that President Clinton had tried to deal with, with actual military force in 1998, he told the American people, I'm doing this because I believe it's in the best security interest of the United States. He also said it's going to be hard, but we're staying there until there is a stable postwar Iraq. We have a commitment to the region for a stable postwar Iraq; we have a commitment to the Iraqi people, having helped them to throw off this bloody tyrant; we have a commitment to the entire region, which is very much now a region of great trouble and turmoil, leading directly to the attacks on the United

States in September of 2001. The President would stand up and say that today, just as he said it in January, February and March of last year.

Everybody has known that this was going to be hard, but we shouldn't lose track of what has been accomplished. Saddam Hussein is out of power. Yes, some of his henchmen who benefited from the terror of that regime against the Iraqi people are still terrorizing the Iraqi people. And it should be notable to everybody that they're going after successes of the coalition, so -- the power grid. We rebuild the power grid; they try to go after the power grid. Oil, which we are getting back up and running -- the Iraqis are getting back up and running -- for the benefit of the Iraqi people; they want to go after that. The Iraqis who want to participate in building their own future, like the Iraqi police, those are the people that these thugs are targeting, just like they

targeted the Iraqi people for the two-and-a-half decades of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Now, the Iraqi people are getting control of their own future. I think that the -- when the leadership council is in place and you have Iraqi governance structures in place, that it will be even clearer to the world that this is not targeted against the coalition, this is targeted directly against the Iraqi people. And it's maybe not surprising given the way that these thugs behaved against their own people was for two decades, the last three decades.

Q Can I ask one more on Africa? As an African American, what has it meant to you to see Africa, to be here with this President? What are your impressions of what you're learning?

DR. RICE: I have found this an incredibly moving trip in a lot of ways. Goree Island was extraordinary to me. The incongruity of it -- it's such a beautiful place and that these horrors could have happened at this beautiful place, and you can almost imagine these stolen people suddenly arriving on the shore of this absolutely beautiful place and being put in these horrible cells where large numbers of them would die. And then I think the Gate of No Return I still have a lump in my throat for, thinking which one of my ancestors might have actually gone through that gate on their way to the United States.

But I thought that the President said something that really struck me as an African American, and it's funny, it's always struck me as an African American, which is that the remarkable thing is that those horrors and the horrors that they experienced on the way to the United States, and the horrors they experienced once they got to the United States didn't break the spirit of these people, that somehow they managed to, in many cases, find faith to find somehow a sense of community.

You know, jumping the broom is still an African American tradition at marriage -- not that I have done that yet -- (laughter) -- but, you know, it's still considered a tradition. It comes out of slavery, and it was in some ways a defiant act because people weren't really supposed to marry. And you just see the tremendous spirit and toughness of these people. And it just makes me extremely proud to be descendant from those people.

Q One more brief one, please? Guantanamo Bay, a big issue that's come up at the moment in Britain is relations between U.S. and U.K. over the British citizens held in Guantanamo Bay. The British government wants reassurances, especially members in the ruling party want reassurances that they will not be facing the death penalty. Can you tell us anything about negotiations?

DR. RICE: This is being worked out between the U.S. government and the British government. Britain is a friend, and so we're going to be open and transparent with Britain about what's going on here. I think we have to remember, these people were picked up for terrorism and so that has to be kept in mind. But both the treatment of them, which is in accordance with the standards of the Geneva Convention, and also the very careful process that the military commission sets up to try to deal with, and balance the concerns of national security with due process, those are being discussed with the British government and I'm sure will be fine.

MR. FLEISCHER: Thank you, everybody.

END 1:07 P.M. (Local)