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Press Briefing by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley

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6:58 P.M. (Local)

SECRETARY RICE: Good evening, and welcome to this press availability with the National Security Advisor and with me. We will divide the labor. I'm going to make a few general comments; Steve has a few specifics for you, on particularly Afghanistan and missile defense and a couple of other matters.

But I thought that I might begin by reflecting on the fact that of course this is the President's last NATO summit. I accompanied him to the first NATO summit in June of 2001, and at that time I don't think that anyone could have foreseen the transformation of the Alliance that has taken place and that was on full display today, at what I think was a truly consequential summit for NATO.

The President's policies have had a great deal to do with that transformation. If you look at the issues that were addressed today, and the decisions taken, on Afghanistan it was probably unimaginable in June of 2001 that NATO would be fighting to help the Afghan people to destroy -- to defeat the terrorists and to bring a decent and democratic life to Afghanistan. I'm an old student of NATO. I remember when there were lots of discussions about whether NATO would ever go out of area. And I think you can say that that debate has ended, and the vision statement which affirms the centrality of the Afghan mission to NATO's -- to NATO and to its members; that affirms that NATO will remain engaged with and committed to Afghanistan is quite a remarkable document. And Steve can talk in a minute about some of the troop contributions that were pledged.

Secondly, we have a breakthrough document on missile defense for the Alliance. Again, I remember going to that first summit, when I think the President talked about missile defense, and perhaps only two allies gave even lukewarm support for the notion of missile defense. But now it is clearly understood in the Alliance that the challenges of the 21st century, the threats of the 21st century make it necessary to have missile defense that can defend the countries of Europe; that this is important to NATO, and we will take that work ahead.

The NATO allies also asked Russia to stop its criticism of the Alliance effort and to join in the cooperative efforts that have been offered to it by the United States.

Third, we had an extensive discussion of NATO enlargement. And I think that one of the things that this President will be remembered for is the extraordinary record of the enlargement of NATO during this period of time. This President has seen nine new members come into NATO. That brings, with the three that were admitted in '99, to the number 12 out of 26 of the members of NATO are actually members who were liberated after the Cold War. And that has had a significant impact on the nature of the Alliance; it has had a significant impact on the Alliance's commitment, dedication -- and intensive dedication -- to the cause of freedom.

This was fully on display during the discussions about the extension of MAP to Ukraine and Georgia. Most of the countries around the table would have been willing to extend MAP to Ukraine and Georgia today, but there were countries that had concerns. And we did, indeed, agree that we would take up this decision again, this question again in December with the foreign ministers having the authority to make decisions about MAP for Ukraine and Georgia.

But I would call your attention to the extraordinary language in this statement because if there was an open door, I think there is a now wide open door, and a couple of questions have been laid to rest: the question of whether or not NATO would ever consider Ukraine off limits, or whether NATO would consider it appropriate to have a member in the Caucasus; that question has been answered with the language that NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. And so those questions are now off the table, and it is a matter of when, not whether.

But even in the discussions of MAP, the strongest advocates, along with the President, for MAP for Ukraine and Georgia now were the newly liberated countries. They made the argument that the future of Ukraine and Georgia is a vital security interest to them. And they also made the argument that MAP had allowed them to overcome old difficulties, differences and conflicts; that MAP had allowed them to have an umbrella for democratic reform. And as a result, they believed strongly in the importance of MAP for these two countries.

So I think that it was, for me, affirming of the decision to expand this Alliance; it was affirming of the decision to keep new blood coming into the Alliance, especially new blood of people who understand what it was to live under tyranny, and now are breathing freedom and liberty with a kind of gusto and enjoyment that perhaps only those who have been denied it can have.

And just as a final note, to sit here in Romania, one of those countries that was admitted during the President's term, and to sit in a palace built by Ceausescu, which I'm quite sure was built for very different purposes, it was a really fine day for NATO.

Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: I'll just talk about four things. One, a little color from the meeting. I thought the meetings last night and today -- one of the things that was interesting about them is they were really a debate among Europeans. And one of the issues was, how do you best get reform, continuing reform out of places like Ukraine and Georgia? And on one school were people who said, you need to see more reform before you can extend them a Membership Action Plan, and

another group of people who had come up through the process of coming into NATO, saying, no, wait a minute, the way you get acceleration of reform is to give countries the assurance of affiliation with a Membership Action Plan, and reassurance that their destination is a membership with NATO. It was interesting to see that debate play out among Europeans.

Second thing interesting about this is that people really got off script. You know, the characterization of these meetings are people sitting around a table reading prepared talking points. In the discussions today, people talked with a first person and a passion that was interesting. And when a text -- a compromised text was finally circulated, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the Secretary General, adjourned the meeting for what was supposed to be 30 minutes and took an hour. And it was astonishing to see groups of foreign ministers, but also heads of state and government, in clusters debating this text. And pretty soon a large crowd developed in the back, and it was a crowd of, if you will, largely men in suits.

And I went back, and seated in the middle of that group was the German Chancellor, talking about this text, explaining her views, and hearing from 10, 15 other countries, many of whom had been through this MAP process and were new members of NATO. And a very vigorous discussion. It went on for some time. The Secretary of State joined. I went back later, and there was the Chancellor, still at her seat, the Secretary of State over her shoulder, and drafting in a group of about 25 people.

And the result was actually a text which was then brought back, the meeting resumed, and with I think one of the most modest changes, the text was drafted -- was adopted. It doesn't happen in NATO meetings a lot. It's a good thing. It's an indication of this Alliance I think grappling with real issues in a very meaningful way.

Second, I want to knock down one thing. Some had said that we had surprised the allies with the President's position on MAP and the strength of that position. I need to say to people that the dialogue we have started, particularly with countries like Germany, the U.K. and France, started really a couple months ago. I had a session with a group of eight or 10 of my European counterparts in Berlin, I think it was; Condi had an early foreign minister section -- session. And we really started putting out the arguments on enlargement -- not making -- affirmatively taking position, but really making the argument. And that continued in a series -- particularly in the last three or four weeks -- of telephone conferences and secure video teleconferences with the President, talking to Angela Merkel, talking to President Sarkozy, and Prime Minister Brown. And also Condi talking to her counterparts and my talking particularly to my German counterpart, but also British and French, really trying to find a compromise, but making clear what the President's position was, and trying to do it quietly and not in the media. The President said early on, about six weeks ago when we got into this, I want to talk to my counterparts; I don't want to have this debate in public, I wanted to do it in privacy and try to bring those folks along.

So this has been a discussion that's been going really for weeks. And the position of the President was very well known. He did, of course, go public in that position in the last week, but it really should not have come as a surprise to anyone.

Third, something that may have not gotten a lot of attention, but something very dramatic, actually, happened. It began when President Sarkozy came to the United States and gave a speech before Congress and indicated that if Europe can make progress in strengthening its own defenses

and its defense commitments, particularly during the French presidency of the EU -- European Union -- which occurs at the last six months of this year, then he would be willing to consider bringing France back into all of NATO's structures. And of course, as you know, that France has been outside the formal military structure for almost 30-plus years -- and talking about the prospect of that, coming back into that integrated military structure, since, I think, they got out in 1967, I believe.

The President, in turn, welcomed the initiative that the French President is taking, along with his British and German counterparts, to enhance the capability of European nations to support both EU missions and NATO missions. He made it very clear that the United States wants a strong partner in Europe, wants a strong EU partner, and that involves both more military capability for those countries, but also partnering NATO's military capability with EU civilian and political capabilities.

Finally, a lot of discussion about Afghanistan. That meeting was still going on. A number of nations have come forward to offer additional contributions, some of them military, some of them in terms of PRTs -- provincial reconstruction teams, some of them economic and reconstruction. A major move was the indication that France would provide about a battalion worth of forces that would go in -- that would be new to Afghanistan, that would go into the east. And the President made clear that this would permit the United States to move forces from the eastern part of Afghanistan into the south, and that those forces would be available in 2009 to meet the requirement that the Canadians have set for a partner, providing at least a thousand additional combat troops and various enablers. We will be in a position to meet that Canadian requirement.

And two things I would say about that. One is that we are also -- have plans to contemplate additional contributions of troops in Afghanistan in the south in 2009. And secondly, these are all in addition to what I know you are aware of, Marines units, about 3,500 of them, that moved -- that appeared and were moved into the south and are moving into the south now in Kandahar, and will be there into the fall.

Bottom line, a good day on Afghanistan. NATO has adopted a vision statement to explain the mission and the importance of the mission to their publics. They have developed and integrated a plan for integrating political and military instruments in order to try and achieve success there. These NATO heads of state and government recommitted in the strongest possible terms in the presence of President Karzai and the NATO Secretary General their commitment to success of that -- sorry, United Nations Secretary General -- committed to the success of that mission, are stepping up and doing more as we asked, and the United States is responding in turn.

Thank you. Questions.

Q With these decisions today by NATO, do you think that President Bush and President Putin will be able to settle their differences this weekend on missile defenses, or do you think it could be more of a broad, strategic statement that they're going to come to?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I certainly think that there will be a -- we expected that there would be a strategic framework about which we've talked. And a part of that has to be some discussion of missile defense. We are hopeful that Russia will take the opportunity to express the views that have actually been expressed to us about the usefulness and the importance of the measures that

the United States has been willing to take, concerning the third site in the Czech Republic and Poland, that are meant to allay Russian concerns that somehow this missile defense system, the nine interceptors and radar sites, are somehow aimed at the Russian deterrent. And so that opportunity obviously arises, and already when we were in Moscow the Russians said that these were useful and important. We hope that we can move beyond that to an understanding that we will all have an interest in cooperation on missile defense, but we will see.

Yes.

Q As far as Afghanistan is concerned, are you -- you said you're satisfied with the result. But is this the end of your pressure of the other allies to provide more commitment, more troops, and I think about Italy, Germany and Spain, or you just satisfied with this result, and that's the end of it?

MR. HADLEY: Well, interesting your question is -- "the end of our pressure." I think one of the things that was interesting about that meeting today was the NATO allies are all putting pressure on themselves. And NATO ally after NATO ally said, we have got to succeed here; it is important for the credibility of the Alliance; more to the point, it's important for the security of our people, and we need to succeed and we need to do more.

This isn't just President Bush's line. This is now the line of everyone there. It's what we heard of President Karzai: a lot of progress was made; we all have to do more. Same thing from Secretary General Ban Ki-moon: progress -- need to do more. And as you know, the United Nations is stepping up.

So I think everyone recognizes we need to do more. And it's not like we're going to come to a level and that's it, success is around the corner. This is going to be a long commitment. This is a hard fight. We are going to have to assess our requirements, modify our forces, modify our tactics and strategy, and do it over the long term. So I think what you are seeing is a much more focused engagement in Afghanistan, and a commitment that we cannot fail, and therefore are going to have to, in a very focused way, do more, and work more effectively with the forces that we have, both military and civilian.

Q I wanted to ask a clarification and a question about the President's calls to other leaders. It was Merkel and who else? When did they start? And then I'd like to ask a follow-up to that.

MR. HADLEY: He has had probably I think about three separate either phone calls or secure videoteleconferences with Angela Merkel over the last probably six weeks on this subject. Condi has talked to her counterpart, I've talked to mine. He's had several conversations with Prime Minister Brown and at least a couple with President Sarkozy. Those have tended to be more phone calls and secure video.

The other thing is that when foreign leaders have come either for visits or for meetings in the Oval Office over the last couple -- three months, this is a subject that comes up.

Q And with all that spadework, why then did these countries still oppose this decision to allow Ukraine and Georgia into MAP? And do you still maintain that Russia's opposition had no role in their decision?

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, I want to just, again, read a -- "Today we made clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP." So it was not a question of whether or not Georgia and Ukraine should be in MAP. There were countries who believed, as Steve said, that there needed to be more progress on certain reform issues before MAP could be offered. But there was no disagreement that MAP is in Georgia and Ukraine's future.

But as to Russia, I know that there has been a lot of talk about a Russian veto, there's been a lot of talk about Russian pressure. But if ever there were evidence that Russia did not have an effect, I think that the language "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, we agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. MAP is the next step. Today we made clear that we support these countries' applications for MAP, and we'll look at this again in December," because, as I said, the real breakthrough here is not just about MAP, but there have long been questions about whether NATO would be prepared to countenance membership for Ukraine and countenance membership for a country in the Caucasus like Georgia. And this is an unequivocal statement, yes. I do not, frankly, think that that's probably a very popular position in Moscow.

Q Secretary Rice, what about Macedonia? Are you worried that people will think NATO looks silly for denying membership to a country because of its name?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we certainly regret that Macedonia was not invited today, and we and many others worked to try and make it happen. But NATO is a consensus organization, and the good thing here is that there was no effort to suggest that Macedonia was not ready in any other way, that it didn't somehow meet the criteria. So if you read the language, what it says is that Macedonia essentially is invited pending the name -- resolution of the name issue. I certainly hope it's going to be resolved soon, and I think we've made no secret of the fact that we believe that Macedonia should have been invited, but it's a consensus organization.

Q How is it going to be resolved, do you know?

SECRETARY RICE: Pardon me?

Q How is it going to be resolved? Will Macedonia have to change its name?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, there is a U.N. negotiator, Matt Nimitz, and some of our people have also been very involved in trying to come to a decision.

As you know, the United States already recognizes Macedonia by the name "Republic of Macedonia," and so do some others. The communique says "as soon as possible." I think the allies really mean as soon as possible, because everybody is concerned that the message be the right one to Macedonia and to the Macedonian people, that they did not fail somehow to be invited to NATO. They will be invited pending name.

MR. HADLEY: I think we have time for three more questions. Condi has got to go. Sir.

Q Were there any more commitments beyond France for Afghanistan? And how much of the reasoning for the verbiage from NATO today on Afghanistan was due to the Canadian threat as opposed to more positive reasons?

MR. HADLEY: Well, again, the Canadian threat was in a context of wanting to extend and reaffirm their presence in Afghanistan. Their basically comment was, we need help. And NATO's answer today is, help is on the way.

I've got a list of about 12 or 13 countries that have made contributions. What I'd like to do is get our mission here, to pipe that up in a form where we can put that out to folks.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Follow on that. What is the correct number to use, in terms of additional forces, either in 2008 or 2009?

MR. HADLEY: We're going to have to tote that up. It's a range in each case. I can't give you a number here. These commitments are things that started at the dinner. More of them have been made today. Some of them are commitments that still need to make their way through local political structures and legislatures. My guess it's going to be two to three weeks before we got that list. But the response is a good one, and we'll try and put it in a form we can get out to you.

Q But not in the magnitude of 10,000 troops?

MR. HADLEY: No. This isn't going to go in that -- this is going to be an incremental -- and remember it's -- people are focused on the number of troops. It's if you -- certainly if you add ours, if you add our Marines it's going to be several thousand before you add the 3,500 we're putting in. But the other thing that's important is, what kind of units, to do what; what kind of folks are stepping up to take responsibility for provincial reconstruction teams? Remember, this is an integrated political-military strategy in terms of Afghanistan, so it's going to be a varied picture. It's not going to sort down to so many thousand troops. That's not the right way to look at it.

Q But you're short of what the commanders asked for two years ago, still.

MR. HADLEY: There is more to do. And I think you're going to find that as we get into this, those requirements are going to change. We are not at the level of what, at this point in time, what our commanders, looking forward, say we need. And that's why we said, more to do, because there was a period of time when you were all writing, six months ago, that no one was stepping up to do anything. And that's changed today.

Q Why is it impossible to --

SECRETARY RICE: Bill, Bill --

Q Why is it possible to believe that things would change in six months, given the nature of the objections, the stated objections to membership for Ukraine and Georgia, having to do with their progress towards democratic reform? I mean, what's going to change in six months that would make a difference?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, just let's keep the language accurate -- it's MAP; it's Membership Action Plan, not membership, which is a very important point. Secondly, we will --

Q I revise and extend my remarks.

SECRETARY RICE: Secondly, we'll have that discussion. There will be, for instance, a parliamentary election in May in Georgia. There may be some other evidence to look at.

But, look, I don't want to suggest that there aren't those who believe that this may take longer. But I do want you to understand -- because I've seen it written certain times, "Allies reject Bush appeal." This was actually an appeal from most of the allies that this be done. And it was appealed most strongly by those states that have been through MAP and that are newly liberated countries. So I would at least hope that when I read the next story that I'll have an accurate -- it will have an accurate reflection of what the balance of forces really was inside that room.

MR. HADLEY: If I could add one thing, some -- a number of countries, I would say a majority of the countries, would have given MAP today. And I think their hope, and our hope, is that another six months, with this kind of commitment to joining NATO, you will see the kind of progress that may actually change some minds when this is returned to in December. We'll see.

Q Secretary Rice, on the relationship between NATO and the European security forces, the change that we've seen today and the moves ahead with France, that doesn't mean that the U.S. will give up the right of first refusal in NATO missions, in military -- so is there a change in that, that the Europeans --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, there's nothing that suggests -- there's nothing that suggests what has been called "Berlin Plus" is to be overturned here. I think everybody understands that this is an issue of NATO wanting to do certain missions. But, look, there are missions that NATO will not do, should not do. The European Union is really the lead nation -- the lead unit in places in Africa, for instance, where we think that, and the Europeans think, that greater capability will be important to them.

I want to be very clear: We have never been concerned that Europe will do too much. The question is, will Europe do enough for its own defense, particularly given declining defense budgets in Europe and the importance of getting new expeditionary capability, new mobile capability so that you can go to the fight quickly, or go to peacekeeping quickly? That's really the concern. So it is absolutely welcome that the French and others want to take a period of time to increase Europe's defense capability. There is not a problem of too little defense capability in the world.

Q Dr. Rice, after the step taken today on the missile defense by NATO, how much do you expect the allies to share the financial burden to realize it?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, there will have to -- on the basis of the commitment taken today, there will obviously have to be planning of how this will go forward. But I do know that there are a number of allies who want very much to be a part of various aspects of missile defense. You have to recognize that some of this is hardware, yes; some of it is information-sharing; some of it is the ability to have appropriate warning and appropriate consolidation of warning. So there are a lot of elements here and there will be plenty of opportunity for people to share in putting missile defense together.

There has been a study that informs the decisions here, but there will, of course, be quite a bit of work to be done to understand how the architecture will work in the integration of the architecture across Europe. What we wanted to make very clear, and it is now very clear in this document, is that the United States considers the Alliance security to be indivisible and that whatever is done in missile defense will cover all allies.

MR. HADLEY: What's significant today, in addition to what Condi said -- I just want to put a little sharper point on it -- there has been, over 10 years, a real debate as to whether there is a ballistic missile threat. And I think that debate ended today, when, in the Alliance document there's a recognize that it is a threat that threatens the Alliance.

Secondly, there has been a debate as to whether what we are working on with the Polish -- with Poland and the Czech Republic is part of, and accepted by NATO as part of, the defense, as a contribution to protecting NATO countries from missile defense. That also got answered today in the affirmative.

And third, there was a tasking to develop some options -- not make decisions, develop some options -- about how to deal with that threat, and particularly that part of the threat that the system in Poland and the Czech Republic would not cover --- options about how to deal with that threat to be looked at in 2009 at the next NATO summit.

SECRETARY RICE: Last question.

Q Can you talk about China and the sentencing of the activists and what that means for American participation in the Olympics?

SECRETARY RICE: Certainly. First of all, it is a decision that is deeply disturbing to the United States. It is exactly the kind of decision that we have tried to convince the Chinese is not only not in the interests of human rights and in the interests of rule of law, but actually not in China's interest.

And that is a case that we're going to continue to make. We are about to restart a human rights dialogue with China. One of the reasons to restart a human rights dialogue to which the Chinese agreed, after the suspension of that dialogue for some time, is to have a place where we can bring up not just individual cases, but also structural issues about what kinds of things are considered criminal in China that in most of the world would not be considered so.

And so this is a long process. We do it respectfully with China, but there is no doubt that this is a decision that is deeply disturbing to us, and we're communicating that to the Chinese authorities.

Q Will it affect American participation in the Olympics?

SECRETARY RICE: The President has spoken to the fact that this is a sporting event, but I -- we've also said that we take seriously our obligation to talk to the Chinese about human rights before, during and after.

And I might just make one other point. This is also going to be a big event not just for the regime, this is going to be a big event for the Chinese people. And whatever one thinks of the behavior of

the regime, even at times like this, there are -- the Chinese people need to know that the United States and the American people support their emergence on the world stage.

Thank you.

END 7:26 P.M. (Local)