

This is historical material, "frozen in time." The web site is no longer updated and links to external web sites and some internal pages will not work.



THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

[Home](#) > [News & Policies](#) > [Press Secretary Briefings](#)

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 23, 2008

Press Gaggle by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Press Secretary Dana Perino, and Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs Daniel Price

Aboard Air Force One
En route Andrews Air Force Base

 [In Focus: APEC 2008](#)

1:55 P.M. EST

SECRETARY RICE: I just want to say a few words and then I'll take your questions.

The President I think made the point that he had come to APEC every year of his presidency, even after September 11th, when he went to Shanghai. APEC is a very special organization and I actually think it has evolved and gotten stronger over the years. But what it really represents is an opportunity to unite the interests of countries on the Pacific Rim, and means for us the countries of Latin America and the countries of Asia, and they are the most vibrant and vital economies in the world; but they also are some of our strongest partners.

So APEC, because it goes along that Pacific Rim and brings Latin America and Asian interests together for us, it's been a very effective organization.

Dan Price will talk about the meetings and what was achieved. I think following on the G20 meeting it gave an extremely strong message about the need to avoid protectionism, very strong free trade message -- these are largely countries that believe very strongly in free trade and open economies. I think it was also an opportunity to push forward -- and Dan can talk about this -- some of the efforts to institutionalize some of the APEC mechanisms, like the Secretariat and so forth. So it was a very good meeting.

But it also -- I think you should think of it as highlighting two areas, two regions in which the President's policies have been extremely successful. If you look at Asia, the United States has better relations with China than ever, across the board -- and it's not easy to manage a very complicated relationship with a country that is emerging in the way that China is. It's not that we don't have our differences, we do -- on human rights; sometimes on economic matters, as well,

issues of economic reform.

But whether it is the way that the President has kept at front and center the importance of the United States remaining open to the advantages of a growing Chinese economy, resisting protectionist pressures, using the strategic economic dialogue that Hank Paulson has to press toward an opening of the Chinese economy; or if you look at more traditional foreign policy issues like North Korea and the six-party talks, Taiwan -- which you've had really one of the great secrets is the tremendous progress in Cross Strait relations between Taiwan and China -- excellent relations, deepening relations with Japan, deepening relations with South Korea, with India -- India is not here, but in that part of Asia as well; strong relations with Vietnam.

Asia has been a very important area for us and an area in which I think we leave the relationships in a much, much stronger position than we found them.

Similarly, in Latin America, where I think the President has broken through an age-old struggle about ideology in Latin America -- this is not a question of whether countries come from the left or from the right, it's really an issue of countries that are governing wisely, democratically, that have open economies that are open to trade and that invest in their people. And so we have friends from the left, like Brazil and Chile and Uruguay; and friends from the right, like Colombia.

And the free trade agreements that have been signed with the countries of this region are the most advanced -- not just in terms of the economics of them, but also in terms of labor rights and environmental policy. And so they are kind of models of free trade agreements going forward. And the President heard that in every meeting that he had here -- the strength of these various relationships.

And so it was good to come to APEC one last time. But I think what it really -- this is a multilateral organization, but what you really feel here is the very strong impact that the President has had and that his policies have had on our relationships in Asia and in Latin America.

So now I'll take some questions, if you'd like.

Q Madam Secretary, when is the next six-party delegation talks?

SECRETARY RICE: December 8th, they're scheduled for in China. And we expect that there, there will be a push to finalize the verification protocol. It's very important that that verification protocol reflect the discussions that Chris Hill had with his North Korean counterparts when he was in Pyongyang, a set of assurances that were given. But it's also very important that it reflects the consensus of the six parties, which is of the other states of the six parties -- Japan, South Korea, China, Russia -- that this verification protocol is going to have to be robust enough to make certain that we're dealing with all of North Korea's nuclear programs.

Q When you talk about institutionalizing it and the rest, Dennis Wilder used the phrase "we're going to put it on paper." Is that really where we are? I mean, is it --

SECRETARY RICE: The verification protocol is already on paper. There were some clarifications and assurances that were part of the negotiating record that now need to be

formalized in the six-party document.

Q Are you confident that you'll be able to lock that down and leave not only the six-party framework in a good spot for President Obama, but specifically get a verification protocol that works?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, North Korea is not the most predictable country in the world, so I'm not going to try to predict. But we have very solid agreement among the six parties -- among the five parties as to what needs to be done, and I think the North Koreans also know that in order to move forward.

But let me just note that we also, of course, have had substantial disablement going on of the North Korean reactor. And some elements of verification have already begun, like the exchange of documents.

Q Madam Secretary, the President will meet with Prime Minister Olmert tomorrow. Looking at the Middle East and also North Korea and Iran -- three, kind of, unsettled hot spots, is the President comfortable with where things stand right now and the situation that he is leaving to his successor?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's remember you always leave something to your successor. It's not as if foreign policy ends when one administration ends and another begins. But I think that in all of these areas there has been significant progress that can be built upon. We just talked about the six-party framework. This is very different than where we found the agreed framework, which was a U.S.-North Korea bilateral relationship that was being violated by the North Koreans; it was freezing, not reversing the program. So I think it's a much stronger place to leave that. And I do hope we can leave a strong verification protocol, as well.

Q Is there any sense of disappointment at unfinished business?

SECRETARY RICE: Sheryl, the North Koreans took 30 years to get a nuclear weapons program; I think it might take more than a couple to unravel it. But I believe very firmly that we've left a good basis on which to do that.

If you look at Iran -- again, I remember my first trip to Europe as Secretary in 2005, and what struck me was that somehow the United States was viewed as the problem. This was -- the Europeans were all talking about Europe needing to mediate between Iran and the United States. You don't hear that any more. You hear a strong consensus that the Iranians need to stop their -- to freeze their enrichment and reprocessing activities. You hear a strong consensus that they can have peaceful uses of nuclear -- peaceful nuclear uses, but not anything that would lead to a weapons program. You have a strong consensus that's not just the six parties, but also four Security Council resolutions.

And so I don't know when it will -- the time will come that an Iranian leadership will finally look around it and see its isolation and see what's happening to its economy and see that the Iranian people deserve better. But I do know that the international pressures are there and they've been built painstakingly over time.

And, finally, on the Middle East -- we found the region for the Israeli-Palestinian issue frankly literally in flames. Second intifada had begun. Over the next year there would be major Israeli military operations and the reoccupation of the West Bank; no talks -- Ariel Sharon had come to power not to make peace, but to defeat the intifada. Yasser Arafat had turned his back on peace and was taking arms from Iran and corrupt and continuing to deal with terrorists.

And you just have a fundamentally different situation now. Out of the Annapolis process you have a robust negotiating process between the parties for the first time in seven years. I can tell you that they've made a lot of progress -- and they told that to the Quartet last week. We have a lot of work being done from the ground up, in terms of building the institutions for the Palestinian state -- security forces, Salam Fayyad's economic activities. And you have Arab support. The Saudis were at Annapolis under their own flag for the first time, and they've maintained their interest and support for this process.

So I think even though there was not an agreement by the end of the year, it is really largely because of the political situation in Israel. It's in pretty good shape.

Q Is the meeting with Olmert just a farewell, or is it more?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, there are always things to talk about between the Prime Minister and the President, and I'm sure they'll have a robust discussion of all the regional issues. And there are still a number of things that the Israelis are doing and need to continue to do to strengthen Palestinians. The work on road map obligations; the work on the movement and access issues; the work on helping to build Palestinian institutions. All of these are issue that still need to be addressed, and they will be.

Okay? Great.

Q Is this your last summit, also, Madam Secretary?

SECRETARY RICE: It's my last APEC summit. I have a ministerial next week, so I'm off to Brussels -- or to London and then Brussels. So I've got a bit more traveling, unfortunately, to do.

Q Are you looking forward to transition meetings with Senator Clinton?

SECRETARY RICE: I look forward to transition meetings with whomever President-elect Obama names. There are some very capable people that are being talked about. But I think we ought to allow the Obama transition, President-elect the courtesy of naming his people.

Q And after January 20th what are you going to do?

SECRETARY RICE: Get back west of the Mississippi as fast as I can. I'm going back to Stanford/Hoover. I will write a book or two, or so. I am going to also get reconnected to some issues that I was involved in before. You have to remember that before taking on the national security job I actually was not doing foreign policy for six years, I was provost at Stanford.

I am a major advocate for K-12 education. I started a nonprofit in 1992 that's now got five centers. And I want to work on those issues because -- you know, it's been great, this is a fabulous

country and there is no greater honor than representing this country. And you recognize that we are really -- we are respected, maybe even a little feared through military power; admired, maybe even a little envied for economic power. But fundamentally admired for the sense that in America it really doesn't matter where you came from, it matters where you're going; and that people of humble circumstance do rise to the top.

And I've always thought that if we're going to be confident and lead -- which we really have to do; the United States has to do -- we have to make sure that our own fundamentals are strong. And my own concerns about the state of education in America are pretty strong at this point. You know, as an educator it just breaks my heart that there are kids -- particularly kids in public schools -- who are not being educated for the jobs of the 21st century -- math, science, technology; but also who just are not going to make that breakthrough that education gives you to personal fulfillment.

But as Secretary of State it's terrifying, because if we can't compete, we're not going to lead and we are going to turn inward. So I think I can use the dual citizenship as an academic and as a former Secretary of State to really talk about the education issues as a national security priority, and that's one of the things I'll do.

Q Will your book be an autobiography?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't know, Sheryl, I'm still -- right now I'm still trying to get through the next few weeks and then I'll sit down and think about it.

Q And are there any plans for some of the longtime advisors to the President -- people like yourself, who have been with him for eight years -- to get together before you leave? Is there a dinner or some sort of -- are you going to have reunions?

SECRETARY RICE: You mean a commencement dinner? We'll have that, I think. (Laughter.)

MS. PERINO: And now Dan Price will give a readout on the meeting.

MR. PRICE: We just completed a very successful summit. This was President Bush's eighth APEC meeting. The priorities of the United States were very well reflected both in the discussions of the leaders, as well as in the resulting statements.

I'll get to those in a moment, but I did want to point out that at a certain point during the second leaders' retreat at the leaders' meeting this morning, President Yudhoyono made a point of thanking President Bush for being such a good friend of APEC, for his commitment to the region, for being a very good listener, a supporter and advocate of free trade. And this was greeted by a round of applause by all the leaders.

In terms of what was covered, as I indicated in a statement that was circulated yesterday, there was very, very strong support for and an endorsement of the work of the G20 leaders, both with respect to dealing with the financial crisis and getting the economies going. There was a resounding rejection of protectionism. The commitment to continue trade and investment liberalization in the region was palpable.

The strong sentiment to conclude a framework agreement, that is the modalities agreement, on Doha was very, very strong. In my experience in this job, the conviction to get it done was unprecedented. Indeed, a number of the leaders noted a certain amount of frustration, saying that in these Doha negotiations we always seem to be finding ourselves in a dynamic where we're catering to the lowest common denominator and trying to please the country in the room who wants to deal the least. Another leader -- actually, a couple leaders suggested -- we need to push forward on Doha, and if there are countries who don't want to join in, so be it.

I say these two points only to give you a sense of the degree of commitment of the leaders in the room to try and get this done.

On the topic of regional economic integration: There was universal support for continuing these efforts, both through the work of APEC on developing these so-called model measures, or model chapters of FTAs; but also leaders spoke about the need to harmonize and rationalize existing FTAs in the region to help deal with this kind of -- some refer to it as this "noodle bowl" of bilateral and regional trade agreements.

There was a great deal of discussion and support for the transpacific partnership -- the new FTA negotiations among Singapore, Chile, New Zealand and Brunei -- that the United States announced that it would join in September, and that Australia and Peru announced yesterday that they would join. There was a great deal of interest in this agreement as one of the paths to realize a free trade area of the Asia Pacific.

On climate change, there was a good discussion about efforts underway both through the U.N. framework convention talks and through the major economies process. Indeed, the leaders welcomed expressly the positive contributions of the major economies process to addressing climate change. There was discussion of the need to foster cross-border energy trade and investment, and to continue the work to enhance energy efficiency.

A number of countries described what they were doing unilaterally to deal with efficiency and to pursue alternatives. A number of countries noted the efforts of the United States, Japan, UK and others in the clean technology fund, to help get existing technologies, clean technologies to the developing world.

President Bush emphasized his continued support for addressing climate change comprehensively -- which, as he explained, in order to have an effective agreement you needed commitments of all major economies to either reduce greenhouse gas emissions or slow their growth; you needed to continue to invest in new technologies; and you needed to get existing technologies deployed in the developing world so that they could take a cleaner path towards economic development than was available when the industrialized nations were developing.

He also pointed out that as we focus on these issues -- climate change, economic integration -- we cannot lose focus on the need to help the most vulnerable, and to alleviate human suffering of those afflicted with AIDS, malaria, TB, hunger and neglected tropical diseases.

Next there was a very thorough discussion of disaster preparedness. Many countries in the region have been severely affected by natural disasters. And there was a great deal of discussion about the need to coordinate and enhance disaster preparedness at the regional level.

There was a good discussion of food and product safety. And there was also a very good discussion of food security, the need to foster climates conducive to increased research and development and investment in the agricultural sector; the need to boost production and the need to promote science-based regulations so as to encourage the adoption of advanced technologies, including biotechnologies.

There was also a discussion related to food, of the need to enhance the local capacity to deliver food, both through removing infrastructure bottlenecks and through adjusting our aid systems to enhance local purchase.

Finally, there was a good discussion of corruption and the declaration well reflects this, and I refer you to that. This was a very important issue to the United States because corruption truly is a serious threat to social and economic development in the region. And there was a renewed commitment of the leaders to address this and to criminalize corrupt conduct.

I think I'll stop there.

Q Dan, I had two questions, please, on the economy. In its final declaration, APEC or APEC leaders said that the financial crisis be fixed in 18 months. Can we assume that President Bush supports that timetable and believes in that timetable?

MR. PRICE: That particular sentence was added by the President of Peru, as the Chair. Certainly some in the region think that recovery may take 18 months. President Bush believes that the actions we are taking now will begin to produce results in the much nearer term, in the coming months. But again, coming back to the key point that with countries agreeing to pursue pro-growth policies, reject protectionism, ensure continued trade and investment liberalization, the President shares the confidence that we will be able to get through this crisis.

Q And also, this is obviously a pro-trade organization -- in the meetings did the leaders express concern about what might happen under an Obama administration? Was there a sense of apprehension, of maybe sealing up Doha and other deals now, before President Obama takes office? Any concern like that that you heard?

MS. PERINO: I'll say that from my perspective there was a general feeling of a concern of protectionism, and that's been true at the previous meetings. The next administration will have to make their own policies and make their own way, and they'll be here next week. But we're not waiting until next year to help them start transitioning, because a lot of leaders have already been in touch with them.

Trade was a big topic on the campaign. And you've heard from us what our policy position is. The leaders at APEC, which represents 21 countries, plus the G20 from last weekend -- some of that is overlap -- but they recognize that the best way to move forward and improve economies and ensure growth is through free trade.

So I think there was a general concern about protectionism. This goes back to the President's concern from I think the 2005 or 2006 State of the Union -- I think 2006 -- when he talked about the concerns about countries that have a tendency to turn inward and throw up barriers. He did a lot of studying and reading up over the years in regards to what happened in 1929, when we in

our country, we raised taxes and then we passed the Smoot-Hawley Act, which was anti-trade. And then what followed was a very rough decade of the Great Depression.

And I think that the more that we can do what Secretary Rice was just talking about -- continue to educate our people, make sure that they're confident, that they can compete in the world -- that we will be able to foster more free trade because it's good for our workers and it's certainly good for these countries. And what happens there affects us, too, and we've seen that in this global economic crisis, that we're all inter-connected and inter-related.

Q You know, all this talk of protectionism, I mean, many of these nations are among the most protectionist in the world. You know, how do you square that circle, basically? You know, you've got a lot of people at this table that already have extremely protectionist policies in place, so it's fine for them to say, well, we're not going to make it worse. But they've already got much higher trade barriers, for instance, than the United States might have. And that could have an impact down the line, in terms of the political pressure that comes on the issues that don't have those kind of barriers.

MR. PRICE: Let me respond to it in two ways. Certainly there are many countries in APEC whose economies are less open than our own. There's no question about that.

With respect to the commitment not to raise new trade and investment barriers for the next 12 months, that's significant because although they may have the right to do so under WTO rules, what they're saying is, we won't do that; we are not going to exacerbate this economic downturn by throwing up new barriers, number one.

Number two, they also said, we are committed both to the successful conclusion of a Doha Round -- which is going to require a lowering of trade barriers and new market access for good, services and agricultural products. And they said they're committed to continuing down the road of regional economic integration, as well, which will have a similar result.

Q I have a question on Doha. There was another extra push on Doha in the statement. But you have countries like India and Brazil, who are not present -- they've been some of the biggest obstacles to completing a Doha Round. What would be a reason for any kind of optimism.

MR. PRICE: India and Brazil, while not at APEC, were at the G20 meeting. And like the other leaders at the G20 meeting, they threw their strong support, one, to reject protectionism, and, two, to get a Doha modalities agreement done this year. That was determination expressed at the leaders' level that included India and Brazil. And although they were not here, they made their views clear at the G20 summit in Washington.

Q So you're going to hold their feet to the fire, then?

MR. PRICE: Leaders mean what they say and we will seek to ensure that all leaders do what they say.

Q Just a practical question for those of us who don't follow Doha so closely -- is there a set expiration date to the talks? Do they continue on after President Bush leaves office? Or what is the time frame?

MR. PRICE: There is no set expiration date for the talks. We came very close in July, as you know. And countries feel that with a final push we stand a very good chance of concluding modalities this year. That will then leave some negotiation for next year's -- not "some," a significant amount of negotiation after modalities in terms of negotiating the precise tariff schedules, as well as making more concrete the services commitments.

Q Do you feel that these two summits taken together -- would you go so far as to say that these two summits have revived the Doha talks? Have they breathed new life into these talks?

MR. PRICE: I would say that these two summits coming in such close succession with the significant players all represented at one summit or the other -- it shows a renewed, if not newfound, commitment to completing a modalities agreement this year.

And if I could just offer a final observation, the United States came to APEC with an affirmative agenda -- not simply to say goodbye, but with a strong, affirmative agenda. And that agenda we believe is realized and well reflected not only in the declarations, but in the statements of other leaders who signaled their broad support for that agenda.

Thank you.

Q Dana, on a separate topic --

MS. PERINO: You guys are killing me. Just kidding. We're killing Ellen. (Laughter.)

Q There's been some speculation that Citigroup might be rescued by the federal government. Do you know of any talks going on between Citigroup and --

MS. PERINO: I don't.

Q Is Citigroup one of those items that's too big to fail?

MS. PERINO: You're going to have to call the Treasury Department. I don't have anything for you. I've been here in Lima, Peru, and any talks like that would take place between the Treasury Department, not at the White House.

Q Do you know if the President would be supportive of a federal rescue?

MS. PERINO: I'm not going to comment on it. I'm just going to refer you over there, to the Treasury Department.

Q Dana, is the President wistful after this final summit?

MS. PERINO: No.

Q No?

MS. PERINO: He's ready to go home.

Q Where is Mrs. Bush?

MS. PERINO: She's up there with little Barbara -- little Barbara Bush -- they call her little Barbara, that's just her nickname. Their daughter is here.

Q What was the electric guitar for in the meeting with President Garcia?

MS. PERINO: I did not see it, I don't know. Do you know about an electric guitar?

MR. SICILIANO: It was a gift, but I'll get more details.

MS. PERINO: It was a gift; we'll find out.

Q Did you have a favorite bib?

MS. PERINO: What?

Q Did you have a favorite bib?

MS. PERINO: Bib?

Q Did you not see the bibs?

MS. PERINO: Bibs? Or would you call them a poncho?

Q No, no, no, what they made the press wear -- red bibs, yellow bibs, blue bibs.

Q This was basically about us being --

MS. PERINO: It would be fun to see you humiliated like that.

Q What about the President, did he like the poncho?

MS. PERINO: He always enjoys the costume picture. (Laughter.) Don't they all? Can't you see the look on their faces?

Okay. Thanks, guys.

END 2:27 P.M. EST