

Press Conference by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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(10:17 a.m. EST)

SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. I'm here principally to take your questions, but I'd like to make a few remarks before doing that.

2007 has been a busy and challenging year, but also a positive one. I want to highlight just a few issues on which we've focused. I was just in Iraq and I can tell you that Iraq today is a different country than it was two -- a year ago. The surge of troops has made an undeniable dent in the violence there and in restoring security. And the surge of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams is facilitating reconstruction and reconciliation at the local level, as I just saw firsthand in Kirkuk. All of this, of course, is still fragile and in the year to come, we will need to continue to help Iraqis translate security gains into lasting political progress. To be sure, serious challenges remain in Iraq, but they are increasingly the challenges of building on positive developments.

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In East Asia, we have made progress this year toward our goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. After agreeing to implement the September 2005 joint statement, North Korea shut down and is now disabling its Yongbyon facilities. We expect North Korea to honor the pledge it made in the six-party talks, to make a complete and accurate declaration of all its nuclear programs. Of course, other challenges and flashpoints of conflict remain in East Asia and we will monitor those closely. In the Taiwan Strait, for example, the United States remains committed to peace and security. We oppose any threat to use force and any unilateral move by either side to change the status quo. We have a One China policy and we do not support independence for Taiwan.

As we have stated in recent months, we think that Taiwan's referendum to apply to the United Nations under the name "Taiwan" is a provocative policy. It unnecessarily raises tensions in the Taiwan Strait and it promises no real benefits for the people of Taiwan on the international stage. That is why we oppose this referendum.