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Remarks at the Women's Foreign Policy Group Annual Luncheon

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you very much. And thank you, Ann, for that kind introduction. And I just want to say that it is true that we had an ambassador named Tom Korologos in Belgium who was very, very successful, but we also had Ann McLaughlin, and that made it terrific for the United States of America. So thank you for your service on behalf of the country. (Applause.)

I'd like to thank Patricia Ellis and Maxine Isaacs, and all of the members of the Board, for inviting me to spend a few minutes with you today.

And of course, I'd like to thank my friend Andrea Mitchell, and she's going to moderate the question and answer. Now, I thought this might keep Andrea from asking the penetrating questions herself, but somehow I doubt it and, Andrea, I look forward to that as well. (Laughter.)

Standing here today, I am deeply aware that I am only the latest in a long line of distinguished women leaders to address this Women's Foreign Policy Group. I am deeply aware that none of those women, and none of us here today, would have had the opportunities we have had, had it not been for the courageous women advocates for equal opportunity who came before us. And it's this tradition that the Women's Foreign Policy Group both embodies and carries forward.

Somewhere in the world – maybe in the Middle East, or maybe in Africa or Latin America, who knows? – there is a young girl who looks up to women like us, and who wants to follow in our footsteps to the heights of accomplishment. That young girl may still face enormous obstacles, but to the extent that she believes that her horizons are limitless, this is in large part because of the sustained advocacy, the global engagement, and the contribution to foreign policy, both at home and abroad, that is made every day by the members of this Women's Foreign Policy Group. And for that, I want to thank you.

It's an important time for groups like yours because we will be debating, certainly over the next year as we go into an election season, what indeed should -- role should America play in the world.

And to be sure, this is a question that always looms large for our country. But there are moments in our history when the questions of who we are and what we stand for come into particularly high relief. Now is such a time.

The international system today is experiencing a degree of transformation that defies precedent: The rise of China and India, the growth of truly global labor and capital markets, the spread of technology, massive new migrations of people, environmental challenges like global climate change. Developments like these are remaking our world before our very eyes. At the same time, all of this change brings with it a sense of uncertainty, of instability, feelings that I know are very real for Americans today.

So how we as a nation address these challenges is of crucial importance. We have need a for pragmatism because without power and prudence we can accomplish nothing, either for ourselves or for others. But we also have need of idealism because if our policies are not guided by our principles then we are left with little more than power.

What we need is a guiding belief that marries our power and our principles together in a uniquely American way. An approach to the world that arises not only from the realities and demands of geopolitics, but from the nature of America's character, from the fact that we are united as a people not by a narrow nationalism of blood and soil, but by universal ideals of human freedom and human rights. What we need is an American realism, an approach to foreign policy that deals with the world as it is, but strives to make the world better than it is; not perfect, better.

So what must be our objective today? I would suggest the following: to expand the circle of well-governed states that enshrine liberty under the rule of law, that create opportunities for their people, and that act responsibly in the international system. America cannot do this for other countries, nor should we. But we can help and we must help and we are helping. We are working with our friends and allies. We are drawing upon the full spectrum of our national power. We are creating incentives that reward and encourage political and economic reform. And we are doing this in a uniquely American way: American realism.

With American realism we are using free trade to expand opportunity and prosperity for people worldwide. Trade is not only critical for our economic success, but it is a vital tool of our foreign policy. This is how we should view the trade agreements now before Congress with Peru, Panama, Colombia and Korea. Asia is changing dramatically. New despots in Latin America want to drag that region back into authoritarianism. Our free trade agreements will help key allies to become democratic anchors of regional and global stability. Passing these agreements is not just a test of America's commitment to free trade, but to the success of our allies. This is a test that we cannot afford to fail.

With American realism, we are using our foreign assistance to promote good governance and to fight poverty. With the full support of Congress, President Bush has launched the largest international development agenda since the Marshall Plan, including the largest effort ever undertaken by one nation to fight a single disease: the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. In the past six years, we have nearly tripled our foreign assistance worldwide and nearly quadrupled it in sub-Saharan Africa, providing food to the hungry, medicine to the sick, and giving girls and boys of every race and religion, class and culture their first experience in a schoolroom.

We are increasing the quantity of our foreign assistance, but also improving its quality, using our money more effectively, more efficiently and more strategically. Our foreign assistance needs to be an incentive for transformation, not a source of dependency. It must support the efforts of developing countries to govern justly, reform their economies and invest in their people. Our goal is to work ourselves out of the foreign assistance business entirely, and the way to do that is by helping countries meet their own needs through effective democratic institutions.

With American realism, we're supporting the human rights of people everywhere, both men and women, boys and girls. Whether it is our assistance to women who are struggling to raise children in Darfur or our fight against human trafficking worldwide or our support for programs of political, economic and social empowerment for women in the Middle East, the United States champions respect for women because it is morally right. But we also recognize that respect for women is a prerequisite for success in the modern world.

In the dynamic 21st century, no society can expect to flourish with half of its people sitting on the sidelines with no opportunity to develop their talents, to contribute to their economy, and to play an equal part in the life of their nation. A group of Kuwaiti suffragettes once sent me a T-shirt that makes the point pretty well. It says: "Half a democracy is not a democracy." This was the slogan with which the women of Kuwait demanded and won their right to vote. And it inspires our own support for women's rights abroad.

Finally, with American realism, we are using all elements of our power to help states transform, because in the face of violent enemies those who seek freedom need more than persuasion to prevail.

In Darfur, victims of genocide are grateful for our humanitarian relief. But they also need to know that the United States will continue to sanction the Sudanese Government until the violence against innocents stops and the UN Security forces -- peacekeeping forces can take up their place to protect the innocent.

In Afghanistan, the freely elected government in Kabul doesn't want yet another feasibility study. It wants U.S. and NATO troops to fight at the side of a new Afghan army until we win the war together, and then to provide reconstruction and assistance so that the people of Afghanistan can move forward.

In Iraq, when a new democracy was besieged by extremists enemies and sinking into sectarian violence last year we backed our partners with a surge of U.S. troops and of U.S. civilians. Now, as security improves, we are working with the Iraqis so that they can seize the real opportunity before them to achieve sustainable stability and political reconciliation.

And of course, in the Middle East, we seek to renew hope for the establishment of a Palestinian state and an Israeli-Palestinian peace. So we are supporting responsible Palestinian leaders as they work together to secure their streets from extremist enemies. We are affirming our historic support for Israel's security so its leaders will be confident in their pursuit of peace. And we are helping both parties to begin negotiating seriously together to resolve all of the core issues of their conflict. We began this work in Annapolis and we will pursue it actively and continually in the year to come because the two-state solution is now a timely solution. The fact is the Palestinians have waited too long for the dignity that will come with their own state and the Israelis have waited too long for the security that will come in sitting side by side with a democratic neighbor. (Applause.)

In all of these endeavors, ladies and gentlemen, the United States is joining great power with great purpose, and we

are writing a new chapter in the history of American realism. But to continue as a force for good in the world we also need to look at one other task: It is the task of keeping hope and opportunity strong at home, in our country -- for America's greatest power will always be the power of our example, our power to inspire.

Today, our society and economy are in the midst of a tectonic shift from an industrial to an information-based order. Globalization is creating unprecedented opportunities, but many Americans still do not feel that they are sharing in them.

All of this is contributing to a sense of uncertainty, a concern that changes and developments abroad might not be helping us here at home. This is even leading some to speculate that we are entering an era of American decline. This mood of decline hangs over some of those articles and news reports that we see daily about the rise of others: China; of India; the coming of a so-called Asian century. We are to believe that America has had a good run, but maybe it's all downhill from here.

Well, I don't believe that at all. I'm optimistic about America's future. I am optimistic because we Americans value success. We cheer success in one another and we push one another toward greater achievement. I am optimistic because in America it does not have to matter where you came from, but where you are going. I am optimistic because America's pioneer spirit is strong, our ability to adapt to change and rise to challenges is strong, and our desire to get in the game and not sit on the sidelines has always been our national disposition. It is our way of thinking about the world that we look to the future with hope, not with fear, as something that we will shape, not submit to.

And I know firsthand that that is America's view of the world. Because I stand before you as a woman born in Birmingham, Alabama, the Birmingham of Bull Connor and the Ku Klux Klan, the Birmingham of church burnings and police dogs and water cannons, the Birmingham of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in September 1963 which took the life of my friend, Denise McNair.

Yet despite all these challenges, I stand before you as America's 66th Secretary of State, something that my first predecessor, Thomas Jefferson, undoubtedly could not have imagined. (Laughter and applause.) And by the way, should I serve out my 12 years -- my -- only feels like 12 (Laughter.) -- my term, America will have gone 12 years without a white man as Secretary of State. (Applause.) Because of course, I was preceded by Madeleine Albright and by Colin Powell, trailblazers also in their own right. Most of us know how impossible that would have seemed not even one generation ago, and now it seems that perhaps it was always inevitable.

In every era, America has found the power to renew itself and to succeed. I am confident that we will do so as we go forward. If we tackle every challenge not merely with realism but with our unique form of American realism, with our ideals, then I am confident that what seems impossible to us today will one day look inevitable to those who come after us.

The Women's Foreign Policy Group is playing an essential role in keeping America on a path of success both at home and abroad. I know that with your support and your leadership, America will remain committed and confident and capable of meeting every challenge that we face. Because it is after all the mobilization of citizens like yourselves that is truly at the root of America's greatness. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. MITCHELL: Thank you all, and thank you all for your many, many questions. We will get through as many of them as

we can. I've been given the privilege of starting off with a couple of my own. (Laughter.) To take it from the most topical in the news today, can you tell us, now that we know that there were people in the White House, in Congress, who urged the CIA not to destroy those videotapes -- you were in the White House during that period -- were you aware of it and did you also urge that those tapes be preserved? And when were you aware of the fact that they were not preserved? (Laughter.)

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, Andrea, I think Mike Hayden has put it well. This is an internal matter for the CIA. I was Secretary of State in 2005, indeed, and I can tell you that I myself don't recollect any knowledge of the tapes. But this is something that I'm sure that Mike Hayden, who is providing excellent leadership to the CIA, will resolve within their internal processes. The Justice Department is involved, and so I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment further.

MS. MITCHELL: Could we just ask since the interrogations took place in 2002 when you were National Security Advisor, at the time were you aware of -- fully aware of the techniques being used and of the videotapes?

SECRETARY RICE: Andrea, as I said, the Justice Department has now taken up this matter and so I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment further.

MS. MITCHELL: On the broader issue of intelligence (Laughter) and on credibility overseas, has the recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iran which was released and described while you were traveling last week, so I don't think you've had the opportunity to ask more about that in person, but do you feel that there is a problem of credibility of American intelligence post-Iraq, now post this NIE? The intelligence community is being in some quarters praised for having come to grips with this and reversed itself, but does this once again highlight the imperfections of American intelligence? They are (Inaudible.) Is there a problem with our intelligence and does it complicate your role in negotiating sanctions and other pressure on Iran and other states that you consider to be rogue states?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, what this highlights is that intelligence, particularly against a hard target like Iran, is a difficult business. And I think the intelligence community is to be congratulated for continuing to go after ever better intelligence about what was going on in the Iranian nuclear program. That's how I see it. Intelligence is not a snapshot in time. You keep improving the intelligence, you keep getting new sources, and that's essentially what they've done and I think we should be grateful to them for that.

This is -- in fact, if you look at this intelligence estimate, what it makes very clear is that first of all, Iran, according to the assessment, had, at one point in time, a covert nuclear weapons program. I think that there are a lot of questions that now need to be asked of Iran about that program and what it was doing, what it achieved, and so forth.

Secondly, that the enrichment activities at Natanz, the enrichment and reprocessing activities have not ceased and indeed continue going a pace and in fact, the reason that the Security Council resolutions focus on suspension of enrichment and reprocessing is that enrichment and reprocessing is what allows you the fissile material to actually make a weapon. And if you can perfect the process of enriching and reprocessing, you can make fissile material.

So it says to me, finally, that the strategy that we've adopted with the international community, with our allies, and with our colleagues is the right strategy. It's a two-track strategy that, on the one hand, lays out for Iran the consequences of failing to adhere to the international demand that they stop their enrichment and reprocessing activities and on the other hand -- and those consequences are continuing, UN Security Council resolutions which deepen the isolation of Iran

-- and on the other hand, a pathway toward negotiations and an improved relationship with the international community as a whole.

And perhaps most importantly, I've said and I'll repeat here again, that if Iran will cease its enrichment -- suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activities, I'm prepared to meet my counterpart anywhere, anytime, anyplace to talk about whatever is on his mind. So to me, that says that we've got the right strategy because we do know that in this case, in the assessment, Iran was perhaps -- was apparently susceptible to international pressure.

MS. MITCHELL: We have a number of questions on this from the audience. Does this new intelligence report open up the possibility for more terror and should you, for instance, drop the preconditions that have been built into what you just described as the basis for possible negotiations and should we go right to the table with Iran?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, let's remember that this is not America's precondition. This was a precondition that was there at the time of the European talks with the Iranians. It is embodied in two Security Council resolutions as well as a decision of the IAEA Board of Governors.

Now why is this the condition? The reason is actually embedded, again, in the National Intelligence Estimate itself, which is that as long as Iran is enriching and reprocessing and learning to do that, then they are perfecting the capability to get the material -- fissile material, the long pole in the tent as some have called it -- that would allow you to make a weapon. So it really is difficult to imagine having negotiations that may go on and on and on while they're perfecting the capability to get fissile material. That's why the precondition has always been there.

Now as to carrots, I think reversing 28 years of American policy and agreeing to talk would be a pretty big carrot. In addition, we've said to the Iranians that we have no problem with Iran having civil nuclear power, if that's what they're seeking, as long as they don't perfect the fuel cycle so that they can enrich material to the level that you can use it for a nuclear weapon. The Russians have offered them civil nuclear cooperation through a reactor at Bushehr. We've talked about assured fuel supply for the Iranians. If they really are after civil nuclear power there are many ways for them to get it.

If, on the other hand, they're trying to preserve their options for a nuclear weapons program by allowing themselves to learn to make fissile materials then that's quite another matter.

MS. MITCHELL: Are you concerned, asks one of our audience, about the multiple intelligence barriers over the last ten years?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, intelligence is always very hard and it's especially hard when you have a state that is engaging in deceptive practices as we know that Iran has, when it's a closed society, and when frankly what it takes to get a nuclear program underway has elements that can be disguised as or explained as civilian, so you're dealing very often with dual-use technologies. So it's hard.

I think that some of the changes, the restructuring of the intelligence community that was done with the existence of a director of National Intelligence, now Mike McConnell, before that John Negroponte, and the state of the -- the craft that they are now using to ask evermore difficult questions of themselves about the intelligence that they're finding, that it

has improved our intelligence capability. But intelligence is never going to be perfect. You are going to have revisions of intelligence estimates, even when we had a fairly fixed target, the Soviet Union, that use to parade its missiles down Red Square so that you knew they were there, we had assessments and reassessments of Soviet capability. It's even harder when you have more nascent and difficult to follow capability of the kind that you're talking about in Iran.

MS. MITCHELL: Do you think this new National Intelligence Estimate will make it more difficult for you to get cooperation from Russia and China and other members of the Security Council for another resolution?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it's very interesting. I was just with all of those states -- well, not China, but I was with the Russians and I was with the Europeans just now at the NATO ministerial last week and we're continuing on path. Nick Burns, who is the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, will hold a teleconference with his colleagues tomorrow. They are working on finalizing a Security Council resolution, that's -- the text of one, that could then be sent to the Security Council to be voted sometime in the next several weeks.

I found that most states understand that we have the right strategy, that the key is still to get Iran to stop its enrichment and reprocessing activities so that we can begin negotiations and find out how we can meet Iran's legitimate needs for civil nuclear power.

But it is extremely important to recognize that there are three elements to any nuclear weapons program: One is the ability to actually weaponize, that is to actually build a bomb. That is the piece that the National Intelligence Estimate believes that that weaponization work that was suspended or set aside in 2003. Secondly, there is the ability to get fissile material indigenously, not to have to get it from abroad somehow, but to be able to get it indigenously. And that's the process of learning to reprocess and enrich uranium. And if you can do it at lower levels of enrichment, which is what you would use for a civil nuclear program, you can do it at higher levels of enrichment, which is what you need for a weapon.

And then finally, there's the matter of the means of delivery in missile technology, which the Iranians continue to pursue. So I have found in my conversations that people understand that we have the right approach to try to get Iran to stop the enrichment and reprocessing activities that are allowing them to perfect this method that could lead to this fissile material for nuclear weapons.

MS. MITCHELL: We have a number of questions, Madame Secretary, on the subject of U.S.-Russian relations. And we could start with whether you feel, because you need Russia's support in the Security Council on a number of issues -- Iran is perhaps the most timely right now -- do you have to overlook some of the anti-democratic decisions that Vladimir Putin has taken?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't believe we could be said to have overlooked the decisions that we see to be anti-democratic and to be taking Russia off the path that we thought was moving them toward greater pluralism and greater democratic institutionalization. We've been very outspoken about the control of the press. We have been very outspoken about the problems that nongovernmental organizations, both Russian and foreign, are having in Russia. I've had conversations directly with the Russians about what I call the concentration of power in the Kremlin. The last thing that you want is no separation of powers among various entities. Because I don't care who is in the Kremlin; if all power is in that presidency, then you're going to have a problem for democratic development. And so we've been very open about that. Russia is a big and complicated country. And it will, to a certain extent, take its own course. But I think we've been very clear that we find very troubling a number of the trends that have emerged over the last several years.

Now, if it's a matter of whether to continue to try and engage Russia in institutions like the G-8 or the NATO-Russia Council or to support Russian accession to the WTO, I've yet to see an argument that convinces me that you're going to have a positive effect on Russia's development by isolating Russia from the very institutions in which the values that you would like to see adopted are practiced. And so I continue to believe that there is great use in having Russia integrated into these institutions, but we have been very clear about our disappointment and, indeed, concern about the reversal of a number of democratic trends in Russia.

MS. MITCHELL: Madame Secretary, turning to the Middle East, you had your extraordinary meeting in Annapolis, which was unprecedented in the participation of several of the players, but since then we've seen a number of developments. One development from the Israeli side has been the expansion of settlements. Can you tell us how you will -- how can you respond to that and how troubling is that to you in terms of the progress that you are trying in a very short timeframe to achieve in Middle East negotiations?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, it is true that the Israelis tendered for (Inaudible) for the building of several apartments -- 300 or so in Har Homa, which is a particularly sensitive area. We've been very clear, first of all, with the Israelis with whom we sought clarification, but also publicly that this is a time that we should be building confidence and this is not something that builds confidence. It doesn't help to build confidence. And certainly anything that looks like an effort to prejudge final status negotiations is simply not going to work because the United States would not consider anything that meant -- was trying to prejudge final status negotiations to have done so.

I think we will be clear when we see problems of this kind. We will be clear on both sides. We will be clear if we don't see performance. But I don't want all of that to cloud what I consider to be the very extraordinary and strong commitment of both Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas to try and end their conflict. These are leaders who I think are taking some risk in the way that they have decided to go forward. They have both spoken about the importance of doing this now, trying to do it within a year. They have spoken about the painful choices that they are going to have to make. And I really do believe that if you had said six months ago that -- or maybe even three months ago, that you would be launching permanent status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians for the establishment of a Palestinian state, that people would not have thought that likely.

And it is in large part due to the strength of those two leaders, the strength of their conviction that it's time to end their conflict. And indeed, the importance of Annapolis was that you had at the table those who can make their course considerably easier by support for the tough choices that they may make. It is indeed the first time the Saudis under their own flag, the Syrians there, which I think was important because you are looking obviously to mobilize support for these leaders as they move forward.

MS. MITCHELL: What role do you see Syria playing?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I hope it will be a helpful role. Everyone understands that Syria is a party to the conflict, that there are tracks other than the Palestinian-Israeli track that will ultimately have to be resolved if there is to be a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. I would hope that Syria would support the legitimate authority of the Palestinians, and that's Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority; that they would recognize that these are negotiations that, if they succeed, should contribute to the possibilities for the resolution of other tracks and for the resolution of the conflict as a whole.

MS. MITCHELL: So does the Palestinian track, Palestinian-Israeli track, have to move towards completion before the other track -- Golan -- gets addressed, or can there be simultaneous tracks?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States is going to support efforts at peace whenever they come, wherever they come. It is simply the case that the Palestinian-Israeli track is the one that is now the most mature; the leaders have taken the decision to do it. They had a series of discussions over the last several months that led them to believe that there was some possibility for ending their conflict, and so in that regard it makes very good sense to push this track forward.

I think it's also well understood that -- I've said this before in Israel and to the Palestinians -- you know, the two-state solution is going to have to be achieved soon. The window is closing for a two-state solution. Because I worry that increasingly the people who believe in the two-state solution, particularly on the Palestinian side, are my age -- or your age, Andrea -- not that that's a bad thing. (Laughter.)

MS. MITCHELL: Actually, it is a bad thing. Your age is better than my age. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY RICE: But that you are potentially losing a whole generation of Palestinians and maybe Israelis who don't really see a realistic end to the conflict. And in those circumstances, you will most certainly get greater radicalization. And so time in that sense is not on our side in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and it is one reason to push this particular track as far and as fast as it can go.

MS. MITCHELL: Can it be done without Hamas? What happens to Gaza?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, Hamas is going to have to make a choice, ultimately. The legitimate authority for the negotiation of this is Mahmoud Abbas, as the head of the PLO. And if there is enough momentum and if the Palestinian people can see what their state is going to be and that there is a state, I would think that would have a unifying effect on the Palestinian population as a whole. And at that point, we will have to see who is outside of the consensus that the two-state solution is about to come into being, and all elements of the Palestinian political life will then have to make their choices. I would hope that all of them would recognize that no state is ever going to be born of violence and no state is going to be born but through negotiation and through compromise and that when that state comes into being, it will be a remarkable and good day for the Palestinian people and ought to be supported, by as broad -- broad elements of the Palestinian political space.

MS. MITCHELL: We have a question here about Pakistan. What do you see as the U.S. Government's role in the events unfolding there?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States has played the role of encouraging the Pakistanis to do a couple of things. First of all, for President Musharraf, I think it was very important that he took off his uniform. It is very important now that the state of emergency end when they said that it's going to end and it's very important that they carry out free and fair elections. That would put Pakistan back on a course toward democratic reform.

The fact is that a lot has happened in Pakistan. There is a reason that you have a vibrant civil society. There is a reason that you have a vibrant media. Some of those changes have come during the period of President Musharraf's rule, but

it's important now that they take the next step, that they go to free and fair elections. We've also been encouraging all of the moderate forces to come together and to oppose extremism, to participate in the elections, and to allow those elections to go forward to hopefully help Pakistan move yet a step further away from extremism. Because this is a country that was very much – has had very deep extremist elements within it, it's important that they be rooted out and it's important that moderate forces triumph.

MS. MITCHELL: As we reach the end of the year, do you think that there is a possibility of closure in the North Korean negotiations?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we've still got a ways to go on the North Korean negotiations because the goal, of course, is the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the establishment then of a -- what has been called a peace regime or a way to move forward so the Korean Peninsula overcomes its division, its conflict, and also, ultimately, the establishment of some kind of mechanism for security among the Northeast Asian states that are party to the six parties.

That will, of course, be the work of the year to come, but in the meantime, I can say that much of the work has gone rather well. The shutdown of the nuclear reactor took place. Now the disablement, which means that it is a set of steps to make it much more difficult to restart the reactor, that that is underway.

And now, we await a complete and accurate declaration from North Korea on all of its nuclear activities and that's extremely important because that becomes, then, the launching pad for the next step toward dismantlement of those activities, programs, and facilities and the beginning of the true denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

MS. MITCHELL: Do you see normalization of relations before you leave office?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't know if it'll be before we leave office, but I think we're on a path that if North Korea is prepared to verifiably denuclearize, that this is a country that could finally break out of its isolation and yes, indeed, break out of its isolation with the United States too.

MS. MITCHELL: How soon can we close Guantanamo?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY RICE: Well, as the President said, we'd like nothing better and I think -- I can't remember who it is that said that the United States has no desire to be a jailer. That's not what we want to do. The problem is that Guantanamo houses a number of very dangerous people, very dangerous people. We have had recidivism from people who were released from Guantanamo, met them again on the battlefield. And you can't simply release these people out, many of whom have made very clear that they will kill again if they are released. You can't simply release them on an unsuspecting population.

And so there are a couple of things that we need. We need the help of countries, these -- their nationals -- whose nationals are there to have them return to their countries of origin and to do so in a way that they are not likely to once again go out and engage in terrorism. And those are difficult agreements to negotiate with governments, but we spend a

lot of time trying to do it. We need to make certain that these -- that people can be put into a system in which they are not going to return to their difficult ways.

But I can assure you that we look all the time at what could be done to end this chapter in American history. The fact is this is a different kind of war. We were confronted with incredibly new challenges. We've done our best over time to transform Guantanamo into a facility that is -- that tries as much as it can to give opportunities to people, to make a new life with education and programs, to be sensitive to religious practices at Guantanamo. But look, it's no secret that no one would like to close it more than I and, I think, the President.

MS. MITCHELL: I know we don't have very much more time. I wanted to combine -- just a couple of people were writing, what regrets that you might have as you face your final year and what are the challenges that you think your successor will face, the biggest challenges that your successor will face?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, on the second, I think that the biggest challenge, not just for my successor, but probably for my successor's successor is going to be that we're in a struggle that is generational in character. The need to find a way to have an answer to terrorism that is not just defending ourselves which we're clearly doing better in terms of intelligence, in terms of what Homeland Security does, we're clearly doing better but that's only one element.

A second element is, of course, hunting the terrorists where they live and where they are -- in their safe havens and denying them safe havens and going on the offense and we're doing better in that regard. But ultimately to have an answer to the terrorists, you have to have a positive vision of the future. And that is one that is embedded in the values of liberty and freedom and believing that they can take root in places where they never have before. And that is not something that will happen on our watch or probably on the watch of the next President. It will take time, because where you have had tyranny, it takes time for people to learn to resolve their conflicts by politics, not by violence. Where there has been tyranny, it takes time for people to learn that majority rule doesn't mean the tyranny of the majority. Where there's been tyranny and the suppression of women's rights, it takes time in deeply conservative societies to really make women equal partners.

When I look at the young and struggling democracies in places like Afghanistan or Iraq or soon to be, I hope, of a Palestinian state, I recognize that not only do they have very determined enemies who don't want to see those positive developments take place, but they also are fighting upstream against years and years and years of learned behavior that is negative for democratic development -- zero-sum thinking, for instance. And I'm reminded, Andrea, that we can be extremely impatient as Americans with others' struggles until perhaps we think back on our own struggles, until we realize that this great democracy, which I think has gotten better and better at really meaning, "we the people," and meaning all of us started as a democracy in which my ancestors were three-fifths of a man and which frankly my relatives couldn't vote reliably until 1965. And so sometimes I just ask us without arrogance and, in fact, with great humility to recognize how really hard democratic development is, to recognize that there's urgency to it, but also that the work of doing it is something that you have to do day by day, every day, and to sometimes be a little bit more patient with those that are just starting along the road.

MS. MITCHELL: All right. Well, we thank you very much for gracing us with your time. (Applause.)

MS. ISAACS: Thank you, Secretary Rice. We are deeply honored by your presence here with us today and found your remarks very interesting and important and thank you for doing that. On behalf of the Women's Foreign Policy

Group, may I ask Pat and Ann to come up and join us, if you don't mind? I would like to make a small presentation. I'd like to ask you to please accept this Certification of Appreciation for your leadership and for providing a role model for the next generation of women leaders.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you.

MS. ISAACS: Thank you very much.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.

(Certificate of Appreciation was presented.)

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