

This Week - ABC

STEPHANOPOULOS: Good morning, everyone.

Hillary Clinton's \$8 million book tour begins today as a new ABC poll shows that she would be the Democratic front runner for 2004. But will she run? Barbara Walters will tell us this morning.

ANNOUNCER: This morning, an ABC News exclusive, the interview everyone's waiting for, Barbara Walters with Senator Hillary Clinton, a special preview. Her future plans, and...

WALTERS: Was there and is there a right-wing conspiracy?

ANNOUNCER: And the questions intensify. Where are Iraq's weapons of mass destruction? Can the U.S. claim victory without finding them?

Also, the prospects for peace in the Middle East. Will this time be different? We'll ask the president's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice.

Plus, a special round table, Bob Woodward of "The Washington Post" and Joe Klein of "Time" magazine, joining George Will and Michel Martin.

From ABC News in Washington, This Week with George Stephanopoulos.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Our first guest, the president's national security adviser, Dr. Condoleezza Rice.

Welcome.

RICE: Thank you.

STEPHANOPOULOS: New violence overnight in Israel, four Israelis killed by Palestinian militants, and three groups are all taking credit for it, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.

What do you expect the new Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, to do to these groups because of this violence?

RICE: George, we've always known that there were going to be those who do not want peace, and that the rejectionists were going to try and scuttle the opportunity of the Palestinian people for statehood and for peace with Israel as a neighbor.

We have gotten from Prime Minister Abbas a very strong statement that he believes that the armed intifada has to end, that he understands that there can be no Palestinian state built on terrorism.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But do you...

RICE: We believe he will act on that, and...

STEPHANOPOULOS: And that's what I'm trying to get to. What actions do you want?

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RICE: In time...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Should he arrest people? Should he disarm them today?

RICE: Well, clearly, the Palestinian Authority is going to have to do some work to reconstitute its security forces and to make them effective and accountable. They've been through a difficult period of time. The prime minister's government is new. We do believe that he will act in every way that he can to make clear that he spends on--steps up to his commitment that terror is not going to be the basis for the Palestinian state.

But we're going to all have to help him. Those who say that they want peace, and I now mean the Arab neighbors, will also have to deal with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and al-Aqsa Brigades. The Palestinian leadership cannot do it alone. People have to cut off money to these organizations, they have to make sure that they are not somehow, through contacts, abetting those organizations.

This is going to have to be an international effort...

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you expect that...

RICE: ... to deal with these--We expect

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... now?

RICE: ... we expect people to live up to the commitments that they took at Sharm el-Sheikh, which said that there is no justification or motivation that is legitimate for terrorism, and that they were going to cut off funding, and they were going to isolate these rejectionists.

That is what the Arab states can do. We believe that there are things the Palestinians can do too. But this has to be an effort on everybody's part, not just on the part of the Palestinian leadership.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How about Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon? He has said that he would dismantle what he called unauthorized outposts. Do you expect him to begin that this week, even in the face of this violence?

RICE: He has said that he would begin that immediately, and we expect it to begin immediately. He made very important statements, both leading up to Aqaba and at Aqaba that he understood that he had to reassure the Palestinians that he believed in a contiguous, viable Palestinian state. And the dismantling of the settle--these illegal outposts is one of the first steps that can do that.

There will have to be other steps as the progress is made on the ground.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You said "settlements" there...

RICE: Yes, no...

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... it was a bit of a slip. Do you expect them to dismantle and freeze the settlements as well?

RICE: ... no, clearly they're going to have to deal with the settlements as well. As the process goes ahead, they're going to have to deal with the settlements as well. And in fact, Prime

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Minister Sharon, when he spoke about this prior to Aqaba, said to the settler community it's going to have to start to think about what is realistic and what is not.

I think we got very good commitments after--at Aqaba. There's no doubt that there are going to be those who try to scuttle those commitments. But this is the best chance that we've had in quite a long time and the Palestinian people have had in quite a long time for peace and for progress toward Palestinian statehood.

It is time for everybody to support Prime Minister Abbas in what he's trying to do.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Let me turn now to Iraq and the questions about the weapons of mass destruction that have not yet been found in Iraq. And as you know, there are a lot of questions now about the credibility of the United States government, about the British government, and whether administration statements overstated the amount of the threat.

And I want to begin by showing two statements from President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld from September 26.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: The danger to our country is growing. The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons. The Iraqi regime is building the facilities necessary to make more biological and chemical weapons.

DONALD RUMSFELD, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: And when you're dealing with weapons of mass destruction, and you're dealing with countries like Iraq that have used weapons of mass destruction, and countries like Iraq that have active development programs for those weapons, and have weaponized chemical and biological weapons, you have to recognize that there are-- that the evidence piles up.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Secretary Rumsfeld said they had an active development program. The president said they possessed chemical and biological weapons.

But at the same time, there was a DIA report, as you know, being circulated through the government at that time. And I want to put that up on the screen as well. And that said that there is "no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing or stockpiling chemical weapons, or whether Iraq has or will establish its chemical agent production facilities."

How do you square those public statements with this private analysis?

RICE: They square quite easily when you look at the October 2002 national intelligence assessment, done by the intelligence community, on what was known about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. That estimate and key judgments, many of which were released in an unclassified white paper prior to that, said that the judgment of the intelligence community was that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

This, of course, didn't come out of the blue.

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There's a bit of a revisionist history going on here, because, of course, going all the way back to 1991 and the Gulf War, when Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, going back prior to that when they used weapons of mass destruction, going to 1994 and 1995, when a high-level defector left and the Iraqis were spooked into admitting to a biological weapons program, going back to 1996, when the then-director of Central Intelligence, John Deutch, talked about the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that were there, going back to 1998, when President Clinton, after the inspectors had left the country in December of 1998 sat in the Oval Office and said that he was going to launch an attack against the Iraqis because heaven forbid that the Iraqis would use their weapons of mass destruction...

STEPHANOPOULOS: But I don't think anybody questions...

RICE: This goes on and on.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It does, but the--nobody questions the history. Everybody agrees that Iraq did have, in the 1990s, weapons of mass destruction. The question was, were they actively developing them in 19--in 2002, and did we know it? Did we have enough intelligence...

RICE: The intelligence...

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... operatives on the ground to know it?

RICE: ... the intelligence assessments were that not only did they have weapons of mass destruction--by the way, stockpiles which were unaccounted for, and it was not just U.S. intelligence but other intelligence services around the world, and, of course, U.N. weapons inspectors who talked about the unaccounted-for weapons of mass destruction, that the Iraqis were unable to account for sarin gas and VX gas and anthrax, leading the--Hans Blix to say, you know, that this isn't like marmalade, mustard gas isn't like marmalade. We're supposed to know what happened to it.

So there was plenty of evidence and plenty of assessment that they were there.

The assessments also said that these programs were being actively pursued and actively reconstituted. There were multiple sources that talked about, as we got ready for the run-up to war, Iraqi preparations to actually use chemical weapons, leading...

STEPHANOPOULOS: But if...

RICE: ... the president to deliver a very strong message of deterrence to those who might, in fact, try and use them.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But if this were true, then why did the Defense Intelligence Agency, one of the top intelligence agencies in the government, say there's no reliable information?

RICE: Because, George, I have never seen a worse case of selective quotation. That quotation is taken out of context of a larger paper, in which there's a lot about potential preparations to use...

STEPHANOPOULOS: So will you declassify the entire paper?

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RICE: ... to use weapons of mass destruction, and, of course, is at odds with the national intelligence estimate in October of 2002, to which the DIA signed on, saying, for instance, that the Iraqis likely had as much as 100 to 500 metric tons of chemical agent.

So this is selective quotation. This is a kind of revisionist history. There was no doubt in people's minds that the Iraq regime had weapons of mass destruction programs, that there were large missing stockpiles.

People talked in this town a lot about connecting the dots after September 11. If you connected the dots about everything that we knew about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction programs going back to 1991 and going all the way up until March 2003, when we launched the attack against Iraq, you could come to only one conclusion, and that was that this was an active program, that this was a dangerous program, this was a program that was being effectively concealed. There was a lot of deception to deceive the international community and weapons inspectors.

But this was a dangerous program, and whether you talked to outside proliferation experts or whether you talked to successive directors of Central Intelligence or the current director of Central Intelligence, that was the overwhelming assessment of the intelligence community.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You said it was selective quotation. Just to be clear, that was all that's been released, or in the public realm, from the Defense Intelligence Agency.

RICE: We're looking at this. But Admiral Jacoby, when he talked about this the other day, made very clear that his agency had signed onto an intelligence estimate that said that there were weapons of mass destruction, indeed, had talked specifically about chemical agents that could be weaponized.

We also, by the way, were looking at reports for preparation for the use of chemical weapons. We were also looking at--are looking at the fact that chemical suits have been found, and atropine injectors, which are antidotes to chemical weapons use.

There's a very large body of evidence here that connects together to paint a picture of a very dangerous regime with very dangerous weapons that had deceived the world for 12 years, that had allowed international sanctions to stay on, rather than come clean about what it was doing.

Either you believe Saddam Hussein, or you believe the overwhelming bulk of evidence.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, let me raise another area that--where the evidence was problematic, and this was the issue of whether or not Iraq was trying to get uranium from Africa. And here's what the president said in the State of the Union address.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BUSH: The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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STEPHANOPOULOS: That claim was later discredited by the International Atomic Energy Agency, found it to be based on forged documents. So how did it make it into the State of Union address?

RICE: At the time that the State of the Union address was prepared, there were also other sources that said that they were--the Iraqis were seeking yellowcake uranium outside from Africa, and that was taken out of a British report. Clearly that particular report, we learned subsequently--subsequently--was not credible.

STEPHANOPOULOS: No, no, but...

RICE: But it was also a very small part, George, of a larger picture of a program aimed at developing nuclear weapons.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But let me stop you right there, because many in the United States government knew before then that this...

RICE: George, somebody, somebody down may have known. But I will tell you that when this issue was raised with the intelligence community--because we actually do go through the process of asking the intelligence community, Can you say this? Can you say that? Can you say this?--the intelligence community did not know at that time, or at levels that got to us, that this...

STEPHANOPOULOS: But let me show you something here, this is...

RICE: ... serious questions about this report.

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... this is a column from Nicholas Kristoff (ph) in "The New York Times," it was on May 6. And he wrote in that column, "More than a year ago, the vice president's office asked for an investigation of the uranium deal. So a former U.S. ambassador to Africa was dispatched to Niger. In February 2002, according to someone present at the meetings, that envoy reported to the CIA and the State Department the information was unequivocally wrong, and that the documents had been forged. The envoy's debunking of the forgery was passed around the administration, and seemed to be accepted, except that President Bush and the State Department kept citing it anyway."

That's hardly low level, the vice president's office.

RICE: Well, the vice president's office may have asked for that report. But I am telling you, George, that the information that this particular report, this particular report--which was cited by the British, and if you notice, the president cites the British on this--this particular report, it was not known to us that it was a forgery.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But why would he cite the British if there were people in the U.S. government, and I also know the State Department Bureau of Intelligence Research, I spoke to someone there yesterday, knew it wasn't true...

RICE: George...

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... and had discredited it?

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RICE: ... I am telling you that when this was raised with the intelligence community, they said what we could say. And there were other attempts to get yellowcake from Africa. But the important thing here is that this case about the nuclear weapons program did not rest on a document that the British cited. This case rested on Saddam Hussein's infrastructure for the development of nuclear weapons. It rested on procurement activities to try and acquire pieces that--of centrifuges that might be used...

STEPHANOPOULOS: The aluminum tubes?

RICE: Well, and magnets and balancing equipment and all kinds of things. It also rested on the expertise that he kept together.

The fact is that there is now a lot of revisionism that says there was disagreement on this data point or disagreement on that data point. But the overwhelming assessment of the intelligence community--that the director of Central Intelligence has a disciplined process which he runs, it's called a national intelligence estimate--and the overwhelming bulk of the evidence in there, not about a data point here or a data point there, but about what Saddam Hussein was doing, was that he had weapons of mass destruction, that was the judgment, that he was continuing to improve his weapons of mass destruction capabilities, that he was hiding these from the world, that there were large, unaccounted-for stockpiles--that was not just U.S. intelligence, that was the U.N. inspectors--and we already knew that this was somebody who had used them in the past, and, as President Clinton said, when he directed an attack on Iraq in December of 1998, there was every reason to believe he would use them again.

So we have a long history here leading up to the decision to use force in 2003. And it is a picture in which the intelligence community connected a lot of dots from multiple services, from multiple sources, to come up with the picture on which the president acted.

STEPHANOPOULOS: As you know, we're now seeing a lot of intelligence officials, some on the record, some off the record, some current, some former, raising a lot of questions about the intelligence estimates. And I want to play something that the president said when he was setting up the Homeland Security Department a year ago. At the same time, he was trying to encourage front-line agents who had information about threats to come forward.

And this is what he had to say.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BUSH: If you're a front-line worker for the FBI, the CIA, some other law enforcement or intelligence agency, and you see something that raises suspicions, I want you to report it immediately.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Would you like the intelligence agencies--agents at any level now, if they have information about Iraqi intelligence, to come forward in the same manner?

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RICE: It would be a very good thing if anyone has information, of course. People want to hear it. But I can't respond to unnamed officials who now try and rewrite the history of how this intelligence came to the president.

The president gets his intelligence from his director of Central Intelligence, who runs a disciplined process that takes into account the views of the different intelligence agencies, that takes into account differences about this data point or that data point.

But when you look at the picture and you ask yourself, Did people believe that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction? Yes, everybody believed that, DCIs believed in the past, the current DCI believed it. The foreign intelligence services believed it, the U.S. intelligence service believed it.

You have to believe, somehow, that Saddam Hussein was willing for 12 years, defying the international community, staying under sanctions, never answering questions satisfactorily, that he just did that kind of for the heck of it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So you may be quite right...

RICE: He was clearly concealing a program. And that's separable from what we will find out about the nature of that program, where these weapons are, what--how he was concealing it.

We've always known that the strongest evidence about the Iraqi programs will come from talking to people who were involved in them. We've interviewed a fraction of the people who were involved. We've gone to a fraction of the sites. We've gone through a fraction of thousands and thousands and thousands of documents about this program.

Already we've discovered trailers that look remarkably similar to what Colin Powell described in his February 5 speech, biological weapons production facilities. We've already in interviews heard from people that a lot of the chemical weapons program was indeed embedded in the dual-use infrastructure, something else that Colin Powell reported in his February 5 speech.

We've not been at this very long. We will see the true extent of this program and its nature.

But that is separable, and it is simply revisionist to say that this administration and administrations before it did not have reason to believe that Saddam Hussein had...

STEPHANOPOULOS: We're just about out of time...

RICE: ... weapons of mass destruction.

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... I just want to clear up one thing. You said it is unfair to respond to these unnamed officials, you're not going to do it. So can they come forward now publicly without fear of reprisal?

RICE: If there are people who have information, I'm sure that George Tenet wants to hear it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Dr. Rice, thank you very much.

RICE: Thank you very much.

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