



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President Announces Rice to Provide Public Testimony to Commission

Statement by the President
The James S. Brady Briefing Room

4:46 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Today I have informed the Commission on Terrorist Attacks Against the United States that my National Security Advisor, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, will provide public testimony. I've also advised Chairman Kean and Vice Chairman Hamilton that Vice President Cheney and I will jointly meet with all members of the commission in a private session.



VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

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This commission has been charged with a crucial task. To prevent future attacks, we must understand the methods of our enemies. The terrorist threat being examined by the commission is still present, still urgent and still demands our full attention.

From the day the panel was created, I have directed executive branch agencies and members of my staff to cooperate with the commission. Recognizing the exceptional nature of this inquiry, we have given commission members access to relevant presidential daily briefings, to my communications with foreign leaders, and to internal White House communications.

More than 800 members of the administration have been interviewed. More than 20 White House officials have met with the commission, or soon will do so. Dr. Rice, herself, has already met privately with the commission for four hours. I've ordered this level of cooperation because I consider it necessary to gaining a complete picture of the months and years that preceded the murder of our fellow citizens on September the 11th, 2001.

As the commission has done its work, I've also been concerned, as has Dr. Rice, that an important principle be upheld: A President and his advisors, including his advisor for national security affairs, must be able to communicate freely and privately, without being compelled to reveal those communications to the legislative branch. This principle of the separation of powers is protected by the Constitution, is recognized by the courts and has been defended by Presidents of both political parties.

We have observed this principle while also seeking ways for Dr. Rice to testify, so that the public record is full and accurate. Now the commission and leaders of the United States Congress have given written assurances that the appearance of the National Security Advisor will not be used as precedent in the conduct of future inquiries. The leaders of Congress and the commission agree -- they agree with me that the circumstances of this case are unique, because the events of September the 11th, 2001, were unique.

At my direction, Judge Gonzales has informed the commission that Dr. Rice will participate in an open public hearing. Our nation must never forget the loss or the lessons of September the 11th, and we must not assume that the danger has passed. The United States will confront gathering dangers to our freedom and security. The commission knows its responsibility: to collect vital information and to present it to the American people. And I know my responsibility, as well: to act against the continuing threat and to protect the American people. I have made that pledge to my fellow citizens, and I will keep it.

Thank you.

END 4:50 P.M. EST

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