

Let Brazil Have Its Nukes, Says Rice in Moscow

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In an interview with Aleksey Venediktov of Russian radio Ekho Moskvy Radio, U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, said that Brazil's nuclear activities do not worry the United States. According to her, all Brazil wants is to develop nuclear energy for civilian use.

Rice was in Russia on Wednesday, where she met President Vladimir Putin. She stressed that Brazil and Iran were two different stories since "Iran has been hiding its activities."

In April of last year, the U.S. State Department insisted that Brazil should sign an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), so that the Agency would be allowed to inspect Brazilian atomic installations without previous notice.

The Brazilian government protested saying that the country is already signatory of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

While visiting Brazil, in October, then secretary of State Colin Powell said that he wasn't worried about the misunderstandings between Brazil and the IAEA and he added that Brazil would not be put in the same category as Iran and North Korea.

From the Russian radio interview:

QUESTION: It is known that there are countries that either possess nuclear weapons already or have a potential, a great potential for that: India, Brazil, Israel, Pakistan. And maybe neither Russia nor the United States can hold this process. Maybe nonproliferation doesn't work at all, it's just impossible.

SECRETARY RICE: I know that the potential for nuclear weapons development exists in a lot of places. You have named some of them. We and Russia are both parties to the nonproliferation regime, which is a very good thing.

And I think we are beginning to carry out our obligations under the nonproliferation regime to try to reduce the levels of nuclear weapons that we, the United States and Russia, have.

I would remind people - it's sometimes now forgotten - the Moscow Treaty cut American and Russian nuclear weapons quite substantially and we are now carrying that process out through 2012.

What we must do is to convince others that nuclear weapons are not necessary. I think we are working together rather well in some of these matters.

I don't worry, for instance, that Brazil will seek a nuclear weapon; Brazil is seeking civilian nuclear power. In fact, we are probably going to have to find ways for countries to seek civilian nuclear power while making sure that they are not trying to build nuclear weapons.

QUESTION: Brazil, yes. Iran, no.

SECRETARY RICE: That's right. Because Iran has been hiding its activities. The Iranians say they want civilian nuclear power. They say that this is about peaceful uses of nuclear power. But then we learn that there are undeclared activities at the reactor at Natanz.

We learn that the Iranians have been probably involved in activities with A.Q. Khan, who was carrying out this black market activity. And it does not inspire confidence in the international system about the Iranians.

On the other hand, countries like South Africa, Brazil - South Africa having actually given up nuclear weapons at one point - there is no reason that they should not have access to civilian nuclear energy.

Now, one of the problems is that as long as you have enrichment and reprocessing capability, there is the possibility of building nuclear weapons.

And the President made a proposal at the National Defense University that there would be no reprocessing and enrichment capability, but that countries would have a reliable fuel supply for their civilian nuclear reactors.

This is in some ways what Russia has done with Iran at Bushehr. So, there are ways to deal with this problem.