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## Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, At the Security Council Stakeout

**Susan E. Rice**

*U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations*

U.S. Mission to the United Nations

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### AS DELIVERED

Ambassador Rice: Good evening, everyone. The United States welcomes the ceasefire announced earlier this afternoon. We are deeply grateful to those who showed such leadership and determination to bring it about.

We're also pleased that the Security Council has spoken with one voice and issued an important statement this evening. Let me note our particular gratitude to President Morsi of Egypt for his commitment to regional security as well as to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his diligent efforts. And, of course, President Obama and Secretary Clinton have worked tirelessly to bring the parties to agreement.

We appreciate Prime Minister Netanyahu's work with the new Egyptian government to achieve a sustainable ceasefire and a more durable solution to this problem. The prime minister has quite rightly reiterated that Israel, like any UN member state, maintains the clear and non-negotiable right to self-defense.

As we move forward, we must all remain clear about what precipitated the crisis: that is the escalating barrage of rockets launched from Gaza by Hamas and other terrorist organizations at Israel's cities and civilians. We also denounce the appalling terrorist bombing earlier today of a bus in Tel Aviv, which summoned up traumatic memories from Israel's recent past. We mourn the loss of every civilian life—Palestinian and Israeli—and for all those who have been wounded and live in fear and danger.

As Secretary Clinton has noted, we must build on today's progress and focus on reaching a durable outcome that promotes regional stability and advances security, dignity, and the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis alike. This crisis was yet another reminder that the absence of peace always risks the presence of war.

The United States remains firmly and fully committed to the only viable solution to the tragic Israeli-Palestinian conflict: two states for two peoples, reached through direct negotiations, with a Jewish and democratic state of Israel living side by side in peace and security with a viable, independent state of Palestine. In the end, there is simply no substitute for a just and lasting peace.

In the days ahead, the United States will work with partners across the region to consolidate the progress made today, to improve conditions for the people of Gaza through the urgent provision of humanitarian assistance, and to provide lasting security for Israelis and Palestinians.

I'm happy to take a couple questions.

Reporter: In light of this tragic event in Gaza, as you said, would you put the peace process in the Middle East as a top priority for you here as the US ambassador to the UN? And I assume—I should ask also about what—is it going to be a top priority for you should President Obama appoint you as Secretary of State? Thank you.

Ambassador Rice: Ali, I think everybody knows that achieving a two-state solution has been a top priority for President Obama and his administration from the very earliest days of his tenure. And I'm quite certain that it will be a very high priority in his second term. As Secretary Clinton said today in Cairo, now that we have a ceasefire, we all must redouble our efforts to achieve that two-state solution. And I'm confident that whoever President Obama selects to be his next Secretary of State will pursue that objective with vigor.

Reporter: Thank you very much. Ambassador Rice, would you explain your view of the controversy concerning your comments about

Benghazi? And have—is Senator McCain fair in what he has said?

Ambassador Rice: Well, Pam, let me begin with the obvious. As a senior US diplomat, I agreed to a White House request to appear on the Sunday shows to talk about the full range of national security issues of the day, which at that time were primarily and particularly the protests that were enveloping and threatening many diplomatic facilities—American diplomatic facilities—around the world and Iran’s nuclear program. The attack on Benghazi—on our facilities in Benghazi—was obviously a significant piece of this.

When discussing the attacks against our facilities in Benghazi, I relied solely and squarely on the information provided to me by the intelligence community. I made clear that the information was preliminary and that our investigations would give us the definitive answers. Everyone, particularly the intelligence community, has worked in good faith to provide the best assessment based on the information available. You know the FBI and the State Department’s Accountability Review Board are conducting investigations as we speak, and they will look into all aspects of this heinous terrorist attack to provide what will become the definitive accounting of what occurred.

Let me just end by saying, I knew Chris Stevens. I worked closely with him and had the privilege of doing so as we tried together as a government to free the Libyan people from the tyranny of Qadhafi. He was a valued colleague, and his loss and that of his three colleagues is a massive tragedy for all of us who serve in the US government and for all the American people. None of us will rest, none of us will be satisfied until we have the answers and the terrorists responsible for this attack are brought to justice.

(Reporter cross-talk)

And, Pam, let me just say—you asked about Senator McCain. Let me be very clear. I have great respect for Senator McCain and his service to our country. I always have, and I always will. I do think that some of the statements he’s made about me have been unfounded, but I look forward to having the opportunity at the appropriate time to discuss all of this with him.

(Reporter cross-talk)

Reporter: Sure. Ok, I’m going to ask you a Gaza question although I definitely respect the right of people to ask a follow up to that. I just wanted to ask you one—on Palestine, the controversy here at the UN about Palestine seeking observer state status. You heard Ambassador Loulichki say there’s no relation between the fighting in Gaza and the vote, and Israel obviously said states should think again. The U.S. opposes the vote, but what effect do you think this week of fighting—do you agree that this shows that the Palestinian Authority has no control over Gaza? Shouldn’t it make fewer states vote in favor of Palestine becoming a state observer at the UN?

Ambassador Rice: Well, I’ll let other states comment on how they see the Palestinian bid for observer state status in the General Assembly. From the United States’ point of view, we’ve been very clear. Our goal remains a negotiated, two-state solution. A Jewish democratic state of Israel living side by side in peace and security with an independent, viable Palestinian state. The only way to accomplish that in the real world is through direct negotiations, and we continue to urge the parties to come back to the table and to resume those direct negotiations. We view unilateral steps, including the bid for upgraded status to statehood—observer state status at the General Assembly—to be counterproductive and not take us closer to that goal, and, therefore, we strongly oppose it .

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