**Critics Question Rice's Low-Profile Approach at U.N.**

June 1, 2010

Fox News

*http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/06/01/rice-facing-criticism-job-performance-low-profile-key-issues/print*

Critics of the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations questioned her decision to stay in Washington during Monday's marathon emergency meeting over the Israeli raid on a Gaza aid flotilla -- though a U.N. official says she was "managing the situation" the entire time.

Susan Rice, who lives in the nation's capital and works most days in New York City, where the U.N. is headquartered, was with her family on Memorial Day when the news broke that the clash between Israeli forces and pro-Palestinian activists had left at least nine dead and dozens more wounded.

In her place, Deputy U.S. Representative Alejandro Wolff successfully pressed the U.N. Security Council to tone down its rebuke of Israel. That is in keeping with other countries, like permanent Security Council members Russia and China, which sent their deputy ambassadors to attend the session on the U.S. holiday.

A U.N. official said Rice was fully engaged the entire time, "managing the situation and in constant communication." The official said Wolff attended the marathon 12-hour meeting because he was already in New York, and that Rice was the one giving the orders from Washington. She has since traveled to New York.

But one of Rice's foremost critics slammed the U.S. ambassador, calling her absence part of a pattern of passivity.

Richard Grenell, who was appointed by George W. Bush and served as U.S. spokesman at the United Nations under four different ambassadors during Bush's administration, called it "troublesome" that Rice would remain in Washington while the crisis was unfolding.

"It's just unbelievable that Susan Rice didn't go out there," Grenell said. "She had plenty of time to get to New York."

Grenell previously has accused Rice of not spending enough time in New York and not pressing U.S. interests at the United Nations forcefully enough.

"She clearly wants to be the popular ambassador and has demonstrated that she's unwilling to take on the controversial issues," he said.

Rice has tackled some hot-button, top-shelf controversies at the United Nations, working with other influential members to pass sanctions against North Korea last year and to draft a new round of sanctions against Iran this year. The U.N. official described Rice as the leader of those talks, "literally at the table with her counterparts going line through line."

While Rice rarely grants extensive interviews with the media, the official dismissed the notion that her low profile in public spoke to anything about her profile at the United Nations.

"Look at the results rather than the number of television appearances," the official said.

But at the same time, the U.S. delegation has been relatively silent on U.N. developments that would normally entail a certain outrage factor for the United States.

The United States just endorsed a U.N. resolution on nuclear non-proliferation that singled out Israel's nuclear program but not Iran's.

That came after Libya, a country with ties to terror groups, won a seat last month on the U.N. Human Rights Council. Rice at the time criticized the council -- which the Obama administration has joined -- as "flawed," but she would not specifically address Libya's election.

The U.S. was successful in lobbying against Iran's bid for a seat on the same council, but in late April the Islamic Republic won election to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. The U.S. delegation did not issue any objection during the acclamation vote.

While an official with the U.S. Mission to the U.N. said at the time that there was "no opportunity" to object to the women's council vote and that the U.S. was powerless to stop Iran because it faced no competition for the seat, Grenell said the U.S. delegation could have drummed up a competitor.

Claudia Rosett, a journalist in residence with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the U.S. delegation is sending the message that "America doesn't mind."

"I think they believe that they can horse-trade their way at the United Nations to a more peaceful world, and they're wrong," Rosett said.

She said she doesn't question whether Rice "puts in the hours" at her job, but said she should have been in New York on Monday. She suggested that the elevation of Rice's job to a Cabinet-level position has put a strain on her time -- essentially requiring her to be both in Washington and New York City for different aspects of the job.

Still, she said, Wolff provided the "voice of reason" at the emergency meeting Monday and that the U.S. delegation was more effective than usual.

U.N. Security Council notes from that meeting show that Wolff was just about the only member not expressing "shock" at Israel's actions. He balanced calls for an investigation with an acknowledgement that Hamas' "interference" in the Gaza Strip has "complicated humanitarian efforts."

Rice, who served as an assistant secretary of state in the Clinton administration, is one of several top-ranking Obama administration members who have put a premium on restoring ties with the international community, and the United Nations as a whole, in the wake of what they say was a hostile approach from the Bush administration.

Rice said last year that "patient diplomacy" would mark U.S. leadership abroad. She appeared from the start to take a warmer approach to her post -- Rice told Vogue in an interview last June that she might have met all 192 permanent representatives in the period of a month.