

Secretary of state defends deployment of USS Cole off Lebanon

Contributed by AFP, State Department
Wednesday, 05 March 2008

CAIRO: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice defended the deployment of a US warship off the coast of Lebanon, saying it was designed to show Washington's readiness to defend its allies' interests.

"As to the American military presence, the US exercise a military presence in the region and it has for a very very long time," Rice told reporters in Cairo at a news conference with her Egyptian counterpart Ahmed Abu al-Gheit.

"It is simply to make very clear that the US is capable and willing of defending its interests and the interests of its allies. That is really all that is happening there," she said.

Rice was responding to a question on the deployment of the guided-missile destroyer USS Cole to waters off Lebanon, amid concerns over regional stability and Lebanon's protracted political crisis.

She said the the United States defended the right of the Lebanese to elect their own president.

"They have lived too long under the shadow of foreign intimidation and foreign presence," she added. - AFP

-----Joint Press Availability with Egyptian Foreign Minister
Aboul Gheit

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
Cairo, Egypt
March 4, 2008

[View Video](#)

SECRETARY RICE: First of all on the Lebanese situation, the United States stands only for one thing, which is for the Lebanese to be able to exercise their constitutional right to elect a president. This is a simple matter. These are a free people. They are a sovereign people. They have lived too long under the shadow of foreign intimidation and foreign presence. The international community spoke in 2004 and said that there should not be foreign presence there. That foreign presence -- Syrian presence left in 2005. And now the Lebanese people ought to be able to exercise their constitutional right to elect a president. That's all we're saying. Now, there is a majority in Lebanon that -- under Prime Minister Siniora that should govern. But this is really a very simple matter.

As to American military presence, the United States exercises a military presence in the region and has for a very, very long time. And it is simply to make very clear that the United States is capable and willing of defending its interests and the interests of its allies.

And that is really all that is happening there, but I want to return to the core point here, which is that this has nothing to do, really, with the United States or anyone else. It has to do with the rights of the Lebanese, and they need to have a president and they need to be able to do it quickly.