

**TRANSCRIPT OF NATO SECRETARY GENERAL'S INTERVIEW WITH
NILE TV DURING HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO EGYPT ON 13 OCTOBER 2005**

MS. AMAL ROUSHDY (NILE TV): Mr. Secretary General, welcome to Egypt. I would also like to welcome you on Nile News, Egypt's leading news channel.

MR. JAAP DE HOOP SCHEFFER (Secretary General of NATO): Thank you.

ROUSHDY: We know that a man in your position as Secretary General of NATO is very busy and has a very hectic schedule so we'll go straight to the questions of the interview. First, would you be kind enough to share with us the outcome of the talks you had with Egyptian officials?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: They were very interesting. I talked yesterday with Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit and they ranged from his analysis about the problems in the region to the prospects of close cooperation between NATO, the Organization I represent, and our Mediterranean Dialogue partners in North Africa, Israel and Jordan, and the leading role Egypt is playing--Egypt's position, of course, is an important one--in that sort of cooperation between NATO and the region.

ROUSHDY: Okay, since you mentioned the Mediterranean Dialogue, which goes back ten years, in your opinion, do you think this Dialogue has fulfilled its objective and does it have the mechanism and resources that makes it capable of attending to new objectives?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: It has fulfilled certain objectives, definitely, in the ten years of its existence. Last year the NATO Heads of State and Governments, after consultations with the region, said there should perhaps be more flesh to the bone. We should try to develop our dialogue into a partnership, and that is what we're doing. And that goes from political talks and political cooperation, to very practical forms of cooperation. Think about interoperability, think about discussions on civil emergency planning, think about the exchange of intelligence in this whole important fight against terrorism. It's our common enemy. The foundation of the partnership is that the new threats and challenges facing Egypt, facing NATO, are the same. They are terrorism. They are the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They are failed states.

So we can only fight that fight together and Egypt can't do that alone, nor can NATO.

ROUSHDY: In the light of the political changes that evolved here in the Middle East, do you see a role for NATO in the region, whether it would be in the aftermath of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip, or else for the settlement of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I don't think so. Of course, NATO is following developments in the region very closely: the Gaza dis-engagement, the role Egypt is now playing at the border, I think is an important role, but NATO does not have the ambition to enter directly into the peace process. We have the Quartet for that. We have the important regional players, Israelis and Palestinians in the first place, countries like Egypt and Jordan in the second place. The Quartet, the United States, United Nations, the Russians, the European Union; that's not on NATO's plate and that should not be on NATO's plate.

ROUSHDY: Not even in the sense of providing peacekeepers, for instance?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: No, not at the moment. I have always said that that question could only come up if the interested parties would raise it. When we would have a long-lasting,

durable and peaceful settlement of the conflict. But NATO is not seeking any direct role in that process. NATO is seeking a partnership, because what's happening in this region is not only very important for the region itself, but if things go wrong then they have their ramifications for, let's say, NATO allies and NATO nations as well.

ROUSHDY: At the summit meeting in Istanbul June, 2004, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed to assist Iraq with the training of its security forces. Has this assistance helped so far to under pressure the existing violence and the establishing or the creation of a democratically controlled Iraqi armed forces?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Well, I was in Iraq ten days ago, opening the Joint Staff College, which is the college where the training takes place. I found very motivated Iraqi officers, Iraqi trainers and Iraqi trainees. Because what do the Iraqis want? They want to be on their own feet as soon as possible. And the first priority of the Iraqi government is training. They want to make their own decisions.

That is why all 26 NATO allies, despite the differences, also in NATO, in the run-up to the Iraqi war, I mean, they were in a difference of opinion in the Security Council, in the European Union, in the United Nations; even in the Arab world. All 26 NATO allies now very much and very strongly, support this training mission. NATO trains inside Iraq. There are NATO allies who are training outside Iraq, and Iraqi officers go to the NATO schools.

In other words, it is an important training mission, I think, in a country which wants one thing: to be on its own feet as soon as possible.

ROUSHDY: After this visit how long do you think this mission should stay there to achieve its goals?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I think it has to stay for a while. There's a lot of training to be done. You know that the Iraqi army was more or less disbanded. Iraq is a proud nation, and these military have a lot of experience, they want to be trained and they want to take their fate into their own hands.

So if NATO can assist and help there, I think it's a very important, a very important job we're doing there.

ROUSHDY: With terrorism and security issues stopping the agenda of international community, NATO has signed a number of security protocols, with organizations and individual countries. The last of which in the region were signed with the Gulf Cooperation Council, the GCC. In your judgement how would these bilateral or multilateral agreements enhance the transfer of expertise and also the mobilization of resources to counteract this growing threat?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: If we fight terrorism together and terrorism is, as we know, everywhere and anywhere. I mean, I can mention Luxor, the Twin Towers, Beslan in Russia, Bali more recently, Madrid. It's everywhere.

We can't do enough--also in the exchange of crucial information--to fight that fight. NATO has a maritime operation in the Mediterranean, an anti-terrorist maritime naval operation where Egypt does help and where other Mediterranean Dialogue partners do help.

If we think there is a suspect ship we inform the Egyptian or the Moroccan or the Israeli authorities, check this ship when it comes into your port. We can do many other things in the framework of exchanging information. We have to find the sponsors of terrorism, because those people want to destroy our society. I think we find an important element of cooperation in this field, in the partnership between the Mediterranean Dialogue partners and NATO.

ROUSHDY: Following a request by the African Union, it was precisely in April of this year, NATO has agreed to help the AU expand its peacekeeping mission in Darfur. Do you see the need of extra efforts to be done for this region?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Well, we have decided to extend that mission upon the specific request of the African Union. What we are doing, as you rightly say, we are airlifting African Union forces into Darfur. Not NATO forces. NATO will not have any soldiers on the ground in Darfur. NATO is assisting the African Union to make sure that African solutions can be found for African problems.

NATO is assisting. See it as part of the new NATO. A new NATO which went to Bosnia. A new NATO which went to Kosovo. A new NATO which went to Afghanistan. I was there two weeks ago. A new NATO with a training mission in Iraq, as we discussed. The new NATO which is now assisting the victims of the horrible earth quake in Pakistan. They're organizing an air bridge.

That is the NATO as it operates and exists today and that is the NATO which I had discussed yesterday evening, in a very interesting discussion with the members of the Council for Foreign Affairs here in Egypt.

ROUSHDY: And do you have other plans to assist or to aid the African Union in other parts rather than Darfur and Sudan?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: What we are doing on a modest scale, is training the African Union military leadership. Why? Because the African Union appreciates this.

I could see that in the future that only upon their request, NATO would continue this kind of training, because it is important that the African Union succeeds in, as I sense, helping to find African solutions for African problems. The African Union is a very important body, very important body. It's called African Union and that means that we should leave it to the Africans. And where we can assist and where we can help we will do it, like we are doing it at the moment in Darfur.

ROUSHDY: And in September of 2002 U.S. Secretary for Defence Donald Rumsfeld, put forward a proposal to take NATO up at rapid reactive force... or reaction force, excuse me, and according to NATO launched something called Response Force Initiative. It was at the Prague Summit in November of the same year. In your opinion, what could be a substantial threat to member countries besides terrorism.

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Well, I mentioned terrorism and you do it. I could mention the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. I could mention failed and failing states. You are referring to the NATO Response Force, the NRF. May I tell you that in the air bridge we are now creating for Pakistan, in the assistance NATO gave to the United States after Hurricane Katrina, elements of this NATO Response Force were involved. I mean, NATO should be able to act if necessary across the whole spectrum. Hard power is necessary, soft power as well.

In Afghanistan, where we have what we call Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the combination of a military and a civilian input. We are in nation building. We are in reconstruction.

And if the Taliban or al-Qaeda would try to spoil and they are trying to spoil the democratic political process in Afghanistan. You'd agree with me that you need military power to fight them. So it's always this, it's always this combination. That NATO has, for large and small missions, such as the NATO Response Force, because we think we should have... we should be able to react very quickly if the need arises.

ROUSHDY: Talking about proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is another threat besides terrorism, how would NATO exactly deal with those standing nuclear issues, especially when new players are joining the nuclear club now?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: NATO is a force, let's say it again here, not a direct player. NATO as such is not a board member of the International Atomic Energy Agency. NATO as such is not directly involved in discussions over the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. NATO is not directly involved in, for instance, Egyptian endeavours to make the Middle East into a nuclear free zone. NATO is not directly involved in Iran and the Iranian question, and the Iranian nuclear question.

But NATO realizes that all forces should be joined, all hands should be joined, in preventing the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And the greatest danger of all, I think, is that we will see the lethal combination of terrorists getting their hands on weapons of mass destruction. That's the reason that, for instance, with our Russian friends, NATO has an excellent relationship with the Russian Federation.

We're trying to see how stockpiles of nuclear weapons can best be guarded, how we can do away with them, how we can destroy them, how we can destroy, apart from nuclear weapons, ammunition, small arms, which are in huge quantities, and we would not like to have terrorists lay their hands on those

ROUSHDY: On those weapons.

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: ...deadly weapons.

ROUSHDY: Do you think personally, it is a military decision or a military choice to deal with growing nuclear programs?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: I'm the Secretary General of NATO. I believe in active diplomacy. And I think the diplomatic road should be walked to find a solution for these problems in the hope that that is possible. And I think there are possibilities here in the framework of further building on the non-proliferation treaty in the International Atomic Energy Agency.

But you will agree with me that proliferation, as it is discussed today and more specifically proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, is a big threat towards security and stability.

ROUSHDY: Cleaning up mine fields scattered in Egypt's western desert since the second world war, does NATO have a specific plan to remove this danger, especially that I heard you mentioning something at the press conference with our Foreign Minister to this end?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Yeah, this is what I discussed with your Foreign Minister, and I know this is a big problem, and I know it gets a lot of attention in Egypt.

I think in the framework of our partnership relationship it would be possible, it should be possible. That we, for instance, start what I would call a pilot project in mine detection. I know that NATO allies on a bilateral basis are already assisting Egypt in de-mining. I do not know if NATO as such would be involved in de-mining, but I think in mine detection, in how you start the process, a pilot project between Egypt and NATO would certainly be within the realm of possibilities. I would hope so anyway.

ROUSHDY: Finally, NATO has an open door policy on enlargement. March 2004 seven new countries joined the Alliance. What are the measurements to accept these countries and other further plans in the future to accept other countries?

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: NATO is an Alliance based on values. NATO has always defended values we cherish. And countries, European democracies, as the NATO Treaty says, sharing those values can enter NATO, and can become an ally.

Of course, if they perform. NATO is also a performance-based Organization. They must not only adhere to those values, they must also prove that in many fields, be it human rights, be it defence, they qualify to become NATO members. NATO's door is open. There are other countries, for instance in the Western Balkans, who are aspiring NATO members. There are countries who have shown an interest in NATO. Let me mention a country like Georgia. Let me mention a big country like Ukraine.

In other words, NATO has an open door. But the roads to NATO... I always say, with Paul McCartney, is "a long and winding road", this famous song by the Beatles. But it can be done. And NATO is assisting and helping nations who want to go that long and winding road. And that's the process we are seeing again at this moment, for instance, with countries in the Western Balkans.

ROUSHDY: Mr. Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, thank you very much.

DE HOOP SCHEFFER: Thank you. It was a pleasure.
