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Rice's refusal is costly for Bush

Though she has attempted to ease the public relations impact, a refusal to testify may hurt Bush politically

By David Lightman
Hartford Courant (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Condoleezza Rice's refusal to testify publicly before the Sept. 11 commission may be grounded in solid historical precedent, but it may already be politically costly.

"Rice's view may be damaging to the president, and he has to weigh that," said Douglas A. Borer, visiting professor at the U.S. Army War College's national security and strategy department.

A public still nervous about terrorist threats does not want to hear the nuances of executive privilege, added Ivan Eland, director of the Center on Peace & Liberty, an Oakland, Calif.-based research group.

"People will say, 'This was a national catastrophe. Why can't she make an exception?'" he said.

There are signs that Bush, said to be adamant about Rice not appearing publicly before the commission, is starting to suffer politically from the controversy ignited by former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke.

Clarke, who is questioning whether

the White House lapsed in pursuing al-Qaida before and after the attacks, has been all over television and Washington reciting his charges and promoting his book.

A new poll from the Pew Research Center, taken between March 22, the day after Clarke appeared on CBS's "60 Minutes," and Saturday, found Bush slipping with the crucial one-fourth of the electorate labeled as swing voters.

Half thought Bush was the best choice to defend the country against terrorism, down from the 72 percent who felt that way in a mid-March survey.

The White House argues that putting the national security adviser under oath in a public setting would compromise executive privilege and add little to what's already known. Many experts agreed.

"We need to take a deep breath here. It's not like the 9/11 commission is hurting for information," said James Carafano, senior fellow at Washington's Heritage Foundation.

"If she testifies, she creates a precedent," Borer added. "Standing on principle on this one is not necessarily a bad idea."

Rice has tried mightily to soften the public relations hit. She got her own forum on "60 Minutes" Sunday and said that although she would like to appear

before the commission investigating the attacks, "there is an important principle involved here: It is a long-standing principle that national security advisers do not testify before Congress."

Rice, however, is arguably on shakier ground than her predecessors. Although Congress created the 10-member commission, the panel is not a congressional committee. Rice has given private testimony, and members of the bipartisan panel have unanimously agreed that Rice should testify publicly.

The furor re-ignites an old debate over how to regard the role of the National Security Council, created July 26, 1947, when postwar Washington reorganized its security apparatus.

The council's role was to coordinate the new Defense Department as well as the Central Intelligence Agency and related departments, and its purpose was to foster cooperation between the agencies, while adding political savvy to the discussions.

Different presidents have used the national security adviser in starkly different ways.

During World War II, before the current system was devised, three presidential advisers appeared before Senate committees.

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WATER

continued from page 1

Summers said the cost of the repairs will be "considerable," adding that the incident caused damage to the street and a storm drain. Both will be repaired within the next few days, Robertson said.

Robertson estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million gallons of water was released from the broken pipe. He said Eugene uses about 30 to 35 million gallons of water every day by comparison.

Freshman pre-business major Jon Marcus, who lives in Cloran Hall at the Hamilton Complex, said he was disappointed when he returned from spring break to find the water shut off.

"It sucked because my friend and I had just gotten back from a 13-hour bus ride and we couldn't shower," he said.

Director of University Housing Michael Eyster said most residents managed fairly well despite the lack of water. Eyster said he received few complaints about the incident.

"I think most people understood and tried to do the best they could to live with the circumstances," he said. "Even the people that had water in their cars seemed to understand that it wasn't someone's fault or it wasn't negligence."

There were a few problems associated with the water being restored,



Worker Lisa Marie watches Craig Matsler (front) grind down the end of a replacement pipe for the burst water main.

Tim Kupsick
Freelance
Photographer

Eyster said. He said the change in water pressure caused some of the toilets to keep flushing, but mechanics easily repaired this problem.

"It was more of a nuisance than a problem," he said.

In spite of an intense investigation by EWEB, the cause of the break could not be determined.

Robertson said EWEB personnel were on site by 10:30 a.m. Sunday and started their investigation shortly afterwards. The investigation involved digging up the street to reach the pipe three feet below the asphalt. The water main was repaired and the water in all the buildings was restored shortly after midnight.

Crews worked into the morning to refill the hole, Summers said.

Eyster said he was impressed with the speed of the repair and the cooperation of the various agencies involved with containing the situation.

"They all seemed to work together very well," he said. "They just rolled up their sleeves and tried to get the job done."

Students whose personal property was damaged by the flooding should contact EWEB at 484-2411 and ask for the claims department.

Contact the people/culture/
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