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## Senate Confirms Rice as Secretary of State

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WASHINGTON - Condoleezza Rice was easily confirmed as secretary of state today, overcoming charges from some Democrats that she had been a disingenuous architect of a failed administration policy in Iraq.

The Senate voted, 85 to 13, to confirm Ms. Rice, who will succeed Colin L. Powell and will be the first black woman to serve as the United States' top diplomat. Ms. Rice is to be sworn in tonight in a private session at the State Department and sworn in again at a public ceremony on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Alberto Gonzales, President Bush's nominee for attorney general, was endorsed by the Senate Judiciary Committee in a 10-to-8 vote that was strictly along party lines and reflected the continuing sharp divisions over his fitness to head the Justice Department.

The full Senate is expected to vote on him next week, following a debate that is sure to be spirited and to focus on his role, as White House counsel, in shaping policies that critics say helped to foster an atmosphere that led to the abuse of detainees at Guantánamo Bay naval base in Cuba and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

Moments after the roll-call vote on Ms. Rice, Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee, the Republican majority leader, celebrated "a proud moment for the Senate and the American people."

Her elevation from national security adviser to secretary of state completes a remarkable ascent for Ms. Rice, 50, a child of the South who, by her own recollection, was instilled with confidence and a love of learning by her parents. She was formerly provost of Stanford University and is an expert on Russian history and culture.

President Bush called Ms. Rice "an honorable, fine public servant" in a news conference shortly before the Senate vote. "She will be a great secretary of state," Mr. Bush said.

Twelve of the Senate's 44 Democrats and the chamber's lone independent, James Jeffords of Vermont, voted against Ms. Rice. No Republican voted against her. (Two Republicans, Judd Gregg of New Hampshire and Conrad Burns of Montana, did not vote.)

Those who voted against Ms. Rice accused her of embracing faulty intelligence about Saddam Hussein's supposed possession of deadly unconventional weapons in making the case to go to war against Iraq. Some of her critics also faulted her performance, as national security adviser, in the months before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Ms. Rice's severest critics accused her not just of making mistakes on Iraq but of outright deception. "We cannot get the truth from this administration," Senator Mark Dayton, Democrat of Minnesota, said in debate on Tuesday.

But Ms. Rice's critics were far outnumbered by those who favored her, on both sides of the aisle. "This nominee is more than qualified," Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut, said today.

Nonetheless, some Democrats who voted for her said they did so with reservations. "My vote in favor of Dr. Rice is difficult to explain," said Senator Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont. "It is more a

product of a belief than a cold analysis of her record. I believe that Dr. Rice is capable of learning from her mistakes and changing her ways. That she will rise to this new challenge. That she can be a good secretary of state."

Mr. Leahy said his position as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee's foreign-affairs subcommittee influenced his vote, since he must work almost daily with the secretary of state and "I want to get this important working relationship started on the right track."

And while the Senate's Democratic leader, Harry Reid of Nevada, voted in favor of Ms. Rice, he said he was disappointed that the White House and some Republican lawmakers had tried to "stifle debate" on the nominee.

"Our Founding Fathers meant for us to carefully consider the matters brought before us, and make sure our government does not act irrationally and does not act without a plan and vision for our country's future," Mr. Reid said in a statement. "Silence is not an important part of American history. Debate is."

Senator Richard G. Lugar, the Indiana Republican who heads the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said before the vote that he hoped for strong, bipartisan backing, since the secretary of state is entrusted with "making the case for the United States of America" throughout the world.

Despite the overwhelming vote, White House vote-counters were somewhat disappointed, having hoped the nominee would glean well over 90 votes.

Those who voted against Ms. Rice, besides Mr. Jeffords and Mr. Dayton, were Senators Barbara Boxer of California, who was one of her most outspoken critics, Edward M. Kennedy and John Kerry of Massachusetts, Carl Levin of Michigan, Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, Jack Reed of Rhode Island, Richard Durbin of Illinois, Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, Evan Bayh of Indiana, Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey and Tom Harkin of Iowa.

Although the confirmation of Mr. Gonzales to succeed John Ashcroft as attorney general still seems assured, given the Republicans' 55 seats in the Senate, it was clear that the debate will be more contentious than that over Ms. Rice's nomination.

Mr. Leahy, the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, and another Democrat on the panel, Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York, said today they had decided that they could not support Mr. Gonzales.

"My reasons for voting against this nomination arise from the need for accountability and derive from the nominee's involvement in the formulation of a number of policies that have tarnished our country's moral leadership in the world and put our soldiers and citizens at greater risk," Mr. Leahy said.

Mr. Schumer said he like and respected Mr. Gonzales, whom he called "a gentleman and a genuinely good man."

"But being less polarizing than John Ashcroft isn't enough, alone, to get my vote," Mr. Schumer said. He said the post of attorney general required more independence than that of secretary of state - and that Mr. Gonzales had displayed "strict adherence to the White House line and barely a drop of independence."

The other Judiciary Committee Democrats who voted against Mr. Gonzales were Senators Kennedy and Durbin and Joseph R. Biden Jr. of Delaware, Herbert Kohl of Wisconsin, Dianne Feinstein of California and Russell D. Feingold of Wisconsin.