



Remarks to the Press en Route Washington

Secretary Colin L. Powell
En Route To Washington
September 1, 2004

SECRETARY POWELL: Thanks for coming with us on a fairly long day, but as far as I was concerned, it was a good day. I have had a chance to meet with two brand new heads of state – Panama and the Dominican Republic – and another head of state, an old friend, President Uribe of Colombia and also with President Alexandre of Haiti. And I had good conversations with all of them.

I was very impressed by President Torrijos' inauguration address. And it was a moving experience for me to be in Panama, to sit there today and listen to him talk about ending corruption and the social and economic issues he's going to deal with and the rule of the law and the importance of democracy. And just to go back fourteen and a half years to when we launched the invasion to get rid of Noriega, and ever since then there have been peaceful, fair elections over those fourteen years in Panama.

The new president seems quite dynamic and he has a solid agenda. I think you all heard him today. So, that was an important moment for me. In our meeting, which took place immediately after the ceremony ended, right after the anthem was played, I extended best wishes from President Bush and the American people, of course, told him I look forward to working with him and especially applauded his commitment to going after corruption.

The biggest challenge he has is, I think, the expectations of the people. And he understands that. And the disparity in income levels between those who are in the urbanized areas and those who are out in the countryside. It's perhaps one of the most severe disparities in the developing world, and he understands that perfectly, as well. I'll just stop there and take whatever questions you have.

QUESTION: You talked about his inauguration, but what did you make of his desire to immediately restore ties to Cuba and his announcement of the investigations into the Moschoso corruption regime?

SECRETARY POWELL: We talked about that briefly. I wanted to reassure him because there are some press reports to the contrary...reassure him that we had nothing to do with it. There's one press report that I had discussed it with President Moschoso when I was here on the last trip - no such conversation took place between me and any Panamanian official and I'm not aware of any conversations that took place with anyone in the United States government. This is something that she had decided. He is also being criticized, a suggestion that somehow he had cut a deal with her, which he said he had nothing to do with. So, President Moschoso will have to explain her actions.

With respect to Cuba, it's an entirely a decision for them to make. President Moschoso made a series of decisions over the last week or so; President Torrijos, who is now the president, will make a series of decisions that are entirely within his sovereignty and his authority to make. But we have had no hands on with this one.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, concerning your meeting with President Uribe of Colombia, Plan Colombia is I think four years old now. The U.S. has invested a lot of money, I think something like two million plus. Can you give your evaluation of where we are now compared to where we started from, particularly with the prospects for peace and the counter-narcotics efforts?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think in the last couple of years, especially under his leadership, of course, the plan is really picking up momentum. Crops are being destroyed. One point he made to me is that we have seen the numbers go up in terms of eradication significantly, but the challenge is that they keep finding new fields. As they go deeper into the countryside to destroy old fields, they are finding new fields. He is determined not to yield or shrink from this. I think you can see he has put enormous pressure on the FARC and the other organizations that he's been dealing with (inaudible) and has some success with that. The murder rates have gone down. The kidnapping rates have gone down. So, the degree of civil society instability that had existed, say at the beginning of our administration, that's all improved.

We also talked about the fact that as he moves forward he has to keep his eye on human rights and civil rights, to make sure that while he is cracking down, it is done in a way is consistent with acceptable human rights standards. And I reminded him that I have to make certifications on this. But I'm very impressed at what he has done; I think Plan Colombia is now paying off. I can see it manifested in my own work on the Hill; it's easier to get support with it now than it was two years ago. I think I joined it in the beginning of the second year, when I got here. It was tough selling then; it's been much easier since.

His big challenge is the, as he calls it, the reintegration of these combatants into society. And if they come across and say we have had enough, and they are not guilty of any crimes, other than they have been associated with the FARC, how do you reintegrate them? How do you say you are no longer considered a terrorist or part of a terrorist organization? How do you get them the training and other wherewithal they need to become constructive members of society? Many of them are in these organization as much as sources of income, as opposed to any ideology there were following. So, how do you reintegrate them into society? And we talked about possible ways we could help, whether in Plan Colombia or maybe new programs might be needed for this kind of reintegration. Kind of reminded me of what the Angolans are going through - they still have that large rebel army and have had the challenge of reintegrating them into the society, and it has happened many other places in the world. That's the number one issue he focused on today and spent the most time on.

QUESTION: Thanks I wanted to ask you about the IAEA's report on Iran today. I guess a little bit about your assessment. Does it help or hurt chances of moving this into the Council and is that still a goal? Is that he number one goal right now in dealing with Iran?

SECRETARY POWELL: I've just gotten spot reports on what it contains. I haven't read it myself yet and I haven't gotten a full analysis of it from my staff. And they're poring over it now. I think what it will say is that there are many problems with Iranian performance. I think it will also say that there are questions that remain unanswered. And at least the people that did the report, and Dr. El Baradei may not be prepared to a final conclusion as to the nature of the problem. But, I haven't really had a chance to get a full assessment of the report.

Our view is that it should have been referred to the Council long ago. It is still our position that it ought to be referred to the Council. We were of that view last November when we worked with our friends in the EU, who wanted a different approach...wanted to take a different approach to the problem. They did and we supported that and we watched it. Now it is almost a year later, 10 months later, and we still believe that the Iranians are not 'fessing up to everything. They still have a program that, in our judgment, is a nuclear program designed to develop, ultimately, a nuclear weapon. And unless there are assurances otherwise that the international community can count on, I think it is appropriate for it to be referred to the Security Council.

Now, that will be our position going in to the discussions on the 13th of September when the Board meets to take this issue up, as well as other issues before the IAEA. Whether there is a consensus to do that now remains to be seen. But we think we've seen enough. The world should have seen enough over the last year to come to the conclusion that it is time for it to be referred to the Security Council. But, there are a lot of discussions that will have to take place. I'll start tomorrow with the EU-3 and other members of the IAEA to get a sense of what the international consensus is. There are a number of countries, I think, that would say, "No, let's not do it yet. Let's take another look at it in November." We think there is enough now to do it, but I obviously have to hear what others have to say. But, this should have been referred

before.

QUESTION: Following on that, Under Secretary Bolton suggested in a speech over the summer that diplomacy didn't seem to be working and it was...I forget his words...it is time to start thinking about isolating Iran rather than engaging Iran. What are your thoughts about that?

SECRETARY POWELL: Diplomacy is never working until it works. You remember the famous George Mitchell line at 788 straight days of failure on the Good Friday Agreement until Good Friday came and we had an agreement. So, I think there is still a diplomatic track here, hopefully a diplomatic solution. But, frankly, if the international community comes together and decides that it has to be referred to the Security Council, then the next question before us is: what alternatives are available to the Security Council? And we are examining what alternatives might be presented to the Security Council for its consideration if there is a referral.

John's speech, the speech you've actually described, says if this country, Iran, continues to move in this direction and it is referred to the United Nations Security Council, there has to be action taken by the Council. And we're looking at the range of possible actions of a political, economic, diplomatic and other nature that might be taken.

QUESTION: Can I ask you about Iraq? What are your thoughts on the idea of reprogramming more than \$3 billion away from electricity and infrastructure projects to security? And to what extent do you think Congress is going to agree with that assessment?

SECRETARY POWELL: When Ambassador Negroponte got over there working with Mr. Nash and General Casey, and especially with General Petraeus, who has the principal responsibility for helping the Iraqis build up their forces, we found some shortfalls in the amount of money needed for the build-up program. These are not shortfalls we should have anticipated earlier because there were changes in the size of the force once the Interim Government got in and had a chance to take a look at what was being planned. And sitting with General Petraeus they came up with a modification of that plan, which now has to be funded. So, we're looking at all the pots of money that are available. I think we can make a case to the Congress for whatever reprogramming we ultimately decide upon.

The first priority for our effort right now has to be security. And we have to do everything we can to build up Iraqi forces as quickly as possible, make sure they're equipped, they're trained and not just trained to shoot a rifle, but trained to operate its units. And that takes money. It might require reprogramming from within the supplemental, the \$18 billion supplemental, or we're looking at other sources of money that might be available. That's priority one. It doesn't mean that there won't be reconstruction, but it might mean that some of the reconstruction activities that we were planning at a particular rate, that rate might have to be slowed down, or some of the programs scaled back. And that seems to me to be the prudent choice to make when your major problem is getting the insurgency under control. And the principal solution to that problem is building up Iraqi forces.

QUESTION: Okay, just to follow up on that. Many Iraqis are complaining that the reconstruction program has been very slow, that it's taken far too long and that there isn't really much to show so far and that the money hasn't been spent quickly enough. I wonder what your overall view is of the reconstruction program so far?

SECRETARY POWELL: It took a long time to get through the contracting process, the letting of bids, the receipt of bids, challenging of bids. It takes a while to put in place a system that could disburse money in these quantities at the same time that you've got an unstable situation and where you cannot always say, "Well, this is where a sewer system should go." But, if a place is not safe to build a sewer system you can't spend the money.

Since the transfer took place, the rate of expenditure--not just obligation and commitment, but actual expenditure--has gone up quite a bit. I don't have the numbers in my mind; it is something like \$600 to \$800 million, that delta, just in the last couple weeks. So, we're trying to ratchet it up. Not just because we've changed from CPA to Embassy, but a lot of the systems that had to be put in place to manage the money are now in place and the pipeline is filling. And you don't really pay for it until it comes out the end of the pipeline. And so, I think you'll see the rate of expenditure will go up rather rapidly in the months ahead.

QUESTION: And I also wanted to ask you about Darfur and whether...the deadline has passed and what you think has been achieved?

SECRETARY POWELL: Mr. Pronk's report is now in and we are studying it. There have been improvements in the humanitarian situation. The problems that I really had uppermost in my mind with respect to the humanitarian situation...I went there in early July, I guess it was now...had to do with simple things like getting visas and passports and opening up the ports to let the relief vehicles come in. That's pretty much happened. That's happening. The fact...my concern on that side of it has gone to getting the international community and the humanitarian organizations to fill the pipeline that has now been opened, and to do a better job of retail distribution, not only to the camps, but the outlying areas. That's now starting to happen with air drops and greater capacity being built up with the number of humanitarian workers in the Darfur region has now doubled, close to doubled, since the first of July.

On the security side it is still mixed. There's been some attempts on the part of the Sudanese Government to put more police in, to bring some of these militias in under uniform, thereby putting them back under the control of the Sudanese Government. But there is still not a secure environment outside the camps. The camps are increasingly secure within the camps, but the countryside is not secure. And I won't be satisfied until the countryside is secure so these people can start going back to their villages. We don't want permanent camps, we want them to go back to their villages, put in crops and start to rebuild their lives.

On the political track that was also one of our goals. That's now underway in Abuja. And we just got word a moment ago, which talks to the points I just made, that the rebels and the Sudanese Government seem to have come to an agreement to cooperate with each other on humanitarian access and not interfere with humanitarian access. And there may be also an agreement for additional AU monitors and protection forces and whatever term they're going to put on it--monitoring protection forces or monitors--additional numbers to come in. And the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has also spoken today on the need for additional personnel. So, he's spoken on it, we've spoken on it and now the first reports coming in this afternoon suggest that the rebels and the Sudanese Government are in agreement that additional monitors would be, and protection forces for monitors, which might do more than just protect monitors, like provide a level of protection in parts of the countryside. It's a large area, as you've heard me say many times, and you can't do all of it with a few thousand troops, but you can make a difference.

So, we've seen some progress but we've got to keep the pressure up. We're not satisfied with where we are yet.

(cross-talk)

QUESTION: Just on the Iraq security situation, since the Najaf standoff there have been a lot of reports, especially in the Sunni areas, the rebels are basically in control of these large areas and it seems doubtful that elections could be held in large parts of Iraq, according to reports coming out of there. Do you have any assessment on how much of the Sunni area, or of Iraq at large, is in the control of the rebels?

SECRETARY POWELL: I wouldn't say that large portions of the country. What I would say is that within the Sunni Triangle there are areas, usually towns, that are not firmly under government control. Accommodations have been made that may not be satisfactory for any length of time, like Fallujah, Samarra, Ramadi, North Babil, places like that where the government has to extend its control. And, this will be a major mission, I think, for the coalition and for the government. In order to regain control of these areas, that takes a political effort, diplomatic effort and military force, as we saw in Najaf. Also, it requires additional Iraqi forces. So, there's a pacing issue here. If you start to bring these places back under control you have to have built-up Iraqi forces that can protect them.

I would not draw any conclusion yet about the elections. Everybody is marching along toward the elections at the end of the year. In fact, the Prime Minister, Allawi, reaffirmed that again today to Ambassador Negroponte. There's no change in his plans. And the UN is there--we need to get them ramped up more quickly. But, we're still moving toward elections. There's no reason they can't be held. The situation that might exist in those cities today is not necessarily what it might be next week, next month or at the end of the year.

(cross-talk)

QUESTION: I just want to follow up on Darfur. What are your views at the moment in terms of sanctions? What are your views on sanctions and what kind of sanctions, if they were implemented, could be effective in your view?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it is too early to answer the question. The resolution that was passed calls for measures under...I think it is Article 41, if I'm not mistaken. Richard will fix it if I am. And so, after we see Mr. Pronk's report, and I've got my own sources of information, after I've had a chance to talk to my colleagues on the Council and after we've heard from the Sudanese Government that the results of the conversations taking place in Abuja between the rebels and the Sudanese Government, we'll make a judgment as to what else the Council can do. Sanctions is not the only other thing the Council can do. One of the things...a possibility that's obvious in what I said a moment ago...is encourage the growth in the size of AU peacekeepers as rapidly as possible and help that buildup. And so, we will examine what additional measures might be needed. But, it is not immediately going to sanctions. It has always been a case of orchestrated pressure in a way that moves the government along, improves the situation and keeps the pressure up, but not to the point where you might get a consequence that you would not like or is unintended.

QUESTION: (inaudible)

SECRETARY POWELL: (inaudible) Security Council members. We've got Chechnya before the Council for discussion, beginning at 5:00...may be over by now. And we're still in consultation with Security Council members on the language of the resolution. We put the resolution in blue this evening.

QUESTION: The Lebanon?

SECRETARY POWELL: The Lebanon. I don't know that there is...to the best of my knowledge there is no Chechnya resolution, just discussion which may lead to a President's statement. The Russians left the President's chair yesterday and the Spanish are in the President's chair today. But, I don't have a good enough vote count to lay off odds on it yet. But, I don't see a veto and I see enough to pass it.

Thank you.

Released on September 1, 2004

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