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## Interview on the Tony Snow Show

### Secretary Colin L. Powell

Washington, DC  
August 27, 2004

(11:20 a.m. EDT)

**MR. SNOW:** Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. My special guest now, Secretary of State Colin Powell. Mr. Secretary, as always, an honor. Thank you for joining us.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Thank you, Tony. It's good to hear your voice.

**MR. SNOW:** I am going to ask you the obvious question you get asked a billion times, but I promised Laurie and Waco that I would do it because she wants you to run for president some day. So, there you go.

First, are you going to be vice president this year?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Of course not, Tony.

**MR. SNOW:** Okay. (Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'm Secretary of State and proud to be serving my nation and my President in this way.

**MR. SNOW:** And do you intend to be president at any time?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, I have no political ambitions, whatsoever, Tony. It's standard. You've heard this answer before.

**MR. SNOW:** I told Laurie what you were going to say. (Laughter.)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yeah, well, I appreciate her interest and I'm flattered by it, but I'll serve the country the way I'm serving it now.

**MR. SNOW:** And God bless you for doing it. Let's talk a little bit about some of the key challenges facing the country. President Bush told the *New York Times* that, yes, there have been some miscalculations in post-war planning in Iraq. Isn't that -- am I wrong, or is it natural not to have perfect foresight about what's going to happen in a war zone after the chief combat hostilities are over?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** You can never be sure what's going to happen. You make plans, but what you have to be able to do is adjust those plans when faced with reality. There is an old army expression, "No plan survives first contact with an enemy."

And so, what we have been doing, as the President noted in this *New York Times* interview, we have been adjusting, and we continue to adjust to make sure that we don't lose sight of our goal and that we accomplish that goal and that is a free and democratic Iraq. In the last 24 hours, I think we've seen some improvement in the situation with the resolution of the situation in Najaf.

**MR. SNOW:** Two questions: First, when you read *New York Times* headlines, the way the *New York Times* played it, does it make you crazy?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Nothing makes me crazy in this town anymore, Tony. You expect these kinds of things, and you just come in every day and do your job and accomplish what the President set out to accomplish: a free, democratic Iraq; a free, democratic Afghanistan.

Fifty-five million people have been freed and they are all getting ready for elections. They're being challenged by insurgents and those who are throwing hand grenades and bombs around because they don't want democracy, and they can't be allowed to win and they will not win. And what's more important to take a look at now is how the new Iraqi Interim Government has started to show leadership and potential in working with the Ayatollah Sistani to resolve the situation in Najaf, as we see it being resolved over the last 24 hours.

But keep in mind it was the presence of U.S. troops, working with coalition troops and with the Iraqi forces, that shaped this situation to the point where the leadership of the Iraqi Interim Government, working with the Ayatollah Sistani, could bring about a resolution that did not require troops to go into that mosque. And that shows how we are working with this new government, this new sovereign government.

**MR. SNOW:** Secretary of State Colin Powell with me on the Tony Snow Show.

That's an important point. U.S. forces had been closing in on Muqtada al-Sadr, who, by the way, was he not taking advantage of the absence of the Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani, who had gone to London for heart treatment and immediately, surprise, surprise, all of a sudden Muqtada al-Sadr starts trying to foment rebellion in Najaf around the mosque of Ali Shrine -- the Shrine of Ali Mosque.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, he may well have been taking advantage of the Ayatollah Sistani's absence, but the Ayatollah Sistani came back and said to al-Sadr and others that this is the time to work with the government and to stop this kind of killing, this kind of violence; we have to start building our country.

**MR. SNOW:** But under the previous provisional government, and correct me if I'm wrong, is not Muqtada al-Sadr still under indictment for murder?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** He is still under indictment. That indictment has not been lifted. Although the new government has declared something of a general amnesty, it's not clear that it applies to him.

Right now, we're not pursuing that. Right now, we're pursuing stability in Najaf and stability in that mosque, and it's good to see Iraqi police and Iraqi troops that are providing that stability, but with the nearby presence of coalition troops, especially American troops, that shaped the battle to the point where it was clear to Sadr that he had to yield to Sistani and to the government.

**QUESTION:** All right. By the way, so, in other words, if he tries again, and we've been through this three or four times already, the U.S. will be at the ready, if necessary?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We'll be at the ready. More importantly, the Iraqi Government will be at the ready and his militia seems to be moving out or leaving the area. Frankly, they took huge losses over the last several weeks and I think their capability was diminished and we want to keep that capability diminished.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, Iran. What do we do to prevent Iran from creating nuclear weapons?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, we have always felt that Iran was moving in this direction and we pressed the Russians, who were working on a power plant for the Iranians, and we pressed the International Atomic Energy Agency and our European Union friends. And the international community has put enormous pressure on Iran and there will be meetings of the IAEA in September and November to decide whether Iran is responding in a proper way or what else we might do.

We do not want Iran to have nuclear weapons. Iran says it is not moving in that direction, but the evidence suggests otherwise.

So this is a case where the President is using diplomatic pressure in a variety of ways -- with the Russians, with the IAEA, with the European Union, with the Security Council -- to constrain Iran. And I hope that Iran will realize it is not in their interest to keep moving in such a direction and will act accordingly.

**QUESTION:** What about the Iranian people? Do you think that they're going to put pressure? There's been a lot of speculation about, at some point, an overthrow.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I see this speculation and, you know, we just have to leave it up to the Iranian people to decide how they wish to be governed. I think the Iranian people, who are mostly young -- I mean, it's a very young population -- I think they are looking for a better life. I've been in touch with a number of Iranians who have relatives here in the United States and talked to them and I'm in touch with them through that means, and they're looking for a better life. They see what the rest of the world has. They know that they could be doing better than they are doing now. And as we have seen in recent months, they are pressuring their government.

But we have learned over the years that we should listen to what the Iranian people say and we should talk to the Iranian people with the message we have of a desire for a better relationship with Iran. But it is up to the Iranian people to determine

how they will be led and what kind of leadership they would like to see in political power in Iran.

**QUESTION:** Secretary of State Colin Powell, thanks so much for joining us. Have a great trip to Greece. Enjoy yourself. Are you looking forward to it?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I am. Thank you very much, Tony. We're still looking at that trip and thank you very much. It's been a great Olympics. I mean, the Greek people and Government have done a superb job. Thank you.

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