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## Interview with Katherine Bauerle of El Mercurio Newspaper

### Secretary Colin L. Powell

Santiago, Chile

November 19, 2004

**QUESTION:** First of all, Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you for the interview. You recently said that President Bush's mandate to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. Does that mean that the U.S. will continue to act alone if it feels it is the right thing to do?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, well, if the U.S. feels that there is some danger it has to deal with, and no one else will deal with it, of course we'll do that. But that wasn't the intent of my statement. The intent of my statement was that the president is going to act aggressively in the area of foreign policy. But in almost every area of foreign policy, he has worked with friends and partners. He has aggressively pursued free trade agreements. He has aggressively pursued better bilateral relations with many of the nations of the world, particularly Chile.

Our relationship with Chile for the last four years has been an aggressive one, in order to get the free trade agreement done, in order to have better relations, in order to help Chile as it hosted the APEC session, as it gets ready for work with the Community of Democracies. We did all of that even though we had a big disagreement with Chile last year on Iraq. You see, friends can disagree and not be disagreeable.

**QUESTION:** Are we OK now?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yes, sure. Chile is a sovereign nation with its own political leadership and its own citizens' interest to take into account. We disagreed with the position the government took, but that had nothing to do with our friendship toward Chile or the strong feelings we have toward Chile. So even after that, the Free Trade Agreement never put that at risk. People said have said that "Well, did you threaten to put the FTA at risk because of that?" Never.

**QUESTION:** Getting back to the subject of Iraq, Mr. Secretary, the main reason for the invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. Those weapons did not exist. Do you still think that this war was justified and necessary?



**SECRETARY POWELL:** At the time that the decisions were being made, our intelligence community and the intelligence communities of most of the major nations that have such capabilities believed that he had weapons of mass destruction. We knew that he had the intent to have such weapons, and he had the capability of having such weapons, and he refused to answer questions about what he had done with some of the weapons and some of the materials that he had and we also thought he had stockpiles. And so in the absence of any different information, we believe the conflict was justified. He was also a huge violator of human rights, and he was doing many other things, we now know, the oil-for-food program was being cheated on.

So we took the action that we did with a willing coalition. We still believe, after the war, that he had the intention of having such weapons; He still retained the capability to develop such weapons. What we have not found are actual stockpiles. I don't know why they weren't there, and I am sure our intelligence community will try to find out how they misread that, but it wasn't because we were just looking to invade and we invented it. It was the same information that President Clinton used in 1998 when he attacked Iraq during a four-day bombing campaign.

**QUESTION:** Do you think that the world is safer now?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** The world is safer, but the world is not yet safe from terrorism. This part of our world, the western hemisphere, is rather quiet. There are no wars going on in our hemisphere right now. This is rather unusual for this hemisphere. I remember 18 years -17 years- ago when I was National Security Advisor, we had problems all over this hemisphere. And now every nation, except one, is a democracy. Somewhere along the continuum between left-of-center, right-of-center, you name it, but they are democracies. All except for Castro's Cuba. So, I think that our hemisphere is certainly safer. Terrorism is still a threat, and we have got to fight it, but I think the world is safer but not yet safe.

**QUESTION:** On the subject of nuclear proliferation, Mr. Secretary, what is the United States going to do to deal with the threat of Iran. The prime minister of Iran said that the allegation of Iran having a missile that has a nuclear warhead was not true. What do you make of that?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I don't agree with that, obviously. The Iranians have spent years hiding things from us. We have said for a long time that we believe they had a nuclear program that was designed to develop a nuclear weapon. They said no. But we kept pointing things out. The IAEA kept finding out about things that the Iranians have not told them, things they have hidden. The European foreign ministers made a deal with the Iranians in the Fall of 2003 that the Iranians would suspend this activity and yet the Iranians broke out of that agreement in 2004. Now they have a new agreement with the European Union. I hope they meet their commitments. But there is no good reason to just trust the Iranian assurances. We need to see performance. We need to get the IAEA back into Iran to look at these places. And we know that Iran has a sophisticated missile program. And with such a program, one must expect that if they are developing a nuclear warhead and nuclear weapons that they will have to find a way to deliver them. And so the statement that I made the other day- that I have reason to believe that they are developing such ability - is a correct statement, and we stand by it.

**QUESTION:** And if Iran does not abide by the American expectations, what will happen?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** It is not American expectations; these are the expectations of the international community. Iran

has been telling the international community that they are not doing this. The international community continues to find evidence that Iran is doing it. So it is not the U.S. versus Iran, it is Iran with this kind of a program that is a concern to the entire international community.

Now what we have been doing aggressively – to pick up your earlier term – is not mobilizing our forces. What are we doing? We are working with the IAEA, we are working with the European Union, we are working multilaterally, not unilaterally. We are doing just that which people say we should do. Now people sometimes get annoyed with the United States for pushing on these issues, pushing, pushing. But until we pushed, nobody really believed that the Iranians were doing the things they were doing. So over the last four years, because of the United States aggressively pushing the problem before everybody, so they could see it, we now have the Russians saying we will not provide any nuclear fuel to the new reactor at Bushehr, unless it is totally controlled and the spent fuel comes back to Russia. We have the IAEA much more aggressive. And we have the European Union involved. So we have put a heat lamp and a spotlight on the Iranian program, thereby making it more difficult for the Iranians to do what they might have been doing in the absence of such attention.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, you are traveling to the Middle East tomorrow, I understand. What will be your governments' initiatives in this window of opportunity, that is the passing of Yasser Arafat, to revive the peace process there?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We are very anxious to see the election for the Palestinian Authority president take place on the ninth of January. I will be talking to the Palestinian leaders about their preparations for the election. I will be talking to the Israelis as to how they can assist the Palestinians in having a good, open election, people can get along in order to be able to vote, participate in such an election.

I will be talking to the Palestinians about how they need to get ready to assume political control in Gaza and prepare security forces to secure Gaza so it is not a source of instability, you don't have people shooting rockets from Gaza against Israeli villages. And I'll be talking to the Israelis as to what they might do to help the Palestinians exercise greater political and security control over Gaza.

Then I will be looking for ways that we can get both sides to start moving down the road map. They have mutual obligations in the road map, and we think this is the time to start moving forward.

And then from Jerusalem, I will go to Sharm al-Sheikh and meet with members of the Quartet and brief them on my meetings in Jerusalem.

**QUESTION:** Looking back to your four years as head of the Department of State, how do you assess your legacy as Secretary of State for the United States?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** You do that.

[Laughter]

**QUESTION:** You must have a feeling, right?

**QUESTION:** I leave feeling very good about the things that have been accomplished by President Bush and his administration over the past four years. I was a part of that administration. Two tyrants are gone, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. Afghanistan is on its way to its parliamentary elections. People have returned to the country—3.7 million refugees. I am very proud of what we did in Afghanistan.

Saddam Hussein is gone. We have some difficult days ahead in Baghdad and the other cities of Iraq as we bring this insurgency under control and defeat it and give the Iraqi people the same opportunity as the Afghan people. I am very pleased that we have undertaken a global war against terror.

Those are the things that get the most attention, the Middle East. But there are so many other things that do not get as much as attention as I think they should that reflects a very positive foreign policy of the United States government under President Bush. The very excellent relations we have with our friends and allies in the Asia-Pacific region. We are having an APEC meeting here, hosted by Chile, and Chile has done a great job in preparing this meeting. These nations will be talking about economics and trade—and a little bit of security—because security affects economics. Without good security, then you do not have the trade opportunities that you might have.

We have good relations with our friends in the Pacific. We helped enlarge NATO. We helped the EU and assisted the EU as they enlarged. We got weapons of mass destruction out of Libya. We have doubled the amount of money we are giving to developing nations around the world. We have put massive amounts of money against the biggest problem in the world, HIV/AIDS. We helped bring tension down on the subcontinent, the conflict that we almost had between India and Pakistan. I think we played an important role in bringing the tension down – now they're talking to one another. So I think my four years with the president, I have seen a number of opportunities seized and a number of successes. We still have some challenges. I am confident that in the next four years President Bush and his team will be able to meet those challenges.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any regrets about those four years?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I never regret. I do not have regrets because they do not do you any good. What do I do with a regret? What do I do with thinking, you know, it's not like a football game- I can press the rewind button and do it differently- or a video game. So I never think about regrets; I always think about what's coming next.

**QUESTION:** And what are your plans?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I don't know.

[Laughter]

**QUESTION:** You're not considering a political career, sir?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** No, not me. I will return to private life. There will be many things I can do in private life that I'm looking forward to.

**QUESTION:** Sir, I'd like you to comment, if possible, on the U.S. relationship with Chile. How do you think the Free

Trade Agreement is working?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think U.S.-Chile relations are in excellent shape. The FTA was a breakthrough. Since it went into effect, at the beginning of this year, trade going in both directions has increased by 30 percent. There are some issues that we have to work our way through, some more issues related to intellectual property rights and things of that nature, but we will work our way through. Even though we had the disagreement over Iraq, look what Chile has been doing—chairing APEC, chairing the Community of Democracies, the fact that you had troops in Haiti standing alongside other UN troops that are there. This shows that Chile is acting in a very responsible manner with respect to taking care of its own economic needs inside the country and dealing with its own problems and opportunities that are in Chile, but at the same time playing a more responsible role regionally and on the world stage. Playing an important role fulfilling its membership in the United Nations. President Lagos and President Bush have a very strong relationship. My relations with Foreign Minister Soledad Alvear were very, very close, and even though I won't be working with him very long, Foreign Minister Walker and I are off to a good start. U.S.-Chilean relations are at a very high point.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, one of the criticisms that was made here in Latin America to your term as Secretary of State, was that the United States was focused mainly on the war on drugs, free trade and the fight against terrorism. What do you make of those criticisms?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Why is that criticism? We focus on free trade, but free trade is not an abstraction, Free trade is how you create jobs for people. So I am glad we focused on free trade. Narco-trafficking is not just bad for the United States, it's bad for the country that is the source of the narco-trafficking activity. It is money that is flowing out of the country and going to drug dealers and not benefiting the people. So, yes, we went after that, and yes we are going to go after terrorists.

But we have done a lot more. With our efforts on HIV/AIDS, more money will be going into the Caribbean, part of our Latin American, our Western Hemispheric family. The development assistance money will be flowing to this part of the world as well.

And so I think that we have had a very robust agenda with Latin America. It's been a priority of mine: In the four years that I have been Secretary of State, I have been to Latin America, I think it is sixteen times—which is more times than my two predecessors were able to do over a period of eight years. And so we have been watching Latin America and doing many things in Latin America even though we have had to fight conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and deal with problems elsewhere in the world.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, I really appreciate this time you have given me. Thank you very much, sir.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Thank you.

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