



## Remarks to the Press With Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal

**Secretary Colin L. Powell**  
 Conference Palace Hotel  
 Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
 July 28, 2004



**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** (in Arabic) In the name of God, I would like to express my welcome to Secretary of State and to express our pleasure with the discussions that we had so far, which we have not finished yet. There will be another round of negotiations after this meeting. Mr. Powell has met the custodians of the two mosques and reviewed the results of the trip he has made. And he's had talks with Crown Prince Abdullah, which discussed the situation in the Middle East, in Iraq and mutual efforts in fighting terrorism, and what international cooperation is required in this regard. Mr. Powell has spent the day, which was a long day actually, and by moving from one country to another with grueling talks. We will be happy if your questions were confined to only four: two from the American side and two from the local press. I hope that those four questions will be to Mr. Powell (laughter).

Thank you.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, I'd just say good evening ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to be back in the kingdom. As my colleague the Foreign Minister said, we have had a good set of discussions. I was pleased to be received by the custodian of the two holy mosques, King Fahd, and had a very extensive conversation with the Crown Prince, his Royal Highness. We covered a full range of bilateral issues, focusing on the war on terrorism and I noted the success of the Saudi government has had in recent months in going after terrorists who were threatening Saudi Arabia. A little over a year ago when I was here just after the terrible attack in the contractor area, I recall how committed the Saudis were at that time to go after terrorists. They have identified some 19 terrorists who might have been involved. And as of today, 18 of those 19 terrorists have either been caught or killed. So, I congratulate the government for their commitment to fight terrorism.

I also thanked them for their continuing support of our efforts around the world. I was pleased to note that Saudi Arabia has reestablished now diplomatic contacts, diplomatic relations with the Interim Government in Iraq. And I look forward to seeing Prime Minister Allawi tomorrow to discuss his assessment of the situation in Iraq.

Mr. Minister, thank you so much for your hospitality. And let's go right to questions, because we still have another session to come.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Foreign Minister, does Saudi Arabia have any kind of a proposal for the possibility of deploying Arab troops in Iraq? And was this discussed today, Mr. Secretary: your response?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** We had preliminary discussion with the Secretary on that, but we are having a detailed discussion on it later on this evening. So, I would like to, if possible, delay the response on how this discussion went until after the meeting.

**QUESTION:** My question is: Mr. Powell, the Secretary of the State, first of all allow me to welcome you in Saudi Arabia. And my question, sir, is: based on your evaluation of the current situation in Iraq, do the advantages that the U.S. has achieved justify to the world what is happening in Iraq now? And the other part of the question, based on these achievements has the world become now more secure and less hostile towards the U.S.? Thank you.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** As a result of the efforts of the United States, and the Coalition, a terrible dictatorship has been removed and the Iraqi people have the opportunity to build a democracy based on the rule of law, with the rights of all citizens protected, with the military under civilian control, with an independent judiciary. And the Iraqi people now have their sovereignty back in the form of an Iraqi Interim Government, which will be a caretaker government until elections could be held. We believe that this is a significant achievement.

The ones who are trying to undercut and destroy this achievement are those leftover elements of the previous regime and terrorists who have come in to Iraq to make trouble. So, the terrible scenes that we continue to see: the horrible murder of innocent Iraqis in Baquba today, other actions of this kind cannot be allowed to succeed. They must be fought against, they must be resisted by the international coalition, as well as by Iraqi security forces. Because the Iraqi people want a life free of this kind of murderous activity, this kind of terrorism, this kind of barbarism. We must not waver, we must not grow faint at the dangers we now are facing, we must overcome this insurgency, overcome the terrorists, in order to give the Iraqi people what they deserve and what they want. So, we will stay the course.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. This is a question for both your Royal Highness and for Secretary Powell. Both of you have recently made statements, or have been asked about the recommendations and findings of the September 11<sup>th</sup> Commission in the United States. And it seems that neither of you have really addressed the central recommendation on the need for reform inside the kingdom to address the deep-seated and deep-rooted radicalism that gave birth to 15 of 19 hijackers, in the Commission's words. Is that because you disagree with that recommendation, or what is your response in general to that?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** Well, how can we disagree with the recommendation that we are undertaking? Reforms in Saudi Arabia have been announced by the leaders of this country. We are convinced of this with the people of Saudi Arabia. We have started the process; we have changed our institutions and make up. The consultative council has more authority. We have elections coming in the fall for the municipal council. We have started a debate in the country about all aspects of the reform process in order to establish a consensus, a way of reaching agreement, a process of achieving agreements on difficult issues the country is facing that will lead to further steps and further activities in this regard. I do not think the issue is whether the Secretary and I agree on it. It is the whole country that is working on this issue, and all you have to do is read the newspapers in Saudi Arabia to see what steps are being taken in this regard.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** His Royal Highness and I have discussed reform many times. In fact, as we were driving from the airport to see the keeper of the two holy mosques, we talked about it some more in his car. And we talked about the upcoming municipal elections—the process for these elections will begin in the fall.

As you know, the United States has been encouraging reform in this part of the world, as well as other parts of the world. But each nation in the world, but especially in this part of the world, has to determine what reform process they wish to follow, based on their own tradition, history, culture, political development, social development, economic development and their beliefs. And the United States and the G-8 members has expressed at the Sea Island summit, stand ready to assist. But, reform has to come from within. It has to come from the bottom up, with the top meaning, in this case, that those of us on the outside that might be able to provide assistance and advice are willing to help. There is no question that, as the Minister has said, that the Saudi leadership understands that reform is appropriate, and the Saudi people are looking to their leaders for reform and the reform is underway. And it would have to be at the pace that is satisfactory to the Saudi leadership and the people of Saudi Arabia. The United States stands ready as a friend to assist in any way that might be appropriate, and might be requested.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** We have always said that reforms cannot be tailor-made for everybody. We will develop our system according to the wishes of the people (inaudible) of Saudi Arabia. These reforms are being handled with complete transparency, with the complete involvement of the Saudi citizens, and we are not only hoping, but convinced, that these steps that we have started will continue until we reach the optimum possible government that will be to the benefit of the Saudi people.

**QUESTION:** (in Arabic) The Question is for Secretary Powell. Until when would the U.S. keep looking upon Arabs and Muslims, or judging them, by what some fundamentalist terrorists have done? Those terrorists, in reality, did not belong to Islam? And when will we see an active and effective role of the U.S. in the Middle East region? Thank you.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Neither the President, nor I, nor any of my colleagues in the Administration, or for that matter I think I could speak for the America people, see Arabs and Muslims in the image of terrorists. We believe that what terrorists do is absolutely inconsistent with your religious beliefs and the teachings of the Koran. And, in fact, the President has gone out of his way to reach out to Arab and Muslim leaders, and to reach out to American Arabs, and American Muslims, to make it clear to them that we in no way believe that the actions of these few murderers and killers reflect Islam or reflect the Arab world. In fact, many of the people who are being killed now here, in Saudi Arabia and in Iraq, are Muslims. And that will continue to be our position and we will do everything to convey that view to the entire world.

With respect to the situation in the Middle East, we remain deeply engaged. We are working with the Israeli government as they structure their disengagement strategy, to bring settlements out of Gaza and begin the elimination of settlements in the West Bank, beginning with four initially—all consistent with the Road Map, part of the Road Map, with the Quartet being engaged, and with final status issues to be resolved not by the United State, not by the UN, not by outsiders, but by the two parties working with each other. This President's vision remains the same. It's a vision that is shared by the Crown Prince, and, frankly, to some extent it was inspired by the Crown Prince. And that is for a Palestinian state, living side by side in peace with Israel.

On the Palestinian side, we have been watching the developments closely in recent days, as Prime Minister Qurei and Chairman Arafat discuss their mutual responsibilities within the Palestinian Authority. And I hope that the reports that we received in the last two days of the provision of authority, giving authority to the Prime Minister to take charge of security institutions and reduce the number of security institutions and make them more efficient and effective under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister, I hope these reports are accurate because it will empower the Prime Minister in a way that will allow him to work with Egyptians, and others to put in place a security force that can protect Gaza when the Israeli withdrawal takes place.

The United States will remain fully engaged, as we have. And I hope that the opportunity of disengagement that has now come along will be seized by the Palestinian side as an opportunity that can get us on the Road Map to peace, and the Road Map to a Palestinian state.

Thank you.

**2004/834**

Released on July 29, 2004

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.