



## Interview With Rima Hamed Al Shamikh of Al Ikhbariya TV

**Secretary Colin L. Powell**

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

July 29, 2004

**QUESTION:** First of all, General Powell, as a Saudi citizen, I would like to say, "Welcome to Jeddah."

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Thank you very much, it is my pleasure to be here.

**QUESTION:** What is the aim of your visit to Saudi Arabia?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I wanted to come and consult with my Saudi colleagues on the situation in the region. I wanted to talk about the fight against terrorism that the Saudis are so engaged in, and see how they are doing very, very well. They are rolling up those terrorist cells that are here in Saudi Arabia. Also I wanted to consult with my Saudi colleagues on the situation in Iraq. The good start that the interim Iraqi government is off to, but the continuing danger that exist from insurgent elements and terrorist within Iraq. And finally I wanted to explore with the Saudi leadership the idea they have for a Muslim initiative as a way of raising additional troops for support of the Iraqi interim government.

**QUESTION:** So can you say that you succeed in this visit?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yes in all of these issues we had good conversations. The Foreign Minister and I also talked about reforms efforts and a number of bilateral issues. I always find that my visits to Saudi Arabia are very productive, and in this instance I had the pleasure of meeting with His Majesty the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques as well as a good, long conversation with His Royal Highness the Crown Prince.

**QUESTION:** Do you want to talk about your visit to the Middle East in general? What can you tell us about it?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I have been in Egypt. I have now come to Saudi Arabia and from here I will be going to Kuwait and other places, and I find it is important to come here on a regular basis because we have so many interests in common. We are all united in the fight against terrorism. We are all doing every thing we can to support the intern Iraqi government and help the Iraqis put down this insurgency.

We are also interested in the process of modernization and reform throughout this part of the world. It is a major interest of the President, recognizing that reform and modernization has to be decided upon by each country. It is not something that can be imposed from outside. But those of us who are friends of nations of this part of the world can provide our assistance, as our assistance is requested and desired.

**QUESTION:** I would like to ask you about Saudi Arabia have been suffering a lot from terrorism. Is the country is accused of supporting terrorism here in Saudi Arabia. Even though the Congress report cleared the side of Saudi Arabia, it seems that there is a portion lately in the US that keep insisting and accusing the Saudi system. What are your comments about this?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** As you know the 9/11 report made it clear that Saudi really had nothing to do with what happened on 9/11. The fact of the matter is a number of the individuals, a large number of individuals who participated in the attacks on 9/11 were Saudis. And therefore there has been a general concern within my country about Saudi Arabia for that reason, in general.

But I think as time has passed from 9/11 and as all the facts have become known and as we have seen how Saudi Arabia itself has gone after terrorism within the Kingdom as well as taking other actions to go after potential financing for terrorist organizations and the other cooperation that Saudi Arabia has extended to us with respect to the campaign against terrorism. I think more and more Americans realize that Saudis are threatened by terrorism as any other civilized nation is. We are partners in the campaign against terrorists.

**QUESTION:** I was an eyewitness of this. What happened during the last year because I worked in the field? I want to assure you a lot of victims were Saudis, children and so.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yes, yes, yes

**QUESTION:** Ok if we are talking about terrorism in general, people who support terrorism and people who commit these crimes, they are a minority in my country. So why these Saudis have to suffer from mistreatment in airports, such as searching their luggage, or when they apply for a visa to the US?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** After 9/11, the United States realized that we did not have a good understanding of who's coming into the United States. We did not have good control of our borders. And so we had to put in place certain restrictions and certain measures to make sure we have control of our country. This is not unusual and it should not surprise anyone. Now that we put in place these procedures, we are re-examining them, to see whether or not some of them can be made more flexible. But we do ask that people now come in to our consular officers to have an interview before getting their visas although we are trying to speed up the way in which visas are issued and the length of time to be shortened in which you receive your visa, and there is some finger scanning requirements also that are universal around the world. We needed to put these procedures and keep them in place in order to know who's coming to our country,

So I hope that our Saudi friends will be patient as they apply for their visas but I do encourage them to come to the United States even though it's a little bit more difficult now than it might have been several years ago. Please understand the reasons for it, but do come, come to visit our entertainment facilities, Disneyworld, come to see New York City, come to go to our universities, go to our healthcare facilities. We want to remain an open country and we want to remain open to our Saudi friends to come and visit us.

**QUESTION:** And on the other side, do you feel that the Americans are safe here in our country?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** There have been some challenges of course because of the series of terrorist incidents over the past year. So we have had to draw down our presence in Saudi Arabia but at the same time we are watching with great interest how Saudi Arabia is going after these terrorists, and we hope that in due course that we will be able to return to a more normal presence here in the Kingdom as the Saudi government deals with this threat. I am very impressed by the way in which the Saudi authorities have gone after this threat.

**QUESTION:** So you mean Saudi Arabia is doing well?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yes it is doing well. One statistics I heard yesterday was that when I was here a year ago, it was right after the bombing of the contractors' facilities, and some 19 individuals were identified as being involved in that. And 18 of those 19 have either been captured or killed. Everything I've seen suggests that Saudi Arabia understands the danger and is going after the perpetrators of these terrorist activities.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Powell, could you please shed some light on the recent activities regarding Gadafi attempt to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah. How does that affect the relations between Washington and Libya?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We are very concerned about these reports and we are examining them. I have had conversations about the subject with the Foreign Minister last evening. And the Libyans, of course, have a different story. We are examining this. But in order for our relationship with Libya to improve, and there has been improvement recently as a result of their decision to give up weapons of mass destruction. But the relationship will not be fully normal until it is absolutely clear that Libya is no longer participating in any kind of terrorist activity. So we take these charges very seriously and we are gathering all the information we can, and we will take it all into account as we determine how fast or how to move forward with our relationship with Libya.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, since Al Qaeda made their leader Al Muqrin, he was killed earlier in Riyadh. As a result of hard work and effort of the Saudi interior affairs. Whereas Zarqawi and Bin Laden are still free and away from justice and countries are still under control of the US?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'm not sure I understood the question with respect, I'm sorry.

**QUESTION:** Al Muqrin he was the leader of Al Qaeda.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Yes, he was killed here/

**QUESTION:** Yes, but Bin Laden and Zarqawi still await justice and are still enjoying their freedom.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We haven't been able to find them. We are looking hard for Zarqawi. He is not...

**QUESTION:** So is there any result about this issue?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Not yet. He is, we believe he is somewhere in Iraq and he is the perpetrator of many of these terrorist incidents and we are looking for him, I can assure you. The Iraqis are looking for him. And with respect to Bin Laden, he may be in the tribal areas along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan and we are certainly looking for him as well.

It's not a matter of either Iraq or Pakistan or Afghanistan wanting these individuals to be free. They want them arrested and brought to justice because all they're doing is creating trouble in all these countries. There is no country that is friendly to these individuals but they are difficult to find.

**QUESTION:** If you want to talk about Teheran, Damascus and Sudan. What is the basis of Washington for the accusation for both Teheran and Damascus? Why do you insist on approving sanctions against both countries?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** In the case of Syria, we believe they have taken certain actions over time with respect to supporting terrorist activity, Hezbollah and others, and we believe they have been involved in the development of weapons of mass destruction. So we have a number of issues with the Syrians and the United States has through its Congress something called the Syrian Accountability Act, which holds Syria to account for these kinds of behavior. And therefore we apply certain restrictions to Syria as a result of our law.

With respect to Sudan, over the last several years we have been removing sanctions from Sudan and we were hoping for a much better relationship with Sudan as a result of the agreements we were able to help them shape between the north and south. Those agreements are still working now and they look very positive.

But the situation in Darfur where we have hundreds of thousands of people who are in desperate need, we need to see that situation improve before we can do more for Sudan. We believe that the United Nations should speak in the form of a Security Council resolution that doesn't impose sanctions right away on Sudan but says to Sudan you've got to move, you've got to do something about the security issues out in Darfur. You've got to bring the Janjaweed militia under control so we can feed these people, so we can keep them from starving, from being subjected to disease. And so a UN Security Council resolution that talks about measures that might be taken in the future which might include sanctions is a way of putting additional pressure on the Sudanese government. We're not anxious to put sanctions on any government. But when a government in our judgment and in the judgment of the international community, the Security Council, is not doing everything it should or could do to deal with the problem. Then it is appropriate for the Security Council to at least consider the possibility of sanctions.

**QUESTION:** Finally, I would like you to address messages through Ikhbariya News Channel to the Saudi officials and to the Saudi citizens and for the foreigners here in Saudi Arabia.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I would say that, first and foremost, the United States and Saudi Arabia have been close friends and partners for many many years. There have been some ups and downs in the relationship but there has never been any question about the friendship that the United States extends to Saudi Arabia and we receive and return. And I think the bilateral relationship right now is very strong and we will continue to do everything we can, as I know the Saudi side will, to improve upon it. I hope that this terrorist threat is dealt with full by the Saudi authorities and I hope that...

**QUESTION:** You think it's over in Saudi Arabia?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, it's being dealt with in a very effective manner. I don't know that it's over yet. You can't be sure of that yet. But I hope that it will be over soon and we can get back to a normal presence. But it is important that the Saudis keep doing what they are doing and not let any of these terrorist threats, not let any of the rest, not let any of the terrorist cells develop. And from my conversations yesterday I'm confident that that's exactly what the Saudi government is doing.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** You're welcome, thank you.

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