



Interview With Hassan Moawad of Al Arabiya TV

Secretary Colin L. Powell
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
July 29, 2004

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary of State, there is talk these days about the Saudi proposal to deploy Islamic and Arab troops in Iraq. Before you said that it has not been decided yet whether they'll be a part of the multinational force, or be special force or a task force that is being decided. What brought this idea into existence?

SECRETARY POWELL: It was an idea from the Saudi government. They said that if perhaps some conditions might be met as to who these troops reported to, and is it an invitation from the Iraqi interim government, and some other ideas, some other conditions, that were mentioned by the Saudis. Then perhaps with these conditions met, that there would be more enthusiasm in the Moslem world for providing troops. But it's a very preliminary idea. They have discussed it with the Iraqi interim government, they've discussed it with Prime Minister Allawi, they've discussed it with Secretary General Kofi Annan, they've now discussed it with us. We're examining it. It's a welcome initiative, and we'll see whether it leads to any additional troops being provided. But it's a welcome initiative.

QUESTION: Now the exclusion of the neighboring countries. As we hear, the Iraqi authorities have some reservations apparently about including of some troops from the neighboring countries. Do you agree with them on this point?

SECRETARY POWELL: It has been agreed for a long period of time that it would be best if neighboring troops were not included in any forces within Iraq. It would just be better. There's a lot of history, there are a lot of issues associated with neighboring troops. And therefore what the Prime Minister has said, what Prime Minister Allawi has said about no neighboring troops remains a solid policy, which we have been following from the beginning of the conflict last year.

QUESTION: So, Mr. Secretary of State, how would you guarantee that you can bring these countries, the neighboring countries, without being involved immediately into this operation so as not to antagonize them?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't think any of the neighboring countries are antagonized. I don't think any of the neighboring countries have an interest in providing troops. The Jordanians said they would be willing to assist, but the Iraqis said it would probably best not to have Jordanian troops. So I don't think anybody is going to be antagonized.

With respect to what other countries that are not neighbors, other Muslim countries that are not neighbors are going to participate, we will have to wait and see. The Saudis are of course would have the initiative and responsibility for reaching out to the countries. We have been in touch with all of these countries over the months, and Prime Minister Allawi has written to all these countries. We're waiting for a response. And hopefully with Saudi encouragement, they might get some positive responses.

QUESTION: So Mr. Powell, do you think about this idea in view of the latest killings, kidnappings of citizens of countries who are members of the multinational force now?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, it certainly, it would be a deterrent of course, but nevertheless we have 31 countries in the multinational force who are there. And the Saudis are still of the view that with some of the conditions met, it might be possible to get some Muslim countries to participate.

QUESTION: Some people are talking about the possible erosion of the enthusiasm of these countries of the coalition now and your purpose in the current tour is really to strengthen this coalition in view of the withdrawal of the Philippine soldiers, before them the Spanish, and now some companies are withdrawing their employees. Doesn't this worry you?

SECRETARY POWELL: Sure, it worries me. And it shows that there's still danger in Iraq. But let's keep this in perspective. The people who are conducting these kidnappings, those who are setting off the bombs, are terrorists, they are murderers. They're evil men who are doing what? They're killing innocent people, mostly innocent Iraqis. So these murderers are killing innocent Iraqis. What do the innocent Iraqis want? They want to be free, they want a democracy. They want to have their own leaders. They want forces from other countries to eventually go home. They want to protect themselves. So the people who we ought to be criticizing and condemning and asking questions of are these murderers, the Al-Zarqawis of the world. Why are you doing this? Why are you blowing up innocent Iraqi civilians? Why are you denying them an opportunity for peace and freedom? And so The United States and its coalition partners will remain firm. We've lost some members of the coalition, and there are some companies who have had to restrict their operations because of the dangers. But this seems to me to be an incentive to the rest of us to redouble our efforts to get after these insurgents, to get after these terrorists and murderers. You cannot just say, "Well, gosh, they are causing all of these troubles, so let's all pull out." No. This is the time to go on the attack and to go after them, find them, and destroy them, and defeat them. That's clearly what Prime Minister Allawi intends to do, and that's why the Saudi government is trying to assist in the generation of Muslim troops that might be helpful in this regard, that would provide security, and I can assure you that President Bush and the members of the coalition are as committed as ever to seeing this through to the end.

QUESTION: Mr. Powell, you are the author of the so-called Powell doctrine, which advises against sending American troops anywhere in the world unless they are guaranteed decisive success against their opponents. Is that what is happening in Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: That's what we're trying to do, we're trying to defeat the opponent. Everybody who is asking about this is almost taking the side of the opponent. The opponent is murder, a murderer, a terrorist, people who is killing innocent people. They have to be defeated. And we have left 140,000 or so soldiers in Iraq for this purpose and we are building up the Iraqi forces so that with those built-up Iraqi forces, and with the coalition forces, and if other forces would join in, from Muslim nations, that would be a decisive force.

My theory as it's called, the Powell theory, says make sure you know what you're doing, and then put the force to it. We know what we're doing, we're going to defeat this insurgency, we're allow the Iraqi people to choose their own leaders, and not have a dictator be imposed on them through this insurgency, and we're building up the decisive force necessary to do this—coalition forces, Iraqi forces, and other forces that might join the battle.

QUESTION: Mr. Powell, in an interview with Al-Arabiya, Prime Minister Allawi said that he was in contact with people who are on the margins as he said of the so-called resistance and he thought that some of them had changed their course. First of all, have you been briefed about these contacts? Would you encourage continuation with these contacts?

SECRETARY POWELL: I'm aware that Prime Minister Allawi has been trying to reach out to all segments of Iraqi society, even those on the fringes and even those who might have participated in this kind of, this kind of insurgency, and try to persuade them that what you want to do now, for the good of the country, is to stop this kind of action, and find a way to display your beliefs within the political system, the concept that allows people to speak out freely. So I congratulate the Prime Minister for not just using military forces, but to use the power to persuade, to use diplomacy, to use his political strength to try to get rid of these fringe elements and to bring them inside.

QUESTION: Would this include an amnesty?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I don't know. I would leave this up to the Iraqi interim government. They are sovereign. And this is choice and a decision for them to make.

QUESTION: Now, Mr. Powell, one of the neighboring countries, a non-Arab neighbor, is Iran. Now Iran has been accused recently, I'm sure you're aware of this, by the Defense Minister of Iraq, of sending saboteurs, terrorists, spies into Iraq. From your information, from your contacts, do you agree with this assessment?

SECRETARY POWELL: I believe that Iran has been trying to seek influence in Iraq, in the southern part of the country, but elsewhere in the country, and we are concerned about some of the activities the Iranians have undertaken. And We will consult with Prime Minister Allawi, his Minister of Defense, his Minister of Interior, and Foreign Minister, to see what needs to be done with Iran, to persuade Iran that this is the time for them to play a helpful role, not a negative role, a positive role, not a role of interference or intervention. Iran should welcome an Iraq as a neighbor that is not in an aggressive posture toward Iran. They've already fought one terrible eight-year war. Iran should do everything they can to help Iraq to stabilize itself, and to have a stable situation with Iran. Now maybe Iran does not like the possibility of a democratic nation next door, looking at a theocratic nation such as Iran. But we need to work with Iran to get it to play a positive role, and not a negative role. I think that's the point the Minister of Defense was making.

QUESTION: Now during your visit to Saudi Arabia, you remarked on the steps taken by the Saudi authorities in the field of reforms, and you added that the United States and other Western countries can help. How can you help?

SECRETARY POWELL: In any way they wish. We have a lot of experience with respect to educational development, curriculums in schools. We have a great deal of experience with respect to civil society development. We have allocated money for Middle East Partnership Initiative, which works in these areas.

The important point here is that President Bush is committed to assisting the nations of the region with their reform and modernization efforts. Each nation however has to decide its own path, on the basis of its own culture, its own religion, its own history, its own tradition. The United States cannot impose anything.

What we can do though is work with all of our friends in the region to tailor our support to their needs. And I think the rest of the industrialized world, the G-8 nations of the world are willing to do the same thing. But in no way are we trying to come to impose our system. We're coming to assist all nations that I think in the region agree they need to reform and modernize their societies, their political systems, and their economic systems in order to be competitive in the 21st century globalizing environment.

QUESTION: Now Mr. Powell, recently American citizens were in a difficult situation in various Middle Eastern countries, including in Saudi Arabia. Now after the efforts the Saudi authorities in this respect, do you feel that the situation is better, that they are more reassured now?

SECRETARY POWELL: The Saudis have done a great deal with respect to going after terrorists. They have broken up a number of cells; they have killed a number of terrorists. During this period, however, there was an increased level of danger to American citizens in Saudi Arabia, and we gave out our necessary cautions, and drew down our presence somewhat. I hope that the situation will stabilize. I hope Saudi Arabia will succeed in rolling up all these terrorists' organizations so we can go back to normal levels of presence. I can't tell you when that will happen, but we're constantly reviewing our presence level in the Kingdom.

QUESTION: Now on Darfur, just one question if I could. The Security Council is supposed to vote on the American proposal, the American resolution. Now the talk is since you started your tour in Egypt, and now Saudi Arabia, some observers are not seeing if you like a more positive [inaudible] from the point of view of the Arabs. You're not talking about now sanctions, in the resolution you are talking about measures. Is that the case?

SECRETARY POWELL: The resolution is for the purpose of bringing pressure on the Sudanese government to do everything they can to improve the flow of humanitarian aid and to take steps with respect to the very dangerous security situation in the Darfur region. The way in which the resolution is now structured, is no measures would be taken, no sanctions would be asked for now. We would give the Sudanese a one-month period of time, at the end of which the Security Council would review the situation, and see whether improvements have been made. We have no desire to impose sanctions to anyone. But when we see the kind of horrible situation that we see in Darfur, it's important for the international community to be heard, to act, and to apply pressure on the Sudanese government to do everything it can. Without that pressure, I'm not sure action would be taken. So I hope the resolution passes with all members of the Council voting for it, but I don't know.

QUESTION: What about sanctions?

SECRETARY POWELL: There are no sanctions immediately in the resolution right now. What it says is, in one month's time, after passage of the resolution, the situation will be examined again, to see what additional measures—a measure might be a sanction—might be appropriate. What we're trying to do is to balance the concerns of the international community with the situation of the Sudanese government, and what they're able to do. But let's not lose sight of one central fact. There are hundreds of thousands—hundreds of thousands of people in Darfur - who are desperately in need, they are dying, they are suffering from disease, lack of water, they have been forced off their land, they have been forced out of their villages. Let's worry about them, and not spend so much time worrying about sanctions, no sanctions, measures, no measures. What we have to do is to get help to these people, and help includes getting security to these people, so that they're not in danger from the Janjaweed militias.

QUESTION: Secretary of State, thank you very much indeed for this interview.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.

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