



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Remarks After United Nations Security Council Debate

Secretary Colin L. Powell

New York, New York

March 7, 2003

(2:15 p.m. EST)

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm prepared to take any questions you might have.

QUESTION: Sir, France suggested to bring together the heads of state for one last-ditch effort to try and forge a consensus on this matter, and if you have heard of this idea, what do you think of it?

SECRETARY POWELL: I did hear the idea. I was in the Council when Dominique de Villepin mentioned it. I think the history of this is that Security Council meetings at heads of state level, and we've only had two of those in any recent history that anyone can remember, both were principally for ceremonial purposes.

I think we have all had good opportunity over the last month to express our views openly and candidly with each other here in the Council at ministerial level, and our heads of state and government are in constant touch with each other. They have a solid understanding of each other's positions. So, at the moment, I don't see a particular need for a heads of state and government meeting at the Security Council, which really isn't the place to deal with issues like this or the forum to deal with issues like that.

QUESTION: Sir, the last time you were here, the Security Council was divided, and today it is again, as we see, is divided. What's wrong?

Also, you have seen everyone's cards today. How are you going to play it?

SECRETARY POWELL: What's wrong is there is a fundamental difference of opinion as to what Iraq is doing, and I think a number of us tried to make the case today that Iraq still is not fully complying, unconditionally complying, immediately complying. That was the standard of 1441. We knew what we were doing when we passed that resolution. It does not take a long time to comply. Just get on with it. Don't keep confusing the world. Don't keep handing out little bits of information. Don't keep grudgingly responding to what the inspectors ask for and what they need.

Iraq knows what it is supposed to do. It was made clear in 1441. There are those of us who believe therefore that it is time to deal with that basic reality that Iraq is not complying. Others believe that just continuing the inspections, but they never quite say how long. For months? How many months? For what purpose? With what additional inspectors? And can anyone commit to me and guarantee the international community that we will achieve disarmament just with more inspections without a fundamental change on the part of Iraq to come into full compliance, and therefore full cooperation, with the verification and monitoring activities of the inspectors.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Jack Straw is trying to find some more time, to have a compromise for a few days. Do you have the patience for that now?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I think the amendment to the resolution put down by Foreign Secretary Straw is, of course, one we support and worked on with Mr. Straw in developing, along with our Spanish colleagues. And I believe in the very near future, sometime next week, that resolution ought to be brought to the Council for a vote, and let's see where everyone is. And I don't think this just can continue on and on and on, and I think Mr. Straw powerfully made the point that the reason we are getting compliance is because the presence of the armed forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. The inspectors have their jobs to do. We have put out powerful, strong political resolutions and

determinations, political determination. But it's also the presence of military force that is causing Iraqi compliance. We've got to keep that pressure up. We've got to let him know that it's going to come to a head in the very near future.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the French Foreign Minister stressed the importance of the United Nations in the world. What would it mean for the United Nations if you went ahead with war without being authorized by the UN? Would you sacrifice the UN for the sake of going to war?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, we have no intention of sacrificing the UN. And my concern right now is the clear will of the UN, as expressed in 1441. They are in material breach, come into compliance, and serious consequences will follow. And we have had four months to see how that resolution has unfolded and the actions they have taken, and it seems to me the UN is damaged when there are members who do not want to stand up to the requirements of that resolution and take the action that was clearly intended in the absence of Iraqi compliance.

The UN is a very noble institution, it's been here over 50 years, and it will continue to serve a purpose in the future. You will remember the resolution that was mentioned so frequently earlier today, Resolution 1284. That was debated here in the Council for some seven to nine months, and France abstained in the final analysis.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the French Foreign Minister suggested that it could be an idea for heads of government, heads of states, to come here for the vote next week. Is that something you'd be in favor of?

SECRETARY POWELL: I just said a moment ago -- I did answer that one.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, what is wrong -- what is unreasonable about the French suggestion that we have achieved now active, proactive cooperation from Iraq, according to both these chief inspectors for the last month, and we have achieved, thanks to your presence and pressure in the Middle East area with your forces, now that we achieved this, why do we want to go back to the conflict?

SECRETARY POWELL: Because I don't think we've really achieved that much. When you see the 167-page paper that we are making reference to, and if you read every page of it, as we have recently, and when you see the history associated with each one of these programs for weapons of mass destruction, and when you see the questions that are remaining, questions that could have been answered anytime over the past five years, the past ten years, and remain unanswered, what you are seeing is a continued pattern of lack of cooperation. And that is a problem for us.

We are seeing some cooperation on process. We see when they are up against a wall, when they know there's going to be another ministerial-level meeting at the Security Council, suddenly some more action is taken. Only when they see this kind of pressure and they're afraid that the Security Council might act in a united way, do they step forward and take additional steps to make the inspectors believe, make us believe, that they're really in compliance when they really aren't.

Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, this resolution and this amendment are somewhat sketchy. It doesn't -- once again does not define full cooperation or any of the other terms that are used. What is to say that if it's adopted we won't be here on March the 17th arguing again about whether Iraq is in full, immediate cooperation?

SECRETARY POWELL: We know what full compliance should look like and we know what it does not look like, and it does not look like full compliance now. They have known for these past 12 years what the requirements are, what the benchmarks are, what they are supposed to do, what we are expecting from them. And for 12 years, they have failed to comply, they have failed to cooperate. More than that, they have done everything to divide, to deceive, to put out practice of deceptions.

And what we are saying is in this amendment to the resolution we are laying out clearly, I think, in that third operative paragraph, what we are looking for in order to see whether or not Iraq has or has not lost this last chance is with --

QUESTION: When you say you know --

SECRETARY POWELL: Yeah, I know.

QUESTION: We've just heard a different interpretation this morning about --

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, there are different interpretations. There are some people who simply, in my judgment, don't want to see the facts clearly. I do not see the level of cooperation that should satisfy us that Iraq is complying in a way that we would know they are no longer going to have weapons of mass destruction and they have given up the intent, the desire, to have weapons of mass destruction.

One more, then I have to go.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, are you saying that Hans Blix doesn't see the facts clearly, and is it not the U.S. who is making the UN look irrelevant by failing to listen to the man who sent over there to find out what's going on?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, we listened very carefully to Hans Blix, and I thought he gave a very thoughtful, balanced report. But even Dr. Blix, if you listen very carefully to his report and read his report, he expresses concern about the level of cooperation that he has received.

I give all credit to Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei and the terrific people who work for them for the work they have been doing, but that work is being frustrated by the continuing actions on the part of Saddam Hussein and his regime to keep them from doing their job properly. And their job is to assist Iraq in the process of coming into compliance, and that's what Iraq has not yet decided to do.

Thank you.
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Released on March 7, 2003