



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Interview on Al Jazeera TV

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Washington, DC
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(11:00 a.m. EST)

QUESTION: We are on air now. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much, indeed, for joining us and welcome to Al Jazeera. Mr. Secretary, the Security Council is meeting today amidst efforts by some Arab countries. Do you think Washington will comply if any resolution to that effect comes out?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I don't know that any resolution will come out of the meeting. My understanding right now is that is an open session and an opportunity for the various nations to express their points of view.

So we will watch it carefully, but right now our policy is to continue to prosecute this conflict until we can bring it to a successful conclusion as quickly as possible and then get about the task of rebuilding Iraq from all of the years of devastation caused by Saddam Hussein's regime; and we can start humanitarian supplies coming in and can get about the process of providing a better life for the people of Iraq.

QUESTION: But Mr. Secretary, if the situation gets more complicated and it moves to the General Assembly, what will Washington do then?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I can't predict that it's going to the General Assembly or what the General Assembly might choose to do.

What we are going to do is to continue to prosecute this conflict in order to bring it to an end as quickly as possible and begin the process of putting in place a new authority in Baghdad that will represent the views of all of the people of Iraq and allow us to start using the wealth of Iraq to benefit the people of Iraq.

So we are interested in concluding this conflict, not having a pause right now or stopping right now, but concluding this as quickly as possible so we can get on with the rebuilding of Iraq and putting in place a better system of governance -- a government that will live in peace with its neighbors and not waste the oil treasure of Iraq on weapons of mass destruction and suppression of the people of Iraq under a dictatorial regime such as Saddam Hussein's.

QUESTION: So briefly, Mr. Secretary, can we say that the United States will not respond positively to any call for a ceasefire?

SECRETARY POWELL: We see no indication of such a call coming out of the United Nations. We'll see what the United Nations does, but right now we have set our course rather clearly.

We tried to avoid this conflict. We did everything we could to get Saddam Hussein to comply. He did not. And under relevant UN resolutions, we believe serious consequences had to befall that regime. And now that the war has begun -- the conflict has begun -- we are going to see it through to its conclusion as quickly as possible, and a pause or a ceasefire would serve no purpose at this time. It would merely delay the inevitable and give Saddam Hussein some chance to believe that he could avoid the serious consequences that he has caused to befall his regime. And the sooner we finish this conflict without a pause, quickly as possible, the sooner we get on to restoring stability within the country, bringing the humanitarian and healthcare supplies in, and providing for a better life for the Iraqi people. A pause or a ceasefire will not lead to a successful outcome that will allow us to begin rebuilding Iraq.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the areas that the American coalition forces say they are under control like Umm Qasr and

others go through a vacuum of power which may disrupt the lives of the civilians. What are you doing to manage the situation?

SECRETARY POWELL: We do understand that there would be a period of disruption and that is why we have units coming in behind the advancing units to begin to restore order until we can put civilian authority back in place. But as you may have noticed already in Umm Qasr, and you will see it increasingly as more and more areas are secured, we are working to provide humanitarian aid, restoring water service and doing everything else we can to stabilize the situation and let the people understand that they are in no danger.

We come to help them, not to oppress them. We come to give them a chance for a better life, not to take away their freedom or in any way harm them.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, we heard that there are some contacts with your counterparts in the Arab world. Have you reached any agreement on anything yet?

SECRETARY POWELL: I stay in close contact with all of my colleagues in the Arab world, and I have conveyed to them what our strategy is to conduct this war in as effective a way as we can, doing everything we can to minimize casualties, minimize damage to property; and I think we've done that very well although there will be accidents that we do everything to avoid, but nevertheless occur. So I've tried to make our position clear, and we followed very closely the meeting of the Arab League ministers the other day, and I followed their activities closely and read the declaration that they issued. But they also know that we are committed to completing this conflict, finishing this as quickly as we can, and not causing a delay or a pause that would merely give encouragement to Saddam Hussein that somehow he could avoid justice and the fate that he has brought upon himself.

QUESTION: Mr. Colin Powell, Secretary of State from Washington, thank you very much, indeed, for joining us this evening. Thank you, sir.

SECRETARY POWELL: You're welcome.
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