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Remarks With German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer After Their Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell

C Street Entrance
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SECRETARY POWELL: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It is, once again, my pleasure to have received my good friend and colleague, Joschka Fischer, the Foreign Minister of Germany. We had, as always, a good and open discussion of a number of issues: our bilateral relationship, which is a strong one, as befitting two allies who do a great deal together, and two nations which have a long history of cooperation and mutual respect.

We also talked about regional issues, the situation in the Middle East, and I thanked the Foreign Minister for his continuing interest in that part of the world, for all the work that he has done over the years to promote Middle East peace. We also talked about Afghanistan and we talked about Iraq and we talked about recent developments in Europe, the new constitution that has been put forward and the new security policies that are being examined in Europe.

And so it was a good, full and open discussion, and I thank the Minister for visiting with us once again.

Joschka.

FOREIGN MINISTER FISCHER: Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here and, as Colin mentioned, we discussed a whole variety of bilateral relations, European-American relations and regional crises.

First of all, I think it's -- it was a very courageous step from the President and the Secretary of State to move forward in the Middle East conflict. We appreciate it very much that America is back in the driver's seat to solve -- to push forward the peace process based on implementation of the roadmap.

We discussed the situation in Afghanistan, where we are engaged with our troops there. The situation must also move forward and we must implement the Petersburg agreement. We talked about Iraq, and we also talked about Iran and the nuclear program and what can we do to solve these problems.

Our relations are excellent. We are close allies. And I think we had excellent discussions today, and I am happy to be here. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, did you ask Germany to provide anything for Iraqi reconstruction?

And Foreign Minister Fischer, has there been any military assistance of any kind provided by Germany? I know the troops is a very delicate question, but what is Germany willing to provide, and is any of that of military nature?

Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: We did discuss Iraq. We didn't get into any specific requests. As you know, a number of nations have offered to provide assistance to the peacekeeping and stabilization efforts. I gave the Foreign Minister an update on the situation and the conversations I have also had with Kofi Annan about the role of the United Nations, but we didn't get

into any other specifics with respect to German contributions.

FOREIGN MINISTER FISCHER: Well, we are -- I think the relevant Security Council Resolution 1483 made quite clear that the responsibility on the ground is in the hands of the coalition. We are not part of the coalition and we are ready to contribute to the humanitarian -- to improve the humanitarian situation. Our business community is ready to play its role in the reconstruction, if it is warranted and if there are -- we know more details about the reconstruction. We are open to discuss what could be our role in the reconstruction, but our position linked to the question of sending military troops is unchanged.

QUESTION: About North Korea, with the Foreign Minister. And is there a plan for the State Department to allow more North Korean refugees to come to this country?

SECRETARY POWELL: We did discuss North Korea, specifically the nuclear situation. I told the Foreign Minister that the United States was still hopeful of a diplomatic solution, that we are in touch with our friends in the region. We have taken note of the recent visit of the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister to Pyongyang, which was reported on in the press this morning, and I had a long conversation with the Chinese Foreign Minister last evening, where he gave me an update on those conversations. So the diplomatic track is alive and well, and I expect to see some developments along that track in the very near future.

With respect to North Koreans who have left the country and are refugees, we are examining this matter, but there are no proposals that are before the President or before me at this point; it is just an item of continuing study on our part.

QUESTION: (In German.)

FOREIGN MINISTER FISCHER: (In German.)

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the Europeans have suggested a sort of a donors' trust fund. The Europeans have suggested a donors' trust fund to get more contributions for post-war Iraq. Why isn't the Bush Administration jumping on this as a way to help with burden-sharing?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, we welcome all burden-sharing, and we are in the process of setting up donors' conferences later in the year, and we welcome contributions whatever form they come. The specific instrumentalities to be used, with respect to trust funds and other ways of doing it, is something that we do have under consideration.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, did either you or the Minister bring up the idea of a UN umbrella transferring the coalition's responsibilities to a different umbrella, which would bring in more countries like India and perhaps others?

SECRETARY POWELL: I mentioned to the Foreign Minister that I have had some discussions with other ministers, as well as with Secretary General Annan, whether or not it would be appropriate to start discussions about other UN resolutions. But that's as far as these preliminary discussions have gone.

I believe -- the United States believes -- that 1483, while recognizing the Coalition Provisional Authority as the government for the moment, also has sufficient authority for nations who are looking for a UN mandate to participate in stabilization or peacekeeping activities; 1483 provides that kind of cover.

But there are some nations who have expressed the desire for more of a mandate from the United Nations, and I am in conversations with some ministers about this, as well as with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

QUESTION: (In German.)

FOREIGN MINISTER FISCHER: (In German.)

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.
[End]

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