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Remarks with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan After Their Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Outside the United Nations
 New York, New York
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SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The Secretary of State and I have had a very good discussion this morning. As you can imagine, we have reassessed the security situation in Iraq, and he brought me the condolence and sympathy of the U.S. administration for what happened to the UN headquarters and the UN personnel, and we have had a chance to review what needs to be done to strengthen our security and to continue our operations.

We also talked about Monrovia, where things seem to be moving. We are making progress both on the political and the military front, and we hope that in the not too distant future we'll be making even greater strides.

We reviewed the situation in the Middle East and the need to ensure that the parties stay on track with the implementation of the roadmap, and we also discussed other UN related issues, and I will let the Secretary say a few words.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary General. It's a sad occasion this morning, but it's an occasion that's also filled with determination. I brought to the Secretary General, once again, the condolences from the President of the United States and the American people on the loss of a great man, Sergio de Mello, and a number of other individuals who were working the cause of peace, who were there to help the Iraqi people.



And there are terrorists and criminals and others who are determined to stop us from helping the Iraqi people, and in my conversation with the Secretary General this morning we reaffirmed that they will not succeed. The United Nations remains committed, the coalition remains committed, and the United States certainly remains committed to stay in Iraq and to make sure that the promise that has been brought to Iraq by the elimination of the Hussein regime will be achieved, will be made available to every Iraqi citizen.

I am very pleased that the Secretary General reaffirmed that the United Nations would be staying in Baghdad and we will be working with the United Nations representatives in Baghdad on security matters. We want the humanitarian workers and other workers in Iraq, the reconstruction workers and others, to have a safe environment. It's a challenging environment, but we will work closely with the United Nations to make sure that they can perform their work in as safe an environment as is possible, considering the circumstances.

We are pleased at the progress made in Liberia so far. We see this morning that a head of a transitional government has been named and are pleased the United States was able to play a role with ECOWAS. And I'd like to congratulate the Secretary General for his efforts as well as the ECOWAS leadership for their efforts in getting Mr. Taylor out of Monrovia and peacekeepers in; and hope in as well.

The Middle East situation is challenging the international community once again today, and I call upon all of my colleagues in the Security Council at the UN, other members of the international community, the members of the Quartet, Arab nations, to step up now and insist that the terror perpetrated by organizations such as Hamas must come to an end.

I call on Chairman Arafat to work with Prime Minister Abbas and to make available to Prime Minister Abbas those security elements that are under his control so that they can allow progress to be made on the roadmap; end terror, end this violence that just results in the further repetition of the cycle that we've seen so often. It has to end. The Palestinian people, the Israeli people, deserve better. And those who are determined to blow up the roadmap must not be allowed to succeed.

And you can be sure that the Quartet, the United States and the Secretary General, as members of the Quartet, will continue to work toward that end.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. Vieira de Mello, Mr. Vieira de Mello. Could you say a word about him -- what it was, what he really represented?

SECRETARY POWELL: I knew Mr. de Mello. Sergio was a wonderful human being. He was a dedicated international public servant. He took on this new mission wanting, really, to do something else, wanting to continue his work at the Human Rights Commission. But he did it because he was a soldier, a soldier in the cause of peace.

And my heart goes out to his family and my heart goes out to the Brazilian people. I know that this has been a shock to them.

I have spoken to the Foreign Minister of Brazil twice in the last 12 hours to convey our condolences and to do everything we can to make sure that Sergio is returned to his homeland with dignity and with honor.

QUESTION: Will the U.S. encourage other member-states to contribute troops to the security situation in Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: The Secretary General and I spoke about whether other steps might be appropriate, and Ambassador Negroponte will be working with the Secretary General's staff and my Security Council colleagues to see what language might be appropriate.

We're looking at, of course, reaffirming our determination to succeed in Iraq. We're looking forward to language that might call on member-states to do more. The President has always felt that the UN has a vital role to play and he has said that repeatedly. It is playing a vital role; that's what Sergio and his colleagues were doing. And so we are now just exploring language with our Security Council colleagues.

QUESTION: Are you ready to assign authority over economic decision-making to the UN in order to encourage participation?

SECRETARY POWELL: I've had no such request, and I think there -- let's put one thing in mind. Some 30 nations are now participating. It is an international coalition. There are 22,000 troops there from these 30 nations. Five other nations are in the process of sending troops and 14 other nations are in conversation with the coalition on troop contributions. But perhaps additional language and a new resolution might encourage others.

Other issues with respect to the role that the UN has to play, all of this can be discussed in the course of our negotiations on a resolution.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Tuesday's bombing in Jerusalem, the bomber came apparently from Ramallah. Would you now reconsider your position to the security fence Israel is building? And also, are we at the end of the roadmap as a result of the new violence?

SECRETARY POWELL: The end of the roadmap is a cliff that both sides will fall off of, and so we have to understand the consequences of the end of the roadmap. So it is not the end of the roadmap. I believe both parties understand that a way has to be found to go forward.

The alternative is what? Just more death and destruction? Let the terrorists win? Let those who have no interest in a Palestinian state win? Let those who have no interest but killing innocent people win? No. That is not an acceptable outcome. And I think both parties realize it and I think both sides should recommit themselves to finding a way forward.

With respect to the fence, we've spoken about the fence previously.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, are you comfortable with the idea of expanding the UN mandate on Iraq? And how difficult to get a consensus in the Security Council after the bitter legacy of this past winter?

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Yeah. No, I think the issue of Iraq is of great concern to everybody, regardless of the divisions that existed before the war. There are many who were against the war who are now coming together to help stabilize Iraq, and I think the stability of Iraq should be in everyone's interest. And this is why I would want to see everyone come together to help to stabilize Iraq and the region.

I think the question of UN mandate and the UN role, we have focused on economic and political reconstruction. And on the question of security, we have no intention of recommending UN blue helmets. So, really, it's either a multinational force that oversees the security arrangements, with the UN focusing on the economic, political and social areas, where we do our best work, including the humanitarian.

QUESTION: Is there a consensus in the Security Council on that, given what happened over the winter?

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: I think it is possible. I think it is possible to get a consent, but it will take work, it will take consultations and negotiations, but I will not exclude it. And I think, as I said, yes, there were divisions last winter, there were divisions before the war, but we all realize that it is urgent to help bring peace to Iraq, bring peace to the region. An Iraq that is destabilized, an Iraq that is in chaos, is not in the interest of the region or the world, and we do have a responsibility to ensure that.

SECRETARY POWELL: My conversations with a number of foreign ministers, Security Council foreign ministers over the last several days, reaffirmed to me that they were interested in moving forward and helping the Iraqi people. And you talked about the disagreements over the winter, but during the spring and in the early summer we passed 1483, we passed 1500, so I think there is a willingness to come together to help the Iraqi people.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, how risky do you think is it for the United Nations to be perceived in the Middle East as to be either too close to or identical with the United States?

And a question for the Secretary of State, if I may. Secretary of State, to what extent are you still in sync with the rest of your administration over Iraq, and would you stay the course through a second term if there is a second term for the Bush Administration?

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Let me say that the UN, obviously, is its member-states. The United Nations have to work with all the member-states, including the U.S., and I think one has to be careful not to confuse the UN with the U.S. The U.S. has its policy and the UN has its policy. I think this was demonstrated very clearly in the spring in the discussions leading to Iraq. Most people forget that the Council did not vote to support the war in Iraq. The Council took a different position. And that the UN, working with the other member-states including the U.S., has been able to get quite a lot done in Iraq, as we speak today.

Sergio de Mello acted under the Security Council mandate and had an independent mandate, even though he cooperated very effectively with Mr. Bremer. But the UN mandate was clear, and what Mr. Bremer's mandate was was also clear, but they did cooperate. And I think even the Iraqis will tell you that they did see the difference, that even though we were cooperating there were two separate organizations, as it were.

SECRETARY POWELL: The United States only has one foreign policy; it's the foreign policy enunciated by the President. I can assure you that I'm in sync with that foreign policy, in sync with the President. I serve at the pleasure of the President and I no longer comment on idiotic summer stories.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, is the United States willing to cede power in Iraq to the UN in order to get other countries to contribute troops?

SECRETARY POWELL: We have said all along, the President made it very clear many, many months ago, that we want the UN to play a vital role. We believe it is playing a vital role. The issue of ceding authority is not an issue that we have

had to discuss this morning. We both understand the role being played.

The Secretary General just spoke to the UN role, and we all understand what the Coalition Provisional Authority is doing; 1483 and 1500 took account of that relationship. So I think we're on solid ground there.

We also have taken note of the fact that we now have a Governing Council that has received acceptance in a number of quarters, and we hope that as the Governing Council, working with Ambassador Bremer, get more and more actively involved in the work of reconstruction and in assisting in the running of the ministries and are seen as representing the Iraqi people, that will give confidence to the Iraqi people and give confidence to the international community that we are on the way to making sure that a government is being formed that will represent all the Iraqi people and will be democratic. And I hope that as we go into the fall, more and more international organizations will come to recognize the role of the Governing Council and endorse that role.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, there does seem to be great will to offer troops and more money to stabilize Iraq in -- among Security Council members, even those who opposed the war, but not under coalition control. How do you propose to square that circle?

SECRETARY POWELL: We now have 30 nations, as I've said, that have contributed 22,000 troops under coalition control. You have to have competent control of a large military organization. That's what the coalition brings and that's what U.S. leadership brings to the coalition. Five other nations are in the process of making their final decisions to send troops and we're talking to 14 others. So that is close to 45 or 50 or something like that, and so that is an international presence. There is an international presence. And we will continue to work with other nations who might be willing to make contributions.

And I don't think there is a problem. I think anybody making a contribution, a military contribution, sending their young men and women into harm's way, want them to be under solid, responsible, competent military leadership of the kind that is being provided by the coalition and the military component of the coalition under General Abizaid's command.

QUESTION: Mr. Powell, did the U.S. offer to provide more security to the UN and the UN turn that down?

SECRETARY POWELL: You mean, in the -- previously? I've heard these stories, but I'm not aware of any facts related to those stories. I don't know.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.
[End]

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