

## Remarks to International Political Directors on the Way Forward in Iraq

### Secretary Colin L. Powell

Loy Henderson Auditorium  
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(9:00 a.m. EDT)

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Thank you very much, Beth, and it's a great pleasure for me to welcome you all here to the State Department this morning and to let you know that I believe that the work that we are all involved in is vital work. It means so much to the cause of world peace. It means so much to the cause of regional stability in that part of the world. But, beyond that, it means so much to 25 million Iraqis who want to live in peace, who want to live in freedom, who want to have nothing more than any of us want for our own people: an opportunity to pursue their destiny, to raise children in an environment of freedom, to be able to have good healthcare, to be able to do all the things that we want for our own people and our own children; 25 million Iraqi people who have been denied this for the last 25, 30 years because they have been led by a dictatorial regime that took the wealth of Iraq and squandered it in so many different ways: on palaces, on suppressing the Shia in the south, on filling mass graves, on working on weapons of mass development<sup>[1]</sup> and weapons of conventional capability in order to invade neighbors, in order to try to build itself up as the major regional military power.

All of that money wasted. At one time, the richest country in the region, now broken by that horrible regime, a regime which is gone. Saddam Hussein is in the jail where he belongs. The regime is crushed. There are still elements of that regime that would challenge this reality, that would challenge the future, that would try to fight against the future. And they will be defeated. They have to be defeated in order to make sure that we do for those 25 million Iraqi people what we promised them we would do.

We all came together in a great coalition to do this, a coalition that should be proud of what it has done so far. But the work ahead is still difficult. The security environment is still challenging. But we can prevail. We can prevail as long as we maintain the kind of solidarity that we have shown over the last year, as long as we continue to take our message to the people of Iraq and to your citizens as well.

I know that in each of the country represented here, difficult political choices were made to help this coalition, to serve in this coalition, and we want to make sure that we do everything we can to help you explain to your people why the difficult political choices that were made were the correct choices, the correct choices for your nation, the correct

choices for the world, and, above all, the correct choices for the Iraqi people.

We have a lot of work to do now in the next 42 days, roughly. Between now and the 30th of June, we have to put in place an Iraqi government, get it ready to assume responsibility no later than the 30th of June. And we're hard at work to do that. And I don't have to tell this group how important it is that in the next 42 days we work even more closely together.

I want to let you know that we don't judge any nation's contribution to this effort by its size. We judge your contribution by the spirit in which it is offered, and by the role that it plays. The political and economic reconstruction of Iraq is a project with many moving parts, and all of the parts have to fit together right for the project to advance. Every part, large and small, is critical to overall success.

We must leave a legacy that points away from tyranny and towards freedom, away from terror and toward legitimate government under the rule of law. I'll leave the many specifics of how we're going to move forward to my able associates who will be speaking to you after I finish my introductory remarks, and especially to our ambassador-designate to Iraq, the Honorable John Negroponte, who is here with us this morning.

But I want to state for you the specific priorities, things we have to accomplish over the next 42 days as we move forward, and, frankly, beyond 1 July as well. The first thing we have to get done is the work of Ambassador Brahimi. We have been in constant consultations with Lakhdar Brahimi all through his current stay in Iraq. We think he is getting closer to the designation of individuals who will be in the interim Iraqi government.

We're working closely, not only with Ambassador Brahimi, but with Secretary General Annan, and other interested officials in Iraq and in the world as well, and among your leaders to move this process forward. We hope that when he brings forward this slate of officers, we can quickly move that slate to the Security Council, to Secretary General Annan, for all of us to take a look and examine the quality of these individuals.

We are looking, and Ambassador Brahimi is looking, for individuals who will be respected individuals within Iraq, who will have credibility within the society, who will be seen as the Iraqi people as the right selection for a caretaker government to take them through the next six or seven months until elections are held at the end of December or sometime in January.

We are mindful that this government must be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the Iraqi people as soon as possible. And there are many ways that we can help that process along, and must help that process along, since we will not have an election by the Iraqi people that endorses this government.

And that takes me to the second point. And that is, a UN Security Council resolution is

very important. If we are successful, I am quite confident we will be, based on the discussions I have had with many of your foreign ministers, discussions I had with members of the G-8 last Friday, I'm quite confident we'll be able to get a UN Security Council resolution.

It is a resolution that will endorse this Iraqi interim government. It is a resolution that I'm confident will endorse the Brahimi process of how to move forward with an interim Iraqi government, followed by a council of significant individuals in July, pulled together to provide their endorsement of the interim government, going to elections by the end of the year or early 2005, as I mentioned. And from that election, a new government will be formed, a national assembly elected by the people, and that national assembly will then pick a transitional government that will take Iraq through 2005 until a constitution can be written and full elections held for an entirely new and permanent government.

We hope the resolution and are confident the resolution will endorse this process of moving forward. We are anxious to hear any suggestions that you have with respect to what you think should be in such a resolution, what your individual country political needs and requirements might be with respect to such a resolution.

The resolution, we expect, will also give guidance concerning a multinational force and how it will relate to the new interim Iraqi government. One point that I want to make absolutely clear -- I think you know this already, but let me just reinforce that point -- we intend for this interim government, on the 1st of July, to be sovereign. That interim government will replace the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Ambassador Bremer, having completed his work, will step down. The elements of the Coalition Provisional Authority that still have a role to play in supporting this government will be integrated into our embassy operation. Ambassador Negroponte will, of course, be the leader of that embassy operation. But it is the interim government that is replacing Ambassador Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority, not Ambassador Negroponte.

He will have more than enough work to do, and he will be playing a vital and valuable role, as will ambassadors from many other nations that are represented here, but in the more diplomatic traditional sense, of working with the new government, providing assistance, helping them as they make choices as to how to use the money that the American Congress and nations represented here have pledged to the reconstruction effort in Iraq, working with our military command that will, of course, remain to provide security.

We are absolutely confident that this new sovereign entity, the Iraqi interim government, in the discharge of their sovereignty, will ask and expect U.S. forces and coalition forces to remain in the country to provide the security that this caretaker government is going to need in the months ahead as it prepares the nation for the elections at the end of the year, the beginning of next year. And we are confident that the resolution will deal with

this issue.

We also expect that the resolution will have words to say about the role of the United Nations, the vital role that we want the United Nations to play, and I'm confident that Ambassador Negroponte will share some additional thoughts with you during the course of your morning's discussions.

Another element that I think I should touch on is the fact that we're not just waiting for the 1st of July for everything to happen. Eleven ministries have already been stood up and turned over to full sovereignty, in a sense, to Iraq cabinet officers. They are running those ministries.

We are providing assistance. We are providing advice. We are providing support. But they are making their own choices. They are making their own decisions now. We expect to turn two more over by the end of the week for a total of 13 ministries in the next day or so. This shows that the process of transition to the sovereign government of Iraq, interim government of Iraq, is underway already, to include such vital ministries as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Planning and Environment, Health and Agriculture. We are working hard so that these ministries and others will be ready, and fully prepared to assume their responsibilities on June 30. These ministries need to be up and running to work with the interim government that will be set up, and these ministries will be immediately responsive and will work under this new government once authority is transferred to it.]

We ask your advice, in the course of this meeting, on -- with respect to any suggestions you might have as to what else we might be doing. We want to hear from you. We want to know from you your perspective from your experience working with the Coalition Provisional Authority, working with the military authorities in Baghdad, or from your own contacts with Iraqi leaders and representatives of the new -- potential representatives of the new government.

We're thinking beyond June 30th, as well. We're going to be working closely with the UN electoral assistance team to ensure that we do get the UN involved and spread out throughout the country, providing security for them, so that they can get the country ready for elections by the end of the year. This is the critical step. These elections provide the kind of legitimacy we need: the Iraqi people actually speaking and selecting their own national assembly.

The final point I might touch on is the need to make sure that we are providing the means to finance this effort. Many countries represented here this morning have contributed financially to the reconstruction effort in Iraq. I urge you all to disburse your pledges quickly. And I hope that your governments will consider additional assistance.

Most of your countries have been invited to an important meeting hosted by Qatar on May 25th and 26th. At that meeting, organized by Japan, as the chair of the Donors Committee, you'll hear directly from Iraqis about their needs and from the United Nations

and the World Bank about the programs that they have in place or are planning to put in place.

This will give your governments what they need to decide the scope and nature of further assistance to the Iraqi reconstruction effort. Reconstruction costs money, and you see what our Congress has been willing to do. But success of any kind always requires investment of this nature. And if we don't do it now, up front, in the beginning, we will end up paying for it later on, under less favorable circumstances. So this is the time to be generous and to make your pledges known.

Finally, let me say that I consider every country represented here this morning to be a leader, a true leader in the international community, for your willingness to participate in this effort, for your willingness to show leadership, even when, occasionally, it is against the public opinion.

But that's what leadership is all about: doing what is right and ultimately bringing public opinion along. Public opinion will support all of us when the people of the world see that the security situation has been brought under control, these former regime elements and anti-coalition militias have been defeated, the terrorists have been dealt with and the reconstruction effort is underway, under the sovereign control of the Iraqis themselves.

You have all backed your commitment to an independent democratic Iraq with action. You are on the ground undertaking stability operations. You are building schools, training Iraqi security forces, supplying clean water, providing medical care, and so much more. You are leaders in this effort.

And just as success requires investment, leadership has costs. Many countries represented in the room have lost soldiers and diplomats and civilians in Iraq. Every one of these losses has been tragic. We mourn every single loss. And it's up to all of us to make sure that none of them will have been in vain, none of these losses in vain. And I think that will be demonstrated as we move forward and achieve success.

Success in Iraq is the profound -- is in the profound interest of the entire international community. We're doing the right thing by helping the Iraqi people, and we're doing it in the right way through partnerships. We'll stay the course. And I know I speak for the President, I speak for all of my colleagues in the Administration, when I say that we're honored to have you with us and we are honored to be able to work in partnership with you.

And now it's time to get to work, and I would invite Assistant Secretary Burns, if he is ready, to please take the lectern. And I hope that you all have a very, very good and productive day.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

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