

Remarks With Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi

Secretary Colin L. Powell

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SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good morning ladies and gentlemen. The Prime Minister and I and our delegations have just finished a very productive meeting. The Prime Minister briefed me on his trip throughout the region, soliciting support for the efforts of the Iraqi Interim Government--a trip which has so far been quite successful. I expressed our condolences for the loss of Iraqi life yesterday in these terrible bombing incidents. And we committed ourselves once again to the proposition that these terrorists must not be allowed to succeed. These insurgents must be defeated, and will be defeated, so that the hopes and dreams of the Iraqi people are not lost and are not blown apart by bombs. The American commitment is steadfast. We will not weaken in the presence of this kind of danger. Rather, we will redouble our efforts working with our coalition partners and with the Iraqi Interim Government.

We discussed the Saudi initiative, which you have now read about--an interesting idea, a welcome idea from the Saudi government as to how to generate additional Muslim forces to participate in the work in Iraq, either as part of the coalition or as a separate organization that would be within the framework of the coalition effort, but would be there perhaps to provide security of facilities or provide protection to the UN. These are preliminary ideas that the Saudis have given to us. They've shared the ideas with the Prime Minister, with us, with Secretary-General Annan. And we welcome the Saudi ideas, and we'll be examining them in the days ahead.

Mr. Prime Minister, all of us in the United States and as the President has said to you, we are admiring of the courage that you have shown, the dedication you have shown and the good start you are off to with your government. It's a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and I'd invite you to say a word.

PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI: (in Arabic) I'd like to welcome the opportunity to meet again with our friend, the U.S. Secretary of State. We have talked about a number of mutual issues. I thanked the Secretary of State for the U.S. support to Iraq and this longstanding support from the United States, which will continue. We also talked about a number of other issues, among them the multinational forces. And we talked about the issue of Arab and Islamic troops participating, excluding the neighboring states. We also talked about a number and a variety of other issues, in terms of activating the economic relationships, the trade relationships, and the U.S. support to Iraq. This relationship will

continue, and will be sustainable, and will continue in the future.

I also accepted with gratitude the invitation that I received from President Bush to go and visit the United States. And I will be doing that in the near future. I found it important to start my travel in the region, in the Arab world, to help the issue of having Iraq being incorporated into the region and deal with our friends in the region.

SECRETARY POWELL: We'll take a couple of questions. George?

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the coalition is about 15 months old now. Why do you suppose there has been such scant support from Muslim and Arab countries? And Minister, could you talk about any concrete support you have received from Arab countries on your present tour, for example, extension of diplomatic relations?

SECRETARY POWELL: There are some 31 nations in the coalition. I believe it's a strong coalition. For a variety of reasons, sound reasons, it was decided that it would be better if the neighbors of Iraq did not participate in the effort. Various Muslim nations around the world have been considering participation. Many of them said they needed to see a UN mandate. There is now a UN mandate under 1546. They also said they wished to see a sovereign government--there is now a sovereign government that is up and running. And so, those basic conditions have been met.

Now we will be in more intensive discussions on the basis of the Saudi initiative with Muslim countries to see if more support cannot be generated. And the Saudis have indicated some conditions that would have to be met, as they see it, with respect to chain of command arrangements, with respect to what the troops should be doing, whether its an offset to existing coalition troops in the country. So there are many questions that have to be answered. But we do welcome the Saudi initiative and we'll be examining it very very closely.

PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI: This is the first time really that a high-level Iraqi delegation has visited the region. We have prepared the grounds for concrete coordination between the various countries in the Middle East, the ones that we have already visited. We have had the pledge that the countries would help us and the leaders would help us to secure Iraq. And, securing Iraq is really securing the region. They now do understand that what is raging in Iraq really is a fight against terrorists, a fight that we are going to win at ultimately. And, this is the only way forward. We think that the scene has been set toward much more structured and constructive dialogue to be ongoing with the nations that we visited.

The issue of multinational force and increasing the capacity by incorporating other Islamic nations and Arab nations to participate is still on the agenda. And we will work towards this objective. We want to enlarge the participation of the international community to help Iraq as the international community, led by the United States, now is helping Iraq. This is a fight that is not only a fight for Iraq--it is global fight, really, against

terrorists. And the participation in the multinational force is a commitment of the nation to fight evil wherever this evil prevails. Thank you.

QUESTION: (in Arabic) The question is to the Iraqi Prime Minister. In light of what Secretary Powell said about the Saudi initiative, have you discussed this issue in detail, seeing how this particular force can contribute to Iraq's security without dragging the region into more violence? And, especially that you mentioned that neighboring states will not participate in that.

PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI: (in Arabic) This is a very important issue the region faces. The forces of terrorism, they exist in this part of the world. They threaten a number of countries and states. They have threatened here, the Kingdom, Iraq, they threatened Iraq and other countries, like Syria and Lebanon. And the leaders of this region must unify and must stand as one group against those gangs, against those terrorists and those criminals who are threatening and causing a great deal of harm to the Arab World and the Islamic world. This is an issue, that it is important that these groups and these terrorists and their conduct is far away from the values of Islam and from the Arab values. The participation of Arab and Islamic states is an important issue, not only to support Iraq. Iraq will be able to overcome its difficulties, but it is important for the region and the leaders to stand and have a decisive position and a decisive role against these groups, that threatens the security of their countries and the region. We have to stand together in confronting those groups. The conscience of the Islamic world and the Arab world should be the motive and the power behind that. These are challenges and these challenges are harming the security of the region and these countries. And, we must confront them. We look forward to the contribution from the Arab and Islamic states, with the exception of the neighboring states, in order to continue this work and secure the region.

SECRETARY POWELL: Robin?

QUESTION: Prime Minister Allawi, first of all, you have written to several Arab and Muslim countries asking for their participation. Have you had a positive response from any of them? And, second, given the experience of Pakistani hostages recently, and the Egyptian diplomat being taken hostage, what guarantees do you have that their experience of the Arab and Islamic forces would be any different from the coalition? And, Mr. Secretary...

SECRETARY POWELL: Robin, that's two.

PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI: I have sent letters asking leaders to participate and some of them have replied favorably to expand the discussions on what kind of commitment they should have. This is something that we will pursue in the weeks ahead. I'll be talking to some of them in the next few days to try and find a common ground that these countries should participate really on the assurances...really, we don't have any assurances. This is a war, again, this is a global war. These are forces of evil who are

acting against us. We are going to suffer casualties, we are suffering casualties. We are going to and we have to end their terrorism route. And I call upon the leaders of the countries, Arab countries, to close ranks. This is really, basically, our fight. Those are people who claim to be part of Islam—they are not. They claim to be part of the Arabs—they are not. The values of Islam and the values of Arabism is different. And really the assurance is that we all close ranks and fight and defeat these evil forces. And this is what is going to happen.

SECRETARY POWELL: One more from the Arab press.

QUESTION: (in Arabic) Since the initial problem with Iraq was Saddam Hussein and his sizeable armed forces, is it one of the conditions in the reconstruction of the Iraqi armed forces to limit the number of the troops and limit the amount of equipment?

PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI: (in Arabic) The relationship between Iraq and our friends as well as our friends around the world, especially the United States, is not based on conditions. There are no conditions. Our relationship is an equal relationship. It is based on quiet dialogue and it is based on true understanding between Iraq and its various interlocutors. Also, there is a true support coming from the United States and coming from various friends of Iraq.

Regarding the issue of capabilities, capabilities are important for the Iraqi armed forces, in order to provide for security, stability and prosperity, not only for the country but for the region. This is the approach that the Iraqi Government is adopting. We believe very strongly in the value of dialogue, a civilized dialogue between us and the various interlocutors. There are no conditions that are imposed on Iraq. And what we see is true support and what we see is true understanding from all of our friends, especially the United States.

Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.

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