

Interview on Al Iraqia TV

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Baghdad, Iraq

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QUESTION: Mr. Secretary of State, thank you for giving Al Iraqia this interview and thank you for your time.

SECRETARY POWELL: A pleasure.

QUESTION: Now, what are your talks with the Iraqi leader revolve around? I mean, the main areas of discussion?

SECRETARY POWELL: I had very good discussions with Prime Minister Allawi yesterday and today with President Shaykh Ghazi, as well as with Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih and members of his cabinet. We spoke about many things. We spoke about security. We spoke about reconstruction. We spoke about the linkage between security and reconstruction. How the reconstruction effort will help with the security by giving people hope and opportunity and jobs as they see improvement in their daily lives, improvement in the economy, improvement in the infrastructure of the country. We talked about the upcoming conference that will be held the middle of August where the people of Iraq – a thousand strong - will be able to come together and talk to one another and select a council of one hundred that will be able to represent their interest to the interim government. We talked about the elections that will be held at the end of the year. But, above all, we talked about freedom and democracy. We talked about the fact that United States of America, President Bush and his administration are fully linked up with the leadership of the new Iraqi government and with other Coalition leaders to make sure that we keep moving forward, that we do not disappoint the Iraqi people. They want democracy. They want peace. They want freedom. They want the end of violence. They want to see their country rebuilt. They want to once again be a proud nation in this part of the world. And the United States will stand firm with the Iraqi government and with the Iraqi people until this goal is achieved. We spoke about all of these things.

QUESTION: Given the worsening security situation, do you think that deploying troops in Iraq from Arab and Muslim countries will improve the security situation, especially in light of threats issued by terrorists against the presence of such troops?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think the Iraqi government will welcome contributions from any nation in the world that wants to come and help the Iraqi people achieve their dreams. If more Muslim nations were able to participate, I think that should be welcome. It would show the people of Iraq that the Muslim nations of the world, the Muslim people

stand with the people of Iraq. Now, whether we'll be able to generate that kind of contribution remains to be seen. Crown Prince Abul of Saudi Arabia came up with the idea of looking at the conditions under which more Muslim troops might come to Iraq and we're examining the ideas that the Crown Prince and other Saudi leaders put forward and we'll see whether or not it generates more contributions. The kidnapping problem, of course, is a deterrent, but we can't let that stop us. We can't allow that to stop our reconstruction efforts and our efforts to secure the countryside and working along with Iraqi security forces. We can't let that stop us. The stakes are too high. It is too important of a matter for us to be stopped by some terrorists, some leftovers from the old regime who commit murder. We can't let murderers win this battle. The forces of freedom - free people - have to win this battle.

QUESTION: The reconstruction of Iraq has almost ground to a halt due to the worsening security situation on the one hand and to the scarcity of financial funds from donor countries on the other. What steps is your government and the international community taking to kick start the reconstruction of Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, I don't think it has come to a stop. Obviously, there have been some distractions as a result of kidnapping and the security situation, but we are pressing right ahead. And Ambassador Negroponte and his team working with the interim government will increase the flow of funds. It's taken a while from the time last fall when our Congress made this money available to put in place the necessary procedures and contracts, but that's pretty much been done now. I think the Iraqi people will see - and the international community will see - these funds begin to flow more quickly and they'll begin to see the reconstruction effort pick up speed even in the presence of the security difficulties that we are facing now.

QUESTION: What have you achieved in your present tour in the region?

SECRETARY POWELL: I've had a chance to talk to many leaders in the region. In Kuwait, I'll be speaking to leaders tomorrow. I've spoken with President Mubarak, I spoken with Crown Prince Abul and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia And, of course, I've been here for the entire day talking with Iraqi leaders. The message I have for all of them is that we have a remarkable opportunity in Iraq to help the Iraqi people build a nation that will be at peace with its neighbors, that will never think of developing weapons of mass destruction, never think of participating in the kind of tyranny and terror that existed under the days of Saddam Hussein. It is now the time for all of us to do even more to help the Iraqi people. I sense in all of the countries I've visited here in the region, as well as before coming into the region, in Hungary earlier this week. All the nations are committed to doing everything they can to help Iraq and to help the Coalition, but above all, to help the new Iraqi government as it works to stabilize the county, build up its security forces and get on with the job of democracy building, having elections and reconstruction.

QUESTION: Yesterday's announcement of the postponement of the Iraqi National Conference for two weeks. Is it a setback?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't think it's a setback. I think it was done at the recommendation of the United Nations. I think the Iraqi government was fully prepared to start the conference tomorrow. But, the United Nations recommended that they take more time to make sure that the processes were in place to have a successful conference and to make sure that we had the proper representation from all over Iraq and that the entire political, social and cultural spectrums will be represented at the conference. I think it is merely an effort to make sure that this conference is done right and not done in haste. Even though it is a delay, I don't consider it a setback

QUESTION: As you may know, nothing substantial has been achieved regarding the process of holding the general elections in Iraq on January 2005. Are you optimistic that the elections will be held as scheduled?

SECRETARY POWELL: Yes, and more importantly, the government is confident that the elections will be held. A lot more work has to be done. The United Nations is now staffing up – starting to bring people in. We're arranging with the government to provide security for the U.N. people that will be coming in. Mrs. Parelli has put forward a good plan and there is no reason why these elections should not be held at the end of the year or in January 2005. Security is a concern, of course, but people are already beginning to show up and say where do I register. How does this work? How do we vote? So, what I sense is that the Iraqi people want to have an election at the end of this year, in January 2005 or in that period. They want to have an election. They want to be able to have their voices heard through the ballot. And as long as the will of the people is there and as long as we build up Iraqi security forces and keep a strong Coalition presence that can work with Iraqi security forces there is no reason why we can't have these elections successfully at the end of the year or in January 2005.

QUESTION: How does US diplomacy plan to deter territorial terrorist interventions in Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well it's not just U.S's diplomacy, but the entire Coalition working with the Iraqi interim government to talk to the neighbors of Iraq. Your Prime Minister, Prime Minister Allawi, has been on a tour of the region speaking to every one of Iraq's neighbors to say to them. "Let's work together, let's do everything we can to keep terrorist from coming into the county." The United States will also work with the neighbors of Iraq to help them understand that this is the time for them to do everything they can to keep terrorists from coming into Iraq. It is in their interest for Iraq to be stable. It is in the interest of every one of Iraq's neighbors to have a stable Iraq that is no longer threatening, no longer claiming one country as another province of Iraq or starting a war with another neighbor. The new Iraq will not be interested in those kinds of things. The new Iraq will be a nation that will be resting on the foundation of democracy as the rule of law, human rights and it will be using the oil revenue of the people to build infrastructure, to build schools, to build hospitals, not to build weapons, not to raise armies, not to threaten the region. That's the message we're giving to all of Iraq's neighbors and why it

is their interest to work with Iraq as Iraq builds this new state – a unique state in this part of the world.

QUESTION: Is democracy in Iraq still a first priority to the US diplomacy in the Middle East?

SECRETARY POWELL: It is a first priority because the people of Iraq have been liberated from a tyrant. Liberated for what? Liberated for democracy. Liberated for freedom. We also believe that if Iraq goes through this transformation successfully, and other nations in the region see that there is nothing inconsistent with being a Muslim nation with a strong faith but also being a nation that practices democracy, that accommodates the needs of the minorities within a political system within a society. We believe it can be an inspiration and a model to other nations in the region. Why should it not be? Why should anybody reject the concept of people deciding how they should be governed as opposed to a tyrant deciding how people will be ruled?

QUESTION: I see. But I cannot see America's diplomacy goals. It is not that clear.

SECRETARY POWELL: It is not up to us to create this democracy. It is up to the Iraqi people to create this democracy with your own leaders. The role of American diplomacy is to help the sovereign government of Iraq. We can help by providing reconstruction funds which help stabilize the country and rebuild the infrastructure. We can work with the United Nations to help Iraqis have an open, free and fair election at the end of the year. American diplomacy can help in generating more funds from the international community to assist Iraq. American diplomacy can help in your relations with your neighbors. So, there is a lot that American diplomacy can do. We also have a great deal of experience with democracy. But, it has to be an Iraqi democracy. It has to be something that deals with the unique culture, history and traditions of the Iraqi people. So, for this new nation to be on a solid basis, it has to be a basis and foundation that has been built by the Iraqi people and in my discussions with Iraqi leaders and with young people that I've spoken to here in Iraq, I see people who understand what freedom and democracy is all about and who are prepared to put it into a political system that will defend the rights of all the people. The American President, the American nation will help them. But, basically, it is going to be a democracy that is built by the Iraqi people with their own leaders whom they select. America will help. America will not dictate. It will not be an American product. It is a democracy that will be made in Iraq, not made in America.

QUESTION: I see. Will Iraq's democracy have to meet American standards?

SECRETARY POWELL: No.

QUESTION: It doesn't have to be at American standards?

SECRETARY POWELL: We believe that democracy should rest on fundamental

freedoms. They are not American values solely. They're universal values. Why shouldn't any group of people be free to pursue their own destiny? Why shouldn't any group of people be free to decide amongst themselves collectively as to who should lead them, who should be responsible for their future, who should be responsible for their fate. This is not uniquely an American system. This is a system of openness and freedom that is practiced in many places throughout the world. And why should Iraq deny itself the opportunity to let its people decide how they will be governed? These can be Iraqi values. These can be Iraqi principles. Why should they not? We believe that these principles are universal and can be applied to any nation that is willing to stand up and say we respect the rights of all of our citizens. However diverse our society may be, there is no reason why we cannot work together with this diversity and have our diversity be a source of strength, not a source of weakness, not a source of fracturing, not a source of conflict. There is no reason why Iraq and the Iraqi people cannot have this kind of system resting on these universal values made in Iraq, for Iraqis and by Iraqis.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary of State, thank you very much.

SECRETARY POWELL: You're welcome. Thank you.

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