

Remarks at the Atlanta Press Club

Secretary Colin L. Powell

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SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much, Mark, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your welcome. And please tell Tom that I accept his apology. I got a copy of the email as well, and wherever I go, Disney World appears. So I don't know why he felt he had to -- (laughter.)

But it's a great pleasure to be with you and a great pleasure to be back in Atlanta. Atlanta is a place well known to me. I had the privilege of being stationed at Fort McPherson some 15 years ago as the Commander of Forces Command, and I still remember the warmth with which I was received into the Atlanta community and became an honorary member of the

Rotary Club.

And then after leaving Atlanta after too brief a tour, to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and retiring four years later, and then after a bit of time spent writing a book, I began leadership in an organization called America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth. And one of the greatest partners that I had in that effort were the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and I was on the board, national board of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. And it brought me to Atlanta very often to be with Roxanne Spillet and the leaders of that great movement.

And after speaking earlier this morning at the Southern Center, I then went to a Boys and Girls Club, and at this gymnasium, sat around on the floor with some of the young kids -- they were on the floor, I was on a little stool -- (laughter.) But it brings me great joy to see these youngsters in Boys and Girls Clubs and some of the facilities, and to see how we take care of youngsters, give them safe places in which to learn and to grow.

I've tried to expand that concept in my work as Secretary of State out to other countries in the world where the philosophy of philanthropy and the culture and ethic of giving is not quite as advanced as it is in our country. In fact, my staff and I were debating the other how much aid do we really give to the rest of the world? We give a lot of aid from our government. There's a lot of aid that comes through the trading activities. There's a lot of aid that goes to countries from remittances that people working here send back to

their homes. But a huge amount of aid comes from American philanthropists, the Gateses of the world, who share the wealth that they've accumulated in the United States, not just for their own personal benefit or for the benefit of Americans at home, but for the benefit of the world. And it is that attitude, that spirit that is so uniquely American that I'm trying to make really part of our foreign policy, to encourage nations around the world to move in this direction.

I won't take much time in my opening remarks and give you a long speech. You can look at the transcript of what I said at the Southern Center earlier to get a full exposition of my views this morning, unless you would like me to speak for the whole period of time and take no questions. But it's more fun to take questions and give my speech to questions, as you get the pick the question and I get to pick the answer. (Laughter.)

But I just want to make a couple of points. Iraq is very much on our mind these days; Afghanistan is fresh in our mind, as they should be. These are great challenges for us and for the international community, challenges that must be met, challenges that will be met. And as we work out way, day by day, through the terrible images that intrude upon our lives, whether it would be youngsters who were killed yesterday because they dared to show up at a reconstruction site where we just put in a new sewage system. Now, these murderers and terrorists targeted that, trying to catch some Americans but knowing they would kill their own fellow citizens.

And then they had two more bombs ready, so that when people came to the rescue the bombs would go off and kill many more. And they ended up killing 40-something children. These are murderers. These are terrorists. These are not freedom fighters. These are not people who want to give the Iraqi people a better life. They are people who want to take Iraq back to the past, back to a time of tyrants and dictatorships, terrorism and suppression of human rights and suppression of people within the country.

And they're not going to be allowed to, not just because the United States said so, but because the international community said so, because the new Iraqi Government said so, because Prime Minister Allawi, who was here last week and spoke with such eloquence across the American political spectrum and Congress and at the White House at the UN, and because our coalition partners -- and more than our coalition partners, because the international community, through the UN, which unanimously passed a resolution a few months ago, 1546, that puts the weight of the international community behind what the Iraqi Interim Government is doing and what the coalition is doing.

NATO, which was fractured last year by the debate over the war, is now, once again, unified and a consensus among 26 nations exists to help the Iraqis train their forces to deal with this kind of challenge.

Everybody that I speak to, whether they were for what happened last year or not for what happened last year, know that we must be successful. The Iraqi people deserve a chance to select their own leaders. They deserve a chance for freedom and democracy.

And we're going to give them that chance. (Applause.)

The same thing exists in Afghanistan. Three years ago when I went there after the Taliban was driven from power, there was one phone for the whole new government, all of them using one phone. Money was being moved around in wheelbarrows to pay for a Coke because the currency had been so devalued by the Taliban; they just kept printing money and it was worthless.

People had been driven out of the country. There were millions of refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and now, just three years later, there are 18 people running for president. The election is on the 9th of October; seventeen men and a woman running for president. Mr. Karzai has brought his country through this difficult period, and now he's standing for election.

It's not going to be our kind of election. This will be their kind of election, an election of a kind they've never really had before, and they're figuring out how to do it. Ten million people have registered. Ten million people have said, "We want to be a part of this." Three million refugees -- imagine this, three million Afghans left camps in Pakistan and Iran to walk home and to be part of their new country, and we helped bring it about.

Is it over? Are there still challenges there? Yes. The al-Qaida elements and the Taliban elements are still trying to reverse this progress, and they can't be allowed to succeed. We are saddened at the losses, every American, every coalition soldier. My diplomats are at risk and I've lost diplomats. We are saddened at the loss of every Iraqi or Afghan who wants to stand up for freedom.

And so this is the challenge of our time, the challenge of this year. This is a challenge we must meet. It's not the only challenge we face. There are others. Getting the Middle East peace process moving. Dealing with Iran and North Korea, that you've heard so much about in recent days. As both candidates said last night, proliferation, nuclear proliferation, is a challenge. But the way to go about it is to work with our friends and partners, not go pay somebody off, but work with our friends and partners and make sure the North Koreans understand that the whole region, all of its neighbors, say no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. And I think it is wise foreign policy and wise diplomacy to bring China, Russia, South Korea, Japan into the discussion with North Korea.

All six of us, to include North Korea, have agreed to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. What the debate is now is how to do it and how to do it in a way so that the North Koreans feel that they are secure and they're not going to be attacked. It troubles them, how to do it in a way that will bring benefits to them, for their people, not the regime.

This is what we're working on. This is where the difficult task of diplomacy requires patience and requires skill. And the President has shown that patience and that skill to move this process forward. My [Chinese] colleague, Foreign Minister Li, was in

Washington yesterday and we went out in front of the Department afterwards and spoke about this. And people asked, "Is the six-party talk the way to go forward?" And I said certainly, and so did Foreign Minister Li. We know that this is a matter for the region, and not just for the United States and North Korea.

Similarly with Iran. I have been in constant communication with my European foreign minister colleagues, the three foreign ministers who had the lead for the European Union, the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, the Foreign Minister of France and the Foreign Minister of Germany. Every move they made, all the discussions they've had with the Iranians over time, I have been a part of. They tell me what they're going to do. We talk about it. We discuss it. We look at how we can move forward. We take the problem to the International Atomic Energy Agency. We get ready to refer it to the Security Council if that is what's going to be required, and it may well be required in November.

And so, we have been reaching out in a multilateral way. We have been working with our friends and partners. We have great alliances. Every time one of these problems comes up, the President takes it to the United Nations. He took the problem of Afghanistan to the United Nations. He took the problem of Iraq to the United Nations. Last year, when he gave his speech at the United Nations General Assembly, he specifically said on the issue of proliferation, we need a UN resolution on proliferation to do something about proliferation, to bring us together. And we went after that, after the speech. And before he appeared again this year, we had a resolution on proliferation and we're working with the international community to shut down avenues of proliferation.

We broke the A.Q. Khan network, had its home in Pakistan, and that was spreading this horrible nuclear technology around the world. We persuaded the Libyans that it is in their best interest that we'll be safer without weapons of mass destruction than they ever were going to be with weapons of mass destruction, a lesson that others should learn in Iran and North Korea and elsewhere and we hope that they will.

We're doing more than just talking about these hard power politics. We're doing other things that invest in societies around the world, whether it's going after the challenge of HIV/AIDS; 8,000 people a day die from HIV/AIDS. We have put more money and international efforts than the rest of world combined by a factor of two. The President announced a new \$15 billion program to go after HIV/AIDS.

We're doing a lot with respect to developing countries, whether it's the Millennium Challenge Account, \$5 billion a year, beginning in 2006, to invest in those developing countries that have made certain commitments: 1) democracy; 2) rule of law; 3) no corruption; 4) open markets; 5) investing in your people -- education, clean water, electricity, infrastructure, so that you can participate in a 21st century globalizing economy. And we will help you. We will help you create conditions that cause trade to come your way, people to invest in your country.

And so, foreign policy these days is very complex. Some days it's challenging, when you have to deal with an Iraq or an Afghanistan. Most of the time, it's steady, steady work dealing with countries that are coming out from behind the Iron Curtain or coming out from years of juntas and generals running countries in our own hemisphere.

We're trying to find a way forward with the Middle East peace process. But every now and then, something happens in your day that makes it all, all worthwhile, makes you realize why we are in a unique place. This happened to me about, oh, a week or so ago, when one of my assistants asked me to go and congratulate some of our staff members who work on refugees; we had a goal this year to bring in 50,000 refugees.

After 9/11, we were having difficulty keeping up the flow of refugees into this country because of clearances and security and making sure we knew who was coming into the country and we kept missing our goal, but this year we were determined to hit that goal so that the world could see that America hasn't changed. We still reach out. We still open our doors. We still want people here.

Refugees are not immigrants. They're not like people who have come here normally and gotten a green card and the like. Refugees are those who have been abandoned, living in camps around the world. There are so many of them and we bring them to this country and they come with nothing. They come with nothing, the clothes on their back, usually don't speak the language, and we marry them up with private organizations, with churches, temples or synagogues, with Americans who are willing to reach out and help them.

And they come here and some of the most wonderful stories come out of this. We're bringing in a lot of the Hmong people, refugees from southeast Asia -- some 12,000, roughly, will be coming into the country this year and they're coming from southeast Asia to Minnesota and Wisconsin in the winter. This is a cultural shock. (Laughter.) And within three years, their kids are going to be kicking soccer balls around. They're going to be speaking perfect English. Their families will be adjusting to this cultural change and they will be Hmong-Americans, just like I'm a Jamaican-American, an African-American, call it what you will, and each one of you can hyphenate your name.

It just shows that we are that same country. We are that same welcoming nation that touches every nation in the world; every nation in the world touches us. We've got to secure ourselves, we've got to protect ourselves, and we can't let ourselves be changed by this threat, a threat we have to defeat, an enemy we have to take on, but never losing sight of our values because our real position in the world today is determined by whether or not America continues to live the values in which we all believe and which we have proselyted the world with: democracy, individual rights, open markets, welcoming attitude, a belief that everybody is ordained by an Almighty to live out life in peace and with the opportunity to go as far as your dreams, ability, and willingness to work will take you.

People still look to us and respect that in us. We are resented often, but we are respected more often. I go to countries and have to argue about our policies, but usually at some point in the conversation, particularly with young people, they'll ask me about a policy and they'll argue with me about a policy, but about 15 or 20 minutes into the conversation, they'll start asking about America. They'll start asking, "How did you become Secretary of State? You're a black guy."

"Oh, yeah, you noticed." (Laughter.) Well, you know, it couldn't have happened 50, 100 years ago. But we're always changing. We're always growing. We're always modifying ourselves. We have taken our diversity and made a source of strength out of it, not a source of weakness. That's what you ought to be looking at.

They know of our generosity. They know of our openness. They're standing in lines in front of all of my embassies wanting visas to come here, to study, to go to hospitals, to go to Disney World. Come on in, great.

So we are what we always have been: an open, welcoming country that is facing challenges. But what we also have always been is a country that can meet challenges and overcome them and not grow weary and faint in the presence of danger, but to prevail.

And in the challenges we're facing now that take so much of our time and energy and we're watching so closely, I assure you we will prevail and we will be successful and Iraq will be better off for it, Afghanistan will be better off for it, and the world will be better off for it.

Thank you. I'll take your questions.

(Applause.)

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary, we have a number of questions and we'll just get to as many as you can accommodate.

The first question is, who is right? President Bush says the situation is improving in Iraq; Senator Kerry is credited with saying that the situation is worse. So which one is it?

SECRETARY POWELL: It's not an either/or. We have a difficult insurgency that we are dealing with. The terrorists and the former regime elements do not want to see progress. But is there progress? Yes, there is an Iraqi Interim Government that has taken over; it has sovereignty. All it wants to do is have an election in January. That's progress. There is an administrative law that recognizes that recognizes that the Shias are the majority, but it's an administrative law that will lead to a constitution that protects the rights of the minorities -- the Sunnis and the Kurds and others. That's progress.

A school will be opening up tomorrow. Municipal elections are taking place. A sewage system was going in yesterday in one part of the city that was blown up, this celebration was blown up by terrorists. And so, yes, there is progress. Yes, we have come a long way in putting in place an interim government of courageous men and women who stand up every day and go out to face the dangers of moving their country along in the face of this kind of insurgency.

And so, what we have to do is deal with those dangers -- not ignore them, not pretend that they are not there and we don't. The President sees it every day. He knows better than anyone what it's costing us and how difficult it is.

But we also know that we have good commanders who can get on top of this, we have Iraqis who come out every day to stand in line to become policemen or to join the army, knowing that they are in danger by standing in that line, but they come anyway.

And so it is not either/or. It is an opportunity to put in place a democracy in the part of the world where democracy is too rare, an opportunity to deal with these insurgents and terrorists so that they cannot cause trouble elsewhere. And it's a course that we have to stay on and we have to win, and we will win.

MODERATOR: At the debate last night, Senator Kerry spoke of the idea of preemptive strikes and said, "Here we have our own Secretary of State who has had to apologize to the world for the presentation that he made to the United Nations."

So the question is: Have you apologized to the world and is that a correct characterization, and what is your comment about Kerry's statement?

SECRETARY POWELL: As Senator Kerry noted last night, preemption is not a new strategy or a new tactic. The President has never said it was. If you look at the President's National Security Strategy published in 2002, you will find that in this 30-odd-page document the concept of preemption is mentioned in about two sentences back in the document, toward the back of the document. It's a strategy of partnership, it's a strategy of working with allies, it's a strategy of helping people in need -- a thing I just discussed.

But preemption is a technique and a tactic that is always available to a Commander-in-Chief, and if you see a danger, if you see somebody who is coming to strike you, if you think the nation is in danger and you can do something about it, you act. That's what preemption or prevention means. The words are used often interchangeably. And no President would ever go into office thinking that if such a danger was heading his way he wouldn't do everything he could to stop it, prevent it, preempt it. And that's what I think both of the gentlemen were talking about last night, certainly the President's view of the world.

With respect to the presentation that I gave on the 5th of February of last year, it

reflected the best view of the intelligence community. Not unanimous on every point, always matter of judgment where people disagree. But that presentation was vetted throughout the intelligence community, and when there was a slight difference of opinion, I mentioned it in my presentation. But it reflected the considered judgment of the intelligence community with respect to Saddam Hussein's intentions, with respect to weapons of mass destruction, the capability that he still had with respect to weapons of mass destruction, the unanswered questions as to what did he do with biological materials that we know he had, what did he do with other weaponry that we knew he had but hadn't accounted for, why hasn't he answered the questions that had been put to him for 12 years? That's what the presentation dealt with.

The presentation also dealt with, in a significant way, the information we had concerning stockpiles that we thought he had, that most of the intelligence community, communities of the world, thought he had. We weren't alone in this. It was a body of intelligence that had been presented at the Congress, to all the members of the Senate and the House repeatedly. It was a body of information that caused President Clinton to become so deeply concerned in 1998 that he launched a military action against this capability. Saddam Hussein is a man who has used these weapons against his own people and against his neighbors. So he had a history of it, an intention of doing it. He was hiding things. He was not responding to the demands of the international community.

And the only thing where we got it wrong and where the presentation did not hold up was actual stockpiles. We have seen nothing to suggest that he had actual stockpiles. And Mr. Duelfer, who is working on this for us, will be issuing a report next week and will talk to this point.

So that was not right, and as we have gone back and looked through the intelligence, there are indications that we had bad sourcing and we should have caught some of this bad sourcing. For that, I am not only disappointed but I regret that that information was not correct. But if you nevertheless looked at the body of knowledge and intelligence that existed, got in the past -- I've been to the village that he gassed in 1988. I've met with the survivors and the family members of those who died. Five thousand people one morning. Five thousand dead, nerve gas, other forms of gas. He gassed the Iranians.

He had that history, that record; he never abandoned the intention. And what is going to become very, very clear after Mr. Duelfer releases his report is that what Saddam Hussein was trying to do was to break out of the sanctions. He figured if he could hang on and break out of the sanctions, get the UN to look the other way, the international community to say, "Forget about the sanctions," then nobody would be constraining him any longer. And maybe there are people who feel, at that point, wouldn't have to worry about it, he would never go back and do any of this stuff.

No. The body of evidence we've come upon is that he would most certainly have gone back. He was trying to break the sanctions, not for the purpose of applying to be Soldier of the Month, but for the purpose of going back and developing these kinds of weapons. It was a risk that the President and Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Howard and

Mr. Berlusconi and Mr. Aznar and so many other world leaders would not take, did not take. And now he's gone. He's in jail. No more mass graves. No more gassing of people. No more concerns about that capability or intention. That's gone. The only intention the new Iraqi leader has is to lead his country to open, free, fair elections at the end of January of next year.

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary, there have been media reports that you will leave your post at the end of this presidential term. Are those reports accurate? And if so, does the war on terror affect your decision?

SECRETARY POWELL: I've made no decision. Media reports are very often quite accurate -- (laughter) -- very often not accurate, and very often totally unsourced and with no basis in fact. I serve at the pleasure of the President. I don't serve a term. I serve at the pleasure of the President and I am just continuing to serve as Secretary of State to the best of my ability and will not divert from that course. In due course, the President and I, I'm sure, will talk about it. But it's been fun to read all of these reports about what I am going to be doing or not going to be doing and what my future is or not, and having decided what I'm going to do, then explain why I'm going to do what somebody has said I'm going to do but it's not accurate. (Laughter.)

MODERATOR: Would you ever consider running for President of the United States? And if not, why not?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I considered politics some nine years or so ago, and made a judgment that it was not what I thought was right for me, couldn't bring to it the passion one needs to bring to it, and thought there were other ways to serve the nation. I've served the nation as a soldier for many years. At that time, I was getting ready to serve the nation again, as, in my youth and volunteer work and I think I have made a contribution there, and then the opportunity came with President Bush to serve as Secretary of State and I was pleased to serve the nation again. There are many ways to serve the nation, and in my life, the judgment I have made is I would serve it best in other capacities than elected office.

MODERATOR: Would the United States consider elections in Iraq a success if places like Fallujah were under martial law and those residents did not vote?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think we have to keep our eye on the goal, and that is to make sure that everybody who wants to vote has the ability to vote, has the access to vote and the ability to get to a polling place. It's going to be difficult. There are parts of the country now where that's going to be a snap. There will be no problem. As Prime Minister Allawi said when he was in Washington last week, roughly 14 or 15 of the 18 provinces of Iraq could probably have a safe, secure election tomorrow -- not to say there won't be an incident at a polling place or somebody isn't going to try to disrupt things, but the election would go forward.

The Sunni triangle in the middle is where we have the problem. That's where the insurgency is raging. Our troops are in serious battle today in Samarra to take that city back from the insurgents and they're having some success, initial reports suggest. And so, over the next several months, you will see us working alongside the Iraqi forces, take control of these cities again so that everybody will have a chance to participate in the election.

It will not be a totally quiet day when that day comes. I'm sure that they will be doing everything they can to keep it from happening. That's what's happening now. And before we transferred sovereignty back to the Iraqis at the end of June, we knew, we said, we analyzed and we have conveyed to the American people and to the world that this insurgency is probably going to get worse because with Iraqis back now in charge and heading toward an election this will say to the insurgents, "You'd better try to stop this while you can because once there is an election, the people have spoken." It gets that much harder to have any kind of justification for what we're doing. There is no justification for it now.

And so, our goal is a full, free, fair election for all of the citizens of Iraq. It will be a difficult mission to achieve, but that is what our goal is. Anything less than that would take away from the election, might not make it an invalid election, but we're looking for the whole country to participate and the Iraqi Government is working toward that end and we're working with them and the UN is playing an important role in all of this.

MODERATOR: President Bush is talking about 10.5 million Afghans registering to vote. Isn't that number higher than the number of eligible voters, and are we encouraging voter fraud?

SECRETARY POWELL: I've been reading about this. It's a higher number than I thought we would have. I think it is an honest number. I think it reflects an outpouring of desire on the part of the Afghan people to participate. The UN has been monitoring and supervising all of this. I have been to a registration place for women and I have seen how the process is done and how documentation is checked. Certifications are made and registration cards are given out.

I don't know if the number is inflated in any way or not. I do know, however, with absolute assurance, that the response to the opportunity for registration has been so great that if we can get turnout of a significant percentage, it is going to be a solid election that people will see does reflect the attitude, will, and desire of the Afghan people. Eighteen candidates are running for office. The election will be held on the 9th, next week, end of next week. President Karzai is one of the 18 candidates. One of the candidates is a woman.

We can argue about whether more people registered than we expected or not. Just go back three years and consider how many were registering when the Taliban were in charge, how many women were out thinking about registering when the Taliban were in

charge, how many girls were going to school when the Taliban were in charge, how many kids were being educated when the Taliban were in charge -- very few.

And so, we've come one long way in three years in Afghanistan and we should be proud of what we've done and the Afghans should be proud of what they have been able to do. And we will see on the afternoon of the 9th of October or a couple of days afterwards, when all of the boxes have come in, some 25,000 polling places are involved in all of this and it has been looked at by independent observers and the UN will be there in considerable presence. I'm confident we'll have an election that will stand the test of evaluation and examination.

MODERATOR: This is kind of a long question, so I'm going to condense it just a little bit, with your permission. Are our troops well prepared for biowarfare, given the sales of anthrax, botulism, plague, and dozens of other fatal pathogens to Iraq in the '80s and the '90s? And what extra steps are we taking to protect our troops against biowarfare, which we failed to take in the first Gulf War?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't think we failed to protect our troops in the first Gulf War. They went in fully prepared for a chemical environment and no chemical weapons were used against them, but we discovered chemical weapon stocks, also not a figment of our imagination. He had chemical weapons about 20 years ago. He had them at the time of the first Gulf War; didn't use them. We found those stocks and destroyed them.

With respect biological weapons, we have never gotten all of the answers we wanted to get from Saddam Hussein and we still don't have all of the answers we would like to have with respect to what toxins he kept around, what materials he had. But I think the evidence so far suggests that our troops are in no danger from any of these materials. There are vaccination programs in the Armed Forces. I'd yield to my friends in the Pentagon to give you the state of play of those vaccination programs. It's been a mixed picture. But I do not think that our troops are in danger of biological warfare agents that might still be in the country and that they might be exposed to.

After the first Gulf War, a number of our youngsters took ill and we're still trying to get to the bottom of what that syndrome was all about. But I've seen nothing to suggest it was as a result of being in contact with either depleted uranium or -- which our shells are made of -- or being in contact with any biological agents.

MODERATOR: How do you respond to Senator Kerry's charge that the U.S. outsourced the search for Usama bin Laden to Afghan warlords?

SECRETARY POWELL: The charge has been made on a number of occasions by various people that they knew exactly where Usama bin Laden was on the day a particular battle took place in a location called Tora Bora. Our military commanders are good, and I don't know all the details of that battle, but I think it's a stretch to say that somebody knew he was there and they knew it at the time the battle was going on so

that we'd know how to go get him.

And so, I can assure you that we are looking for Usama bin Laden. The Pakistanis are being very active along their side of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan chasing al-Qaida and Taliban elements. They recognize that this is a threat to them as well as a threat to Afghanistan and a threat to us.

But with respect to a specific tactical operation and who might have been in Tora Bora that day or not, I have no reason to believe that our commanders mishandled that. I don't know what they knew about who might be there or not there. What they're trying to do is work with the allies of the resistance, the Northern Alliance and others, and the emerging Afghan forces who were in the area at that time. But I don't have the details of the battle to a level of knowledge and precision that I can go back in time and tell you what was there. Maybe others are serendipitous enough to do that. I'm not.

MODERATOR: Last question I'm told we have time for. Your hometown of New York City is bidding for the 2012 Olympics. One of the challenges that that bid faces is anti-U.S. sentiment abroad. How can the U.S. Government help and encourage the bid to overcome this sentiment, and would you be willing to work for the New York City Olympic bid? (Laughter.)

SECRETARY POWELL: I have. I've already taped a promotional for the New York City bid. I have written letters to my foreign minister colleagues in various parts of the world saying that New York is a great town, my hometown. I've told them that we know how to do an Olympics -- (laughter) -- in the United States of America. Atlanta has certainly proven that, as has Salt Lake. And I hope New York will win the Olympic bid.

Now, we have to do a better job in taking our case to the world and explaining our policies to the world. There is anti-American feeling out there and we are doing a lot to overcome that. We're putting up our own radio and television stations to push back against the voices and images that one sees on the Al-Jazeeras of the world. We're encouraging all of our ambassadors and more embassy employees to get out and do more.

Iraq is an overhanging problem. The Middle East peace process is an overhanging problem on attitudes toward the United States. But I still find as I go around the world that people do respect us, people want America to be successful. They think a successful America is a benefit to them and to the world.

If you look at the Arab world, for example, where some of this anti-American attitude is so prevalent, and even though it's real -- I can't deny it -- yet last Friday morning I was able to sit in the Waldorf=Astoria with 28 nations present, most of them from the broader Middle East and North Africa region, and the G-8 industrial nations present, to talk about reform and modernization in the Middle East. I was the chair. My co-chair was the Moroccan Foreign Minister.

So the American Secretary of State and the Moroccan Foreign Minister co-chairing this group of leaders from the Middle East, North Africa and the industrialized world, talking about reform in the Middle East and North Africa, not America's plan for your reform, but what are your plans for reform and modernization? And how can we help you? We're not here to impose. We're here to help.

And guess what? They all listened quietly and patiently. They exchanged views. They argued. We argued with each other. We had some business people there who looked across the room and said the major challenge in our part of the world is unemployment, unemployment of young Arabs who need jobs.

So while we have problems, while we may be mad about Iraq and while we are waiting for a solution in the Middle East peace process, we've got to have development, modernization, education of our young people, opening up our societies to women so they can participate in our societies. We've got to move forward. And if the G-8 industrialized world, to include the United States, wants to help us in partnership based on our plans, then let's do so.

So even though we do get this sort of anti-American attitude, at the same time, I find so many of our friends around the world, so many of the nations where these attitudes exist in the population, still reach out to work with us for a better life for their people and for a better world for their people. And so we have to press back, put our message out.

And a place like New York City, the world knows what New York is all about. They saw the resiliency of that city after 9/11 and how that city came back. They saw how that city now is, once again, a welcoming place, a place where you can come and have a good time. They'll put on a great Olympics and you will be welcomed in America. You'll be welcomed in New York City.

We've had to clamp down on some of our visa policies and we have had to secure our homeland. We didn't know who was coming into the United States. We didn't know where they were. We didn't know when they left. It's not unreasonable for us to know these facts and to protect ourselves. We've done that. We're getting better at it. We've got a long way to go, but under the leadership of Tom Ridge in Homeland Security and John Ashcroft and your humble State Department, we're working hard to get on top of that and improve our system and to make it easier to get a visa but to make sure we know who got the visa and where you are.

And so, we want a secure border but we want open doors, and that's going to be the case in New York City. We're going to be secure. We went New York to be secure and we want people coming to New York to be secure and safe.

And so, come to New York and enjoy yourself. I was there last week. I had a ball. (Laughter.) I left the Waldorf=Astoria last Monday afternoon, arriving a little early, a

beautiful fall afternoon in New York -- doesn't get any better, except a fall afternoon in Atlanta. (Laughter.) I'm a little politician still. (Laughter.) Beautiful fall afternoon in New York and I left the Waldorf and I started walking up Park Avenue and Madison Avenue, 40 blocks up and 40 blocks back, stopping on the corner of 62nd and Madison to get a hot dog out of one of those great stands on the corner, with that unique red onion mixture that you can only get on a New York hot dog.

And so I'm standing there with the guy who owns the pushcart. He's an immigrant, speaks no English. He looks at me -- (laughter.) I'm not sure if he thought I was either Colin Powell or Amre Moussa, the head of the Arab League. (Laughter.) I think he even said -- I'm like, "No, no, no, not Amre Moussa."

And he was just standing on the corner, happy as can be, safe as can be, far away from wherever he came from. But he was making his way in this world in America. He was making his way in the world in America because we and New York said, "Come on, come here. What do you want to do?"

And, you know, his kids will be doing something better. They will have gotten an education just like I did after my parents came to New York City. And he'll be successful and his kids will be successful. He may eventually learn the language. That didn't stop him. He didn't think New York was inhospitable or forbidding or not safe, not secure. And where else in New York City, where else in America, where else in the world -- I should say only in New York City, maybe Atlanta -- can you come to this country, get yourself a hot dog stand on a fall afternoon, be standing on the corner of 62nd and Madison, and sell a hot dog to the Secretary of State of the United States of America? (Laughter and applause.)

I gave the guy a one dollar tip, paid two dollars for a one dollar hot dog, had a great time, thinking it was terrific. And the *New York Post* got the story and printed it the next day. (Laughter.)

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary, on behalf of the Atlanta Press Club and the Commerce Club, thank you very much for visiting with us today. You are always welcome to come back here, and maybe by the time of your next visit Tom Johnson will not be at Disney World, or maybe we'll just all meet at Disney World next time, okay?

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

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