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Iraq: Still Failing to Disarm

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies
Washington, DC
March 5, 2003



SECRETARY POWELL: Well, thank you very much, Zbig, for that short and generous introduction. I am deeply honored as a former National Security Advisor to be introduced by yet another former National Security Advisor, somebody who almost hired me once to work for him when he was National Security Advisor and I was a Brigade Commander in the famous 101st Airborne Division. And I showed up for the interview wearing my green uniform and jump boots, which clearly indicated to Dr. Brzezinski that I really did not want to come to the NSC at that time. (Laughter.) But I subsequently did return to the NSC in another capacity.

And I am very pleased to be here at CSIS and look around the room and see so many, many old and dear friends, and especially David Abshire. And this gives me a chance to, once again, thank CSIS for all the work that it has done over the years to research issues of interest to Americans, of interest to people around the world; and, through the hard work of the many people who have been here over the years, produce products that have helped shape the times in which we live. So it's a great pleasure to be back at CSIS, and, in that regard, then, it makes it the perfect place, really, to discuss the issue of the day, to address the grave and growing danger posed by Saddam Hussein and his continued pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Let me put the question to you directly and clearly in the simplest terms that I can. The question simply is: Has Saddam Hussein made a strategic political decision to comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions? Has he made a strategic political decision to get rid of his weapons of mass destruction? That's it, in a nutshell. The question is not how much more time should be allowed for inspections. The question is not how many more inspectors should be sent in. The question simply is: Has Saddam Hussein made a strategic decision, a political decision, that he will give up these horrible weapons of mass destruction and stop what he's been doing for all these many years?

That's the question. There is no other question. Everything else is secondary or tertiary. That's the issue. It's an issue that's been on the table for 12 years. It's the issue that was put to Saddam Hussein in 1991 after the Gulf War. And over a period of years, and resolution after resolution after resolution, the same question was put to him, the same challenge was given to him, the same instruction was given by the international community, by the Security Council, to Saddam Hussein: Disarm, give up these weapons of mass destruction, stop threatening your people, let your neighbors live in peace, no longer fearful of these kinds of weapons. And for 12 years, Saddam Hussein has given the same answer back repeatedly: No, I will not.

On September 12th of last year, President Bush took the issue, once again, to the United Nations, and

before the General Assembly on that day, the 12th, he challenged the world community to act, to act in a definitive way to deal with this threat to international peace and security that was being posed and had been posed for so many years by Saddam Hussein and his regime.

We then went into a spirited debate for the next seven weeks after the President's speech to come up with a resolution that would lay it out clearly once and for all. It's interesting to note that as soon as this debate began and Saddam Hussein recognized that something might come out of it, he started to respond. Within a few days after the President's speech, he said, oh, I'll let the inspectors in, after years of saying, no, you can't come back in, after he caused them to leave in 1998.

Was he doing that because he had suddenly made a strategic decision to comply or disarm? No. He was doing it because he began to feel the pressure. And once again, he started to play the game that he had been playing for the last 11 or so years, to divert attention, to distract, to throw chaff up, to confuse, to cause us to lose our way in applying our will.

Nevertheless, the debate went forward, even though there were people who said, well, gosh, why do we need a new resolution? We have all these other resolutions, and he's now going to let the inspectors back in. But we went right ahead. We ignored all of that. We ignored the letters that went back and forth between he and the United Nations and the inspectors as he tried to see if he could derail a new resolution. And he failed.

And after some seven weeks of the most intense negotiations, intense diplomacy imaginable, last November, the Security Council unanimously, 15 to zero -- people thought it couldn't be done -- 15 to zero, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441.

And let's be clear what Resolution 1441 is all about. It's not just a bunch of meaningless words. Every one of those words was fought over. It's not about inspectors. It's not about an inspection regime. It is about Saddam Hussein, in the first instance, in the first part of that resolution, being found guilty again, reaffirming his guilt over the preceding 11 years of possessing and developing with the intention of having and potentially using weapons of mass destruction.

That resolution, in the first instance, was about Saddam Hussein continuing to be in material breach of multiple previous resolutions, 16 of them, that demanded his disarmament. It was about giving Saddam Hussein, in the next instance, one last chance to come clean and disarm. That was the clear purpose of the resolution. One last chance. You have been in material breach. You have been guilty. You still are guilty. We're giving you one last chance to make that strategic choice, make that political decision to give up these horrible weapons that threaten humanity, to give them up, come into compliance. Once again, join with your neighbors in trying to build a better neighborhood. Come into compliance, one last chance. But the drafters of that resolution and all of the ministers and ambassadors who worked on it knew who we were dealing with. We have seen the record of the past 11 years.

So we made it clear that there had to be certain other elements in the resolution. One of the other elements had to be an inspection regime that would be tough, demanding, that would allow the inspectors to go anywhere, anytime, anyplace. It also said that Hussein had to provide them everything they needed to do their job, had to cooperate, provide people for interviews, all the other things that you have heard discussed. That was an essential part of the resolution.

And then the final element of that resolution, so that there could be no doubt about what would follow in the absence of compliance, it made it clear that if he missed this one last chance, if he committed new material breaches, then serious consequences would follow.

Nothing we have seen since the passage of 1441 indicates that Saddam Hussein has taken a strategic and political decision to disarm; moreover, nothing indicates that the Iraqi regime has decided to actively, unconditionally and immediately cooperate with the inspectors. Cooperate for the purpose of showing everything they have, not cooperate for the purpose of seeing how little we can show them.

Process is not performance. Concessions are not compliance. Destroying a handful of missiles here under duress, only after you're pressed and pressed and pressed and you can't avoid it, and you see what's going to happen to you if you don't start doing something to deceive the international community once again, that's not the kind of compliance that was intended by UN Resolution 1441. Iraq's too little, too late gestures are meant not just to deceive and delay action by the international community, he has as one of his major goals to divide the international community, to split us into arguing factions. That effort must fail. It must fail because none of us wants to live in a world where facts are defeated by deceit, where the words of the Security Council mean nothing, where Saddam and the likes of Saddam are emboldened to acquire and wield weapons of mass destruction.

Saddam's response to Resolution 1441 is consistent with his answers to all the previous resolutions. He has met each one of them with defiance and deception, with every passing year since 1991 and with every passing day since the adoption of Resolution 1441. Saddam, as a result, has taken Iraq deeper and deeper into material breach of its international obligations.

It was precisely because of his long history of defiance and deception when the Security Council's members voted to pass Resolution 1441, we were expecting to see this all again. And we carefully included in the resolution some early tests to see whether or not we were wrong. Maybe he had changed. Maybe this time it would be different.

One of those early tests was 30 days after the passage of the resolution we wanted to see from Saddam Hussein something we were supposed to have seen back in 1991, but didn't, and that was a current, accurate, full and complete declaration of its banned programs. The Iraqi regime was to give inspectors immediate, unimpeded and unrestricted access to any site and any person to help them do their job of verifying whether Iraq was disarming. In that first 30 days, wait for the declaration, see if this kind of access was granted.

1441 spelled out very clearly that false statements or omissions, and failure to cooperate with these inspectors, as they started to do their work, these two elements combined, would constitute a further material breach, a further finding of guilty, not complying.

No one has seriously claimed that Iraq provided a currently accurate, full and complete declaration on December 8th when they met the 30-day schedule. No one has stood up to defend them. So many of my colleagues, unfortunately, on the Security Council don't even want to remember that. Well, that was back in December. We know we don't have to think about that now. Well, that was December. That's not worry about that now. Let's not discuss that at our next meeting. Let's just let bygones be bygones. Let's see what we can get him to do today that might make us feel a little better.

It's not going to work. We cannot ignore it. The things that are not in the declaration are things that we have to know about. Instead, we got a mixture of lies and deceit, falsities. Chief UN Inspector Blix and International Atomic Energy Head ElBaradei both told the Council on December 19th that there was not much new in that Iraqi declaration, and we shouldn't have been surprised. Indeed, the 12,000-page document that they tried to pass off as the whole truth was nothing but a rehash of old and discredited material, with some new lies thrown in for good measure to make it look fresh. Fresh lies on top of the old lies.

It repeated the biggest lie of all, the claim that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction, thereby

setting the stage for further deception of the inspectors as they went about their business.

You know, it's illustrative just to look at a couple of examples. You take VX nerve agent. VX nerve agent is the most deadly chemical weapon imaginable. Horrible to contemplate. As a soldier, I had to contemplate it, both as a battlefield commander, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and it was a weapon that I never wanted to see used in battle, I would never like to see used in a terrorist operation, I would never like to see used against any human being. A few drops and you're dead.

Back in 1991, Iraq was required then to declare and destroy its arsenal of all these kinds of materials and VX. And what did Iraq do back in 1991? It denied it had any. And it stuck to that denial for four long years, all the way through 1995. Inspectors were all over the country. Inspectors were there looking. Inspectors were doing what inspectors are supposed to do: verify what they have been told. And they were told there was no VX.

In 1995 or thereabouts, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, who knew a lot, defected, and he spilled the beans. He let it be known that the Iraqi regime had VX. And as a result of what he told the international community, what he told the inspectors, the Iraqi regime was forced to admit it. Forced to admit that it had produced large amounts of this terrible, terrible poison.

If it hadn't been for that cueing from his son-in-law, who subsequently paid with his life when he foolishly went back home, if you have any doubts about the nature of this regime, if it hadn't been for the cueing that he provided, who knows where Saddam Hussein might be today with VX? The fact of the matter is, we don't know where he is today with VX because the latest declaration is still inadequate.

Even now, eight years after that discovery, he continues his deception. He still claims that Iraq has never weaponized its VX stocks. He wants us to believe that while he has had some VX, he can't use it.

The inspectors aren't buying it. Dr. Blix reported to the Security Council on January 27th that there are indications the Iraqis have made more progress on weaponizing VX than they have admitted.

Just a few days ago now, the Iraqis suddenly have come forward and said they will provide a report on their VX, where he's going to look for a new report to come in a week or so, they said. I'm not going to hold my breath. We've been waiting for these reports to come for years and they have not come. Why do they come now? They are trying to get out of the glare of the light. They're trying to get off the stove. They're trying to, once again, put us off the case. How many lives would you risk, innocent lives would you risk on the veracity of such a report coming from Saddam Hussein? He still hasn't made the strategic choice to comply and disarm.

The saga of Iraq's prohibited missile programs offers another example of how he weaves his web of deceit. Missiles in and of themselves are not weapons of mass destruction, but they can deliver such warheads. Shortly after the end of the Gulf War, in order to contain Saddam Hussein and as part of that early series of resolutions, missiles with ranges of more than 150 kilometers were banned, were banned from Iraq by Security Council Resolution 687. He's not supposed to have missiles that will go beyond 150 kilometers, but he does.

In its voluminous declaration of December 8th, Iraq flatly stated that it had no such missiles. We don't have any. But data from flight tests for two missiles, the al-Samoud II and the al-Fatah, showed that they traveled more than 150 kilometers. They were clearly trying to upgun these missiles so that they go far beyond their prohibited range. And why would one want to do that? To reach out, that's why they wanted to do it.

So Iraq quickly shifted tactics and said, well, you know, that's really not the case, let's talk about this, let's show you why you've got the wrong data, and they tried to throw the inspectors off the track. But the inspectors insisted, Dr. Blix insisted, that these missiles be destroyed.

You should see the first letter that came back from the Iraqis, when Dr. Blix's letter went to them. It was an attack, once again, saying well, you know, you shouldn't be doing this, it's wrong, we're innocent. Once again, denial. Once again, trying to deceive. Once again, only going along with the destruction because they were trying to keep us divided, keep us confused, and try to delay what might well be heading their way.

Nobody should be quick to declare a victory for compliance in the missile department. And from recent intelligence, we know that the Iraqi regime intends to declare and destroy only a portion of its banned al-Samoud inventory and that it has, in fact, ordered the continued production of the missiles that you see being destroyed. Iraq has brought its machinery that produces such missiles out into the daylight for all to see. But we have intelligence that says, at the very same time, it has also begun to hide machinery it can use to convert other kinds of engines to power al-Samouds II.

Once again, he plays the double game. Even as he orders some to be destroyed, he is continuing with activities that will allow more to be produced. We can see no real improvement on substance. Iraq is far from disarming.

But what about process? People talk about process. Shouldn't we be pleased about the cooperation we have seen with the inspectors? Unfortunately, we don't find Baghdad's performance much better in that regard.

Since my presentation to the Security Council on February 5th, we have received further intelligence from multiple sources showing that Iraq is continuing in its efforts to deceive the inspectors. Much of this intelligence from a variety of sensitive sources, many of these sources I cannot share with anyone in any greater detail than I am here today, but it's reliable and shows that the Iraqi regime is still moving weapons of mass destruction materials around the country to avoid detection.

Why should we be surprised? This has been his pattern. This has been what he's been doing for 12 years. For example, we know that in late January, the Iraqi Intelligence Service transported chemical and biological agents to areas far away from Baghdad, near the Syrian and Turkish borders, in order to conceal them, and they have concealed them from the prying eyes of inspectors.

In early February, fearing that UNMOVIC had precise intelligence about storage locations, the Iraqis were moving prohibited materials every 12 to 24 hours. And in mid-February, concerned about the surveillance capabilities of the U-2 overflights that they finally were going to permit, Iraq was transferring banned materials in old vehicles and placing them in poor, working class neighborhoods outside the capital.

If Baghdad really were cooperating, if they really wanted to comply, if it really was disarmament that they were interested in, they would be bringing all of these materials out, not scattering them for protection.

We also know that senior Iraqi officials continue to admit in private what they continue to deny in public, that Iraq does, indeed, possess weapons of mass destruction. A senior official stated in late January that Baghdad could not answer UNMOVIC's questions honestly without causing major problems for Iraq.

Another senior official said that allowing UNMOVIC to question Iraqi scientists outside of Iraq would prove disastrous. Why? Because free of intimidation, free from the risk of loss of life, they might tell the truth. And we also know that Saddam Hussein has issued new guidance to key officials saying everything possible must be done to avoid discovery of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

If Iraq was serious about disarming, it would encourage, it would order, it would tell all of its scientists: Step forward, those of you who know anything about what we have been doing for the last 10 years. come forward so that information can be made available so we can convince the international community of our claims.

That is not what is happening. Instead, Saddam's security officials have been working aggressively to discourage or to control interviews between Iraqi scientists and inspectors and we should not be deceived because a few, a few have made themselves available without minds.

Last month, a senior Iraqi official told an Iraqi scientist not to cooperate with the UN inspectors. He threatened the scientist with grave misfortune if the scientist did not obey. Iraqi security officials have required scientists who have been invited to interviews with the inspectors to wear concealed recording devices. Hotels where the interviews are being conducted have been bugged.

Resolution 1441 was meant to end this kind of action. It was intended to end 12 years of deceit and manipulation. It was intended to give him one last chance to comply. And that's why the Security Council demanded full and immediate compliance, not piecemeal gestures of cooperation, not more documents of deception, not more half-measures and half-truths.

The inspectors are very, very dedicated professionals. I've gotten to know Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei very, very well and I've met with some members of their teams. These are terrific people. We should be so thankful that there are international civil servants such as they who are willing to undertake these kinds of missions under difficult circumstances, and I give them all the credit for their willingness to do this. None of this that I am talking about is of any fault of theirs.

They are working hard. But unfortunately, the inspection effort isn't working. Why? Because it was never intended to work under these kinds of hostile circumstances. It was intended to help the Iraqis comply. They were not intended to be detectives that went around seeking out things in the absence of genuine Iraqi cooperation. Inspections cannot work effectively as long as the Iraqi regime remains bound and determined to hold on to its weapons of mass destruction instead of divesting itself of these terrible items.

In recent weeks, we have seen a dribbling out of weapons -- a warhead there, a missile there -- giving the appearance of disarmament, the semblance of cooperation. And in recent days, they have promised more paper, more reports. But these paltry gestures and paper promises do not substantially reduce Saddam's capabilities, they do not represent a change of heart on his part, and they do not eliminate the threat to international peace and security.

Nor do they come because Saddam is worried about hordes of additional inspectors being sent into Iraq armed with work plans and benchmarks. They have everything to do, these process efforts on their part, they have everything to do with the fact that Saddam faces an ever nearer prospect of defeat by overwhelming military force. It is the threat of force -- and no one will deny this -- it is the threat of force that is causing him to comply, not the threat of inspections or the threat merely of resolutions. In the absence of his willingness to do what he has to do, it is only the threat of force that is getting him to do anything at all.

If, at this late date, Saddam were truly to decide to come clean and comply with 1441, the current

number of inspectors could do the job of verifying Iraq's disarmament and they wouldn't need an enormous amount of time in which to do it. Inspectors have said so. The amount of time needed to verify all this is a function of how much cooperation and the willingness there is to comply with the resolutions, not the number of inspectors. What is now needed is that strategic and political decision which we have not seen over the past 12 years.

Inspections will amount to little more than casting at shadows unless Iraq lifts the fog of denial and deception that prevents inspectors from seeing the true magnitude of what they're up against. It is for Iraq to prove to the Security Council and to the world that it has disarmed.



We know that true disarmament looks like. We saw it with South Africa. We saw it with the Ukraine. The leaders of both of those countries made solemn political commitments to disarm and they worked with the international community. And even then it took a lot of time, but at least you knew that they were in union with you to disarm. Those two nations did everything possible to ensure complete cooperation with inspectors, and an expeditious, rigorous, transparent disarmament process was put in place.

What would it look like in Iraq? Instead of letting the inspectors grope for answers in the dark, Iraq would bring all of its documents out and all of its scientists into the light to answer the outstanding questions. Indeed, Iraq would be besieging the inspectors with information. Mobile labs would be driven up and parked outside of UNMOVIC headquarters. All of the missiles of the al-Samoud variety would be destroyed immediately. They wouldn't be hesitating. They would go and find the infrastructure for these missiles and what machinery they have hidden to produce more and make them available for destruction.

I return to the fundamental question: Is he complying? That's it. Is Iraq complying with 1441? And the only reasonable answer is no.

Last November, when 1441 was passed, the international community declared Saddam Hussein a threat. In four months since, that has not changed; he is still a threat. He was given one last chance to avoid war. If Iraq complies and disarms, even at this late hour, it is possible to avoid war.

He is betting, however, that his contempt for the will of the international community is stronger than the collective resolve of the Security Council to impose its will. Saddam Hussein is betting that some members of the Council will not sanction the use of force despite all the evidence of his continued refusal to disarm. Divisions among us -- and there are divisions among us -- if these divisions continue, will only convince Saddam Hussein that he is right. But I can assure you, he is wrong.

So those who say that force must always be a last resort, I say that I understand the reluctance to use force. I understand the hesitation to undertake human -- human -- to take human life. I have seen the horrors of war. I have been where the dying is done. I agree with those who say that lives must only be sacrificed for the greatest of causes. We should do everything possible to avoid war. We have done that, and no one believes that more deeply than President Bush. That's why he went to the United Nations. That's why he persuaded all 15 of us on the Security Council to give Saddam Hussein one last chance.

It is always a hard thing for citizens to accept the prospect of war, and it should be. But consider the chilling fact that Saddam Hussein also knows what war is like. He has used war and weapons of mass destruction against his neighbors and against thousands of his own citizens. And in this post-September 11th world, getting those appalling weapons out of his hands is the only way to guarantee that he won't use them again, or he won't make common cause and pass them on through his terrorist

connections for use practically anywhere in the world.

Consider what could happen if Saddam Hussein, a tyrant who has no scruples and no mercies, concludes that the governments of the world will not condone military action under any circumstances, even as a last resort, as at least one member of the Security Council feels. Under those circumstances, he will never comply with his obligations. All he has to do is wait us out. And a terrible message will go far and wide to all those who conspire to do harm, to all those who seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction. It is now for the international community to confront the reality of Iraq's continued failure to disarm.

The Security Council resolution put forward last week by the United Kingdom, Spain and the United States says precisely that: "Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded it in Resolution 1441." That is a simple statement of fact, as well. Iraq has refused to disarm and cooperate. It serves the interest of no one for Saddam to miscalculate. It doesn't serve the interest of the United States or the world or Iraq for Saddam to miscalculate our intention or our willingness to act. By passing this new resolution, the Council will remove any doubt that it will accept anything less than Iraq's complete disarmament of its weapons of mass destruction and full cooperation with the inspectors to verify its compliance.

If Saddam leaves us no choice but to disarm him by force, the United States and our coalition partners will do our utmost to do it quickly, do it in a way that minimizes the loss of civilian life or destruction of property. We will do our utmost in such circumstances, should they be forced upon us, to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. And we would take responsibility for the post-war stabilization of that country. We would be responsible for establishing and maintaining order, destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction once and for all.

Dismantling terrorist networks with nodes in Iraq would also be a priority.

And soon after these immediate needs are met and internal security is established, we would want to move as quickly as possible to civilian oversight of the next stages in the transformation of Iraq, working with the many coalition partners we will have, working with all the elements of the international community that would be willing to play a role in such an effort. Then, legitimate Iraqi institutions representing all Iraqis, representing the people, can be raised up; institutions created and a formal government put in place that will make sure the nation does not rearm, that the treasure that exists in Iraq in the form of its oil is used for the benefit of the people of Iraq. The United States has a superb record over the past 50 or 60 years of helping countries that we found it necessary to do battle with or in, put themselves on a better footing for a brighter future.

To be sure that there will be lots of work to do. The work of reconciliation and rehabilitation and reconstruction will be a long and hard one, but we are up to the task. But the true test of our collective commitment to Iraq will be our efforts to help the Iraqi people build a unified Iraq that does not threaten international peace, one that is a welcome presence among the nations of the world, not an international pariah.

For 30 years, Saddam has fed off the blood, sweat, and tears of his people. He has murdered, tortured, and raped to stay in power. He has squandered Iraq's vast oil wealth on lavish palaces and secret police and weapons programs.

The United States and the international community want to help free the Iraqi people from fear, freedom from want. We in the world community desire to help Iraqis move their country toward democracy and prosperity. We want to help the Iraqi people establish a government that accepts principles of justice, observes the rule of law and respects the rights of all citizens. In short, we want to

see an Iraq where people can look to the future with hope, and not be seen as a pariah on the world stage.

We aren't just thinking about that famous day after. We know it's not going to be just one day after, but many days after a long, formidable challenge that will lie ahead of us and our coalition partners, until such time as Iraqis are prepared to govern their own land.

Even as the Iraqi people are liberated, we are determined to do all we can to renew hope in other parts of the region. To strive for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. President Bush has recently again emphasized his own personal commitment to achieving the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and dignity, and to implementing the roadmap, the Quartet roadmap, that will help make that vision a reality.

We stand ready to lead the way to this better future. To get there, all those in the region who yearn for peace -- the Palestinians, the Israelis, and their Arab neighbors -- will have to fulfill deep commitments and make difficult compromises. But the tough choices will be worth it. While the process of peacemaking poses obligations for all, the benefits of peace will be felt for generations to come by millions of people.

But if the international community wants the hopeful prospects for the days, months and years ahead to materialize for Iraq, we must confront the reality of Saddam Hussein's intransigency. We must confront that reality here and now. We must face the reality that Saddam's Iraq is Exhibit A of the grave and growing danger that an outlaw regime can supply terrorists with the means to kill on a massive scale.

Last November, the entire Security Council declared his weapons of mass destruction to be that threat to international peace and security. And if that threat existed last November when we voted for 1441, it certainly exists now. If the international community was resolute then, it must be resolute now.

Resolution 1441 was not just President Bush and the United States saying Saddam is a menace to the world. It was France, Britain, Russia, China, Syria and all the rest of the Security Council going on record saying so. We spent seven weeks working over and weighing every single word of that resolution. All of the members of the Council knew when they passed 1441 that the time might come when we would have to meet our responsibility to use force in the absence of Saddam Hussein's strategic decision to disarm and comply.

For the past four months, he's been trying to avoid the consequences of his noncompliance, to escape the moment of truth. Now is the time for the Council to come together once again to send a clear message to Saddam that no nation has been taken in by his transparent tactics. Now is the time for the Council to underscore its unanimous conclusion that Saddam remains in material breach of his obligations.

Now is the time to tell Saddam once and for all that the clock has not been stopped by his machinations, that the clock continues to tick, and that the consequences of his continued refusal to disarm will be very, very real.

The goal of the United States remains the Security Council's goal: Iraq's disarmament. One last opportunity to achieve it through peaceful means remains open to Saddam Hussein, even at this late hour. What we know for certain, however, is that Saddam Hussein will be disarmed. The only question before us now is how. The question remains as it was at the beginning: Has Saddam Hussein made that strategic choice? He has not and we will see in the next few days whether or not he understands the situation he is in and he makes that choice. And that is the argument we will be taking to the

Security Council.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)



SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much. I have a few moments to take a couple of questions before I have to get to a meeting, if there are any questions. There shouldn't be after that presentation.

(Laughter.)

Anyone? Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Sir, if the case was that you wanted to make the Security Council resolution as you said, now what the Security Council is saying, they do not see this suitable. So why don't you want to respect the will of the Security Council in this?

SECRETARY POWELL: At this point, we are respecting the will of the Security Council. There's a lot of speculation about what the Council might or might not do when it meets next week. I think that's when it is more than likely that action will be taken on a resolution, if that seems like the appropriate step after we hear from Dr. Blix and Dr. EIBaradei.

But at the same time, we have also made clear that we believe that the threat is so great that if the Security Council is unable to take action, despite our best efforts to work with it, we must, in the interest of our own safety and, we believe, the safety of the region and the world, reserve the option to act with a coalition of willing nations if the Council does not act.

We believe the situation is that clear and the situation is that dangerous.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you said at the beginning, you pointed out that 1441 demonstrated in its 15-0 vote a common perspective on what needs to be done to disarm Iraq. Yet right now we seem to be perceiving a completely different sense of the imminence of the threat between those very same members of the Security Council. How do you explain the difference in the perception of the imminence of the threat that seems to have emerged right now?

SECRETARY POWELL: There was always a difference in the perception of the threat. Some of my colleagues in the Council have never quite seen it as strongly as we have seen it and that was the case during the seven weeks of the debate and before the debate. There are even some members of the Council who argue most vociferously now for delay or something else, who were anxious to see sanctions go away years ago when it was clear there was something still going on in Iraq.

The one thing that we all agree upon is that there is no doubt that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction and the capability to develop them, or else I don't think we would have gotten a 15-0 vote. The debate really is, well, how much should we be concerned it, how much should we worry about it?

What we came together and said in 1441 is that they're in breach, continue to be in breach, they have not accounted for so much of this horrible material that they have, they have not allowed the inspectors in to verify the claims that they have made, and that this is a threat to the security of the region.

We believe what highlights the threat, at least in our eyes, is the nexus that now exists in the post-9/11

world that it was one thing, and it was a bad enough thing for Saddam Hussein to have these weapons of mass destruction available to him, but if, per chance, he also served as a source for these weapons of mass destruction, either accidentally or deliberately putting them in the hands of terrorists, we would all look back on this moment in time and feel awful if, at some future moment in time, a horrible attack took place and we discover one of these weapons was used, and when we had the chance to do something about it and we had the obligation to do something about it, we didn't do something about it.

But there certainly is a difference in perspective among the members, some of the members, as to the seriousness of this threat. And many of my colleagues agree with us on this issue. Some of my colleagues, three of whom I was watching on television earlier today, believe that the problem is there, the threat is there, but the solution to it is just, oh, let the inspectors keep going.

What I didn't hear in their press conference today is for how long, and how many more inspectors do you think will do, will do what the number of inspectors there are unable to do. And there was very little comment from them today or in earlier days about the basic fact that you still don't have somebody who is complying. He is not -- he has not made that strategic choice. And I don't think any one of them would argue that he has.

One final, then I do have to go.

Steve*.

QUESTION: You just said that you didn't hear your colleagues be very concrete on what needs to be done. Suppose they were to agree with you and others to set a series of very specific benchmarks with very specific deadlines, almost in the form of ultimatum, focusing on specific items, such as the VX, or the anthrax, or the biological labs, with the presumption that if there is not a concrete response on these specific items, as to some extent there has been on the rockets, then there would be common action for the purpose of disarming Iraq?

SECRETARY POWELL: I'm not sure that even some of them would find that, or if we laid out such a series of benchmarks now, and a month or two or three months later we found some of them had been met and others had not been met, we'd be right back in the same boat, in my judgment. Let's give them some more time.

I don't think it's a question of additional benchmarks. All of these benchmarks have been out there for years. Some of the benchmarks that are spoken of and some of the elements that I'm sure we'll be hearing about later in the week are not new elements. They have been there all along. They have been the basis of previous resolutions. They've been there all along.

And it is not the need for new specific benchmarks to measure Saddam Hussein. I think we have a lot to measure with -- against -- with him -- to measure him with already. As a result of his lack of performance on the declaration, his lack of answering the basic questions that people have been asking repeatedly with respect to VX, with respect to botulinum toxin. He doesn't need to have these benchmarks repeated. He knows what they are, and he has not demonstrated a willingness to answer the questions that have been out there for so many, so many years.

And that's our -- that's the reason we are reluctant to yet see another resolution come forward that starts listing benchmarks in that resolution as a new measure of merit. We've given him enough measures of merit and I think we can pretty much judge now that he is not compliant, not made that decision, and is not cooperating in a way that would verify if he had made that decision.

I do regret that I have to get to a meeting, so thank you very much.

(Applause.)
[End]

Released on March 5, 2003

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