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## Remarks at "Meet and Greet" Event with Coalition Provisional Authority Personnel and Troops

### Secretary Colin L. Powell

Coalition Provisional Authority Headquarters  
Baghdad, Iraq  
March 19, 2004

**AMBASSADOR BREMER:** Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to welcome again the Secretary of State, Colin Powell.



**SECRETARY POWELL:** Hooah. All right. Thank you very much Mr. Ambassador, my good friend Jerry. Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Bremer for all the brilliant work he and his staff have been doing here in the name of freedom for the Iraqi people. Jerry, thank you, sir.

I'm pleased to be back and to be in this room again and to see so many of you here who are working hard, serving the cause of freedom. A great coalition represented here, nations around the world, Iraqis, civilians, members of the State Department, every other government agency in our great United States of America is represented here. You're doing powerful work, important work.

This is a week when people will be taking note of anniversaries. It was on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March this week, just a few days ago, that commemorated an event that took place sixteen years ago up in Halabja, where Saddam Hussein on a Friday afternoon used chemical weapons to kill 5,000 of his own citizens—one of the great tragedies of our time. He murdered innocent people. It was the nature of his regime, the nature of that individual. It was about 13 years ago, about now, after the Gulf War that we were uncovering more and more chemical stocks, other weapons that he was using and getting ready to use again if he had the chance, I'm quite sure.

And now we don't have to worry about that anymore on this March day, this one-year commemoration of the beginning of the war. The people of Halabja never have to worry again. Neighbors never have to worry again. Because you have removed, you and your buddies have removed a horrible dictatorial regime that was a threat to its own citizens, that was a threat to the world. You can be very proud of what you and your buddies have done. And let no one ever tell you otherwise. Be proud of yourself.

We've taken casualties doing it; we still take casualties. Everyone whose life is lost, and everyone who was injured: we care about and think about. We think about their loved ones. We think about those at home who worry about you everyday. The message to them is that who've lost their lives and those who've injured did not lose their lives, were not injured, in vain. They've caused a great thing to happen here in Iraq.

The Iraqi people are free. Under Ambassador Bremer's leadership and a lot of other people, recently the Governing Council produced an administrative law that will be the basis for a Constitution, the basis for an interim government that will be formed in the course of this year, and hopefully we will be fully active in taking over on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. Basic administrative law that guarantees to every Iraqi citizen: democracy, freedom and opportunity to participate in a representative form of government where all segments of the society will have the opportunity to be present and debate the future of the country. An administrative law that has an independent judiciary, puts the military firmly under the control of civilian authority. An administrative law that is groundbreaking for this part of the world, certainly for

Iraq. And as we move forward to a constitution and to a permanent government, people remember that (inaudible).

There are those who are determined to stop us. They don't want Iraqis to be free. They don't want Iraqis to have democracy. They don't want women to have freedom in their own society. They don't want any of these good things to happen and they have struck back in every which way they can: whether it is with an IED or a car bomb that kills innocent people or whether it's small arms fire. We have to be on guard against it. We will fight against it because we cannot let them win. And they will not win. They will not win, because you are here determined to make sure that they lose and that we prevail, and that we prevail for freedom and democracy, and we prevail for the Iraqi people.

This is noble work, (inaudible) fighting these former regime elements and fighting those who have come to Iraq to stir up trouble. We're fighting terrorism around the world and this is part of that battle. You can't walk away from it, you can't escape it, you can't pretend that terrorism won't affect you or affect your country. It's a threat to every civilized nation and I'm proud that our President, George W. Bush, did not turn away. And after 9-11 he realized this was a threat to the whole world and he said, 'Here we stand. We will fight it. Americans don't walk away from this kind of challenge.' And we are blessed that we have so many friends and allies that are standing alongside of us, and with that kind of leadership, with that kind of determination, we will prevail over terrorism.

Let me just conclude by thanking you: thanking you on behalf of the Iraqi people, and I think I can speak for them—they just want to live in peace. They want to see all this violence over with, they want to be done with all these people who are trying to deny their future to them. I thank you on behalf of myself and my other colleagues in the Administration. I thank you, of course, on behalf of the President. We're proud of you, so proud of you, each and every one of you, no matter which country you are from, what component you are from. We're proud of your willingness to come here and serve, and serve proudly and serve with distinction and serve with courage, and bring your competence and knowledge and experience to the task that is at hand.

But I especially want to thank you on behalf of the American people. You hear a lot of chatter back home and there are debates about it, and that's as it should be, we're a democracy. But there is one thing you should never doubt: the American people are proud of you and they will support you in this endeavor. Count on that. Count on that.

You can be sure that the President will support you and he will take the cause that you are fighting for and defend that cause to the American people and to the international community, as will all of us. Because what we are doing is right. Thank you and God bless you.

[End]

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