



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

[About the State Dept.](#) | [Press and Public Affairs](#) | [Travel and Living Abroad](#) | [Countries and Regions](#) | [International Issues](#) | [History, Education and Culture](#) | [Business Center](#) | [Other Services](#) | [Employment](#)

[\[Print Friendly Version\]](#)

Remarks to the Press With Coalition Provisional Authority Administrator L. Paul Bremer

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Baghdad, Iraq

March 19, 2004



QUESTION: (In Arabic) A minute of silence in memory of the two martyrs al-Khatib, Abd al-Aziz.

In the name of God, most merciful, a quotation from the Koran.

After the security situation in Iraq has become tragic, where it is impossible to live with and where there were too many innocent victims from among the Iraqi people, who -- without any reason, because of the American measures, which has proved its failure in eliminating terrorism and the creation of a secure environment; after a year of occupation, the occupation of Iraq, we representatives of the media, of the Iraqi media and Arab media and foreign media working in Iraq, we declare our condemnation of the incident which led to the killing of the two journalists, martyr Ali al-Khatim and martyr Ali Abd al-Aziz, from

the Arabiya satellite station, who were killed at the hands of the American forces the evening of Thursday, the 18th of March.

We ask for an investigation, an open investigation and before all of the media, with the entity that committed this murder of the journalists. And we also ask providing enough security and guarantees for the press in Iraq, which are facing dangers for their lives. And we declare our abandonment or walkout of the conference because of the martyrs. Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I respect the rights and privileges of the journalists who just left to express their feelings. This is something that could never have happened at an earlier time in the history of Iraq, and certainly not in the last 30 years.

I also regret the loss of life of the two journalists that they commemorated here by their action. I regret any loss of life, whether it is journalists, coalition soldiers, nongovernmental organization workers, missionaries, average Iraqi citizens just going about their daily life.

But let's be clear who is responsible for this: terrorists, those individuals left over from the old regime who do not want to see the Iraqi people live in peace, who do not want to see democracy take root, who would return this nation to a nation under the thumb of a dictator, a dictator who filled mass graves, who ran rape rooms, who suppressed his people, who wasted the resources and the talents of the Iraqi people on terrorism, on weapons of mass destruction, on threatening neighbors.

Those days are gone. This is the first anniversary of the beginning of the conflict that ended his brutal regime and put Iraq onto a new path to a brighter future. Yes, there will be difficult days ahead. Yes, we will have challenges with the security situation. Coalition forces will continue to go after these individuals who are responsible for these acts. Increasingly, Iraqi security forces will take on more and more of the responsibility for dealing with these individuals.

But we must not let anyone believe that we won't prevail. We will prevail because we owe it to the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people deserve it. And guess what; the Iraqi people want it. They want to live in democracy. They reflect that in the recent actions of the Governing Council to put in place an administrative law on the way to a full constitution, an administrative law that grants freedoms to Iraqis of a kind that they have never enjoyed before, as you just saw exercised a few moments ago: a bill of rights, rights for women, independent judiciary, a military that is under civilian control, representative government, free elections—all of the things that are appreciated by individuals around the world. And now the people of Iraq will enjoy these rights...not privileges, but rights...as a result of our efforts a year ago and what we have been doing for the last year and what we will continue to do in the future.

With this administrative law, we are now on track to put in place an interim government on the 1st of July, at which time the Coalition Provisional Authority will end. An American embassy will take its place, representing American presence here. Iraqis will govern themselves with our assistance, the assistance of the United Nations, the coalition partners, and of course with the continuing presence of an American military force to provide the stability that will be needed during this time of transition.

So much is happening that is good. Town councils are being formed. Schools are being rebuilt. Schoolbooks are being distributed to children. The hospital system is being repaired. The sanitary system is being repaired. The water system is being repaired. The oil system is being repaired in order to generate funds that will not go to suppress people, but will go to benefit people. The electrical system is being repaired. Iraq is becoming a respected nation once again as your foreign minister, who I just met with a little while ago, Mr. Zebari, carries your message to the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conferences and to the UN and other places around the world to say that a free and democratic Iraq that wants to be a responsible partner in the international community is on its way back.

And so I'm pleased to be here to demonstrate American commitment and American support to this effort, and to thank all the coalition members present and the Iraqi people for their commitment to this effort, for their understanding of what we are trying to achieve.

What we are trying to achieve, in simple words, is to give Iraqis a country that they can be proud of that is based on democracy, freedom, individual rights of men and women, a free market system; an Iraq that will live in peace with its neighbors and with the world community. That is our goal. It is a goal that we intend to achieve as a partnership, between the coalition, the Iraqi people, Iraqi ministers, the new interim government, the United Nations and so many other international organizations that are committed to this effort.

And the United States will not shrink from this task. And President Bush has made it clear that the United States and its coalition partners will show the staying power necessary to accomplish our goal.

With that, I'd be delighted to take any questions that you might have.

MR. SENOR: George Gedda.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, George Gedda of AP. Did you hear anything today that gives you confidence that the security forces will be able to turn a corner with respect to controlling the serious security situation that this country is still suffering?

SECRETARY POWELL: I had good discussions with Ambassador Bremer and his staff and with the military commanders. They have a good sense of who's responsible for these attacks. The intelligence system, I think, is getting more and more insight into what's happening. But I don't want to underestimate the seriousness of the challenge, and we have to shift as the enemy shifts.

They've moved from harder targets to softer targets, so we'll have to adapt our tactics likewise. One of the key things that the coalition is working hard on now is to raise the number of functioning police, Iraqi police—make sure they're well equipped, make sure that the civil defense paramilitary units are out doing their job and are well equipped, and to increase the rate at which we can bring military units up to...into existence and up to a standard that will allow them to contribute to the security of the country, increasing the number of border patrolmen to keep terrorists from getting into the country with ease. And so many things have to be done. The intelligence system has to change. As the enemy changes shape and tactics, the military will respond accordingly with their changes in tactics. And most significantly and most importantly, increasing the size of Iraqi security forces because they are, frankly...at the end of

the day they should be, and I expect they will be, better able to get the intelligence needed to deal with these kinds of threats.

And so, there has been a spike in attacks on coalition forces and soft targets. We have seen these spikes before. I hope it does not stay at this level, and we'll work hard to get it down as fast as possible.

MR. SENOR: Salema Abdel Hafin.

QUESTION: (In Arabic.) Mr. Colin Powell, welcome. First, you mentioned that through the... rebuilding the hospitals. We did not notice this building schools and hospitals, just simply painting the walls and the curbs. This is in contradiction to what you said. Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, certainly if a building is there and it needs repair and that will make it a functioning institution again, then let's do that. But as the full impact of the \$18 billion that the United States Congress has appropriated to this task...as that money starts to flow out, the contracts are being signed now...I think you will see a great deal of new construction of the kind of institutions that this country very vitally needs in education, in health care, sanitary systems, clean water, all of the infrastructure systems that we are committed to.

MR. SENOR: Steve Weisman.

QUESTION: Thank you. Steve Weisman with The New York Times. Mr. Secretary -- here I am. There seems to be no sign of progress in resolving the impasse over what sort of government will take over Iraq on June 30th. Now that you've met with members of the Iraqi Governing Council and Foreign Minister Zebari, can you say as specifically as possible whether you've been able to make progress in getting a consensus or a solution on that issue, or is the process basically frozen until the arrival of the UN envoy?

SECRETARY POWELL: I wouldn't say we're at an impasse or that anything is frozen. We are in a continuing process of moving toward an interim government. We have not yet resolved with the Iraqis or the Governing Council or with the UN its shape. But we have a number of ideas that are under consideration and we have time between now and then to come to decisions and to put in place that government.

Our concentration for the last month or two has been on the administrative law, the TAL. And now that that is in place, and we have to create some annexes and amendments to it that will describe what the interim government will look like. In my conversations today with the Governing Council we discussed various models, and a number of ideas were put out on the table for consideration. We hope that the UN representative will be here in the not-too-distant future to participate in this dialogue.

So we're not frozen and we're not at an impasse. We're hard at work on this and in consultation with the U.N. and with the Governing Council.

QUESTION: Zena Beka from Al-Farat International. Your Excellency, you received...you will deliver the sovereignty to the Iraqi (inaudible), how many American bases will be in Iraq and where are they going to be? Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't know that I can answer that question in terms of our force posture after the 1st of July and how our forces will be distributed. And we're not in the business of building permanent bases. But essentially, a smaller-sized force than has been here for the past year will be here after the 1st of July. And I'll have to leave it to the military authorities at the next briefing to describe to you in detail what that force disposition might look like.

MR. SENOR: Peter Jennings.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you're having a difficult time with...

SECRETARY POWELL: Peter?

QUESTION: Right here, sir. Sorry.

SECRETARY POWELL: Oh, I'm sorry, Peter.

QUESTION: You're having a difficult time with American allies. The Koreans are rethinking their position out here. The President of Poland says he was misled on weapons of mass destruction. You know all about the Spanish. And today the French Foreign Minister says terrorism did not exist in Iraq before the war and the Iraq war has not led to a more stable world. Would you comment, please?

SECRETARY POWELL: Terrorism existed in many parts of the world before this war; it especially existed in Spain, which has been suffering from terrorism for many, many years.

I heard the comments of the Polish President. I think we gave him full, candid and open information and the best information we had with respect to weapons of mass destruction, the intention and capability of Saddam Hussein. The question of whether there were or were not stockpiles will be resolved in due course. But Poland has been a good ally and a solid partner in the coalition. And I'm pleased that even though the president did make that statement, he also said that Polish troops would be remaining.

With respect to the South Koreans, I think it's a matter of dialogue between the South Korean government and the coalition authorities here as to where South Korean troops might be located.

And with respect to Spain, we followed carefully what the prime minister-designate has said. He made reference to a need for UN resolution or UN authority, and he stated some other conditions. And I expect that after he has assumed office, we will have conversations with him. And ultimately, of course, this is a judgment for the Spanish government and the Spanish people to make as to whether they want to have a military presence here or not.

So I think the coalition is still strong. There are still 30-odd countries who are here doing their job. And many of the nations in that coalition have, since the Spanish announcement and the Spanish comments by the prime minister-designate, have reinforced their commitment to this effort.

Terror is something that has been with us. And now that it is manifesting itself in other ways, in more violent ways, such as we saw in Spain, this is not the time to say let's stop what we're doing and pull back; this is the time to redouble our efforts in every way -- law enforcement activities, intelligence activities -- and deal with this threat to the civilized world and not run and hide and think that it won't come and get us. It will come and get us. It is a threat to the whole civilized world, and the civilized world has to respond.

QUESTION: With respect, sir, you didn't answer the reference to Mr. Villepin, who said today, in an interview with Le Monde, the war in Iraq has not led to a more stable world.

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't know what to respond to Mr. de Villepin. He's free to say that. I think...I don't think that it is the war in Iraq that was the source of instability throughout the world. There is...we have seen terrorist attacks all over the world have nothing to do with the war in Iraq. We've seen terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia. We've seen terrorist attacks in Indonesia. We've seen terrorist attacks in the Philippines, in Colombia, in Morocco, in many places throughout the world, and they're not attributable to the war in Iraq. They're attributable to the fact that we have terrorists in the world who want to go after those nations that are trying to build a better future for their people, and are determined to kill innocent people to keep that from happening.

MR. SENOR: Carol Rosenberg.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I'm Carol Rosenberg with the Miami Herald. I understand why you blame the ...or you say it's the resistance and the terrorists who are responsible for the deaths last night of our Al-Arabiya colleagues, but our Iraqi colleagues believe it was American gunfire. Is there anything you can say to close that gap?

SECRETARY POWELL: I really...I...yeah, I don't have the details on what happened last night, and Ambassador Bremer and I were talking about it earlier and it'll be looked into.

But at a scene where there's been a battle or an explosion or something of that nature, there tends to be confusion. It very often is dark. And mistakes happen. Tragedies can occur. I don't know the details of this one, but I am confident it wasn't anything that was deliberate or anything that was intended. But I will wait for the military

authorities to complete their investigation before making a judgment about it.

MR. SENOR: Thank you, everybody.

[End]

This site is managed by the Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State.
External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.