



Press Briefing in Beijing, China

Secretary Colin L. Powell

China World Hotel
Beijing, China
October 25, 2004

SECRETARY POWELL: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen I'm very pleased to be back in Beijing and in the course of my visit I've had some very excellent conversations with President Hu and Premier Wen, and especially with my friend and colleague Foreign Minister Li. This is the fifth time that Minister Li and I have met this year, and I look forward to seeing him again later in the year at the APEC meeting in Santiago, Chile toward the end of November.



The range and scope of the issues we discussed today reflect the increasingly global nature of interaction between China and the United States, on a whole host of issues of importance to our nations and to the world, from security threats to bilateral matters. We are showing that we can move forward together. When we disagree, we do so candidly, openly, and in the spirit of trying to find a solution to the disagreements. But, we agreed in so many more areas than that in which we disagree.

We had a good, open, and candid discussion today with respect to human rights, for example, and I am pleased to report that as a result of our conversations today that we have agreed that we will start talks about resuming our human rights dialogue. I expressed our appreciation with China's leadership in the six-party talks. Together, we are dedicated to a Korean peninsula that is free from the threat of nuclear weapons. I also noted that the president is looking forward to his meeting with President Hu in Chile, at the APEC meeting in November and that we are ready to work together to implement the measures agreed to at last November's APEC meetings in Bangkok.

The people of the United States mourn the loss of Chinese citizens who are victims of terror. We express our condolences to the family of the Chinese engineer who was killed in the recent hostage-taking event in Pakistan. And to the families of those who were killed in last June's incident in Afghanistan. Terrorism is global, and we welcome China's continued actions in the global war against terrorism. I appreciate the hospitality of my Chinese host on this visit and want to extend on behalf of the people of the United States our best wishes to the people of China. With that brief statement I'm prepared for your questions.

QUESTION: Do you see Chen Shui-bian's national day speech as a genuine possible opening and, if so, did you try to persuade the Chinese to call Chen's bluff on resuming talks on the 1992 Hong Kong basis? And, with respect to North Korea, did you ask the Chinese to be more of a participant and less of a mediator in resolving the North Korean impasse?

SECRETARY POWELL: On the second question I think they are a participant. They've been actively participating in the last three rounds, not only convening the rounds, but taking a position, making it clear to the North Koreans that China believed, as we all do, that the denuclearization of the peninsula is what we want to achieve, and that benefits would accrue to the people of North Korea as a result of denuclearization of going forward. So, I see China as a full participant and not just a convener in the talks.

With respect to President Chen Shui-bian's speech, we thought--the United States thought--that there might be some elements that the Chinese could work with in improving cross-strait dialogue. The response I received from the Chinese leadership today was that they are still concerned about President Chen Shui-bian's actions and they did not find his statement to be that forthcoming. Nevertheless, we had a good discussion of the situation with respect to Taiwan. I reinforced to our total commitment to our One China Policy, based on the three communiqués, and our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act. We once again said that we felt strongly that both sides should avoid any unilateral actions that might prejudice progress. And, I particularly encouraged the Chinese leaders that I met with today to do everything they could to get into cross-strait dialogues in a more systemic and deliberate way.

QUESTION: I'm from China News Daily. Four years ago, President Bush called China a strategic competitor. Today what do you think about the biggest change in Sino-US relationship? Second question is what kind of role do you think you play during the process? Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: During what? I'm sorry.

QUESTION: During the process. What kind of role do you think you play during the process. Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: With respect to the first question, our relationship with China is very comprehensive and very complex--too complex to be described by a single term or a single statement. I believe we have progressed a great deal over the last four years in President's Bush's administration. We remember that in early April of 2001 we had a confrontation over the incident that took place between our aircraft, and people thought that would put the relationship in the deep-freeze. We got through that in a matter of two weeks and ever since then we have been improving our relationship.

We have had good and constructive talks with respect to trade, and with respect to economic issues affecting our two countries. We've seen China accede the WTO. We have worked with China to increase American exports to China while receiving large number of exports from China to the United States. There's still a trade imbalance but we're working on it. We have dealt with difficult issues with respect to market-based flexible currency rates, and we know that the Chinese are working toward that end.

So, I think if you looked at this four-year period, you would see that this complex relationship that we have with China, has allowed us to move forward by being candid with each other on areas of disagreement and we have areas of agreement building on those areas of agreement. I think that all members of President Bush's administration have played a role in this. We have a large number of delegations that go back and forth, and we receive them at a very high level when Chinese visitors come to the United States. And, our ministers are received at a very high level here. And, I would expect that this practice will continue and the relationship will grow during President Bush's second term.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, could you tell us a little bit more about the significance of the agreement you just announced to discuss human rights? And, perhaps in that context, can you tell us whether you discussed the issue of the arrest of the New York Times research assistant; with whom might you have discussed it; what sort of response you got; and, whether you are at all encouraged by anything you heard today?

SECRETARY POWELL: On the second question, I did raise it, raised it with Foreign Minister Li, and told him that we were concerned about the arrest of the New York Times researcher. And I asked if he would look into the matter. We hope that it could be resolved quickly and the individual could be released. He took note of my statement, and noted that the individual was a Chinese citizen, and that the matter is being looked into in accordance with Chinese law. So, we did have a pretty candid exchange on the subject.

With respect to human rights, we have said previously, and I said it again today, that we have seen some improvement in human rights behavior in 2002, but we have seen some moving backwards in 2003, with respect to the detention of journalists, with respect to other individuals who have not been able to move about as freely and participate in civil society as freely as we would like to see. And, we think it would be in the interest of the Chinese people for this to happen. So, things had slowed down with respect to human rights and the dialogue had stopped. We were not talking to each other as openly and candidly as we should. And so, in our luncheon conversation, the Minister and I talked directly to each other about these issues, to include the New York Times researcher, to include some of their concerns about our comments on their human rights behavior. And, we allowed as how it was time to start the dialogue again. So, we will begin the process of putting in place the teams and get ready for formal announcement of the resumption of dialogue in the not too distant future.

QUESTION: Good afternoon, Secretary Powell. I'm with United Press International. I have a couple questions for you.

SECRETARY POWELL: One question, please.

QUESTION: China's oil imports in the first nine months of the year were officially stated to be about 4.3 million tons, most of that probably went to North Korea. With winter fast approaching, did the DPRK's energy needs come up during your discussions with the Chinese officials as a means of leverage to get them back to six-party and what other specific areas does the US believe China can explore to get North Korea to give up its WMD?

SECRETARY POWELL: It did not come up. We did not talk about oil imports either into China, or what North Korea's needs are. Obviously, China is a major provider of assistance to North Korea, both energy and other forms of assistance, and as a result of that I think China has considerable influence with North Korea. What we agreed on today was the need for the six-party framework to continue, and for it to continue, it has to meet. And, I hope that as a result of our conversations today, both of us will energize the other members of the six-party framework to resolve the outstanding issues that keep us from setting a date for a meeting.

I'm confident that the Chinese are totally committed to the six-party framework, view that as the way to find a solution, and will be working toward finding that solution. What they might do in the days ahead with respect to conversations with the North Koreans, I will leave up to them to discuss. As you know, senior officials from Pyongyang have visited here recently, and senior officials from Beijing have gone to Pyongyang. So, the Chinese are actively involved, and we reaffirmed our commitment today to the six-party talks and hope that the next round will be held in the not too distant future. All the parties are ready. It is the DPRK that has been showing a reluctance to have the next round. But, it is the only way forward.

(Cross-talk)

QUESTION: It is reported that in 2004 the Chinese students going to the States to study decreased sharply. It is said that only half the students in 2003 have taken the GRE test that is requested by the American graduate schools so my question is, what is your comment on that? Is there any actions planned to deal with it?

(Cross-talk)

SECRETARY POWELL: We encourage students from around the world to come and obtain an education in our universities. I think there are something like 64,000, if memory serves me correctly, Chinese students at our universities now. We would like to see that number go up. After 9/11, we had to put in place new visa procedures and other procedures to have a better understanding of who was coming to our country, for what purpose, and when they were leaving. That slowed down the issuance of visas, it made it more difficult. But over the last year, we have improved the process significantly, making it easier to get visas, reducing the time that you have to spend waiting for a visa.

And we are going to do everything we can, and the Ambassador is committed to doing everything he can, both here in Beijing and at all of our Consulates, to speed up visa processing. It is in our interest to have foreigners come to our institutions, come to our medical facilities, come to our entertainment facilities, visit the United States as tourists to get a better understanding of who we are, what we are as a nation and people, how we can reach out to other nations. And so, we are doing everything we can to make it easier to get a visa for those who should be coming to our country and mean us no harm. We want to be seen as an open country, with open doors welcoming people as we have in the past. So, I hope we will see these numbers reversed and get back up to the higher levels.

QUESTION: Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said yesterday that next year will be the best year for Taiwan and China to resume dialogue. After you met with the Chinese leader Hu Jintao this morning, did you see any possibility? And also when you met with him, do you feel any pressure from him on the issue of US arms sales to Taiwan? Thanks.

SECRETARY POWELL: We didn't have a conversation specifically about what President Chen Shui-bian might have said yesterday. I just encouraged all of my interlocutors today to keep an open mind with respect to dialogue and to take every opportunity that comes along to increase cross-strait dialogue.

With respect to arms sales to Taiwan: yes, it did come up. The Chinese side expressed their opposition to such sales and I reiterated that our policy was based on one China, the three communiqués, but also the responsibility that we have under our law – the Taiwan Relations Act – to make sure that Taiwan was able to defend itself-- not to have an offensive capability, but to defend itself. All of our arms sales are for that purpose and are carefully examined and the arms sales items that are up for consideration now are the same items that have been known to the parties for the last three years. The Taiwanese have not yet made a firm commitment to what it is they wish to buy off that list.

But, we believe that we will continue to meet our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act and do it in a way that in no way undercuts our basic policy, which is the one China policy based on the three communiqués. We very carefully balance the responsibilities that we have to China and the responsibilities that we have to Taiwan under our own domestic law.

Okay, thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

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