



## Press Briefing On Board Plane En Route to Elmendorf Air Force Base

**Secretary Colin L. Powell**  
On Board Plane  
February 21, 2003

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Well, welcome on another relatively short, but I hope busy and useful trip. On the way here, I've been on the phone with a number of ministers. I spoke to George Papandreou, the Greek Foreign Minister, as you know, who has the presidency of the EU this six month period. We're going to set up a meeting with the EU leadership next week, when George is in Washington. It's part of our regular consultations with the EU.

I also spoke to the Foreign Secretary of Mexico, Mr. Derbez and to the Foreign Minister of Chile, Soledad Alvear. I also spoke to the Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Passy, discussions in general and, of course, specifically about the United Nations action with respect to Iraq and the possibility of a second resolution.

I don't have any other calls planned for this leg of the trip, but that's what I've been doing so far this morning. I think you've got the domestic issues out of... Richard's been keeping you informed of the barge in Staten Island, which was essentially some kind of accident and the awful, awful tragedy up in Rhode Island with a body count now of 86 young people. So, a horrible, horrible accident. That's dominating the news, as you'll discover when we get to Elmendorf.

I'll go to your questions.

**QUESTION:** You and other State Department officials keep talking about a bold approach that would have been offered or could be offered to North Korea if it would behave itself. Nobody has ever defined for me this bold approach. Could you tell me what was, is, could be in this bold approach?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** What we were thinking at the time and still are thinking is that North Korea is in dire straits with regard to its ability to feed its people, with respect to its energy, with respect to its economic situation. We were looking for something that would go beyond just, you know, statements going back and forth or just the nuclear issue alone, but to see if we could undertake some more fundamental efforts that would help them with food, help them with their economic situation and point them in a new direction; to let them know that it is not our intention to invade North Korea, but to see if we could not help them provide them a better life for their people as we go into this twenty-first century.

We had begun looking at how to flesh this out, what it might mean with respect to specific ideas and specific programs. The President had authorized me to begin discussions to get that started. You know the rest of the story, really, when the intelligence caught up with us and we had to begin our dialogue by meeting with Foreign Minister Pak and then Jim Kelley going over to Pyongyang. We simply had to deal with these proliferations issues and the nuclear issue and that essentially stopped any further discussions toward a bold approach.

It's not out of the realm of the possible and it's not out of consideration, but we have to get these matters resolved and behind us with regard to their proliferating actions, with respect to their nuclear weapons development programs and also with respect to size of their military poised along the 38th parallel.

Keep in mind that as we were developing this last spring and summer, it wasn't standing alone. The Japanese had stepped forward and the Pyongyang declaration that came out of Mr. Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang pointed to a route toward normalization. The abductees going back to Japan after North Korea finally acknowledged that they did have abductees and the promise of significant financial aid for the North Koreans from the Japanese was also part of that tapestry that we were all working on. The South Koreans had continued to pursue their Sunshine Policy and we had gone so far as to work with the South Koreans to start talking about opening lanes through the DMZ, which has continued to go forward. We had the groundbreaking and concrete pouring for the light water reactors.

So, there was some momentum building up that might have assisted North Korea. But what we discovered was during this entire period of the agreed framework, when everybody thought the nuclear genie had been caught in the Yongbyon jug, there was another nuclear program underway and that had to be dealt with.

So that's where we are. We are continuing to pursue a policy that says that we are not poised to invade North Korea, but we have not taken any of the options that are available to the President off the table. We are still hoping that we will be able to get a dialogue going, but we feel strongly that it should be a multilateral dialogue or a multilateral forum for this dialogue, for the simple reason that other nations are involved. It is not just a US-DPRK matter. It affects their neighbors, who are at a greater risk for this kind of proliferation than we are, for that matter. But we're all at risk, the whole world is at risk. This kind of proliferation, this kind of technology.

I would just point again to the strong position of the Chinese government, they do not want to see a nuclearized peninsula. That came out of the Crawford summit between President Jiang Zemin and President Bush. I'll be discussing with the Chinese potential ways to go forward, ideas of how we can get a multilateral dialogue going in a multilateral forum, within which we can try to find solutions to the challenge we face.

**QUESTION:** Can you give us an example of what you might be thinking about?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We have an idea on the table of course, the five plus five. Other ideas have come along and we have heard from some of our friends that they have some ideas. I don't have anything that I'd like to put on the table right now. But there are many ways to do this, to you look at the different forums that exist around Asia; there are other forums that might be used besides just the five plus five. We're not ruling anything out, or any number in or any number out.

We're looking for a way to make it an international problem. Because what you have to keep in mind throughout all of this is that the two person solution, US-DPRK, was not successful last time, even though we thought it was successful. We had every reason to believe it was successful, only to discover that they were working on an alternative technology for nuclear weapons development. They were doing that with all kinds of assurances from the previous administration in the form of signed letters from the President, in the form of joint statements agreed to and also in other means of communications back and forth. So this time we believe that a multilateral solution, recognizing that we'll have to talk to them, but a multilateral forum is the best way to get this started.

**QUESTION:** Why is a multilateral solution going to work any better than a bilateral one? If the North Koreans choose to cheat, they can just as easily cheat on everybody.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** They could, I'm not predicting that the final, if there is a final... I don't know who would be in on it. But I think that if more nations in the region and the international community were involved, then the obligations on North Korea would be stronger and the consequences of failure to perform or abide by would be greater.

And frankly, the international community has already acted on this. We were successful, the international community was, in getting the resolution from the IAEA, on the

12<sup>th</sup> of February I believe it was, referred to the Security Council with a 33-0-2 abstention vote was a pretty strong statement of the international community. So, they are concerned about it and it is now before the Security Council with a referral to an experts' group.

**QUESTION:** Can you elaborate on why the consequences would be more serious, particularly because Japan, South Korea, China have not shown a whole lot of desire, for example, to use economic leverage.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** The Japanese right now are not providing any food aid because of North Korean policies with respect to abductees and other things. The route of normalization that the Japanese were going down rather steadily last fall, we've seen certainly a yellow light, if not a red light, on that road.

And so I just think that if more nations were involved in this, and more nations took an active role in managing this problem or working this problem with the DPRK and if we are able to find a solution, and I still believe a solution is possible, then I think it would be a better solution if it involved regional partners of ours and neighbors of North Korea and other international organizations, perhaps.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary, you said last week that Russia and China would be threatened by a nuclearization of North Korea. Surely, North Korea is not going to attack either one of those two. How would they be threatened?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think any nation in the region should be concerned and would be at risk with a nuclear weapon in the hands of North Korea. It is China who has said they want the Korean peninsula to remain denuclearized. I assume China had good reason for adopting that policy and for reaffirming that policy at every opportunity.

**QUESTION:** Are you concerned that while you're waiting for these other countries to get convinced that this is indeed an international problem, you're losing valuable time?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** Time is passing, and there's always the possibility that North Korea might take other actions that we would not like to see, but we have made it clear to all of our partners and friends that it would be wise for North Korea not to take further provocative action with respect to its nuclear activities, at a time when we are all working to see if we cannot find a diplomatic solution, a peaceful solution.

But time is passing and we're trying to use that time to the maximum. But at the same time, we're not going to let time become a weapon to be used against us, essentially saying you must respond to what North Korea is demanding because of time or because of what they might do tomorrow. We will stay in close touch with our friends and neighbors, we watch closely what's happening and we will remain ready to engage when the opportunity presents itself.

**QUESTION:** Last week, the Chinese foreign ministry said that they thought the best way to resolve this problem was for the United States and North Korea to talk in a bilateral fashion. Have you seen any indication at all that China is ready to use its influence and get involved in a more robust multilateral fashion?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We have spoken at considerable length to the Chinese leadership. I've met with Foreign Minister Tang almost every week for the last month in New York. We'll see him again this weekend and President Bush has spoken to President Jiang Zemin about it.

We understand their point of view and their desire for us to speak directly to the DPRK and Mr. Tang and I have had long conversations about this. He's heard us say that we understand that point of view, but we believe that others have an obligation as well to achieve a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

The Chinese are sensitive to our point of view and they are in close touch with the North Koreans. I don't want to characterize what they might or might not be doing because they tend to keep their cards close to the chest, but we are communicating back to the Chinese and through them to the North Koreans and through others to the North Koreans that we strongly believe that the way to get moving and the way to get started is through a multilateral dialogue. But we recognize that everybody in the region has been taking positions over the weeks that say they hope they will find a way, that a way will be found for there to be direct US-DPRK dialogue. We have said that we are looking for a multilateral forum in which to start dialogue and then lots of things can happen from there.

**QUESTION:** Do you think you can solve this without China's help?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think China will be an important partner in finding a solution. I think there will have to be lots of people involved in a solution that will be comprehensive and solve the problem once and for all and not leave the problem in place only to erupt at some later time. We need to deal with this in a comprehensive way and a comprehensive solution, in my judgment, will require participation of all the neighbors and other organizations or, in other words, not just the immediate neighbors. I think the IAEA has a role to play, the UN has a role to play, and all should play their role.

**QUESTION:** I'd like to change subjects for just a minute. Do you know if the Blix letter on the missiles, on whether the missiles would be destroyed, has come out yet? And what it says?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I don't know and I would really have to refer that to Blix himself. I don't think it has, but don't take that for the record. I'll have Richard check. I don't know what might have happened today, but I can't answer the question.

**QUESTION:** What would your choice be? Do you want the missiles destroyed or do you want them disabled in some way?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** We believe they are prohibited, we believe the test stand was designed for a prohibited purpose, we believe all of the engines that have been brought in are prohibited, and therefore believe they ought to be destroyed.

**QUESTION:** Could you give us an update on Turkey and the negotiations?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I think we've made some progress. The information I have, which I was talking to you about this morning, I'll give you now for the record. We have been contacted by the Turkish authorities through our Ambassador and they say there are some outstanding issues with respect to the three documents we were discussing with them and on some of the ideas that we had for flexibility with respect to economic assistance.

Our teams will be working intensively over the next 2 to 3 days to resolve these issues. They're difficult, but they should be resolvable. And if they are resolved, then we believe the possibility exists for the Turkish government to take this to their parliament early next week. It is not yet a done deal, but there has been progress in the last 12 hours. The next question I think will be, has 6 billion dollars remained the number? The answer is yes. We're trying to see how much flexibility there is in the use of that 6 billion dollars, in order to assist them in the months ahead.

**QUESTION:** Back on North Korea. You've talked about the sort of leverage China could have over North Korea because of the food and the fuel that it provides. Does using that leverage entail somehow reducing the food and fuel aid they provide? Is that something you would expect from the Chinese?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I don't think so. Our concern with food aid really is to make sure we have a good understanding of where it's going and how it's being used. I don't know if we've made an announcement yet, but we'll be making an announcement soon of an initial tranche and then we will monitor the World Food Program needs and what they ask for, to see what our additional contribution will be as we go through the year.

We were unable to do anything until the omnibus bill was passed, which gave us the authority and before this trip is out, I think that I'll be able to say more about other food. But to go back on our solid policy is that we don't use food as a political weapon. The need is still great. You go through all the politics; there are kids out there that are starving. If we can help them, we will. That's what we've always done. We've got to make sure it's the kids and the people in need who are getting the food and that remains a concern of ours and a concern of the World Food Program as well.

So it's not just a US concern, we can't have the food not going to the people who need it. It's not fair to our taxpayers, and taxpayers around the world who pay for this food. We should not be using the food to prop up the elite or the regime; we should be using the food to feed people that are desperately in need.

**QUESTION:** Could you go into any more detail about your phone conversations with the Mexicans, the Chileans and Bulgarians about what you might be saying to them to persuade them not to abstain?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I told all of them that we were at work on the language for another resolution and that we expected to table such a resolution early next week. I told them that we'd be in touch with them through their permanent representatives in New York to discuss it. Expect that the resolution would be fairly straightforward, direct and point out the fact that it appears that Iraq is still not moving in a way to comply with 1441 and that therefore the council has to consider appropriate action on the resolution or other action the council might choose to take.

We will then begin consulting with members of the council on the resolution once it is tabled on the specific language in the resolution and when action might be appropriate on the resolution. Over the weekend, we'll be consulting with other members of the Security Council.

**QUESTION:** I wanted to ask you what you expected of China in terms of food and fuel.

**SECRETARY POWELL:** China has considerable influence, not just influence that comes from many years of association with the DPRK, but it's its principal supplier of energy and economic activity and a large portion of the aid that China gives to other nations goes to the DPRK. So they have leverage, but I don't have any specific requests taking to the Chinese leadership as to how they should use that right now, other than to make the point to them that they do have considerable influence with the DPRK because of this. I've made this point to Foreign Minister Tang on a number of occasions and it won't be news to them.

**QUESTION:** Are you willing to risk a veto in order to get to a second resolution?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** One is always at risk of a veto, or one is always at the potential benefit of a 15-0. I just don't know where it's going to come out. It's a little early to start speculating on how the debate will go and what the votes will be like.

In my own mind, I have a lineup of where we are now. And I have some instincts and some sense of where we might be in a little while. I think that's where it is, but I don't want to speculate on risking or not risking a veto. This is the time to not speculate about future matters.

**QUESTION:** I was sure you were going to begin that sentence with "never underestimate...."

**SECRETARY POWELL:** You guys did it last time.

**QUESTION:** Has the World Food Program put in place anything new that would suggest that this new food aid would be monitored any better than in the past and where do you expect to announce it?

**SECRETARY POWELL:** I'll have to ask Richard to get an answer on what World Food Program has been doing. I can't answer that. And food, we'll make an appropriate announcement at an appropriate time. Richard will let you know in due course.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

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