



Press Briefing En Route Phnom Penh

Secretary Colin L. Powell

On Board Plane
June 17, 2003

SECRETARY POWELL: Thanks for joining us on this longest of all trips. I think we've been in the air for about three days, as best I can figure it out. But it is an important meeting, to have the opportunity to, for a day and a half, sit and talk with some 20 Asian Pacific nations. I call it Asian Pacific because when you get to the ARF forum, after the ASEAN meetings which took place today, you include Canada and the United States and so many other countries that expanded, so it's a good opportunity to speak to 20 countries plus European Union representatives will be here, and a number of additional observers.

Out of ASEAN today, I don't have a complete report of all the statements, but I believe they put out a good statement on Burma. We'll pick that up in interventions tomorrow in the ARF meeting. Coming out of the ARF meeting, I'm expecting several things: a statement having to do with maritime security, piracy and crimes on the high seas; and also, another statement on border security which includes protecting your border physically, but also includes the kinds of things we're doing to secure our borders back in the United States with documentation and knowing who's going across the border.

These two statements really flow from something that's called the Intersessional Ministerials (ISM) - everybody following me, anybody need any crayons? But the Intersessional Ministerials is when assistant secretaries get together, such as my Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism, Cofer Black and they hammer out these issues and they bring them to us at the ARF. So these two items on maritime security and on border security were dealt with in the intersessional meetings a few months ago, will be brought to us tomorrow, and we will encourage another intersessional meeting between our sessions for the further work of this kind.

We'll also take note of what's happened since our meeting last year where I introduced a new program dealing with ASEAN coordination, ASEAN cooperation program, where we'd work with nations on development programs and infrastructure programs and some 11 projects have been started under that initiative, and we'll also touch on the initiative that the President launched at Los Cabos at the APEC meeting in Mexico last fall, which is called the Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI), and this really talks about free trade agreements, bilateral trade agreements such as the Chile Free Trade Agreement, and the discussions we have underway with the Philippines, Thailand, and other nations to reduce trade barriers as part of the President's free trade policy and desire to open trade to all nations. So here in ARF we will talk about trade, we will talk about infrastructure development, we talk about counterterrorism, and then we will take note of the two initiatives I just mentioned and how that helps the region, and then we'll shift to some regional issues of concern in ARF and among those will be North Korea. I will make an intervention on North Korea, I will also make an intervention on Burma, and I will make an intervention -- all part of a larger, one intervention, parts of an intervention -- and an intervention on the situation in Aceh, and then a fairly long intervention on HIV/AIDS, and all that will be in about 10 minutes, or longer, depending on how fast I speak or how quick my editing pen is overnight. As you know there are a lot of speakers who have to get a lot out, but it's not just what is said on the intervention but the various meetings you have in the course of the day and I'll have lots of bilaterals. I can't list them all because they're all still being set up, but with Minister Lee of China and I'm sure we'll discuss both Koreas in more depth, and Igor Ivanov will be there, Alexander Downer from Russia [Correction - Alexander Downer of Australia], Foreign Minister Sinha, India, and Bill Graham of Canada, and many others and in the course of the day, I expect I'll have a chance to see all of them.

Then, the Post Ministerial Conference, which comes after that on the following day has a slightly different group of attendees, but basically the same format and the issues will be a little more of a global interest, not just regionally-oriented, and that's where I'll have the chance to talk about the Middle East and what the President wants to see happen, what happened at Aqaba and what's going on right now, and I'll also have the chance to talk about the situation in Iraq, and after that we will go on to Dhaka. OK? So how's that just for openers?

QUESTION: Could you give us a more specific sense of what you plan to say, both about Burma and about North Korea?

SECRETARY POWELL: Things that will be familiar to you on Burma. If you've been following what we have been saying, and if you noticed my op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, we want to see Aung San Suu Kyi released as soon as possible, and allowed to participate in the political process in Burma in a democratic way, and we thought that there had been movement in that regard in recent months but that all of that has now been blocked by the government and they're going backwards. And just as we did last week at the OAS meeting in the Western Hemisphere, that same message should apply here when this group of nations increasingly is committed to openness in the political process and increasing commitment to democracy has to speak out when we see things going in the wrong direction in the region. And on North Korea, I don't know who'll be there for North Korea - I don't think it'll be the Foreign Minister - but, the North Koreans will be in the room when I will once again make the case that they have to stop this nuclear weapon development program that they have underway and the way to do it is through multilateral dialog. The President is still confident that we can achieve a political and diplomatic solution, and I'm pleased at the unity we've been able to achieve with the countries in the region. Everybody is saying the same thing to the North Koreans with the respect to the unacceptability of their actions, that they want a Korean Peninsula without nuclear weapons, and frankly nobody is doing much in the way of providing help to the North Koreans right now, and it's sort of tragic when you think of where we were, say 14-15 months ago, when there was a movement - the Japanese were moving through a process of providing aid and normalization -- others were anxious to do things, and then we learned about the enriched uranium program and it came to a halt. There is a way forward, and we're going to make sure that the North Koreans understand what that way forward is, and make the point that we will not be intimidated by their rhetoric or their actions.

QUESTION: Following up on North Korea, can you tell us what you think the IAEA will do this week, and how does the, on North - oh, I'm sorry, I've got it mixed up - on North Korea, I want you to connect it to the interdiction program, about which much has been written in the last week or so. You mentioned piracy and other forms of maritime security, but isn't this also directed at North Korea's shipments, including to Japan?

SECRETARY POWELL: The specific statement that you'll see tomorrow won't, but as you look at what happens on the high seas with respect to piracy, with respect to trafficking in persons, with respect to drug running, with respect to the shipment of weapons of mass destruction, you can see that there could be a broader agenda for discussing maritime security. There was another meeting in Madrid earlier this week or last week, where we started to move forward on the other initiative that we started, I guess two weeks ago, where we contacted a number of nations most interested in this, to see if we could not start coming up with approaches to the problem of interdicting weapons of mass destruction and making it more difficult for them to traverse the airways and seaways and landways of the world. Whether these efforts will blend together at some point, it's too early to say, Steve.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you were talking about countries that have aided North Korea, and you said you've seen a real swing toward cutting off aid to North Korea. Does that include China, any more than that brief interruption in oil shipments?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think that China's still providing aid to North Korea and they haven't cut off, but what I was really referring to was the momentum we saw last year, when there were all sorts of initiatives coming from the South. One of them did come to pass the other day when they finished the rail line going through, put the final bolt in the rail line over the weekend, but otherwise there hasn't been much else going North, and the big initiative that has stopped was what Prime Minister Koizumi had indicated would be possible in the way of billions of dollars of assistance, and a path towards normalization, and then you had the return of the kidnapped ones to Japan, and that plus the North Korean nuclear developments essentially stopped that path for now. The Japanese have been speaking as strongly as we have, frankly, in the recent weeks and months about the need of North Korea to do something about this. But China, I can't say that they have cut off anything, or that they have added

anything more to what they had traditionally been doing, I don't have that much insight into Chinese programs.

QUESTION: Does it do any good for everyone else to cut off aid to North Korea, if China's still giving them aid?

SECRETARY POWELL: Did I say everyone should cut off aid?

QUESTION: Let me rephrase it. Does it do any good for countries to change their attitudes about helping North Korea if China is still giving them oil and other forms of aid?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it does, because North Korea, even with Chinese aid, is suffering mightily. It is a country that is in great difficulty, live in a Potemkin capital, but the countryside is in dire straits – and that is with Chinese aid. They need more than Chinese aid and Chinese fuel. They need aid from other neighbors and they need aid from the rest of the world, and that's the message we convey to our friends and our partners in the region.

QUESTION: First of all, what is the status of US food aid to North Korea? Has that been restarted, is it in the process of being restarted? And secondly, just on the issue of interdiction, there was a report over the weekend that the US was considering trying to seize counterfeit money that the North Koreans apparently distributed in their diplomatic pouches. I was wondering if there was any truth to that?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think the, and Richard will correct this if I get it wrong, I think we committed 40,000 tons in the first tranche, but we wanted to wait and see how it's being distributed before we made additional allocations for this year.

QUESTION: It hasn't been distributed?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't know. We can find out. I don't know if it's gone in or not yet. I don't know if you know, Richard? We can find out from AID or the World Food Program. We'll get the answer for you, Glenn. Counterfeit money is criminal activity, and if we can find it, we will seize it, but I don't have any comment on diplomatic pouches. I think I saw a report of it, but I don't have anything to add to it. We can see if there's any guidance that the Department can provide you, but I don't have any.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, can I go back to Burma for one question, and that is you say that you want to see Aung San Suu Kyi released as soon as possible, but really it's too late, isn't it? Even if they do release her right now, at least from the United States' point of view, you're still going to go ahead with this new policy to punish them, or to put more pressure on them, is that correct?

The second thing I wanted to ask is about the host country. Senator McConnell's other big issue with you and foreign policy issue has been Cambodia, aside from Burma. You told him about two months ago that you'd be bringing up the elections as well as the Khmer Rouge trials with them – what are you going to say about that?

SECRETARY POWELL: I think it's necessary for us to take a harder line with Burma, as you see coming from the Hill as well as statements coming out of the Administration and what I've been saying. Let's see whether the Burmese react or not, and we'll determine after their reaction not just for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi but also what will they allow her to do or what will they allow her party to do, and that will determine what our policy will be.

With respect to elections in Cambodia, I failed to mention that my intervention will also talk about the need for free open elections next month, I think it's July 27th if I'm not mistaken, and the need for parties to have access to the media and all the other instruments of free, open and fair elections.

QUESTION: And the trial?

SECRETARY POWELL: It may come up in bilaterals, I don't know if it's in my intervention, I'll have to look.

QUESTION: Can we shift to the Middle East and ask, first of all, can you make any announcements about additions to the trip and more specifically the Israelis apparently are saying they're not prepared to do any kind of ceasefire with Hamas until there is an end to terrorism, which is the same policy in the past. Is the United States disappointed with Israel or either party that there is not more progress and what are we planning to do about it?

SECRETARY POWELL: There have been talks for the last several days that suggest the two sides are trying to find a way to move forward with respect to establishing security, perhaps first in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. There are also discussions between Palestinian leaders and Hamas and other organizations as to whether or not they will stop terrorist attacks, and I hope that over the next day or two I will get fuller reports of those discussions and whether there is any promise there and any possibility.

It would not be enough in the long term for Hamas to simply say, "We're not gonna do it right now, we're not gonna give up the capability." Ultimately, these terrorist organizations have to not only stop conducting terrorist attacks, we have to eliminate their capability to do so, and that has to be one of the goals as we move forward in the roadmap. And to listen to what Mr. Abbas said, the armed intifada must end, the armed intifada ending means you take it to its logical conclusion.

There's no need for this kind of capability to exist in any organization, and we have to come down hard on organizations such as Hamas, which try to claim that they're a political organization at the same time that they have an armed wing that is conducting terrorist activities. And that's what we have been saying, especially vigorously in recent days and my European Union colleagues discussed it at their meeting Monday, with some differences of opinion, but at least the EU is finally fessing up to the reality that you can't deal with Hamas as two separate things that are not connected, and you can't finance one part without realizing that you are helping to finance the bad part.

QUESTION: Alright, on North Korea. It's been eight months since the discovery of the enrichment program, precious little has happened since then diplomatically. There has been, you know, the brief meeting in October and you had the brief meeting in October, you had the meeting in China, is there anything new with respect to North Korean willingness to reach a diplomatic solution, which you say is possible?

SECRETARY POWELL: Since last October, when this all blew, I guess that's about eight months, we have convinced North Korea that multilateral is the way to go, although they are holding out at three and we believe it has to be more than three and we'll press that point.

I think we have aligned the international community in a way that makes it clear to North Korea that they will not have any support or friends helping them with this. We got the IAEA to take a position, it is before the UN, and we will make judgements in the weeks ahead as to whether we want the UN to take any action, and North Koreans, what they have done is made a lot of statements and made a lot of claims and tossed out a lot of rhetoric and shifted their arguments and their latest argument was that they need nuclear weapons in order to cut the size of their conventional forces which was something I had never heard from them before, and to save money which is an interesting concept for North Koreans.

So, it's been about, I guess, eight months, and these things take time, that's usually what's called diplomacy, and we'll keep working away at it. I'm still hopeful of a diplomatic solution and I don't think we are in crisis mode. It's a dangerous situation and we worried about it, we're working on it, working on it very hard, and we believe that we can find an answer.

QUESTION: Question on Iran, the IAEA was to present its report yesterday. Is the United States pushing to have the issue taken to the United Nations and to discuss further sanctions, and secondly, what is the US doing or thinking about the student demonstrations in Tehran, do you think this is a turning point and are we doing anything to encourage them?

SECRETARY POWELL: Dr. El Baradei made a presentation this Monday to the Board of Governors. They then moved on to another agenda item, so discussion didn't take place. Discussion will take place Tuesday, or more likely Wednesday on what he presented. And the BOG, Board of Governors, will have to make a judgement as to whether a resolution is the appropriate action or whether a chairman's statement is appropriate, so there'll be a debate on this later in the week, and we'll wait to see the results of that debate before we make a judgment as to what next steps should be taken.

There are alternatives, go to the UN, ask for another meeting before the next scheduled one in September, and all of those are under consideration but I can't tell you yet what we're gonna do until I see the results of the debate.

What was your other one, I'm getting older, I can't remember two. Ah, we have long said that there is desire on the part of the people of Iran, especially the young people of Iran to see reform in their political system. They are not happy with the leadership they are receiving from their secular or religious leaders, so-called secular or religious leaders, and it's now manifesting itself in the streets of Tehran and other cities.

I don't know if this is a turning point, but it certainly validates the point we were making all along that there is dissatisfaction among the Iranian people. I hope what these young people are saying is we can have a better life and why are we pressing ahead on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction at a time when we have greater needs in our society, and the United States has always encouraged peaceful demonstrations for people to express their views, and this has been our policy and will continue to be our policy, and that's that.

QUESTION: (inaudible)

SECRETARY POWELL: Our policy is to encourage people to demonstrate for their views, and I think we've said this kind of consistently for months and months and months and months, and every now and then it spikes when somebody thinks something is about to happen or our policy is about to be changed. Well, the policy isn't gonna be changed except our policy with respect to political developments whereas I just described them. We are concerned still about al-Qaida residing in Iran, and we are concerned about terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and all of these issues are being dealt with in a comprehensive way.

QUESTION: The talks are still suspended indefinitely?

SECRETARY POWELL: I don't think I said that. I don't think I said that or want to say now.

QUESTION: The Iranians are accusing of the United States of fomenting the demonstrations and you just said that the US is encouraging them, you want to address the Iranian charge, please?

SECRETARY POWELL: The difference between fomenting, we are not out there inside Iran fomenting them but if people wish to demonstrate peacefully and demonstrate for their rights and for a better life, that seems to us to be a proper thing to do, and we support those kinds of political systems which allow that kind of openness of expression and freedom of expression.

Iran, as usual, is always just trying to deflect its problems onto others. And with respect to discussions, we have ways of having messages go back and forth to Iran, so I don't want to get into a debate as to how we do it and how we might do it.

QUESTION: No, no, it's just to clarify, I don't understand. The issue of we suspended the....

SECRETARY POWELL: It's your story, you're asking me about your point of view.

QUESTION: No, no, no, no, no, no. Alright, we did not hold the talks, we did not hold the talks.

SECRETARY POWELL: You're asking me if we suspended and I'm saying.....

QUESTION: Are there plans for talks with the Iranians anytime soon?

SECRETARY POWELL: I'm not gonna tell you if there are plans for talks with the Iranians anytime soon. You've asked me the question, "since we've suspended them, are we gonna start them again or are they gonna stay suspended?" I don't think we've ever said anything's been suspended. Did we? Correct me. I don't know. I never said it. Others have said it. Then you need to, . . . oh really. Well then, we'll have to go find out who they are. If it wasn't Boucher, it wasn't me, I don't know who it was. To suspend a meeting, a talk, for one reason or another doesn't mean you've suspended something forever and that's the conclusion that was leapt to.

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